



NEWSLETTER



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Afghan Culture

Observations, Insights, and Lessons

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Foreword

U.S. Army personnel serving in Afghanistan have numerous opportunities to interact with the Afghan people (called Afghans) who are the product of a multiplicity of diverse cultures. Afghan values, beliefs, behaviors, customs, and norms have been shaped by Afghanistan's rugged environment and geography; history of conflict; non-standard Islamic beliefs; tribal ethnicity; external and internal politics; and education. Soldiers will definitely find their culture different from that of the Afghans.

Soldiers, during their initial entry training, receive U.S. cultural training that includes the seven Army values: loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage. Afghans have the same seven values. Where the U.S. applies these seven values toward its own country and constitution, the Afghans apply them to their tribe, sub-tribe, or village, of which there are many throughout Afghanistan.

This newsletter provides information on the basics of the Afghan culture and how Soldiers should apply this information while living and working with the Afghans. The key points covered in this newsletter are:

- Effects of Afghan culture on counterinsurgency operations.
- Means of acquiring an awareness of the Afghan culture.
- Components that shape the diverse Afghan culture.
- Sources for training on the Afghan culture.
- Background on the Taliban.
- Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center Afghanistan/Pakistan languages DVD.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tom Murphy', is written over a light gray background.

THOMAS JOSEPH MURPHY
COL, FA
Director, Center for Army Lessons Learned

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Introduction

“Afghanistan isn’t Iraq. Iraq is largely characterized by the Sunni/Shia/ (Kurd) split. Here [Afghanistan] it’s ethnic diversity and complex tribal dynamics. We need to drastically improve our Afghan cultural awareness. Training for Iraq doesn’t prepare Soldiers for Afghanistan. And they [Afghans] are too different to water down cultural training to a common denominator.”

—Major General Richard P. Formica, Commander
Combined Security Transition Command–Afghanistan

U.S. Army Field Manual 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*, defines society as a population whose members are subject to the same political authority, occupy a common territory, have a common culture, and share a sense of identity. Afghanistan’s society does not fit that definition. Afghanistan has a central government and a defined border, but the government does not control all of the country or population. Afghanistan does not have a common culture or shared identity. Afghanistan is a tribal/clan society with many languages. The mountainous geography has channeled the tribal/clan society into limited-access villages and has protected that way of life from invading armies and central governments. Therefore, understanding and applying knowledge of the Afghan tribal cultures and languages are critical components to success in counterinsurgency (COIN) operations in Afghanistan.

What is culture?

Culture is the way people behave. Culture is a system of shared values, beliefs, behaviors, and norms used to cope with the world and each other. Culture is influenced and shaped by geography, history, economics, politics, art, religion, education, traditions, and ethnicity.

Why focus on culture?

History provides many examples of where failure to know, understand, and apply the culture of others often led to disastrous results. Afghans have defeated and driven from Afghanistan the British and Soviet forces who attempted to subjugate them. Could failure to recognize the unique and complex Afghan culture have led to the defeat of the British and Soviets?

With Afghanistan being the home to a great variety of ethnic, linguistic, and tribal groups, focusing on local Afghan culture is critical to enabling Afghans and U.S. forces to do the following:

- Earn each other's trust.
- Communicate the needs of the local population and possible U.S. support.
- Influence each other toward mutually agreed upon solutions.
- Build confidence in the Afghan central and provincial governments.
- Promote and develop economic and physical security.

Chapter 1

Afghan Culture in Counterinsurgency Operations

“The future is not one of major battles and engagements fought by armies on battlefields devoid of population; instead, the course of conflict will be decided by forces operating among the people of the world. Here, the margin of victory will be measured in far different terms than the wars of our past. The allegiance, trust, and confidence of populations will be the final arbiters of success.”

—Lieutenant General William B. Caldwell
Former Commander, U.S. Army Combined Arms Center

As we look at the counterinsurgency (COIN) operations in Afghanistan, knowledge and understanding of Afghan culture can greatly facilitate dealing with the local population. That knowledge and understanding will set the stage for applying the diverse Afghan culture in operations planning and execution. For Soldiers, the challenge is their daily interaction with the local Afghan population and the Afghan security forces. How do Soldiers relate to and with these Afghans who are very much a part of Afghanistan’s complex cultural environment? Will Soldiers actions win the support of the Afghans or turn the Afghans against the U.S. efforts?

Section I: Counterinsurgency Operations and Culture

The U.S. Army, in conjunction with the U.S. Marine Corps, identified the importance of culture in COIN operations and incorporated it into U.S. Army Field Manual 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*.

- Cultural knowledge is essential to waging a successful counterinsurgency.
- Members of other societies often have different notions of rationality, appropriate behavior, level of religious devotion, and norms concerning gender.
- Counterinsurgents—especially commanders, planners, and small-unit leaders—should strive to avoid imposing their ideas of normalcy on a foreign cultural problem.

- Insurgents hold a distinct advantage in their level of local knowledge. Insurgents speak the language, move easily within the society, and are more likely to understand the population’s interests.
- Counterinsurgents, therefore, must have a thorough understanding of the social and cultural environment to conduct successful COIN operations. U.S. forces must know and understand the following about the population in the area of operations:
 - Organization of key groups in the society.
 - Relationships and tensions among groups.
 - Ideologies and narratives that resonate with groups.
 - Values of groups (including tribes), interests, and motivations.
 - Means by which groups (including tribes) communicate.
 - The society’s (including tribe’s) leadership system.
 - The essential nature and nuances of the conflict.
 - The motivation, strengths, and weaknesses of the insurgents.
 - The roles of other actors in the area of operations.

* * *

Integrating Cultural Sensitivity into Combat Operations

MAJ Mark S. Leslie, U.S. Army

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This article was originally published in the January–February 2007 issue of *Armor* magazine.

Although this article addresses Iraq, it equally applies to Afghanistan.

“Guerrillas never win wars but their adversaries often lose them.”¹

—Charles W. Thayer
Author

Mentioning cultural sensitivity or cultural awareness in regards to combat operations is often met with rolled eyes or groans from those who execute

the orders. Many Soldiers often think that cultural sensitivity is a weakness and is secondary to actual operations—this is incorrect. Cultural sensitivity incorporated into operations in Iraq is sometimes more valuable than other more conventional weapons in the U.S. Army’s inventory. Soldiers who are culturally aware and know how to apply that cultural awareness on the battlefield are 21st-century warriors. Integrating cultural sensitivity on the battlefield is something we all must do without putting Soldiers at risk.

The Army has come a long way on the subject of cultural sensitivity. All units deploying to Iraq [and to Afghanistan] are required to complete a certain amount of cultural awareness training. Soldiers learn a little of the language and a little about the culture. Units deploying also train on traditional combat skills at the individual, squad, section, platoon, and company levels.

Prior to my last deployment, I had been in combat several times. I assumed the rules of engagement (ROE) were the only kind of cultural sensitivity I needed to understand. After all, he was the enemy and deserved as little consideration as legally possible in regards to humanity. It did not take long to realize that I had the wrong idea. I spent the majority of my time in Iraq living, working, eating, and fighting with the Iraqi National Guard (ING), and quickly came to realize that I had to change my thinking if we were going to be successful.

Through daily, often personal interaction, our Soldiers saw U.S. units through the eyes of the Iraqis. This perception was not only from Iraqi soldiers, but everyone from the average Iraqi farmer to local “power brokers,” such as sheiks, council members, and police chiefs. Our unit leaders spent many hours with local citizens in their homes, on the street, and at our patrol base discussing various issues of concern. Because of this newfound knowledge, we gradually adopted a more sensitive approach, and we were successful at not only finding and eliminating insurgents and caches, but also fostering and developing a good rapport with the local community. The intelligence we collected because of these relationships was incredible, and often we (the advisors) and our ING counterparts were the only people local informants trusted.

What worked for our unit is not a cookie-cutter solution for all situations and all units. However, a few common themes of cultural sensitivity, when integrated into combat operations, can greatly influence the desired outcome. Cultural sensitivity is not something learned and then tucked away in a rucksack for later use. Instill it in your Soldiers, in your training plan, and use it in everything you do on the Iraqi battlefield. I am not advocating treating the enemy with kid gloves; when it is time to be brutal (when engaging the enemy), then it is time to be brutal and eliminate the threat. However, all Soldiers must be capable of making a mature decision, and

at the precise moment, switch back to nonlethal force. Integrating training scenarios where Soldiers must make these decisions in a few seconds will save both American and Iraqi lives. Below are suggested techniques for integrating cultural sensitivity into combat operations:

- **Cultural awareness training.** Soldiers must know what is culturally acceptable.
- **Language training.** This is an invaluable skill that serves you well throughout your tour. Every unit has its language training challenges, but anything is better than nothing. Knowing some of the language helps break down cultural barriers.
- **Leader training.** Develop scenario-based vignettes involving escalation of force issues (EOF) and integrate them into training exercises.
- **ROE and escalation of force (EOF) training.** ROE and EOF vignettes are culturally sensitive. Every Soldier will have to make a life-or-death decision within seconds. Understanding ROE and EOF enhances Soldiers' chances of making the right decision. Put these scenarios in all levels of training.
- **Diversify training events.** Combine ROE, EOF, role-playing, and civilians on the battlefield into all tactical exercises. Ensure there are consequences for cultural ignorance and rewards for incorporating cultural sensitivity into combat operations, without putting Soldiers at risk.
- **Draw the line.** Emphasize that cultural sensitivity in no way jeopardizes the lives of Soldiers. Ensure Soldiers understand that sometimes tactical decisions that are not culturally sensitive must be made; but whenever possible, care toward civilians and treating the populace with dignity and respect are "the culture of our organization."
- **Information operations (IO) training.** Conduct training at all levels, from private to battalion commander. IO is a powerful tool and grasping the concept of how to integrate it into daily operations is paramount. Knowing IO is the name of the game; incorporate it at all levels of training.
- **Every Soldier is a sensor.** Every Soldier is an intelligence collector and must understand that he could observe something important. Verbal engagements on the battlefield happen more than lethal

engagements and must receive the same amount of attention. Debriefings are critical.

- **Civil affairs training.** Conduct predeployment training on understanding public works and how city governments work—including trash collection, waterworks, and city council meetings. Columbus, GA, or Killeen, TX, is nowhere near Mosul, Iraq, but these cities do provide leaders a working model on which to base their “nation builder” role. Leaders should attend local government meetings and observe how issues are brought up, discussed, and resolved in a small city government.
- **Embrace the culture.** This is difficult but possible. Understanding Iraqis and how they think, operate, and act is a combat multiplier. It also reinforces the idea within your unit that neither the Iraqi people nor Islam is the enemy—insurgents are the enemies.

The importance of cultural awareness and putting that knowledge to use in the form of cultural sensitivity during combat operations in a counterinsurgency is put into perspective by Field Manual Interim (FMI) 3-07.22, *Counterinsurgency Operations* [Note: FMI 3-07.22 has been superseded by FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency* in December 2006]. FMI 3-07.22 defines an insurgency as “an organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through the use of subversion and armed conflict.” The manual goes on to state that counterinsurgency includes “those military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological, and civic actions taken by a government to defeat an insurgency.”² These citations should clearly point out to all commanders and Soldiers that our role in Iraq and Afghanistan is far more complicated and challenging than in past high-intensity conflicts.

Our mission in Iraq is defined by more than simple military objectives. Every Soldier is a warrior statesman, an ambassador of our intent to make Iraq safe and secure. The actions of every Soldier during every engagement, verbal and otherwise, are critical in conveying this message. The actions of every Soldier at every level during daily dealings with Iraqi citizens are critical. Perception is reality. If Iraqis perceive us as the enemy, with elimination of the insurgent threat as our only goal, we are doomed to failure.

A counterinsurgency is a much more complicated war. Success is not defined solely by eliminating insurgents; in fact, success is impossible without the application of a much more complex and difficult approach. FMI 3-07.22 puts the warrior statesman duties into perspective by clearly defining the end state and criteria of success: protect the population;

establish local political institutions; reinforce local governments; eliminate insurgent capabilities; and exploit information from local sources.³ In our unit's operational environment, it is up to the maneuver commander, with guidance from higher, to determine how to prioritize these goals. However, it is a mistake to think that all are not juggled as simultaneous daily events.

To fight a counterinsurgency in Iraq correctly, we must change the culture of many of our units. Traditionally, as an Army, we focus on eliminating the insurgent threat. Eliminating that threat is the easy part; however, it is only one part of the equation. Other prongs of attacking a counterinsurgency are much harder and more difficult to accomplish. We must establish in our subordinates' minds the whole concept of being there to protect the Iraqi people.

Often, Soldiers spend entire tours in Iraq with the mindset that all Iraqis are only potential threats. However, every Iraqi is also a potential ally, informant, and friend. To consider them only a potential threat is a mistake and will severely limit the unit's capabilities. To best ascertain if an Iraqi is a potential friend or foe, pay close attention to how he behaves. Keep in mind that our actions have a huge impact on his decision to be a friend or foe. A unit that is culturally ignorant and does not attempt to use cultural awareness training on the battlefield during daily operations is doing more harm than good for the overall picture—regardless of how many insurgents it eliminates. A counterinsurgency is less about eliminating the threat and more about eliminating support for the threat. If our actions, either knowingly or innocently, produce more insurgents, we are not accomplishing the goals set forth in FMI 3-07.22 for defeating an insurgency.⁴

Insurgents often create support for their actions by eliciting us to overreact, and we often unwittingly fall into their plans. For example, if an improvised explosive device (IED) attack occurs on a U.S. patrol or convoy and a residence is located within a few hundred meters, what is the patrol's first reaction? Based on personal experience and from talking with hundreds of other combat veterans, the normal response is to raid that house immediately. This is tactically sensible. If the IED was within sight of the house, then logically, the occupants of the house must be responsible or know something.

It is irresponsible to ignore the residence; however, the way we conduct the search and questioning are more important. If we aggressively approach the house, kick open the door, conduct a search, and question the owner of the house, he will most likely claim to know nothing about the IED. Our overreaction has just humiliated the owner and proved to the local populace that the message the insurgents spread throughout Iraq is correct: "Americans have no regard for you or your property."

Using the same scenario with a different approach can enhance conditions for successful information gathering. For example, assuming there is no direct fire threat from the house, isolate the objective. Use all the normal precautions when approaching the house, but instead of kicking open the door, simply knock. When the owner comes to the door, greet him and ask to search his house. He will comply because he realizes that there are no real alternatives. Ask him to move his family to one room, and assign security to that room.

We cleared houses according to standing operating procedures. We thoroughly searched one room, requested the owner move his family members (children and women) to that room, and placed the room under security. We then began a detailed search of the house and surrounding grounds. During the search, we asked the owner or a male family member to accompany us during the search to prevent any accusations of personal property theft. We also took great care not to “trash” the house; the average Iraqi does not have a lot of material wealth, and for us to destroy what little he has is not the way to demonstrate our concern for those we are there to protect.

While the search was underway, we quietly moved the owner to an area that his neighbors could not see and asked if he knew anything about the IED incident. The owner you question may not know exact details or even be willing to share them with you if he does, but he may give you bits of information that will be useful in finding those responsible. He is much more likely to assist you if you show him dignity and respect. He is unlikely, in most cases, to be responsible for the attack because he knows he will automatically be presumed “guilty by proximity.” However, if you find incriminating evidence, you have the option of detaining the individual.

This is just one example of integrating cultural sensitivity into combat operations. There are thousands of situations, but no cookie-cutter solution, as the tactical situation is different in every case. A few rules of thumb apply to many situations in Iraq when conducting operations similar to the one above:

- Assuming there is no direct fire threat; knock on the door instead of kicking it in.
- Whenever possible, allow the head of household to give instructions to his family.
- Allow the women and children to stay inside in a central location (under security).
- Do not zip tie or question potential informants/suspects in front of family or other males detained for questioning.

- If the decision is made to detain an individual, allow him to get personal items, such as medicine, shoes, and glasses (under security)—this serves well during tactical questioning and demonstrates you are humane and concerned for the welfare of the detained individual.
- Depending on the situation, a gift to the family may be appropriate; maybe a box of clothes for the children or some other token gift. This may seem a naive gesture, but the effect on the village and neighbors is surprisingly positive.

It is important to separate the detainee from his family (remember, he is not the enemy yet). Our actions determine which path they choose. For example, the gesture of good will and the care taken in searching his home demonstrates respect for his property. Respecting the family and preserving the detainee's dignity have far-reaching benefits in the community. The message that reaches the members of the community will confirm that a "bad guy" was detained, but American Soldiers treated his family and property respectfully and demonstrated genuine concern for the welfare of the family. This message supports one of the goals in defeating a counterinsurgency by "exploiting information from local sources." If the people of the community feel you are truly concerned for their welfare and interest, they are more likely to approach you with information on potential threats.

The fight in Iraq is not only with insurgents, it is a fight for the hearts and minds of Iraqis. It is not easy to win over people's hearts and minds, but demonstrating humanity and compassion in our everyday actions helps. Every Soldier should embrace and understand his role as an ambassador and intelligence collector for his command. Every Soldier must understand that we are not just in Iraq to fight an insurgency. We are in Iraq to win over the population, which is where this fight will be won or lost.

More often than not, when insurgents choose to engage us with direct fire, we are clearly the victor. The enemy chooses to fight as an insurgent because he is incapable of defeating us militarily. He chooses instead to attack using hit-and-run tactics and then disappears into the population. To find such an elusive enemy, we must demonstrate through words, deeds, and actions at all levels that we, not the enemy, have the best interests of the Iraqi people in mind.

Our victory in Iraq is not to just eliminate the insurgency threat, but to establish an environment where the Iraqi people can affirm their loyalties to a newly established government and pursue peace.

Endnotes

1. Charles W. Thayer, *Guerrilla*, M. Joseph, c.1963.
2. U.S. Army Field Manual Interim (FMI) 3-07.22, *Counterinsurgency Operations*, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., October 2004.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.

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Section II: Afghan Culture in a Counterinsurgency Environment

When employing military forces in the Afghan COIN environment, the diverse cultures of Afghans in the local area must be taken into consideration. According to CPT Carl W. Thompson in his *Winning in Afghanistan* papers, there are key points to consider:

- **Evaluating influence.** First, evaluate who has influence, why the person has it, and how he uses it. Part of the commander's job is to determine who has influence and of those people, who can be turned to a more positive government position. If it is determined the person who has influence cannot be turned, the commander must determine how to neutralize, discredit, or get rid of that person. People who have influence include:
 - A local Mullah who preaches at the Mosque.
 - A village elder who has lived within the same 15 kilometers 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 do not cooperate with the insurgent.
 - A local police chief who is respected for the performance of his duties.
 - A local doctor who is constantly treating people.
 - A respected former Mujahedin warrior who fought the Soviets.

- **Time.** Time will never be on the commander's side when fighting an insurgency. Commanders need to do everything they can to make lasting connections and resolve differences with the Afghan people. The element of time means the villager will wait and governments will not. Consider these time elements:
 - There is a cost from national treasury every day.
 - There is a cost in human life every day.
 - There is a cost in public support every day.
 - 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's honor and reputation within the 15-30 kilometers of his house. He has rarely gone further than that—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.
 - Military forces assisting the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan's (GIROA) COIN operations get tired of being in country and want to go home.
 - The enemy does have the same concerns, but on a much smaller scale.
 - Time is power. Insurgents can wait the government out.
- **Resources.** The one area where U.S. forces can dominate the battlefield is in resources. However, just spending money is not necessarily what needs to be done. Just because the U.S. has the advantage does not mean resources are used wisely or efficiently. However, without having large amounts of resources available to begin with, the fight becomes tough. What exactly makes resources valuable in the Afghan COIN environment is the ability to use them to strengthen the people on the side of the GIROA. However, if resources are not used wisely, the cost can be in loss of support from the resource provider.
- Afghans have multiple and divergent agendas. The key thing to remember is that U.S. forces are there to accomplish their mission—not someone else's. Afghan and U.S. forces need to link their missions. Afghans should not be able to succeed unless the U.S.

gets what it wants. However, it is best to “put an Afghan face” to the U.S.’s efforts to enhance the creditability of the GIRoA.

- U.S. solutions will not work for Afghan problems—Afghan solutions are needed for Afghan problems.

* * *

COIN Operations in Afghanistan

CPT Brad Israel, U.S. Army

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There are many factors that dictate success or failure in counterinsurgency (COIN) operations, and these outcomes are largely determined on how the unit handles the specific opportunities presented in its unique battlespace. As Infantrymen, we are asked to do many very disparate tasks, which require that we develop a large skill set so that those tasks can be accomplished. Traditionally, an Infantryman’s job is to close with and destroy the enemy. This role changes significantly in a counterinsurgency fight. The Infantry Soldier is asked to not only find and kill the enemy, but to train an indigenous force, help establish a stable government, assess village living conditions, pass out humanitarian aid (HA), treat sick or wounded locals, build structures, fix roads, utilize engineer and construction abilities, along with the myriad of other responsibilities that come from properly building and maintaining working relationships.

There are three basic tools that have proven successful in managing all these tasks and “winning the hearts and minds:”

- Gaining trust through building relations with the indigenous population.
- Distribution of humanitarian aid coupled with infrastructure development.
- Mentoring the various government forces so that they can provide security for their own people.

These three premises are dependent on each other, but one must do all three well in order to have impacting effects in the battlespace.

A unit's leaders build relationships through constant interaction with the local populace and Afghan forces. The establishment of a strong relationship requires more than just an occasional village visit; it is imperative that leaders get to know the people as individuals. The unit leadership should know the village elders' names, their tribe, and their unique tribal history. I would also encourage leaders to learn the names of some of the children, local shopkeepers, and farmers; they will prove to have useful information from time to time. The more locals that recognize the leader as a familiar friend—one that is committed to them and not someone they or their children should fear—then the better the chance the leader has to build a bridge between the host nation government and its people. By genuinely listening to the people and addressing their concerns, leaders can help actively facilitate relationship building. It is important that the unit, not just the leadership, act in kind—have the gunners wave to the locals as the convoy passes through the villages (see how many locals actually wave back and use that as a measurement of support over the months).

When the lead truck stops to search a vehicle or while setting up a hasty traffic check point (TCP), the leader needs to speak with the individual, treat him with respect by thanking him and shaking his hand, and wishing him well on his journey after the search is complete. Through these types of interactions, the unit will slowly have success, and individuals will begin to come forward with valuable information about the situation in the area of operations (AO). Be an expert on the history of the assigned battlespace by knowing the tribes, sub-tribes, village origin, family disputes, etc; the more a leader knows and the more knowledge he has, the more ground he will gain.

Before conducting a leader engagement, ensure security is established and an over-watch position is in place covering all possible exfiltration routes out of a village.

Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF)—whether that be the Afghan National Army (ANA), the Afghan National Police (ANP), the Afghan Border Police (ABP), or the Afghan Security Group (ASG)—should request for the village elders to escort the unit into the town. If it is or becomes necessary for the unit to conduct a search through the compounds while the leadership is meeting, permission should be requested first. Success in leader engagements has been created by knowing the villages and occasionally quizzing the children on school curriculum before discussing the talking points with the adults. It is vital that the leadership be seen as men first and Soldiers second, so that tribesmen and the unit leaders can share common ground as individuals in order to make progress towards building trust and relationships.

Once the leaders of the village have opened up, a smooth transition into village assessments and issues can be made. These issues and assessments include potential future projects, security, education, active participation and support of the government through joining the police force, ANA, and attending *shuras*. Most village elders do not mind if pictures are taken and their information is recorded, but always ask permission and explain why (so that they can be identified by name and to help better build on the relationship between his village and the unit).

At the bare minimum have at least one ANSF leader present during the engagement. This consideration will not only put an Afghan face on the meeting, but it can lead into recruitment and a question and answer session with a government representative. The relationship displayed between the coalition and Afghan leaders is as important as that of a platoon leader and platoon sergeant or a company commander and first sergeant.

When an engagement is finished and the unit leaves the village, the Afghans talk. It is human nature to want to be part of a strong team or community, one that takes care of each other and provides opportunity. By showing this united front with strong bonds, Afghan tribes will not only be interested, but it will stir inspiration among those who want to better their lives and those of their families. Always rehearse the talking points with the Afghan counterpart to ensure the values and vision are shared.

The long term effects of winning a COIN fight are how these people will remember the footprint American Soldiers left in their country. It is about our character, our kindness, and our generosity. The Afghans have strong feelings of distrust and anger towards the Soviets. We must consider how we want to be remembered. If we help construct the base infrastructure for each district to build upon, we will always be recognized for the help and community development that we provided.

It is important that a leader have an area of operations that is not bigger than what he can influence. Visiting a village in the battlespace once a month is hardly winning the COIN fight; it requires tireless effort, an almost “campaign trail” approach in trying to visit each village at least once or twice a week if possible. Gomal is the largest district in the Paktika Province. It is impossible for one platoon to control and develop Gomal in its entirety. If this is the case in any given battlespace, determine what sphere of influence the unit is possible of having and seek to achieve effects in that targeted area.

Ensuring that the unit has enough dismounts available to engage and interact with the local populace, while still maintaining sound security, is of the utmost importance. Remember, the more a leader believes he is protecting his force by staying grounded to the forward operating base

(FOB), the less secure he and his force really are. To truly protect his unit, the leader must get out and live amongst the people and use the FOB to refit and grant downtime when necessary.

Be patient with the tribal elders. They have been around long enough to fight and survive for generations. The leadership needs them on their side—that being said, they still have strong beliefs in tribal law and often will not recognize the governmental laws of Afghanistan. The military leader needs their advice, opinions, and support at the weekly *shura* meetings. While many of them make overly broad requests, tolerating them with a congenial attitude is what gains ground. For example, at a *shura* in the Gomal District, a village elder told the Afghan leadership that the tribesmen will punish people as they see fit, be it killing a man, burning his home down, or killing his family and livestock, depending on the severity of his crime. The Afghan and coalition leadership countered his argument by reinforcing how this only causes deeper tribal tension among villages; in a culture rich in honor and revenge, such acts could be fought over for generations. By allowing the Afghan government to uphold an equal law for everyone and objectively pursue those who disobey, the people do not have to continue the internal conflicts that run deep in their history.

The weekly *shura* should be an organized and efficient meeting, and rest assured it will take time until this landmark is reached. They are accustomed to disorder and chaos, but with coalition mentorship they can become a successful group. Unit leadership must address the issue of representation for each village or tribe in the district (at least one village elder); otherwise, some areas will prosper while others continue to struggle. If there is not a sub-governor or a *shura* president, then encourage them to elect both.

Help get the *shura* established by teaching them about how to run meetings, conduct business, and work together. Always have an agenda, set SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely) goals, and plan tasks for the follow-up meeting. Provide *shura* member ID cards for the elders, military ID cards for the local forces, and write memorandums for the sub-governor and police chief (conduct a follow up on the memorandums with the American counterparts such as provincial reconstruction teams [PRTs] or embedded tactical trainer [ETTs]). Once they grasp the concept, allow the *shura* president, sub-governor, and military or police leadership to lead the meeting. Once things seem to be running smoothly, teach the sub-governor, police chief, and *shura* president about task organization. Sub-governors are often so overwhelmed with requests, demands, and issues that they can hardly get anything done; so with the support and vote of the *shura*, elect members for cabinet positions at the district level (i.e. minister of education, finance, development, agriculture, etc). This gets everyone involved in some aspect of district improvement and allows the sub-governor to manage the *shura* rather than being the backstop for complaints. However, be mindful

that each elected cabinet minister will naturally look out for his village and sub-tribe before any others in the district (be prepared to counter this). Remember, U.S. forces are guests at the *shura* meeting, so encourage the Afghan leaders to conduct the engagement and empower them through battalion and company resources. U.S. forces are there for mentorship, security, and to aid in reconstruction projects. The tribal leaders will never be successful if we do not allow them to be independent; the leadership should quietly support them, but avoid making the locals dependant on the coalition forces for everything. Utilize battalion resources to empower the sub-governor, *shura* president, and police chief. There are many resources available at the battalion level so keep organized notes of meetings and requests, and be persistent in getting aid to the district.

Remember to use extreme discretion, caution, and care with both direct and indirect hostile intent fires (HIF); every unit has more firepower than it will ever need in any village, so use disciplined control measures to determine the best course of action if it ever goes kinetic in a populated area. Tactical patience is one of the most important attributes a leader must have in combat. A new unit in country was out on a patrol in a district; they were in an observation post (OP) overlooking a road into the valley, when they spotted two individuals with a shovel down near the road. They immediately took these two locals for insurgents trying to emplace an improvised explosive device (IED) along the route and engaged them, killing one and wounding the other. When they moved down to the engagement area, they came to see that the wounded individual was just a boy and the one killed was his father. They were attempting to fix a wash out in the road when they were shot. This is the easiest way to lose the trust of the people and possibly never gain it back. This village and sub-tribe will certainly not support the government or coalition forces, and there is a good chance that his son and others may join sides with the insurgents.

Humanitarian Aid Distribution and Projects

Humanitarian aid distribution is the most popular and successful way to create a positive image for a unit. Many of the women and children fear coalition convoys as they roll by, but when the vehicles stop and Soldiers distribute supplies or give medical treatment, these locals no longer see the unit as foreign invaders or infidels whom they need to fear. With few exceptions, most of the village elders will not be swept off their feet by the American guests in their country. This lack of support can be helped by focusing on the next generation that will become elders. By gaining ground with them, the ideals of the coalition and Afghan government can flower. If this generation of children remembers us as positive representatives of freedom—individuals that they want to emulate—then the hard work we have put in will have borne good fruit. Get as many supplies and resources from your battalion as possible, and encourage the American public to

get involved. Supporters back home have sent a wide variety of goods such as school supplies, candy, toys, dolls, children's clothes, shoes, and games (anysoldier.com, soldiersangels.com, USO, etc). Wheat and corn seed distributions are vital for economic growth in any district, so go the extra step and provide fertilizer as well. The mosque refurbishment kits are not only accepted with open arms by every village, but provide concrete evidence that we support Islam and are not here to threaten it or its people. This attention will help in the information operations (IO) campaign by not giving the enemy propaganda to use against us.

Giving out HA is one of the more enjoyable experiences for Soldiers. After security is in place and a defendable and safe site is established to conduct the distribution, the leader should afford Soldiers the opportunity to switch out if they want to hand out any supplies. In order to keep things organized, bring the villagers and children in through one search checkpoint and send them out another. As they enter the perimeter, have the children sit down and keep them separate from the adults. The Soldiers can then give the children toys, clothes, school supplies, and candy, while the adults receive the plant seed, flour, sugar, mosque kits, etc. One of the more memorable distributions was when we had a Soldier lead a personal hygiene class for the children. He taught them how to brush their teeth and use soap and shampoo. Every time we visited that village in the future, the children would come running out grinning ear to ear with their toothbrushes in hand.

It is important to keep an accurate inventory of humanitarian aid and the villages in which it has been distributed. After conducting an initial assessment of the size of a village, cater the HA loads to meet the number of individuals in a village. A leader should always carry HA in each vehicle; it should become part of the vehicle load plan. The unit leadership will come to learn that most villages keep the same list of priorities for HA. The mosque refurbishment kits and solar panels are always highest on the list, followed by cold weather gear and boots in the winter, wheat and corn seed during the harvest months (as well as fertilizer), school supplies for areas with teachers and facilities, and then the rice, beans, flour, hygiene kits, dolls, candy, etc. Allow the ANSF forces on the patrol to distribute the HA; this courtesy will not only give power to them, but allow the people to physically see that their government supports them.

Once the leadership has identified the most important development/reconstruction needs of the village (be it a well and hand pump, floodwall, irrigation dam, or school) write up a proposal for the S-9 and/or provincial reconstruction team (PRT). Something we were not fortunate enough to have but would have been ideal is an embedded PRT Soldier or liaison with us at all times or even once a month to assess these projects and get things in motion through their channels. Ensure not to allow the villagers to believe they are getting these projects until the contract has been

approved; otherwise, the village will quickly lose faith and interest in their government. Follow up on these contracts and provide a timetable to the village so they know when to expect the project to begin. These developmental projects will clearly display to the local populace how the government's actions coupled with the people's cooperation will benefit them.

Development of Indigenous Forces

Developing the indigenous forces is the single most important task in counterinsurgency warfare. It is their nation and the amount of time we spend here in the future depends on the Afghans' ability to act and operate independently and allow their government to become stable. Training the Afghan soldiers, regardless of ANA, ANP, or ABP, is not just the job of the embedded training team mentors. If a unit works with them, goes on missions with them and interacts with them, then it becomes their job as well. Do not neglect this duty, because it is paramount to their success. Without constant guidance and supervision at the beginning of the relationship, the Afghan unit has a much greater chance to fail, be it because of ineffectiveness or corruption. Many units lack education, military doctrine or leadership, and proper planning techniques. Treat these soldiers as part of the team by taking care of them and by remembering to teach, coach, and mentor them.

When the unit stays at a district center, combat outpost, or small firebase with an indigenous element, it is essential to include them in classes and joint meetings. Allow them to give a class to the unit's men on Afghan customs, courtesies, and culture; in turn, coalition soldiers can give them a class on how to properly conduct searches, raids, and set up traffic control points. Leaders should eat with them (if they can handle the food) and invite them to eat with coalition forces when possible. Teach them about personal hygiene, weapons maintenance, and individual soldier discipline; pair them up with squads for these types of educational classes. The trust and bonds gained through constant interaction will help keep the coalition and Afghan soldiers alive.

Afghans have a culture rich in honor; they will feel obligated to protect the unit as their duty. Train the indigenous element on varying the routes and times of travel, and ask them about enemy signs such as stacked and marked rocks because they know the culture and hidden signs much better than we do. In one district, supportive locals would place a circle of rocks in the road to mark improvised explosive devices (IEDs) for coalition and Afghan convoys; these simple acts of courage undoubtedly saved Soldiers lives. In another district insurgents used rock formations to indicate to the locals where the IEDs were; they also used these rock stacks as aiming stakes on when to initiate an attack or detonate a buried explosive. The

unit leadership must train Soldiers to recognize these tactics; they must be alert and aware of the situation at all times regardless whether they are driver, gunner, or passenger. The Afghan soldiers can train the American counterparts to identify such signs while on joint patrols; many from the indigenous element know the terrain and the way the enemy thinks better than anyone in the unit. Utilize these individuals because the insight they share is invaluable.

After these missions, build pride within their team by expressing satisfaction for any good work and conducting after action reviews (AARs) with their leadership. Discuss the value of having them on the patrol and give them things to work on before the next mission. If they did something to jeopardize the lives of anyone on the patrol, be sure to mentor the Afghan leadership in proper discipline measures so that it never happens again. Encourage them to conduct local patrols on their own so they can sharpen their skills and become proactive; these patrols are the first step in making them operate independently. It is important to understand that the host nation's forces doing some things tolerably is often better than the coalition forces doing it well.

While back at the FOB or police center, teach the Afghan counterparts about accountability. Under the leader's supervision, the Afghan leadership should conduct an inventory of all unit-issued equipment at least once a month and hold them responsible for anything missing or not collected from any soldiers who quit. Afghan officials, both soldiers and sub-governors, tend to believe government-issued equipment is their personal property. If someone is fired or quits, they will attempt to keep the weapon, vehicle, uniform, or documents provided. It is imperative that the coalition leadership keeps an eye out for these issues because the equipment can be sold to insurgents, and the vehicles and uniforms can become instruments for suicide bombers and vehicle-borne explosives.

Make contact with their higher headquarters' American counterpart so that the Afghan element can get the support they need. Help fill out supply, wood, fuel, and ammunition requests so that they can be properly equipped on a monthly basis. Never promise the Afghan counterparts anything that cannot be delivered (this goes for the locals, too!). Use the local forces to spread the word on small rewards program for weapons caches and enemy information; occasionally, villagers will feel more comfortable talking with the police chief than with the Americans. If the information he provides to the police chief turns out to be accurate, ensure that anonymous informant is paid so others will see how much money they can make by supporting their own government.

These are a few of the techniques we found success with in the last 15 months. If one of these works one week, it may not the next; if it is well

received in one village, it may not be in the next. Each village is different, and the leadership must tailor their approach based off their initial observation. Because these situations are always fluid, a unit leader must bring dynamic solutions to each individual problem. If the unit leaders and Soldiers bring the proper tactics and attitude coupled with energy and efficiency to their area of operations and do not simply go through the motions, it will be a highly rewarding and successful deployment for both the locals and the unit. The coalition forces are the ambassadors of freedom for their battlespace. Once the locals get a taste of the opportunity for a better life, they will inevitably crave the possibilities to have such. However, stay committed to the cause because success is only granted through tireless effort.

————— End of article —————

To enable the U.S. to more effectively understand the Afghan culture and apply that knowledge to how it conducts COIN operations in Afghanistan, Admiral Mike Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in 2009 initiated the AfPak Hands language and cultural immersion program in 2009 to build trust with the military and local populations in both Afghanistan and Pakistan. AfPak Hands is a group of experts specifically trained to become experts in the Afghan and Pakistani cultures to build relationships.

In Afghanistan, AfPak Hands will help International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) officials build better long-term relationships with the Afghan and Pakistan people, governments, and militaries. It is anticipated AfPak Hands will accelerate the continual transition of more responsibility to the country's government and security forces. "It is a positive change to the way we do business here," said Air Force Master Sgt. Irene Mason, an engineer and a member of the 1st AfPak Hands Cohort, "because the Afghans value personal relationships."¹

AfPak Hands personnel will deploy for 12 months before rotating back to the United States for a period of time before returning, ideally to the same area and position in Afghanistan or Pakistan. While in the United States, they will mentor other AfPak Hands personnel. They will stay involved in AfPak issues at one of four major hub locations and further develop their language and culture skills with Defense Language Institute instructors.

Endnotes

1. Sergeant First Class Matthew Chlosta, "AfPak Hands begin Immersion Training," Department of Defense American Forces Press Service News Release, Camp Julien, Afghanistan, 5 May 2010.

Section III: Taking a Village

For COIN efforts to be successful, it is important to shape the operational environment. One method is “clear-hold-build.” FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*, states that COIN efforts should begin by controlling key areas through security and influence, then spread out from the secured areas. The pattern is to first clear-hold-build one village, area, or city, then to reinforce success by expanding to other areas. This approach aims to develop a long-term, effective host nation (HN) government framework and presence that secures the people and facilitates meeting their basic needs. Success reinforces the HN government’s legitimacy. The primary tasks to accomplish during clear-hold-build are:

- Provide continuous security for the local populace.
- Eliminate insurgent presence.
- Reinforce political primacy.
- Enforce the rule of law.
- Rebuild local HN institutions.

Applying clear-hold-build in Afghanistan is complicated by the mountains which isolate remote villages and hinder travel. This geography affects contact with the outside world, security, economic growth, and Afghan governmental presence. These same mountains negatively impact U.S. and Afghan Security Force (ASF) presence while positively supporting insurgent force presence. Thus U.S. and ASF commanders and their planners are significantly challenged in their efforts to win the support of Afghans living in mountain villages, building on that support, and promoting the GIRoA to those villagers, while working to reduce and eliminate the insurgents who infest the area.

Clear-hold-build efforts by U.S. and Afghan forces in the non-mountainous areas have increased as these efforts are much easier to facilitate due to the lack of mountain-caused isolation, access to a greater number of people and villages/towns/cities, and the ability to have greater GIRoA presence. Unfortunately, this also brings into the picture warlords who do not readily support the GIRoA, who are themselves seeking to maintain and/or secure greater influence at the expense of the GIRoA or neighboring warlords, and the insurgent/criminal elements’ involvement in the massive drug trade which may include some of these same warlords.

The following article describes the process used by the Taliban to take a village and how the U.S. and ASF can counter the Taliban.

How the Taliban Take a Village

SFC Mark E. Sexton, U.S. Army

A current method used by the Taliban in Afghanistan to gain control of an area deemed of strategic interest to the Taliban leadership, which operates from safe havens in Pakistan or within Afghanistan, is to identify and target villages to subvert. The Taliban have recognized the necessity to operate with the cooperation of the local population, with their modus operandi being to gain the villagers' cooperation through indoctrination (preferred) or coercion (when necessary).

Village Nodes of Influence

For a non-Afghan or foreigner to understand how the Taliban can subvert a village, we can use a simple social structure model to identify the key nodes of influence within a typical Afghan village. A village can be divided into three areas that most affect how daily life is lived. These key nodes are political and administrative, religious, and security aspects of village life. Of the three nodes, the one that is the most visible to outsiders is that of the *malik* (tribal leader or chieftain) and village elders. The *malik* and village elders represent the political aspects of the village. A second key node of influence is the *imam* (religious leader). The *imam* represents the religious node of influence within a village. A third local node of influence is the individuals and system of security found within a village. Security is traditionally conducted by the men of each individual village. If either the Taliban or the Afghan government controls one of the parts or nodes of influence in a village, then that entity also heavily influences or controls the village and perhaps other villages in the area.

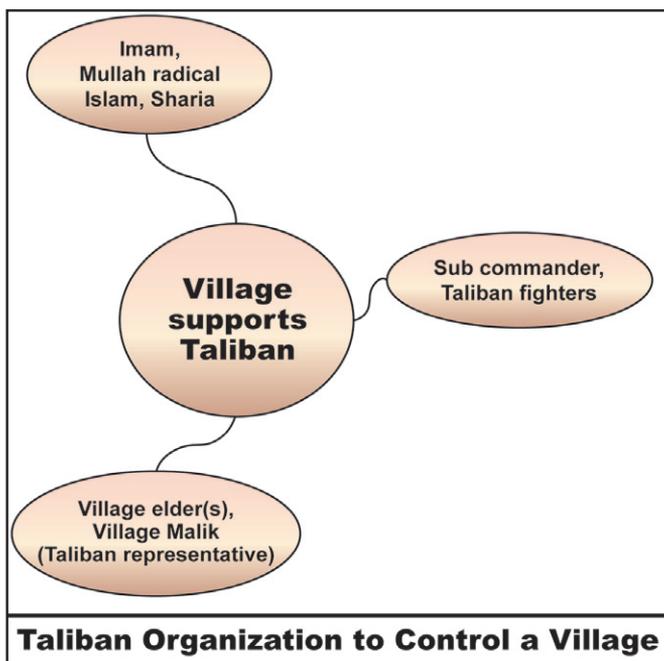


Figure 1-1.

Taliban Control of Village Nodes

The Taliban look for villages and areas within which they can operate and use as a base against U.S. and Afghan forces. Areas with little U.S. or Afghan police or army presence are prime areas the Taliban will initially seek to subvert and hold. The Taliban build networks by getting the support of a fighter, religious leader, or village elder. Whichever one or more are initially used will be exploited for tribal and familial ties. The village politics administered by the elders and represented by an appointed *malik* are the most identifiable node of influence of any particular village. The Taliban will attempt to sway those *maliks* who are not supportive by discussion and, if necessary, threats, violence, or death. In villages where the locals say there is no *malik*, it is usually described as a convenience to the village as “no one wants the position,” or sometimes “the elders cannot agree on a *malik* so it is better there is none.” In these cases it is most likely the Taliban have neutralized the desired representative of that village. When locals are pressed for a representative they will give you a name of a person who has come to represent the village. This individual will also most likely be in support of and supported by the Taliban. The Taliban will try to install a *malik* or “representative of the village” by coercion or force.

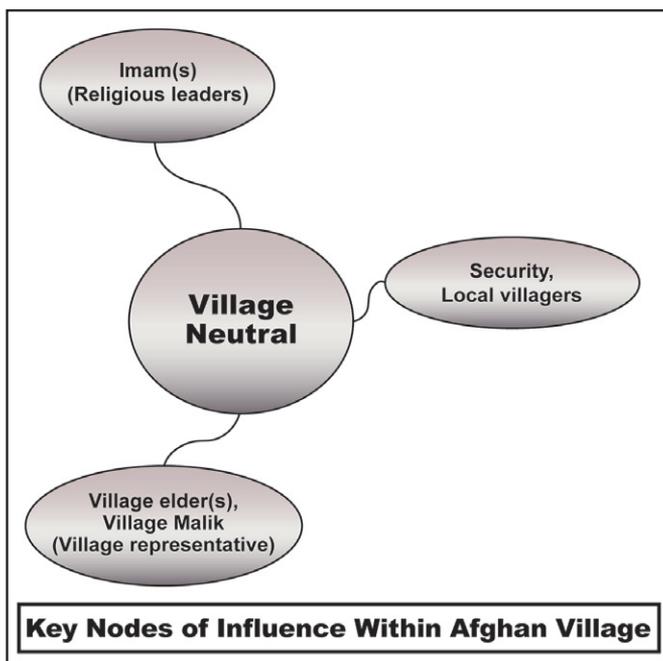


Figure 1-2.

A sub-commander will be established in the village to keep those in line who would resist the Taliban or their *malik*, who will be supported by limited funding. The sub-commander will generally have 2–5 fighters under his control. The fighters will often be armed only with small arms and shoulder-fired antitank rocket launchers (RPGs). The fighters may or may not have an improvised explosive device (IED) capability; if not, they will coordinate IED activities for the defense and, when possible, offense against U.S. and Afghan forces. These fighters may stay in the village, but preferably are not from the village. Locals can sometimes be pressed into service to fight when needed, but the Taliban tend to use fighters from different villages so that when threats or physical violence is utilized, it will not be kinsman against kinsman.

The Taliban often visit the village imam and local mosques. Villagers do not generally oppose this, as it is expected that even the Taliban must be allowed to perform and express their Islamic duties. These mosque visits afford the Taliban opportunities to gauge village sentiment and to build and establish contacts within localities. Village religious leaders also serve to educate children in villages where the Taliban have either closed or destroyed the local school. The mosque and imam serve as an education

center for the Taliban while still presenting an opportunity for village children to be “educated.” This presents a solution to the unpopular notion of schools being closed. A constant and recognized complaint from the Afghan people is the lack of opportunity because of poor education. The Taliban will supplant the local imam if needed by supplying their own to a village. A village with no imam will receive one and the Taliban will establish a mosque. This mosque will serve as a Taliban meeting place, storage facility, and indoctrination center.

Sympathetic locals are used as auxiliaries to provide food and shelter. One way to do this is for known supporters to place food and blankets outside their living quarters or in guest quarters to be used by Taliban in transit or operating within a village. This gives the resident supporter some plausible deniability. When U.S. or Afghan forces arrive, all that is found are the blanket, possibly clothing, footprints, and other signs of visitors. The Taliban have blended into the surrounding village.

Taliban Can Control With Few Fighters

The Taliban method requires relatively few of their own personnel. Its strength is in the local subversion of the most basic levels of village organization and life. It is also a decentralized approach. Guidance is given and then carried out, with commanders applying their own interpretation of how to proceed. The goal is to control the village. The only effective method at the local level, which must be used by all commanders, is to control what we have termed the nodes of influence. Form fits function—an Afghan village can only work one way to allow its members to survive in a subsistence agrarian lifestyle, and the Taliban know it well.

To control an area, the Taliban will identify villages that can be most easily subverted. The Taliban will then spread to other villages in the area one at a time, focusing their efforts on whichever node of influence seems most likely to support their effort first. Using this model, the Taliban could influence and dominate a valley or area with a population of 1,000–2,500—ten villages with 100–250 people each (100–250 compounds)—with only 20–50 active fighters and 10 fighting leaders. The actual numbers may encompass greater populations and fewer fighters.

The Taliban will have an elaborate network to support their fighters in areas they control or dominate. They will have safe houses, medical clinics, supply sites, weapons caches, transportation agents, and early warning networks (the British Army calls them “dickers”) to observe and report. The U.S. and Afghan forces, heavily laden with excessive body armor and equipment, are reluctant to leave their vehicles. They are blown up on the same roads and paths they entered the area on. The Taliban will use feints and lures to draw our forces away from caches and leaders in an attempt

to buy them time to relocate, or into a lethal ambush. After the attack the Taliban will disperse and blend into the village. The village will frequently sustain civilian casualties and propaganda will be spread of U.S. and Afghan soldiers using excessive force.

U.S. and Afghan forces say one thing but our actions are different. Locals are reluctant to help because to be seen talking with the Americans and Afghan security forces will result in a visit from a Taliban member to determine what they talked about and to whom. The local villagers know the government has no effective plan that can counter the Taliban in their village, and will typically only give information on Taliban or criminal elements to settle a blood feud. The Pashtu people are patient to obtain justice and will use what they have to pay back “blood for blood,” even against the Taliban.

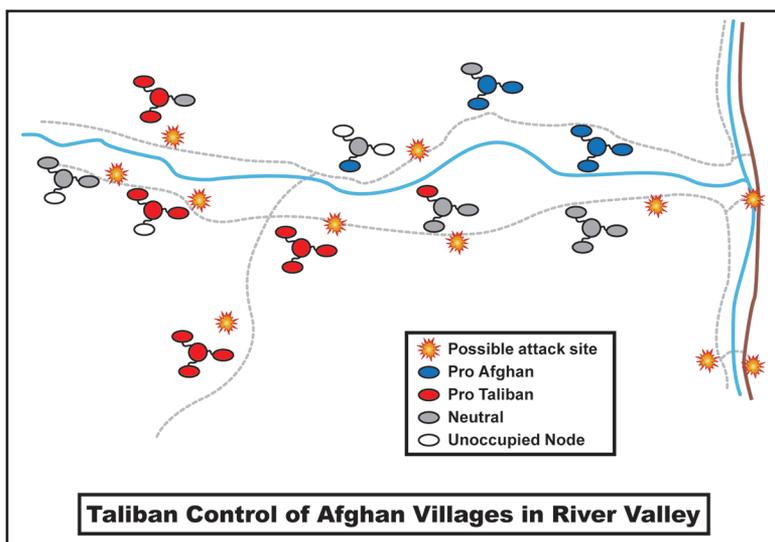


Figure 1-3.

Countering the Taliban in the Village

Countering Taliban subversion of the populace is not done effectively with just more troops located at outposts. The troops must coordinate their activities with the local population and establish security through and within the village. When U.S. and Afghan forces do this, the fight will typically take on a particularly violent aspect, and involve the population as the Taliban attempt to maintain or reassert control.

The U.S. and Afghan forces and government will need to identify individuals to employ lethal and non-lethal targeting. This requires in-depth knowledge of tribal structure, alliances, and feuds. Viable alternatives or choices need to be available to village leaders and villagers. Just placing U.S. and Afghan soldiers at an outpost, conducting token presence patrols, occasionally bantering with locals, and organizing a *shura* once a month are not going to work.

Afghan identity is not primarily national (i.e., belonging within a geographic boundary with a centralized national government). Afghan identity is tribal in nature. Americans view identity as a national government; Afghans in the villages do not. The tribe is most important. The country “Afghanistan” running things from Kabul does not mean very much to the Afghan people in the villages under duress from the Taliban.

U.S. and Afghan forces must be able to infiltrate and shape the village nodes of influence and then target individuals. Our military embraces a centralized, top-driven approach that prevents our military and U.S.-trained Afghan counterparts from doing so. Current U.S. procedures and tactics attempt to identify the Taliban without regard to their influence or social role at the village level. Instead, we attempt to link individuals to attacks and incomplete network structures through often questionable intelligence. The individuals in nodes of influence must be identified as neutral, pro, or anti-Afghan government and then dealt with. To target any other way is haphazard at best and does not gain us the initiative.

U.S. and Afghan forces must also devise and utilize tactics to fight outside and inside the village. This requires true light infantry and real COIN tactics employed by troops on the ground, not read from a “new” COIN manual by leadership in a support base. The tactics must entail lightly equipped and fast-moving COIN forces that go into villages and know-how to properly interact with locals and identify Taliban insurgents. They must have the ability to take their time and stay in areas they have identified at the local level as worth trying to take back. Being moved from place to place and using armored vehicles while scarcely engaging local leadership will not work. Targeting identified high-value targets will only result in the “whack-a-mole” syndrome. This practice is demoralizing for U.S. and Afghan troops, the American public, and the Afghans who just want to live in peace.

A light infantry force conducting specialized reconnaissance in villages, and using proven tactics like trained visual trackers to follow insurgents into and out of villages, proper ambush techniques on foot outside the village, and knowledge of the local village situation, is the key to effective COIN operations. Infantry tactics should also include vertical envelopment of Taliban fighters by helicopter and parachute to cut off avenues of escape. Troop units should have a secure local patrol base from

which to operate, send foot patrol into villages at night, and talk with and document compounds and inhabitants for later analysis. Mega bases or forward operating bases are only for support; units and tactics should be decentralized.

————— End of article —————

Section IV: Conclusion

Afghanistan's environment defines the unique culture of the Afghan people. A study of Afghanistan's history, and the almost endless warfare resulting from external and internal causes, shows the culture has remained basically intact for centuries. Afghan culture will always affect U.S. and Afghan operations execution and planning. Therefore, it must always be taken into consideration.

Whether you are working lethal or non-lethal COIN operations, remember the importance of knowing, understanding, and applying the cultural influences of the population in your area of operations (AO). Also, it is important to keep in mind that the culture in one village may not be the same as the culture in the nearest village, which could be on the other side of the mountain. Failure to consider Afghan culture, especially in your AO, may lead to greater loss of life and failure to achieve mission goals.

Chapter 2

Afghan Culture and Mass Casualty Operations

The initial call of a major avalanche in Parwan Province was received at 0328 hours on 9 February 2010 by the Task Force Medical (TF MED)–East Tactical Operations Center, Bagram Airfield. At that time, approximately 150 Afghans were trapped at a high mountain pass blocking a major route between Kabul and northern Afghanistan. Helicopter evacuation was the only means of removing victims from the avalanche site. By 1250 hours, 60 to 70 casualties were inbound to Bagram Airfield.

While hospitals and medical personnel are expected to respond to such mass casualty events, this disaster involved primarily a U.S. military hospital, staffed with U.S. medical personnel, and Afghan casualties. What were the cultural implications?

Fortunately a group of Afghan medical professionals with varying backgrounds, from internal medicine to an orthopedic surgeon, were participating in a trauma mentorship program at the hospital. The Afghan providers played a vital role in the medical care given to their own people. It was evident the local-national patients were more comfortable being treated by their fellow countrymen. In addition to assisting with medical treatment of the injured, these Afghan medical personnel worked as interpreters and liaisons to the patients in a cultural capacity.

“For some of the patients coming from remote areas of Afghanistan, this may be their first and only interaction with coalition forces,” TF-MED Medical Readiness Officer CPT James McDaniel said. “The importance lies in the fact that we are professional and sensitive to their cultural needs. The assistance we receive from the Afghans helps to convey the respect and professionalism these people need and deserve.”

—Staff Sergeant Richard Williams,
455th Air Expeditionary Wing Public Affairs Office
Medical Teams Render Assistance after Afghanistan Avalanches,
10 February 2010, Air Force News Service

Catastrophic events caused by environmental conditions can occur anytime and anywhere, and they are never predictable. Unfortunately they can and often do produce mass casualties. Afghanistan has two such environmental conditions—earthquakes and avalanches—the size and timing of which can significantly affect counterinsurgency (COIN) operations. U.S. forces could become victims, but will almost always be relief providers. In either case, U.S. forces must be sensitive to the culture of the Afghan victims and their families.

Section I: Afghan Mass Casualty Operations

When employing military forces to provide assistance during mass casualty operations involving the Afghans, U.S. personnel must consider these key points:

- Afghanistan, in urban areas, has hospitals and medical personnel. However, these areas lack the numbers of hospitals and medical personnel as well as medical supplies and equipment to provide what Westerners would consider adequate and timely treatment.
- Victims in the rural and mountainous areas, in all likelihood, are without other than rudimentary medical care.
- Afghanistan lacks the organizational capabilities to respond to mass casualty events.
- U.S. military medical personnel who do not routinely come into contact with Afghans in the performance of their medical duties must have knowledge and understanding of the Afghan culture, as well as the language.
- Afghan victims and family members who escort them for medical care may be experiencing their first contact with U.S. military personnel, their first helicopter flight, their first contact with other than family or clan members, their first Western food, and their first experience with doctors and nurses.
- U.S. military medical personnel must consider Afghan cultural needs. For example, can the Afghans eat the food provided based on their religious beliefs? Do provisions need to be made in the event male doctors cannot treat female patients or male patients cannot be treated by female nurses? In some instances injured female Afghans may not even be allowed in the same area with men who are not family members.
- Afghan medical personnel, if available, need to be incorporated into mass casualty operations that involve Afghans. Their involvement shows them how to prepare for and respond to mass casualty emergencies. They can serve as interpreters and liaisons between coalition medical personnel and Afghan casualties. Additionally, Afghans may be more comfortable being treated by their fellow countrymen if they feel they are medically competent.

- U.S. military personnel may be working with individuals from nongovernmental organizations or individuals who may or may not have a high opinion of the military. In all likelihood, these individuals are there to assist in caring for the casualties. Casualty care is the reason for everyone being there. Put the casualty first.
- A single command authority does not exist in a humanitarian mass casualty event. Because one aspect of U.S. forces in Afghanistan is to enhance the creditability of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA), seek every opportunity to show the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) are working to provide timely and positive responses.
- Legal limitations apply in humanitarian mass casualty response operations. The staff judge advocate is trained and resourced to identify the legal, fiscal, and political limitations. Some humanitarian mass casualty response may have to be almost instantaneous. Therefore, it is advisable to have this staffed and rehearsed in the event such a response is required.

Section II: Conclusion

Being prepared for mass casualty events in the Afghan diverse cultural environment is an absolute must as your unit could go from conducting or preparing to conduct COIN operations to humanitarian mass casualty operations in a very short period of time. Afghans and U.S. personnel who do not normally come into contact with each other are not prepared for the cultural differences they will experience. It is important that all U.S. military personnel prepare themselves in the event they become involved in such operations. Preplanning and rehearsal exercises are thus very important.

Chapter 3

Afghan Cultural Awareness

Awareness of the culture(s) of the Afghans in the area of operations is vitally important to commanders as they develop and implement plans to conduct both lethal and non-lethal operations in the counterinsurgency (COIN) environment of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). Commanders need to know and understand the diverse Afghan culture of the local population in order to win the support of that local population.

To achieve cultural awareness, commanders have several tools available. These include patrolling, key leader engagements (KLEs), female engagement teams (FETs), human terrain teams (HTTs), and other interactions with the local population. The following means of achieving cultural awareness are the focus of this chapter:

- Assessments
- KLEs
- FETs
- HTTs
- Observations.

Section I: Assessments

Commanders, when conducting preoperational assessments of their projected operational environment (OE) in Afghanistan, must look at the variables of the human population and the possible short- and long-term effects of the anticipated operations on the population who live in the projected operational area. The OE, as defined by Joint Publication 1-02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, is “a composite of the conditions, circumstances, and influences that affect the employment of military forces and bear on the decisions of the unit commander.”

U.S. Army Field Manual (FM) 3-0, *Operations*, describes OE in terms of the interrelated operational variables: political, military, economic, social, information, infrastructure, physical environment, and time (PMESII-PT). At the tactical level, per FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*, commanders have to consider mission, enemy, terrain and weather, troops and support available,

time available and civil considerations (METT-TC). This includes areas, structures, capabilities, organizations, people, and events (ASCOPE).

Aspects of the population's influence and cultural imprint are contained within each of these variables. Although the human element is more prevalent in civil considerations, it can affect the others as well. Commanders must assess their operational and tactical environments to gain situational awareness of human variables and their impact on current and future military operations. An example of this is what element and percentage of the local population support the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) or the Taliban forces occupying the area, and what are the agendas of those who neither support the GIROA nor the Taliban? Are their choices of allegiance culturally driven? How will that information impact the operation? What concurrent actions must be taken to retain the support and gain additional support?

Dr. David Kilcullen, a former Australian army officer and COIN subject matter expert, in several of his 28 articles, addresses the importance of commanders gaining and assessing knowledge of the people who live within their area of operations. Below is an extract from Dr. Kilcullen's articles.

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Twenty-Eight Articles (Extract) Fundamentals of Company-level Counterinsurgency

Dr. David Kilcullen, Lieutenant Colonel, Australian Army

Reprinted with permission from *Small Wars Journal*. This article was originally published in the 1 March 2006 issue of *Small Wars Journal*.

1. **Know your turf.** Know the people, the topography, economy, history, religion, and culture. Know every village, road, field, population group, tribal leader, and ancient grievance. Your task is to become the world expert on your district. If you don't know precisely where you will be operating, then study the general area. Read the map like a book; study it every night before sleep, and re-draw it from memory every morning until you understand its patterns intuitively. Develop a mental model of your area, a framework in which to fit every new piece of knowledge you acquire. Study handover notes from predecessors; better still, get in touch with the unit in theater and pick their brains. In an ideal world, intelligence officers and area experts would brief you. This rarely happens, and even if it does, there is no substitute for personal mastery. Understand the broader area of influence. This can be a wide area, particularly when insurgents draw on global grievances. Share aspects of the operational area among platoon leaders

and noncommissioned officers. Have each individual develop a personal specialization and brief the others. Neglect this knowledge, and it will kill you.

2. Diagnose the problem. Once you know your area and its people, you can begin to diagnose the problem. Who are the insurgents? What drives them? What makes local leaders tick? Counterinsurgency is fundamentally a competition between many groups, each seeking to mobilize the population in support of their agenda. Counterinsurgency is always more than two-sided. So you must understand what motivates the people and how to mobilize them. You need to know why and how the insurgents are getting followers. This means you need to know your real enemy, not a cardboard cut-out. The enemy is adaptive, resourceful, and probably grew up in the region where you will operate. The locals have known him since he was a boy. How long have they known you? Your worst opponent is not the psychopathic terrorist of Hollywood, it is the charismatic follow-me warrior who would make your best platoon leader. His followers are not misled or naïve. Much of his success is due to bad government policies or security forces that alienate the population. Work this problem collectively with your platoon and squad leaders. Discuss ideas, explore the problem, understand what you are facing, and seek a consensus. If this sounds unmilitary, get over it. Once you are in theater, situations will arise too quickly for orders, or even the commander's intent. Corporals and privates will have to make snap judgments with strategic impact. The only way to help them is to give them a shared understanding, then trust them to think for themselves on the day.

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11. Avoid knee jerk responses to first impressions. Don't act rashly, get the facts first. The violence you see may be part of the insurgent strategy, it may be various interest groups fighting it out, or it may be people settling personal vendettas. Or, it may just be daily life; normality in Kandahar is not the same as in Kansas. So you need time to learn what normality looks like. The insurgent commander also wants to goad you into lashing out at the population or making a mistake. Unless you happen to be on the spot when an incident occurs, you will have only second-hand reports and may misunderstand the local context or interpretation. This fragmentation and disaggregation of the battlefield, particularly in urban areas, mean that first impressions are often highly misleading. Of course, you cannot avoid making judgments. But if possible, check them with an older hand or a trusted local. If you can, keep one or two officers from your predecessor unit for the first part of the tour. Try to avoid a rush to judgment.

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20. **Take stock regularly.** You probably already know that a “body count” tells you little, because you usually cannot know how many insurgents there were to start with, how many moved into the area, transferred from supporter to combatant status, or how many new fighters the conflict has created. But you still need to develop metrics early in the tour and refine them as the operation progresses. They should cover a range of social, informational, military, and economic issues. Use metrics intelligently to form an overall impression of progress, not in a mechanistic “traffic light” fashion. Typical metrics include: percentage of engagements initiated by our forces versus those initiated by insurgents; longevity of friendly local leaders in positions of authority; number and quality of tip-offs on insurgent activity that originate spontaneously from the population; and economic activity at markets and shops. These mean virtually nothing as a snapshot—trends over time are the true indicators of progress in your sector.

21. **Exploit a single narrative.** Since counterinsurgency is a competition to mobilize popular support, it pays to know how people are mobilized. In most societies there are opinion-makers: local leaders, pillars of the community, religious figures, media personalities, and others who set trends and influence public perceptions. This influence, including the pernicious influence of the insurgents, often takes the form of a single narrative, a simple, unifying, easily-expressed story or explanation that organizes people’s experience and provides a framework for understanding events. Nationalist and ethnic historical myths, or sectarian creeds, provide such a narrative. The Iraqi insurgents have one, as do al-Qaida, and the Taliban. To undercut their influence you must exploit an alternative narrative. Or better yet, tap into an existing narrative that excludes the insurgents. This narrative is often worked out for you by higher headquarters, but only you have the detailed knowledge to tailor the narrative to local conditions and generate leverage from it. For example, you might use a nationalist narrative to marginalize foreign fighters in your area, or a narrative of national redemption to undermine former regime elements that have been terrorizing the population. At the company level, you do this in baby steps, by getting to know local opinion-makers, winning their trust, learning what motivates them and building on this to find a single narrative that emphasizes the inevitability and rightness of your ultimate success. This is art, not science.

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Section II: Key Leader Engagements

Key leader engagement (KLE) is the primary means of conducting assessments of the leaders of the tribe and community. It is also the means of meeting with individual families since the family elder is usually the key leader. These KLEs are vital to fostering an environment of mutual respect and trust with the local population, learning and understanding the challenges they face, acquiring knowledge of their strengths and weaknesses, and identifying possible ways you and they can benefit from each other. The following guidelines will assist when conducting KLEs:

- Review and become familiar with the background of the area of operations.
- Determine the meeting time, location, and targeted leaders.
- Conduct route and site reconnaissance.
- Establish and review your team's goals prior to the engagement (such as setting objectives in an agenda). Translate the agenda into the local language.
- Be open-minded without making assumptions.
- Rehearse the agenda with your interpreters and ensure they understand the overall focus for the KLE.
- Encourage and incorporate interagency partner participation when feasible.
- Stay on task during the KLE, avoid going down "rabbit trails."
- Ask specific questions.
- Avoid committing to actions and projects too early; wait until you are absolutely sure they are necessary, productive, and will be approved and funded.
- Remember, the initial meeting will focus on getting to know each other, with a little time for business. Although follow-on meetings generally involve more business, the opportunity to refine personal relationships through repeated visits is critical and should be viewed as a success.

- Plan your meeting. If your meeting objective will require an hour, keep in mind the translator has to translate your messages to the recipients and translate their responses back to you. If you planned an hour for the meeting, you may be lucky to address 25 percent of your meeting objective.
- Conduct business and decision-making with the senior male.
- Converse with men in mixed-gender meetings.
- Do NOT shake hands with engagement attendees of the opposite gender.
- Once a relationship is established, expect same-gender hugs or even three kisses.
- In meetings:
 - Arrive on time but expect to wait.
 - Greet everyone in the room; seniors (tribal elder) first.
 - Rise if senior (tribal elder) enters or exits the room.
 - Shake hands with same gender only.
 - * May be soft and limp.
 - * Conveys formality or humbleness, not insincerity or indifference.
 - Do not give group farewell wave; inappropriate.
 - Accept or give (if hosting) tea and finger food.
- If tea is not offered, especially in rural areas, it could be a danger signal, but it could also mean the individual is reluctant to offer tea or that he has personal problems preventing his ability to provide hospitality.
 - Expect “small talk,” smiles, stares, and interruptions.
 - Expect deference or silence when a topic is difficult or confrontational.
 - Realize Afghan saying: “First meeting, a stranger; second meeting, a brother.”

- Home visitation:
 - Decline gracefully (if you must) to allow host to save face.
 - Do not expect a quick dinner or mixed-gender dining.
 - Remove shoes (conveys both respect and comfort) even if told it is not necessary.
 - Take gift if it is your first visit (such as something for host's children or a U.S. souvenir/memento).
 - Do not pull out your own food (even to share) or offer to pay.
- Food and eating:
 - Praise the cook often and early.
 - Food is served and often eaten from common plates.
 - The host will force second and third helpings (refuse politely three times).
 - Do not eat with your left hand—it is considered to be unclean.
 - Forks and spoons are provided if available (otherwise use your right hand; you can use both hands to tear your bread or drink from your cup or bowl).
- Verbal communication:
 - Loudness conveys anger or domination.
 - Do not lose your temper or get angry.
 - Remember to pause for translation.
 - Do not try to cover an entire agenda in one meeting.
 - Do not expect immediate answers or decisions.
 - Watch passive silence; could mean contemplation or conflict avoidance.
 - Often non-committal; answers are often vague.

- Non-verbal communication:
 - Eye contact is averted with superiors and the opposite sex.
 - Physical gestures:
 - * The right hand is clean and the left hand is unclean.
 - * Placing the palm of your right hand on your heart is a sign of respect and sincerity or appreciation.
 - * Placing the palm of your right hand on your Afghan counterpart's heart is a sign of friendship and mutual respect after a relationship is established.
 - Touching (same gender only unless there is a wide age difference).
 - * Touching and kissing on top of the head conveys blessing.
 - * Touching and kissing the hands conveys supplication.
 - * Holding hands and hugging conveys friendship and kinship.
 - * Do not show your emotions—it is a sign of weakness.
- Public protocol:
 - For senior leaders, maintain rank-appropriate behavior (Afghan elders do not interact with children or teens).
 - Do not show a picture of your wife when developing personal relationships. Do show a picture of your children (including girls under the age of 12) to express/gain trust.
 - Placing your right hand over your heart is traditional when meeting elders, and is a sign of respect.
 - Taboos include the left-hand or sole of the foot.
 - Follow the lead of the Afghan host regarding wearing shoes in the Afghan's home. As a guest, he may tell you to leave your shoes on even though he has removed his.
 - Avoid showing open affection or having contact with the opposite sex.

- Conservative dress: no shorts, low-rise/low-cut or skin-tight clothing.
- No restriction of foreign wear of the native dress.
- Western women are not expected to wear the *hijab* (head cover for woman); but it is appreciated.
- Motorized vehicle transportation is too fast, too furious, and has no yield (car, truck, and bus horns are constantly in use in cities).
- Waiting in line is the same as above (no restraint or courtesy); push and shove until at the front.
- The left hand is unclean; used for personal hygiene.
- Personal hygiene: all body fluids and discharges unclean (heavy tissue paper use).
- Afghan males squat to urinate to keep splashes away from their clothes as they do not want their clothes soiled when they pray. Western males who stand to urinate are unclean.
- Breaking wind and blowing your nose in front of Afghans are considered rude and immoral.
- Never spit or urinate in the direction of Mecca (west of Afghanistan).
- Religious customs:
 - Working mosques (*Masjid*) are closed to non-Muslims unless invited or escorted.
 - Always remove shoes (socks or bare feet are acceptable) if in a mosque.
 - Head is covered at all times while inside (men and women).
 - Men and women pray in separate spaces.
 - When a Muslim is praying, he prays toward Mecca; walk behind him. If you have to walk in front of him during prayer time, use good judgment and common sense.

- It is polite to refer to “Prophet Mohammad.” Afghans have a great deal of respect for their Prophet. Whenever you say his name, Afghans request that you add “Peace be upon him” in your speech.
- Exceptions:
 - Many allowances are made because you are a Westerner/foreigner.
 - Accommodation often leads to greater hospitality and cooperation.
 - Be authentic, sincere, respectful, and informed (and maybe a little humble).
 - A female servicemember or civilian should be present when meeting with Afghan females.
- Hospitality and sanctuary:
 - Guests must be honored and treated with absolute respect and selflessness.
 - Most Afghans (especially in rural areas) have little to offer except tea and hospitality.
 - Poorer families/villages may undergo financial strain to provide for guests.
 - Extends to protection of prisoners and fugitives. This is *pashtunwali*, the Pashtun tribal code of conduct which will be covered in Chapter 4. This causes concern for servicemembers working with local Afghans when reports are released of U.S. and International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) forces abusing Afghan prisoners and other Afghans. Most Afghans become angry when hearing of the alleged abuse.

Most KLEs will occur with village elders and/or local government leaders. These are mostly male. There are growing numbers of females working in the various levels of government and in commercial enterprises. If a local woman engages a Western male in conversation, maintain a friendly but serious demeanor.

From KLEs, it is often possible to build relationships. The familiar saying “It’s all about relationships” applies to commanders achieving success in

Afghanistan. Relationships result from a need, a unique experience, or a common bond. Commanders of U.S., GIRoA, and coalition forces have a common goal: defeat of the Taliban while establishing the creditability of the GIRoA. Therefore, one of the first tasks is building relationships. This is done through meetings with leaders of the provincial and local governments, villages, tribes and clans, commerce, education, and religion—key leader engagements.

Dr. Kilcullen addresses, in his *Twenty-Eight Articles Fundamentals of Company-level Counterinsurgency*, the importance of developing relationships among the local key leaders within the area of operations.

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Dr. David Kilcullen, Lieutenant Colonel, Australian Army

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13. **Build trusted networks.** Once you have settled into your sector, your next task is to build trusted networks. This is the true meaning of the phrase hearts and minds, which comprises two separate components. Hearts means persuading people their best interests are served by your success. Minds means convincing them that you can protect them and that resisting you is pointless. Note that neither concept has to do with whether people like you. Calculated self-interest, not emotion, is what counts. Over time, if you successfully build networks of trust, these will grow like roots into the population displacing the enemy's networks, bringing him out into the open to fight you, and seizing the initiative. These networks include local allies, community leaders, local security forces, NGOs and other friendly or neutral non-state actors in your area, and the media. Conduct village and neighborhood surveys to identify needs in the community, and then follow through to meet them, build common interests, and mobilize popular support. This is your true main effort: everything else is secondary. Actions that help build trusted networks serve your cause. Actions, even killing high-profile targets that undermine trust or disrupt your networks help the enemy.

14. **Start easy.** If you were trained in maneuver warfare you know about surfaces and gaps. This applies to counterinsurgency as much as any other form of maneuver. Don't try to crack the hardest nut first. Don't go straight

for the main insurgent stronghold, try to provoke a decisive showdown, or focus efforts on villages that support the insurgents. Instead, start from secure areas and work gradually outwards. Do this by extending your influence through the locals' own networks. Go with, not against, the grain of local society. First win the confidence of a few villages, and then see who they trade with, intermarry, or do business with. Now win these people over. Soon enough the showdown with the insurgents will come. But now you have local allies, a mobilized population, and a trusted network at your back. Do it the other way around and no one will mourn your failure.

15. **Seek early victories.** In this early phase, your aim is to stamp your dominance in your sector. Do this by seeking an early victory. This will probably not translate into a combat victory over the enemy. Looking for such a victory can be overly aggressive and create collateral damage, especially since you really do not yet understand your sector. Also, such a combat victory depends on the enemy being stupid enough to present you with a clear-cut target, a rare windfall in counterinsurgency. Instead, you may achieve a victory by resolving long-standing issues your predecessors have failed to address, or co-opting a key local leader who has resisted cooperation with our forces. Like any other form of armed propaganda, achieving even a small victory early in the tour sets the tone for what comes later, and helps seize the initiative, which you have probably lost due to the inevitable hiatus entailed by the handover-takeover with your predecessor.

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Engaging Afghan: KLE Keys to Success

Capt. Don Moss, U.S. Air Force

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A pillar of Coalition Force/United States Government (CF/USG) efforts in Afghanistan is to separate the people of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan from insurgent groups such as the Taliban, Haggani Network, and Hezbe-Islami Gulbuddin, and unite the same populace with their fledgling government. In order to do this, the men and women undertaking this effort have access to the latest in information, training, and high-tech equipment. But possibly the most important asset any Soldier, Airman, Marine, Sailor, or civilian can possess is the ability to engage. Not the enemy on the field of battle, but the Afghan civilians he or she encounters on a daily basis.

It is through mastering the art of the key leader engagement (KLE) that strong relationships, which are the cornerstone to victory in COIN operations, can be truly fostered. Believe it or not, your time in Afghanistan is short and the quicker you can establish a strong relationship with the populace of your area the greater the results you'll see in a shorter period of time. Your actions during the longest of meetings or the shortest of convoy stops will leave an impression that will last much longer and spread much farther than you can imagine and may be the key to success or failure for you or other units during future encounters.

What is a KLE?

While normally reserved for meetings with senior officials, for the purposes of this perspective, a KLE is any interaction with an Afghan national. It may be face-to-face (F2F), a phone call, an email, or just passing by on a convoy. All of these interactions shape the way the Afghan people view not only you and your unit, but CF/USG in general. If you say to yourself “well it was only one person during that one time” then you're wrong. Because the tribal structure of Afghanistan and the reach of word of mouth throughout the country, what you do, say, and suggest, even in the shortest of meetings, will reach more Afghans than you can imagine.

Note: While the majority of the tips below pertain to F2F encounters, as many as possible should be considered during any type of interaction you may have. With that said, below are suggestions of who to engage and how to engage them when conducting any KLE.

Who to Talk to?

Established religious/governmental/ANSF and tribal leaders. The order in which you engage these individuals is important as well. (Example: My unit made a concerted effort when we first arrived in Paktya to engage the provincial religious leaders—who were overlooked by the previous PRT—and it has paid huge dividends. The religious figures, because of their place in the Paktya community, have facilitated security discussions with people that we never would have met or even known to have existed. This was a direct result of constant and continuous engagements with religious leaders.)

Suggestion. Take the time very early on (preferably through a predeployment turnover with your predecessor) to identify the true power players in your province and engage them early and often. If the senior *Mulawi* (higher than a *Mullah*) of the province is the individual that the majority of the populace heeds and he is the last one you engage, you're already fighting an uphill battle because of the loss of face he has suffered.

The more engagements you have with different Afghans the more you'll be able to pin down who truly has the pulse of the populace and should be engaged more often.

GIRoA/provincial officials. These figures will be evident and some of the first you meet upon your arrival. They represent the GIRoA, so in order to establish any legitimacy for GIRoA (one of our end goals) it is very important for the populace to see CF/USG working closely with elected/appointed Afghan leaders.

Note: Working with leaders may become a dilemma when dealing with those who are corrupt. The best course of action is to report incidents of corruption to the appropriate Afghan authorities and make your reservations known. However, until that official is removed by the GIRoA you still have to deal with him. If you refuse to deal with a corrupt official you are subverting GIRoA's authority and decision-making. It's not an easy situation but something that must be dealt with from time to time.

Tribal/village elders (or “white beards” as Afghans call them).

Sometimes easier said than done. We have had multiple engagements where villagers have said we're talking to the wrong elder/tribesman. That is usually because those parties were the first to come and identify themselves when a convoy stopped in their village. If someone is willing to immediately help you and seems to have knowledge when you're out on patrol you attach authority to that person because he made your job easier. Anyone dealing with tribes must be very careful that they not give the wrong people too much power. You'll get an individual's perspective on issues/solutions rather than the tribe's perspective. Try to deal primarily with the elders/leaders when discussing issues that will affect the tribe/village as a whole.

Note: The key is identifying the true village and tribal leaders in the area. This can be done through talking with multiple villagers to see if they all identify the same leaders, or by actually attending a village/tribal *shura*. The *shura* members will know and identify the influencers.

Talking to the right people is critical. You can talk to any villager all day long, but he may not have the ability to sway the village or tribe, and help in the overall mission. It is the village/tribal leaders who will win you the most support.

Should you take the time to talk to as many Afghans as possible? Certainly; but make sure you focus your engagements where appropriate depending on the time you have.

Keys to the KLE

Show respect. This is a constant theme that will be noted throughout this paper. Most Afghans feel that, throughout history, they have been disrespected and looked down upon. Showing respect, when dealing with anyone from the provincial governor to a local villager, is essential. If anyone you deal with feels they are being disrespected, they will be less willing to help you and more willing to harm you or allow you to be harmed. Respect doesn't mean giving everything or even anything requested during a KLE. It means treating the other party with a good "do unto others" attitude during the scheduling, execution, and aftermath of a KLE.

Note: Some Afghans, especially those from rural areas, rarely have the opportunity to engage CF/USG. The amount of respect you show them has an equal if not greater effect on perceptions of the populace.

Set the tone of respect early. If meeting on a CF/USG installation, the Afghans will have to run the gauntlet of security measures just to enter the base or compound. Once a meeting time has been established, ensure the entry control point is aware of their arrival and the proper respect, security permitting, is exhibited by the installation guards. These are individuals who represent hundreds, if not thousands, of people in some cases. They should not be yelled at or disrespected by a disgruntled E-4 manning the gate.

A good practice is to meet your party at the gate or send a representative. You want to avoid leaving the Afghans waiting at the gate for an inordinate amount of time. Think of it as welcoming someone to your home. You do not want them standing on the doorstep for a half-hour waiting for you to answer the doorbell.

It's not all business. Engaging leaders with early discussion on daily topics (health, family, recent travels, etc.) prior to getting down to business is very important in showing respect and that you care about them as individuals versus a means to an end. From time to time, invite leaders and villagers to your base just to have lunch and talk about life in general. It is not a waste of time. Personal engagements such as this help cement a deep relationship with these figures that continues to pay off in information exchange and rallying support for CF/GIRoA efforts.

Very small things make very big differences when dealing with Afghans. Placing your hand over your heart after shaking hands shows respect. Learning basic phrases (hello, how are you, nice to meet you, thank you) in the language of the area (Pashto or Dari) will instantly break away layers of ice as well as earn you respect for taking the effort to learn their language (this cannot be overstated).

Taking The Time To Learn 3–4 Phrases Will Make A World Of Difference

Take every opportunity to engage. Our unit has had several cases where elders have shown up at the gate unannounced. If there is an opportunity we've brought them onto the FOB [forward operating base], served them chai, and discussed issues as if they had arranged a meeting. In the Afghan culture, hospitality (*melmastia*) is one of the pillars of *Pashtunwali* (it is strongly urged that anyone who will be conducting missions/business in Pashtun areas know *Pashtunwali*. It's a cornerstone of their culture).

You should try to be hospitable at any time in any place. If you're unable to entertain a party of Afghans that drops in unexpectedly, still make the time to go out to the gate to at least talk to them face-to-face and get initial ideas on their issues as well as point of contact information for a follow-on call. Afghans realize that when they show up unannounced there is the possibility they won't get the time they'd like, but make the time if at all possible. If nothing else, they will certainly appreciate the respect shown by meeting them at the gate versus having the entry control point getting their number and asking them to leave.

Note: Impromptu KLEs are common.

Sometimes it takes hours to get from place to place in a convoy. During those trips the convoy may stop once or twice. Depending on where you stop, you will almost immediately be surrounded by local villagers. Security permitting, you should use this opportunity to engage locals. All convoys travel with a host nation linguist or two. Request assistance from one and start talking. Many villages are secluded and cut off from most national news. Use the time to talk to them about national events, tribes and villages in the area, and local issues.

You can both give and receive a lot of information in a short period of time. It is always wise to bring a healthy supply of ISAF newspapers which discuss national events in English, Dari, and Pashto. Usually the only thing villagers will see of CF in some places is the tail of HMMWVs [high mobility multipurpose wheeled vehicles] or MRAPs [mine resistant ambush protected vehicles] as they pass by. Jump out (security permitting), smile and engage whoever is willing. You can make a huge difference in a very little period of time and leave a lasting impression.

Be patient. The majority of Pashtuns in RC-East rarely get the opportunity to speak with CF/USG leaders. When they do they may have a litany of issues to discuss. Be prepared for a long meeting and allow several members of a tribe, village, or group to talk at length. At times there may be one individual who mainly speaks for the group. At other times it may

be several members of the delegation who take turns bringing up specific problems. This sometimes translates into a lot of listening and very little talking by the CF/USG member.

Keep your composure. Some issues will generate heated discussion. For instance, we had Gerda Serai District villagers come to the PRT [provisional reconstruction team] to address recent CF operations which had detained members of their village suspected of emplacing IEDs. The leaders of this group were very emotional in their opposition to operations conducted without their knowledge as well as how long the suspects had been detained. One elder was especially vocal and visibly angry.

Be prepared to weather these outbursts. While some are heartfelt, others are mainly displays for the rest of the group. If a village asks their leaders to address CF/USG about a “hot” topic, reports will come back to the village on how forcefully the leaders tried to get their point across. Leaders, in private, usually do not get as aggressive in their discussions as they do in front of their peers/followers. This is the way of public speaking in most countries, not just Afghanistan. The face a leader portrays when attempting to address an important topic is a factor in how his group/village/tribe perceives him.

If the leader is passive when addressing or negotiating a critical issue for a village, he will be perceived as weak which is a poor trait to be attached to a Pashtun leader. Withstand the barrage, keep your composure, and speak professionally and intelligently to the issues addressed. This will both serve to mitigate any escalation in tensions, which may derail the conversation entirely, as well as earn you respect for keeping your cool.

Note: In most cases the discussion will continue in a more subdued manner after the issue is initially addressed. However the speaker becomes belligerent and overly volatile, then it is certainly appropriate to ask them to leave without addressing their issues. If the group is coming to make a demand or request they will certainly return, and usually in a much more cooperative manner. In addition, the group will respect the fact that your tolerance of outbursts is limited and will conduct their negotiations more professionally.

Follow through. A simple phone call to an Afghan with the current status of a project or issue that is being worked goes a long way and shows the proper respect. In follow-on meetings, even on other topics, if you bring up previous issues it reflects that you are both listening and actively working to solve issues.

Things happen. Anyone who has been to Afghanistan can tell you how dynamic the daily schedule can be. At any time an event can arise which

trumps your scheduled KLE. If this happens, immediately make every effort to contact the party and reschedule. This happens as much on the Afghan side as it does for CF/USG so they will understand. If unable to contact the party (which in mountainous eastern Afghanistan is quite possible), ensure that you designate a stand-in for the conversation who is properly briefed on the topic and can engage appropriately. Some visitors drive for hours to attend these meetings so making every effort to minimize their inconvenience or maximize the effectiveness of a KLE you are unable to attend shows respect and helps to maintain or even foster the relationship. The last thing you want is to have a party drive for two hours only to be turned away at the gate.

Keep Your Promises

When speaking with any Afghan, be certain of your words and intentions. If you say things like “I think we can do that” or “that sounds like a good idea,” and you do not caveat it with “but I have to check before I can promise anything,” they will take that as a promise to do something. If you don’t follow through with that promise, you lose creditability and one of the bricks in your “relationship wall.” You would prefer this wall to not get shaky. The Afghans have had years of broken promises laid upon them. Don’t add to that pile. If you’re certain that you can do something and know with a 99-percent probability that it will happen, then go ahead and promise. Once you keep your promise, you will gain respect and it will drive those you interact with to keep their promises as well.

Do:

- **Show respect.** To each Afghan, regardless of placement within the government, tribe, or village.
- **Seniors first.** Serve chai or food to the senior Afghan first.
- **Know names.** You will possibly meet hundreds of Afghans during your stay. Afghan and Taji names are foreign sounding and sometimes difficult to capture. While difficult, do your best to take down names of those you meet. Forgetting someone’s name in a follow-up meeting is just as embarrassing in Afghan culture as it is in Western culture.
- **Respect Islam.** Depending on when you are meeting leaders, have prayer rugs and a quiet place nearby where they can pray if need be. This is another huge sign of respect for them as well as Islam as a religion.

- **Smile.** The Afghans are naturally warm and welcoming people. A large portion of the populace view CF/USG as cold and businesslike. Break that perception early. It is one of the first steps to shaping a lasting, beneficial relationship.

Don't (Some of these are well-known, others not so much.):

- **Lose focus.** If you have the opportunity to meet multiple Afghans, you may very well meet the same groups who bring up the same issues over and over. These groups may also show up at the most inopportune times. Regardless of the inconvenience, show them the same amount of respect and attention you would if you were talking with the provincial governor. Showing Afghans a lack of respect during a meeting is a slap in the face and is multiplied when they are surrounded by their peers. Once you engage in a meeting, engage. Bring your “A game” and focus on what they are saying. During any meeting with any Afghan a valuable piece of information could be passed relating to a security threat, tribal conflict, or governmental issue.
- **Flatulate or blow your nose** during a meeting. This is considered exceptionally rude to Afghans.
- **Show** the soles of your feet.
- **Talk down** to anyone in the delegation (anyone in the group at some point could become invaluable or be the next leader of the delegation).
- **Rush to close.** If you do not have time to conduct a proper meeting, ask to meet them again. Inviting someone in for a meeting and then shooing them out after 15 minutes is rude. Be prepared to discuss the topic at hand without checking your watch every 5 minutes.

Final Thoughts

It is always said, but can't be said enough; Afghanistan is not Iraq. The overwhelming majority of interactions are with individuals from small cities or smaller villages. Many CF come to Afghanistan from Iraq and believe it is the same environment—there will be multiple bombings and attacks, and the majority of Afghans are nothing but future terrorists. This couldn't be further from the truth. The people of Afghanistan have a rich, dynamic history that is incredibly interesting. The people themselves, after 30 years of warfare, want little more than a safer village, district, province, and country. They are looking for our help and, if engaged in a respectful manner and treated as equals, will respond in a positive manner.

The impression you make in any engagement will be a lasting one. How you respected or disrespected someone in your words or actions will be mentioned far and wide. Stay professional, respectful, and alert. Then the road to success in your meetings with the Afghan people will be much improved.

————— End of article —————

While not considered key leaders, female family members may have information of value to operational planning and execution. Unfortunately, they are not readily available and it is not smart for Western males to seek opportunities to meet with them. Since females comprise half of the Afghan population, it is wise to create a means to garner their support while collecting information they may possess.

Section III: Female Engagements

The Afghan gender mix is almost 50 percent each male and female. Most KLEs and other engagements with Afghans are almost always between males, except where Afghan women are in leadership positions in government, business, or education. This limits sources of information and opportunities to win support of the GIRoA and U.S. to only Afghan males. However, that is changing as U.S. forces realize Afghan women, while not normally out in public, do possess information valuable to U.S. operations and that these women are more influential in their tribes, clans, villages, and families than previously thought.

* * *

Women Have the Power in COIN: Female Engagement Teams

Lieutenant Colonel J.J. Malevich, Canadian Armed Forces

This article is used with the permission of Lieutenant Colonel Malevich. It originated from his post on the U.S. Army and U.S. Marine Counterinsurgency Center blog.

In 2005, I was sitting under a tree at Shira, in Kapisa Province with Minister Stanakzia who was in charge of the Disarmament of Illegally Armed Groups (DIAG) program. I was struck by the fact that there were no women to be seen anywhere. I mentioned this to the Minister and he explained to me that

although there were no women present, in Afghan culture they were quite powerful in the home. He said that the great interest in cell phones and the riots that had taken place because of a lack of phone cards was generated by Afghan wives pushing their husbands to keep up with the Jones, or in this case, the Barakzias. Being married, I knew exactly what he was talking about. In spite of the fact that I was a rough, tough army guy, I too seemed to make very few decisions at home. It seems gender dynamics were not that different even in the backwaters of Afghanistan.

After eight years of engagement with the Afghans, someone has finally realized that we have been missing out on 50-percent of the population who have an enormous influence within the family and especially on adolescent males who make up the recruiting pool of the insurgents. Best of all, the Taliban by culture cannot talk to Afghan women and therefore, we have a monopoly.

The best way to exploit this is the female engagement team (FET). A FET is a small, all-female element, 4–6 members, with the task of engaging the Afghan female community. This construct needs to be better exploited in order to communicate and win the support of the most influential part of the population. We should start integrating this more into our training and TTPs [tactics, techniques, and procedures].

Several Army and Marine commanders have created FETs comprised of all-female servicemembers to open dialogue with Afghan females. The meetings between FETs and Afghan women are proving very productive as they are a means of obtaining new information, corroborating information, and winning the support of the Afghan women. FETs can include medical personnel to provide for the needs of Afghan females who rarely, if ever, have opportunities to obtain medical care.

However, to be successful and have Afghan male “buy-in,” it is best to request the village elders arrange the engagement. This can be done by either the FET or a male coalition member making the request. Experience shows that having the male request the meeting is the more appropriate method as it maintains the Afghan culture of male-to-male interaction. Unfortunately, FETs do not always receive approval to meet with Afghan women, especially in areas with significant Taliban influence. Where they have met with FETs, Afghan females are more willing to approach U.S. forces. Interestingly, Afghan males are often more open in their meetings with the FET than with male servicemembers.

An additional observation is that children run free in the community; they see and watch and are involved in nearly every activity in the community.

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**Twenty-Eight Articles (Extract)
Fundamentals of Company-level Counterinsurgency**

Dr. David Kilcullen, Lieutenant Colonel, Australian Army

Reprinted with permission from *Small Wars Journal*. This article was originally published in the 1 March 2006 issue of *Small Wars Journal*.

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19. **Engage the women, beware the children.** Most insurgent fighters are men. But in traditional societies, women are hugely influential in forming the social networks that insurgents use for support. Co-opting neutral or friendly women, through targeted social and economic programs, builds networks of enlightened self-interest that eventually undermine the insurgents. You need your own female counterinsurgents, including interagency people, to do this effectively. Win the women, and you own the family unit. Own the family, and you take a big step forward in mobilizing the population. Conversely, though, stop your people fraternizing with local children. Your troops are homesick; they want to drop their guard with the kids. But children are sharp-eyed, lacking in empathy, and willing to commit atrocities their elders would shrink from. The insurgents are watching: they will notice a growing friendship between one of your people and a local child, and either harm the child as punishment, or use them against you. Similarly, stop people throwing candies or presents to children. It attracts them to our vehicles, creates crowds the enemy can exploit, and leads to children being run over. Harden your heart and keep the children at arm's length.

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**Half-Hearted: Trying to Win
Afghanistan without Afghan Women (Extract)**

**Capt. Matt Pottinger, U.S. Marine Corps
Hali Jilani, Task Force Leatherneck Cultural Advisor
and Claire Russo, U.S. Army Civilian Advisor**

Reprinted with permission from *Small Wars Journal*. This article was originally published in the 18 February 2010 issue of *Small Wars Journal*.

By fits and starts, United States and allied military forces are realizing how difficult it will be to win the war in Afghanistan without correlation from half its population, the Afghan women.

One of the few military efforts aimed at earning the support of women began a year ago when a handful of female U.S. Marines and a civilian linguist formed the first “Female Engagement Team” (pronounced “FET”). The team visited rural Pashtun women in their homes and distributed humanitarian supplies, in the process, earning the goodwill of women who, before they had spoken with the Marine FET, had viewed international troops with fear.¹

Since then, more FETs have stood up. The 2nd Marine Expeditionary Brigade now employs several teams on an intermittent basis in southern Afghanistan.² U.S. Soldiers and Airmen in the country’s east run FETs that, in cooperation with district governments, teach health classes to local women. All international and Afghan security forces were ordered in November to establish FETs of their own.³

Despite these steps, four factors are limiting our ability to intensify and replicate successful female engagements: 1) die-hard presumptions by battlefield commanders that engaging local women will pay no dividends; 2) erroneous hypotheses that female engagement will offend most Pashtun men; 3) a failure to involve FETs in the planning stage of operations, leading to poorly conceived missions; and 4) an unwillingness to establish full-time FETs made up of volunteers who are given the resources and time to train as professionals should.

All of these problems can be resolved by brigade and battalion commanders.

Consider the first factor. Some officers still imagine that engaging women is not worth the effort. “Pashtun women don’t have enough influence or knowledge to make valuable allies,” they argue. On the contrary, experience confirms that local women wield more influence in their homes—including over their husbands and their sons—than people uninitiated in Afghan family culture believe to be the case.

Rural Pashtun women are responsible for raising children, collecting water, cooking, and helping farm and care for animals, among other jobs. Though rarely seen by outsiders, they are keen observers and opinion-makers about the goings-on in their villages. “The women pass all the news in the villages,” says an Afghan National Army colonel who cautions against ignoring half the country’s population. “They know who is doing what, who should and should not be in the area. They talk around the well or while they are collecting firewood about the news they have heard from their husbands.”

The tactical benefits of speaking with women have already been well established. Pashtun women have on numerous occasions given FETs important information about local personalities, economics, and grievances,

as well as about the enemy. The longer-term benefits of earning the confidence and support of Afghan women are more difficult to quantify but, on balance, are likely to be profound.

A second conventional wisdom—that addressing female populations is culturally taboo—is also incorrect. The idea that sending female Soldiers on patrol or to tribal meetings will outrage Pashtun men has been turned upside down. Experience over the past year demonstrates that this assumption is usually wrong. Many Pashtun men, far from shunning American women, show a preference for interacting with them over U.S. men. Pashtun men tend to view foreign women troops as a kind of “third gender.” As a result, female servicewomen are accorded the advantages, rather than the disadvantages, of both genders: they are extended the respect shown to men, but are granted the access to home and family normally reserved to women. In many circumstances, this attitude opens opportunities to allied forces. Afghan culture turns out to be more flexible than many male officers have conditioned themselves to believe.

The third problem is the failure to involve FETs in mission planning, with the result that too many operations are limited in scope, duration, and effectiveness. For example, some maneuver units use FETs to search women or try to comfort them during a clearing operation. But as soon as the mission is complete, despite the goodwill achieved, the FET is withdrawn and never sees these women again. While using FETs in this way is entirely legitimate, there are better uses of the FETs in other types of missions that score bigger gains. Instead of using them exclusively in the “clearing” phase of counterinsurgency operations, they should be used more in the “holding” phase. FETs that are devoted to a district and authorized to make recurring visits to households deliver lasting benefits. When repeat visits are possible, FETs should go beyond identifying women’s grievances to helping address them in partnership with local leaders, non-governmental organizations, and Afghan policewomen.

Last, the ad hoc nature of FETs, virtually all of whose members have full-time jobs in addition to their FET duties, limits their time for training and rehearsals and, as a result, hampers their effectiveness and safety. The teams should be comprised of full-time members, including female Pashtu linguists, and given the intensive training and resources they need. To do otherwise is a disservice to the mission and to FET members themselves, whose missions are dangerous. Poorly trained FETs are probably worse than having no FETs at all, just as poorly trained maneuver units tend to do—and suffer—more harm than well-prepared units. (**Note:** Marines will soon deploy the first full-time FETs to Afghanistan).

Endnotes

1. This FET was led by 2nd Lieutenant Johannah Shaffer of Combat Logistics Battalion 3, part of the Special Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force Afghanistan. An account of her mission is contained in the 16 May 2009 memo “Afghanistan Female Engagement Team After-Action and Way Forward.”

2. The authors wish to thank Marine Expeditionary Brigade Commander Brigadier General Larry Nicholson and his battalion commanders for their support of the FET program.

3. See: JOINT OPORD OMID (HOPE), signed and issued by the Afghan National Army, Afghan National Police, National Directorate of Security (Afghanistan), and the International Security Assistance Force Joint Command in November 2009.

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Section IV: Human Terrain Teams

Commanders may be fortunate to have input from a human terrain team (HTT) to contribute to their assessment process. HTTs were created to provide knowledge of the local population (the human terrain) to military commanders to:

- Assist them in understanding the people within their area of operations (AO).
- Enable them to make better-informed decisions.
- Reduce the chance for negative effect responses such as improvised explosive device events directed at American Soldiers.

The HTTs fill the socio-cultural knowledge gap in the commander’s operational environment and interpret events in his AO. The team, made up of individuals with social science and operational backgrounds, deploys with military units to bring knowledge about the local population into a coherent analytic framework. The team also assists in building relationships with the local community to provide advice and opportunities to commanders and staffs in the field.

The HTTs are regionally focused, modular, staff augmenters that bring to the unit capabilities that exist outside organic unit structures. They deploy

as trained and organized teams and are attached to Army brigade combat teams, division-level headquarters, and higher command echelons. Each team is recruited and trained for a specific region. The HTT integrates into a unit's staff, conducts unclassified open-source and field research, and provides focused and operationally relevant human terrain information in support of the planning, preparation, execution, and assessment of operations.

Knowledge of the human terrain allows commanders and their staffs to make better decisions. By identifying local dynamics, grievances, and motivation; assessing governmental effectiveness; and making recommendations on how to address them, HTTs provide the unit nonlethal options, assist the unit in preventing friction with members of the local population, and track effects on the local population that are likely to occur based on planned unit operations.

* * *

Human Terrain Support for Current Operations (Extract)

CPT Nathan K. Finney, U.S. Army

Reprinted with permission from *Infantry* magazine. This article was published in the March-June 2009 issue of *Infantry* magazine

In the article “The Human Terrain System: A CORDS for the 21st Century,” which appeared in the September-October 2006 edition of *Military Review*, the authors (Dr. Jacob Kipp, Lester Grau, Karl Prinslow, and CPT Don Smith) described the need for “giving brigade commanders an organic capability to help understand and deal with “human terrain”—the social, ethnographic, cultural, economic, and political elements of the people among whom a force is operating.” For over a year, Human Terrain Teams (HTTs) have been addressing that need in both Afghanistan and Iraq.

The teams have supported brigades in numerous ways, including identifying local populations' needs and perceptions from the “grass-roots” perspective; engaging influential political, military, business, tribal, religious, and other cultural leaders to cultivate credible local, provincial, and national governing institutions; and identifying the formal and informal centers of gravity and external influences on the local populations through social network analysis.

Operations Attal and Sham Shad, which were conducted in the Paktika Province of Afghanistan from November to December 2007, were two of the first fully integrated operations to include a HTT. The team successfully engaged and interviewed the local populations to map tribal dynamics,

determine effects of coalition forces' (CF) operations, conduct market assessments, and identify the population's views on governance. This allowed the team to acquire a more robust and integrated socio-cultural, political, and economic awareness of the brigade's area of responsibility in order to provide CF with operationally relevant information related to the human terrain, improving the commander's understanding of the local populations.

Through field research, the HTT was able to support the commander and his staff by identifying developmental, governance, and security issues within the province. Development within the province was in a questionable state, with the local population perceiving that the severe joblessness was due to the government not fulfilling its duty to provide local jobs. Local leaders voiced their concerns that, without jobs, their people were susceptible to taking money and support from adversarial elements. Additionally, households were relying on remittances from distant family members and loans. As noted on an HTT report from Operation Sham Shad, "money earned through work abroad is sent back to families as remittances through the money transfer system (locally referred to as *hawala*), [which] is used to sustain families." Through applied social science methods, the team determined that a rapid price inflation of staples was straining this *hawala* system. According to the report, analysis by the HTT determined that the price increase was the "primary determinant of whether the local situation was improving or deteriorating; and whether the current government is good or bad." The team also discovered that the perception of the local government was linked to the price of staples. This analysis of the local populace's needs was then incorporated into the unit's planning and local operations, enhancing the development in the province, and stabilizing the area.

The team was also successful in identifying the local populations' perceptions and interactions with local governance. The HTT's analysis discovered that locals viewed "good" government as one that consults with elders, incorporating the local tribal structure into government decisions. The team's interactions among the local populace provided the following insights: "All respondents stressed qualities of listening, consulting with elders, fairness, equity, reciprocity, and bringing the government, tribes and people together." Prior to operations in the area, both Afghan officials and CF held strong perceptions that Paktika Province was an isolated, insular area. Once on the ground, the HTT discovered that a portion of the district was actually highly transnational, possessing world views that included concepts of government that came from the Arab peninsula and Afghanistan's neighboring countries. In some areas, this generally younger, transnational population of those who left Afghanistan primarily for work was viewed as the powerbrokers of an area based on wealth, rather than

age or family status amongst the tribes. This analysis led the HTT to recommend to the BCT commander a different method of interacting with the local populace; one that did not center on the common assumption that the center of power is based on the elder tribal members of the area.

The HTT was also able to highlight the negative synergistic effects of predatory local government practices on the district population. The effects of this “bad” governance led to the collapse of a district *shura* and a feeling among a segment of the populace that only the Taliban could protect them. One elder had reported, “People were tired of the Taliban because they beat them. Now, if this government [also] beats them, what should the people do?” The HTT revealed to the BCT staff a case study that Taliban fighters in the area affected some of the population, but the effects of bad local governance affected all of the population. Ultimately, Afghans view the *shura* as the center of decision making, and the provincial and national governments need to take into account this model. This research analysis was a key planning factor for the brigade to support the need for provincial government officials to strengthen the ties to the local populace by meeting their security concerns. This improved interaction by the provincial government reduced the local populace’s support of the Taliban.

The HTT best displayed this type of cultural analysis in Yousef Kheyl District, where the team was able to assist the brigade in coordinating humanitarian assistance distribution in a more equitable manner. The HTT discovered the problem with the distribution process by interfacing with the local population during Operation Attal. The HTT recommended that the brigade distribute the supplies through the district sub-governor (DSG). This new system was based on the tribal elders supplying a list of village families in the greatest need of support to the DSG, who would then provide the distribution information to the brigade through the Provincial Reconstruction Team. This system was more successful than the previous system by ensuring equitable distribution based on tribal consensus, rather than a less legitimate, Western manner. It also provided the brigade with accountability of distributed items. Lastly, this manner of humanitarian assistance distribution brought the local population to the government and aided in developing legitimacy for the DSG.

Finally, the team was able to address local perceptions on security. The local perception was that there was a direct correlation between the ability of the coalition forces to provide protection for the local leaders and their capability to protect the general population. According to the Operation Sham Shad HTT report, this view stemmed from the fact that “since 2004, Paktika has been the site of numerous attacks on Afghan civilians, including electoral workers, tribal elders, religious scholars, and professionals. A number of prominent tribal elders were assassinated between 2005 and

2007, most notably the head of the Sharan tribal *Shura*, a prominent Sharan tribal member, and the head of the Kushamond tribal *Shura*.” These assassinations led to many effects identified by the local populace. These included government officials leaving the province, the local population unwilling to work for or with the government, collapse of the tribal *Shura* and anger at the assassinations. In fact, the report also noted, “One of the more profound effects both described and observed was elder self-censorship and fear of talking openly to both the CF and also to other senior *Shura* members.”

The integration of this human terrain information gathered in the field by the HTT provided the brigade’s common operating picture an added cultural perspective. Thus cultural perspective positively influenced the planning and decision-making processes of the unit.

The three examples described above keenly display the human terrain system’s dedication to training and deploying HTTs to assist combat brigades. This support has taken many forms and used different methodological constructs, leveraging the socio-cultural aspects of the brigade area of operations and creating a clearer picture of the human terrain for both the commander and his staff.

While information gleaned from HTTs, HUMINT [human intelligence], FETs, and KLEs provide vital information, it is the daily monitoring of the local population that provides relatively current situational awareness.

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Section V: Observations

Throughout the course of preparing for and conducting operations, patrols, KLEs, meetings, and associations with Afghans, observations are constantly made that affect or could affect how commanders and Soldiers interact with the local population. Not only is it important to collect all the information you can during your initial visit, it is equally important to pursue follow-on visits and possibly even establish a continual presence. It is important to share these observations and make them a matter of record for use by others in similar situations. Such sharing should be incorporated into:

- Patrol debriefs/products.
- After action reports/critiques.
- Update briefings.

**Twenty-Eight Articles (Extract)
Fundamentals of Company-level Counterinsurgency**

Dr. David Kilcullen, Lieutenant Colonel, Australian Army

Reprinted with permission from *Small Wars Journal*. This article was originally published in the 1 March 2006 issue of *Small Wars Journal*.

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10. **Be there.** The first rule of deployment in counterinsurgency is to be there. You can almost never outrun the enemy. If you are not present when an incident happens, there is usually little you can do about it. So your first order of business is to establish presence. If you cannot do this throughout your sector, then do it wherever you can. This demands a residential approach, living in your sector, in close proximity to the population, rather than raiding into the area from remote, secure bases. Movement on foot, sleeping in local villages, night patrolling: all these seem more dangerous than they are. They establish links with the locals, who see you as real people they can trust and do business with, not as aliens who descend from an armored box. Driving around in an armored convoy, day-tripping like a tourist in hell, degrades situational awareness, makes you a target, and is ultimately more dangerous.

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Section VI: Conclusion

Cultural awareness, a key component of relationship building, is gained through education, training, and contacts with and monitoring of the local population. U.S. forces have daily opportunities to gain additional cultural awareness information using KLEs, FETs, HTTs, patrolling, and all other interactions with the local population. The quality and quantity of the information received by U.S. forces depend on identifying the sources of information received or to be received, engaging the sources in conversation, and evaluating the information received to determine how best to use it.

Insurgents are initially one step ahead of U.S. forces when these forces move into new areas of operations because insurgents have cultural awareness of the local population. Commanders have the responsibility of assessing the local population to gain local cultural awareness and using

that information. Done properly, assessments enable relationship building, which leads to partnering in efforts toward the U.S.'s objectives of:

- Gaining the support of the Afghan local population.
- Extending the influence of the GIROA into the local area.
- Removing the insurgent influence and presence.

Chapter 4

Afghan Cultural Influences

“The Afghans are such impressive, devout, generous, and energetic people. They have an acute sense of humor in the face of relentless misery and adversity. They are superb, courageous soldiers and energetic, creative businessmen. They have deep respect for learning and teachers—and a thirst and gratitude for education and knowledge even at the most elemental level. They are intensely focused as students at any age and quick to learn and adapt.”

—General Barry R. McCaffrey, U.S. Army (Retired)
After Action Report, Visit to Kuwait and Afghanistan,
10-18 November 2009

Culture defines a society, and even the sub-elements within a society. It is also a means to compare and evaluate societies and sub-societies, to determine how and why they act as they do. Such information can enable reasonably accurate predictions as to how people might react or affect situations over which they may or may not have control or influence. As in all such societies, culture is influenced by many different variables such as language, religion, tribe, geography, economics, gender, government, and education. For this newsletter, the Afghan culture variables are addressed in the following three broad categories:

- Ethnicity
- Economics
- Government

Within Afghanistan there are as many cultures and variations of cultures as there are valleys and villages. Given the number and geographical distribution of the tribes and sub-tribes, it is virtually impossible to identify each and every one. Therefore, the training of military and civilian personnel deploying to Afghanistan should focus on what is common throughout the country. Some of the commonalities include:

- Tribal and Islamic cultures are traditional and conservative.
- Tribal codes (honor, revenge, and hospitality) are social controls.
- Tribal identity and loyalty are communal and public and take precedence over individual identity and private loyalty.

- Self-interest and personal gain outweigh the fear of retribution or legal/punitive action and hypocrisy or loss of respect.
- *Jirgah* is a tribal assembly of elders that makes decisions by consensus. This is most common among Pashtun tribes.
- *Shura* is Dari for an assembly, an organized body of participants, or administrative body usually called upon for a specific decision making process.
- The most important duty of an Afghan man is to defend and control his assets: women, gold, and land.
- Hospitality is an essential aspect of Afghan culture.

One area the tribal elders have maintained is their resistance to change. Over the centuries very little has changed, to include modernization, which is directly related to economics and isolation.

Section I: Ethnicity

An ethnic group is a large group of people with a common racial, national, tribal, linguistic, religious, or cultural origin or background. This section addresses the following ethnic areas:

- Language
- Tribes
- Gender
- Religion
- Education

Afghanistan consists of a multitude of ethnic groups and sub-groups. It could be compared to a 1000-piece, multicolored, jigsaw puzzle. Each piece has its own unique shape and place within the larger picture. Some are related by their color or color patterns, which may or may not indicate their place in the picture. When any piece is out of place, conflict may result. The same can and often does occur with Afghan ethnic groups.

The following map (Figure 4-1) shows the major Afghan ethno-linguistic groups and their general locations, and how those ethnic groups are not limited to the political boundaries of Afghanistan. Within the geographic areas of the major ethnic groups are enclaves of almost every other ethnic

group. Notice how much of the country is Pashtun and how that ethnicity encompasses areas of western Pakistan.

Note: The Durand Line, named after Sir Mortimer Durand—the British government’s Indian Foreign Secretary who convinced the Amir of Afghanistan to agree to this line—marks the border between Afghanistan and northwest India, which is now Pakistan. It was established by the British in 1893 to ensure the Khyber Pass, Khojak Pass, and important cities of Peshawar and Quetta were on the Indian side of the border between Afghanistan and India. This border divided the Pashtun people, who are Afghanistan’s dominant ethnic group and the world’s largest remaining tribal-based society.¹



Figure 4-1.

Major Afghan Ethnic Groups²

Afghanistan’s major ethnic groups are defined by language and origin, whereas the sub-ethnic groups may be defined by religion, geography, history, politics, and/or tribes. For example, there are 10 identified ethnolinguistic groups, with the largest being the Pashtun, closely followed by the Tajik and Hazara. These 10 groups are often referred to as tribes. However, within each of these groups are subgroups. The Pashtun ethnic group, for example, consists of five major unique subgroups, each with its own separate identity. They are as follows:

- The *Durrani*, or *Abdali*, or Western Pashtun confederation centered in Kandahar and Helmand Provinces of southwestern Afghanistan.
- The *Ghilzai*, or *Ghalji* confederation dominating Oruzgan, Zabol, Ghazni and Dai Kundi Provinces and the Katawaz region of south-central Afghanistan.
- The *Ghurghusht* tribes, which primarily share Baluchistan Province with the Baluch people of northern Pakistan.
- The *Karlanri*, or “hill tribes” of southern Afghanistan, the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) in Pakistan, and the ill-defined borderland between them.
- The *Sarbani*, or Eastern Pashtun, who live in southeastern Afghanistan, Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) of Pakistan, and the states of Dir, Chitral, and Swat in Pakistan.

These sub-Pashtun tribes rarely communicate with each other unless in a common struggle or *jihad*. Several sub-tribes of these tribes have forged alliances; for example, the Kakar tribe of the *Ghurghusht* tribes and the Hotaki tribe of the *Ghilzai* confederation, which produced Mullah Omar and several top Taliban leaders. The *Durrani*, which has dominated much of the political life of Afghanistan for the last 300 years, and the *Ghilzai*, which is the largest of the Pashtun tribes and rarely has national political power, have been at odds with each other for centuries, thus making it almost impossible to unite the country.³ This is called ethnocentricity, where one tribe believes it is culturally superior to the other tribes and correspondingly acts that way often to its own detriment.

“Afghanistan is a tribal culture that believes in blood for blood—just like the Hatfields and the McCoys.”

—SGT Ali Altimeemy, U.S. Army
Camp Atterbury COIN Academy

Language

Dari (often called Farsi) and Pashtu are the official languages spoken in Afghanistan per article 16 of the 2004 Afghan Constitution. Afghans who speak one of these languages have a familiarity with the other. However, due to the Afghanistan geography, differences have evolved within each of the two official languages. For example, Dari spoken in Herat may be somewhat different than the Dari spoken in Kabul, at least by less-educated Afghans.

Pashtuns consider themselves true Afghans, and it is their areas of Afghanistan that are the most unsecure and in which most U.S. forces in Afghanistan are currently working. Having a translator who speaks Pashtu is beneficial when dealing with the local population.

An excellent source for learning important Dari and Pashtu words and phrases is on the CALL website, and is maintained by the Defense Language Institute. Go to <http://call.army.mil> website and click the <Log In> button (left side at the top). Log in will require an Army Knowledge Online/Defense Knowledge Online account. After you have logged in, select the <CALL's FORSCOM Message> link (right side in the middle). Click <view the full FORSCOM message> option and then go to <LANGUAGE> in the alphabetical section of *Key Topics from "Training Guidance for SWA."* Scroll down to 2.P.1.F, then scroll down to OEF. There you will find material on both Dari and Pashtu. You can view the Dari and Pashtu words that correspond to the English words and by clicking on the play button you can hear the words spoken. Keep in mind there are some commonalities in Dari and Pashtu.

Additionally, to assist Soldiers in learning key Dari and Pashto phrases, attached to this newsletter is a Defense Language Institute Afghanistan/Pakistan language DVD.

Having a translator who speaks the local language is important when Dari and Pashtu are not the local languages. For example, in Laghman Province, Pashtu, Pashai, Dari and at least one other language are the spoken languages. In some remote villages, the Afghans do not speak Dari or Pashtu. If you do not have, for instance, a Pashai interpreter, you will not be able to communicate with the locals in a village where Pashai is the only language spoken. There are very few Pashai interpreters available.

(Note: For your information, English is the official language established by the United Nations, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to be the common language for those working to assist the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA). Fortunately, many leaders in the Afghan government speak English or their offices are staffed with Afghan expatriates who speak English. Some Afghans, who do not speak English, do understand the English numbering system.)

Tribes/Clans

Afghanistan, as a multi-tribal society, consists of sub-tribes, clans, and sects that represent specific communities or villages. While tribes are important, communities and villages reflect the dynamics of the Afghan culture. They

are self-contained, most often due to geography, which has enabled them, over the centuries, to maintain their own culture with minimal outside influence.

While clans and sub-tribes, and alliances of clans and sub-tribes, have fought each other for centuries, these same clans and sub-tribes have banded together to successfully resist and/or oust foreign intervention, even that of Afghan central governments if they believed their honor was being violated. They will fight to the death to defend their honor.

In his article *One Tribe at a Time: A Strategy for Success in Afghanistan*, Major Jim Gant, who spent his tour in Afghanistan living and working with an Afghan tribe, stated:

First, tribes understand people. Being illiterate does not mean unintelligent. Tribesmen are extremely adept at understanding one another and others. As I have preached and preached to the Special Forces officers headed to Afghanistan that I have trained in the unconventional warfare (UW) portion of their training, “You damn well better know yourself, because they know you.” The Afghan people have a knack for looking straight through deception and incompetence. Trust me when I tell you, not only are they as smart as you are, they know they are.

Second, tribes understand protection. Tribes are organized and run to ensure the security of the tribe. Not only physical security, but revenue and land protection. But most important of all is preservation of the tribal name and reputation. Honor is everything in a tribal society. Tribes will fight and die over honor. ...When honor is at stake, tribal members stop at nothing to preserve their tribe’s integrity and “face.”

Third, tribes understand power. How many guns do we have? How many warriors can I put in the field? Can I protect my tribe? Can I attack others who threaten my tribe? Can I back my words or decisions up with the ability to come down the valley and kill you? Can I keep you from killing me?

Lastly, tribes understand projection. Tribes have no “strategic goals” in the Western sense. Their diplomatic, informational, military, and economic (DIME) priorities are almost without exception in reference to other tribes.

Can I project my power across the valley? Does the tribe across the river know not to come over here and meddle in my

affairs? Do the Taliban know that they are not welcome here?
 Can I influence decisions, either by force or otherwise, outside
 of my tribe?

As foreigners in Afghanistan, you must always keep in mind that the peace between clans and villages and their willingness to work together may be fragile. Their agenda is not always your agenda. You each see it as a way to gain advantage over your enemies and potential enemies. Remember the Afghan saying, “brother against brother, brothers against cousins, and all against their common enemy.” Once the common enemy is defeated and/or eliminated, the conflicts between brothers may resume—now or later.

Tribal Organization

The following diagram shows the typical subdivisions of a Pashtun tribe. Below the confederation level, such as “Karlanri” in this diagram, will be many tribes, or Qawms. Each tribe will contain many Khels, or clans, such as the Kabuli Khel shown here. (Some Khels, like the Suleiman Khel of the Ghilzai in the Katawaz region, have grown so big that each Khel has still another layer of Khels beneath it!) Beneath each of these will be extended family groups, called Kahols, which in turn are comprised of varying numbers of individual families, or Koranay, the basic building blocks of Pashtun society. When two Pashtun strangers first meet, they will typically work their way up the genealogical ladder until they find their first common ancestor before beginning a conversation—as you would if meeting a distant cousin, for example, at a family reunion.⁴

Pashtun Tribal Organization

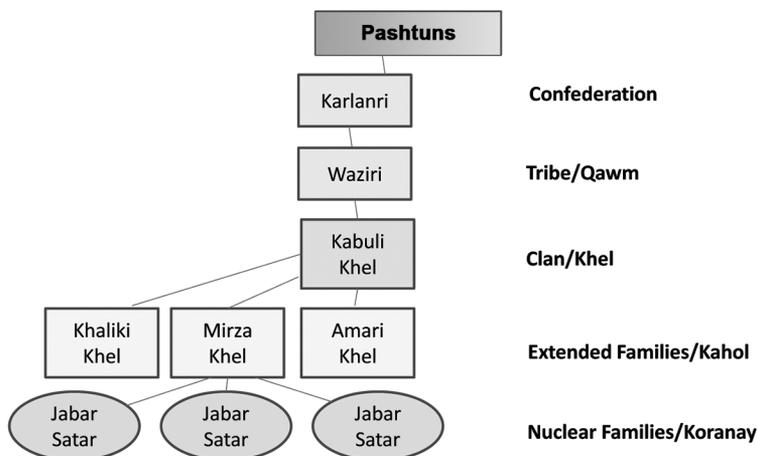


Figure 4-2.

The GIRoA, with assistance and guidance from the U.S. and NATO, established and is creating the Afghan National Army (ANA). The focus is “national.” The intent is for the ANA to be a “melting pot” of all Afghan ethnic groups and tribes that, hopefully, will work to bring the diverse tribal/ethnic cultures to understand and accept their cultural differences and work toward a national Afghanistan.

Tribal Democracy

Tribes in Afghanistan are democracies. Tribal councils (*shuras* [informal] and *jirgas* [formal]) give every man the opportunity to be heard as the councils conduct tribal business. Women do not participate in the council meetings, but likely are heard as a result of discussions with their husbands.

However, while every Afghan male is an equal within the tribe and no one has the authority to command or compel the actions of the other males, there is a hierarchal structure that is not always obvious to those who lack knowledge of Afghan tribes. For example, the first born son of the first wife has higher social and political standing than the sons of his father’s other wives. This is the result of elaborate genealogies that describe the relative position of a man to his ancestors.

It is important that U.S. forces know, understand, and leverage this process in their key leader engagements to assist tribal councils in supporting efforts to identify the insurgents and defeat that enemy. U.S. forces must first identify through local government resources the important elders in the formal councils (*jirgas*) and ask to meet with them. However, caution is required to ensure the tribe’s enemy fits the definition of enemies of the GIRoA and not a feud between tribes that has nothing to do with the reason the U.S. is assisting the GIRoA.

Tribal Code of Conduct

Afghan tribes have codes of conduct that reflect their social values and behavioral patterns. The Pashtun’s tribal code of conduct (*Pashtunwali*) is not written and is not easily put into words, but does tie Pashtuns together.

Pashtunwali includes honor, bravery, revenge, zeal, courage, sanctuary, truce, elders, hospitality, and protection. Of these, honor is the lynchpin of Pashtun tribal society.

Most Pashtuns—especially those who have lived in the predominately rural Pashtun areas—see honor as the obligation to protect the three things most important to their lives: women, property, and home. This is the pivot on which Pashtun males’ actions revolve. Failure to maintain their honor means being dishonored, for which revenge is required, no matter how

long it takes. A violation of a man's honor could be as simple as accidentally bumping into another man, or as complex as a property boundary dispute. And revenge could be within the same generation, or a later generation.

Because such conflicts, if left unchecked, could result in the destruction of a family, village, or maybe even a clan, the honor code does have an "out." When the weaker of two feuding individuals or tribes desires to resolve the conflict through means other than fighting, it does so by requesting a truce, at which time the giver becomes obligated to provide protection, food, water, and shelter to the requestor. If the giver chooses to withdraw the truce, hospitality, and protection from the individual or tribe he has agreed to protect and provide for, he has dishonored himself. Once a Pashtun male has lost his honor, he loses his status within his family and tribe.

It is important to note that the concept of *Pashtunwali* is oftentimes foreign to Pashtuns who grew up in urban areas of Afghanistan or in refugee camps in Pakistan. It is also foreign to those not from Afghanistan. *Pashtunwali* states that the Pashtuns will provide protection and the accompanying hospitality to those seeking refuge, in this case the sanctuary offered to Osama bin Laden and his al-Qaeda cohort by the Pashtun-dominated government of Taliban Afghanistan. Because of the U.S. intervention in Afghanistan following September 11, Pashtuns fighting U.S. forces in Afghanistan are fighting a Pashtun tribal insurgency, and not a global *jihād* against the West.

Interestingly, the five major Pashtun tribes and their sub-tribes have enough differences that they rarely come together unless it is for a common cause. Pashtun blood was spilled by the Americans and the Pashtuns have come together for revenge.

Gender

A distinguishing feature of Afghan culture is gender-specific cultural imperatives. Basically males and females are segregated from each other except within their immediate families. Other than urban areas such as Kabul, males and females rarely interact with each other. In Kabul, where numerous women work in governmental and commercial offices, you will find varying degrees of male and female interaction. It is best for U.S. personnel to respect this aspect of Afghan culture and limit contacts to male-to-male and female-to-female.

Afghan Men

Outward appearances give the impression Afghanistan is a male-only society, as men outnumber women in the outside-the-home environment. Afghanistan is male dominated. The men are responsible for maintaining

the honor of their family, which gives them the right to make decisions. This includes controlling female behavior and selecting who their daughters will marry.

The men are the income earners as only an extremely low percentage of women work outside their homes. Men work in all areas of Afghan society, to include clerical positions the Western world normally considers as being filled by women. Most jobs in Afghanistan are menial labor with minimal income making it hard for men to provide adequately under their standards for their families. They also, as do the female Afghans, believe *Inshallah*—God willing—when they describe their situation, be it economic, health, or other aspects of their lives or environment. Essentially they accept things as they are and do not expect much beyond what they have.

It is not uncommon to see Afghan men holding hands. While that does not in and of itself identify them as homosexuals, male homosexual activity, to varying degrees by tribe, is a fact of life among Afghans. Most U.S. Soldiers will not see these practices during their deployment. If they do, it is imperative that they are trained on how to handle themselves.

- A training scenario available on the CALL website addresses homosexual relationships: “Homosexuality is present and accepted as a norm, but not recognized as an exclusive lifestyle choice. Some males of sexual age engage in sexual activities with each other, but still marry and father children. Physical advances and postures that might be considered affectionate in Western cultures, such as hugging very tightly, holding hands, cuddling, flirting looks, are still considered as such in this culture and are signs of coupling activities. There exist hand and arm signals that advertise and invite homosexual encounters. Music and dancing in male groups almost always leads to coupling and sometimes group sex.”

Afghan Women

Afghan women and girls are not free like American women and girls. In Afghanistan, women cannot drive cars, ride bicycles and horses, participate in sports and other social activities, and travel and shop without being accompanied by a male family member. While some Afghan women and girls may work outside their homes, attend school, and have greater freedom of dress and contacts with men other than family members, based on their tribal group’s beliefs and/or practices, you will not see them enjoying the freedoms and doing other things American women and girls routinely do.

Life for most Afghan women is extremely hard. Their life expectancy is 44.39 years as compared to Afghans males, which is 44.04 years. Their freedom of movement is severely restricted. While some may be seen in

public during the day, it is extremely rare to see them in public at night, even with a male family member. In many cases, men even shop for personal items for their wives so that women need not risk their modesty by leaving home. Medical care for women is inadequate if available at all. Conditions in most homes are primitive compared to Western standards. They lack running water and indoor plumbing. The availability of electricity, if they have it at all, is inconsistent. And, they only have modest privacy in their homes as they typically share the same small room with other women and children. The wife of the eldest male is the dominant female. If he has more than one wife, the dominant female would be the first wife.

An Afghan woman is considered to be the property of her husband, or father, or in their absence another male member of her family. Under some tribal laws, an Afghan woman cannot own property or receive an inheritance, whereas in other tribes she can. Marriages may be arranged, often to settle a debt or to secure an alliance. When they do marry, it is usually within their extended family, sometimes to first cousins. Rarely do they marry outside their tribe or sub-tribe.

Afghan men are expected to protect their women's honor, the same as they protect their home and property. Failure to do so makes them men without honor, which is socially unacceptable.

Within the family household, multiple generations and their families, cousins, widowed and unmarried females, possibly additional wives, and elderly grandparents can often be found living together in a single compound. Interestingly, if the grandfather is still active, he typically controls all expenditures even if he is no longer the wage earner.

An Afghan man may encounter or see a woman outside his extended family in public if there is no conflict or potential for conflict between families living in the same area. If there is such conflict, Afghan women are kept within their home's walled compound. Consequently, Afghan women are not active participants in the insurgency unless used as shields to protect insurgents.

Because of their very restricted role in tribal society and the prohibition on contact with men outside their immediate family, Afghan women will have very limited to no opportunities for contact with male U.S. Soldiers. However, female members of the U.S. military can meet with Afghan women. The best advice for male U.S. Soldiers is to have nothing to do with Afghan women—pretend they do not exist.

As with every rule, there are exceptions. That is true with Afghan women, especially in Kabul and other urban areas where expatriate women have

returned from the United States, Germany, Pakistan, and other countries. While away from Afghanistan, these women experienced freedoms and opportunities for education, careers, and personal growth. Many are in leadership roles in commercial enterprises, government and politics, are entrepreneurs, are working in professions such as women's medicine, or actively working for women's freedom and opportunities that come with such freedom.

Burqa

You will see many Afghan women in rural areas, and less in urban areas, wearing the *burqa*. The *burqa* is a loose-fitting garment; it is normally light blue, but could be other colors depending on the cloth available. It usually covers the entire body with a mesh panel that allows the eyes to see. It is a symbol of oppression, expression of beliefs, or protection. It has been worn voluntarily for centuries by Afghan women who wished to conform to Islamic standards of modesty. However, it is not required by the Muslim faith, only by some extremist Muslim groups such as the Taliban, in which case it is used as a tool to oppress women. Some husbands may require the women in their family to wear the *burqa* in public to preserve their beauty for his eyes only.

Occasionally, Afghan women wear the *burqa* because it provides protection from dust to keep clothing clean. For example, they wear it to and from work. The *burqa* also gives them privacy, allowing them to hide their identity. Unfortunately, it may also be worn by males who wish to hide their gender identity, and occasionally by women, with the intent of attacking coalition forces with hidden weapons or explosives.

Religion

Afghanistan is an Islamic country—virtually 100 percent of Afghans are devout Muslims. Islam permeates their beliefs and daily lives. However, like the Protestant faith, Islam has specific faith groups—Sunnis, Shia, Sufi, and multiple derivatives of each—and religious conflicts due to their differences.

“Islam is so all pervading an element that there is little religiosity, little fervor, and no regard for externals. Do not think from their conduct that they are careless. Their conviction of the truth of their faith, and its share in every act and thought and principle of their daily life is as intimate and intense as to be unconscious, unless roused by opposition. Their religion is as much a part of nature to them as is sleep or food.”

—T. E. Lawrence
Lawrence of Arabia

Islamic spiritual leaders in Afghanistan are very effective in influencing opinions but are not necessarily local leaders. Those who serve as *imams* (scholars), teachers, and clerics have varying levels of education and knowledge of Islam. Most U.S. military personnel will not come into contact with these individuals. They could come into contact with a village *mullah*, the local religious leader. *Mullahs*, while generally uneducated, do have the ability to influence local opinions, and for this reason can play a critical role in counterinsurgency operations.

There are five pillars to Islam which you will see observed in varying degrees. They are:

- Testimony of faith—Allah is the one true god and Muhammad is his prophet.
- Prayer—five times per day facing Mecca.
- Fasting during the month of Ramadan—a form of self-purification.
- Charity—caring for the poor.
- Pilgrimage to Mecca (*Haji*)—once in a Muslim’s lifetime.

The Islamic mosque is the center for public worship. It may be very ornate and impressive in its outward appearance, such as the Eid Gah Mosque in Kabul, or it may be a simple sun-baked mud hut in a remote village. In any case, there are several basic rules to follow in regards to a mosque:

- Never enter unless invited.
- Remove your shoes before entering.
- Never enter with a weapon of any type.

(**Note:** U.S. Soldiers are prohibited from entering mosques.)

Muslims have two sources of Islam. One is the *Quran* and the other is the *Hadith*. The *Quran* is the holy book of the Islamic faith. Muslims believe it to be the actual words of God given directly to the Prophet Mohammed. They further believe it must not be mishandled as Christians would the Bible. To do so, especially if the action or perceived action appears to disrespect the Quran, may result in a violent response by the Muslims.

The *Hadith* is a narrative record of the sayings or customs of the Prophet Mohammad or his companions. The *Hadith*, originally passed orally from generation to generation, was collected and written beginning in the mid-700s AD. Interestingly the different Islamic faiths recognize their own specific interpretation and not the others. This too can lead to conflict between the Islamic faiths.

The following guidelines will assist you in respecting the practices of Islam:⁵

- Never attempt to interrupt prayers.
- If you must pass a man praying, pass at a respectful distance.
- Do not walk between a man praying and Mecca—always walk behind him.
- Never spit or urinate towards the West in the presence of Afghans—that is the direction of Mecca from Afghanistan and doing so is hugely disrespectful.
- If you are sleeping in a bivouac with Afghan soldiers, sleep with your head pointed towards Mecca—never your feet.
- Be considerate during Ramadan—if you are in the presence of Afghans, do not eat or drink in public or offer them food or water. They cannot take it. Take your meal or drink privately.
- Do not touch *Qurans* or prayer rugs. If giving these as gifts to local Mosques, let Afghan government personnel handle them.
- There are many recommendations regarding what to do with the dead, including the Taliban. The best recommendation is to leave them, including the Taliban, and let the closest village know where they are located. The Afghans will take the initiative and properly handle the remains.

Afghans are very interested in our religion. Do not be afraid to talk about your religion to Afghans, but do not initiate the conversation. They recognize the Old Testament, Moses, and Abraham as do Christians.

Education

In Afghanistan, as in most societies, vast differences exist between geography, cultures, generations, and financial abilities. In most areas of Afghanistan, girls do not go to school and in many rural areas boys do not go to school. In the more modern urban areas such as Kabul, many children, boys and girls, do attend school. Boys usually wear Western-style pants and shirts or the Afghan male pants with long over-shirt. Afghan girls wear black, ankle-length dresses with white head scarves. Interestingly, the Afghan Ministry of Finance even has a daycare for preschool age children.

Some Afghan boys go to boarding schools called *madradas* where they learn to read and write, and to recite the *Quran*. Science and math may also be taught.

Colleges, universities, vocational/technical schools, and English schools are available for those who can afford to attend, as are higher education opportunities in other countries. In numerous cases, Afghan colleges and universities are partnering with Western schools that offer the same courses of study and research as a means of furthering their educational offerings. At least one Afghan university is working with a U.S. agribusiness development team to train its interns in agribusiness skills.

Younger, more-educated Afghans are much more open not only to change, but in assisting in creating change. It is interesting to see areas where there are significant changes in the attitude and capabilities of specific groups. This has been observed in Kabul among young educated Afghans working in the ministries and in the rural areas of eastern Afghanistan by agribusiness development team members. Young Afghans in Kabul are interested in raising their families in a peaceful and secure environment, with opportunities for education, careers, travel, and modern medical care.

Endnotes

1. Stephen Tanner, "Indomitable Afghanistan," *Military History Magazine*, August/September 2009.
2. Image obtained from the Hope for Afghanistan website.
3. Afghanistan Operational Culture for Deploying Personnel, U.S. Marine Corps Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning, May 2009.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.

Section II: Economics

Afghanistan is economically a very poor country that has been further devastated by more than three decades of war. It is landlocked and very much dependent on foreign aid and imports. It lacks industry for the manufacture of exportable goods. Afghanistan lacks housing, electricity, clean water, irrigation systems, medical care, transportation systems, jobs, and security. Massive numbers of returning refugees, regardless of tribal affiliation, have flooded urban areas seeking the basics for survival—food, clothing, and shelter. Tourism is basically non-existent. Many Afghans maintain a hand-to-mouth existence.

Agriculture is a large portion of the economy, but farmers in many cases have been reduced to basically subsistence farming. Irrigation systems and orchards have been destroyed. Storage and transportation of any surplus products are unreliable. Fertile fields that once produced food for consumption and export now produce record crops of poppies making Afghanistan the world's largest exporter of opium. Indications are that the Taliban is supporting and enforcing the production of poppies to fund its insurgency.

While Afghanistan is rich in natural resources, it lacks the capacity to mine and process them. Consequently, the GIRA is selling mining and processing rights to foreign investors. Much of its once vast forests have been illegally harvested without reforestation, resulting in almost irreversible changes to the ecological system and weather patterns.

* * *

The Quiet Success of National Guard Agribusiness Development Teams in Afghanistan

COL Martin A. Leppert, Army National Guard

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I have looked across the epic desolation of the Afghan landscape many times, pondering the country's future and how the collective power of the United States and its allies can be brought to bear to bring this ancient land back from the abyss of feudalism and chaos. Recent global conflicts continue to spark changes in military doctrine and training methodologies. Forward-thinking in their approach, these new concepts are deeply rooted in lessons learned from periods of conflict and reconstruction throughout history. Thus a look back at our proud military heritage reaps valuable knowledge applicable today in the fight for the hearts and minds of the Afghan people.

In 2002, I took part in a joint combined military exercise conducted on the Japanese island of Hokkaido. Despite cold, gray days and lightly falling snow, I could not help but notice the striking similarities between the Japanese rural landscape and the southern Wisconsin farm region where I grew up. Familiar Midwestern-style farms with ceramic silos, barns, and dairy cows all reminded me of the toils of my American youth.

Noting the commonalities, I asked a Japanese officer if he knew of Hokkaido's early development; his response was a revelation. In the late 19th century and during post-World War II occupation, development

advisors from the U.S. Army, academia, and the private sector poured into Japan. Journeymen from America's heartland particularly reshaped the agribusiness sector of Hokkaido. Together these outsiders partnered to profoundly influence every facet of a nation's rebirth. I shelved that bit of information regarding Japan until fate—and the Army—ordered me to southern Afghanistan in 2006 as an embedded training brigade commander and senior advisor to an Afghan army brigade.

Throughout my tour, I experienced firsthand how decades of civil war and conflict with the Soviet Union devastated the once prosperous fields, farms, herds, and remotest villages of the inner valleys and rural plains. In the late 1970s, Afghanistan had a sustainable agriculture economy that provided for its population and competed in international markets. Soviet occupation strategy targeted *mujahedin* support among this very infrastructure. Scorch-and-burn tactics decimated the land and effectively incapacitated formerly profitable agrarian livelihoods. The Soviets incinerated and poisoned orchards and destroyed ancient canal systems and wells critical to irrigation.

Combined with the natural effects of drought, these led even the toughest Afghans to flee centuries-old hereditary homesteads for Soviet-controlled urban areas. Refugees also migrated to neighboring countries and the United States, creating a drain of generational knowledge still affecting Afghanistan. Inevitably, Soviet strategy failed, their troops withdrew, and the resultant systemic void left the door wide open for the emergence of corrupt warlords, the extremist Taliban and, ultimately, an influx of drug traders with their seed of choice—the poppy. Afghans struggling to survive and subsist quickly succumbed to the easy, low-knowhow, high-profit crop. The poppy invaded Afghanistan, supplanting traditional and indigenous staple harvests, and became the illicit cash crop of insurgency.

Engaging an unconventional enemy requires unconventional solutions. Upon my return from Afghanistan, Lieutenant General Clyde Vaughn, then director of the Army National Guard, approached me with a novel idea for establishing teams of National Guard members uniquely equipped with civilian expertise in agribusiness. Our National Guard personnel represent a diverse and unique pool of military and civilian skill sets.

Like generations of citizen-soldiers and airmen before them, members of today's Guard are mature, responsible, versatile, competitive, and entrepreneurial. Many who muster in hail from jobs associated with agribusiness. The practical expertise of the production farmer, the agriculture education instructor, and the agronomy researcher simultaneously serving in uniform is a very positive force-multiplier for the current mission in Afghanistan.

These “agrarian warriors” were raised in and have worked in a sector that requires developing technical knowledge and building supplier and marketer partnerships to stay competitive in a global economy. With time and patience, they can—and are—transferring those skills to Afghan farmers.

Lieutenant General Vaughn understood that regenerating agribusiness is critical to neutralizing extremist influence and enabling a self-sustaining Afghanistan. Bottom line: Agriculture determines whether Afghanistan flourishes or fails, and National Guard agribusiness development teams (ADTs) would ensure that success.

“Agriculture,” Afghan Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL) Mohammad Asif Rahimi has averred, “is the dominant factor in the Afghan economy, in food security, in livelihoods, sustainable resources, and national security.”

The versatile citizen-soldier and airman could deploy, establish good relationships with farmers and villagers, and begin to revitalize the agricultural sector of Afghanistan. The reliance on ADTs is critical in initial phase development. For agile team members are not only agriculture experts, but are also military professionals able to secure hostile areas of operation; this is a full spectrum capability not yet actualized in civilian counterparts.

In a November interview, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates articulated the unique capabilities that only the Guard brings to this stability mission: “It seems to me [it is] often the situation where the Guard and the expertise in the Guard can provide the initial response in areas in Afghanistan until the security situation is stabilized enough for the civilians to come in.” This joint operation hinges on precision warriors who ensure full access and the ability to reach out and make a difference deep in the wild and remote river valleys of the country.

Use of military personnel for ADT missions is part of the overarching counterinsurgency strategy designed to protect locals, improve their lives, and unfetter them from extremist influence. This strategy is based on a pragmatic assessment of the global security interests of the United States and our belief that representative national governance and a sustainable economy in Afghanistan are essential to success in the region. A centralized, effective government lessens support for insurgents and reduces the pool of unemployed men from which extremist groups recruit. It further undergirds governmental authority and the capacity to provide basic services. To this end, rebuilding the farm sector is imperative.

In the 21st-century security environment, the whole-of-government approach is the way to effectively prevent and deter conflict around the globe. ADTs implement this interagency strategy through partnerships with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Agency for International Development, U.S. land grant colleges and universities, the Afghan national and provincial governments, Afghan farmers and businesses, and nongovernmental organizations. This collective endeavor provides training, rebuilds Afghanistan's agribusiness sector and MAIL capacity, and enables a viable economy capable of providing for Afghans.

Seeing Afghanistan's natural condition as a perpetual state of war and conflict is understandable, but it is not correct. It is just as easy, and just as wrong, to think Americans lack common bonds with the Afghan people. Our National Guard ADTs clearly lock into a shared agrarian connection, working hard with Afghans to grow not just crops but also trust and hope in remote regions. Theater requirements for the mission initiated from Headquarters, Combined Joint Task Force–Afghanistan. The National Guard Bureau (NGB), in a collaborative effort with the Army, structured teams of approximately 58 Soldiers and Airmen to provide training and advice to Afghan universities, provincial MAIL employees, Afghan agriculture extension agents and, most importantly, local farmers. Together they formulate a five-year agricultural development plan. ADTs use their developed educational farms to conduct training programs to introduce sustainable-agriculture practices.

All National Guard ADT projects are planned and executed in a combined effort with the provincial directors of agriculture, irrigation and livestock [DAIL] using local labor. These efforts produce not just an achievable, legal subsistence but also long-term relationships, building capability and professionalism at all levels of Afghan agribusiness. Additional partnerships with Afghan universities will further bridge ties with U.S. land-grant universities, similar to [the] historical cooperative efforts in Japan.

After more than two years working in some of the harshest, most volatile areas of Afghanistan, the progress of both the ADTs and Afghan farmers is evident. NGB has supported 18 ADTs on 11-month rotations, with 1,080 National Guard members deployed. To date, teams have collectively trained more than 2,115 farmers and 435 Afghan agriculture extension agents in various agriculture best practices and have provided practical learning experiences to 1,600 Afghan agriculture students.

Simultaneous with the education focus of the ADT mission, Guard members work to improve basic agriculture infrastructure. Teams have supervised construction of 282 check dams to reduce erosion, control release of mountain snowmelt, and improve quality and quantity of water in irrigation canal systems.

They have overseen construction of multiple cool-storage facilities to better stock fresh produce and help multiple slaughter facilities preserve more wholesome, sanitary meat products. The ADTs have also worked with Afghan farmers to plant more than 1,000 *jeribs* of grape plants, properly trellised, and irrigated with trickle irrigation systems. (Note: 2 *jeribs* = 1 acre).

While the increase of 30,000 American troops attracts media attention, a surge of civilian agriculture expertise in Afghanistan is also occurring. U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan Karl W. Eikenberry told Congress in December that he is marching in lockstep with military commanders to put a civilian strategy in place: “We aim to increase employment and provide essential services in areas of greatest insecurity, and to improve critical ministries and the economy at the national level. ... Our overarching goal is to encourage good governance ... so Afghans see the benefits of supporting the legitimate government and the insurgency loses support.”

In all likelihood, current ADT structure will make the transition from military to more civilian-centric, with a core of civilian and military agriculture advisors in support of the greater effort. This whole-of-government approach focuses on improving key ministries. This is achieved by increasing the number of technical advisors and providing more direct development assistance so that the ministries, in turn, can stand up and take over.

Efforts will be bolstered by *in situ* rule of law, including law-enforcement institutions fighting corruption, organized crime and drug trafficking.

More than 370 years ago, the call to duty beckoned the first American citizen-soldiers away from farms and families. Leaving plows in fields, they picked up muskets and forged a new nation. The fruit of their labor is now a global superpower possessing the world’s most technically advanced agricultural economy. Today the modern citizen-soldier and -airman have been asked yet again to step forward, away from farmsteads; take up arms; and volunteer to facilitate the rebirth of a nation—this time, Afghanistan.

As always, America’s citizen-soldiers and airmen, men and women from 54 states and territories, stand ready to serve and support one of the most unique and successful missions in Central Asia: American farmers reaching out to Afghan farmers through a common bond to harvest freedom from a once fallow land. Soldier in war, citizen in peace, this is America’s National Guard at its best.

————— End of article —————

Another facet of the Afghan economy is the donated money and other forms of aid from numerous countries to assist Afghanistan in revitalizing its economy. Vast amounts of money have flowed into the country in the last eight years and new construction is readily evident in Kabul and other more stable urban areas. Unfortunately, much of this aid is unregulated and has come into the possession of a small portion of the population.

The net result of the vast sums of money from opium and foreign investment is a country with a vast gap between those who have and those who have not, and an economy impacted through graft, corruption, and cronyism. Unfortunately, it is no different than other countries and other peoples regardless of where they live.

Graft, Corruption, and Cronyism

“There have to be significant steps taken on the part of President Karzai and other leaders in Afghanistan to eliminate corruption.”

—Admiral Mike Mullen
Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

“Afghan is the second-most corrupt nation in the world, with public sector corruption worsening for the second consecutive year. ... Examples of corruption range from public posts for sale and justice for a price to daily bribing for basic services,” according to Transparency International, the global civil society organization leading the fight against corruption in Afghanistan.

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID)—Afghanistan report titled *Assessment of Corruption in Afghanistan*, for the period 15 January 2009–1 March 2009 stated:

Corruption has become a system, through networks of corrupt practices and people that reaches across the whole of government to subvert governance. Particularly perniciously, these networks ensure that the guilty are not brought to justice; often the officials and agencies that are supposed to be part of the solution to corruption are instead a critical part of the corruption syndrome.

Before we further address corruption, what you just read is based on non-Afghan cultural beliefs and social acceptance of corruption. Western culture and Afghan culture are not the same. Western culture is a blend of many cultures, especially in the United States, which is referred to as a “melting pot” of people from all over the world. The Afghan culture is unique. It is

made up of a multitude of centuries old, diverse cultures, mostly separated by mountains, and only blended in the larger urban areas.

Since the beginning of time, people living in what we know today as Afghanistan have bartered for the things they needed or wanted. Afghans today continue to barter, with or without money. Afghans know you cannot get something for nothing, unless you steal it. As you read the following information on corruption, it may be actual corruption, it may be corruption to Western cultural standards, and it may be bartering to Afghan cultural standards. Any way you look at it, bartering and corruption are an established part of Afghan culture.

Causes and Effects of Corruption

Corruption, graft, and cronyism are a way of life in Afghanistan. Afghans see no way out of corruption as it is deeply embedded in their culture. Even statements and promises by President Karzai to fight corruption within the Afghan government are looked on with skepticism.

Abdul Jabar Sabit, a former attorney general, in his efforts to clean up corruption, found it included members of parliament, provincial governors, and cabinet ministers. He requested permission from the Afghan parliament, as required by the country's constitution, for approval to investigate charges against 22 of its members. He says, "Despite all my letters, the issue never made it onto the agenda of either house."

USAID, in its report *Assessment of Corruption in Afghanistan*, stated that "corruption, defined as 'the abuse of public position for private gain' is a significant and growing problem across Afghanistan that undermines security, development, and state and democracy-building objectives". The report further states the following:

- Pervasive, entrenched, and systemic corruption is now at an unprecedented scope in the country's history.
- Thirty years of conflict has weakened underdeveloped state institutions and the country's social fabric.
- Afghanistan's dominant role in worldwide opium and heroin production, and the tremendous size and diversity of international security, humanitarian, and development assistance all increase Afghanistan's vulnerability to corruption.

U.S. Ambassador Karl Eikenberry recently stated that:

Ordinary Afghans must be convinced that the powerful can no longer exploit their positions to make themselves wealthy while the less fortunate in this country struggle to find work and to feed their families. The appearance of luxurious mansions around Kabul, with many expensive cars parked outside, surrounded by private armed guards, is a very worrisome sign that some Afghans are cheating their people while claiming to be in their service.

According to U.S. Coast Guard Captain Steve Anderson, NATO Training Mission–Afghanistan (NTM–A) chief of anti-corruption:

Every society has some level of corruption. In Afghanistan, there is plenty of corruption—it's been determined through surveys, cases, and trials. There are not too many cases where our senior leaders talk about Afghanistan without mentioning some form of corruption. Corruption is a big term. There is no lack of consensus on the fact that corruption needs to be addressed. From what I can tell, it's one of the highest priorities of the coalition and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan."¹

Corruption, according to a captain with recent experience working with the Afghan National Army (ANA) and the Afghan National Police (ANP), is evident in the ANA and ANP per the following examples:

- Trucks given to the ANA were missing the spare tires and jacks.
- New fuel pumps were taken off of the trucks and sold in downtown Kabul. Old fuel pumps were brought back and put on the trucks.
- Issued property was not recorded on property lists and found at the homes of relatives.
- Tools were taken from the maintenance shops and sold.
- Kickbacks were given to the local officials in return for projects.
- Fuel trucks arrived with half of what fuel was bought.
- Afghan soldiers were selling their issued equipment for money.

- Local government officials were pocketing all or part of ANA and ANP soldier pay.
- The ANP consistently shake down or extort the local people for money.
- Citizens paying bribes to government officials for visas to travel abroad.
- All project bids may come from the same person under numerous front companies via relatives. Once a project is started, Afghan contractors may not show up to do the work. If they do, their workers will not have the tools they need and will expect the Americans to supply the tools 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 slowdowns.

Another example of corruption U.S. Soldiers may encounter is the “flipping of contracts.” In this case, each subcontractor “skims” off his share until there is almost no money left for its original intended purpose. Consequently, projects are delayed and the workmanship is less than satisfactory.

An example of the U.S. contributing to corruption is the following from a captain who recently served in Afghanistan:

- A young lieutenant paid \$20,000 for a mud hut to function as a shower for the ANA. The contract was far too much for the work. The contractor put up some rock walls and plumbing, then left with the money. Intelligence later confirmed the money was given to *Hezb-i-Islami Gulbuddin* anti-GIRoA forces that the contractor was working with. The lieutenant was under immense pressure from his battalion commander to spend money, whether the projects worked or not. In this same sector, there were two lieutenants with degrees in engineering and one with extensive civilian experience. Neither one of those two was allowed to work with the Commander’s Emergency Response Program officer even when requested.

Overcoming Corruption

In 2008, the GIRoA created the High Office of Oversight for Anti-corruption to combat corruption. It has:

- Launched a provocative, yet well-received, countrywide TV and radio anti-corruption campaign.
- Created an interactive website that gives Afghan citizens a place to lodge complaints against corrupt activities and government officials.

- Established a corruption complaints office which receives and manages hundreds of written and verbal complaints each week.²

Other actions in place to reduce and/or prevent corruption include:

- The NTM–A approach focuses on building capacity, training, and accountable systems to deter and prevent people from doing corrupt things.
- The NTM–A has a staff of lawyers who mentor the Afghan Ministries of Defense and Interior on anti-corruption measures.
- Payment of Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) electronically via their cell phones to prevent their superior officers from skimming off their salaries.
- Use of blue fuel by the ANSF to identify siphoned government purchased fuel from being sold to non-government purchasers.
- The Afghan Ministry of Defense has a lottery system for selecting students for the National Military Academy to eliminate “who they know or what they paid” students.³

U.S. Soldiers should be:

- Briefed on how to handle projects using their authorized funds.
- Provided with more knowledge on running projects.
- Provided with individual training on plumbing, electrical work, power generation, concrete work, and general construction to better understand what is required to complete projects.

It has taken centuries for corruption to evolve in Afghanistan. It will take a concentrated effort by the people of Afghanistan; the Afghan national, regional, and local leaders; and the nations and institutions involved with assisting Afghanistan to reduce the practices of corruption and punish those who use corruption. This will take much time and may not be possible based on *Pashtunwali*.

However, U.S. Soldiers should not be contributors to the corruption through their own corrupt practices and/or failure to properly provide oversight of the administrative and funding actions to accompany contracting and procurement. Many countries contributing personnel to the coalition forces have established and require the use of internal controls and the requirement for reporting of violations and weaknesses of the internal controls. The use of these controls must be enforced.

Endnotes

1. Fighting Corruption in Afghanistan will take time, Staff Sergeant Rachel Martinez, NATO Training Mission – Afghanistan, U.S. Central Command website.
2. “The Afghanistan High Office of Oversight for Anti-Corruption—A Glimmer of Hope,” The Asia Foundation, 9 September 2009.
3. “Fighting Corruption in Afghanistan Will Take Time,” Staff Sergeant Rachel Martinez, NATO Training Mission—Afghanistan, U.S. Central Command website.

Section III: Government

The Afghan national government consists of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches with the first two elected by the Afghans and the judicial branch appointed by the executive branch with approval of the legislative branch. The Afghan government has varying degrees of presence/influence in the provinces and districts, depending on acceptance by tribal elders and warlords and/or the presence of the Taliban.

In regard to the central government, historically, per the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center—Dari Cultural Orientation, rural Afghans, whatever their ethnicity, generally viewed the state as a potential source of interference in their daily lives, rather than as a source of important resources over which they needed to gain control. Within the cities, a sort of balance evolved among the various groups; in general, Pashtuns made up the armed forces while Dari speakers performed administrative tasks.

Geography

Afghanistan is a landlocked country with a rugged physical environment that isolates communities and tribes. It has roads, from the most primitive to fairly modern, but the latter are limited in the number of miles available. Mountain passes and tunnels are subject to winter storms and avalanches. Unfortunately ongoing warfare sometimes renders these roads unusable, as do dust storms and floods. There are currently no railroads, but one is under construction from Uzbekistan’s border to Mazar-e-Sharif, Afghanistan and is projected to be completed by the end of 2010. Iran is funding a railroad from Herat to the Iran border, but it has met several delays.

Afghan culture is significantly affected by the geography. The geography isolates villages, further subdivides tribes and clans, and makes it even harder for U.S. and coalition forces to learn and understand the cultural

differences, win the support of the Afghan people, promote the GIROA, and defeat the Taliban. Additionally, the geography makes it harder for the Afghan central government to direct provincial and local governments.

Highlanders and Lowlanders

This cultural division is driven by geography and associated environmental conditions. Afghan lowlanders live on the cultivated, irrigated plains on the external edges of the mountains. Afghan highlanders live on the interior sides of the mountains, at various altitudes, on the more marginal lands. Pashtuns living in these environments have a folk saying: “Honor ate up the mountains and taxes ate up the plains.”

The mountainous terrain has proven an effective barrier to most attempts by invaders and the central government to control and influence the people who live there. Highlanders are fiercely proud of their independence and their ability to resist change. This forms a central part of their cultural identity. Unfortunately, this isolation has contributed to the endless cycle of feuds and honor killings.

Lowlanders on the other hand, while having to pay the much hated taxes and abide by external governance, have benefited from better farmlands, agribusiness opportunities, influences and contacts with the outside world, and the changes that accessibility has brought to them. Their cultural identities are impacted by their location as is evident through centuries of association with invading cultures and the efforts by the GIROA to create a national army and a national police force.

In its counterinsurgency mission in Afghanistan, U.S. forces, as shown in the following article, work to gain the local Afghan population’s support of the GIROA.

* * *

Remote Areas of Afghanistan: “Getting a Foot in the Door”

CPT Tim Kelly, U.S. Army

Reprinted with permission from *Armor* magazine. This article was originally published in the March-April 2009 issue of *Armor* magazine.

The tasks to be done require logistical support in the form of funds, equipment, and qualified personnel. These should be made readily available and given with a minimum of red tape. Moreover, the manipulation of this logistical support is a

political act and it must be allocated with a priority in favor of villages or districts where the population is most active on the side of the counterinsurgent.¹

The preceding quote from David Galula's book, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*, summarizes what appears to be an obvious method of distributing support; creates the idea that resources should be given only to local nationals who support the efforts of multinational forces and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (IRoA); and establishes that support should obviously be withheld from villages or people who would simply turn over the supplies to insurgents. Under most circumstances, this approach would be effective; however, what approach would be effective when a unit deploys to an isolated area not knowing what side its local citizens support or if they support any side at all?

There still exist citizens in remote areas of Afghanistan who have not experienced firsthand the effects of unlawful insurgency, and the few who have do not connect these operations with a larger framework. Most of these places are located across from the Tribal Areas in Pakistan, which is convenient for anti-coalition militia (ACM) fighters, who use these villages as way stations and safe havens. The villagers, who identify with these fighters based on tribal alliances or shared Muslim faith, provide aid to the fighters without realizing they are supporting any cause.

Withholding logistics support from such places as a way to "punish" villagers for aiding the insurgency will have absolutely no effect. These people have lived for generations without aid from the IRoA, so denying them aid now will not impact their daily lives in the least. Supplying a neighboring area with support as an example of benefits associated with cooperating with the government does not always seem to work in these outer-lying areas either.

Many villages are geographically located in close proximity, but have nothing to do with each other socially; even two villages composed of the same tribesmen might have severed relationships due to a feud that happened 250 years ago. Choosing one village to serve as an example of "benefits for government cooperation" and neglecting its neighbors will likely cause jealousy in the "have-not" village and push its citizens into the enemy's camp. As far as the have-not villagers are concerned, they did not do anything against the government and are unfairly being discriminated against (Afghanistan's people can think of many things that mark their clan as distinct from every other), so they are forced to join the opposition to that government.

Bringing gifts and distributing them widely, without attached strings, seems to work best when entering a new area in a remote location. In February

2008, in support of Operation Winter Stand V, Anvil Troop traveled to the area around Nakumkheyl Village in the Torah Wrey Valley. Task Force Eagle's intent for Winter Stand was to conduct air assault missions into traditional AMC safe havens when these insurgents were wintering in Pakistan, which would demonstrate to the residents the benefits of supporting the government.

Anvil Troop was met with a hostile reception; shura elders refused Anvil Troop pashtunwali (hospitality) and informed them they were not welcome. For 2 days, Anvil leaders attempted to explain to the elders that they would bring civil affairs projects, new clothes, and food for their people, but the shura members insisted that coalition presence would only bring trouble. It was obvious that two of the elders were influencing the rest, but removing these two influential elders was not an attractive option. Our chances of being accepted by the elders was further damaged by the same two elders when they told the elders that coalition forces were just in the area to arrest innocent individuals who the government unjustly did not like. So, for 2 days Anvil leaders tried in vain to isolate these two elders in an attempt to reason with the rest of the elders, who served as representatives from five different villages in the area.

During the afternoon on the second day, after repeated unsuccessful meetings with shura elders, Anvil Troop and Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) decided to call some curious boys over to the mission support site and give them some shoes. They instructed the boys to tell their parents that the IRoA had sent more supplies, but they must come to the pickup area to get the supplies. The next day, as an element traveled to an area outside the immediate influence of the hostile shura members, the Afghan National Army (ANA) gave out humanitarian civil assistance (HCA) to everyone who wanted it, telling them that more would be distributed at a shura the next day. The villagers were also told that neighboring villages would be invited to the same shura.

If the villagers from the Nakumkheyl Shura did not want their free supplies, then their neighbors were welcome to the unclaimed goods.

There were a large number of attendees at the shura the following day. ANSF and Anvil leaders simply explained that the IRoA had sent HCA and coalition forces as its duty to the people to ensure they survived the winter. There were no accusations of ACM activity and no one was asked to swear any oaths of allegiance. The two truckloads of HCA were then distributed evenly to everyone in attendance, which supported the position that the government in Kabul was real and its job was to serve the people. Suddenly, the shura elders who had spread negative stories about the coalition did not seem so credible.

Many of the villagers began to view the troublemakers as a hindrance to their rights, depriving them of necessities. Another shura was held by the sub-governor of Bermel a few days later and attendance was doubled. When the troublemakers tried to impede the process, the sub-governor had them arrested for not agreeing to attend the Bermel Shura at least once a month. The villagers did not protest the arrest because it now appeared justified; it was a government official removing individuals who were irrationally interfering with events that would benefit the average person.

By simply giving away supplies at the beginning of the week, Anvil Troop showed the villagers that they were being denied something they did not even know they wanted or needed. Also, by distributing HCA with no initial strings attached, Anvil Troop created the impression that goods distribution was normal in a country run by the IRoA.

The villagers saw the goods as items they wanted, needed, and later deserved, and accepted them without realizing what HCA represents in a political context. The IRoA's free distribution of the HCA, as opposed to using the goods as a bribe to compel villagers to support the government, made the villagers de facto supporters of the government. It created a situation where villagers began to rely on simple gifts that made their lives better, and realize that these benefits were provided by the IRoA. The ACM, however, viewed the acceptance of anything from the IRoA as a political act, but could not do anything about it without negatively affecting its information management campaign.

As seen in many villages in Afghanistan, the ACM's only counter-tactic to free distribution of HCA is to force villagers to destroy the goods given to them. In the eyes of the villagers, they were asked to destroy mosque rugs, cooking oils, children's clothing, and food rightfully belonging to them—for a cause with which they never agreed. This forced the ACM into an outsider role, attempting to dictate the villagers' behavior, and as a result, coalition forces became the agents of maintaining the status quo.

The system currently in place by Task Force Eagle serves as an effective method to enable company commanders to use the valuable tool of HCA. Basically, a company can stockpile as much HCA as it needs to have goods available when visiting a village. Commanders should ensure they have plenty of HCA on hand at all times in the event a local leader engagement develops during a mission. During revisits to villages the company should redistribute HCA, which will remind villagers that such visits are beneficial and will reduce the probability of the coalition being attacked on its way to the villages. If the ACM does attack the coalition, the villagers will resent these attacks and the ACM because it is preventing the delivery of goods.

The free distribution of HCA is just the first step; it simply allows the company a “foot in the door.” To have a lasting effect, the coalition must quickly escalate civil affairs involvement to begin building projects, which will develop the area by providing infrastructure, employment, and closer ties to the government in Kabul. If a company limits itself to distributing HCA as a nonlethal offensive, it will simply be creating a welfare economy in an area, which will not bring the population into the IRoA’s orbit.

Villagers will continue to accept HCA, which means they are passively supporting the government, but will never be forced to actively support it. If the coalition places caveats on HCA distribution, the Afghans will then resent the government and become suspicious of coalition efforts. However, if there is evidence of a village actively supporting the ACM, the HCA will be withheld as punishment, but the villagers understand the concrete cause and effect. Afghans do not like to be manipulated and to arbitrarily change the rules of the game results in their distrust of coalition motives, causing them to refuse contact with the coalition and return to the way of life they have lived for thousands of years. On the other hand, withholding HCA without a concrete reason will create a vacuum that the ACM can quickly fill. If a village disassociates from the coalition and refuses to accept HCA, the ACM can simply move in and provide the same items, or cash, to the villagers so they can continue to enjoy the benefits to which they have become accustomed.

Although HCA distribution introduces villagers to a better way of living, it does not intertwine their well-being with the success of the IRoA. Infrastructure development projects, on the other hand, can do just that if they are awarded judiciously. These projects also have the benefit of offering a means of long-term quality of life improvements that the ACM does not have the resources to replicate.

Infrastructure development projects are powerful weapons in a counterinsurgency environment. For example, building a school in a village demonstrates that the government is working for the people and it has the capability to accomplish big projects. Once the project is completed, however, it does nothing more to bring the villagers into the sphere of the IRoA. In effect, the project becomes just an elaborate HCA distribution: the village gets something it did not have and is grateful, but once the project is complete the villagers can choose to ignore the IRoA and coalition. Of course, the government does not have the option of taking back the new school. If the ACM does something foolish, such as destroy the school, the villagers might turn against them; on the other hand, it may plant the idea that the government cannot protect the village.

If local leaders are involved from the beginning of the project, they are obligated to support the government. By having elders nominate projects and recommend contractors, they are publicly viewed as working for the government. The elders can ensure their villagers are hired to work on the project, giving them a vested interest.

At this point, if the ACM destroys the project, the villagers will see it as a direct attack on their village and not on the government. Eventually, however, the ACM will destroy the projects because the building of infrastructure means the government is acting as a legitimate entity, which makes the ACM illegitimate. Another added benefit for the government is the elders will become targets for the ACM, based on their involvement with a project, requiring them to get even closer to the IRoA for protection.

Initially, this scenario was difficult to create in Afghanistan because the system was not set up for a company to move into an area and employ locals to build projects. Typically, the company would move into an area and request projects, which the battalion civil affairs team would oversee, but they could not select the contractor. The contracting office, interested in ensuring the government's money was spent on quality work, chose contractors with whom they were familiar. These contractors were not from the company's operational area, which caused some problems with the locals, and diminished the positive effects of using local contractors to complete the work.

As stated before, a civil affairs project built without the input and participation of local elders is nothing more than an expensive HCA distribution. All contracts require contractors to hire local workers; however, the village shura realizes the real money is made by the contractor so they may not allow their villagers to work for outside contractors. The Afghans feel they do not need to prove themselves to get contracts; if they get a contract and fail to complete it correctly, then outsiders can be brought in without hard feelings, but the villagers feel they should be given the first chance when building anything on their lands. The villagers in our operational area did not accept the new projects built by outsiders as an improvement to their lives; they viewed it as the government giving their money to someone else. They would reluctantly accept the project, but the practice of higher headquarters letting contracts did not maximize the effects civil affairs projects would have. To facilitate maximum effects, Task Force Eagle's civil affairs team participated in creating a new policy that opened up contract bidding to local villagers.

Only time will tell if the villagers can actually do a good job with the projects, but the new policy had an immediate positive effect on how local villagers participated with the government process. The villagers began visiting the shuras to ask about upcoming projects and suggesting their own projects to increase their chances of getting contracts.

Once local villagers realize the benefits associated with working with coalition forces, stipulations can be placed on the aid they are provided. For example, the company can negotiate in areas such as forcing two sub-tribes to cooperate on planning and executing projects; tying the number of awarded projects to a decrease in improvised explosive device (IED) activity; or asking the villagers to prove their support by providing soldiers and police to the government.

The first step, however, is to ensure they are given a free taste of HCA benefits at first contact so they know what they have been missing.

Endnotes

1. David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*, Praeger Security International, 30 August 2006.

Section IV: Conclusion

Culture influences the shaping of operations, both yours and the Afghan's. It is critical that you have knowledge and an understanding of the Afghan culture. It is diverse, it is complex, and it varies from village to village. Recently, two Task Force Currahee company commanders addressed this topic.

- “Know the culture of the area you are responsible for, and understand that it may be completely different from that of your brother commanders.”
- “The population is the center of gravity in a counterinsurgency.” And “those who do not see the Afghans as humans were generally a hindrance. Develop relationships with the idea that they are going to be life-long.”¹

U.S. Soldiers have many opportunities to work with and get to know Afghans, possibly even building lasting friendships. Remember, although you will only be in Afghanistan for a short period of time, you were sent there to assist the GIRoA and the people of Afghanistan. The insurgent threat and the counterinsurgent response is people against people, and culture against culture. Your success hinges on knowing, understanding, and applying culture of the Afghans to your actions.

Endnotes

1. Company Commanders' Forum, *Army Magazine*, Association of the U.S. Army, December 2010.

Chapter 5

Afghan Culture and Language Training

“This training on culture, politics and economics is not only critical; it is the most critical. ...It’s all about relationships.”

—Lieutenant General H. Steven Blum
Former Chief, National Guard Bureau
Former Commanding General MND–N, SFOR

“An Army of strangers in the midst of strangers.”

—Lieutenant General David Petraeus
Commander, Multinational Security Transition Command

Both Lieutenant Generals Blum and Petraeus recognized the two elements of the environment in which U.S. Soldiers were operating: relationships and strangers. They targeted training as the means to prepare Soldiers to understand and know how to employ culture in relationship building to eliminate the stranger stigma.

U.S. Soldiers, especially those with “boots on the ground,” if they hope to achieve success in their areas of operations, must know and understand the culture of the local population and have some basic skills in using the language of the local Afghans. Thus, before their boots hit the ground, they must receive cultural and language training.

Understanding the culture and language of the population within their operational environment is vital for several reasons as Soldiers prepare for and conduct operations:

- Building rapport.
- Enabling force protection.
- Establishing networks of relationships.
- Conducting key leader engagements and meetings with the local population.

- Ensuring appropriate conversation.
- Reducing potential for miscommunication.
- Accepting and returning hospitality.
- Learning acceptable dining etiquette.
- Relating to local children.
- Giving gifts.
- Detaining individuals.
- Searching individuals and property.
- Entering and searching mosques.

U.S. Soldiers are aware of their own culture as it relates to each of the above items. Unfortunately, what is acceptable to U.S. Soldiers may not be acceptable to the culture of the local population. Thus these Soldier's intentions, while being good, may be counterproductive.

To ensure Soldiers know and understand the culture of the people in the area they are preparing to enter, Soldiers and their commanders need to participate in cultural training specific to that area. This can be accomplished in a classroom environment, via the Internet, and through practical exercises. However it is done, it must be done. And while they are at it, Soldiers and their commanders must not neglect learning key words and phrases of the language within the area they will operate.

Section I: Predeployment Training

The best time to receive cultural and language training is during pre-deployment preparations. But, as necessary, it should continue throughout the deployment as Soldiers grow in their knowledge of local customs and cultural norms.

The U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) established the TRADOC Culture Center to provide the U.S. Army with mission-focused culture education and training. The TRADOC Culture Center is located at the U.S. Army Intelligence Center, Fort Huachuca, AZ. The TRADOC Culture Center's mission includes training all units and

Soldiers preparing to deploy, and enabling all institutional organizations to effectively educate and train culture. The TRADOC Culture Center:

- Develops culture education and training support packages.
- Conducts culture education and training as part of professional military education.
- Conducts culture training via transition teams and embedded training teams.

In January 2010, TRADOC issued the second edition of its *Afghan Smart Book*. The purpose of the smart book is to ensure U.S. Army personnel have a relevant, comprehensive guide to use in capacity building and counterinsurgency operations while deployed in Afghanistan. The smart book is an excellent resource for other military and civilian personnel deploying to Afghanistan.

The TRADOC Culture Center's website is <<https://icon.army.mil/apps/tccv2/>> (requires Army Knowledge Online [AKO] logon). The website provides a list of contacts, culture education and training, culture center documents and pictures, and culture center links.

The U.S. Marine Corps has established the Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning (CAOCL) to provide regional, operational culture, and language knowledge through training and education, to plan and operate in the joint expeditionary environment. In May 2009, CAOCL issued its guide *Afghanistan Operational Culture for Deploying Personnel*. This guide provides basic Afghan cultural training. CAOCL's website is <<http://www.tecom.usmc.mil/caocl/>>.

There are two other excellent sources of Afghan culture and language training:

- Naval Postgraduate School's Leader Development and Education for Sustained Peace Program (LDESP).
- The U.S. Army Forces Command (FORSCOM) message on the Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL) website, *FORSCOM Training Guidance for Follow-on Forces Deploying to ISO (in support of) Southwest Asia (SWA)*. Go to <<http://call.army.mil>> website and click the <Log In> button (left side at the top). Log in will require an Army Knowledge Online/Defense Knowledge Online account. After you have logged in, select the <CALL's FORSCOM Message> link (right side in the middle). Click <view the full FORSCOM message> option and then go to <LANGUAGE> in the alphabetical section of *Key Topics from "Training Guidance*

for *SWA*.” Scroll down to 2.P.1.F, then scroll down to OEF. There you will find material on both Dari and Pashtu. You can view the Dari and Pashtu words that correspond to the English words and by clicking on the play button you can hear the words spoken.

* * *

Cultural Awareness and WOT

Dr. Dorothy Guy Bonvillain

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Note: Although this article addresses Iraq, its lessons apply to Afghanistan.

A tense encounter with a frenzied crowd in Najaf during Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) I began spiraling out of control with no apparent way out of direct conflict. The U.S. Army battalion commander then ordered his troops to “Take a knee, point your rifles at the ground and smile.” Next, he ordered them to “Stand, turn your backs on the crowd and walk away.”

His informed directives saved lives. In the Arab culture, a blank face indicates hostility while a smiling face conveys friendship. The Soldiers’ turning their backs on the crowd showed trust. Because of their commander’s knowledge of Arab culture, the Soldiers were able to defuse this dangerous situation.

CNN caught this now famous incident on tape and aired it, hailing these Soldiers as “heroes of war” who saved American and Iraqi lives by demonstrating their valor and restraint. The commander of that unit, 2nd Battalion, 327th Infantry (2-327 IN), 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), then Lieutenant Colonel Christopher P. Hughes, clearly made his command decision based on cultural intelligence.¹

Military commanders increasingly are becoming aware of the critical link between cultural intelligence and success in the contemporary operating environment (COE). For Field Artillerymen (FA) serving in FA, maneuver, or other nontraditional units in the War on Terrorism (WOT), cultural awareness enhances their ability to conduct operations with Arabs or other foreigners. This is especially true not only for commanders at all levels, but also for those who serve on fire support teams (FISTs), as fire support officers (FSOs), and effects coordinators (ECOORDs), coordinating and conducting nonlethal effects, such as information operations (IO), and civil-military operations (CMO).

Even so, we at the Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) Culture Center at Fort Huachuca, Arizona, still hear the argument that training for the unit mission allows little or no time for cultural awareness training. Another argument is that “War is war! We are in WOT to keep terrorists off U.S. turf!”

This article discusses the importance of cultural awareness training for WOT, the needs and priorities of the Iraqi people in comparison with Americans’, and techniques to demonstrate cultural awareness and most effectively execute the mission. Some of these basic techniques include identifying leaders, respecting elders, and socializing with Arab contacts.

If we listened to our military transition teams (MiTTs), border transition teams (BTTs), and special police transition teams (SPTTs) returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, we clearly would hear the message that cultural awareness training is important. They say that cultural training would have better informed them and facilitated their missions—but training was either nonexistent or deficient before they deployed.

For example, see the article “So, You’re Going to be on a MiTT. What Do You Need to Know?” by Captain Jared R. Kite, et al, in the November-December 2006 edition of *Field Artillery* magazine. This article discusses the team’s lessons learned in Mosul and the relevance of “soft cultural skills” to their mission.

TRADOC’s Operations Order (OPORD) 05-123A for Professional Military Education (PME), October 2005, identifies cultural awareness training as one of TRADOC’s top three training initiatives. In response, the Culture Center developed training about Iraqi and Afghan values, beliefs, behaviors, norms, ancient history, culture, and religion. The ultimate goal is for this training to make Soldiers more aware of cultural differences and treat the Iraqis and Afghans with dignity and respect, making the Soldiers more effective in WOT deployments.

The fact is that cultural awareness enhances Soldiers’ understanding of Arab insurgents and noncombatant population, and facilitates situational awareness in both lethal and nonlethal operations. Situational awareness translates into more informed decision making, ultimately saving Soldiers’ lives. Some of the benefits of cultural awareness training are outlined in Figure 1.

Benefits of Cultural Awareness:

- Protects and saves lives—American and host national.
- Enables Soldiers and leaders to accomplish their tasks and missions more effectively.
- Produces long-term relationships versus short-term gains.
- Improves diplomatic relations by decreasing social blunders.
- Enables a more seamless unit replacement process (relief-in-place) in country.
- Reduces operational costs and the loss of equipment.
- Increases overall situational awareness and effective decision making.

Figure 1. Benefits of Cultural Awareness

Culture within Context and by Comparison. While visiting the TRADOC Culture Center in the fall of 2006, now Colonel Hughes emphasized that, for any area of the world, identity is culture. Within any culture, knowing the people is the “center of gravity” for influencing the people—the goal of any counterinsurgency.

Colonel Hughes discussed “Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs”²² and revised the hierarchy to compare the Iraqi and U.S. cultures, as shown in Figure 2. The hierarchy on the left for Iraq is the more traditional hierarchy. Iraq is a nation with a recently deposed dictator and an infant democracy, so the figure shows a natural progression of the people’s concerns and time spent to secure first their physical needs (food, shelter, water, and clothing) and then to feel safe. People must satisfy these basic needs before they can move on to socializing and establish enough confidence and status, or esteem, to self-actualize—become creative, independent self-starters who can maximize their human potential.

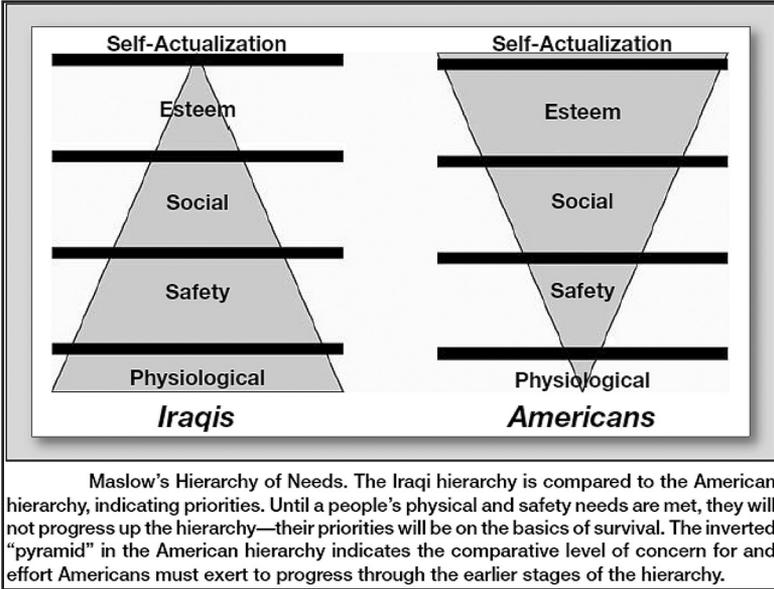
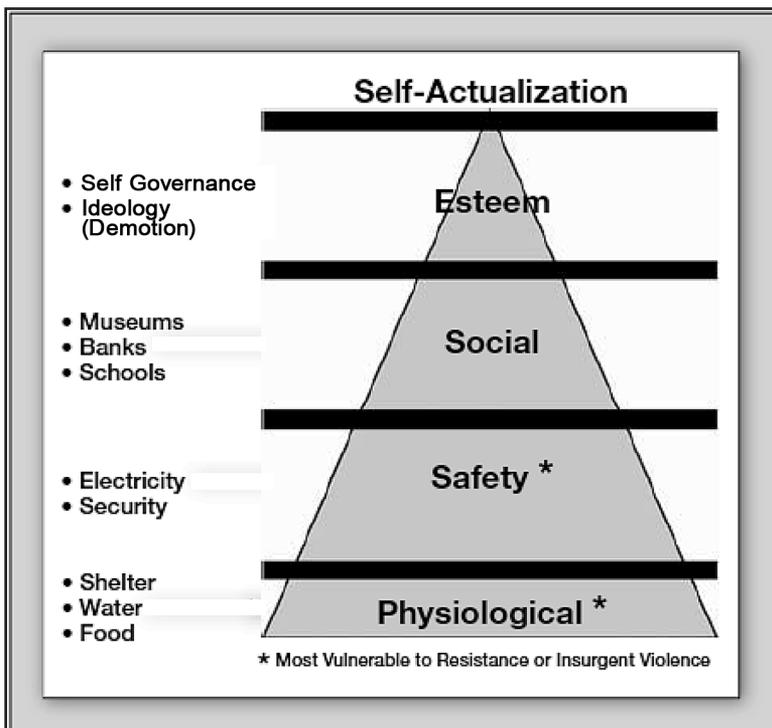


Figure 2. Revised hierarchy of needs between Iraqi and U.S. cultures.

In comparison, the hierarchy for the United States is on the right in Figure 2. Although this hierarchy shows the same progression of people working their way up through securing their physical needs to the ultimate of self-actualization, the classic "pyramid" shape of the hierarch is inverted. This shows the diminished amount of time, concern and effort necessary for Americans to attain their basic needs before progressing through the hierarchy to self-actualization. The difference is that the U.S. has an abundance of wealth and infrastructure and a mature system of rights established by our Constitution and laws that are established and enforced by our federal, state and local governments. Also, the U.S. does not have tribal or religious leaders or foreign insurgents fighting each other on American soil for control of our country. Without understanding the different needs of the Iraqi people, Americans easily can misunderstand Iraqi priorities.



Military Objectives in Iraq Based on Iraqi Priorities. Note that the Iraqis are most vulnerable to resistance or insurgent violence at the earlier “Physiological” and “Safety” hierarchy stages. As the Iraqi people mature toward democracy, the levels of resistance and violence become less likely.

Figure 3. Iraqi hierarchy of needs compared with Coalition objectives.

Figure 3 takes the same Iraqi hierarchy of needs and lists the Coalition Force’s progression of military objectives beside those needs, leading to the goal of a free and independent Iraq. Note that the Iraqis’ need for securing food, water, shelter and safety call for the most Coalition Force support (time, energy, and dollars) and make the Iraqis most vulnerable to coercion by insurgents—most vulnerable to insurgent acts of violence. Only when the Iraqis’ (or any people’s) needs are met at the lower levels will they be able to move up the pyramid.

Understanding the Iraqi culture within the context of the people’s priorities and vulnerabilities allows Soldiers and their leaders to understand situations in Iraq more accurately.

Identifying Leaders. Soldiers can use some practical techniques to demonstrate their cultural understanding, allowing them to more effectively accomplish the mission. A colleague of mine, Bassam Almesfer, a native of the Gulf Region, served as a language and cultural interpreter for the U.S. Marines in Iraq during OIF II. Bassam shared the following scenario relating the relevance of cultural awareness to operations in theater.³ To paraphrase what Bassam said:

We were on a routine trip to Najaf with three vehicles and nine Soldiers when we encountered an Iraqi vehicle carrying 12 personnel armed with AK-47s. The situation quickly intensified when we surrounded the vehicle and requested all to step out of and away from the vehicle. The gunmen refused and pointed their weapons at us. Our Soldiers proceeded to the “ready” position as well.

As the situation escalated, I spotted a gentleman stepping out of the back of the truck wearing a headpiece that denoted him as a cleric—the person of influence in the truck. Ignoring the increasingly tense situation, I requested permission to speak with him as a sign of respect. I approached the cleric with the utmost respect and explained that we had no intentions of harming anyone; however, we wanted to remove their weapons and have the local authorities check them out.

I respectfully asked him to help us stabilize the situation and, in turn, stated that we would provide security for his journey to his destination. Surprised by the offer, he then ordered his men to put down their weapons. We escorted him and his personnel to their destination.

The story spread like wildfire, and we became known as the good people who had ensured the cleric’s safety.

This incident laid the foundation for establishing a relationship with the cleric, and we were able to secure his cooperation on many other matters in the area for months to come. As a result, we conducted visits to the area with ease and communicated with many people in and around Najaf.

The key points are that we identified the leader and treated him with respect: called him “Sir,” asked him for permission to speak to him, were profusely apologetic about the difficult situation, and escorted him to his destination safely. This culturally informed approach allowed us to build a long-term relationship that proved beneficial to our mission.

Showing Elders Respect. Bassam Almesfer also described visits to neighboring villages where he took extra care to stop and extend greetings to elders in the area. He taught Soldiers within his sphere of influence to take extra care when they saw elders and always to treat them with respect as a demonstration that the Soldiers recognized the dignity of the elders in the tribal system and honored them. As a result, Americans gained the villagers' trust and were able to consult with the elders frequently. The elders used their power and prestige to help the Soldiers conduct more effective missions.

Iraqi elders are the “hidden jewels” of the operational area. In their villages and tribes, they have the final word and can influence many by their status and power.

Taking Time to Socialize. Arabs are firmly entrenched within a system of allegiances. They follow a code of honor and are loyal to family, tribe and (or) clan with Islam permeating their everyday lives—on every level from personal to political. Their primary concerns move in concentric circles from within their home, family, elders and family/tribal honor and pride.

To build trust and relationships that can facilitate change and the success of their operations, Soldiers and leaders must get to know their Arab contacts within the context of these strong influences. Therefore, it is worthwhile to invest time just sitting in coffee shops with locals and talking about the village, the tribe, the weather, or whatever they choose to discuss.

When the locals know Soldiers and leaders are coming to the market to drink tea instead of always “conducting operations,” then the atmosphere is more relaxed and people get to know the Soldiers and become more responsive and helpful. Unhurried time spent with Arabs establishes a highly valued bond and a level of trust that only can be earned.

It is critical that Soldiers and leaders have trusted local sources of information to help them ferret out insurgents in a neighborhood or be forewarned of ambushes on “the only paved road in town.” By respecting leaders and elders and taking the time to get to know the people, Soldiers and leaders build trust and create loyalty in the Iraqi people, their leaders, and interpreters.

On the other hand, using fear as a tactical tool to get information does not establish trust or create loyalty. Sometimes in WOT, Soldiers must use fear to interrogate known terrorists or Iraqis caught attacking Coalition Forces or innocent Iraqi citizens. But as a rule, trust and loyalty that go both ways is critical for Iraqis to feel safe and help units accomplish their missions.

Even though the political climate is changing, people in the Middle East have chosen to remain the same for hundreds of years. Their cultural values, beliefs, norms, and behaviors continue to play a fundamental role in real-life situations throughout the region. By being culturally aware and investing time in the locals, Bassam Almesfer's Soldiers fostered friendly relations with locals and had no life-threatening incidents in their area of operations (AO) on either side for more than a year and one-half.

Other Tactical Techniques. At the tactical level, there are many things Soldiers and leaders can do to build relationships and influence the people in counterinsurgency operations. Here are a few of them.

- Know the customs, mores, religion and culture of the people in your AO.
- Always show respect when approaching locals and smile—especially for the most valued members of their culture: elders and leaders. Do this regardless of whether they are clean or dirty, barefoot, or well dressed. With this approach, locals will be more willing for you to search them without offense and (or) provide information.
- Learn key Arabic phrases and use them to open communications with the Arab people. Understanding how to use language within the framework of cultural application is critical.
 - For example, before asking a question or making a request, say “*Min Fathalk,...*” or “*Lau Samaht,...*” These mean “If you please” or “If I may ask.” They are signs of respect and widen the pipeline of communications.
 - Arabs favor using religious expressions because Muslims integrate religion into their everyday lives and language. Phrases such as “*In-sha’Allah,*” meaning “if God is willing”; “*Al Hamdu Lillah,*” meaning “thank God”; and “*Mashaa Allah,*” meaning “with God’s blessing” will help Soldiers to connect with Arabs.
- Understand that Arabs have a different sense of time than Americans, which often causes Americans to see them as “undependable.” When an Arab says, “*In-sha’Allah,*” something may or may not get done—only “If Allah wills it.”
- Never tell locals what you want them to do without first asking what they need.

- Learn to identify key personnel based on their culture; political, tribal, or religious affiliations; and their economic and financial status.
- Learn to evaluate the political effectiveness of Arab leaders in your AO, both formal and informal.
- Know persuasion techniques and how to conduct the negotiation process.
- Know the basic differences between Sunnis and Shiites and which sect influences which part of your AO.
- When training Iraqi soldiers or policemen, Sunnis and Shiites should be together in squad-sized elements and forced to rely on one another. Genghis Khan did this to make rival tribes he conquered integrate and assimilate into one people—and it worked.
- When training host nation soldiers or police, use cross-cultural skills to guide and mentor them.

Ignoring a people's culture leaves Soldiers and leaders ignorant of the broader negative consequences their actions can have and of the broader positive effects their cultural awareness could have on accomplishing the mission. The mission is to move the Iraqi people up the Maslow's hierarchy toward security and total independence.

Endnotes

1. Colonel Christopher P. Hughes, former commander of 2nd Battalion, 327th Infantry Brigade, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) I, shared some of his experiences in Iraq with the staff, students and Soldiers at the Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) Culture Center at Fort Huachuca, Arizona, on 30 October 2006.
2. Abraham Maslow discussed his hierarchy of needs in "A Theory of Human Motivation," *Psychological Review* (Volume 50, Number 4, 1943), 370–396.
3. Author's interview with Bassam Almesfer, currently a Training Developer and Instructor in the TRADOC Culture Center, December 2006.

————— End of article —————

“You need to teach Pashtu to units going to Pashtun areas.”

—First Lieutenant, police mentor team S-3/S-4

The TRADOC Culture Center supports home station, combat training center, and mobilization training centers culture training as follows:

- Home station training:
 - Commander planned and resourced:
 - * Institutional Army provides: doctrine; training and evaluation outlines; training support packages; and training aids, devices, simulators, and simulations.
 - * Functional courses with embedded culture training.
 - Commander planned and externally resourced:
 - * Mission rehearsal exercise (MRE) and mobilization readiness exercise (MRX) training with embedded culture training.
 - * Mobile training teams; basic and advanced culture training.
 - * Executive program for operational and strategic leaders.
 - Afghan Culture Training Centers:
 - * Formal and informal Afghan culture familiarization training.
 - * Simulated Afghan environment with actual Afghans.
- Combat Training Centers (CTC)/Mobilization Training Centers (MTC) site training:
 - Commander planned and externally resourced:
 - * CTCs—Battle Command Training Program, Joint Readiness Training Center, Joint Multinational Readiness Center, and the National Training Center with embedded culture training.

- * MTCs with embedded culture training—First Army training support brigades, training support battalions, and the Army School System battalions.
- * Non-CTC MRE/MRX with embedded culture training.

One major deficiency being addressed is the lack of Afghan females to serve as trainers for Afghan female cultural training. Another deficiency identified by leaders and Soldiers is that cultural training is too generic and not focused on duty requirements.

Civilian-Provided Training Opportunities

Numerous U.S. colleges and universities are partnering with equivalent schools in Afghanistan and/or are involved with U.S. Army training centers and schools as a means to facilitate Afghan culture and language training. One such program is hosted by the University of Nebraska at Omaha and is designed to immerse Soldiers in Afghan culture.¹ The university's Center for Afghanistan Studies hosts the program, which consists of three weeks of Afghan language, cultural, and historical immersion. The program consists of a series of seminars focusing on Afghan language, culture, history, geography, natural resources, and current issues. The Center's Afghan instructor staff includes President Hamid Karzai's former scheduler, an Afghan-American who graduated from the United States Military Academy and a former instructor at Kabul University who fled the country in 1987 during the former Soviet Union's occupation. He now serves as the center's assistant director.

Endnotes

1. Kevin Abourezk, University of Nebraska at Omaha Program Immerses Soldiers in Afghan Culture, *Lincoln Star Journal* website, 10 April 2010.

Section II: Deployed Training

Since training never stops for professionals, Soldiers should continue to receive cultural and language training while deployed.

The TRADOC Culture Center provides training for deployed Soldiers.

- TRADOC deployed training:
 - Commander planned and CENTCOM resourced/provided:
 - * Human terrain teams.
 - * Relief in place/transfer of authority and right-seat-ride culture training.
 - * Reach back to the TRADOC Culture Center.

Counterinsurgency Training Center–Afghanistan

Combined Security Transition Command–Afghanistan (CSTC–A) established the Counterinsurgency Training Center–Afghanistan, located at Camp Julian, Kabul, to ensure U.S. Soldiers on arrival in Afghanistan receive a standard Afghan culture training program. Additionally, per the commander of the Counterinsurgency Training Center–Afghanistan, the course is designed to ensure personnel understand that counterinsurgency is a mindset that encompasses prevention of civilian casualties, fosters public trust in the government, and establishes conditions for economic growth, and is necessary to win the war.

Section III: Conclusion

Training is a leader’s responsibility to provide and the responsibility of the follower to complete. Afghan cultural awareness training is available individually and collectively to U.S. Soldiers prior to and following deployment. COIN academies and training centers inside and outside of Afghanistan are employing Afghans and creating training venues that replicate Afghanistan to add realism and credibility to their Afghan culture training programs. Predeployment Afghan cultural training sets the stage for success. Afghan culture training during deployment enhances success.

In the unconventional warfare environment of Afghan COIN operations, U.S. Soldiers are almost constantly in contact with the Afghans living in their area of operations (AOs). Providing these Soldiers with culture and language training specific to their particular AO in Afghanistan is a significant key to enhancing their mission success.

Chapter 6

Know the Insurgents

“If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle.”

—Sun Tzu

During World War II, a newspaper reporter asked a high-ranking German officer why he had a Bible in his library. The German officer responded that to defeat his enemy, he had to know his enemy.

GEN Robert E. Lee, as commander of the Army of Northern Virginia, knew the Union Army had far greater resources than the Confederate Army. He also knew that until the battle of Gettysburg, he had been able to “out-general” the Union generals who faced him. From that battle, he learned that the Union generals he now faced and the forces they led could possibly out-perform him and his soldiers. He therefore had to devise operations and tactics to overcome both the Union soldiers’ resources and their ability to equal or surpass the Confederates’ battlefield capabilities. He knew his enemy.

In Afghanistan, the Taliban are the insurgents and are predominately Pashtun. However, they have a distinct culture that sets them apart from their Pashtun cousins. U.S. Soldiers, whether they engage in lethal or non-lethal counterinsurgency (COIN) operations against the Taliban, should be aware of the Taliban’s culture and history as they devise means to defeat them. This is in addition to knowing the culture of the non-Taliban Afghans. Actions to defeat the Taliban that do not take their culture into consideration, and how it relates to the local non-Taliban Afghans, could unintentionally bring those Afghans to support the Taliban. Therefore, U.S. Soldiers in the Afghan COIN environment must know the insurgents.

Section I: The Taliban

In 1989, the Soviet Union withdrew its military forces from Afghanistan after its failed attempts to defeat the *mujahedin* who were opposed to its oppressive efforts to maintain the pro-Soviet regime in Kabul. For the next five years, rival Afghan *mujahedin* warlords battled each other, either individually or in alliances, for regional/ethnic control of additional territory

or the Afghan government which remained from the Soviet era. While Soviet attacks had been directed against the *mujahedin* in the rural areas, with millions of Afghans either killed or driven to exile in Pakistan, Iran, and other countries, the post-Soviet fighting brought the destructive conflict into the urban areas where the pro-Soviet central government remained in control.

As 1994 drew to a close, the Taliban gained control of the area around Kandahar. Its success was based on several factors:

- Afghans were tired of the fighting and destruction.
- Many Afghans opposed the *mujahedin* groups. A number of these groups defected to the Taliban.
- Afghans around Kandahar and the Taliban were of the same ethnic group—Pashtun.

The Taliban, their name which is the Pashto and Persian plural of the Arabic singular word *talib* (meaning student or seeker), are a traditionalist Islamic group pursuing a return to the purity of the teachings of the *Quran* and the *Hadith* (sayings) of the Prophet Mohammed. They saw the *mujahedin* as immoral and corrupt. The Taliban believed they fought with divine purpose to ensure others adhered to their application of those teachings and practices and that religious edicts have a divine source and carry more authority than humanitarian law that stresses human rights and individual freedoms. They also believed the purpose of government was to be a reflection of the divine will, not a guardian of individual rights and liberties.

Unfortunately for the Afghans, the Taliban became very ruthless in the enforcement of their form of traditional Islam and the suppression of Islamic and other religious beliefs that did not follow that of the Taliban. Consequently, they alienated many of the Afghans who originally supported their fight against the *mujahedin* and rise to power. To counter the Taliban, other Afghan tribes, either individually or collectively, waged war against the oppressive Taliban. It became the classic Afghan tribal conflict: brother against brother and brothers against cousins.

Because the Taliban are outside the common characteristics of the Afghan tribes, clans, and villages, the following areas will be addressed:

- Taliban ethnicity.
- Taliban religion.
- Taliban education.

- Taliban application of *sharia* law.
- Taliban treatment of women.
- Taliban rules of conduct and engagement.

“Afghanistan is the only country in the world with a real Islamic system. All Muslims should show loyalty to the Afghan Taliban leader, Mullah Mohammad Omar.”

—Osama Bin Laden, April 2001

Taliban Ethnicity

While the Taliban are Pashtun from the Kandahar area of Afghanistan, they are the product of Afghan refugee camps in Pakistan where Afghan tribal and ethnic cultures were non-existent and survival became their focal point. With time on their hands due to no job opportunities, and lacking mentorship from their family and tribal leaders, Afghan males in the refugee camps became susceptible to the religious teachings taught in the *madrasas* (schools). While these *madrasas* taught the purity of Islam, they also taught against people and governments that did not follow their form of Islam. As a result, the Taliban became a political movement; where the Taliban gained control it ruthlessly applied its Islamic religious beliefs.

Religion of the Taliban

The Taliban are followers of Deobandi Islam which originated in India in the 1850s. Deobandi Islam can track its lineage through Sufi Islam to Sunni Islam. Sufi Muslims pursued a strict interpretation of the teachings of Mohammad and Islamic law and were called Deobandi. While the Deobandi sect originated in the Sunni community, Deobandi followers are not strictly Sunnis. Deobandi Islam students are taught that Islamic societies have fallen behind the West in all spheres of endeavor because they have been seduced by the amoral and material accoutrements of Westernization, and have deviated from the original pristine teachings of the Prophet.

Under Deobandi Islam a Muslim has two requirements:

- First is loyalty is to his religion and only then to the country of which he is a citizen or a resident.
- Second is the sacred right and obligation to go to any country to wage holy war (*jihād*) to protect the Muslims of that country.

Deobandi Islam also teaches political activism. This originated with the 1857 rebellion in India against the British and grew to include any religion that did not adhere to the Deobandi theology. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and now the presence of NATO forces there are seen as a threat to the pure expression of Islam in Afghanistan.

Educating the Taliban

The Taliban are the product of religion-only Deobandi *madrasas* in Pakistan. (**Note:** *madrasas* is the Arabic word for any type of schools, regardless of what they teach. Teachers in the *madrasas*, like many of their counterparts in other parts of the world, form the minds of their students, in some cases creating indoctrination and ideological foundations that are counter to what may be acceptable norms.) However, the schools the Taliban attended are radically different from the traditional Deobandi *madrasas* where it took 10 years to complete the training provided by Deobandi Islamic religious scholars. At the *madrasas* attended by the Taliban, instruction centered on memorization of the Quaranic text in Arabic, which is a foreign language to most of the students. There was no other instruction. Upon graduation, the *talib* (student) was qualified as a village *mullah*, officiating at births, marriages, deaths, and providing religious education for boys in exchange for cash contributions or gifts.

The *talibs* at these religious *madrasas* were orphan boys or boys who were forced to attend. They had no contact with women or girls, and thus no understanding of the feminine gender. They also had almost no contact with the outside world. Consequently, they never learned how to socialize. They were indoctrinated.

The pre-*madrasas* training for the Taliban was not from their family and village/clan elders. These young men were the products of broken homes and the refugee camps in Pakistan that housed tens of thousands of Afghan refugees from the Soviet invasion and subsequent Afghan civil war. There were no schools, no family and village/clan elder structure—only hunger and idleness. They knew their languages, but only in speaking as there was no means to learn their written language, their history, and their culture. Their young minds were available to be molded by the *madrasas*.

Sharia Law

After the death of the Prophet Mohammad, the Islamic community began to develop a body of law known as *sharia*. This law was based upon the *Quran* (the Prophet's revelations) and the *Sunnah* (the words and deeds of the Prophet). For legal solutions that could not be found in these sources, the Prophet had sanctioned the use of *ijihad* (independent reasoning). New issues not covered by *sharia* were and are addressed by Muslim scholars

based on their interpretation of the *Quran* and *Sunnah*. This has led to differences in the *sharia* legal systems in Islamic countries due to their adopting one form of Islamic belief over another. Additionally, application and definition of *sharia* requires the consensus of the Muslim community.

Sharia law guides the daily lives of Muslims, their family and religious obligations, and their financial transactions. It influences, to varying degrees, the legal code in most Muslim countries. Due to the influx of Muslim-believing people into Judeo-Christian areas of the world, there are efforts to incorporate *sharia* law into the laws of non-Muslim countries that apply to marriage, divorce, inheritance, and custody. This is highly controversial due to varying applications of *sharia* law based on differing interpretations of the *Quran* and *Hadiths*.

The Taliban, which places a very strict interpretation on the *Quran* and the *Hadiths*, uses its form of *sharia* law as a tool to enforce their Islamic beliefs. This allows the Taliban to justify cruel punishments and the unequal treatment of women, such as dress, independence, and inheritance. Examples of how the Taliban applies its version of *sharia* law are as follows:

- Amputation of one or both hands for theft.
- Stoning for adultery.
- Women losing any freedoms they previously had under the Soviets and previous Afghan governments.
- Banning all forms of television, imagery, music, and sports.
- Wearing white shoes—the color of the Taliban flag—was illegal.
- Men were required to keep their beards at a specified length.
- Atheism and conversion from Islam were considered apostasy and were punishable by death.
- Minority Shia were brutally persecuted and oppressed by the Taliban:
 - More than 15,000 Shia were killed in Hazara Province.
 - Shia women were enslaved and later sold to tribal leaders in Pakistan.

Taliban Treatment of Women

“They made me invisible, shrouded and non-being; a shadow, no existence, made silent, and unseeing; denied of freedom, confined to my cage; tell me how to handle my anger and my rage?”

—Zieba Shorish-Shamley, from *Look into my World*,
Published on the 50th anniversary of the United Nations
Universal Declaration of Human Rights

The Taliban, in the areas of Afghanistan they controlled, stripped away what remained of the freedoms Afghan women had gained under the Soviets, especially in the urban areas. Women who previously had professional careers, owned successful businesses, or had jobs in civilian and government career fields found themselves forced to give up that part of their lives and become subservient to the male elder in their family. They were forbidden to own property. If an Afghan woman became a widow or was single, she lost everything and had to beg on the streets to survive.

The Taliban, like the *mujahedin* before them, were primarily from the rural areas of Afghanistan where women had little to no contact with Western influences or Afghan urban areas regarding feminine freedoms and dress. In the rural areas, women were treated as property. While that was not a part of the urban Afghan culture, the Taliban made it that way, and used their version of *sharia* law to enforce the restrictions they placed on Afghan women.

Several Taliban officials who were ministers in the Afghan government made statements regarding the role of women in Afghanistan:

- Taliban Minister of Religion Al-Haj Maulwi Qalamuddin: “To a country on fire, the world wants to give a match. Why is there such concern about women? Bread costs too much. There is no work. Even boys are not going to school. And yet all I hear about are women. Where was the world when men here were violating any woman they wanted?”

Taliban Minister of Education Syed Ghaisuddin when asked why Afghan women needed to be confined at home: “It’s like having a flower, or a rose. You water it and keep it at home for you, to look at it, and smell it. It [a woman] is not supposed to be taken out of the house to be smelled.”

Taliban Minister of Culture Qudratullah Jamal: “If we are to ask Afghan women, their problems have been solved.”

Taliban Minister of Foreign Affairs Moulvi Wakil Ahmad Mutawakel: “We do not have any immediate plans to give jobs to (women) who have been laid off. But they can find themselves jobs enjoying their free lives.”

Taliban Minister of Justice Mullah Nooruddin Turabi: “If a woman wants to work away from her home and with men, then that is not allowed by our religion and our culture. If we force them to do this they may want to commit suicide.”

Simply put, the Taliban took all means necessary for Afghan women under their control to be classified and treated as the property of either their husbands or their fathers.

Taliban Code of Conduct and Rules of Engagement

Like most governments and organizations, the Taliban have their own code of conduct and rules of engagement. It is called “*The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan Rules for Mujahedin*.” It was written by Mullah Omar, the Taliban leader, and consists of 13 chapters and 67 articles. Following are excerpts from the book:

- Any Muslim can invite anyone working for the slave government in Kabul to quit their job and remove himself from the corrupt administration.
- It is strictly prohibited to exchange prisoners for money.
- Killing can only be decided by the *imam* or his deputy. No one else has the right to do so.
- If a military infidel is captured, any decision to kill, conditionally release, or exchange such a prisoner can only be made by the *imam* or his deputy.
- Suicide attacks should be at high value and important targets because a brave son of Islam should not be used for low-value and useless targets. In suicide attacks, the killing of innocent people and damage to their property should be minimized.
- All *mujahedin* must do their best to avoid civilian deaths and injuries and damage to civilian property.
- Weapons used to be taken from people by force. This practice is no longer permitted. People may hand over their weapons voluntarily.
- No *mujahid* is allowed to smoke.

- A male who has not yet grown a beard may not stay in a common sleeping area with other men.
- It is forbidden to disfigure people. For example the cutting off of ears, nose and lips are severely prohibited. *Mujahedin* should refrain from such activities.
- *Mujahedin* of the Islamic Emirate should not collect donations from people forcibly. People should be free to choose who they want to give to.
- *Mujahedin* should not search people's homes. If there is a need to do this, they should get permission from authority and the search should be done in the presence of the *imam* of the local mosque and two elders.
- Kidnapping for ransom is strictly prohibited.
- *Mujahedin* must be well-behaved, and treat the people properly, in order to get closer to the hearts of civilian Muslims.

Section II: Conclusion

The Taliban make up a very unique Islamic organization with many of its members from the Pashtun areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan. The Taliban's Islamic beliefs and application of those beliefs, coupled with its application of *Pashtunwali*, brought it into focus as a result of its providing security to al Qaida. The Taliban's record of denying religious freedom, treating women as chattel, and applying *sharia* laws that strictly adhere to their Islamic religious beliefs is counter to the culture of almost all other civilizations.

Afghans desire peace, security, freedom, and opportunities to both live and better their lives and those of their offspring. If the Taliban can provide for those desires, it will regain control of Afghanistan. However, the Taliban's strict Islamic interpretations will push Afghans away, but only if there is no better alternative than what the Taliban offers.

Appendix A

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Appendix B

Afghan Calendars and Holidays

Life for Afghans is guided by three different calendars: one for identification of religious holidays, one for most of their daily activities, and the third for international relations, which is the one U.S. Soldiers also use. However, while in Afghanistan, U.S. Soldiers also will be affected by the other two Afghan calendars. Awareness of these two calendars is important because they are the calendars Afghans follow.

Afghan Calendars

During your time (using 2010 as an example) in Afghanistan, you will hear and see the Afghans talk about it being year 1388, or possibly year 1430. That is because they do not use the calendar we use. It is important, as you work with the Afghans and plan your activities, to have local calendars to know when their government and religious holidays will occur. Because some holidays are harder to identify, work with your interpreter to identify the holidays.

Three calendars are used in Afghanistan. They are the:

- *Hejrah-e shamsi* calendar (Solar Islamic), Afghanistan's official calendar.
- *Hejrah-e qamari* calendar (Lunar Islamic), used for religious holidays.
- Gregorian calendar (Solar Christian), used mainly in international relations.

Hejrah-e shamsi Calendar

The *Hejrah-e shamsi* calendar starts from the year 622 A.D., when the Prophet Mohammad emigrated (*hejrah*) from Mecca to Medina. It has 12 months, consisting of 29–31 days each. The beginning of the *Hejrah-e shamsi* Year (1 *Hammal*) corresponds to 21 March (20 March in leap years) on the Gregorian calendar. The *Hejrah-e shamsi* Year has 365 days (366 days in leap years). The *Hejrah-e shamsi* calendar year 1388 corresponds to our year 2010.

Month Number	Dari (Hejrah-e shamsi)	Pashtu (Hejrah-e shamsi)	English (Gregorian)	Number of Days
1	<i>Hammal</i>	<i>Wray</i>	March–April	31
2	<i>Saur</i>	<i>Ghwayai</i>	April–May	31
3	<i>Jauza</i>	<i>Gargholai</i>	May–June	31
4	<i>Saratan</i>	<i>Chungash</i>	June–July	31
5	<i>Asad</i>	<i>Zmarai</i>	July–August	31
6	<i>Sonbola</i>	<i>Wazhay</i>	August–September	30
7	<i>Mizan</i>	<i>Talah</i>	September–October	30
8	<i>Aqrab</i>	<i>Larum</i>	October–November	30
9	<i>Qaus</i>	<i>Lindah</i>	November–December	30
10	<i>Jadi</i>	<i>Merghumai</i>	December–January	30
11	<i>Dalw</i>	<i>Salwagah</i>	January–February	30
12	<i>Hut</i>	<i>Kab</i>	February–March	29

Figure B-1. *Hejrah-e shamsi* calendar

Hejrah-e qamari Calendar

The months in the *Hejrah-e qamari* calendar are alternatively 30 and 29 days long. In leap years the 12th month has 31 days. The lunar year is 11 days shorter than the solar calendar. The *Hejrah-e qamari* calendar months “*Ramadan*” and “*Shawwal*” define Muslim fasting. The first day of each of these months is observed by authorities as a holiday. A difference of one day can occur between the observed and the precomputed calendar. At 30 years, a leap year occurs to synchronize the calendar with the moon phases. The *Hejrah-e qamari* calendar year 1430 corresponds to our year 2010.

Month Number	Arabic (<i>Hejrah-e qamari</i>)	Pashtu (<i>Hejrah-e qamari</i>)	Number of Days
1	<i>Muharram</i>	<i>Muharram</i>	30
2	<i>Safar</i>	<i>Safar</i>	29
3	<i>Rabi' al-Awal</i>	<i>Rabi'1</i>	30
4	<i>Rabi' al-Thaani</i>	<i>Rabi'2</i>	29
5	<i>Jumada al-Awal</i>	<i>Jumada1</i>	30
6	<i>Jumada al-Thaani</i>	<i>Jumada2</i>	29
7	<i>Rajab</i>	<i>Rajab</i>	30
8	<i>Sha'ban</i>	<i>Sha'ban</i>	29
9	<i>Ramadan</i>	<i>Ramadan</i>	30
10	<i>Shawwal</i>	<i>Shawwal</i>	29
11	<i>Zul al-Qi'dah</i>	<i>Z.Qi'dah</i>	30
12	<i>Zul al-Hijjah</i>	<i>Z.Hijjah</i>	29 (31 in leap years)

Figure B-2. *Hejrah-e qamari* calendar

Holidays

Afghans, like Americans, observe numerous holidays. However, these special days affect operations. The operational tempo may need to be adjusted to balance mission requirements and respect these holidays. Afghans, especially in Kabul, recognize but do not necessarily celebrate two Western holidays: Christmas and New Year's Day.

Public Holidays

These Afghan holiday dates align with the Gregorian calendar:

- Friday—Afghans refer to Friday as a holiday. It is a day off work with the morning for religious services.
- Victory Day (28 April [27 April in leap years])—celebrating the end of the pro-Soviet regime in 1992.
- Independence Day (19 August [18 August in leap years])—celebrating the end of the British Empire’s three attempts to rule Afghanistan

Religious Holidays

Afghans observe many religious holidays. Unfortunately, unless you have an in-depth understanding of the three calendars used in Afghanistan, these holidays are not easy to identify on the calendar we use, the Gregorian calendar. The following are the major religious holidays as identified on the *Hejrah-e-qamari* calendar. Have your interpreter assist you in identifying these holidays on your calendar.

- *Ashura*. The day the Prophet Mohammad’s grandson, Husayn, was killed at the battle of Kerbala. It is celebrated on the 10th day of the *Hejrah-e qamari* month of *Muharram*.
- Prophet Mohammad’s birthday. Celebrated on the 12th day of the *Hejrah-e qamari* month *Rabi’ al-Awal*.
- First of *Ramadan*. Celebrated at the 1st of the *Hejrah-e qamari* month *Ramadan* and marks the beginning of the fasting month *Ramadan*.
- Night of Measure—Muslims believe this was the night God sent down the first verses of the *Quran* via the angel Gabriel to the Prophet Mohammad. It is also the anniversary of the night in which the *Quran* was first communicated in its entirety to Mohammad. There is uncertainty about the exact date. It is believed the night is in the last third of the *Hejrah-e qamari* month *Ramadan*.
- *Eid al-Fitr* (End of *Ramadan*). *Eid* is the Arabic word for feast. The holiday is celebrated at the end of *Ramadan*, at the 1st of the *Hejrah-e qamari* month *Shawwal*. Celebrations extend up to three days.

- *Arafat*. Celebrated one day before *Eid al-Adha* (Festival of Sacrifice) on the 9th of the *Hejrah-e qamari* month *Zul al-Hijjah*. It marks when the Prophet Mohammad delivered his farewell sermon at the end of his life on the mountain of Arafat also known as *Jabal ar-Rahmah* (Mountain of Mercy).
- *Eid al-Adha* or *Eid al-Qurban* (Festival of Sacrifice). Commemorates the Prophet Abraham's devotion to God and is celebrated on the 10th of the *Hejrah-e qamari* month *Zul al-Hijjah*. Celebrations extend up to three days.

Other Holidays

These Afghan holidays may align with the Gregorian Calendar:

- New Year. The *Hejrah-e shamsi* year starts on 1st *Hammal* (20 March, 21 March in leap years) and is celebrated all over Afghanistan. This is the most festive holiday celebrated by the Afghans.
- As established by Afghan law.

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