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“Partnership ‘Till it Hurts” The Use of Fusion Cells to Establish Unity of Effort Between SOF (*Yin*) and Conventional Forces (*Yang*)

Paul Lushenko

The Operational Opportunity Cost

America’s Special Operations Forces (SOF) have historically shared an adversarial, but necessary, relationship with conventional counterparts due primarily to intra-service rivalry, personality conflicts, and mission secrecy. Yet, the SOF-conventional operating paradigm mirrors a *yin-yang* dynamic in which both forces are seemingly disjunct but nevertheless complementary when synchronized: “...there is contradiction as well as harmony, and...unity in multiplicity.”¹ While *yin-yang* fluctuate in time and space, inherent opportunity costs ultimately compel balance. As the world’s *de facto* leader against extremism, America has necessarily expanded SOF’s global presence to undermine savvy militants and shadowy networks outside the mission and capabilities scope of more mechanical conventional forces. Consequently, the “wall of secrecy”² once maintained by SOF has been lowered to synchronize all facets of the military within the contemporary operating environment (COE) in which SOF and conventional forces more deliberately cooperate.

As the Intelligence Officer of a Joint Special Operations Task Force (JSOTF) re-deployed from eastern Afghanistan in the fall of 2009, my experiences reinforced the gravity of establishing unity of effort between SOF (*yin*) and conventional forces (*yang*) to exploit intelligence, capabilities, and mission opportunity costs. The development of a Brigade-level *fusion cell* in eastern Afghanistan fostered operational harmony, resulting in heightened, non-doctrinal partnership; deliberate intelligence sharing; joint planning and operations; and innovative leadership to more effectively conduct irregular warfare including counter-insurgency (COIN). By streamlining the opportunity costs of SOF and conventional forces through the *fusion cell*, our JSOTF empowered the conventional Brigade’s more important Lines of Effort (LOE), undermined the Haqqani Network’s (HQN) strategic objectives, precipitated the reconciliation of mid-senior level HQN leaders, and promoted legitimacy of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) through an aggressive Information Operations (IO) campaign.

¹. Wing-Tsit Chan, *Chinese Philosophy*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963: 245.

². MAJ Richard Scott, Senior LNO-75th Ranger Regiment, conversations with the author, 30 NOV 2009.

The Enemy, Pakistan's Existential Threat

General McChrystal's recently published *Tactical Directive* incorporates insights from Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) to more effectively safe-guard the COIN center-of-gravity (COG) in Afghanistan: the civilian population. He scrutinizes close air-support (CAS) against residential compounds and locations that may result in civilian casualties.³ While security represents a chief pre-condition to COIN, General McChrystal has balanced the need to co-opt "fence-sitters" through *soft power*⁴ with unnerving security operations to alienate die-hard insurgents.⁵ Ultimately, "the highest imperative of the insurgent is to deprive the population of...[a]...sense of security. Through violence and bloodshed, the insurgent seeks to foment a climate of fear by demonstrating the authorities' inability to maintain order and thus highlight its weakness."⁶ In other words, insurgencies are successful if they merely survive.

Prior to General McChrystal's succession as the ISAF commander, and his *Tactical Directive*, our JSOTF observed a blurring division between insurgents and terrorists in eastern Afghanistan. This phenomenon made attempts to curb violence extraordinarily difficult due to competing mission requirements. Notably, tribal and religious affiliations within Pakistan perpetrate an atmosphere of ambivalence towards historic mujahidin groups, like HQN, that serve as proxies to Afghanistan instability. The Haqqani Network conducts terrorist attacks from North Waziristan under the shroud of Pakistan sovereignty based on hard-fought victories against Russian occupiers to re-claim Kabul in the 1980s.⁷ Consequently, youth throughout Paktika, Paktia, Khost, Logar, and Ghazni provinces are receptive to the esteemed history of HQN embodied in the group's leader, Jalauddin Haqqani, or his sons, Sirajuddin and Badruddin. The mysticism of these figures inspires jihad especially within mountainous regions where ISAF presence is extremely limited or non-existent. Worn images of HQN leaders and its renowned sub-commanders often grace the walls of mud-huts inhabited by families eerily unaffected by the reach of globalization, and underscore the affinity some Afghans possess for mujahidin. These leaders not only radicalize Afghans, but also attract an expanding enterprise of non-state, transnational terrorists who are protected across the "Durand Line" on Pakistan soil.

Transnational terrorists, previously affiliated with al-Qaeda (AQ) solely, now find solace in the more heterogeneous and accepting HQN and Taliban (TBN) due to AQ's imperious nature. The malleable ideology of international terrorists has imbued a propensity to adapt to an increasingly arrogant, selective, and corporate trade. More so than ever, for these "... 'professional' terrorist groups, simply perpetuating their cadres becomes a central goal, and what started out as a moral crusade becomes a sophisticated organization. Ensuring the survival of the group demands

³. General Stanley McChrystal, *Tactical Directive*, (Afghanistan: ISAF Headquarters, 6 July 2009).

⁴. Dr. Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, (New York: Public Affairs, 2004). Hard power is coercion through inducements and threats, while soft power is the ability to achieve national security through attractive values, policies, cultures, and institutions.

⁵. Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, "Democracy and Its Arenas," in *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe*, (Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 6.

⁶. Bruce Hoffman, "Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Iraq (Occasional Paper)," *RAND: National Security Research Division* (June 2004): 15.

⁷. Dera Ismail Khan, "Tackling the other Taliban," *The Economist* (October 17-23, 2009), 36.

flexibility in many areas, but especially...mission.”⁸ Surprisingly, AQ cannot operate within Afghanistan without the approval and logistical support of HQN or the TBN. Although it possesses broader objectives than ousting ISAF, it too must offer deference to home-grown militants aligned with Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) for critical enemy insight, funding, and sanctuary. Al-Qaeda’s hauteur as the vanguard of Islamic extremism has disheartened and embarrassed Muslims across the world and resulted in gradual moderation of the TBN’s ideology to demonstrate fundamental independence.⁹

Although British and Mughal imperialists continually attempted to pacify South Waziristan, AQ and Pakistan Taliban (TTP) find safe-haven within its daunting landscape of mountains and earthworks. The Malakand region, in particular, served as a strongpoint to frustrate British colonization at the end of the 19th century. This region also encompasses the Swat Valley and represented the objective of the Pakistan military’s recent envelopment of hostile tribes during my deployment. The region’s treachery affords relative safety that allows AQ to direct a global jihad¹⁰ and both groups to attack Pakistan’s political, cultural, and academic communities in Islamabad, Peshawar, Rawalpindi, and Lahore. Starting in 2003, various tribes across South Waziristan’s uninviting terrain launched uncoordinated attacks against Pakistan and ISAF interests. Extorting their common enemy, Baitullah Mehsud rallied tribal elders to form the TTP in 2007.¹¹ A recent wave of TTP attacks following my re-deployment resulted in another Pakistan military surge titled the “Path of Deliverance,” designed to stem the group’s fomenting aggressiveness and expanded violence.¹²

Until recently, the most dominant tribe throughout South Waziristan, the Mehsud Tribe, was complicit with the planning and execution of TTP attacks under the direction of its former leader, Batiullah Mehsud. His death, reportedly from a U.S. drone strike, resulted in appointment of his trusted deputy, Hakimullah Mehsud.¹³ Hakimullah ordered a considerable increase in attacks elongating Batiullah Mehsud’s previous declaration of war against the Pakistan government. Reprehensible attacks against schools, commercial centers, and military infrastructure initially castigated tribes historically supported by Pakistan to resist meddling of foreign governments. Intelligence garnered from the Swat Campaign reflected the potential for a nation-wide insurgency and ultimately influenced the government to focus attention on this existential threat. The recent deployment of approximately 28,000 soldiers from Kashmir into South Waziristan to stem increasing attacks represents an emerging interest for a country predominately consumed with hedging India, its opposition in four previous wars since Pakistan’s statehood in 1947. Yet, the government’s historic appeasement of bellicose tribes throughout the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) has established a dangerous precedent that continues to undermine genuine action against homegrown militants. For instance, the military and ISI reportedly provide the Mehsud Tribe and HQN not only intelligence regarding security near important Afghan political

⁸. Jessica Stern, “The Protein Enemy,” *Foreign Affairs* 82, no. 4 (July and August, 2003): 28-29.

⁹. Abdul Hameed Bakier, “Jihadis Debate Growing Rift Between Al-Qaeda and the Taliban,” *The Jamestown Foundation Terrorism Monitor*, Volume VII, issue 38 (15 December 2009): 4-6.

¹⁰. Jeffrey Bartholet, “It’s a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World,” *Newsweek* (1 October 2009).

¹¹. Imtiaz Ali, “Military Victory in South Waziristan or the Beginning of a Long War,” *The Jamestown Foundation Terrorism Monitor*, Volume VII, issue 38 (15 December 2009): 6-8.

¹². Alex Altman, “The World,” *Time* (2 November 2009): 13.

¹³. Pir Zubair Shah, Sabrina Tavernise and Mark Mazzet, “Taliban Leader in Pakistan Is Reportedly Killed,” pp. 1; available from <http://www.nytimes.com>; Internet; accessed 9 August 2009.

and population centers but funding, weaponry, and materiel to facilitate attacks against these symbols of stability. Previously aligned with Batiullah Mehsud, Maulvi Nazir of the Ahmedzai Wazir tribe recently entered a nonaggression pact with the army and will receive funding and reconstruction for neutrality.¹⁴ Yet, he is not barred from attacking ISAF. In a letter to the Mehsud tribe recently, General Ashfaq Kayani attempted to subside local and national fears and rationalize the military's focus on the enemy within: "To the brave and honorable people of the Mehsud tribe, the operation [Path of Deliverance] is not meant to target the valiant and patriotic Mehsud tribes but aimed at ridding them of the elements who have destroyed peace in the region."¹⁵

From encampments within the FATA, Baluchistan, and undisputed mountainous areas of eastern Afghanistan, praised and seemingly immortal leaders throughout HQN, as well as the acclaimed TBN leader Mullah Omar, inspire recruits that undergo sophisticated training. These charismatic leaders harness the nature and behavior of tribes, terrorists, and insurgents to confront the essence of ISAF's mission: self-determination and liberty.¹⁶ They manipulate disparate peoples historically attuned to treat foreigners as anti-bodies to ascribe hardships, including collateral damage (civilian casualties), to an array of scapegoats, most notably a hegemonic, bullying America. In some cases, extremist websites maintained by terrorists radicalize westernized Muslims.¹⁷ Recruits are also inculcated with radical Islamic doctrine, including an abhorrent perspective of American morality and prisoner treatment. Tactical questioning of captured HQN fighters and leaders instructed to "fight Americans to the death" reflects surprising amazement at ISAF's attentive medical care and adherence to Afghan sovereignty through judicial procedures. Finally, our JSOTF's sensitive site exploitation (SSE) of an encampment populated by 30-50 HQN and AQ affiliated foreign fighters (FFs) reflected the belief of illiterate recruits in supernatural tendencies promised by HQN senior-leaders. Seasonally, these homegrown and FFs are dispatched to strategically important areas within Afghanistan to menace ISAF in places like the Khost-Gardez (K-G) Pass. The development of a trafficable K-G Pass road system traversing severely restrictive terrain would link Kabul to Khost to Pakistan and increase commerce between the two countries. This would legitimize the government and provide alternates to direct and ancillary involvement with terrorists and the insurgency.

"Partnership 'Till it Hurts"

The Area of Operations (AO): The 4th Brigade Combat Team (BCT), 25th Infantry Division (Airborne) from Fort Richardson, Alaska, controlled eastern Afghanistan throughout the spring and summer of 2009. The AO consisted of Paktika, Paktia, and Khost provinces. As part of the Combined Joint Task Force 82 (CJTF-82), Task Force Yukon (4th BCT) further task organized into subordinate task forces, including: Geronimo 1 (1-501st Infantry Battalion), Geronimo 3 (3-509th Infantry Battalion), TF Steel (2nd Battalion, 377th Parachute Field Artillery Regiment), and TF Denali (1st Squadron, 40th Cavalry Regiment). Geronimo 1 and 3 operated throughout west and east Paktika respectively; TF Denali maintained responsibility for Paktia; and TF Steel

¹⁴. Aryn Baker, "Pakistan's Army Gets Serious," *Time* (9 November 2009), 35-37.

¹⁵. Ibid.

¹⁶. John Gallagher, Director for Iraq and Afghanistan National Security Council, conversations with the author, 6 NOV 2009.

¹⁷. "Home-grown bombers," *The Economist* (October 3-9, 2009): 36.

operated within Khost. Additionally, TF Yukon coordinated with two Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs). They represented the *de-facto*, yet seemingly hollow proponent, of stability operations throughout Khost and Gardez provinces.¹⁸

Fusion Cells: A JSOTF possesses greater ability to find and fix insurgents, terrorists, and their senior-leaders due to technical and tactical capabilities as well as intangible attributes including experience, talent, expertise, and mission. However, the nature of a JSOTF's mission often sabotages intimate knowledge of local communities and fogs the consequences of intrusive counter-terrorist operations. The ability to forecast effects demonstrates heightened situational awareness compulsory to irregular warfare and COIN where killing or capturing of combatants is often (and rightly so) subjugated to the preservation of civilian life. Situational awareness is only achieved through continuous communication and collaboration with conventional counterparts. Several constructs exist to facilitate both a formal and informal SOF and conventional unit relationship, including *fusion cells*. Unfortunately, an inherent confusion regarding *fusion cells* and the intentions of JSOTFs, due to mission and personality conflicts, incessantly circumvents transparency vital to COIN as demonstrated throughout OIF. Because terrorists and insurgents must conduct attacks within population centers, SOF and conventional units target the same networks. The use of a Brigade-level *fusion cell* standardizes intelligence across an AO; results in Inter-Agency (IA) reach-back to develop a holistic Pattern-of-Life (POL) on high value targets (HVTs); de-conflicts ground and aerial Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) assets; reconciles the conventional lethal and non-lethal targeting process know as Decide, Detect, Deliver, and Assess (D3A) with a JSOTF's strictly lethal targeting cycle; leverages the correct SOF-conventional task organization based on environmental atmospheric; and ensures nested, synchronized operations.

A *fusion cell's* task organization varies, but encompasses Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines who are experts in their fields of intelligence and possess vast targeting experience. These professionals conduct technical collection and analysis of the enemy's composition, disposition, and strength, drawing on an extensive network of databases updated daily and conduct meetings as necessary to disseminate intelligence. As a joint organization, the *fusion cell* incorporates representatives of several IA and Other Governmental Agencies (OGA) that marshal the full extent of America's intelligence community and coordinate preemptive homeland security. While it is true that *fusion cells* "...overwhelming focus on 'red' [the enemy],"¹⁹ they also provide a mechanism for intelligence sharing and partnership. Indeed, the tactically oriented collection and analytical focus of uniformed service members, coupled with the operational and strategic insights of civil intelligence professionals, imparts an unparalleled understanding of the enemy to Battle Space Owners (BSO) that facilitates mission analysis, course of action development, and empowers Company Intelligence Support Teams (ISTs).

Initially, JSOTFs directed *fusion cells* under the guidance of a branch qualified Captain or recently promoted Major, both awaiting command opportunities. However, "the surge" in Iraq

¹⁸. Thomas H. Johnson and M. Chris Mason, "Refighting the Last War: Afghanistan and the Vietnam Template," *Military Review* (November-December 2009): 12-13.

¹⁹. Major General Michael T. Flynn (USA), Captain Matt Pottinger (USMC), and Paul D. Batchelor, "Fixing Intel: A Blueprint for Making Intelligence Relevant in Afghanistan, (5 January 2010): 18.

increased the foot-print of conventional units and mandated an organic knowledge of a proven targeting cycle like Find, Fix, Finish, Exploit, and Analyze (F3EA) to train Iraqi Security Forces and target savvy militants. The success of *fusion cells* imparted an expertise to conventional units particularly concerning Time Sensitive Targeting (TST), ISR management, and ISTs that eventually focused pre-deployment mission readiness exercises at the National Training Center and Joint Readiness Training Center.²⁰ Ownership of *fusion cells* eventually migrated to conventional control in Iraq and spurred the current transition of *fusion cell* control from SOF to conventional units in Afghanistan. However, commanders in “the other war,”²¹ have not yet internalized the importance of *fusion cells* to COIN. They have not invested the personnel, time, and energy to build its capacity to analyze information from multiple sources and facilitate the non-lethal and lethal targeting process. Therefore, the ability of commanders to effectively allocate limited ground and aerial ISR to develop POL and target HVTs has suffered. In a recent study, Major General Flynn, ISAF’s Intelligence Officer, reiterated military doctrine in an effort to educate commanders: “*Creating effective intelligence is an inherent and essential responsibility of command.*”²² In absence of command sponsorship, tactical partnership of JSOTFs and conventional units does replicate the capability of *fusion cells* albeit at a diminished capability and for a sliver of the AO. As ISAF’s force structure expands in Afghanistan, capability will arise to coordinate ISR and more appropriately nest counter-terrorist operations with COIN to maximize the combat effectiveness of a thin force. Only commanders can set the conditions for increased engagement.

Our JSOTF deployed to Afghanistan prior to President Obama’s authorized expansion of U.S. forces to counter the enemy’s resurgence and quickly learned that the *fusion cell* recently transitioned to conventional control. Apprehensive, TF Yukon did not initially invest the personnel required to operate its *fusion cell* effectively. Nor did TF Yukon commanders participate in weekly targeting meetings designed to tailor ISR and nest and synchronize SOF and conventional operations. Therefore, the *fusion cell* provided little to no targetable intelligence initially, further eroding its potential to assist COIN. To ensure partnership and intelligence sharing, my JSOTF dedicated a junior, but seasoned Captain, to serve as Liaison Officer (LNO) to TF Yukon’s *fusion cell*. The LNO imparted valuable lessons learned from OIF regarding ISR redundancy, mixing, and integration; special intelligence (SI) analysis; IA reach-back; exploitation of media and technical devices; and recommended a previously successful task organization. His performance spawned a *yin-yang* partnership between TF Yukon and the JSOTF that persisted throughout the deployment.

As the JSOTF Intelligence Officer, I targeted warily and strategically important senior-leaders, using SIGINT, a robust HUMINT network, and the lethally focused F3EA targeting process. However, I also developed lower-tiered auxiliaries, including facilitators—those militants responsible for activities like building explosives, emplacing explosive devices, trafficking weapons, equipment and finances, and conducting visual observations of ISAF. Kill or capture of these personalities of interest (POIs), coupled with SSE and further, advanced exploitation of technical devices and media, would eventually lead to the targeting of more senior-leaders. The LNO facilitated daily dialogue with conventional intelligence officers (Battalion and Brigade

²⁰. MAJ Rod Morgan, “Company Intelligence Support Teams,” *Armor* (July-August, 2008).

²¹. Rajiv Chandrasekaran, “Pentagon Doubts Led to General’s Ouster,” *The Washington Post* (17 August 2009).

²². Major General Michael T. Flynn (USA), Captain Matt Pottinger (USMC), and Paul D. Batchelor, 6.

S2s) via the *fusion cell* to reconcile their D3A High Payoff Target Lists (HPTL) encompassing both lethal and non-lethal targets with our JSOTF's F3EA HPTL including those lower-tiered POIs. These discussions identified lethal targets both forces were developing and resulted in joint planning to determine which force should "action" them based on anticipated effects throughout the Afghan community, operational risk, and the expected value of SSE for rapid follow-on operations. Additionally, reconciliation identified JSOTF lethal targets that constituted BSO non-lethal targets and whose kill or capture would damage BSO rapport with the community as well as its LOEs (on one occasion, our JSOTF planned on targeting a corrupt District Governor who cooperated closely with HQN but also garnered respect and legitimacy from local Afghans). This *yin-yang* partnership not only stimulated our F3EA targeting cycle but also stemmed criticism of ISAF due to proactive consequence management, increased the legitimacy of ISAF and Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), and increased TF Yukon's exposure to more accessible and heavily populated centers to engage non-lethal targets while our JSOTF conducted lethal targeting.

In addition to his daily targeting synchronization, the LNO also coordinated for ISR, CAS, a Quick Reaction Force (QRF), Medical Evacuation (MEDEVAC), and Battle Handover (BHO) when required. He also conducted a weekly targeting meeting with TF Yukon's *fusion cell*, detailed TF Yukon's daily operations during my JSOTF's Commander's Update Brief (CUB), provided history of TF Yukon's previous operations, and captured significant AO trends. He routinely accompanied TF Steel's 70-man TST platoon to kill or capture lower-tiered HVTs in Khost to skirt more restrictive ISAF Rules of Engagement (ROE) and take ownership of important SSE for advanced exploitation and analysis. On one occasion, the *fusion cell* represented a medium to inform TF Steel of our on-going, over-day operations against a heavily defended HQN and FFs encampment within Paktia's mountainous terrain. Previous partnership inspired an inordinate amount of trust that influenced the TF Steel commander to conduct an airstrike on the encampment based on our descriptions of the situation alone. This operation severely limited the enemy's pre-election disruption campaign. In another instance, the *fusion cell* communicated the results of my JSOTF's ground-based ISR operations within a previously impenetrable area that facilitated TF Steel's mission analysis and resulted in tailored air-assault operations to disrupt the enemy's pre-election attacks. Finally, acute collaboration and trust near the end of my JSOTF's rotation resulted in dedication of our organic ISR to TF Yukon's *fusion cell* on numerous occasions to empower both TF Steel's and TF Denali's security operations. This tactic, technique, and procedure (TTP) more effectively facilitated COIN than our aggressive counter-terrorist operations. Generally, my JSOTF's investment in the conventionally operated *fusion cell* provided experience and resources otherwise not made available by commanders and inspired a *yin-yang* partnership that resulted in tremendous trust and strategic success.

Partnership: Prior to our operations, the JSOTF Commander, Operations Officer, and I provided TF Yukon and its subordinate TFs an overview of our ISR capabilities, targeting cycle, and mission at a *fusion cell* meeting. We explained our targeting cycle, known as F3EA, to kill or capture HVTs to achieve our mission: (1) to block the K-G Pass as a training, planning, and operational sanctuary for HQN, TBN, and AQ militants including FFs; (2) to clear Khost of HQN, TBN, and AQ militants including FFs; and (3) to disrupt the flow of FFs into eastern Afghanistan.

Afghanistan's severe terrain, tribal cleavages, lack of nationalism, culture of corruption, and survivalist mentality creates a more difficult operating environment than that of Iraq. For example, the geography provides phenomenal cover and concealment to an enemy historically familiar with its cave systems, bunker complexes, aqueducts, and encampments. The ability of TF Yukon, our *yang*, to employ F3EA in Afghanistan's rugged environment was extremely limited for several reasons. It lacked redundant aerial and ground based ISR. It lacked appropriate lift and flexibility due to a deliberate planning process. It pursued dynamic HVTs within the constraints of ISAF ROE that mitigated timely application of airpower, hamstrung the detention of militants, and required adherence to an arduous authorization process. One veteran candidly reports: "In my experience, decisions move through the process of risk mitigation like molasses. When the Taliban arrive in a village, I discovered, it takes 96 hours for an Army commander to obtain necessary approvals to act. In the first half of 2009, the Army Special Forces company I was with repeatedly tried to interdict Taliban. By our informal count...we (and the Afghan commandos we worked with) were stopped on 70 percent of our attempts because we could not achieve the requisite 11 approvals in time."²³ Finally, its communication equipment performed poorly within severe terrain. Unfortunately, the hierarchical nature of terrorist and insurgent groups, coupled with continued recruiting, counteracts reported airstrikes within Pakistan against senior-leaders whose deputies will emerge as replacements. This succession facilitates consolidation and reorganization as evident by Pakistan's on-going operation ("Path of Deliverance"). We determined that greater synchronization between our JSOTF and TF Yukon via its *fusion cell* would provide pressure and tailored lethality to achieve the COIN Lines of Effort (LOE).

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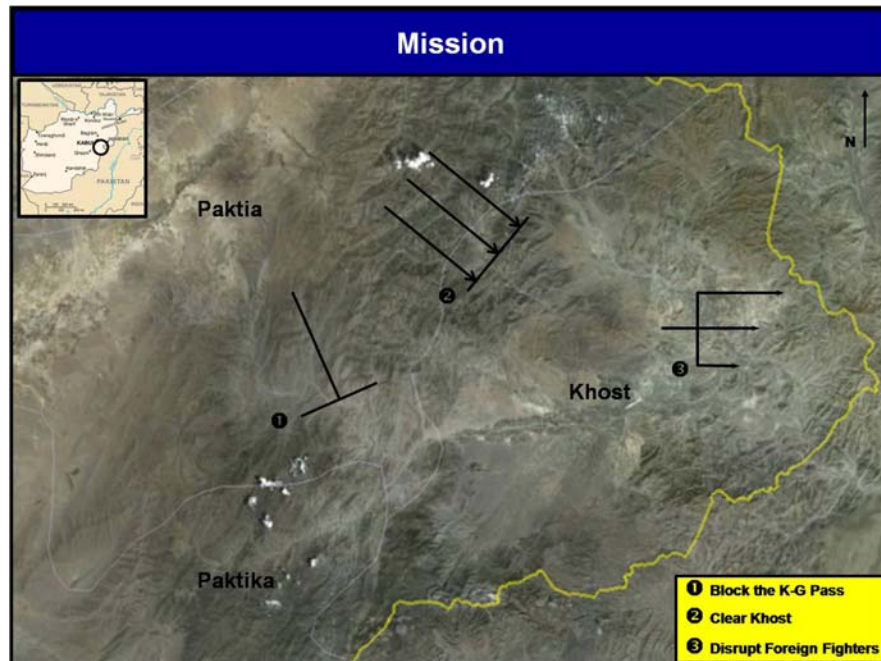


Figure One: The JSOTF's Targeting Mission

²³. Jonathan T. Vaccaro, "The Next Surge: Counterbureaucracy," pp. 1; available from <http://www.nytimes.org>; Internet; accessed 13 December 2009.

Therefore, the JSOTF nested its counter-terrorism operations within the security LOE of both TF Steel and Denali and entrenched the *yin-yang* relationship. The BSOs were afforded more time to foster governance and participation, social and economic well-being, and justice and reconciliation through leader engagements, presence patrols, infrastructure projects, and similar activities, while my JSOTF targeted senior-leaders to achieve our mission. The JSOTF's dedication of ISR, including signals, human, and imagery intelligence (SIGINT, HUMINT, IMINT) assets resulted in seamless communication, greater intelligence sharing, and cross-pollination of TTPs. More importantly, nested security operations resulted in joint planning, imparting an accurate understanding of insurgent capability and sanctuaries from the two TFs more familiar with the AO after months of engagement. Ultimately, partnership with both TFs resulted in the unprecedented, joint-destruction of multiple HQN, TBN, and AQ affiliated FFs encampments that facilitated training, planning, and staging for attacks against ISAF and cooperative Afghans during the election season. The encampment possessed Uzbek senior-leaders connected to international terrorist organizations as well as Tajik, Chechen, Uighur, and Arab FFs. The affects of this partnership resonated through the HQN, TBN, and AQ strategic leadership, blunting their will and capacity to disrupt the Afghan elections contrary to a preponderance of media reporting.

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Figure Two: A Typical Mujahidin in Eastern Afghanistan²⁴

²⁴. Ghaith Abdul-Ahad, "Inside the Taliban: 'The more troops they send, the more targets we have,'" pp. 1; available from <http://www.guardian.com>; Internet; accessed 5 December 2009.

On one occasion, the JSOTF relocated its Tactical Operations Center (TAC), consisting of the commander, an assistant operations officer, me, and an assortment of intelligence and communications personnel, to the K-G Pass to operate closely with TF Denali. Re-location provided proximity to the enemy's seasonal presence corroborated by SIGINT, HUMINT, and historical data and synchronized our surgical operations with TF Denali's security LOE: TF Denali conducted a clearing operation of historic caches and safe-havens following our departure, again underscoring the *yin-yang* dynamic. Unfettered intelligence sharing also tailored ground and aerial-based ISR to find and fix HQN and Uzbek senior-leaders and AQ affiliated FFs within three previously constructed and repopulated encampments in austere, mountainous terrain throughout Paktia. This area was unobserved by ISAF, and the enemy took advantage of a well-spring of local support. TF Denali's extensive knowledge of the AO provided an instantaneous awareness of the enemy's location via SIGINT and All-Source (AS) analysis that stimulated an aggressive POL development evolving over seven days. Incredible analysis by our JSOTF's junior analysts, as well as multiple briefs to the Chain of Command (CoC) satisfying the *Tactical Directive*, resulted in a massive aerial bombardment on extremely concealed, resourced, and self-sustaining encampments. The coordinated strikes resulted in the death of 30-50 HQN and Uzbek senior-leaders as well as AQ affiliated FFs. Timely HUMINT validated the encampments' significance to the enemy's seasonal operations. Furthermore, the pre-staged nature of JSOTF forces facilitated rapid time-on-target (TOT); eased QRF, CAS, and MEDEVAC; and resulted in an intimidating shock of capture due to an explosive F3EA cycle.

At one point throughout our partnership with TF Denali, my analysts confirmed that the enemy engaged in patrol base operations, including stand-to, challenge and password, and 360 degree security. Subsequent SSE confirmed that the enemy developed a tubular hydration system, connecting satellite positions to a centralized point further camouflaging their locations; rigorously followed a security plan outlined by HQN senior-leaders to protect against surprise attacks; maintained a logistical program founded on intimidation of villagers; and trained extensively within concealing terrain. The JSOTF's SSE also resulted in identification of historic safe-houses, caches, facilitation routes, meeting locations, and encampments throughout eastern Afghanistan. This provided a road-map to a partnered JSOTF and BSO election security plan that disrupted the enemy's scheduled attacks. As the *yin*, our JSOTF targeted HVTs including senior-leaders and concealed encampments. As the *yang*, TF Yukon secured population centers, bolstered ANSF capability, and secured lines of communication (LOCs) to expedite election results. Perhaps most important, partnered operations resulted in a Situational Template (SITEMP) that accurately depicted the enemy's encampment security and sustainment structure. Dissemination of this SITEMP as well as all SSE to TF Yukon and adjacent JSOTFs via the BCT's *fusion cell* focused ISR and resulted in multiplicative targeting success.

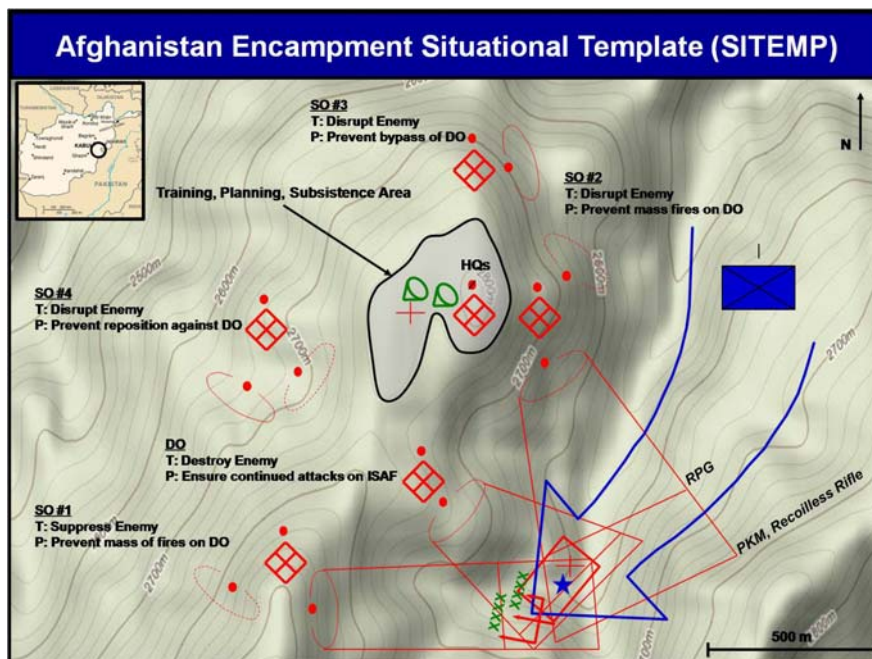


Figure Three: Encampment SITEMP in Mountainous Terrain

Fundamentally, JSOTF and conventional unit partnership results more from the personality of task force leadership (commander, operations officer, intelligence officer) as well as investment in a *fusion cell* rather than a directive from higher authority. Iterative deployments of different JSOTFs into the same AO will undoubtedly result in varying shades of operational and strategic success most easily measured by not only the number of senior-leaders killed or captured, but also the reactions of insurgent and terrorist leadership to adopt new, more restrictive TTPs, hide-away, moderate, and potentially reconcile. Sensitive reporting continues to indicate the willingness of moderating HQN and TBN senior-leaders to reconcile due to our JSOTF's "personality management" and *yin-yang* relationship with TF Yukon entrenched through the *fusion cell*. This model could redefine the otherwise murky SOF-conventional operating paradigm.

Innovative Leadership: Ultimately, both partnership and intelligence sharing result from nothing more than in-depth mission analysis of often self-isolated JSOTFs to acknowledge more appropriate means to extenuate their unmatched experience, targeting acumen, lethality, and less-restrictive ROE. While COIN represents our coalition's strategy within both Iraq and Afghanistan, uncertainty still clouds generations of officers more comfortable with a "...clean war, where the leader can be up front—'Follow me, men'—because this war doesn't dictate it. This war dictates drinking *chai*, handshaking, being political."²⁵ Because the military has conducted both COIN and stability operations throughout the last nine years in Afghanistan and will continue to be burdened with both in an era of persistent conflict, SOF and conventional forces must cooperate more closely than before to remove hard-lined combatants and preserve the sanctity of civilian life at the cost of perhaps more inconsequential militants: "lethal targeting, by itself, will do nothing to help us win in Afghanistan."²⁶

²⁵. David Finkel, *The Good Soldiers*, (New York; Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 2009), 28.

²⁶. Major General Michael T. Flynn (USA), Captain Matt Pottinger (USMC), and Paul D. Batchelor, 3.

My JSOTF's successes were summed by a bumper-sticker phrase favored by commanders: "partnership 'till it hurts." This flexibility resulted largely from a nuanced commander and young staff unrestrained by a previously isolated culture and willing to change the SOF-conventional paradigm at a crucial time in OEF. This slogan facilitated unity of effort through partnership and intelligence sharing based on improvement to the *fusion cell*, dedication of an LNO to the BSOs, cross-pollination of ISR and personnel to ensure success of conventional operations, and joint operations on multiple occasions to kill or capture HVTs. Ultimately, disruption of HQN and TBN strategic objectives increased potential for reconciliation. Future JSOTFs and conventional units deployed to Afghanistan should mirror this *yin-yang* dynamic to overcome resource limitations and synchronize operations based off complementary combat power, capabilities, and situational awareness. Senior intelligence professionals are correct that *fusion cells* represent a cross-section of "...bright people under the same roof...able to coordinate classified SIGINT and HUMINT and real-time surveillance video and allow commanders to 'action' the information with airstrikes and special operations."²⁷ However, they should acknowledge that *fusion cells* also provide operational balance by empowering conventional forces to focus on "white" activity (Afghan perceptions, security, economic and development projects, and governance) while JSOTFs prosecute high-risk and sensitive targets most often in severely restricted terrain. In testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on 9 December 2009, GEN Petraeus tacitly acknowledged the importance of this balance promising "...increased focus on counter-terrorism operations...particularly those in rural areas outside the reach of population centers that conventional forces will focus on."²⁸

Captain Paul Lushenko is currently assigned as a Rotary Ambassadorial Scholar at The Australian National University's (ANU) Asia-Pacific College of Diplomacy. He was assigned to the 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment in Fort Benning, Georgia as an Intelligence Officer. His deployments include multiple tours to Iraq and a recent deployment to Afghanistan where he served as the J2 for a Joint Special Operations Task Force. He graduated from the United States Military Academy in 2005 (B.S., International Relations) and is studying for dual masters in diplomacy and international relations.

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²⁷. Ibid., 18.

²⁸. Eric Schmitt, "Elite U.S. Forces Expanding Hunt in Afghanistan," pp.1; available from <http://www.nytimes.com>; Internet; accessed 9 December 2009.

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