



# SMALL WARS JOURNAL

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## SWJ Magazine -- INTERIM New! & Improved? 😊 (BETA)

This is an interim edition of an article that has been peer-reviewed for its content and quality, and accepted for publication in SWJ Magazine.

The article, its author, and its audience deserve better editing and formatting than we have provided at the moment, i.e. none. It is being released in this format because the Small Wars Community of Interest needs this material, and this is the way we can get it out without further delay (which, in some cases, has already been substantial).

The throughput of our publishing has not kept pace with the enthusiasm of our audience and the productivity of our contributing authors. We're working on that, but the author's ideas are ready now. So this article is provided "as is" for the moment. Revised versions of this article for edits, format, and presentation will be posted when they are available and as site improvements are made.

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***A battalion's employment of "The Elements of  
National Power"***

By

LtCol Robert R. Scott

*“The motive in small wars is not material destruction. It is usually a project dealing with the social, economic, and political development of the people. It is of primary importance that the fullest benefit be derived from the psychological aspects of the situation.”*  
*(The Small Wars Manual, page 18)*

The first 90 days in theater for any battalion are a steep learning curve. For 2D Battalion, 3D Marines (TF KOA) this learning curve occurred in Afghanistan during Operation ENDURING FREEDOM VI. What we learned outside of the tactical and operational lessons that every unit learns in its first few weeks in country is that most Afghans simply want what every parent of citizen wants for their family or themselves. Safety, the opportunity to work and provide for their family, and in most cases transparency from their elected leaders. However, the reason for their humiliation and how that has turned into anger is best captured in a paragraph written by Thomas Friedman. “This humiliation is the key. It has always been my view that terrorism is not spawned by the poverty of money. It is spawned by the poverty of dignity.....When you take the economic and political backwardness of much of the Arab-Muslim world today, add its past grandeur and self-image religious superiority, and combine it with the discrimination and alienation these Arab-Muslim males have.....you have one powerful cocktail of rage.”<sup>1</sup> That “cocktail of rage” is manipulated by Imams and insurgency leaders for their own ends and a heavy handed approach by Coalition Forces (CF) 100% of the time will guarantee failure 100% of the time.

The battalion learned that it had to work across lines of operation that brought to bear diplomacy, information, military, and economic elements of power. These are the elements of national power and it was initially incongruous to us that we would have to employ them at a platoon, company, battalion, and brigade level. But if we wanted to be successful we would have to employ them at the local and tactical levels. Our lessons learned from massing elements of a Brigade of the Afghan National Army (ANA), units of the Afghan National Police (ANP) and 2D Battalion, 3D Marines across the 12,600 square kilometer Area of Operations KOA (AO KOA) in

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<sup>1</sup> The World Is Flat, Thomas L. Friedman, p400, 2005.

order to conduct 10 to 14-day battalion-sized deliberate operations in conjunction with the ANA Brigade assigned to TF KOA bear that out.

### **PRE-DEPLOYMENT TRAINING (PTP)**

During our pre-deployment training 2D Battalion, 3D Marines' leadership understood that AO KOA would encompass three provinces, all of which were led by Governors appointed directly from Kabul by President Hamid Karzai. A critical element to our successful pre-deployment training and preparation was the work of our sister battalion, 3D Battalion, 3D Marines, who did an outstanding job preparing us for the logistical, C4I and host nation training challenges that lay ahead. The battalion staff made recommendations to Col MacMannis, the battalion commander that included forming four maneuver elements from the three rifle companies and Weapons Company, forming Operational Support Teams (OSTs) to provide decentralized combat service support (CSS), and task organizing all enablers to best support the companies. These recommendations were adopted in theater by the incoming C.O., LtCol Donnellan, after the change of command on 14 July 2005.

### **OPERATIONAL DEPLOYMENT OVERSEAS**

2D Battalion conducted a "left seat/right seat" turnover with 3D Battalion and assumed responsibility of the battlespace in a Relief in Place / Transfer of Authority that occurred on 15 June 2005. Building on 3D Battalion's success, our battalion maintained 50 percent of the force outside of the wire at all times, and on long-duration combat patrols of seven to 10 days. 2D Battalion's immediate higher headquarters was the U.S. Army's 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division, also known as Combined Task Force (CTF) DEVIL, commanded by COL Patrick Donahue and located in FOB Salerno 75 miles to the south in Khowst province. Organizationally above CTF DEVIL was the Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF) 76, located at Bagram Airbase and commanded by MG Jason Kamiya, US Army.

2D Battalion’s final task organization is shown in the figure below. It is difficult for any task organization slide or matrix to convey the team effort contributed by CTF DEVIL and the numerous attachments and supporting units in the AO. Neither does it capture the cooperation that existed amongst contracted security forces, and other US Governmental Agencies. Including all attachments and supporting units, the battalion numbered close to 2,500 Marines, sailors, soldiers, airmen and Afghan troops (army, police, et al.) in a battlespace the size of Maryland that shared 333 kilometers of border with Pakistan. The matrix represents those units that had a significant impact on operations. The command relationships were sometimes convoluted and often confusing, with the recurrent theme being, lack of unity of effort and a lack of unity of command. The challenges in the area of “unity of command” were not driven by CTF DEVIL, but rather by the JTF headquarters in Bagram. CTF DEVIL’s support enabled TF KOA to work out “hand con” agreements with several different agencies and military organizations; these “hand con” agreements allowed us to accomplish our mission and shape the battle space for follow on units.

<b>Unit</b>	<b>Relationship</b>
<b>1 X Afghan National Army (ANA) Brigade</b>	<b>“Partnered”</b>
<b>1 x US Army Civil Affairs Team (CAT)</b>	<b>OPCON</b>
<b>2 X US Army PSYOPS Teams</b>	<b>OPCON</b>
<b>1 X US Army Military Police Platoon</b>	<b>TACON</b>
<b>2 X US Army EOD Teams and 1 X CEX-C Team (FBI Agents specializing in EOD)</b>	<b>“GS to the AO”</b>
<b>4 X US Army Tactical HUMINT Teams</b>	<b>OPCON</b>
<b>1 X US Army SIGINT Team</b>	<b>OPCON</b>
<b>2 X US Army Artillery Platoons</b>	<b>DS</b>

In addition to the units noted above, additional elements included three Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), two units from Other Governmental Agencies (OGA) working

with indigenous forces, several Special Operations Forces, ANP, Afghan Border Police (ABP) and several local militia groups hired by the three provincial governors in order to augment security around the population centers in anticipation of the National and Parliamentary Council Elections (NAPCE) on 18 September 2005. In order to accomplish the missions assigned small unit leaders were required to deal with all parties by bringing diplomacy (tribal politics) and economic power to bear on daily challenges.

### **DIPLOMATIC- INFORMATION – MILITARY – ECONOMIC (DIME) ELEMENTS OF POWER IN DELIBERATE BATTALION OPERATIONS**

Operation RED WINGS, which eventually became known as RED WINGS II ran from 27 June to 14 July 2005, was a combined/joint force operation with Special Operations Forces, ANA, ANP and NAVSOF. Operation RED WINGS centered on killing or capturing one specific enemy personality and its purpose was to disrupt enemy activities in Kunar province. Operation RED WINGS lasted two days and it ended with the compromise of a USNAVSOF sniper/observer team. As a result three personnel were immediately killed and a fourth was declared missing and evaded enemy forces for several days.

During the rescue/recovery mission, enemy fighters shot down an MH-47 Chinook loaded with 16 personnel – eight Army aircrewmen and eight NAVSOF - with a RPG, in broad daylight. The aircraft and all personnel were lost on a mountain side at approximately 6,000 feet of elevation. The rescue efforts were complicated by the fact that the CJSOTF C4I node and key leaders were located at Bagram Air Base, while our battalion COC was at Jalal Abad Airfield, almost 150 miles away. The compromise and loss of both the sniper/observer team and the MH-47 immediately forced our staff to conduct rapid planning with remaining CJSOTF personnel in liaison with us at Jalal Abad. The resulting sequel operation was Operation RED WINGS II.

Operation RED WINGS II lasted approximately two weeks and was successful in disrupting the Anti-Coalition Militia's (ACM) ability to operate freely within Kunar province

while simultaneously supporting CJTF-76's efforts to recover the remains of all personnel.

Notably all 16 troops killed in action were recovered and the missing NAVSOF was returned to U.S. hands.

The NAVSOF's return can be attributed to a "walk-in" local national to Camp Blessing. This event demonstrated early on to us the value of keeping and maintaining good relationships with the local populace. It was diplomacy executed by a small unit leader in dealing with village elders, local merchants, and Afghan National Police. This "walk-in" was an elderly man who lived closer to Asad Abad than Camp Blessing. He chose to travel to the Marines at Camp Blessing rather than the Special Operations Forces in Asad Abad because of the exceptional work done by the two lieutenants at Camp Blessing and 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon Company E with the local populace. The "walk-in" local national came to Camp Blessing solely because of the relationship that the locals had with the senior officer there, 1stLt Bartels. 1stLt Bartels successfully built on the strong relationships forged by his 3d Battalion predecessor through his will, personality, the use of funds to purchase items on the local economy for the FOB, and through the treating of small injuries and sickness of the villagers with his Independent Duty Corpsman. 1stLt Bartels knew that "without trust, there is no open society, because there are not enough police to patrol every opening in an open society."<sup>2</sup> By building coalitions with the Afghan civilian leadership along diplomatic, information and economic lines he was able to make significant inroads and enable success.



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<sup>2</sup> The World Is Flat, Thomas L. Friedman, p394, 2005.

The distances involved in Operation RED WINGS II, coupled with the C4I challenges of operating in a rugged and mountainous environment, drove the battalion commander to maintain a forward COC controlling operations in the Korengal, Pech and Shiryek valleys (Alpha command group) while the remaining 85 percent of AO KOA was controlled at the main COC by the Bravo command group. The Main COC was responsible for deconflicting mission requirements and asset support for AO KOA, while simultaneously maintaining C2 of all elements conducting Operation RED WINGS II in Kunar province. The rough terrain and fluid mission did not allow for the concentration of the staff forward in Kunar, nor did it allow the staff and battalion commander to remain with the Main COC. The information war in this environment was a challenge; particularly challenging was our requirement to get the Afghan Governments and Coalition Forces version of events out on the “street” in less than 24 hours. Because ACM’s Information Operations clearly out-cycled TF KOA’s capabilities, efforts were specifically geared toward getting “our message” out as quickly as possible. The Information Operations Campaign Plan was then used to develop a “play book” of pre-approved messages that were released quickly based on the battalion commander’s intent and approval. Maj Wood, S3 Officer, and Maj Migletz, S5 Officer, developed the messages that were pre-approved and then had them translated by local linguists prior to the commencement of large scale task force operations. This enabled the COC to “plug in” information that originated from the point of contact and disseminate it through the local radio and cable channels. During this timeframe eight former ACM members reconciled with the Government of Afghanistan (GoA) and entered the Program Takhim-e Solh (Program to Strengthen the Peace (PTS)).

During August 2005, TF KOA conducted Operation WHALERS, a combined USMC/ANA two-battalion reinforced attack within Kunar province intended to disrupt ACM activities in order to set favorable conditions for successful NAPCE on 18 September 2005. For the first time, post-operation intelligence indicated that the ACM were surprised by the six directions from which the attack sprang and were left completely disorganized. The element of

surprise was achieved by positioning forces at night over the course of three cycles of darkness via ground transportation. Once the decision was made to cross the line of departure TF KOA staggered the units in order to give the ACM the appearance that there was an avenue they could use to escape. Fox Company operating jointly with a company of ANA met the enemy at 8,000 feet of elevation and fought a pitched battle over 72 hours during which time their only resupply came from Containerized Delivery System (CDS) drops from a C-130 and the ammunition and water they had brought with them on donkeys.



During Operation Whalers, Captain Grissom pushed his company past the limits of endurance and as a result discovered the enemy's command and control center, which forced the enemy into decisive contact. After covering a distance of over 6 kilometers and a 4000 feet gain in elevation, the company twice came under intense fire from the enemy. On the morning of the 14th of August, they were suppressed by enemy mortars, plunging machine gun fire and rocket propelled grenades, yet Capt Grissom calmly controlled supporting arms while at the same time

directing his ground maneuver units to maintain contact with enemy forces. He directed an immediate suppression mission, which ensured the company maintained fire superiority over the enemy. On the evening of the 16th, the enemy conducted a combined arms night attack upon their defensive position. The enemy had located the company command post and directed a massive amount of fire towards it. After being directed to move south in order to extract the company, Captain Grissom developed a scheme of maneuver which denied the enemy the ability to ambush the company. During the extraction, Captain Grissom was left with a small section of his company, and the enemy was attempting to gather forces to overrun their position. Captain Grissom made the decision to conduct an extraction under fire using local pickup trucks. At the end of Operation WHALERS, 65 combined patrols had been executed; approximately 44 ACM killed; one ACM wounded; and two detained with the loss of three Coalition Forces troops.

2D Battalion also took the lead in establishing (as directed by CTF DEVIL) the Provincial Elections Operations Centers (PEOCs) in Nangarhar, Laghman and Kunar provinces. To this end, a liaison officer was assigned to the Regional Elections Operations Center, in Nangarhar. These centers proved to be critical links for communications and incident response control for Coalition forces, ANA, ANP, and the Joint Electoral Management Board (JEMB) during the elections. The establishment of PEOCs greatly assisted with overall command and control of the NAPCE. Although obtaining GoA representation in the PEOCs prior to elections was difficult, the collocation of JEMB and Coalition forces increased reporting responsiveness for updates and incident reports. Although incorporating all representatives into operation of PEOCs requires finessing, the PEOC concept and foundation was established and validated. 2D Battalion learned that calling on the provincial governor when problems were encountered was useful in two ways. His input helped, at a minimum, to keep the effort focused from week to week. Also, his participation established accountability of the provincial security chiefs.

On 15 September 2005, 2D Battalion began deploying forces in support of the NAPCE elections and during the elections the ANP provided security immediately around the polling

centers, the ANA provided the outer ring of security, and the battalion providing the third ring of security and QRF. The battalion also conducted numerous combined mounted and dismounted patrols prior to and after the elections to ensure that ballot movement routes and marshalling areas were secure. In AO KOA, there were over 740 polling centers, and due to the security presence of both USMC and Afghan forces, no polling centers were destroyed.

Our working relationship with JEMB in all three provinces was good, but an adequate level of support from the ANP was initially difficult to attain. GoA entities were extremely noncommittal and the same issues were discussed repeatedly without resolution (as is customary for the culture). GoA entities typically would not identify how many personnel from their departments would be available for security purposes and any figures given dramatically changed every week. There were also frequent disputes among GoA entities regarding the requirement to provide forces.

The Small Wars Manual (1940) was a good primer for the battalion staff in planning and conducting election support throughout this period. Our endstate was to facilitate “A “free and fair” election *which* implied unrestrained popular choice of the whole people expressed at the polls by all who are lawfully entitled to suffrage.”<sup>3</sup> Starting the planning process early and with key leaders and players was important. Discussions at the JEMB meetings included intelligence updates, updates on the voter registration progress, ballot movement plans, and security efforts. These meeting were fairly productive and assisted in synchronizing our security effort with the JEMB security plans. Combined planning with the ANA took twice as long, but served as a critical developmental step in their planning progress and professional education. ANP, ABP and Highway Patrol would all benefit greatly from instruction in a formalized planning process also. Many law enforcement leaders are political appointees and lack the training and skills needed to plan and execute major security operations. Although biweekly planning meetings were tedious and time consuming, there were many unanticipated rewards. The meetings allowed us to

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<sup>3</sup> Small Wars Manual, NVMC 2890, Ch 14, Sect 4, p2

synchronize and integrate our plans, which created “buy in” with the course of action eventually chosen and allowed us to familiarize ourselves with capabilities and limitations based on staff estimates. We learned of other GoA entities’ concerns and it helped draw the two staffs together.

Presenting an “Afghan lead” when conducting meetings and planning sessions is critically important, but Americans still need to lead the effort from behind the scenes to ensure plan development and execution. Frequently law enforcement entities will claim that everything is progressing smoothly when in reality plans rarely progress at the required pace. Planning and coordinating must begin as early as possible to allow for the missteps and inner conflicts that will likely ensue.



The deployment and recovery of ballots went smoothly. The JEMB established a timeline for both events and was able to work through sticking points and stay on track. Although the elections were a critical segment of the deployment, Coalition forces were never

placed in a position of being in charge that was left to the key Afghan agencies running the effort. In order to balance the need for information flow up the chain and the need to allow other agencies to execute their plans, a reasonable schedule of one update per day was established and maintained. Requesting more frequent updates on both ballot movement and recovery proved counterproductive.

Utilizing Coalition Forces to provide route security and overwatch allowed election materials to move more securely than if embedded in a combined convoy. In AO KOA, no major attacks were reported against vehicles transporting elections materials. 2D Battalion did not transport any ballots, nor did we escort any ballot convoys. In the planning phase, 2D Battalion was provided basic ballot movement plans and was able to conduct route security patrols in advance, and overwatch while materials were being transported. By staying out of the ballot transportation business, 2D Battalion was able to preserve the “Afghan lead” for the elections and avoid drawing unnecessary attention to the contents of the transport trucks.

At the beginning of the deployment Col MacMannis’ intent was for TF KOA to conduct joint and combined operations at all times. After the change of command, in July 02005, between him and LtCol Donnellan this concept was expanded so that TF KOA would maintain 50% of the force outside of the wire at all times while conducting one battalion sized operation per month for 10 to 14 days depending on the lunar cycle. It was critical to the success of the task force that “hand con” agreements are entered upon with the Provincial Reconstruction Teams, the Afghan National Police, and the Brigade of the Afghan National Army and its Embedded Training Teams. The following were our lessons learned from employing diplomatic, information, military, and economic tools at the tactical level:

- 1) Although not doctrinal for the infantry battalion, we had to develop a campaign plan in order to build consensus among our American and Afghan partners;
- 2) Our two biggest challenges were the lack of unity of command and unity of effort, and poor progress in equipping host nation forces (ANA/ANP) that would allow them to shoot, move and

communicate above the platoon / company level;

3) The battle is generational in terms of people; the key terrain is people and minds, not land;

4) The Small Wars Manual (1940) remains relevant;

6) Our greatest success came from all operations being integrated with the ANA and ANP;

6) Using donkey trains and man porters to haul water, ammunition, and MREs in conjunction with Cargo Delivery System (CDS) drops from C-130s was the vital link of our resupply efforts;

8) Of the six lines of operation listed in the draft USMC COIN doctrine, **the task to train and advise is the most important**;

9) The ability to mass forces has a utility in its own right when conducting distributed operations.

Units must have a method to mass, close with, and destroy the enemy and then immediately follow up with non-kinetic operations, which should be the main effort;

10) “Counterinsurgency always requires the three p’s – presence, patience, and persistence.”<sup>4</sup>



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<sup>4</sup> Imperial Grunts, Robert D. Kaplan, p209