



A Comprehensive Approach to Local Engagement in Afghanistan, That may also Mitigate IEDs

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Executive Summary

This paper intends to provoke thought on the connection between *Stability Operations*¹ and Improvised Explosive Device (IED) reduction. Stability Operations emphasizes the need for a simultaneous bottom-up, top-down, and whole of government approach in order to "...outsmart the insurgents and wrest away the initiative."² Ultimately, the end state is to link the informal (traditional) local sub-national consensus governance structures³ with the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (Afghan Central Government) at the district level. Therefore, one may reasonably ask whether an engagement program with local villagers might also diminish the IED threat.

Experience demonstrates it can. Interviews with US Army Special Forces Operational Detachment Alphas (Special Forces Team{s}) conducting the Local Defense Initiative program from July 2009 until January 2010 provide evidence that a population-centric, bottom-up local engagement program within the rural areas of Afghanistan can reduce the number of IED incidents. What was further revealed was that indigenous reporting of IEDs and related information increased proportionately to the degree of trust, respect, and credibility developed between local village elders and United States Army Special Forces (Green Berets).⁴

Accordingly, the IED more precisely should be viewed as a symptom and not the cause of the problems affecting Afghanistan. To discern this symptom requires opening the aperture to look over the horizon and effectively scope out the Operational Environment.⁵ The human terrain in Afghanistan, while very complex, helps drive the symptom, as does the ease and cost effectiveness of the IED. Currently there are three successful bottom-up local engagement programs from which to conduct further research and analysis: 1) the former Special Forces Local Defense Initiative program and the current Village Stability Operations program, along with the Afghan Local Police program; 2) the United States Marine Corps (USMC) Female

¹ *Stability Operations* - According to JP 3-0, 10 SEP 01, Stability Operations encompass various military missions, tasks, and activities conducted outside the United States in coordination with other instruments of national power to maintain or reestablish a safe and secure environment, provide essential governmental services, emergency infrastructure reconstruction, and humanitarian relief.

² Center for the New American Security, "Fixing Intel: A Blueprint for Making Intelligence Relevant in Afghanistan," by Major General Michael T. Flynn, USA; Captain Matt Pottinger, USMC; and Paul D. Batchelor, DIA; January, 2010

³ For further information regarding traditional local governance or sub-national governance in Afghanistan please refer, "The Political Economy of Customary Village Organizations in Rural Afghanistan," by Jennifer Brick, University of Wisconsin at Madison and a classified document by US Army National Ground Intelligence Center entitled, (U) "Complex Environment – Afghanistan: Understanding Afghan Village Structure – A Guide for Population Engagement."

⁴ Interviews with 7th Special Forces Group (SFG), SFODAs, March 8-9, 2010

⁵ UFMCS Draft Red Team Handbook, October 2007

Engagement Teams⁶ (FETs); and 3) the Non-Government Organization (NGO) Central Asia Institute's methodology.

In the fall of 2008, local engagement re-emerged as the critical pathway to initiate, build, and sustain enduring cross-cultural relationships with the indigenous population of Afghanistan to achieve an end-state. As a consequence, several bottom-up and top-down courses of action were considered to establish village security, mentor existing traditional local governance, build development and bring economic opportunity, while improving the quality of life. In January 2009, International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) elected to go with a top-down approach to local engagement. Unfortunately, a top-down approach does not necessarily account for the complexity of the operational environment⁷ or the historical distrust Afghans have toward a central government. This is further complicated by the fact that over the past thirty years the people of Afghanistan have seen six different forms of central government. During this period of time, traditional local sub-national governance structures continued to exist in the rural villages of Afghanistan as they have for thousands of years. In July 2009, a bottom-up approach to local engagement was initiated; however, within a year the Local Defense Initiative program converted into another top-down approach, the Afghan Local Police program. Like its predecessor, the Afghan Public Protection Program, the Afghan Local Police program is controlled by the Afghan Government's Ministry of Interior.

In 2009, Special Forces Teams conducting local engagement in Regional Command – West were able to utilize several of the highly successful FETs.⁸ After repetitive engagements between the same FET, village, and Afghan women, remarkable information was exchanged.⁹ The fact that 48.8% of the Afghan population is female¹⁰ and 44.6% of the population is under the age of 14 underscores the need to engage the women.¹¹ Women are the caregivers and primary influencers of the next generation in their youth, prior to their attainment of fighting age.¹² Going forward, serious consideration should be given to the creation of Joint Female Engagement Teams (JFETs) to augment the current Female Engagement Team program.

Since 1996, Central Asia Institute has been building schools, primarily for girls, in Pakistan and Afghanistan. As of 2009, the Central Asia Institute has helped build 131 schools, providing secular education to over 51,000 students as an alternative to the Madrassas, in some of the most Taliban infested and geographically inhospitable areas in the world plagued by war.¹³ The Central Asia Institute goes to areas where the Afghan Central Government cannot reach and other NGOs don't dare venture due to their desolate geographic locations. The key to their success is building relationships through trust over time.

⁶ USMC - FETs grew out of the USMC Lioness Program in Iraq. FETs in Afghanistan are now used in all phases of USMC operations

⁷ UFMCS Red Team Handbook, Section III Operational Environment, October 2007 – Twelve Critical Variables (physical environment, nature and stability of the critical actors, sociological dimensions, culture, regional and global relationships, military capabilities, information, technology, national will and the will of critical actors, time, and economics) version 4, October 2007

⁸ USMC - FETs grew out of the USMC Lioness Program in Iraq. FETs in Afghanistan are now used in all phases of USMC operations

⁹ Interviews with 7th SFG, SFODAs, March 8-9, 2010

¹⁰ CIA – The World Factbook: Afghanistan, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html>

[This is a rough estimate as there has not been a census completed in Afghanistan since prior to the Soviet Invasion in 1979

¹¹ Task Force Leatherneck, Female Engagement Teams, Concept of Operations

¹² Niala Mohammad, Open Source Analysis Augmentation Center, May 2010

¹³ Central Asia Institute, <https://www.ikat.org/alima>

Further research and analysis is needed to define the connection between these local engagement programs and the frequency of IED incidents to determine if a correlation exists. An oft-quoted Afghan phrase regarding outsiders is “you have the watches, but we have the time,”¹⁴ alluding to the fact that while foreign invaders, colonialists, and visitors have occupied parts of Afghanistan over the centuries, often with superior technology, it is ultimately only the Afghans that prevail, living much as they did before.¹⁵ A lack in understanding this concept has frustrated many US and coalition military leaders at every level since 2001, who cannot grasp why millions of dollars in aid and assistance have failed to secure the loyalty and cooperation of the Afghan populace.¹⁶ This happens because time necessary to build trusting and respectful relationships with the village elders was not taken. Furthermore, the perception is that the US and coalition forces will eventually depart, leaving them to deal with the Taliban, thus asking themselves why they should risk retribution now or later.¹⁷

The challenge continues to be the ability of the Afghan Central Government to bring good governance to the rural villages of Afghanistan. To date, they have been unable to establish security, provide justice, offer economic opportunity or bring basic government services to the rural areas of Afghanistan where most of the population resides.¹⁸ Further complicating matters, by picking his Provincial Governors who in-turn hand pick the district sub-governors, President Karzai in effect drives the anger of a disaffected populace. The insurgent capitalizes on this by assuming shadow government functions within the rural villages. Thus, the relationships developed through a bottom-up local engagement program between US and coalition forces and the villagers may determine their willingness to report on insurgent activities, including IED related information. As a consequence, the battle is over influencing the villagers sitting on the fence trying to decide whether to risk their future and place their trust with the Afghan Central Government or accept what may be the better of two untenable positions by remaining with the proverbial devil they know, the Taliban.

Regrettably, to date bottom-up local engagement programs suffer from top officious interference that disrupts and eventually destroys the program’s intent. A top-down approach makes it more difficult for US and coalition forces to develop relationships; in particular, with the Pashtun, who have a fiercely independent nature and do not self-identify with the central government of Afghanistan. Ideally, local engagement should be conducted, at least initially, free from the Afghan Central Government’s interference in order to allow the necessary time for US and coalition forces to effectively reverse bridge the village with the district government. The Afghan Central Government should concentrate its efforts to clean up corruption while effectively extending essential public services, law and order, development, economic reform, and possibly even electricity down to the districts and out to the villages. This is where a top-down program can be the most effective provided it is nested with a bottom-up local engagement program.

Overall, experience suggests that Stability Operations can reduce the number of IED incidents. However, for any local engagement program to succeed, the US and coalition forces must separate the Taliban from the local populace, eventually compelling the Taliban to

¹⁴ Will, George F. *Hostage to a Timetable*, May 6, 2010. Retrieved May 7, 2010 from <http://www.buffalonews.com/2010/05/06/1041783/hostage-to-a-timetable.html>

¹⁵ Bradley Grimm, JIEDDO, Competitive Strategies Group, Cultural and Political Cell, June 2010

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ Ibid

¹⁸ CIA Fact Book Afghanistan, as of 2008 only 24% of Afghans live in urban areas.

negotiate, air their grievances constructively, and be willing to become part of the legitimate representative political process. In the interim, the biggest obstacle in achieving our objectives is the perceived illegitimacy of the Afghan Central Government, resulting from systemic corruption that creates an endless cycle of instability.¹⁹ An independent bottom-up local engagement program that can make the best use of FETs, applies Central Asia Institute methodologies, and the successful tactics, techniques and procedures from the Local Defense Initiative program may be the best approach to buy time and space until the Afghan Central Government has the capacity to establish security and deliver basic public services to the districts. Upon further research and analysis, a bottom-up, top-down, and whole of government approach may prove to successfully link the village to the district, improve security, bring development and economic opportunity while significantly reducing the number of IED incidents as Afghan National Security Forces and Special Forces gain the respect, trust, and support from the indigenous population of Afghanistan.

Ultimately a successful bottom-up, top-down, and whole of government strategy will require the full integration and support of the United States and coalition partner military and civilian agencies to forge a *unity of effort*²⁰ from the strategic down to the tactical level. This strategy could enhance the operational effects and speed the process of creating a non-permissive IED environment for the *insurgents*²¹ through Stability Operations.²²

Background

Tribal Structures in Afghanistan: {ref. Annex A} Not all Pashtun are Taliban, but the predominance of Taliban are Pashtun. The Pashtun are the largest ethnic group in Afghanistan, representing 42% of the population.²³ The Pashtun belt stretches from the west along the south to the east across the Afghanistan – Pakistan (AFPAK) Border (Durand Line) into Pakistan’s Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA). The Afghan Pashtun are not necessarily organized or hierarchal, whereas the Pakistani Pashtun are more institutionalized and more structured due to years of regular interaction with the Pakistan Central Government.²⁴

Although Afghan Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Hazaras have variant forms of local governance, they often have similar positions of leadership as the Pashtun, except the names of the village leader or executive branch and the village council or legislature branch may differ depending

¹⁹ Dr. David Kilcullen speaks specifically to the *Cycle of Instability*: whereby *Corruption and Criminality* causes *Bad Governance and Exploitation of the People* producing a *Disaffected Frustrated Population* allowing for the *Taliban and their Shadow Governance* that further allows for more *Corruption and Criminality*

²⁰ Unity of effort – Is the foundation of success for operations that require integrating the capabilities of all the instruments of national power, as well as those of other nations, nongovernmental organizations, intergovernmental organizations, and the private sector. However, many actors, particularly nongovernmental organizations, participate in unified action at their own discretion. Their roles are often defined by competing interests and governed by differences in policy; in the case of non-governmental organizations, their activities are driven by fundamental humanitarian principles and may have goals separate from the United States Government (USG) or the international community. FM 3-07 Stability Operations, October 2008.

²¹ Insurgents – For the purposes of this paper the term Insurgents or INS refers specifically to the Taliban (religious students) and affiliated organizations such as the Jalaluddin Haqqani and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar Networks. It does not include other warlords, al Qai’da, drug barons, or other nefarious criminal networks.

²² “Taking Interagency Stability Operations to a New Level: The Integration of Special Operations and USAID in Afghanistan,” by Sloan Mann, Small Wars Journal

²³ CIA – The World Factbook: Afghanistan, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html>

²⁴ “Afghanistan: A Tribal Society?,” by Joshua Foust, December 2008

upon the region of Afghanistan; for instance, a *jirga*²⁵ may be referred to as a shura.²⁶ Despite thirty years of war and six different forms of central government, traditional local sub-national consensus governance structures continue to exist as they have for thousands of years. During the Afghan – Soviet War many village elders were systematically killed. As a result the village political system of checks and balances became fractured, particularly in the south. After the Taliban came to power in 1996, they exploited this situation by appointing their own village mullahs, and elevating their prominence over the malik and the village elders, purposely upsetting the balance of power within the rural villages.

The Succession of Warfare in Afghanistan Post 9/11: {ref. Annex A} Shortly after the tragic events of September 11, 2001, Special Forces Teams were inserted into Afghanistan, whereupon they linked up with Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) operatives and members of the United Islamic Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan, more infamously referred to as the Northern Alliance, a political-military organization formed in the late nineties to fight the Taliban, comprised of mostly ethnic Tajiks, Hazaras, Uzbeks, and Turkmen from northern Afghanistan.²⁷ At the time, it was also critical for Special Forces to join forces with the Pashtun resistance in southern Afghanistan to liberate Kandahar from the Taliban in order to avert any potential ethnic strife between the Northern Alliance and the Pashtun. Initially, in the fall of 2001, there was no coordinated Pashtun guerilla force.

Embedded Special Forces Teams enabled these resistance movements to overthrow the Taliban government, operating by, with, and through the Northern Alliance in the north and Karzai's anti-Taliban fighters in the south. By December 2001, Hamid Karzai was named to head the transitional government and shortly thereafter he was appointed as the interim President of Afghanistan. At that point, Special Forces transitioned from *Unconventional Warfare*²⁸ to Stability Operations and counter-insurgency to include *Foreign Internal Defense*²⁹. Accordingly,

²⁵Jirga – According to “Jirga – A Traditional Mechanism of Conflict Resolution in Afghanistan” by Ali Wardak, University of Glamorgan, UK; “...the Pashtun traditional tribal *jirga* where people gather and sit in a large circle in order to resolve disputes and make collective decisions about important social issues.” It is called a Shura in other ethnic regions of Afghanistan. It is by its nature consensus government.

²⁶ “The Political Economy of Customary Village Organizations in Rural Afghanistan,” by Jennifer Brick, University of Wisconsin at Madison

²⁷ BBC News Website, “Who are the Northern Alliance,” published November 13, 2001, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/1652187.stm

²⁸Unconventional Warfare – ARSOF broadens the definition by defining Unconventional Warfare (UW) operations as “a broad range of military and/or paramilitary operations and activities, normally of long duration, conducted through, with, or by indigenous or other surrogate forces that are organized, trained, equipped, supported, and otherwise directed in varying degrees by an external source. UW operations can be conducted across the range of conflict against regular and irregular forces. These forces may or may not be State-sponsored.” This expanded definition includes the use of surrogates and the implementation of UW operations against non-State actors. These aspects are important for ARSOF to meet emerging threats. Operations conducted by, with, or through irregular forces in support of a resistance movement, an insurgency, or conventional military operations. FM3-05 Army Special Operations Forces, September 2006.

²⁹ Foreign Internal Defense – Foreign Internal Defense (FID) is a subset of stability operations. These operations promote and protect U.S. national interests by influencing the threat, political, and information dimensions of the operational environment through a combination of peacetime developmental, cooperative activities and coercive actions in response to crisis. Army forces, including ARSOF (particularly SF and PSYOP), accomplish stability goals through security cooperation. The military activities that support these operations are diverse, continuous, and often long-term. Their purpose is to promote and sustain regional and global stability. Stability operations employ Army forces, including ARSOF (particularly CA), to assist civil authorities, foreign or domestic, as they prepare for or respond to crises. The primary role of stability operations is to meet the immediate needs of designated groups,

Special Forces operations now directly supported President Karzai in order to prevent the insurgents from trying to overthrow the newly formed Afghan Central Government. During this time, Special Forces maintained the use of irregular security forces, including warlords and various militias, to conduct offensive military operations. Also during this stage of the war, IEDs were not a major factor as they would become in Iraq and thereafter in Afghanistan.

In March 2002, Operation Anaconda in the Shah I Kot Valley involved large numbers of US General Purpose Forces or conventional forces, along with Special Operations Forces (SOF), in direct combat against the *Anti-Afghan Forces*³⁰. This operation served as a benchmark when conventional forces began assuming greater control of the battle-space in Afghanistan. Unfortunately, Special Forces became fixated on *Direct Action*³¹ operations, focusing on kill or capture missions in pursuit of high priority individuals, over the complex and difficult to measure warrior-diplomat efforts to develop relationships with village elders. The latter requires incredible time and patience, in some instances taking longer to establish than the standard deployment rotation. Another contributing factor may have been that many new Special Forces soldiers, particularly those coming through the 18 X-Ray Program, grew-up conducting predominately Direct Action operations.

In 2008, a paradigm shift began to emerge within the US Army Special Forces community, when the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force - Afghanistan (CJSOTF-A) Red Team,³² the first ever to deploy with a SOF unit since its inception in 2006,³³ discovered that Tribal Engagement, as it was referred to at the time, occurred more as a means to facilitate Direct Action operations rather than to initiate, build, establish, and sustain enduring cross-cultural relationships with the indigenous people of Afghanistan to achieve an end-state. After analyzing the success of the Sunni Awakening and the Sons of Iraq program, as well as previous tribal engagement efforts by the CJSOTF-A – to include the tremendous effort by the Special Forces Teams that worked in Chamkani, Paktia Province – the CJSOTF-A Red Team³⁴ devised a comprehensive Tribal Engagement Initiative for Regional Command - East.

for a limited time, until civil authorities can accomplish these tasks without military assistance. FM3-05 Army Special Operations Forces, September 2006.

³⁰ *Anti-Afghan Forces (AAF)* – For the purposes of this paper enemy forces composed of any and all combatants fighting ISAF and ANSF inside Afghanistan to include the Taliban, al-Qai'da, and criminal elements such as drug barons.

³¹ *Direct Action* – JP 3-05, *Doctrine for Joint Special Operations*, defines Direct Action (DA) as short-duration strikes and other small scale offensive actions conducted as a special operation in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive environments and that employ specialized military capabilities to seize, destroy, capture, exploit, recover, or damage designated targets. DA differs from conventional offensive actions in the level of physical and political risk, operational techniques, and the degree of discriminate and precise use of force to achieve specific objectives. In the conduct of these operations, SOF may employ raid, ambush, or direct assault tactics (including close-quarters battle); emplace mines and other munitions; conduct standoff attacks by fire from air, ground, or maritime platforms; provide terminal guidance for precision-guided munitions; conduct independent sabotage; and conduct anti-ship operations. FM3-05 Army Special Operations Forces, September 2006.

³² CJSOTF-A Red Team was formerly trained at the University of Foreign Military and Cultural Studies, Fort Leavenworth, KS.

³³ University of Foreign Military and Cultural Studies (UFMCS) Red Team Handbook – Draft, October 2007

³⁴ Red Teaming enables units to avoid group think, mirror imaging, cultural missteps, and tunnel vision in plans and operations, while providing alternative analysis. Red Teams also help to identify poor assumptions, and discover gaps and seams in the operations plan that fail to account for the complexity of operational environment

After the Tribal Engagement Initiative concept was briefed to several flag officers³⁵ at the annual SOF Conference held at Bagram Air Base in October 2008, the former ISAF Commander, General McKiernan, decided a top-down approach to local engagement would be more appropriate to support the Afghan Central Government and arrest President Karzai's concerns. As a consequence, the Tribal Engagement Initiative's bottom-up approach was modified one hundred and eighty degrees. Community Outreach, as it was called initially, was adopted by the Afghan Government's Ministry of Interior and became the Afghan Public Protection Program. Unfortunately, this program did not account for the local concerns or the complexity of the operational environment, regarding the indigenous process of village governance and the historical distrust of a central government. Over the past thirty years the people of Afghanistan have witnessed several forms of national government in which they were ruled rather than governed.

The Types of Engagement Programs: Every day, US and coalition forces conduct some type of local engagement in the conduct of their operations. Many of these independent engagements have been overlapping and duplicative in effort. Special Forces are extremely qualified to conduct local engagement with the indigenous people of Afghanistan, as that is an essential element of what they are trained to do. Their small size allows them to remain agile with a smaller logistics and sustainment footprint than their larger conventional counterparts. They are specifically trained as warrior-diplomats, possessing an intimate knowledge of the local culture, language, and social order necessary to develop respectful and trusting relationships with native inhabitants.³⁶ From 2003 to 2008, Special Forces focused on kinetic (Direct Action) type of operations, whereby local engagement occurred more as a means to understand the local environment and gather information for their situational awareness rather than as part of a comprehensive local engagement plan.

In May 2007, Special Forces began instructing, training, and mentoring the newly created *Afghan National Army Commandos* {ref. Annex B}. The commando program is not part of any specific local engagement strategy. However, training, assisting, and advising are central components of the type of Foreign Internal Defense operations Special Forces do when building host nation capacity. However in 2009, Special Forces initiated two local engagement programs, representing a departure from their previous focus. In January 2009, the *Afghan Public Protection Program* {ref. Annex C} began in Wardak Province. Wardak was chosen because of its strategic importance and proximity to Kabul. The Afghan Government's Ministry of Interior sponsored the Afghan Public Protection Program, while the Independent Directorate of Local Governance provided oversight.

The intent of Afghan Public Protection Program was to improve district security while denying *safe haven*³⁷ for the insurgents as a stopgap measure until which time enough Afghan National Police were trained and deployed to the rural communities. As such, Afghan Public

³⁵ In fall 2008, the TEI concept was briefed to the CJSOTF-A Commander, Colonel Sean Mulholland; the Special Operations Command Central (SOCCENT) Commander, Major General Charles Cleveland; the Assistant Secretary for Defense for Special Operations/Low-Intensity Conflict and Interdependent Capabilities (ASD/SOLIC&IC), Honorable Mr. Michael Vickers; and the Commander of United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), Admiral Eric Olson.

³⁶ "To Serve the Nation: U.S. Special Operations Forces in an Era of Persistent Conflict," by Michele L. Malvesti, Center for New American Security, June 2010

³⁷ *Safe haven* – For the purposes of this paper safe havens are the areas within Afghanistan where insurgents and anti-Afghan forces have freedom of movement and local support.

Protection Program graduates or *Guardians* as they are called were issued uniforms, vehicles, and weapons by the Ministry of Interior. Special Forces played a significant role in executing the program by training the Afghan National Police trainers and then mentoring the Guardians upon their graduation. The Guardians' primary responsibility initially was manning checkpoints along the portion of the Kabul-Kandahar Highway that runs through Wardak. Prior to surge of forces in 2009, Wardak had only a small contingent of US and coalition forces. Regrettably, more forces presented the insurgents with more targets of opportunity, therefore increasing, at least initially, the number of IED incidents.³⁸

In July 2009, Special Forces initiated a second local engagement program, the Community Defense Initiative. By the fall, the program became known as the *Local Defense Initiative* {ref. Annex D} and in May 2010 it changed once again to become Village Stability Operations. Although ISAF under General McChrystal supported the Local Defense Initiative and Village Stability Operations, President Karzai and the US Embassy had concerns with these programs. As a result, the community policing aspect formerly of the Local Defense Initiative program and now Village Stability Operations transitioned into the Afghan Local Police program. Similar to previous local engagement programs, the Afghan Local Police program affords the Afghan Central Government time and space to build Afghan National Security Forces. The intent of the Local Defense Initiative's bottom-up approach was to build mutually respectful and trusting relationships with village elders and to separate the insurgents from the population, just as they have successfully separated the US and coalition forces from the population over the past several years.

In executing the Local Defense Initiative, Special Forces Teams returned to living within the community, utilizing indigenous modes of transportation and as necessary wore local clothing instead of standard Army uniforms. Through traditional local sub-national consensus governance structures (jirga, malik, and mullah),³⁹ Special Forces obtain credibility and buy-in to facilitate the establishment of a village defense system, determine development projects, mentor traditional local village governance, and improve the quality of community life, effectively creating a non-permissive IED environment for the insurgent. The Local Defense Initiative's civil military projects employed local villagers to help with the development efforts in building village infrastructure (schools, wells, roads, vocational centers, municipal buildings, irrigation, IED prevention – sealing culverts, etc.). One of the benefits of this program was the increase of indigenous reporting on IED related information.

The end state for the Local Defense Initiative program was a community where traditional local governance and village elders were strengthened, the Taliban powerbase and the shadow government were subverted, the village could defend itself from the insurgents, and the village was successfully linked to the district, whereby the Afghan Central Government was able to provide essential basic public services, such as justice, law and order, and development.

³⁸ Questionnaire and Interview with CW Mark Simon, March 24, 2010

³⁹ For further information regarding traditional local sub-national governance structures please refer to "Complex Environments – Afghan: Understanding Afghan Village Structure – A Guide for Population Engagement," January 8, 2010; US Army National Ground Intelligence Centre and "The Political Economy of Customary Village Organizations in Rural Afghanistan," by Jennifer Brick, University of Wisconsin at Madison.

*Female Engagement Teams:*⁴⁰ {ref. Annex E} In Regional Command – West, the Special Forces Teams executing the Local Defense Initiative were able to utilize several of the highly successful USMC - FETs for up to six weeks at a time. This allowed the Special Forces Team the opportunity to engage the entire village population, thus obtaining a more in-depth perspective of the village. Although FETs have been successful at engaging local Afghan women in a manner that has become vital to USMC ground operations, there remains an element of cognitive dissonance that allows for voluntary, or perhaps involuntary, exclusion of female engagement. Afghanistan’s conservative environment has led to the assumption that engaging the local women is socially taboo.⁴¹ For those reasons, US and coalition forces often engage Afghan men rather than Afghan woman. “Pashtun men tend to view foreign women troops as a ‘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.”⁴² Despite their traditional status, even when compared to Arab women, Pashtun women wield influence over their husbands and in particular their children. FETs were first employed in Afghanistan, Farah Province in 2009 in response to IED attacks on the Marines in the area.⁴³

Besides being successful in building rapport, FETs support ISAF’s population-centric counter-insurgency strategy. By their design, FETs are able to establish relationships with local villagers in ways male Marines cannot, providing a human face to US and coalition forces efforts.⁴⁴ The USMC - FETs allowed Special Forces Teams to acknowledge and interact with the villages’ female population in order to discover their views and hear their concerns. In fact after repetitive engagements between the same FET, village, and Afghan women, remarkable information was exchanged.⁴⁵ Consequently, events over the past few years demonstrate the legitimate disregard insurgents have toward females, particularly Afghan girls attending school and female aide workers. Therefore, as a result of the success of this program and the increase of their employment, FETs could become a potential target of the insurgents in the future. While Special Forces have been conducting local engagements within the rural villages and utilizing the FETs in Regional Command - West, the US Department of State increased its presence throughout Afghanistan including the establishment of District Support Teams.

The Taliban and al Qai’da have been keen to exploit the Afghan Central Government’s image as ineffectual and corrupt in their masterful efforts to manipulate local communities through informational warfare. As a consequence, they are succeeding in their efforts to make President Karzai and his central government out to be puppets of the West. To help change this perception, The United States, as well as other countries such as the United Kingdom, is working with the Afghan Government’s Independent Directorate of Local Governance by mentoring, advising, and assisting in building meaningful capacities to bring services and good governance

⁴⁰ The Female Engagement Team section was written by Niala Mohammad, Open Source Analysis and Augmentation Cell, May 2010

⁴¹ Task Force Leatherneck, Female Engagement Teams, Concept of Operations

⁴² “Half-Hearted: Trying to Win Afghanistan without Afghan Women,” by Matt Pottinger, Hali Jilani, and Claire Russo, Small Wars Journal, 2010

⁴³ Task Force Leatherneck, Female Engagement Teams, Concept of Operations. NOTE: The first known FET was a group of female Marines in Iraq with the 1st Marine Logistics Group. This group was called the Iraqi Women’s Engagement Team (IWET), and began operation in 2006 near Al Anbar province.

⁴⁴ “Half-Hearted: Trying to Win Afghanistan without Afghan Women,” by Matt Pottinger, Hali Jilani, and Claire Russo, Small Wars Journal, 2010

⁴⁵ Interviews with 7th SFG, SFODAs, March 8-9, 2010

to the people of Afghanistan. As such, the Department of State deployed the first District Support Team to Helmand Province in support of the USMC operations in the summer of 2009. *District Support Teams* {ref. Annex F} are now deployed to key Afghan districts in order to provide subject matter expertise in coordination of arriving US and coalition forces. They are staffed with at least three civilians, employing expertise in urban planning, agriculture, and law and order, tailored specifically to meet the particular district's needs.⁴⁶ District Support Teams are guided by Provincial Reconstruction Teams, and are directed by Department of State representatives at the provincial level.

In 2003, the United Nations Habitat, in cooperation with the Afghan Government's Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, established the National Solidarity Program from the view that traditional local sub-national consensus governance structures within the rural communities were devastated after three decades of war. The National Solidarity Program was formed with three objectives: 1) to facilitate the rural communities in re-establishing relations with the Afghan Central Government; 2) provide grants for reconstruction of physical and social infrastructure; and 3) empower the communities by establishing community government structures to replace traditional local village governance.⁴⁷ Subsequently, what the National Solidarity Program created was a *non*-traditional local governance organization called *Community Development Council* {ref. Annex G}. Although the National Solidarity Program, a national community driven development program, helps strengthen traditional local governance institutions, such as the jirga, to plan, manage, finance, and monitor their own development projects,⁴⁸ in theory the Community Development Council is elected from the rural community they represent to serve as a decision making body to provide decentralized and participatory distribution of international funds for public goods and development projects. Community Development Councils have two objectives: to deliver project and community based development and to improve community governance.⁴⁹

Contrary to the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development calling for Community Development Councils to fill the void, traditional local sub-national governance structures already exist as they have for thousands of years. For this reason, the Community Development Council may not align with how a rural village self identifies or with respect to its boundaries. Furthermore, CDCs do not have good cooperation with the traditional local government. They are completely driven by NGO and donor funding. Whereas, traditional local sub-national consensus governance structures have inherent separation of authority that provides checks and balances. The jirga (legislature branch) can depose a malik (executive branch), a mullah (judicial branch) can veto programs or policies that violate religious norms, and the jirga ensures power is not situated with any one person or group in the community.⁵⁰

Independent of the NGOs involved with the National Solidarity Program, Greg Mortenson the co-author of "Three Cups of Tea" and author of "Stones into Schools" created an extraordinary, grassroots NGO, the *Central Asia Institute* {ref. Annex H} in 1996. The Central Asia Institute builds schools, primarily for girls, in Pakistan and Afghanistan. As of 2009, the

⁴⁶ (Unclassified) TF Leatherneck, (TF-LNK) Operations Order 1-09 (U) Appendix 5 to Annex G, 7 June 2009

⁴⁷ United Nations Habitat, National Solidarity Program and Community Development Councils in Afghanistan; www.unhabitat.org/content.asp?cid=4896&catid=245&typeid=13&subMenuId=0

⁴⁸ Ibid

⁴⁹ The Political Economy of Customary Village Organizations in Rural Afghanistan, by Jennifer Brick, University of Wisconsin at Madison.

⁵⁰ Ibid

Central Asia Institute has helped build 131 schools throughout eastern Afghanistan and western Pakistan, providing secular education to over 51,000 students as an alternative to the Madrassas, in some of the most Taliban infested and geographically inhospitable areas in the world plagued by war.⁵¹ Their successful methodology is simple, “last place first.”⁵²

The Central Asia Institute goes to areas where the Afghan Central Government cannot reach and other NGOs don’t dare venture due to their desolate geographic locations. The Central Asia Institute provides opportunities to the local community: they are involved from initiating the project to implementing and then managing it thereafter.⁵³ The key to their success is building relationships through trust over time. Greg Mortenson believes that changing hearts and developing relationships requires patience, time, and consuming many cups of tea: a luxury that the US and coalition forces may not have. The Central Asia Institute understands that building relationships may require talking with conservative mullahs, corrupt government officials, the Taliban or other informal or nefarious networks of people. Another ingredient to the Central Asia Institute’s success is their advocacy for Afghan Ownership. The Central Asia Institute ensures schools, vocational centers, and development projects are purely local.

Therefore the supposition of a simultaneous bottom-up, top-down, and whole of government approach to local engagement as it pertains to the aforementioned programs may be able to connect our Stability Operations and population centric counter-insurgency strategies with our Counter-IED efforts in order to reduce the number of IED incidents in Afghanistan.

Discussion

*Concept of Time and Continuity in Afghanistan.*⁵⁴ An oft-quoted Afghan phrase regarding outsiders is “you have the watches, but we have the time,”⁵⁵ alluding to the fact that while foreign invaders, colonialists, and visitors have occupied parts of Afghanistan over the centuries, often with superior technology or implements at their disposal, it is ultimately only the Afghans that remain at the end of each cycle, living much as they did before. In such a culture, it is not the latest technology or most modern school of thought that prevails, but rather the forces and collective cultural knowledge that have endured the test of time and proven reliable. A lack of understanding of this concept has fueled the frustration of many US and coalition forces leaders at all levels since 2001, who cannot fathom why millions of dollars in aid and assistance have failed to secure the absolute loyalty and cooperation of the Afghan populace.

In many cases, assistance is gladly welcomed and resources are eagerly consumed, but when leverage is applied by US or coalition forces to seek repayment through Taliban turn-in efforts, IED information, or at least to resist insurgent influence, a tepid response prevails. This can happen because time was not taken to earn the respect and trust of the village elders and because of the perceived notion that US and coalition forces will eventually depart, leaving the Afghans to deal with the Taliban, thus asking themselves why they should risk retribution now or later. As discussed in previous portions of this paper, building trust requires an approach

⁵¹ Central Asia Institute, <https://www.ikat.org/alima>

⁵² “Stones into Schools” by Greg Mortenson, 2009, Viking Penguin Publishing, New York, NY

⁵³ Central Asia Institute, <https://www.ikat.org/alima>

⁵⁴ Concept of Time and Continuity in Afghanistan section was written by Bradley Grim, JIEDDO Strategic Influence Cell, May 2010

⁵⁵ Will, George F. *Hostage to a Timetable*, May 6, 2010. Retrieved May 7, 2010 from <http://www.buffalonews.com/2010/05/06/1041783/hostage-to-a-timetable.html>

containing honesty and a perceived mutual benefit. This trust is built over time, and is most easily accomplished when initiated by the Afghan who has a need, rather than US or coalition forces deciding what is needed and where, and then being wrong.

Unfortunately for US and coalition forces, military operations do not lend themselves to lengthy and sometimes open-ended time scales. While Greg Mortenson and his NGO, the Central Asia Institute, may benefit from re-engaging over time until a particular village or population is willing and ready to form a cooperative relationship and build a school, military forces do not have the same luxury. Adequately addressing and reconciling this stark difference requires interaction and understanding at the lowest level, not demands with short suspense. From 2002 until the recent surge in 2009, Operation Enduring Freedom was vastly under resourced and under manned.

At present albeit slow, the US and coalition forces are making progress; however, the timeline has been shortened with the announcement several months ago by the President of the United States that withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan will begin in July, 2011. In order to accomplish meaningful progress, commanders must now redouble the efforts from the past nine years, but with the knowledge that results need to begin accruing between now and July 2011. The means to achieve any degree of progress rests upon the ability of US and coalition forces to engage effectively with traditional local sub-national governance and build trust, credibility, and respect through their actions and interactions, and ensure that promises made are promises kept. Only the respect and trust built at this level will allow governance and security to function properly from the *qawm*⁵⁶ and village to higher-level functions at the district, province, and national level. The reality of a US and coalition forces drawdown may be that limited numbers of forces remain for quite some time, possibly in the form of Special Forces continuing to conduct local engagements with village elders and training missions to assist the Afghan National Security Forces, but achieving even basic functioning levels of governance and security will greatly improve the performance by Special Forces and their enablers over what is possible in the Afghan theater today.

Why Conduct Local Engagement? The US and coalition forces are in their ninth year of the war in Afghanistan, since first launching retaliatory airstrikes and follow-on unconventional warfare to remove the Taliban from power and to deny al Qai'da safe haven following the attacks of September 11, 2001. In 2002, Hamid Karzai became the interim President of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. He was subsequently elected in 2004 and reelected in 2009 as the President of Afghanistan. To date, President Karzai's central government has been unable to establish security, provide justice, or offer economic opportunity to the rural areas of Afghanistan where most of the population resides.⁵⁷ The Afghan National Police remain too few and improperly trained to establish law and order in the rural areas.

Regrettably, the Afghan National Police continue to be viewed by Afghans as dishonest, abusive, and incompetent. The insurgency in Afghanistan is ideological, based on a conservative, orthodox, and fundamental interpretation of Sunni Islam and Sha'ria Law to which both the Taliban and al Qai'da subscribe. Unfortunately, many Afghans as well as members of

⁵⁶*Qawm* – Is a group of people that have something in common and acts as a single group. This can be a family, ethnicity, geographical location, profession class, leader's name, village name or tribe., or a group of people united by a common political as defined in "My Cousin's Enemy is My Friend: A Study of Pashtun Tribes in Afghanistan," by TRADOC – G2, Human Terrain System, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, US Army, September 1, 2009.

⁵⁷ CIA Fact Book Afghanistan, as of 2008 only 24% of Afghans live in urban areas.

the international community view President Karzai's government as corrupt and ineffectual. Compounding this view is the fact that President Karzai picks his Provincial Governors who in turn hand-pick the district sub-governors, leaving behind an unrepresented and disaffected populace. The insurgents capitalize on Karzai's ineffective central government and assume shadow government functions in the rural villages, such as security, tax collection, and quick justice.

The Taliban are able to manipulate the leadership in the rural villages to their own advantage based on an innate understanding of Afghan leadership dynamics. A better understanding of the Afghan village political and social structure will benefit US and coalition forces in wresting the population away from the insurgency's shadow government.⁵⁸ Additionally, the relationship developed between US and coalition forces and the village may also determine the willingness of villagers to report on insurgent activities, to include IED related information.

Thus the challenge continues to be the ability of the Afghan Central Government to bring good governance to the rural villages of Afghanistan from which to establish security and build economic development. Consequently, the debate remains how to best achieve this. President Karzai and the US Embassy support a top-down approach. Conversely, ISAF and Special Forces support a bottom-up approach. What is actually needed is a simultaneous bottom-up, top-down, and whole of government approach to successfully link traditional local sub-national governance with the Afghan Central Government at the district level. Just as a small percentage of hardened Taliban supporters remains, there is also a small percentage of supporters for an Afghan Central Government. Consequently, the insurgency is being waged to win the hearts and minds of the largest group of Afghan populace, those who have not chosen sides.⁵⁹ They will not stand up to the insurgency unless they feel confident they will not suffer retributions.

Therefore, it is critical that ISAF and the Afghan Central Government assist the rural villages to establish security, justice, and development, which will allow the fence-sitters to feel confident in their ability to stand up to the insurgency. Previous tribal engagement efforts to establish grassroots policing in the rural villages, such as the Tribal Engagement Initiative concept and more recently the Local Defense Initiative and Village Stability Operations, have been mired due to concerns that local militias could spin out of control. In the past militias were used by powerbrokers to settle disputes between rival qawms, khels (clan), communities or tribes. Earlier in the war, the US provided assistance to various militias and warlords for several years after Hamid Karzai became President. This may serve as one of the reasons why efforts to establish community policing continues to be met with resistance.⁶⁰ As a consequence, the Local Defense Initiative became Village Stability Operations and the Afghan Local Police programs, with oversight for the latter now firmly with the Afghan Government's Ministry of Interior.⁶¹

The Afghan Local Police program is reminiscent of previous top-down efforts to bring about rural village security, the failed Auxiliary Afghan National Police program and the Afghan

⁵⁸ For more in-depth information on Afghanistan Village Structures refer to the Classified Secret Document, "Complex Environments – Afghanistan: Understanding Afghan Village Structure, A Guide for Population Engagement," January 8, 2010; US Army National Ground Intelligence Centre

⁵⁹ Nation Defense University's Symposium and Workshop, "Effects of Corruption and Information Operations in Irregular Warfare in Afghanistan," May 11-13, 2010

⁶⁰ "The Rise of Afghanistan's Insurgency," by Dr. Seth G. Jones, 2010

⁶¹ "Karzai Approves Defense Force Plan: Welcome news comes as senators interrogate Obama's special envoy," by Karen DeYoung and Rajiv Chandrasekaran, Washington Post, July 15, 2010

Public Protection Program which suffered from erratic execution beyond Wardak Province. Neither of these programs accounted for the independent nature of Afghans, especially the Pashtun and their historical distrust toward any form of central government, particularly one they perceive as being corrupt. Incidentally, when the United States was forming its own government two of the founding fathers, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, had the same apprehensions regarding a strong central government. The average Afghan looks upon President Karzai's democratic government as another attempt in a succession of various forms of government imposed over the past thirty years, ranging from monarchy, communism, socialism, chaotic failed state, theocracy, and now democracy, none of which relate to the indigenous form of consensus governance practiced within the villages.

In contrast, the Special Forces Local Defense Initiative called for the clearing of hostile insurgents and their shadow governments from the Pashtun villages, then holding the community with a community policing program and building development, utilizing Operational Pashtunwali.⁶² Ideally, local engagement would be accomplished, at least initially, free from the Afghan Central Government's control to allow the necessary time and patience to effectively reverse-bridge the village with the district government when it was deemed suitable⁶³ by the Special Forces Team. Even before this bridge can be established, the district needs to be able to effectively extend essential public services, law and order, development, economic reform, and possibly even electricity down to the village.

According to Dr. David Kilcullen, the understanding of military service members regarding the complex human terrain and various languages spoken in Afghanistan remains equivalent at best to how a typical US middle-schooler comprehends his or her surrounding environment as it pertains to family, neighborhood, and town.⁶⁴ Although there are some naturally inclined warrior-diplomats within US and coalition forces, for example Colonel Christopher Kolenda⁶⁵ of the US Army and Captain Matt Pottinger⁶⁶ of the USMC, many of their peers simply have not had the opportunity to obtain in-depth cultural knowledge necessary to understand the complexity of Afghanistan's human terrain. The skill set necessary for a warrior-diplomat is counterintuitive to the basic war fighting skills taught to military service members.

Further complicating matters, errant airstrikes and the death of civilians continue to be the biggest complaint Afghans have against US and coalition forces; certainly, this has pushed some to side with the insurgents over the past nine years. Meanwhile the insurgents continue to enjoy freedom of movement and safe haven within Afghanistan, as well as *sanctuary*⁶⁷ inside

⁶² "Understanding Afghan Culture: Operational Pashtunwali," by Professor Thomas H. Johnson, Program for Culture and Conflict Studies (CCS), Department of National Security Affairs, Naval Post Graduate School, June 15, 2009

⁶³ Refer to Annex H as well as "Measuring Progress in Afghanistan" by Dr. David Kilcullen, Kabul, December 2009 for suggested metrics to measure the effectiveness of a local engagement program prior to linking the village to GIROA at the District

⁶⁴ Statement made by Dr. David Kilcullen at the Small Wars Foundation Tribal Engagement Conference March 23, 2010

⁶⁵ "Stones Into Schools," 2009 by Greg Mortenson

⁶⁶ Co-Author of "Half-Hearted: Trying to Win in Afghanistan without Afghan Women," 2010, Small Wars Journal and "Fixing Intel: A Blueprint for Making Intelligence Relevant in Afghanistan," December 28, 2009, Center for New American Security

⁶⁷ Sanctuary – For the purposes of this paper sanctuaries are those areas within Pakistan, in particular the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) that provides refuge, respite, recruitment, money collection, freedom of movement, and receive support wittingly or unwittingly from the local population and possibly from the Pakistani military.

Pakistan's FATA. Although ISAF has tried not to be viewed as the occupying force, many in the Muslim world think otherwise and view President Karzai as a puppet of the US. At the same time, President Obama's announcement that in July 2011 his administration will assess the ground situation and begin withdrawing troops leaves Afghans skeptical whether the US and coalition forces will deliver a better situation or if they will depart and subject their supporters to US and coalition forces to insurgent retributions.

Implications

Traditional local sub-national consensus governance holds the future for Afghanistan. Consequently, the battle is over influencing those Afghans sitting on the fence trying to decide whether to risk their future and place their trust with President Karzai and the US, or accept what may be the better of two untenable positions by remaining with the proverbial devil they know, the Taliban. Over the past nine years, US and coalition forces were under-resourced and under-manned, but that is no longer the situation. Accordingly, a simultaneous bottom-up, top-down, and whole of government approach, with unity of effort between the Afghan Central Government, US and coalition forces, other US government agencies, and international organizations may be the key to successfully bridging the rural villages with the Afghan Central Government at the district level. For instance, synergy was created between the CJSOTF-A and US Agency for International Development (USAID). Had it not been for their partnership, USAID representatives would not have been able to access previously inaccessible remote, non-permissive (hostile), rural areas in order to carry out their objectives: 1) strengthen local ties to the national government; 2) demonstrate benefits of alliances with the Afghan Central Government; 3) reward communities who cooperate in driving out the insurgents from the area; and 4) strengthen local will and ability to resist the insurgents.⁶⁸

The Afghan Nation Army Commando Program, Embedded Training Teams, Provincial Reconstruction Teams, Agribusiness Development Teams, USAID, and Department of State - District Support Teams are a few of the effective programs and agencies doing great work to bring security, good governance, and development to the Afghanistan. In some instances these organizations, including Special Forces and their enablers (Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations), have competing agendas to influence the same segment of the Afghan population. If we hope to bridge the districts with their corresponding villages, these organizations need to work closely together. Additionally, although the National Solidarity Program's Community Development Councils appear to function well within the rural villages and provide an excellent conduit for NGO development, they should not be established with the intent to replace pre-existing traditional local sub-national governance structures. Rather, Community Development Councils should augment these structures and help facilitate the district government's ability to extend services to the outlying villages.

The USMC - FETs have become an incredible enabler. Serious consideration should be given to the creation of Joint Female Engagement Teams (JFETs) to augment the current FET program, particularly to meet the fulltime needs of Special Forces with their local engagement efforts. Volunteers for the JFET program can be recruited from across the military services. As one FET recognized, Afghan men show a preference to interact with US female Marines over

⁶⁸ "Taking Interagency Stability Operations to a New Level: The Integration of Special Operation Forces and USAID in Afghanistan," by Sloan Mann, Small Wars Journal

their male counter-parts.⁶⁹ The fact that 48.8% of the Afghan population is female⁷⁰ and 44.6% of the population is under the age of 14 underscores the need to engage the women, who are the caregivers and thus the primary influencers of the next generation in their youth, prior to and during their attainment of fighting age.⁷¹ JFET volunteers could be awarded an additional military skill identifier upon completing a formal course of instruction, such as the current program being taught to the USMC - FETs at Camp Pendleton, California. In the era of Persistent Warfare, there will remain a need beyond Afghanistan for JFETs to engage the other half of the population for the foreseeable future.

The US Army Special Forces generated a lot of momentum with their bottom-up approach conducting the Local Defense Initiative by recognizing, mentoring, and assisting traditional local governance by first establishing security, then developing infrastructure, while improving the quality of life. Initially only a few Special Forces Teams were assigned this mission, but as the success of the program progressed, more villages were selected and subsequently more Special Forces Teams assigned. As one redeployed Special Forces Team Commander stated in an interview, “The Local Defense Initiative is a great program to beat the insurgent at their own game, but it requires many cups of tea and enduring patience on the part of leadership.”⁷² Regrettably, as with previous local engagement programs initiated by Special Forces, they eventually suffer from top officious interference that disrupts and eventually destroys the program’s intent to reverse-bridge the community to the district at the grassroots. Rural villagers will initially resist any local engagement program and possibly reject the program outright if they feel it is affiliated with the Afghan Central Government.

On July 14, 2010, President Karzai agreed in principle to back the establishment of community police in the rural villages. The Afghan Local Police program is the current incarnation of community policing, which is now managed by the Afghan Government’s Ministry of Interior. The Community Police wear beige uniforms and are paid and equipped akin to the Afghan National Police. Like other local engagement programs, this is a stop-gap measure until community police can be demobilized or incorporated into Afghan National Security Forces. As with the Afghan Public Protection Program, the Afghan Local Police program will attempt to replicate many of the grassroots initiatives from the Local Defense Initiative, without appreciating the full ramifications of its top-down rather than a bottom-up approach to local engagement. Special Forces will remain the principle force involved in training, assisting, and advising indigenous security personnel within rural villages as they continue to build bridges between traditional local sub-national governance and the district.

As a consequence of the Afghan Local Police program’s top-down approach, reminiscent of the Afghan National Police Auxiliary Program and the Afghan Public Protection Program, it could possibly make local engagement more difficult for Special Forces to develop relationships with the various ethnicities and particularly with the Pashtun because they do not self-identify with the central government of Afghanistan. A bottom-up approach to local engagement, such as the Local Defense Initiative, may be the only means to successfully reverse-bridge tradition local governance with the central government that could translate to a reduction in IED activity.

⁶⁹ Niala Mohammad, Open Source Analysis Augmentation Center, May 2010

⁷⁰ CIA – The World Factbook: Afghanistan, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html>

[This is a rough estimate as there has not been a census completed in Afghanistan since prior to the Soviet Invasion in 1979]

⁷¹ Task Force Leatherneck, Female Engagement Teams, Concept of Operations

⁷² Interviews conducted between March 8-9, 2010 with 7th SFG, SFODA team members involved in implementing LDI form July 2009 through January 2010

However, before such a bridge can be established, the district must be able to deliver at least some basic public services to the rural population, particularly in the form of security and justice. This is where a top down program such as the District Support Teams can be extremely effective provided it is done through unity of effort with a bottom-up local engagement program. For any type of local engagement program to succeed, the US and coalition forces must separate the Taliban from the local populace, eventually compelling the Taliban to negotiate, air their grievances constructively, and be willing to become part of the legitimate representative political process.

*IED Relevance:*⁷³ In the interim, the biggest obstacle in achieving our objectives is the perceived illegitimacy of the Afghan Central Government, resulting from systemic corruption. An independent local engagement program can buy time and space until the Afghan Central Government has the capacity to establish security and deliver basic public services to the districts. Local engagement may also be the only practical means to reduce the violence caused by IEDs and to stabilize Afghanistan, whereby US and coalition forces can begin to withdraw and leave behind a viable, stable country. Until that occurs, the IED should be viewed as a symptom and not the cause of the problems affecting Afghanistan. Just as in medicine, getting rid of the symptom does not necessarily cure the disease. JIEDDO has successfully developed many technological solutions that have saved countless lives. However, to discern the cause in Afghanistan requires opening the aperture to look over the horizon and effectively scope out the Operational Environment {ref. Annex I}.

The human terrain in Afghanistan, while very complex, drives the symptom, including the ease and cost effectiveness of the IED. This is why the IED remains the tactical weapon of choice by the insurgents and Anti-Afghan Forces. IEDs cause a threat to the mission, personnel, civilians, and infrastructure. Thus, what is the postmortem or “failure element” of our strategy? Is the element of failure the loss of US and coalition forces lives that will call for more force protection shielding the military service member from the IED blast, or the premature departure of more coalition partners? Or is the failure the freedom of movement that calls for more robust Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance assets? Or is the failure the lack of a simultaneous, bottom-up, top-down, and whole of government approach to local engagement that will successfully link the village to its respective district?

⁷³ Trish Martinelli, Competitive Strategies Group – Strategic Influence Cell, made contributions to this section of the paper.

Annex A: Background Information

Tribal Structures in Afghanistan: Not all Pashtun are Taliban, but the predominance of Taliban are Pashtun. The Pashtun are the largest ethnic group in Afghanistan, representing 42% of the population.⁷⁴ The tribal structures in Afghanistan are very different from those in Iraq. The term *tribe* does not fully capture how the Afghan identity is formed or how it operates.⁷⁵ Pashtun ethnic tribes are not necessarily hierarchal nor ordered with respect to one another.⁷⁵ The *qawm*, or the sense of community may better describe the various segments of Afghan society that are bound by solidarity ties, whether those can be defined as an extended family, *khel* (clan), occupational group, community, or village.⁷⁶

The Pashtun belt stretches from the west along the south to the east across the AFPAK Border into Pakistan's FATA, where tribes have highly localized identities. In addition, Afghan Pashtun also are not necessarily organized or hierarchal, whereas the Pakistani Pashtun are more institutionalized and more structured due to the years of regular interaction with the Pakistani central government.⁷⁷ That said, the aforementioned is not universally true, demonstrating the highly complex nature of Pashtun Tribes in Afghanistan.

Although Afghan Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Hazaras have variant forms of local governance, they often have similar positions of leadership as the Pashtun, except the names of the village leader or executive branch and the village council or legislature branch may differ depending upon the region of Afghanistan, for instance a *jirga* may be referred to as a *shura*.⁷⁸ Despite thirty years of war and six different forms of central government, traditional local consensus governance structures continue to exist as they have for thousands of years. During the Afghan – Soviet War many village elders were systematically killed. As a result the village political system of checks and balances became fractured, particularly in the south. After the Taliban came to power in 1996, they exploited this situation further by appointing their own village mullahs, elevating their prominence over the *malik* and the village elders, purposely upsetting the balance of power.

The Succession of Warfare in Afghanistan Post 9/11: Shortly after the tragic events of September 11, 2001, Special Forces Teams were inserted into Afghanistan, whereupon they linked up with CIA operatives and members of the United Islamic Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan, more infamously referred to as the Northern Alliance, a political-military organization formed in the late nineties to fight the Taliban, comprised of mostly ethnic Tajiks, Hazaras, Uzbeks, and Turkmen from northern Afghanistan.⁷⁹ At the time, it was also critical for a Special Forces Team to join forces with the Pashtun resistance in southern Afghanistan to liberate Kandahar from the Taliban in order to avert any potential ethnic strife between the Northern Alliance and the Pashtun. Initially, in the fall of 2001, there was no coordinated Pashtun guerilla force. Before the 5th Special Forces Group would allow one of their Special Forces Teams to deploy to southern Afghanistan, they needed assurances that there existed a

⁷⁴ CIA – The World Factbook: Afghanistan, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html>

⁷⁵ “Afghanistan: A Tribal Society?,” by Joshua Foust, US Army Human Terrain Team Research Reachback Center Afghanistan Cell, December 2008

⁷⁶ Roy 1989: 71 taken from Joshua Foust’s Power Point Presentation, “Afghanistan: A Tribal Society?”

⁷⁷ “Afghanistan: A Tribal Society?,” by Joshua Foust, December 2008

⁷⁸ “The Political Economy of Customary Village Organizations in Rural Afghanistan,” by Jennifer Brick, University of Wisconsin at Madison

⁷⁹ BBC News Website, “Who are the Northern Alliance,” published November 13, 2001, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/1652187.stm

sizeable guerilla force of approximately 300 fighters.⁸⁰ A well known Pashtun Mujahedeen Commander from the Afghan-Soviet War, Abdul Haq, and a relatively unknown Pashtun, Hamid Karzai, were both independently trying to form such a force of Pashtun guerillas willing to work with the US forces to defeat the Taliban in the south.⁸¹

Unfortunately, Abdul Haq was captured, tortured, and killed in late October 2001 by the Taliban, leaving only Hamid Karzai to form his group of Pashtun guerillas.⁸² Embedded Special Forces Teams enabled these resistance movements to overthrow the Taliban government, operating by, with, and through the Northern Alliance in the north and Karzai's anti-Taliban fighters in the south. By December 2001, Hamid Karzai was named to head the transitional government and shortly thereafter he was appointed as the interim President of Afghanistan. At that point, Special Forces transitioned from Unconventional Warfare to counterinsurgency and Stability Operations to include Foreign Internal Defense. Accordingly, Special Forces operations now directly supported President Karzai in order to prevent the insurgents from trying to overthrow the newly formed Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. During this period, Special Forces maintained the use of irregular security forces, including warlords and various militias, to conduct offensive military operations.

In March 2002, Operation Anaconda in the Shah I Kot Valley involved large numbers of US General Purpose Forces or conventional forces, along with Special Operations Forces (SOF), in direct combat against the Anti-Afghan Forces. This operation served as a benchmark when conventional forces began assuming greater control of the battle-space in Afghanistan. By 2004, Special Forces began to show resemblance to conventional forces by moving away from indigenous vehicles such as pickup trucks in favor of the modified version of the Humvee, the Ground Mobility Vehicle, becoming more reliant on Forward Operating Bases rather than operating from Afghan villages, and wearing standardized Army uniforms and full personal protective equipment. Special Forces became fixated on Direct Action operations, focusing on kill or capture missions in pursuit of high priority individuals instead of the complex and difficult to measure warrior-diplomat efforts to develop relationships with village elders. The latter requires incredible time and patience, in some instances taking longer to establish than the standard deployment rotation. Another contributing factor may have been that many new Special Forces soldiers, particularly those coming through the 18 X-Ray Program grew-up conducting predominately Direct Action operations. Despite these developments, Anti-Afghan Forces continue to recognize the differences in tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) and the subtle nuances between US, coalition forces, and other SOF elements.

In 2008, a paradigm shift began to emerge within the US Army Special Forces community. The Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force – Afghanistan (CJSOTF-A) Red Team,⁸³ the first ever to deploy with a SOF unit since its inception in 2006,⁸⁴ discovered that Tribal Engagement, as it was referred to at the time, occurred more as a means to facilitate Direct Action operations rather than to initiate, build, establish, and sustain enduring cross-cultural

⁸⁰ The Only Thing Worth Dying For, by Eric Blehm, 2010, Harper Collins Publishers, New York, NY

⁸¹ For more information on the story behind the SFODA that inserted into southern Afghanistan suggested reading: "The Only Thing Worth Dying For: How Eleven Green Berets Forged a New Afghanistan," by Eric Blehm, HarperCollins Publishers, New York, NY, 2010

⁸² The Only Thing Worth Dying For, by Eric Blehm, 2010, Harper Collins Publishers, New York, NY

⁸³ CJSOTF-A Red Team was formerly trained at the University of Foreign Military and Cultural Studies, Fort Leavenworth, KS.

⁸⁴ University of Foreign Military and Cultural Studies (UFMCS) Red Team Handbook – Draft, October 2007

relationships with the indigenous people of Afghanistan to achieve an end-state. After analyzing the success of the Sunni Awakening and the Sons of Iraq program, as well as previous tribal engagement efforts by the CJSOTF-A, to include the effort by the Special Forces Teams that worked in Chamkani, Paktia Province; the CJSOTF-A Red Team⁸⁵ devised a comprehensive Tribal Engagement Initiative for Regional Command - East. The Tribal Engagement Initiative planned to employ aspects of Pashtunwali,^{86,87} an ancient pre-Islamic code of honor, which included the Arbakai^{88,89} village defense system.

The Arbakai System is a form of community police or neighborhood watch made-up from dedicated community volunteers selected by the jirga,⁹⁰ a council of elders formed to make decisions and settle disputes. The isolation of the eastern Pashtun tribes located in the rugged mountainous terrain along the AFGPAK border accounts for the preservation and coherence of tribal authority, particularly within Khost, Paktika, and Paktia Provinces, where the Arbakai continue to exist.⁹¹ Should a jirga decide an Arbakai from one village can be called upon to support the Arbakai from an adjacent village, provided the social structures between villages are homogenous; otherwise contention between rival qawms, khels, or villages may arise. Regrettably, outside of the AFGPAK border region, the term Arbakai conjures negative connotations associated with militias affiliated with warlords and drug barons.

After the Tribal Engagement Initiative concept was briefed to several flag officers⁹² at the annual SOF Conference held at Bagram Air Base in October 2008, the former ISAF Commander, General McKiernan, decided a top-down approach to local engagement would be more appropriate to support the Afghan Central Government and address President Karzai's concerns. As a consequence, Tribal Engagement Initiative's bottom-up approach was modified one hundred and eighty degrees. Community Outreach, as it was called initially, was adopted by the Afghan Government's Ministry of Interior and became the Afghan Public Protection Program. Unfortunately, this program did not account for the local concerns or the complexity of the operational environment regarding the indigenous process of village governance and the historical distrust of a central government. Over the past thirty years the people of Afghanistan have witnessed several forms of national government where they were ruled rather governed.

The Types of Engagement Programs: Prior to 2009, local engagement was often the result of individual unit efforts undertaken at the tactical level as a means of mission

⁸⁵ Red Teaming enables units to avoid group think, mirror imaging, cultural missteps, and tunnel vision in plans and operations, while providing alternative analysis. Red Teams also help to identify poor assumptions, and discover gaps and seams in the operations plan that fail to account for the complexity of operational environment

⁸⁶ Suggested reading for further information on Pashtunwali: "Understanding Afghan Culture – Operational Pashtunwali" by Professor Thomas H. Johnson, Naval Post Graduate School, June 15, 2009 and

⁸⁷ Suggested reading for further information on Pashtunwali: "The Pashtunwali's Relevance as a Tool for Solving the "Afghan Crisis," Edited and updated excerpt of the Research Report submitted to the American Institute of Afghanistan Studies (AIAS) by Craig Cordell Naumann, John F. Richards Fellow, 2008

⁸⁸ Courage Services Inc., Human Terrain & Geographical Research, "Tribal Dynamics in Afghanistan," April 2008

⁸⁹ Crisis States Research Centre, Occasional Papers: "The Tribal Security System (Arbakai) in Southeast Afghanistan," Mohammed Osman Tariq, December 2008

⁹⁰ "Jirga – A Traditional Mechanism of Conflict Resolution in Afghanistan," by Ali Wardak, University of Glamorgan, United Kingdom

⁹¹ Department of State, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, "Afghanistan: Tribal Policing in the Southeast," March 20, 2009

⁹² In fall 2008, the TEI concept was briefed to the CJSOTF-A Commander, Colonel Sean Mulholland; the Special Operations Command Central (SOCCENT) Commander, Major General Charles Cleveland; the Assistant Secretary for Defense for Special Operations/Low-Intensity Conflict and Interdependent Capabilities (ASD/SOLIC&IC), Honorable Mr. Michael Vickers; and the Commander of United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), Admiral Eric Olson.

accomplishment, rather than any part of an overarching plan. Every day, US and coalition forces conduct some type of local engagement in the conduct of their operations. Many of these independent engagements have been overlapping and duplicative in effort. Special Forces are extremely qualified to conduct local engagement with the indigenous people of Afghanistan, as that is an essential element of what they are trained to do. By their design, Special Forces Teams are able to operate for extended periods of time in remote locations anywhere around the world under austere conditions with little support. Special Forces Teams bring a more complete spectrum of capability in a single small unit to include the Special Forces Functional Areas of weapons, engineer, medical, communications, and operations and intelligence.

A Special Forces Team's small size allows it to remain agile with a smaller logistics and sustainment footprint than with larger conventional counterparts. Special Forces soldiers are specifically trained as warrior-diplomats, possessing an intimate knowledge of the local culture, language, and social order necessary to develop respectful and trusting relationships with native inhabitants.⁹³ In addition, Special Forces create symbiotic relationships with their enablers such as Civil Affairs, Psychological Operations, and USAID, as well as with other US agencies and NGOs that make it possible for them to conduct their operations. From 2003 to 2008, Special Forces focused on kinetic or Direct Action type of operations, whereby local engagement occurred more as a means to understand the local environment and gather information for their situational awareness rather than as part of a comprehensive local engagement plan.

⁹³ "To Serve the Nation: U.S. Special Operations Forces in an Era of Persistent Conflict," by Michele L. Malvesti, Center for New American Security, June 2010

Annex B: Afghan Commando Program

In May 2007, Special Forces began instructing, training, and mentoring the newly created *Afghan National Army Commandos* {ref. Annex A}. The commando program is not part of any local engagement strategy. However, training, assisting, and advising are central components of the type of Foreign Internal Defense operations Special Forces do when building host nation capacity. In this situation, Special Forces serve as the coalition partner force for the Afghan National Army's Commando Program, as they have since its inception. The Afghan Commando Kandaks (battalions) are somewhat modeled after the US Army Rangers.⁹⁴ As each Kandak was established, Special Forces Teams were partnered with them throughout their initial training and then advanced with them to their home bases, where they continued to mentor and conduct joint operations in a three-phase operational cycle of train, operations, and refit and recovery.

Aside from the obvious benefit of continued oversight and mentorship to the newly graduated Commandos, this model allows persistent Special Forces operations in a given area while increasing the legitimacy of an elite part of the Afghan National Army in the eyes of the populace, with whom they interact during routine patrols. This legitimacy and accompanying trust factor becomes very important as operations occur in a specific area, during which some members of the population may become the targets of these operations. The bonds of trust built over time between the Commandos and the general population may mitigate negative responses from the population at large and allow a more rapid return to normalcy following any negatively-perceived event.

⁹⁴ French Ministry of Defense website,
http://www.defense.gouv.fr/ema_uk/operations_exterieures/afghanistan/archives/10_april_2008_afghanistan_commando_school

Annex C: Afghan Public Protection Program

In the 2008, CJSOTF-A began writing a grassroots tribal engagement strategy for eastern Afghanistan. The plan was later reverted and became a top-down approach to local engagement. The Afghan Public Protection Program began in January 2009 in Wardak Province. Wardak was chosen because of its strategic importance and proximity to Kabul. In 2008 this province had become the launching point for insurgent attacks into Kabul.⁹⁵ In addition, the Provincial Governor and several of his District Governors strongly supported the Afghan Public Protection Program concept. The Afghan Government's Ministry of Interior sponsored the program, while the Independent Directorate of Local Governance provided oversight. District Community Councils help select prospective Afghan Public Protection Program candidates from the surrounding communities. The objectives of the Afghan Public Protection Program were to develop relationships with the village elders, establish security along the Kabul – Kandahar Highway, build infrastructure, recognize and mentor traditional local governance, and improve quality of life.

Candidates attended a two week training period where they were taught basic defensive security tactics by a select cadre from the Afghan National Police. Upon graduation, candidates were issued uniforms and officially became *Guardians* as part of the Afghan Public Protection Force and immediately begin providing security as an official augmentation force to the Afghan National Police. The intent of the program was to improve district security and deny safe haven to the insurgents as a stop-gap measure until more Afghan National Police could be trained and deployed to the rural communities. Special Forces were responsible for training the trainers, the Afghan National Police cadre, as well as mentoring the Guardians upon their graduation. The program's immediate impact and success included the buy-in of critical village elders, who offered their sons, brothers, and cousins as prospective Afghan Public Protection Program candidates. In addition, it provided 243 Guardians with a monthly paycheck, boosting the local economy.⁹⁶ Unfortunately, the Afghan National Police continues to be viewed by Afghans as dishonest, abusive, and incompetent. Whether it was due to the fact that AP3 became such a high profile program or because more US soldiers were present in Wardak Province, the number of IED incidents increased initially.⁹⁷ It appears the Afghan Public Protection Program may have been more suitable in areas where strong relationships already exist between traditional local governance and the district. It may also have been the better program for the more populated and built-up areas where there are too many forces, uniforms, and languages to risk establishing an indigenous village defense force.⁹⁸

Annex D: Local Defense Initiative

In July 2009, US Army Special Forces initiated a second local engagement program, the Community Defense Initiative. By the fall, the program became known as the Local Defense

⁹⁵ Questionnaire and Interview with CW Mark Simon, 19th Special Forces Group (SFG), Executive Officer on the first Special Forces Operational Detachment Alpha (SFODA) to implement the Afghan Public Protection Program in Afghanistan, March 24, 2010

⁹⁶ Ibid

⁹⁷ Questionnaire and Interview with CW Mark Simon, 19th Special Forces Group (SFG), Executive Officer on the first Special Forces Operational Detachment Alpha (SFODA) to implement the Afghan Public Protection Program in Afghanistan, March 24, 2010

⁹⁸ Interviews with 7th SFG, SFODA team members involved in implementing the Local Defense Initiative from July 2009 through January 2010, conducted between March 8-9, 2010

Initiative and in May 2010 it changed once again to become the Village Stability Operations. Although ISAF under General McChrystal supported the Local Defense Initiative and Village Stability Operations, President Karzai and the US Embassy had concerns with these programs. As a result, the community policing aspect of Village Security Operations transitioned into another top-down program, the Afghan Local Police, controlled by the Afghan Government's Ministry of Interior.

Similar to the Afghan Public Protection Program, the Local Defense Initiative affords the Afghan Central Government time and space to expand the Afghan National Security Forces and its ability to provide basic services to the population, while Special Forces Teams conduct local engagement in the rural areas of Afghanistan. The significant difference between the Afghan Public Protection Program and the Local Defense Initiative is in the approach. The Local Defense Initiative began as a grassroots bottom-up program. It's a shaping effort nested into the overall US strategy to assist the Afghan Central Government to create meaningful ties with the local populace.⁹⁹ The Local Defense Initiative also fit well with ISAF's population-centric counter-insurgency strategy.

The cornerstone of the Local Defense Initiative is building mutually respectful relationships with traditional local governance. Prior to a Special Forces Team deploying to a selected community, an extensive village assessment is completed. Once the Special Forces Team deploys to the village a Special Operations Box (boundary) is established around the village in order to allow the Special Forces Team to better manage their battle-space. This requires conventional forces as well as other US and international agencies to request access before entering the area. Henceforth, Special Forces Teams could focus on their enablers while building credibility, earning trust, establishing security, developing projects and bridging the village to the district.¹⁰⁰

The intent of any local engagement program should be to separate the insurgents from the population just as they have successfully separated the US and coalition forces from the population over the past several years. In executing the Local Defense Initiative, Special Forces Teams returned to living within the community, utilizing indigenous modes of transportation, and as necessary traded standard Army uniforms for local clothing. This provided Special Forces an opportunity to better understand the local culture, as well as obtain an appreciation of the Afghans' natural desire for self-sufficiency. As advisors, Special Forces Teams vie for credibility and buy-in from the village elders by mentoring traditional local governance (jirga, malik, and mullah) in order to establish a village defense system, develop infrastructure, and improve the quality of community life. As necessary, Special Forces Teams are prepared to manage the complex dynamics between local or tribal expectations, rivalries, and jealousies. Local Defense Initiative promoted village self-sufficiency from initiation through implementation of development projects. Local Defense Initiative's civil-military projects employed the local villagers to help with the development efforts in building infrastructure (schools, wells, roads, vocational centers, municipal buildings, irrigation, IED prevention – sealing culverts, etc.). Indigenous reporting on IED related information increased in direct

⁹⁹ “Afghan Human Rights Official Criticizes [GEN] McChrystal's ‘Tribes Initiative’,” by Spencer Ackerman, February 23, 2010

¹⁰⁰ “Consideration for Tribal Engagement,” a summary of the Small Wars Foundation Tribal Engagement Workshop, March 23-24, 2010. District Government is the logical structural connection between GIRoA and traditional local sub-national governance structures, because interface between the central government and the population is best facilitated at this level

proportion to the degree of trust and respect developed between the Special Forces Team and the village elders. Special Forces Teams charged with executing the Local Defense Initiative expressed a need for a better micro-financing program to improve rural economic opportunities.¹⁰¹

Micro-financing allows villagers to use small amounts of starter or seed money to establish cottage businesses from their homes, village markets, or vocational centers, ranging from a few dollars to several hundred dollars. “For some [in the west], \$200 buys a pair of jeans, for an Afghan woman, \$200 can mean a whole new life. Every year a group of women, mostly single mothers, are each given micro-loans and training to start small businesses. While the loans may be small, their impact is enormous. ‘The single most important indicator of whether a child will live to his or her fifth birthday is their mother’s access to income. So, if you give loans, create businesses and foster education for women and girls, you literally change a society for the better,’ says Dr. Samantha Nutt, executive director of War Child Canada. The average loan amount is \$200 and the repayment rate is almost 100 percent. Now, in the sixth year of the Afghan Women’s Community Support Project, some women with good financial track records have been granted bigger loans to expand their businesses.”¹⁰² Furthermore, as girls are allowed to attend school, their literacy rate increases while the infant mortality rate decreases proportionately.¹⁰³

The end state for the Local Defense Initiative program was a community where traditional local governance and village elders are strengthened, the Taliban powerbase and the shadow government has been subverted, the village can defend itself from the insurgents, and the village is successfully tied into the district, whereby the Afghan Central Government provided essential basic services such as justice, law and order, and development. Local engagement takes time and may take multiple deployment rotations before a village can be effectively linked to the district. As a consequence, the Special Forces relief in place and transfer of authority processes are very important and should last at least 3 to 4 weeks to insure institutional knowledge is not lost. As one redeployed Special Forces Team Commander stated in an interview, “Local Defense Initiative is a great program to beat the insurgents at their own game, but requires many cups of tea and enduring patience on the part of leadership.”¹⁰⁴

In July 2010 the Afghan Central Government succeeded once again in wrestling away a bottom-up approach to local engagement from Special Forces in favor of another top-down approach, the Afghan Local Police program. The fact that Community Defense Initiative program started in July 2009, changed to Local Defense Initiative program in the fall of 2009 and is now called Village Stability Operations and the Afghan Local Police program demonstrates the inertia that Special Forces, ISAF, US Department of State, and the Afghan Central Government must shed to allow a local engagement program to independently achieve the momentum necessary to reach a *tipping point*¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ Interviews with 7th SFG, SFODAs, March 8-9, 2010

¹⁰² “Afghanistan: Micro-Financing for Women” a photo journal by Donald Weber <http://donaldweber.com/wp/?p=2154> and http://www.viipphoto.com/detailStory.php?news_id=1109

¹⁰³ According to the CIA Fact Book, Afghanistan has the 2nd highest infant mortality rate in the world.

¹⁰⁴ Interviews with 7th SFG, Operation Detachment Alpha team members involved in implementing the Local Defense Initiative from July 2009 through January 2010, conducted between March 8-9, 2010

¹⁰⁵ “The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference” by Malcolm Gladwell, Little Brown 2000. A tipping point is the momentum of critical mass in sociological terms that an idea or change becomes unstoppable and begins to spread like a virus.

*Annex E: Female Engagement Teams*¹⁰⁶

Captain Matt Pottinger and Lieutenant Johannah Shaffer coined the term “Female Engagement Team” (FET) in February 2009 when they co-founded and employed the first FET in Southern Afghanistan, which visited Pashtun women in rural villages.¹⁰⁷ Although the USMC - FETs¹⁰⁸ have successfully engaged local Afghan women in a manner that has become critical to ground operations, there remains an element of cognitive dissonance that allows for voluntary or involuntary exclusion of female engagement. Afghanistan’s conservative environment has led to the assumption that engaging the local women is socially taboo. Often times US and coalition forces ignore Pashtun women because they believe it is socially unacceptable to engage them, but “experience over the past year demonstrates that this assumption is not only usually wrong, but upside down.”¹⁰⁹ Afghan culture “...limits women’s movement and visibility outside the home and strictly regulates women’s interaction with male outsiders.”¹¹⁰ For those reasons, Afghan men rather than Afghan woman are often engaged by US or coalition forces. It is believed that Afghan men will be offended by the presence of foreigners amongst their women. Although this is true, there are no social norms that prohibit the concept of foreign females engaging local females. Engaging the hidden half of the population is imperative in bringing stability to Afghanistan. Women make up 48.8% of Afghanistan’s population.¹¹¹ In fact as one FET recognized, “men show a preference for interacting with America women over U.S. men. Pashtun men tend to view foreign women troops as a kind of third gender: female Marines are extended the respect shown to men, but granted the access reserved for women.”¹¹² Afghan women are often intrigued, curious, and eager to meet and interact with a FET. FETs have a distinct advantage to observe atmospheric, probably because they do not pose the same threat in their approach as their male counterparts.

Most US and coalition forces assume an Afghan woman’s role is inconsequential due to the patriarchal structure of Afghan society. A woman’s absence, or lack of representation, does not necessarily indicate that a woman accepts not to participate in the village decision-making process. In fact, it is quite the opposite; women are essentially *the neck that turns the head*. As one FET member stated, “...experience confirms that local women wield more influence in their homes, including over their husbands and their sons, than the uninitiated in Afghan family culture believe to be the case.”¹¹³ Women, particularly as they get older, often voice their opinions, concerns, and grievances in the privacy of their own home to their husbands and sons, and those thoughts eventually find their way into the discussion during village councils (jirgas).

¹⁰⁶ Female Engagement Teams paragraph was written by Niala Mohammad, Open Source Analysis Augmentation Center, May 2010

¹⁰⁷ “Half-Hearted: Trying to Win Afghanistan without Afghan Women,” by Matt Pottinger, Hali Jilani, and Claire Russo, Small Wars Journal, 2010

¹⁰⁸ USMC - FETs grew out of the USMC Lioness Program in Iraq. FETs in Afghanistan are now used in all phases of COIN operations

¹⁰⁹ Ibid

¹¹⁰ Task Force Leatherneck, Female Engagement Teams, Concept of Operations

¹¹¹ CIA – The World Factbook: Afghanistan, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html>

This is a rough estimate because there has not been a census in Afghanistan since prior to the Soviet Invasion in 1979

¹¹² “Half-Hearted: Trying to Win Afghanistan without Afghan Women,” by Matt Pottinger, Hali Jilani, and Claire Russo, Small Wars Journal, 2010

¹¹³ “Half-Hearted: Trying to Win Afghanistan without Afghan Women” by Captain Matt Pottinger, Hali Jilani, and Claire Russo, Small Wars Journal, 2010

Rural Afghan women, whether they are Pashtun, Tajik, Uzbek or Hazara, are almost always the main care providers of the household. Their responsibilities include raising children, caring for the elders, tending to guests, collecting water, cooking, washing clothes, as well as helping with farm chores and caring for animals.¹¹⁴ More importantly women are expected to carry out local customs of *miraay-jwandey*, which literally means death and life. *Miraay-jwandey* is an essential part of Afghan culture involving men and women partaking in family and village celebrations and grievances (weddings, new births and funerals).¹¹⁵ Through these customs and daily rituals, women in the community are able to gather and disseminate information in a way that men simply cannot. “Furthermore, the fact that 44.6% of the Afghan population is under the age of 14 underscores the need to engage the women who are caregivers and thus the primary influencers of the next generation in their youth, prior to, and even during, their attainment of fighting age.”¹¹⁶ Despite their traditional status, even when compared to Arab women, Pashtun women wield influence over their husbands and in particular their children.

FETs were first employed in Afghanistan, Farah Province in 2009 in response to IED attacks on Marines in the area.¹¹⁷ The Marines set off to a local village in Farah province, where they were looking to detain two men believed to be involved in the attacks. In order to search the homes of the local villagers where the men were thought to be hiding, the Marines employed a FET. The FET spent several hours in conversation with the local Afghan women, while the Marines went about their investigation. The mission proved to be a success. The male Marines processed the village men and found the two men believed to be involved in the IED attacks, while the FET built rapport with the local village women.

Besides being successful in building rapport, FETs have been able to ameliorate the aggressive image of US and coalition forces. FETs are able to create calmness in the midst of chaos by comforting local women and children during military operations. A female face often helps soften local anger directed at US and coalition forces. It would be out of character for a male Pashtun to react aggressively or disrespectfully towards a woman, especially if that woman is considered a guest. FETs provide an alternative approach to respect local culture without insulting or invading homes. They are an essential component in the relationship building process and have the unmatched ability to open alternative networks of communication channels. “Our odds of winning will improve when we establish bonds with the other half of Afghanistan’s population- the women.”¹¹⁸ The interaction between FETs and local Afghan women has been incredible. Building trustworthy relationships is critical to the success of any strategy in Afghanistan.

In Regional Command - West, Special Forces Teams were able to utilize several of the USMC - FETs for up to six weeks at a time. FETs allow Special Forces to acknowledge and interact with the village female population in order to obtain their views and hear their concerns. In fact, after repetitive engagements between the same FET, village, and Afghan women remarkable information exchanged.¹¹⁹ This information helps Special Forces determine future

¹¹⁴ Ibid

¹¹⁵ “Understanding Afghan Culture-Operational Pashtunwali” by the Program for Culture and Conflict Studies (CCS) Department of National Security Affairs, Naval Postgraduate School, June 15th 2009.

¹¹⁶ Task Force Leatherneck, Female Engagement Teams, Concept of Operations

¹¹⁷ Note: The first known FET was a group of female Marines in Iraq with the 1st Marine Logistics Group. This group was called the Iraqi Women’s Engagement Team (IWET), and began operation in 2006 near Al Anbar province

¹¹⁸ Task Force Leatherneck, Female Engagement Teams, Concept of Operations

¹¹⁹ Interviews with 7th SFG, SFODAs, March 8-9, 2010

development projects and quality of life improvements, such as schools, wells, and vocational centers. Of note during the fourth and fifth engagement, Afghan men became more apprehensive, not because of any improper actions by the FET, but rather because outsiders were asking too many questions. As a result, they increased their supervision or inserted themselves into the conversations.¹²⁰ The men were obviously becoming more uncomfortable with either the exchange of information or the familiarity developing between village women and the FET. With knowledge of this issue, future engagements can be managed appropriately by the FET and the Special Forces Team.

The successful utilization of USMC - FETs demonstrate a critical need for the SOF community to establish their own organic FETs, rather than relying on the USMC or ad hoc female volunteers from higher headquarters. Furthermore, in an era of persistent warfare, there will be an enduring need for FETs for the foreseeable future. The program should be expanded whereby interested females from across the military services volunteer for the Joint Female Engagement Team (JFET) program. JFET volunteers could be awarded an additional military skill identifier upon graduation from a formal course of instruction such as the program currently being taught to FETs at the USMC Camp Pendleton, California.

¹²⁰ Interviews with 7th SFG, SFODAs, March 8-9, 2010

Annex F: US Department of State (DoS) District Support Teams (DSTs)

The Taliban and al Qai'da, in their masterful efforts to manipulate local communities through informational warfare, have been keen to exploit the Afghan Central Government's image as ineffectual and corrupt. As a consequence, they are succeeding in their efforts to make President Karzai and his Afghan Government out to be puppets of the West. To help change this perception, the United States as well as other countries such as the United Kingdom, are working with the Afghan Central Government and President Karzai's Independent Directorate of Local Governance to build meaningful capacities to bring services and good governance to the people of Afghanistan. As such, the Department of State created and deployed the first District Support Teams to Helmand Province in support of the USMC operations during the summer of 2009.

While the Department of Defense has been surging forces in Afghanistan, the Department of State has also been increasing its own workforce in effort to improve the capabilities of the Afghan Central Government to bring basic level public services to the rural communities from the top down. In particular, the District Support Teams are deployed to key districts in order to provide subject matter expertise. They deploy in coordination of arriving military units.¹²¹ By mentoring, advising, and assisting district level governance, the District Support Teams integrate civil and military efforts so the Afghan Central Government can build capacity to deliver public services. At a minimum, the District Support Teams are staffed with three civilians; employing expertise in urban planning, agriculture, and law and order tailored specifically to meet the particular district's needs.¹²² District Support Teams are guided by Provincial Reconstruction Teams and are directed by Department of State representatives at the provincial level. This ensures the right expertise and program (agriculture, education, healthcare, reconstruction, justice and cash for work) are tailored specifically for that particular village.¹²³

Unfortunately as late as this past spring, the District Support Teams and Special Forces were not coordinating or synchronizing their efforts in what would be an incredible simultaneous bottom-up and top-down approach crucial to establishing an enduring bridge between the village and the district. In some instances, USAID and Special Forces are working together. This affords the Special Forces the ability to nominate projects for USAID funding consideration beyond their customary Commander's Emergency Response Program. USAID through their partnership with Special Forces is able to go to expand their operations into non-permissive areas to carry out their strategic objectives for Afghanistan.¹²⁴ By combining resources, Special Forces and USAID create a symbiotic approach from which to provide incentives to rural villages which contributes directly to building confidence between the local community and the district level of the Afghan Central Government.¹²⁵

¹²¹ Conversation with a USAID official that asked to remain anonymous, stated that DSTs were purposely avoiding working in districts where SFODAs were conducting the Local Defense Initiative in the outlining villages, NDU Workshop, June 2010

¹²² (Unclassified) TF Leatherneck, (TF-LNK) Operations Order 1-09 (U) Appendix 5 to Annex G, 7 June 2009

¹²³ Mr. Frank Ruggiero, DoS Representative, Guest Speaker at MCU's Express Strategic Symposium Series:

"Afghanistan: The Way Ahead, April 21, 2010

¹²⁴ "Taking Interagency Stability Operations to a New Level: The Integration of Special Operation Forces and USAID in Afghanistan," by Sloan Mann, published by Small Wars Journal, 2008

¹²⁵ Ibid

Annex G: Afghan National Solidarity Program and Community Development Councils

Linking the Afghan central government at the district level with traditional local governance in Afghanistan has been the topic of the sub-governance discussion since the Bonn Conference in December 2001. In response, the transitional Afghan Central Government and the United Nations Habitat established the National Solidarity Program from the view that traditional or informal sub-national consensus governance structures within the rural communities had been devastated after three decades of war. As such, the National Solidarity Program was formed with three objectives to empower the communities: 1) re-establish relations between the central government and the rural communities; 2) provide grants for reconstruction of physical and social infrastructure; and 3) empower the communities by establishing community government structures to replace traditional local village governance.¹²⁶

Subsequently in 2003, Community Development Councils emerged as a result of the efforts by the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development which runs the National Solidarity Program.¹²⁷ The Community Development Council is a *non*-traditional local government organization. Although the National Solidarity Program, a national community driven development program, helps strengthen traditional local governance institutions such as the jirga to plan, manage, finance, and monitor their own development projects,¹²⁸ in theory Community Development Councils are elected from the rural community they represent, to serve as a decision making body to provide decentralized and participatory distribution of international funds for public goods and development projects. As of July 2008, there were over 18,000 Community Development Councils throughout Afghanistan. According to the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, Community Development Councils have two objectives: to deliver project and community based development and to improve traditional local government.¹²⁹

In reality, the Community Development Councils do not have good cooperation with the traditional local government. They are completely driven by NGO and donor funding. As a consequence there is no incentive to work with the local government. Traditional local sub-national consensus governance structures have inherent separation of authority that provides checks and balances. The jirga (legislature branch) can depose a malik (executive branch), a mullah (judicial branch) can veto programs or policies that violate religious norms, and the jirga ensures power is not situated with any one person or group in the community.¹³⁰ In this system, the malik serves as the bridge between the community and the central government.

Although the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development is a ministry of the central government they do not implement the Community Development Council program. Facilitating Partners,¹³¹ made up of mostly American and European NGOs, sponsor the

¹²⁶ United Nations Habitat, National Solidarity Program and Community Development Councils in Afghanistan; www.unhabitat.org/content.asp?cid=4896&catid=245&typeid=13&subMenuId=0

¹²⁷ The Political Economy of Customary Village Organizations in Rural Afghanistan, by Jennifer Brick, University of Wisconsin at Madison

¹²⁸ United Nations Habitat, National Solidarity Program and Community Development Councils in Afghanistan; www.unhabitat.org/content.asp?cid=4896&catid=245&typeid=13&subMenuId=0

¹²⁹ Ibid

¹³⁰ United Nations Habitat, National Solidarity Program and Community Development Councils in Afghanistan; www.unhabitat.org/content.asp?cid=4896&catid=245&typeid=13&subMenuId=0

¹³¹ Ibid

community to establish a Community Development Council. They ensure the community holds elections for the Community Development Council officials who will manage the organization. In addition, NGOs help the Community Development Councils build the capacities in order to identify sub-projects, prepare plans, and implement training to develop skills in participation, consensus-building, accounting, procurement and contract management, operations and maintenance, and monitoring, as well as provide funding for projects and link the Community Development Councils to central government agencies, NGOs, and donors in order to improve access to resources.^{132,133}

Due to the stated objectives of the Community Development Council, and the varying agendas and priorities of the various national and international agencies and organizations involved in the program, there remains an ambiguity that has affected the integration of a non-traditional structure into the community and prevented a clear vision for traditional local sub-national governance in Afghanistan.¹³⁴ There is a potential issue with either NGOs or the central government that the Community Development Council may be perceived to be in the lead role in community projects, development, and the improvement of governance. For these reasons, the Community Development Council may not align with how a rural village self-identifies or with respect to its boundaries. Further, local variations in traditional local governance by ethnicity and region make it difficult for the program to be one size fits all. Therefore, Community Development Councils should *not* be established with the intent to replace pre-existing traditional local sub-national governance.

¹³² MRRD/NSP website: http://nspafghanistan.org/about_nsp.shtm

¹³³ “The Political Economy of Customary Village Organizations in Rural Afghanistan,” by Jennifer Brick, University of Wisconsin at Madison.

¹³⁴ “The Changing Face of Local Governance? Community Development Councils in Afghanistan” by Hamish Nixon, Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU), February 2008

Annex H: An NGO Approach to Local Engagement

The Central Asia Institute is an incredible, grassroots NGO that builds schools, primarily for girls, in Pakistan and Afghanistan. The methodology to their success is simple, “last place first.”¹³⁵ The Central Asia Institute goes to areas where the Afghan Central Government doesn’t reach and other NGOs don’t venture, due to their desolate geographic locations. As of 2009, the Central Asia Institute has helped build 131 schools throughout Afghanistan and Pakistan, providing secular education to over 51,000 students as an alternative to the Madrassas, in some of the most inhospitable areas in the world plagued by war¹³⁶ A central component to their success is not the number of schools they have built, but the lives they have changed through education.¹³⁷ There is a thirst for education in Afghanistan and Pakistan where thirty years of war have created generations of uneducated adults. In addition to building schools, the Central Asia Institute provides scholarships for young women as well as vocational opportunities that focus on education, health, environment, and cultural preservation.

The Central Asia Institute provides opportunities to the local community: they are involved from initiating the project to implementing and then managing it thereafter.¹³⁸ The key to their success is building relationships through trust over time. The founder of the Central Asia Institute, Greg Mortenson, believes to change hearts and develop relationships requires patience, time, and consuming many cups of tea, a luxury that the US and coalition forces may not have. The Central Asia Institute understands that building relationships may require talking with conservative mullahs, corrupt government officials, the Taliban or other informal or nefarious networks of people. For example, in one village it took eight years to persuade the local Mullah how important it was for girls to learn to read and write. The Central Asia Institute eventually convinced the Mullah of the inverse relationship between increasing female literacy and decreasing infant mortality. Afghanistan has the second highest infant mortality rate in the world, 152 deaths per 1000 births.¹³⁹ Another ingredient to the Central Asia Institute’s success is its advocacy for *Afghan Ownership*. The Central Asia Institute ensures schools, vocational centers, and projects are purely local. The Central Asia Institute entrusts local Afghans and Pakistanis to run its operations, in turn these trusted staff members with their cultural expertise provide an intimate knowledge of the operational environment. As a small NGO, the Central Asia Institute is able to remain nimble and adaptive to the ever changing situation on the ground in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The process for a village to request a school or vocational center varies from village to village; conversely, it is essential for the community to buy into the idea for the project to be successful. The formal request process involves the Central Asia Institute working with traditional local sub-national governance as well as with the district government. Once a jirga convenes, a decision is made whether or not the village is ready to commit free land on which the school will be built, as well as resources such as wood and subsidized labor. In return, the Central Asia Institute provides skilled labor and additional materials not readily available in the area. A second order effect from this practice is the pride derived from community participation

¹³⁵ “Stones into Schools” by Greg Mortenson, 2009, Viking Penguin Publishing, New York, NY

¹³⁶ Central Asia Institute, <https://www.ikat.org/alima>

¹³⁷ “Stones Into Schools,” 2009 by Greg Mortenson

¹³⁸ Central Asia Institute, <https://www.ikat.org/alima>

¹³⁹ CIA – The World Factbook: Afghanistan, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html>

that transpires into a sense of ownership.¹⁴⁰ Upon completion of a school, the Central Asia Institute continues their involvement by paying the teachers' salaries and the school's operating costs until such time that the village can absorb and sustain these costs. The Central Asia Institute's accomplishments have created a domino effect, causing villages in the vicinity to covet the same things. Greg Mortenson believes "[l]iteracy represents hope, progress, and the possibility of controlling their destiny."¹⁴¹

¹⁴⁰ "Stones into Schools" by Greg Mortenson, 2009, Viking Penguin Publishing, New York, NY

¹⁴¹ Ibid

Annex I: Suggested Measures of Effectiveness:

Below are suggested indicators to measure success by implementing a simultaneous bottom-up, top-down, and whole of government strategy, whereby military forces and civilian agencies, such as US Army Special Forces Teams and Department of State District Support Teams, work in unison to develop Afghan Central Government capacities at the district while rural villages are engaged, secured and eventually linked to their respective district.

- Villagers increasingly provide information to US and coalition forces on insurgent activity, IED locations and caches, and future planned attacks¹⁴²
- Villagers believe there will be a US and coalition forces presence beyond July 2011
- Village elders have faith in and are willing to support the Afghan Central Government over the insurgents
- Villagers including the women are recognized and acknowledged through the JFET program.
- Traditional local sub-national governance structures are accepted as a legitimate form of village government
- Provincial and District Governors are elected rather than selected
- The Village is linked to the district and the district is able to provide basic public services to village (i.e. security, justice, development, etc.)
- Village quality of life improves as a result of development projects and economic programs (vocational centers and agricultural programs)
- Corrupt government officials are held accountable versus immunity/impunity
- The price of transportation to move a basic load remains stable versus inflated due to security, sporadic and arbitrary road taxes, and piracy¹⁴³
- The price of exotic fruits and vegetables remains stable versus inflated, as relative to the cost of growing, transporting, selling fruits and vegetables from one region to another¹⁴⁴
- Progress and continuity of NGO construction projects relative to security conditions and confidence levels¹⁴⁵
- Influence of Taliban versus the Afghan Central Government courts in the rural communities¹⁴⁶
- Tax collection: compliance rate with government taxation program¹⁴⁷
- The amount of Afghan on Afghan violence¹⁴⁸
- Rate of new business formation and loan repayment is improving¹⁴⁹
- Percentage of local people with secure title to their home and land increases¹⁵⁰
- Assassination and kidnapping rate decreases¹⁵¹

¹⁴² “Taking Interagency Stability Operations to a New Level: The Integration of Special Operation Forces and USAID in Afghanistan,” by Sloan Mann, Small Wars Journal

¹⁴³ “Measuring Progress In Afghanistan,” by Dr. David Kilcullen, Kabul, Afghanistan, December 2009

¹⁴⁴ Ibid

¹⁴⁵ “Measuring Progress In Afghanistan,” by Dr. David Kilcullen, Kabul, Afghanistan, December 2009

¹⁴⁶ Ibid

¹⁴⁷ Ibid

¹⁴⁸ Ibid

¹⁴⁹ Ibid

¹⁵⁰ Ibid

¹⁵¹ Ibid

- Civilian accessibility: degree of difficulty for local government officials to travel, live, or work in given area¹⁵²
- Government officials' business interests beyond their official duties is legitimate and transparent and not a conflict of interest¹⁵³
- Percentage of government officials purchasing their positions decreases¹⁵⁴
- Public safety function of government improves¹⁵⁵
- Villagers take initiative to secure their community and drive the INS out¹⁵⁶
- Displaced village and district population and leadership return to their homes because of the improved of security situation¹⁵⁷
- Trust and confidence exists between the local population and their security forces¹⁵⁸
- Trust and confidence exists between the local population and their security forces to include Afghan National Security Forces¹⁵⁹
- Villagers feel confident that they can control the insurgents or at least stand up to them¹⁶⁰

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¹⁵² Ibid

¹⁵³ Ibid

¹⁵⁴ Ibid

¹⁵⁵ Ibid

¹⁵⁶ "Taking Interagency Stability Operations to a New Level: The Integration of Special Operation Forces and USAID in Afghanistan," by Sloan Mann, Small Wars Journal

¹⁵⁷ Ibid

¹⁵⁸ Ibid

¹⁵⁹ Ibid

¹⁶⁰ "Taking Interagency Stability Operations to a New Level: The Integration of Special Operation Forces and USAID in Afghanistan," by Sloan Mann, Small Wars Journal