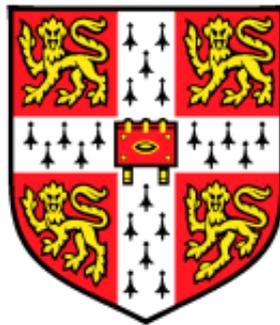


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Provincial Reconstruction in Afghanistan:  
An Examination of the Problems of Integrating the  
Military, Political and Development Dimensions  
with Reference to the US Experience in Vietnam.

This dissertation is submitted for the degree of Master of Philosophy.

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## **ABSTRACT**

The conflict in Afghanistan has been running now for more than six years but, after some early successes, the situation appears to have developed into a classic insurgency with the prospect of it becoming a long-term commitment for the coalition forces. Since taking the lead of the UN established International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in 2003, NATO has pinned a lot of its hopes on the ability of its multi-agency Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) to deliver stabilization to the country. The PRTs try to bring together the three strands of security, governance, and development through the contribution made by the military, political and economic elements of the teams. This paper considers how NATO is tackling the particular difficulties of managing the PRTs, and how it is attempting to harmonise the potentially disparate aims of their three separate dimensions.

In examining the problems faced by ISAF the dissertation looks back to the US experience in Vietnam where a similar situation existed in the late 1960s with their pacification programme. Robert Komer's mandate from President Johnson was to determine where the problems lay, and to come up with proposals for solving them. Komer's eventual recommendation was for a single civil-military command structure, which he later went on to help implement by establishing the Civil Operations Revolutionary Development Support programme, or CORDS, in Vietnam. The dissertation takes a close look at how Komer went about this, and consideration is made of whether there are any lessons from Komer's work with CORDS that could be usefully employed by ISAF today.

In the conclusion some of the current problems that the coalition faces in Afghanistan are identified, and the specific areas where the lessons from CORDS might be helpful are discussed. Recognition is made of the additional problems that ISAF faces over those the US had to manage in Vietnam, and considers whether a military alliance such as NATO is actually capable of establishing the robust, unified command structure necessary to succeed in Afghanistan. It also poses the wider question of the suitability of broad-based coalitions for waging counterinsurgency campaigns at all.

## **PREFACE**

The genesis of this dissertation was in Faryab province in Northern Afghanistan in 2004. The experience of setting up, and then running, a multinational PRT in Maimana at a time when it really seemed that progress was being made in the campaign to put Afghanistan back on its feet, left me with a feeling that we were, at last, doing something right. However, even then it was clear that there were different methods being applied by each of the nations that were leading PRTs at the time, and that they all took very different approaches to the problem. I felt that, should I ever have the time, it would be worthwhile taking a look at what the key issues were with PRTs in Afghanistan, and to examine if there were any aspects of the existing models that might be employed more widely. I did think that perhaps it might even be feasible to define a template.

The real possibility of carrying out such a study only arose when I was given the opportunity to read for an MPhil in International Relations at Cambridge University. However, the suggestion of turning what I had essentially seen as a military study looking at 'best practice', into an academic research paper that looked in depth at the US experience in Vietnam, came from my tutor in Cambridge Dr Tarak Barkawi. I am extremely grateful to him for this as it has made what was already an interesting topic into a truly fascinating study into how history can repeat itself. I must also thank him for his wise guidance throughout the year.

Thanks must also go to Mr Mike McNerney for assisting me in setting up a series of interviews in Washington with various extremely helpful individuals in the DOD, the State Department, USIP and the National Defense University, all of whom are named specifically in the bibliography in the interviews section. Additionally I must express my gratitude to all of the staff at the US Army Heritage and Education Centre at Carlisle, PA for their patience, wisdom and good humour during my fortnight with them, and in particular Rich Baker and Dave Keogh who kept me on the right track in my research.

At the end of all of this, however, it must be said – mainly because the University requires me to, but also because it is the truth - that this dissertation is a result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except where specifically indicated in the text. I should also mention that the dissertation does not exceed the word limit of 25,000 words stipulated by the MPhil Degree Committee.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

In the media, the most predominant aspect of the 'war on terror' over the last few years has been the invasion of Iraq and the subsequent insurgency there. In the US that is probably still the case, but in Europe the conflict in Afghanistan has begun to come more to the forefront since NATO took the lead of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in 2003. This has been even more noticeable in the UK since British troops moved from the relatively quiet North to the more active South in early 2006 and began taking significant casualties. However, there seems to be, for the moment at least, a tacit acceptance in Britain that whilst Iraq has been a 'bad war' and that we should leave as soon as possible, Afghanistan is still a worthwhile cause. For this to remain the case the public will expect to see enduring progress made in terms of stabilization and reconstruction, and the twenty six Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) that ISAF has in the country may be the key to delivering this. Much effort is being expended by the coalition to try to ensure that this happens, and a great deal is being written on the subject. Perhaps inevitably one topic that frequently arises is the comparison with the US and Vietnam. This is usually in the negative, predicting another humiliating defeat of a major power by an unsophisticated enemy, and it makes the assumption that all that the Americans did in Vietnam was unsuccessful. The facts, however, suggest otherwise; one area of the US campaign in Vietnam that did show merit was the pacification programme. It is possible that some of the painful, hard-learned lessons about how to conduct this aspect of a counter-insurgency campaign may provide useful insights for current planning in Afghanistan.

## **Research Objectives**

Post-conflict reconstruction in Afghanistan has been generally termed as stabilization, and has been implemented in the main through the mechanism of PRTs. These are small, multi-agency teams combining military personnel delivering security, with civilian government experts in governance and development. Since its inception by the US in Gardez in 2002 the concept of the PRT has continued to evolve and, although they now all come under the auspices of the NATO-led ISAF coalition, there is still no structural template for them, with each lead nation appearing to run their programme very differently. In particular, it is unclear how the

complex yet fundamental issue of how the potentially disparate aims of the three main strands of a PRT, (those of the military, the political and the development), are integrated within the ISAF command structure. Such integration is not an easy task and unless all sides possess an open-minded outlook the three do not always sit comfortably together. To work as a cohesive team requires a strong focus of effort in order to operate in harmony with one another and not pull in different directions. This study looks at how ISAF is approaching this problem, and considers the US experience of pacification in Vietnam to address the question of how, if at all, their Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS) programme, which had similar aims, can inform NATO's campaign in Afghanistan today.

## **Background**

The attacks on the US by Osama Bin Laden's al-Qaeda terrorists on September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001, and the fact that al-Qaeda had been supported and protected by the ruling Taliban in Afghanistan, ensured that the gaze of the US government was very quickly focussed on that area of Southern Asia. In his address to the nation on the evening of the attacks President Bush announced 'I've directed the full resources of our intelligence and law enforcement communities to find those responsible and to bring them to justice. We will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them.'<sup>1</sup> The following month US forces began Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) with a campaign plan that was designed both to find and exact revenge upon those responsible for the 9/11 terrorist attacks, and also to liberate the Afghan people from the oppression of the extreme Islamic regime of the Taliban.

In the mid-1960s the US had found themselves in what may be considered to be a somewhat comparable situation in Vietnam, although they had arrived there by a very different route. After the defeat of the French colonial forces in 1954 and the division of Vietnam into two supposedly temporary states, the US government saw the support of President Ngo Dinh Diem in the South in his struggle against Ho Chi Minh's Marxist North as a necessary part of its

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<sup>1</sup> George W Bush, "Address to the Nation on the Terrorist Attacks," *Weekly Compendium of Presidential Documents*, Vol 37, September 17, 2001, p. 1301.

wider anti-communist strategy. Initially the US military presence in the country comprised only the small number of specialists and advisors that made up the US Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG). Throughout this period it was clear that the South Vietnamese forces were engaged in two separate wars – the ‘big-unit war’ against the insurgent troops and the ‘other war’ that involved winning the hearts and minds of the people of South Vietnam. This ‘other war’ was referred to by a number of different terms such as Rural Construction or Revolutionary Development which were aimed to convey a more positive mindset, but in the end it came to be known simply by the more general term of pacification.<sup>2</sup> Initially pacification was purely a South Vietnamese government-led operation and was enacted through a series of campaigns or strategies, (with titles such as *Agrovilles*, *Strategic Hamlets*, *Chien Thang*, and *Hop Tac*), each of which was under-resourced and poorly enabled, resulting in their failing to have any real impact on the situation.<sup>3</sup> However, when American ground troops began arriving in Vietnam in significant numbers and started to become involved directly in combat operations for the first time, President Lyndon Johnson identified that there was a problem with the relationship between the civil and military aspects of US support to this pacification programme. It was clear that if they were to help the South Vietnamese in defeating the insurgency then they needed to tackle this critical problem.<sup>4</sup>

The war that is now being waged in Afghanistan has many of the same characteristics as that fought in Vietnam - it too is a classical insurgency in which the protagonists are fighting not for military victories or territorial gains, but for control of the population itself. For the coalition to succeed in this situation requires a clever blending of military, political and development strategies into a single, comprehensive campaign. The Americans took a long time to work out how to do this in Vietnam, and by the time they did it was arguably too late for it to have a real chance of succeeding. Getting this right as a single nation proved complex, but managing it when operating as part of a coalition force is likely to be even more difficult. If NATO is not to end up with a similar outcome in Afghanistan as befell the Americans in

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<sup>2</sup> William A. Nighswonger, *Rural Pacification in Vietnam*, 1966, p2.

<sup>3</sup> Richard A. Hunt, *Pacification The American Struggle for Vietnam's Hearts and Minds*, 1995, pp20-30.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, p63

Vietnam, then it must ensure that it identifies all the relevant lessons from that conflict, and then implements them.

### **Sources of Material**

Tackling a subject that has two very different strands – one firmly rooted in history and one that is very much an ongoing affair – means that two different approaches to gathering the relevant data has been required. In looking at Vietnam there are a number of locations where primary sources of material can be found, but with time and travel resources at a premium it was necessary to select just one. On the recommendation of others the US Army Heritage and Education Centre (AHEC) at Carlisle, PA was selected, and proved to be an excellent choice. The US AHEC mainly holds personal papers rather than official documents, but of course many individual's personal papers contain original copies of official records. As well as the main Vietnam Papers section, the extensive records that belonged to Colonel, later Brigadier General, Robert Montague, (who was Military Assistant to Robert Komer, the architect of the whole CORDS programme), and those of John Paul Vann, (a key USAID official), provided a great deal of useful information. Of special note are the series of interviews conducted by Robert Scoville with Komer and Montague in 1969 and 1970 for a book that he was writing on pacification. In these interviews Komer, still raw from having recently been replaced in Saigon, is his usual open, frank and self-congratulatory self and launches forth on almost every aspect of the CORDS programme from the early days up until the point when he left. With regards to secondary sources, there have clearly been thousands of books written on Vietnam and some of them proved very useful; there were, however, surprisingly few on the specific subject of pacification. The definitive volume is Richard Hunt's 'Pacification' published in 1995 which is an extremely detailed look at the whole programme from start to finish. Andrew Krepinevich's book on the whole of the war, 'The Army and Vietnam' written in 1986, does touch on the subject and was also useful to place CORDS into the perspective of the wider conflict. There have also been many papers written on the subject of the Vietnam War, but again only a few on the specific area looked at for this study.

Obtaining information on the situation in Afghanistan required a very different approach. There is currently an enormous amount being written on the subject of the conflict generally, and on PRTs in particular, but almost all of it tends to give a particular slant or angle and it was difficult trying to ensure that a balanced view was presented. With primary sources, the intention was to seek two levels of opinion – the first from those at the ‘coalface’ currently or recently having direct involvement with PRTs in the field; the second from those at the top responsible for setting policy. Sadly the appropriate British Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), Ministry of Defence (MOD) and the Department for International Development (DfID) senior officials proved extremely difficult to arrange interviews with, whilst conversely those in the US were very free with their time. This was mainly due to the access that was gained through Mr Mike McNerney, a senior US civilian working in the US Department of Defense (DOD) and whose assistance is gratefully acknowledged. As a consequence the study is primarily US-oriented in its focus, which is perhaps apposite given the fact that twelve out of the twenty six PRTs are still led by the US, but may seem curious given the author’s background in the British Army. Getting information from those currently running PRTs proved to be much more difficult, despite the fact that approval was kindly given by Lieutenant General (Lt Gen) Jonathan Riley, the Deputy Commander of ISAF (DCOMISAF) in Kabul, for a detailed questionnaire to be circulated by his HQ to the military and civilian heads of each PRT. Unfortunately, for whatever reason, his staff did not seem to feel that they were able to insist on it being completed and returned, which is arguably symptomatic of the whole relationship between HQ ISAF and the PRTs. It therefore went out as a request and, as an inevitable consequence, only eight out of a possible fifty two were returned - and all of these were from US civilians. Unfortunately, although the information that they furnished was fascinating, it did not provide a statistically significant sample and the data has only been able to be used to give the occasional enlightening quote. Secondary sources for Afghanistan clearly abound although almost exclusively in the form of papers and articles, (and of course official documents), and a wide selection of these was used to contribute to the study. Interestingly, whilst many articles made passing references to Vietnam and CORDS and suggested that further work should be carried out, none were found that actually provided a comparison in depth.

## **Approach**

In examining the current stabilization issues in Afghanistan, and comparing them with those faced in Vietnam to see if lessons can be usefully transferred, there are a number of different ways in which the subject could have been approached. The material obtained from the various sources led to the decision to use a thematic structure, concentrating on what appeared to be the key aspects of the issue. However, it was felt necessary to look first at the background of the two conflicts, analysing the important similarities (and differences), and taking both scenarios to the point at which the respective programmes, pacification through CORDS and stabilization through the PRTs, were initiated. This is covered in Chapter 1. Next, the critical subject of command and control (C2) and Komer's focus on the need for a strong, single chain of command is examined. It is compared with the situation in Afghanistan and the way in which the need for consensus constrains the nature of C2 in a coalition. The next theme evaluates what the original roles of the organisations were in each theatre, how this led to their subsequent structures and to what degree this affected expectations of the contributing nations, the hosts and other external agencies. The fourth chapter of the main body addresses the important subject of the relationship between the external forces and the host nations, and investigates the mechanisms available to ensure that the aims of the two sides can be harmonised. In all of the literature and discussion on both Vietnam and Afghanistan the subject of how to measure the effectiveness of the campaign arises frequently. Chapter 5 examines the enormous effort that was devoted to this by the Americans in Vietnam and compares it with the relatively little that has been done so far by ISAF in Afghanistan. Finally, the conclusions attempt to summarise the contemporary problems facing NATO and ISAF in Afghanistan and to answer the question of whether or not Vietnam and the CORDS programme have anything of value to offer to those looking for solutions today.

## **CHAPTER 1 – COMPARING THE CONFLICTS**

### **Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF)**

The start of OEF was different to previous US military incursions in that, as well as the usual use of air power from land and sea-based aircraft, the use of Special Forces (SF) operating alongside indigenous forces was carried out in close cooperation with the CIA in the form of CIA paramilitary teams. This unusually tight relationship between the CIA and the military transformed the effect that they had on the ground in support of the anti-Taliban Afghan commanders within Afghanistan and created a synergy which exceeded all expectations.<sup>5</sup> Most of these indigenous forces had been resisting the Taliban for many years, although at that time they were probably at their lowest ebb and almost on the verge of defeat. This disparate collection of militias was not in fact the coherent force that it is often assumed to have been, and although it is referred to as the Northern Alliance, it was in fact made up of a squabbling group of regional and factional forces under a number of separate warlords whose only real common binding force was a desire to defeat the Pashtun-led Taliban. However, despite many predictions of dismal failure and dire consequences, with the popular press citing the historical lessons of previous imperial British and more recent Soviet attempts at invasion,<sup>6</sup> the first stage of the operation proved to be surprisingly swift and successful.

Within a month the Northern Alliance forces, with strong Coalition support, had taken the key city of Mazar-e-Sharif (MeS) in the north of the country, and other provincial cities soon followed. By mid-December the capital of Kabul had fallen and the Taliban were on the run. The pressure was kept up over the following weeks with most of the Taliban leadership, and that of al-Qaeda, being killed, captured or forced to flee across the border into Pakistan. On the face of it the war had been won, and the focus could be turned towards the other perceived threat, Iraq. However, even at the time there were those who recognized that this may not be the end for the Taliban, or al-Qaeda. In early 2002 Carl Conetta, the co-director of the Project on Defense Alternatives, wrote a paper in which he gave the following assessment of the

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<sup>5</sup> Daniel J. Moore, *CIA Support to Operation Enduring Freedom*, Military Intelligence Professional Bulletin, July/Sept 2002, p. 46.

<sup>6</sup> Eg ABC Lateline, *Afghanistan will be difficult:experts*, 27 Sep 2001.

situation: 'The Taliban have been driven from power in Afghanistan, fragmented and widely discredited as an ideological movement. Nonetheless, many veterans are likely to re-assume a role in the Afghan polity - some as insurgents, others as members or even leaders of other formations. Al-Qaeda infrastructure and operations in Afghanistan have been destroyed, proportion of their core cadre have been attrited, and their capacity to act been disrupted significantly - although perhaps only temporarily.'<sup>7</sup>

It was clear at this time that one unintended, but perhaps inevitable, outcome of both the rapid success of the operation and the use of indigenous forces to achieve it, was that a very unstable situation now reigned in the country. Although an interim government under Hamid Karzai was quickly established in Kabul under the terms of the 22 December 2001 Bonn Agreement, it was not truly in control of the rest of the country. As described in Conetta's paper, the situation was one of a revival of warlordism, banditry and opium production, where the power of the national government was really only effective in Kabul, with some influence possibly extending over the northeast parts of the country and a few areas of the Pashtun south. Overall, the new Afghanistan was now more chaotic and less stable than before the fall of the Taliban. The requirement was for stabilization and aid and it became apparent early on that this was not something that the coalition forces were well structured to deliver. It was recognised that there was a need to unite the requisite civilian-led reconstruction skills together with the military expertise necessary to enable them to be effective; however, there was no obvious mechanism available with which to do this at that early stage.

### **The Quagmire of Vietnam**

Despite having committed large numbers of US troops to Vietnam in the summer of 1965, President Johnson was not convinced that a military campaign alone could achieve his aims. Early on he and his inner circle of advisors, including Dean Rusk the Secretary of State, Robert McNamara the Secretary of Defense and McGeorge Bundy his National Security Advisor, recognised that pacification was being pushed into the shadows and that something

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<sup>7</sup> Carl Conetta, *Strange Victory: A critical appraisal of Operation Enduring Freedom and the Afghanistan war*, 30 January 2002, pp4-5.

needed to be done to increase its profile.<sup>8</sup> As early as March 1965, in his role as the assistant on South Vietnam to the National Security Advisor, Chester Cooper recommended to the President that he set up a multi-agency task force in Saigon to better coordinate the various US programmes that were running, and he went on to advocate the creation of 'pacification Czar' in Washington to drive the operation from there.<sup>9</sup> Although Johnson did not take this forward at the time, the idea began to take hold in some parts of the administration and when Cooper raised the idea again in October he found an enthusiastic supporter in Secretary of Defense McNamara, who had by then started to think that the whole pacification programme might be better run directly under military control.<sup>10</sup>

President Johnson accepted that the various military and civilian agencies operating within Vietnam needed to be much better coordinated, but at this stage he favoured the appointment of an all-powerful 'proconsul' style figure in Saigon, mirroring the function played by the British General Sir Gerald Templar in Malaya in the 1950s. He attempted to achieve this by appointing recently retired general Maxwell Taylor, a former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, as ambassador in Saigon in July 1964 with sweeping powers to enable him to mesh together the military and civil sides. However, as an ex-soldier, Taylor was unwilling to set up what would in effect have been a dual chain of command for the officer in charge of operations in Vietnam (COMUSMACV), General William Westmoreland, and by the time he was replaced as ambassador by Henry Cabot Lodge in August 1965 Taylor had not made any progress in this area.<sup>11</sup> Johnson gave Lodge a similar mandate to Taylor's, but he too proved to be disinclined to make use of his powers.<sup>12</sup>

Finally in March 1966 the President decided to follow Chester Cooper's earlier advice and to create a post on his own staff to achieve a similar effect from Washington. He selected Robert Komer to be his 'Special Assistant for Peaceful Construction in Vietnam'. Komer at that time was standing in as the interim National Security Advisor, since Bundy had left the administration a few weeks before. Johnson had specially chosen Komer since he knew that

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<sup>8</sup> Hunt, 1995, p35.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, pp65-66.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p68.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, pp65-66.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, p67.

even someone who was operating with the President's direct authority would have difficulty in influencing the actions of a number of separate and very independent-minded departments of state. It would need an individual with a forceful personality – the type of person who Bundy had previously suggested would prefer 'action to excuses and management to contemplation.'<sup>13</sup> Komer certainly met these criteria, and many people have used similar terms to describe him as those employed by Frank L. Jones when he called him 'prickly, abrasive, brash, impatient and intolerant of bureaucratic foot-dragging'<sup>14</sup> – all traits that he was to demonstrate frequently during the two and a half years of his direct involvement with the Vietnam war.

Recognising that he would need a strong form of official authority if he was to achieve anything, Komer drafted a document for the President to sign personally which gave him far-reaching powers and assured him not only considerable authority over seven civilian departments and agencies, including the CIA, but also a sizeable say in the mobilization of military resources to support the President's pacification commitment.<sup>15</sup> The document, National Security Action Memorandum (NSAM) 343, was unusual in the breadth of the mandate that it gave to Komer and the way that it explicitly gave him the responsibility for 'the direction, coordination, and supervision in Washington of US non-military programs for peaceful construction relating to Vietnam.'<sup>16</sup> Komer also ensured that he was suitably empowered to achieve real progress by insisting on having NSAM 343 grant him direct access to the President at all times without having to report through the National Security Advisor. Johnson wanted action quickly and in the first few weeks of April 1966 Komer set about delivering it.

Komer very soon realised that there were serious problems with the way in which both the Saigon government and the multitude of US organisations in Vietnam were attempting to direct the pacification effort. His view was that a purely military build up might prevent a disaster, but it would not guarantee victory in what was essentially a political war.<sup>17</sup> With his Harvard MBA background and experience, Komer looked at the problems with the existing management structure and concluded that the best way forward would be for the whole

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid, p72.

<sup>14</sup> Frank L. Jones, *Blowtorch: Robert Komer and the Making of Vietnam Pacification Policy*, Parameters, Autumn 2005, pp104/105.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, p105/106.

<sup>16</sup> NSAM 343, 28 March 1966.

<sup>17</sup> Jones, 2005 pp107/108.

pacification programme to be drawn into a single unified chain of command and for Westmoreland to be given overall responsibility, under Lodge, for both this and the manoeuvre war. By August 1966 he had drawn his ideas together sufficiently to draft a long and detailed memo for circulation amongst key officials in Washington entitled 'Giving a New Thrust to Pacification'.<sup>18</sup> To at least appear open-minded he proposed three alternatives (sic). Alternative 1, was the 'Single Manager Concept' in which the two sides were unified under Deputy Ambassador Porter, (who already nominally reported to Lodge on pacification), with Porter taking control of the military advisory assets in addition to the civilian agency staffs; Alternative 2, entitled 'Split Military-Civilian Functions', (which was Komer's least favourite option, but was also the least politically contentious), kept the civil and military sides separate, but drew the civilian agencies closer together under Porter and increased his staff; Alternative 3, was the 'Integrated Civil/Military Chain of Command'. Alternative 3 was the option that Komer advocated, and the one which the whole construction of the memo pointed towards.

Under this arrangement Westmoreland, reporting through Lodge, would run both aspects of the war through two separate deputies, one responsible for the manoeuvre war and one, probably a civilian, responsible for pacification. The original draft of the diagram for Alternative 3 that he used to illustrate his proposal is shown at Appendix 1. Before sending the memo he passed it for comment to John Paul Vann, a retired US Army Lieutenant Colonel, who whilst serving some years before in the war had attracted a lot of attention for his outspoken views and who was now working for USAID in Hau Nghia province. Komer had met and befriended Vann on a visit there earlier in the year and trusted his opinions. In the note that he sent to Vann covering the draft memo he wrote, 'I'm bold enough to say that it makes basic sense as the recipe for beefing up pacification, though it needs a little polishing'.<sup>19</sup> Having explained that he intended to get his deputy Bill Leonhart to 'try it out privately' on Ambassador Lodge and Deputy Ambassador Porter, he went on to say 'I'm leery of asking Bill to show it to Westy [Westmoreland] but will if you see merit'. In fact when it was shown to Westmoreland he was not against the idea, and later he recalled that, 'I told McNamara I was not volunteering for

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<sup>18</sup>Robert Komer, *Giving a New Thrust To Pacification Draft 3*, memo dated 7 August 1966, John Paul Vann Papers, US AHEC.

<sup>19</sup> Robert Komer covering letter to *Giving a New Thrust To Pacification Draft 3*, memo to John Paul Vann, dated 10 August 1966, John Paul Vann Papers, US AHEC.

the job but I would undertake it if the President wished me to'.<sup>20</sup> Johnson was persuaded by Komer's arguments and believed that his integrated 'Alternative 3' was the best solution. Although Komer had suggested that Porter should be the man to fill the pacification deputy's post, the President told Komer that he wanted him to head it personally. However, before this could happen Johnson felt that there were some essential moves that had to be enacted to neutralize the views of all those who were against the whole idea of a MACV-run pacification programme, (of whom there were a number, in both the civilian and military realms).

### **Provincial Reconstruction**

In many ways the circumstances that Komer found in Vietnam in 1966, although more entrenched and on a much larger scale, were similar to those that the US-led coalition was confronted with in Afghanistan in early 2002. The forces that were available for the task of post-conflict reconstruction in Afghanistan at that time were mainly SF or Civil Affairs (CA) soldiers and they were not working particularly well together, nor with the small number of civilian experts who were there. The SF troops had a higher level of equipment and a different approach to the CA units who were not designed to be self-sufficient, and there were times when soldiers on the ground ended up almost fighting amongst themselves over supply drops.<sup>21</sup> It was also realised that there was a need for more experts from the civilian agencies and that the whole approach to the post-conflict situation had to be better orchestrated. The first attempt to do this and at least meet the immediate need of coordinating the limited manpower available was made by combining the SF and CA troops into more coherent teams called Coalition Humanitarian Liaison Teams (CHLC), referred to as 'chicklets'. These were moderately successful and eliminated some of the logistic and coordination problems, but they were still not properly equipped or organised to deal with what was proving to be the real problem – as foreseen by Conetta, the growing threat from warlordism in the ungoverned majority of the country.

At that time Donald Rumsfeld, then the Secretary of Defense, did not want to expand the nascent International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) that had been created on 20 December

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<sup>20</sup> Hunt, 1995, p78.

<sup>21</sup> Interview with David Des Roches, Executive Officer of the US 450<sup>th</sup> CA Bn 2002-2003, 1 April 2008.

2001 under UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1386, but did want to expand what he described as “the ISAF effect” into the ungoverned spaces.<sup>22</sup> The solution was to create so-called Joint Regional Teams which were essentially more robust and better resourced versions of the chicklets. The name was later changed to Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) and the idea was that they should become a series of properly established civil-military units designed to help Karzai’s interim government to improve its influence outside of Kabul. At this early stage there was no attempt to detail what precisely that meant, and there was no clearly articulated doctrine for the PRTs to operate to - and some would argue that remains the case six years later.<sup>23</sup>

The UNSCR authorised ISAF to operate for six months, with a remit: ‘to assist the Afghan Interim Authority in the maintenance of security in Kabul and its surrounding areas, so that the Afghan Interim Authority as well as the personnel of the UN can operate in a secure environment.’ However, the OEF operation continued to exist in parallel to this much smaller Kabul-based force, and the initial PRTs were all US-led under OEF control, the first being established in Gardez in November 2002, with Bamian, Konduz, MeS, Kandahar and Herat following in early 2003.<sup>24</sup> The map at Appendix 2 helps to visualise the spread and isolation of these locations. The next step was to persuade other nations to take on the lead for some of these locations; New Zealand at Bamian and the UK at MeS were the first to step up and provide the resources. In late 2003 the Germans took over the site at Konduz from the Americans, and this became the first ISAF controlled PRT. Since then, as part of the plan that was developed at the NATO Istanbul summit in June 2004, ISAF has expanded its footprint in Afghanistan, beginning in the North and then gradually encompassing the whole of the country in an anti-clockwise movement, finally taking control of the US element in Regional Command (East) (RC(E)) in October 2006. At the same time there has been a growing willingness by additional nations to contribute to the campaign by assisting with existing PRTs or by leading their own in new locations. As a result, by May 2008 there were twenty six PRTs in operation,

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<sup>22</sup> Interview with Mike Mc Nerney, Director International Policy and Capabilities in the Office of the US Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Stability Operations 2002-2004, 1 April 2008.

<sup>23</sup> Interview with Robert M. Perito, Senior Program Officer, USIP, 1 April 2008.

<sup>24</sup> Robert M. Perito, *The US Experience with Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan: Lessons Identified*, USIP Special Report #152, October 2005, p2.

all under ISAF control. The US has the lead in twelve of these with the others headed up by thirteen different nations, (Germany now runs two), and of course within each of these teams other nations also make contributions to a greater or lesser extent.<sup>25</sup> The map at Appendix 3 shows this situation. Although all of its PRTs are now under ISAF command, the US still maintains a separate force of about 8000 troops not under NATO command, but continuing to operate as part of OEF and involved throughout Afghanistan in what they describe as counter-terrorism operations.

Although the concept of the PRT was born in the immediate aftermath of the 2001 overthrow of the Taliban regime in Kabul, the stated purpose of extending the authority of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIRA) beyond Kabul and the major cities and into the rest of the country remains unchanged. Their objectives are now specifically listed by ISAF and include:<sup>26</sup>

- To support the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIRA) in the development of a more stable and secure environment;
- To assist in extending the authority of the GIRA;
- To support where appropriate the Security Sector Reform (SSR) initiatives;
- To facilitate the reconstruction effort and reinforce national development priorities;
- To enable unity of effort amongst civil actors; and
- To demonstrate the International Community's commitment to Afghanistan's future.

These objectives are not particularly contentious, and are designed to be sufficiently high level to ensure that almost any country can sign up to them without any real difficulty. Where the disagreement comes is over what precisely those objectives mean on the ground, and how the deployed forces, both civil and military, should be organized, structured and resourced to carry them out. Here there is very little consensus, certainly between ISAF contributing nations, but even among the US agencies themselves.

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<sup>25</sup> PRT Page of the ISAF Website.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

## **Two Wars, One Problem**

The conflicts in Afghanistan and Vietnam are not identical by any means and there are a number of differences that have to be considered.<sup>27</sup> The communist ideology of the Vietcong was based on the concept of a popular uprising against an oppressive regime, and it had Great Power support in China whose rhetoric talked of world-wide revolution. Marxist-Leninist theory postulates that conflict with the bourgeoisie is both inevitable and necessary until the final overthrow of capitalism and, for the Chinese, Vietnam was simply seen as part of that greater struggle. In fact Ho Chi Minh's main aim was to unite the two Vietnams, and the issue of land ownership for the population was central to his objectives. The Diem government, like the French colonialists before them, allowed rich elites to charge exorbitant rents causing suffering amongst the peasant population. To the Vietcong, as well as the obvious desire for the overthrow of the South Vietnamese government, the insurgency was equally about social justice and where they took control the communists seized the land and gave it to the people gaining their support in the process. This did mean that government land reform and other social measures could provide another weapon with which to counter the insurgents, although the US often found it hard to persuade the South Vietnamese administration to make use of it.

Whilst the wider Islamic cause of the Taliban might be seen by some as having similar global aims to the communists, in fact theirs is a much more localised struggle and they have no genuinely influential external allies. The Taliban's objectives are not about land ownership and social reform, but about the application of the Islamic law and lifestyle and this makes it more difficult for non-Islamic forces to counter their propaganda. Even Afghans who associate with westerners can easily be targeted and are often preached against in the mosques by clerics who support the religious views of the Taliban. The Vietnamese and Afghan cultures are also markedly different. There is a very complex tribal and ethnic aspect to Afghan society, which is further complicated by the factors of warlordism and drugs. Although these were also part of the Vietnam landscape, they were nowhere near as influential as they are in Afghanistan. Finally, whilst the Northwest Frontier Province of Pakistan does provide a safe haven for the Taliban, there is no threat of external invasion as there was from the North in Vietnam.

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<sup>27</sup> Henry Nuzum, *Shades of CORDS in the Kush*, draft MA Thesis, 23 October 2007, p64.

However, the similarities, particularly with regards to the strategic and political nature of the conflicts, cannot be ignored. The insurgency in Vietnam was fought not just as a battle on the ground, but much more as a struggle of wills in which the staying power of the public back home was as much a factor as anything else – and indeed it proved to be the decisive factor. The same is true of Afghanistan and the Taliban are well aware of this.<sup>28</sup> The similarities between the situations of the two governments in Saigon and Kabul are also striking, with key concerns over deeply embedded corruption, a lack of power beyond the capital and weak and ineffective police and judiciary. Even operationally there are parallels, with the seasonal nature of the campaigns, the asymmetric levels of the forces on each side and the tactics employed - the Taliban actually stated recently that they plan to use the guerrilla tactics of the legendary Vietnamese commander General Giap in the future.<sup>29</sup>

On the face of it, Komer's problems as he prepared to travel out to Saigon in early 1967 and those that face the coalition in Kabul today would not appear that dissimilar. His proposed solution, (the 'Alternative 3' from his 'New Thrust' memo), required an integrated civil-military structure and this eventually led him to set up the CORDS organisation, which focused on getting the pacification aspect of the war right. Whilst it seems unlikely that the precise solution that he put in place in Vietnam forty years ago could prove to be directly applicable to Afghanistan today, it is worth examining whether or not there are some enduring principles from the experience of CORDS that might still be pertinent.

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid, p63.

<sup>29</sup> Syed Saleem Shahzad, *The Taliban talk the talk*, Asia Times Online, 11 Apr 2008.

## **CHAPTER 2 – COMMAND AND CONTROL**

### **Preparing the Way in Saigon**

As has been seen, when he was still in Washington as Presidential Advisor, Komer's biggest criticism of the way the pacification programme was being run was that there was no single chain of command able to set the overall strategy and then have the resources to deliver it. He felt that it was essential to bring all of the separate organisations working within the programme in Vietnam into a single unified structure. To him, the ideal way in which to achieve this was under the direct control of Westmoreland as COMUSMACV, in order to utilise the huge logistic and manpower capacity of the military. Such a hybrid civil-military command on this scale was a relatively new concept and there were many who thought it at best impractical and at worst detrimental to the cause of winning the war. From the military perspective those who supported the 'big war' strategy of large scale search and destroy type operations considered pacification to be waste of resources that could be better employed in getting to grips with the enemy.<sup>30</sup> Equally, on the civilian side many in both the State Department and USAID resented the idea of being subordinated to Westmoreland and felt that the military simply did not understand that the war could not be won using military force alone.

President Johnson was fully supportive of Komer's 'Alternative 3' option, however, he considered that it was such a radical step that it would have to be implemented more subtly if it were to stand a chance of success. He decided upon a compromise which looked very similar to Komer's original Alternative 2, and in which all of the civilian agencies operating in Vietnam were to be brought under a single umbrella organisation called the Office of Civil Operations (OCO). Formally established in December 1966, OCO was headed by the then Deputy Director of USAID in Saigon, L. Wade Lathram. He was told that he had ninety days to prove that he could make it work after which, if the President was not convinced, then the military would be put in charge. In truth OCO was never really a practical proposition and Lathram's task was virtually impossible as, apart from the ridiculously short timeframe, OCO was not even properly established as a fully integrated organisation. It was hamstrung from the start by not being

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<sup>30</sup> Hunt, 1995, p61.

given total control over its own assets, with individual agencies still retaining authority for the funding of the programmes and with no one having the power to transfer funds from one to another; even logistical support remained with the parent agencies<sup>31</sup>. Later Komer admitted that it was designed to fail, describing its creation as merely ‘a stay of execution’ and ‘an interim measure’.<sup>32</sup>

It now seems clear that the President’s intention was always for Komer to move forward and to set up a fully integrated civil-military pacification structure, with full budgetary authority, under the direct command of Westmoreland in MACV – the organisation that would later become known as CORDS. In mid-March the President appointed Ellsworth Bunker as the new Ambassador in Saigon to succeed Lodge. He told Bunker that Komer would be made Westmoreland’s civilian deputy for pacification, essentially bringing OCO’s trial to an end.<sup>33</sup> In fact it was several weeks later, on 11 May 1967, before Bunker made the official announcement in a press release that Komer would take up this new position and that from then on MACV would run pacification as well as the manoeuvre war.<sup>34</sup>

### **CORDS and the Integrated Chain of Command**

Komer’s first task was to bring the OCO into MACV and to prove that his idea of a single command structure was not only possible, but was actually the best way to make progress in Vietnam. There was a great deal of suspicion and resentment on both sides but one of his biggest assets proved to be the unwavering backing of Westmoreland himself. Despite having been one of the greatest proponents of the Search and Destroy approach, Westmoreland threw himself totally behind Komer’s efforts and publicly supported him. It helped that Komer and Westmoreland got along well, which is perhaps a little surprising given that they were both strong personalities with the potential to clash. With a typically egotistical perspective Komer later expressed the view that this was partly down to the fact that Westmoreland having been reluctantly given responsibility for pacification recognised that in Komer he had a man who had

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid, p83.

<sup>32</sup> Interview with Robert Komer by Thomas Scoville, Oct 1969, Montague Papers, US AHEC, p70.

<sup>33</sup> Hunt, 1995, p87.

<sup>34</sup> Ellsworth Bunker, US Mission in Vietnam official press release, 11 May 1967, Vietnam Papers, US AHEC.

the President's ear, who knew all there was to know about pacification and who could deliver it for him – and equally someone who could be blamed if it failed. Whatever the reason, almost uniquely Westmoreland in effect made Komer a component commander in his own right. He delegated to him, a civilian, full authority to act as his deputy in this area and to make any decisions he felt necessary 'on every issue that did not involve taking something away in the way of forces'.<sup>35</sup>

At first Komer's plans were greeted by both the military and the civilians alike with a great deal of scepticism, and within the OCO staff, a degree of trepidation. Komer's management style was aggressive and he deliberately tried to mimic how he thought a military commander would behave – he barked orders, issued directives, and peremptorily summoned staff to his office in the same manner as he imagined a general would. If his authority was ever challenged by a military officer he would simply say 'if you disagree with this direct order, you take it up with Westmoreland because he's the guy I'm working for', which was not how people expected a civil servant to act, even one of ambassadorial rank<sup>36</sup>. In this way he ruffled a lot of feathers on both sides of the civil-military divide, but at the same time he did begin to create the sense of a single entity in which both military and civilian staff felt part of the same team and were treated equally. This also applied to the selection of personnel for key posts within the CORDS structure, whereby the best person was selected for the job regardless of whether they were civilian or military. Except at District level, where the security situation did not always allow it and the majority of the staff still tended to be military, the principle was always rigorously enacted that if the senior advisor was a civilian then his deputy was a military officer, and vice-versa. This unity of command was equally as important to Westmoreland as it was to Komer and the title of Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support was selected by Westmoreland himself specifically in order to stress the word 'Civil'.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Scoville interview with Komer 1969, AHEC, p82.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, p89.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, p187 and Hunt, 1995, pp88-89.

Prior to properly taking up his appointment, Komer and his ultra-loyal, almost sycophantic,<sup>38</sup> Military Assistant Colonel Robert Montague had drawn up a set of 'governing concepts of the organisation' and briefed these to Westmoreland. They included the following principles:

'The single manager concept should guide reorganization at every US level from Saigon down through the region, province and district. This means: (a) a single chain of command; (b) integrated civil/military planning, programming, operations, evaluations, logistics, and communications; and (c) one voice is speaking with the Vietnamese.

The President and his advisors envisage the Deputy COMUSMACV as having management and supervisory responsibility under COMUSMACV for all military as well as civilian aspects of the US role in pacification.<sup>39</sup>

Westmoreland had agreed to these principles and the briefing notes later formed the basis for National Security Action Memo (NSAM) 362 of 9 May 1967 which put Komer in post and formally established his position within MACV.

A great deal of structural reorganisation took place in the first few months of CORDS existence and according to Komer he and his small CORDS staff were the sole arbiters of what went on. In his opinion, everything that happened with regards to pacification in 1967, both in terms of direction from Washington and discussion with the Ambassador, was driven by them. As he put it: '... there was nobody in State telling us how to run it. We ran pacification in the field, and we were generally so far ahead of the people in Washington that we were telling them what they needed to do to support us rather than vice versa.'<sup>40</sup> However, not every one has always been as complimentary or as praiseworthy of Komer's efforts as he was of himself; indeed many have been extremely critical of him, and in particular of his abrupt and confrontational manner. Lewis Sorely in his book 'A Better War' is particularly scathing, and quotes many contemporary critics who found him impossible to work with.<sup>41</sup> Sorely describes Komer as 'heavy-handed and insensitive', (which was almost certainly the case), but we should

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<sup>38</sup> In a memo to Komer in May 1967 advising him on how to fight the battle with Westmoreland for a key position in MACV, Montague finishes with the line "We love you too – so this is just our hopes for you". Montague Papers, US AHEC.

<sup>39</sup> Komer interview with Scoville, 1969, AHEC, p100.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, p130.

<sup>41</sup> Lewis Sorely, *A Better War The Unexamined Victories and Final Tragedy of America's Last Years in Vietnam*, 1999, p62.

be careful not to let impressions of his personality detract from his extraordinary achievement in bringing together the disparate elements and agencies of the US in Vietnam, and then harnessing them into a cohesive team – elements that until he took charge had been pulling in totally different directions.

It is true that by the time Komer was, to all intents and purposes, sacked by Westmoreland's successor General Creighton W. Abrams in November 1968, very little in the way of progress in the pacification programme could actually be measured on the ground. In fact, the immediate impact of the enemy's widespread attacks during the Tet holiday in February 1968 had caused a disillusioned Daniel Ellsberg, (later to become noteworthy for releasing the secret 'Pentagon Papers' to the New York Times), to write in a memo that 'The Tet offensive and what is shortly to come, do not mark a "set back" to pacification; it is the death of pacification as it has been conceived.'<sup>42</sup> However, in the margins of his copy of the memo Robert Montague wrote, 'Let's review this as of 30 April'. As it turned out Montague was right to be optimistic as pacification not only survived Tet and the later battles that year, but by the end of 1968 it was clear that shoots from the seeds that Komer had sown were at last starting to show through and it looked as if the situation would materially improve the following year. Unfortunately this was not widely acknowledged and Komer ended up taking his share of the blame for Tet and what was widely seen back home as a dramatic reversal in the progress of the war. Komer resented this and felt that he had been cheated of his approbation for all that he had achieved, and believed that without him the programme was bound to fail. He chose not to recognise the positive results that were seen within the pacification programme after he had left and considered that all the good work he had put in place had begun to collapse. In a bitter mood not long after his return, in an interview with Robert Scoville, he suggested that perhaps Scoville should have a section in his book entitled 'the Degradation of Pacification After Komer Left'.<sup>43</sup> In fact, ironically, quite the opposite was true and it was at this point that the programme really began to show how successful it could be.

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<sup>42</sup> Daniel Ellsberg, *Impact of the Winter-Spring Offensive*, Memorandum for the Record, 28 February 1968, Montague Papers, US AHEC.

<sup>43</sup> Scoville interview with Komer, 1969, AHEC, p183.

In late 1968 Komer's successor William Colby took forward a reinvigorated pacification effort that had been initiated by Komer after Tet and that was known as the Accelerated Pacification Campaign (APC). The APC proved to be extremely successful and following the apparent set-backs that Tet had caused, CORDS rapidly managed to follow up with positive reconstruction and pacification efforts in many rural areas where the Vietcong infrastructure proved to have been seriously weakened.<sup>44</sup> Abrams was now convinced that this was the route to success in Vietnam and fully mobilised MACV's efforts in support of pacification with results that were rapid and tangible. Komer's single, unified civil-military structure, now given the impetus of being COMUSMACV's main effort and with a level-headed, analytical mind like Colby's at the helm, finally started to deliver on its original promises. In September 1970 Charles Whitehouse, a departing senior civilian CORDS official, wrote a memo in which he spoke about 'a high degree of cohesiveness within the organization', and whilst he acknowledged that there was still much to be done in terms of pacification, concluded that 'In looking back over two years in this area, one must inevitably touch on the improvements that have come to pass'.<sup>45</sup> There were very few other aspects of the war in Vietnam at that time about which any senior official was prepared to make comments like that.

### **NATO Versus National Interests**

Afghanistan, by contrast, has never made a similar step towards having a unified command structure. Not long after NATO took over ISAF in August 2003, UNSCR 1510 was approved which provided for 'the progressive expansion of the International Security Assistance Force to other urban centres and other areas beyond Kabul'. Prior to the Alliance taking on the lead role, a series of individual nations had, more or less reluctantly, led the ISAF partnership of nations and had struggled to exert a firm grip over them. One of the strengths that it was expected that NATO could bring to ISAF was its long experience of running a centralised command and control (C2) structure within a coalition environment. As described by the then Secretary General of NATO Lord Robertson, it was hoped they would be able to make use of

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<sup>44</sup> Hunt, 1995, p143.

<sup>45</sup> Charles S. Whitehouse, Memo to Colby, dated 22 September 1970, John Paul Vann Papers, US AHEC.

'NATO's unique reputation for inter-operability, standardization, the habit of training and education together, which allows all of these diverse forces to work well and effectively on the ground in a multinational formation'.<sup>46</sup>

Another key element of UNSCR 1510 was the decision to expand the ISAF mandate in four stages to take in the whole of Afghanistan. It was later agreed that this would begin in region North and gradually take in regions West, South and finally East. One of the purposes behind this expansion was to try to bring the diverse strands of the campaign into a more cohesive whole. When discussing the final expansion phase into the East of the country in a press release in October 2006 General Ray Henault, the Chairman of the NATO Military Committee, stated that he hoped that it would, 'provide for greater continuity of command, additional flexibility for the commander on the ground, and a more focused overall effort'.<sup>47</sup> However, whilst this may possibly have been achieved in some aspects of ISAF's operations, the same cannot be said with regards to the PRTs where, if anything, the exact opposite appears to have occurred.

NATO is very sensitive towards the national restrictions and caveats on the use of their assets that nations wish to impose and tries to be as accommodating as possible with them. As a result the situation has developed whereby although the military elements of the PRTs nominally report to their Regional Command HQs at Mazar-e-Sharif, Herat, Kandahar or Bagram respectively, and thence to HQ ISAF in Kabul, the same does not apply to the civilian elements, which remain under national command. This separate civilian reporting chain is usually enacted through each of their appropriate representatives in their embassies in Kabul and then back to national capitals. This means that all PRTs, instead of having a single chain of command through which they receive their instructions, now have at least two. In a many PRTs, especially the non-US led ones, there are several nations who have contributed civilian representatives and each of these also has their own additional links back to Kabul and their capitals. This means that it is virtually impossible for COMISAF to issue orders to PRTs since by their nature any task that they might be expected to undertake will be one of a joint civil-military nature and lead nations hold the right to amend or veto such orders. As a consequence

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<sup>46</sup> Lord Robertson, video interview, NATO HQ, 23 July 2003.

<sup>47</sup> NATO Int Mil Staff News Release, 5 October 2006.

direction from HQ ISAF to the PRTs is more in the form of guidance than orders, and COMISAF cannot truly claim to command them but at best loosely coordinates their activities.

Whilst this might perhaps be considered to be an extreme view of the situation, it is one that is supported by retired US Lieutenant General (LTG) David Barno. Barno is currently the director of the Near East South Asia Center for Strategic Studies at the National Defense University, Washington, DC, but was in charge of the US Combined Force Command – Afghanistan (CFC-A) from October 2003 to May 2005. In his time in command he expanded the PRTs and attempted to bring them into a single, more unified command structure. However, he feels now that much of what he put in place has since been undone under ISAF, and described the situation in which PRTs are now effectively working directly for national capitals as ‘horrifying.’<sup>48</sup> In essence this means that the single chain of command, (one of Komer’s ‘governing concepts’ that he identified as essential for success in Vietnam), that Barno attempted to establish under OEF has been allowed to evaporate. It is certainly hard to see how this apparent dissolution of direct control over such key assets as the PRTs could be described as having resulted in the stated aim of a ‘more focussed overall effort’.

For any stabilization or counter-insurgency (COIN) campaign to be successful it is generally recognised that it must have an overall political vision and plan - military operations alone are rarely successful in a COIN situation. Whilst there are many treatises on the subject, David Galula’s 1964 book is widely accepted as one of the classic texts, and his ‘twenty percent military action and eighty percent political’ rule is a reasonable approximation of how the military/political effort has to be split.<sup>49</sup> It is open to debate as to where precisely the PRTs fit within this analysis of effort – it is not precisely clear whether they are part of the military or the non-military endeavours. The truth is probably that they straddle the two, and that is really exactly what they were designed to do; to bridge the gap. It should be remembered that the majority of the troops allocated to ISAF are the more conventional military units, with the PRTs only making up a small proportion of the forces available in terms of numbers. However, even if it is accepted that ISAF is able to exert strict control over the conventional military elements of

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<sup>48</sup> Interview with LTG (Retd) David Barno, Director NESA Center, NDU, 2 April 2008.

<sup>49</sup> David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*, 1964.

its force, the question remains as to who in a eighty percent/twenty percent political/military split, is directing the remaining eighty percent of the COIN strategy through the PRTs?

In an article that he wrote in September 2007 David Barno examined the progress of the campaign in Afghanistan since he left and concluded that, 'NATO's ISAF has assumed a narrow focus on the "20-percent military" dimension of COIN. It views the remaining "80-percent non-military" component of successful COIN operations as falling outside the purview of what is, after all, a "military alliance."<sup>50</sup> In interview he took this view further, explaining with an obvious degree of frustration, why he thinks NATO is unlikely to grasp the 100 percent of the campaign:

'I think NATO's objectives for example, (which is the 800lb gorilla in the corner of the room which we don't talk about sometimes), are very unclear. I think the US objectives are relatively clear, but the two of those don't match up necessarily. The way to put it in my view is that Afghanistan within the NATO context has become about the preservation of NATO. The US context for Afghanistan has been about the strategic interest the US has in that region ... which is a strategic outlook not shared by NATO in any way, shape or form. In fact I had a discussion six months back with a former Defence Minister from one of the European contributors to NATO and I said this about the strategic region to the United States and this person said I can't go back to my population and tell them Afghanistan is about the strategic importance of the region, that's not why they agreed to go to Afghanistan - they went there for humanitarian reasons. And NATO is still very much stuck in that corner.'<sup>51</sup>

David Barno's observations seem to be borne out by the official statements made by the German General Egon Ramms, Commander of the NATO Joint Force Headquarters in Brunssum (JFCB), the higher-level NATO HQ responsible for running ISAF. His HQ recently hosted a PRT Conference in Maastricht designed to follow up on the political decisions on Afghanistan taken by the Heads of government at the NATO summit at Bucharest last year. At this conference General Ramms made the point that most of the criticisms of the PRT effort in regard to unity of effort that had been raised at a SHAPE meeting in February 2007 had still not been addressed, and that 'much work remains to be done to achieve the aims of greater coherence and coordination'. At this point that you might then have expected him to go on and

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<sup>50</sup> David W. Barno, *Fighting the "Other War": Counterinsurgency Strategy in Afghanistan 2003-2005*, Military Review, September-October 2007, p43.

<sup>51</sup> Interview Barno, 2 April 2008.

make the case for ISAF to be given a stronger, more centralised civil-military C2 arrangement over the PRTs. However, instead he simply made it quite clear just what the limits were on how radical he was prepared to be to in order to achieve this desire for greater coherence and coordination within PRTs by saying:

‘This is not an effort by the military to bring the civilians at PRTs into the NATO command structure. I have no desire to subordinate the civilians at the PRTs to the military elements, and that is not what the contributing nations want.’<sup>52</sup>

So then, if the stated view of NATO is apparently contrary to the accepted wisdom on how a successful COIN operation should be run, how is the campaign in Afghanistan to be taken forward? Barno has his own views which would involve the US taking a more central lead in the southern half of the country in order to deliver a ‘100%’ solution where he thinks it is most critical, but it is hard to imagine that this would be acceptable to most politicians in the US or Europe. When talking to him it is clear that this concept is born out of a real disappointment that what he believes is a winnable situation is being lost because of the bureaucracy that the consensus approach of NATO inevitably brings with it. However, aside from the operational logic that he expresses, he also makes a strong case for a more pragmatic, political reason for implementing his plan. He is concerned that whilst they become ever more involved in war fighting and continue to take casualties, the other ISAF nations’ appetites for staying in Afghanistan will shrink immeasurably. He makes the point this way:

‘If they’re involved in what they thought they came for originally – broadly humanitarian operations, stability operations, non-kinetic activities, which is what the northern half of the country looks like today, then their ability to stay in Afghanistan extends significantly. We’ve aligned ourselves in ways that shorten NATO’s lifespan in Afghanistan the way we’re set up today. And the countries that are in the south are stuck there forever unless we can come up with a model which allows them to do something differently.’<sup>53</sup>

It is not difficult to see how this situation in Afghanistan today as described by David Barno might be seen to have remarkable parallels with Vietnam in the late 1960s. The high US casualties and the rapid dwindling of support for the cause back home led a gradual but

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<sup>52</sup> General Ramms, Commander NATO JFCB, a presentation given to the JFCB PRT Conference, Maastricht, 14 May 2008.

<sup>53</sup> Interview Barno, 2 April 2008..

relentless US withdrawal from Vietnam that was inevitable regardless of the events on the ground. This meant that, despite the ever-increasing progress of pacification, such success as the programme did have came too late for the overall campaign to be saved. Given that the situation was so complex, it is impossible to know with any certainty what would have happened if it had been allowed a little longer to run its course in South Vietnam, but it does seem that CORDS may at last have been beginning to turn the tide. In an interview in late 1969 Komer, in a particularly prescient moment, made the following comments:

‘I have a grim feeling sometimes that we may end up with the situation where there’s a disaster in Vietnam ... it ends disastrously, and the pacification effort is sort of engulfed with all the rest. At which point nobody, except perhaps professional historians, are going to delve in the thing and find out well: “Maybe the whole thing collapsed, but the pacifiers, at least, were on a reasonably promising track.”’<sup>54</sup>

In retrospect, it does seem that this is precisely what did happen and as a consequence we are having to re-learn the same lessons in Afghanistan. Again we are seeing a lack of strong unified leadership, in which the civil and military aspects of the operation are run by separate command structures, resulting in the same lack any of genuine progress. Unfortunately in Afghanistan the situation is further complicated by the fact that the whole campaign is under the direction of a twenty six nation military alliance, each member of which has their own chain of command in place and sets their own agenda for their PRT. Since it seems that the NATO hierarchy does not have the stomach for the political struggle that changing this would involve, this does not bode well for the future. If casualties continue to mount then overwhelming loss of public support for engagement in Afghanistan may occur before any real success in terms of stabilization can take place. The result may well be a case of *deja-vu*.

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<sup>54</sup> Scoville interview with Komer, 1969, AHEC, p411.

## **CHAPTER 3 – ROLES, STRUCTURES AND EXPECTATIONS**

### **Stabilization in Afghanistan – Flexibility or Chaos?**

The way in which PRTs have evolved means that there has never been a template laid down that mandated how they should be constituted or run. Even amongst the first PRTs established by the US in early 2002 there was little conformity, with their size and shape in the various locations depending on who and what was available. When other nations began to arrive then the possibility of standardization became even more remote. This situation has been criticized on the grounds that more strict control should have been laid down from the start, but Mike McNerney, who worked in the Office of the US Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Stability Operations from 2002-2004, and who was heavily involved in drawing up the initial guidelines for PRTs in 2002, would disagree. He recognises that the question of the uniformity of PRTs is debatable but suggests that it is one of a balance between extremes. On the one hand that of the templated 'cookie-cutter' solution, or on the other a situation where they are all so different that you can't manage them and they are not even identifiable as the same type of organisation. His view is that he 'leans a little more towards the flexibility model, partly because of the multi-national aspect'.<sup>55</sup>

In essence though, all of the PRTs have certain basic roles that are required to be fulfilled in some form or another, and these are shown in outline in Appendix 4. By mid-2003 the way in which the contributing nations had developed their approaches to providing these basic elements had resulted in three separately recognisable models - the US model, the UK model and the German model.

The US Model. Robert Perito in his Special Report for the US Institute for Peace In October 2005 takes quite a detailed look at the so-called generic US PRT model.<sup>56</sup> In the report he acknowledges that the actual size and composition of US PRTs varied even then, depending on such factors as maturity, local circumstances and the availability of personnel from civilian agencies. The key element of the US concept was one of strong military leadership and direction, usually under a professional military Civil Affairs (CA) officer,

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<sup>55</sup> Interview McNerney, 1 April 2008.

<sup>56</sup> Perito, 2005, pp4-6.

concentrating on delivering ‘small, quick impact development projects designed to win “hearts and minds”, or at least encourage a more benevolent attitude to the US military presence’.<sup>57</sup> The teams were relatively small and comprised approximately eighty soldiers and three or four civilians, plus a representative from the Afghan government. This structure has more or less remained unchanged through to 2008. As well as operating at the national level through the US Embassy in Kabul, the US Agency for International Development, (USAID), had representatives in every PRT. However, these representatives were there primarily to give advice to the military commander and, except in a few cases, did not have authority to let contracts independently. They also assisted the USAID office in Kabul by reporting to them on any USAID national projects in their area.<sup>58</sup> The political aspect of the PRT was covered by State Department Foreign Service Officers who, whilst again acting as advisors to the PRT commanders, also seem to have been very much forward representatives of the Embassy staff in Kabul to whom they reported directly. Each PRT also had, when available, a representative from the US Department for Agriculture as part of the team. One perceived weakness of this early US model was the potential for a lack of cohesion between the various elements, and although this has improved, such concerns still persist even today.<sup>59</sup> Additionally, the use of humanitarian aid projects which deliberately focussed on military objectives raised strong criticism with from the Humanitarian Non-Governmental Organisations (HNGOs) – again something that is still very much a live issue.<sup>60</sup>

The UK Model. The first nation after the US to step up and offer to provide its own PRT was the UK, and in July 2003 it took over command of the previously US-led team in MeS in the North of the country. In contrast to the US approach, from the start the emphasis was on the integration of the military and civilian elements of the organisation and a concentration on Security Sector Reform (SSR) related projects. Whilst being commanded by a military officer, the MeS PRT was coordinated by what has been described as ‘a “triumvirate” of lead staff from

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid, p5.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, p6.

<sup>59</sup> Michael J McNerney, *Stabilization and Reconstruction in Afghanistan: Are PRTs a Model or a Muddle?*, Parameters, Winter 2005-2006, pp39-40.

<sup>60</sup> Save The Children, *Provincial Reconstruction Teams and Humanitarian-Military Relations in Afghanistan*, 2004, pp 19-20.

FCO, DfID and MOD.<sup>61</sup> This meant that whilst ultimately the military commander had the final say on matters relating to administration, security and personnel safety, the day to day tasks of the team were closely coordinated to achieve maximum impact for each aspect of the mission. As well as an army Colonel, the command team comprised a FCO officer who provided both local expertise and also continuity, (being there for up to two years), and a development officer who was a representative from the DfID. As the MeS team grew and took in more staff from other nations, so the civilian element also grew and included representatives from USAID and several other partner countries. In a short paper reflecting on the early UK experience of PRTs the FCO made it clear that, as well as integration between the various departments of the UK government, two other aspects of the operation were critical to them.<sup>62</sup> The first was that generally, the UK does not support PRTs providing direct humanitarian assistance as this may lead to confusion about the PRT's primary role, (although they accept that there may be areas of Afghanistan in which this would be appropriate). This was allied to the desire to work hard to establish good relations with HNGOs in the area. The second aspect was the importance placed on working with the Afghan government, believing that having a representative from the Afghan government in the PRT allowed them to demonstrate that it was a joint international/Afghan operation and also allowed them to draw on the experience of a senior government representative in their dealings with the local population and power brokers. By mid-2004 when the UK brought online a second PRT at Maimana in Faryab Province, (a satellite, subordinate to the main MeS location), many were acclaiming the UK model as the one that all others should follow. However, as can be seen from the FCO comments above and from discussion with UK Commanders at the time, amongst the UK practitioners it was recognised that whilst it was extremely well-suited to the particular conditions in the North of the country, it was not necessarily something that could be directly transplanted elsewhere in the country.<sup>63</sup>

The German Model. Perhaps surprisingly, given their historical reluctance to send forces overseas, the Germans were another one of the early players in the PRT game. They

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<sup>61</sup> The Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University, *Provincial Reconstruction Teams: Lessons and Recommendations*, report on workshop on PRTs, January 2008, p44.

<sup>62</sup> FCO, *Afghanistan: Paper on UK PRT Experience*, Afghanistan Group, 20 January 2005.

<sup>63</sup> The author established and commanded the UK PRT at Maimana from April to November 2004.

took command of the US-led PRT in Kunduz in October 2003 and it quickly became apparent that they intended to do things differently. They were under ISAF command from the outset and their rules of engagement from Berlin were understandably more constraining than either those of the Americans or the British. The workshop on PRTs that took place at Princeton in 2007, and which was led by Robert Perito from the US Institute for Peace, suggested that this in part reflected the lack of support among the population back home where even recently polling has indicated that less than a third of the electorate supported the government's actions in re-committing troops to Afghanistan in 2007.<sup>64</sup> The most immediately obvious difference about the Kunduz PRT was its size – at 300 plus strong it was almost three times the size of any other existing PRT. It also had a much larger number of civilians involved, reaching, at some points, as high as thirty. However, despite their size, early criticisms of the Germans revolved around their apparent inability to operate much beyond the immediate environs of the PRT base. In his 2005 paper which examined the possibility of further Danish involvement in the PRT process, Peter Viggo Jakobsen is quite scathing about the Germans' capabilities.<sup>65</sup> Although such comment and criticism was widespread at the time, Jakobsen is perhaps a little harsh and the situation actually reflects much more on the political restrictions placed on the team rather than either their willingness, or their ability to engage more widely. This has been seen more recently as restrictions on the now even larger German PRTs appear to have been eased a little, and they have become involved in longer range patrolling and have generally become more adventurous in their operations.

The other big difference that was seen with the German model was its unique dual-command aspect, whereby it appears to have two chiefs – a military commander and a civilian head.<sup>66</sup> The two have equivalent status within the organisation, each representing the unit equally to the local population, although the civilian head, (from the Foreign Office), is the official face of the PRT. The degree of separation between the two halves of the PRT has reduced since its inception, but certainly early on it was a very striking feature and one that was very hard to understand for those looking in from the outside. Even today the civilian development

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<sup>64</sup> Woodrow Wilson School report, p26.

<sup>65</sup> Peter Viggo Jakobsen, *PRTs In Afghanistan: Successful But Not Sufficient*, 2005, p25.

<sup>66</sup> Oskari Eronen, *PRT models in Afghanistan: Approaches to civil-military integration*, 7 February 2008, p20.

staff are still not co-located with the military personnel. Perhaps unsurprisingly, it does not seem that this is a model that any other nation has chosen to follow and the reasons for its design in the first place are probably more specifically connected with internal German politics rather than its effectiveness as a design for successful civil/military integration.

As additional nations began to consider that contributing a PRT to ISAF might be an acceptable way to show support for NATO and the coalition, without committing too many troops in high risk roles, these three models were the ones they looked at. However, as time was to prove, they were not constrained by NATO to adopt any of them and before long very different looking versions of PRTs began to appear.

### **Komer and Revolutionary Development**

The approach that the Americans took towards pacification in Vietnam was not the same as that the coalition has taken towards stabilization in Afghanistan. In Vietnam the equivalent of the PRT was known as the Revolutionary Development (RD) Team or Cadre but these were based two levels below that of the PRTs, not even at district level but at village level. Additionally, they were manned entirely by Vietnamese, with US personnel involved only at District HQs and above. However, the RD Cadres' roles were remarkably similar to those listed in the ISAF PRT Handbook, and in an official briefing given by Military Assistance Command CORDS (MACCORDS) in 1967 to explain how RD Planning would take place, the following definition of Revolutionary Development was put up on a slide:

'The integrated military and civil process to restore, consolidate and expand government control so that nation building can progress throughout the Republic of Vietnam. It consists of those coordinated military and civil actions to liberate the people from VC control, restore public security, initiate political, economic and social development, extend effective GVN authority [and] win the willing support of the people toward these ends.'<sup>67</sup>

When Komer first established CORDS he had two problems with his ability to implement his plans on the ground. The first was that the Vietnamese government directly controlled both

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<sup>67</sup> MACCORDS briefing 29 June 1967, Montague Papers, US AHEC.

the RD Cadres and the Regional Forces and Popular Forces (RF/PF) who, in theory at least, provided the security for the RD Cadres to operate. This was always going to be the case given the nature of the US C2 arrangements in Vietnam whereby they were in support of the Saigon government and although joint command, (under which Westmoreland would control Vietnamese forces as well US forces), was often discussed it was never implemented.<sup>68</sup> Secondly, and much more frustratingly from his point of view, Komer did not even hold the position of being responsible for the US advisory aspect of the RF/PF, which in effect meant that he could not shape or control them in any way. It took him a year of hard lobbying with Westmoreland to achieve this, but once he had succeeded he was able to begin to establish the role for CORDS that he had envisioned. Komer didn't face any real dissent to his plans for the lower level of organisation in the pacification programme, and in truth there were very few rival models to compete with his.

One alternative that is perhaps worthy of note was that devised by the US Marines in the I Corps area in the north. Here the Marines were able to exercise their usual degree of autonomy and came up with concept of operation that was much closer to that of present day PRTs. This was known as the Combined Action Platoon (CAP) programme and involved placing a squad of fourteen US Marines and a US Navy medic into a village where they would work alongside the RF/PF and village hierarchy to achieve the pacification aims. Later Komer claimed to have thought highly of the idea, but at the time he did little to support it and Westmoreland would not agree to its wider introduction outside of the Marine Corps area.<sup>69</sup> It was also not well thought of by the Vietnamese, and the Vice Chief of the Joint General Staff, General Thang, considered that CAP teams tended to cause the locals to sit back and 'let the Americans do things for them'<sup>70</sup> – interestingly, something that PRTs have also been criticised for.

The nearest that CORDS came to developing a similar concept to the CAP teams was with the use of Mobile Assistance Teams (MATs), which, according to Komer was an idea originally put forward by Westmoreland himself and certainly Westmoreland was more

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<sup>68</sup> Andrew F. Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, 1986, pp194-196.

<sup>69</sup> Scoville interview with Komer, 1969, AHEC, p308.

<sup>70</sup> Hunt, 1995, p 108.

supportive of them than the CAP programme.<sup>71</sup> The idea was that small roving teams of US military personnel, (usually about five), would move from village to village training RF/PF in small unit tactics and local defence.<sup>72</sup> However, even at the peak of their popularity, these were still just a minor element of the pacification capability, the primary focus always being the RD Cadre under the CORDS advisory umbrella. The composition of the RD Cadres had varied considerably during the pre-CORDS period, but in 1967 the structure was agreed by MACCORDS with the Vietnamese authorities and the organisation chart of a typical 59-man team at that time is shown at Appendix 5. The close resemblance to the outline of the basic PRT structure in Appendix 4 is obvious.

The actual CORDS organisation itself sat above the RD Cadres, at District, Province and Corps level. Komer, through his strong position as the component commander for pacification in Westmoreland's HQ, was able to dictate how CORDS was to be organised. However, it was never uniform throughout Vietnam and a degree of flexibility was allowed in the way in which it was implemented on the ground. In his end of tour debrief, one USAID Programme Officer made the observation that Komer's staff 'only specified the chain of command, certain functional sections, and a presence at the district level, but left subordinates free to adjust the organization to the circumstances'.<sup>73</sup>

This idea of allowing a degree of flexibility in the lower level structures seems to mirror Mike McNerney's comments on the approach taken with the PRTs in Afghanistan in 2003/2004. Certainly the operational situation in Afghanistan is similar to Vietnam, whereby different parts of the country have very different levels of security at any one time and this would suggest that it is sensible to allow the structure, approach and specific tasks of PRTs to vary accordingly. However, since the emergence of the original three PRT models, the situation has changed dramatically and the expansion of ISAF has led to a huge growth in the number of nations contributing PRTs. Without any ability to impose even a set of boundaries within which nations might have been constrained, there is now an extreme diversity in the size and structure of the teams.

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<sup>71</sup> Scoville interview with Komer 1969, AHEC, p308.

<sup>72</sup> Hunt, 1995, p108.

<sup>73</sup> Nuzum, p58.

More recently ISAF has made attempts to bring some order to the situation by producing a detailed and extremely practical doctrinal manual for establishing and running a PRT in the form of the ISAF PRT Handbook. Unfortunately it is only guidance not direction and without the means of enforcing it PRTs are able to simply ignore instructions from ISAF HQ. As one very experienced commentator on the situation in Afghanistan, Barbara Stapleton, points out, this ironically results in a relationship between them that is not dissimilar from that existing between the Kabul government and its provincial subordinates.<sup>74</sup> Even General Ramms, Commander of NATO's JFCB, recognises that the widely differing national approaches to PRTs are a cause for concern. At his Maastricht conference he said:

'Perhaps one of the most important PRT issues discussed at Bucharest was the need for increased transparency, coherence and coordination of PRTs. This long-standing goal remains unfulfilled and this is due, mainly, to the differing models nations have chosen for the structure of their PRTs, and to one practical consideration. The differing models reflect the relationship between the civilian and military components. Some PRTs function as a coherent entity with a "country team" approach. Others view the military component mainly as force protection for the civilian staff. Of course, there is a wide range of variation between those two extremes and each sponsoring nation seems to have come up with its own solution.'<sup>75</sup>

However, because of the command structure that NATO has allowed to develop in ISAF General Ramms is simply not in a position to order the nations to conform, even if he wished to. The degree of latitude that Komer was able to give to his subordinates was only possible because he imposed a rigid framework within which they could extemporise and this is something that ISAF has never been able to lay down. Without this, flexibility begins to look more like chaos.

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<sup>74</sup> Barbara J Stapleton, *A Means to What End? Why PRTs are Peripheral to the Bigger Political Challenges in Afghanistan*, *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies*, Fall 2007, Vol 10, Issue No. 1, p40.

<sup>75</sup> Gen Ramms, 14 Apr 2008.

## **PRTs – All Things to All Men**

The over-arching aims of the PRTs are clearly defined, and were reaffirmed at Bucharest where a statement by all the troop contributing nations said:

‘Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) play a significant role in enabling security, governance and development. We pledge to provide all the PRTs needed, enhance their unity of effort, strengthen their civilian component and further align their development strategies with Afghan government priorities until such a time as Afghan government institutions are strong enough to render PRTs unnecessary.’<sup>76</sup>

Yet despite this it is quite clear, and perhaps inevitable, that having agreed to send forces to Afghanistan in support of ISAF for their own particular motives nations wish to have control over both the size and structure of the organisation they send. Equally, since in most cases they are also providing their own funds for development, they will expect to be able to dictate the specific use of those funds.

The Princeton PRT workshop produced an unusual and insightful summary of their activities that looked at this issue of motivation.<sup>77</sup> In the report some of the less obvious reasons that nations gave for deciding to contribute a PRT varied from a wish to try out a new whole of government approach methodology to a desire to obtain security guarantees from the United States and NATO to counter Russia. Others, it suggested, are not motivated by development or humanitarian assistance reasons, (nor even is counter-terrorism a priority), but by a perceived requirement to demonstrate their commitment to NATO. All of this has a bearing on how they view their role and tasks, and sends a confusing message to the Afghan government, whose priorities, as laid down in the Afghan National Development Strategy (ANDS), the ISAF nations claim are their primary driving force. Again this was clearly reinforced by Commander JFCB at Maastricht when he said:

‘We need to move beyond the focus in some PRTs on activities selected primarily on the basis of the decisions and priorities of the lead nation. Instead, we need increasingly to focus on those activities that provide a clear path toward activities driven by the priorities of the ANDS and to see the ANDS as the critical road map for PRT activity’.

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<sup>76</sup> Bucharest Summit, *ISAF’s Strategic Vision*.

<sup>77</sup> Woodrow Wilson School report.

When examining expectations, there is one other critical set of players in Afghanistan in 2008 that needs to be considered and who were not a significant factor in Vietnam in the 1960s – the HNGO community. Although there were dozens of aid agencies from over forty countries operating in the Vietnam during the war, (including sixteen from Britain), they had very little influence and were barely acknowledged by either the US or the South Vietnamese governments in their planning.<sup>78</sup> In March 1967 in a White House memorandum written to Ben Read the Executive Secretary at the State Department, William Leonhart, (Komer's deputy in the White House), did raise the issue. Under the heading "The Free World Joins In", he noted that thirty nations "have sent more than 500 teachers, technicians and medical personnel" and that "six other countries, plus the UN, have individual programs to assist the people of Vietnam".<sup>79</sup> However, this was mentioned purely as an indication that the US was not totally alone in its support of the South Vietnamese government, not because they were considered to be noteworthy in any other terms.

By contrast, forty years later HNGOs now have a much higher international profile and expect their voices to be heard. Few of them share the generally positive, if somewhat incoherent, views of the role of the PRTs that the UN and national governments tend to put forward, and they have frequently voiced their concerns. Ingrid MacDonald of the Norwegian Refugee Council recently made the following point:

'Most NGOs have a cautious approach to the PRTs, with many disputing the appropriateness of the PRTs operating in Afghanistan. This is especially the case in the area of PRTs undertaking quick impact projects (QIPS) and duplicating development and emergency relief activities with the hope of winning hearts and minds of the Afghan people for political and military ends.'<sup>80</sup>

When UNSCR 1510 was approved in October 2003, as well as giving PRTs official status in international law for the first time, it also formally acknowledged their reconstruction role. The UNSCR talked about the purpose of the expansion of ISAF being: 'so that the Afghan Authorities as well as the personnel of the United Nations and other international civilian

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<sup>78</sup> Precise figures are hard to come by, but Ronald J Rexilius' 2000 PhD thesis is the best source I have found.

<sup>79</sup> White House memo, William Leonhart, to Ben Read, 24 March 1967, Vietnam papers, US AHEC.

<sup>80</sup> Ingrid MacDonald, *Challenges and Ways Forward for PRTs in Afghanistan – an NGO perspective*, a presentation given to the JFCB PRT Conference, Maastricht, 14 May 2008.

personnel engaged, in particular, in reconstruction and humanitarian efforts, can operate in a secure environment, and to provide security assistance for the performance of other tasks in support of the Bonn agreement'. In addition to legitimacy, this Resolution gave ISAF-led PRTs a mandate, (in fact almost a duty), to work closely alongside not only the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), but also the HNGOs. This is something that often seems to be overlooked on both sides when disputes arise between the military and the HNGOs operating in the country.

To some extent, Ingrid MacDonald's viewpoint is acknowledged by HQ ISAF in their PRT Handbook where, under the heading 'Don't Be Short-sighted in "Winning Hearts and Minds"', it states that 'It is recommended that PRTs take care how they go about these projects' and that 'providing humanitarian items or projects to certain groups may help gain their confidence in the short-term. However, they may also create long-term grievances with other groups.'<sup>81</sup> Yet again, however, not all PRTs pay attention to this guidance and ISAF can only shake its head and shrug when they don't.

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<sup>81</sup> ISAF PRT Handbook, p G-4-5.

## **CHAPTER 4 – A SUPPORTING ROLE**

### **The Need For Justification**

In situations such as Afghanistan and Vietnam where attempts to suppress an indigenous insurgency are assisted by external actors, the relationship between those foreign forces and the sovereign government of the host country is critical. In such cases the host nation has the lead and the external force is only there in a supporting role. Whilst it is true that national interests and wider politics clearly had a major part to play in the original reasons for intervention in both Afghanistan and in Vietnam, this supporting role has remained the official basis for the justifications of the intervention of foreign troops.

According to Andrew Krepinevich, the introduction of US ground forces into Vietnam in substantial numbers was carried out under the rationale that they were only there to buy time so that the South Vietnamese government could 'take steps and enact reforms to preserve its independence in the face of communist aggression'.<sup>82</sup> In 1965 as Australian forces were also being committed to the war Robert Menzies, the Australian Prime Minister, even felt it necessary to go to great lengths to make it clear to his own Parliament that the South Vietnamese had made an explicit invitation for foreign combat troops to become involved.<sup>83</sup>

This same issue can be seen to have been equally important to the coalition forces operating in Afghanistan. A lot of effort was put into ensuring that the Bonn Agreement, drawn up as soon as practical after the fall of the Taliban in December 2001 and signed by representatives of the Afghan people, made provision for the presence of the coalition troops in the country. The Afghan Compact that built on this, and which was jointly issued in February 2006 by the Afghan government and the international community, stated that: 'All OEF counter-terrorism operations will be conducted in close coordination with the Afghan government and ISAF. ISAF will continue to expand its presence throughout Afghanistan, including through Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), and will continue to promote stability and support security sector reforms in its areas of operation.'<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Krepinevich 1986, p258.

<sup>83</sup> Sir Robert Menzies speech to First Session of Twenty-Fifth Parliament, Commonwealth of Australia, Hansard, 29 April 1965.

<sup>84</sup> The Afghan Compact, February 2006,

This desire to be seen as being in a supporting is also demonstrated by the respective names given to the commands – the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Kabul, and the Military Advisory Command Vietnam (MACV) in Saigon. However, the way in which this supporting role was enacted within the actual structure of the stabilization forces in Afghanistan and the pacification forces in Vietnam is in fact quite dissimilar - no doubt primarily because of the different nature of the initial intervention in the two countries.

The US involvement in Vietnam occurred in a series of graduated steps which began with their simply providing support to the French in their campaign against the communists until the French withdrew after Dien Bien Phu in 1954. From the formation of MAAG, (the predecessor to MACV), in 1956 until the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution in August 1964 there was a phase that only involved the US provision of special advisors to the South Vietnamese forces, albeit in ever increasing numbers towards the end. Finally US involvement culminated in President Johnson's deployment of large numbers of US troops in a direct combat role in the war in 1965. In this way the US government was drawn deeper and deeper into supporting an existing, but failing, ongoing Vietnamese attempt at pacification. It is for this reason that even in the CORDS era the RD Cadres who were actually doing the work on the ground, remained entirely made up of local personnel, with the US only acting as staff officers and advisors at higher levels.

By contrast, in Afghanistan the PRTs were created in a situation in which there was a total lack of any recognised government structure on the ground and the only indigenous military forces present were unofficial militias of some kind or another. This meant that there was never any question of PRTs comprising anyone other than coalition personnel from the start and, although later they were supposed to have some form of Afghan government representation in them, this was practically very difficult to achieve. Subsequently an increasingly capable Afghan National Army (ANA) has begun to emerge, but so far it has mainly been used in the more conventional aspects of the war against the Taliban and has had nothing more than a token involvement with the PRTs.

## A Local Face

In 1917 T. E. Lawrence published a list of 'Twenty Seven Articles' in the clandestine Arab Bulletin, with the intention of providing British officers with a guide on how to get the best out of working with the local forces. One of these articles stated:

'Do not try to do too much with your own hands. Better the Arabs do it tolerably than that you do it perfectly. It is their war, and you are to help them, not to win it for them. Actually, also, under the very odd conditions of Arabia, your practical work will not be as good as, perhaps, you think it is.'<sup>85</sup>

This would seem to be as valuable tenet to apply in Afghanistan today, as indeed it was in Vietnam.

Through the medium of a questionnaire PRT heads were recently asked, 'It has been suggested that PRTs are in danger of developing a culture of dependency. What is your view on this?'<sup>86</sup> Although only eight responses were received, (and all of those came from US civilian development representatives), it is interesting to note that whilst there were mixed views, most expressed the opinion that they agreed that there was a real danger of dependency occurring, and one made the simple, bold statement: 'It has happened already'.

There have been some attempts to put a local face on the whole reconstruction programme in Afghanistan and the need for this is understood by many in ISAF. Their Strategic Vision Statement issued at Bucharest in April 2008 by the Heads of State of the nations contributing to ISAF, expressed the view that, 'only Afghan-led security forces and institutions can ensure the rule of law in the long term' and stated that they would, 'work towards progressively transferring lead security responsibility throughout the country to Afghan forces, supported by ISAF, as appropriate conditions are met and Afghan capacity permits'. Capt Sterling Deramus USN, who recently completed a tour as Chief of PRTs in HQ ISAF, has put it like this:

'It must be recognised that the end-state for a PRT is for it not to exist. It provides an umbrella of security within which development assistance can be provided. Once conditions are such that indigenous forces can maintain a secure and stable

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<sup>85</sup> T. E. Lawrence, *Twenty-seven Articles*, Arab Bulletin, 20 August 1917.

<sup>86</sup> Q42 of author's questionnaire.

environment the military component is redundant. Further, its presence may well be counter-productive since its very existence undermines local perceptions of the capability of the local police and army and also may interfere with IO/NGO activities. PRTs should thus be prepared to work themselves out of a job. They should always seek not to create dependency and to build the capacity of the government to manage its own development. They should have their end state in mind and have plans in place to phase themselves out as soon as possible.<sup>87</sup>

Unfortunately, no practical moves towards this appear to have occurred with the PRTs themselves. There are still no PRTs that have more than a token representation from the Afghan government within them, and even the PRT handbook only suggests that, should the PRT request it, 'The GoA [Government of Afghanistan] MOI [Ministry of the Interior] will provide an experienced and senior ANP [Afghan National Police] officer (usually colonel rank) to act as the MOI LNO [liaison officer] for a PRT'.<sup>88</sup> This is the closest that it comes to discussing the issue, despite the fact that it seems clear that ultimately the desired end-state of a PRT must be to hand over responsibility to an Afghan-led organisation.

From discussion with a middle-ranking official in the Afghan Foreign Service, it is clear that this is also what the Afghan people expect.<sup>89</sup> He expressed the view that the PRTs must be considered to be much more than just providers of security or a military base, and that they are seen by the local populace as the ideal vehicle for launching longer-term infrastructure projects. For this to happen, however, he believed that two things must occur. Firstly there needs to be a much stronger coalition civilian presence in the PRTs, but secondly there needs to be much greater Afghan involvement. In his words: 'PRTs have to recruit clean, trusted, talented and experienced people from local communities to help its work. We must see more Afghans involvement in the PRTs not by only interpreters or drivers etc.'<sup>90</sup> This, therefore, means more than just a token MOI Representative.

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<sup>87</sup> Sterling Deramus, *PRTs – The Way Forward And Thoughts For Future Missions*, 2008.

<sup>88</sup> ISAF PRT Handbook, 2003, p29.

<sup>89</sup> Discussions and e-mails with anonymous Afghan Foreign Ministry official, May 2008.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

## **Vietnamization**

In Vietnam, whilst similar general views about the need for the Vietnamese to take more of a lead were expressed before 1968, this became more pressing in the aftermath of the Tet offensive. Westmoreland was replaced by his deputy at MACV, General Creighton W. Abrams, and back home in the US President Johnson announced that he would not be seeking re-election. It emerged that the two Presidential candidates would be Vice-President Hubert Humphrey for the Democrats and Senator Richard Nixon for the Republicans. Vietnam was inevitably a major issue in the 1968 election campaign and, in a situation that in some respects mirrors the position of the Iraq war in the 2008 US election campaign, both candidates sought to distance themselves from an unpopular war and to find a strategy of disengagement. In particular Nixon spoke about making better use of South Vietnamese forces so that they could gradually replace Americans, and when he was subsequently elected this became a key element of his policy on Vietnam.<sup>91</sup>

In April 1969 Nixon's National Security Advisor, Henry Kissinger, issued National Security Study Memorandum (NSSM) 36 entitled 'Vietnamizing the War'. This gave direction that preparations should be made for a specific timetable for the withdrawal of US troops and for the 'progressive transfer to the South Vietnamese of the fighting effort with the US and other TCCs [troop contributing countries] increasingly in support roles'. The timetable was to begin on 1 July 1969 and examination was to be made of the impact of working towards completion dates ranging from December 1970 to December 1972. It was also quite explicit that this should cover 'all aspects of US military, para-military and civilian involvement in Vietnam'.<sup>92</sup> In fact part of Abrams' assessment when he had taken command the year before had already been that the US should switch the emphasis from major combat operations to greater support for the pacification effort.<sup>93</sup> The Vietnamization instruction, therefore, dovetailed well with this.

Abrams' plan was to link army operations more directly to supporting rural security, and in the process to give the CORDS-led RD Cadres more modern equipment and increase their numbers. From the outset of CORDS Robert Komer had argued that pacification was all about

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<sup>91</sup> Hunt, 1995, pp208-209.

<sup>92</sup> NSSM 36.

<sup>93</sup> Hunt, 1995, p212.

getting the Vietnamese to do more for themselves, and this continued to be part of the ethos of the organisation under Colby. In a briefing given to Abrams by CORDS staff in 1971, in summing up the point was made that, 'Vietnamization in the CORDS context has been going on since the inception of CORDS. In large part the operational support tools have been built into the GVN [Government of South Vietnam]. The various CORDS tools of management have been in a continuous state of transfer to the GVN and this process continues.'<sup>94</sup>

The extent to which the US managed to successfully work alongside the Vietnamese and to eventually conduct a viable transfer, even within the CORDS programme is debatable, but they did at least have a plan and tried to implement it. Right from the start many USAID and Foreign Service officers understood what was required, even if their military colleagues sometimes missed the point. At the end of his tour of duty Thomas J. Barnes, the Province Senior Advisor (PSA) for Binh Long in the South East of the country from August 1967 to August 1968, wrote a memo to the MACCORDS staff giving his thoughts on what he felt had been achieved and what could be improved. He was an ex-military man who had served in the Japanese theatre in WW2 and in Korea, but had been a professional US State Department Foreign Service Officer for twenty three years at this time. In summarising the impact of his period in Binh Long he said that he considered one achievement to be that he had: 'antagonized some American generals and colonels into the realization that they were not fighting the war in a US vacuum.'<sup>95</sup> Critically, he was a man who really understood that his role was to improve the performance of the Vietnamese, not to do their job for them. He went on to emphasise that, 'If I had really been able to accomplish my job, the people would be saying that the [Vietnamese] Province Chief now circulated everywhere, and had become a much better administrator, tactician, and humanitarian than the rather distant and unassuming man that some of them have glimpsed from afar. They would also feel that the government was vigorously pursuing their economic and social interests and defending them from VC incursions ... but such is not the case.'<sup>96</sup> However, he concluded by saying that he was not pessimistic or depressed about his efforts, that some improvements took place, and that a few of them might have stuck.

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<sup>94</sup> Transcript of briefing on Vietnamization to General Abrams by CORDS staff 1971, Vietnam Papers, US AHEC.

<sup>95</sup> Thomas J Barnes, memo to MACCORDS, August 1968, Montague Papers, US AHEC.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

## **An Afghan Lead**

Even without the exhortations of the Nixon administration for Vietnamization, CORDS had developed an understanding that the key to success was to work closely alongside the local institutions, including the RF/PF forces, and to handover the tasks to them wherever possible. This is the same concept invoked by Sterling Deramus' description of working towards the desired end-state for PRTs being 'not to exist', but it does not seem to match what is actually happening on the ground in Afghanistan. There are still some PRTs who feel that they are there to do the work for the local populace, not to assist them to do it themselves. In response to the question, 'How near do you feel the time is when the GIRoA [Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan] would be able to carry out the kind of activities currently being conducted by the PRTs – without your PRT?' one USAID officer could not understand why this question was being asked at all as, in his opinion, 'The GIRoA is not expected to do the work of the PRTs.'<sup>97</sup> This same officer, in response to a question about what might be a workable exit strategy replied that he considered this to be a 'trick question'.<sup>98</sup> However, it is true to say that the majority, of what was admittedly a small sample, recognised the need to hand across to the Afghans, but were not practically doing anything to achieve it and all believed that it would be at least 5 years before they could consider doing so in their province.

Even at the simplest level there are problems and again Sterling Deramus picks up on this in his notes when he says: 'PRTs at a minimum need to understand that the key to developing a stable and prosperous province is to get governance out to the people. PRTs always should be taking government officials with them on trips. A trip alone is not merely a waste of gas, but undermines the legitimate government in place. PRT commanders should understand that they are never to do projects that are not properly coordinated with provincial governmental officials and with the corresponding ministers in the capital.'<sup>99</sup>

One mechanism that has been developed to try to ensure that all reconstruction work that takes place in the country, both through the PRTs and also through centrally coordinated

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<sup>97</sup> Q41 of author's questionnaire.

<sup>98</sup> Q43 of author's questionnaire.

<sup>99</sup> Deramus, 2008.

projects, is the Afghan National Development Strategy (ANDS). This document was produced by the Afghan government in 2008 and looks five years ahead with the aim of reflecting, 'the Government's vision, principles and goals for Afghanistan, building on and in support of commitments to reach the Afghanistan Compact benchmarks and the Afghanistan Millennium Development Goals.'<sup>100</sup> In it the alignment of international assistance with Afghan priorities is enunciated in this way:

'Afghanistan's international partners can contribute to improved aid effectiveness through increased discipline in respecting defined sector ceilings and priority programs, while improving coordination through more extensive information sharing and policy dialogue—both horizontally (across donors and government institutions) and vertically (with PRTs and local governments).'<sup>101</sup>

The ANDS provides a broad-brush strategy, but at provincial level it has been broken down into more practical Provincial Development Plans (PDPs). These PDPs are now supposed to be the basis on which all PRT-led projects are initiated, hence ensuring that it is the Afghan government who are in the lead. However, this does not always occur on the ground and often particular nations, and even individual PRT commanders, have their own agendas. Again, Deramus recognises the key issue when he notes:

'The military R&D effort must remain subordinate to the legitimate government's efforts that we are trying to support. ISAF's PRT mandate is to extend the authority of the legitimate government of Afghanistan. PRTs are not true development actors. They are not trying to "win their hearts and minds" (which is not really possible anyways); we want the government to win the hearts and minds of its citizens, not the military. PRT efforts must be done under the "host" nation's mandate. They must follow the Afghan government's plan for its development.'<sup>102</sup>

It is not difficult to envisage how a more forceful directive, similar to that issued for Vietnamization, might be made to work for Afghanistan. It would need to be implemented over a more protracted timeframe than the two to three years that Nixon specified through NSSM 36, but provided that it was not followed by a frenzied departure from the country altogether, as

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<sup>100</sup> Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS), Executive Summary, 2008-2013, p3.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid, p21.

<sup>102</sup> Deramus, 2008.

happened with the US in Vietnam, then a similar catastrophic result need not occur. Indeed it could prove to be the start of genuine long-term development in Afghanistan. However, with such little Afghan involvement in the ISAF stabilization structure at present, it would require some major changes before the PRTs could play the same role in any such plan as the RD Cadres did in Vietnam.

In fact at the highest level in Kabul there is already a very effective mechanism in place to enable more practical involvement of the Afghan government in directing the work of the PRTs, and that is the PRT Executive Committee (EC). Unfortunately it has so far proved to be totally ineffective. The purpose of the EC is to 'provide guidance for and oversight of all existing and future PRTs in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan'.<sup>103</sup> Included amongst its goals is, 'to develop an exit strategy to enable transition to a civil environment'.<sup>104</sup> The EC is chaired by the GIRoA Minister of the Interior and its members include the Ministers of Finance and Reconstruction and Rural Development, COMISAF (the co-chair), the UN Special Representative, and Ambassadors from PRT contributing nations. This is a powerful and august body – and this may well be part of its problem.

The EC is supposed to meet every two months and report to President Karzai every six months, but in May 2008 it had not sat for over a year now and must be seen as at the very least dormant, if not actually defunct. Trying to get this level of representation together in Kabul is extremely difficult and a lower level body may well have more success, provided that it had the authority to direct the actions of the PRTs. This of course highlights the other problem; the PRT EC, as with all supra-national bodies working with PRTs, can only advise not mandate. The final paragraph of the EC Terms of Reference underlines this when it states that it recognises that PRT commanders can only be expected to follow the 'general intent and spirit' of the document.<sup>105</sup>

Since closer Afghan involvement in stabilization appears to be recognised as the key to a successful exit strategy for PRTs, the lack of action in this area can only point towards the gloomy prospect of coalition troops being on the ground for some considerable time to come.

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<sup>103</sup> ISAF PRT Handbook, Annex B.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.



## **CHAPTER 5 - MEASURING EFFECTIVENESS AND PROGRESS**

### **Perspectives on the Problem**

Many of the criticisms that are made of the PRTs are rebutted by the defence that, whilst they may not be perfect, they are at least making a difference and improving security and living conditions in the outlying areas, often where other agencies cannot reach. Recently Martin Howard, a senior NATO civil servant, expressed the view that 'PRTs are able to establish a stabilizing and reassuring presence in often the more difficult areas because of their military components and are able to contribute to the stabilisation and reconstruction of these areas because of the combined capabilities of their civilian and military components.'<sup>106</sup> It is also fair to say that this is the view of most of those who are participating at the coalface. One PRT USAID representative stated that he had 'no trouble finding useful areas of need in which our provincial and national programming portfolio can assist' and when asked if he felt that his personal concept of the goals/aims of the PRT were being achieved he said, 'I am so pleased with the work that we are doing here that I have extended.'<sup>107</sup>

However, there are some, (especially those within the HNGO community), who deny that PRTs are actually having any positive effects on either the security or the humanitarian situation and would argue that there is no evidence to support the claim that they are. Indeed, there are a few who believe that they have made things worse. Barbara Stapleton, probably one of the more balanced critics, writing only last year had this to say:

'The expansion of PRT numbers and funding has not had a significant impact on the interlinked political and security crises in Afghanistan, which continue to move in a downward trend. The contributions of PRTs to the development needs of Afghanistan, which require a carefully nuanced approach over time and effective oversight, are coming under increasing scrutiny. During the period in which PRT numbers have increased throughout the country, security conditions, particularly in the south west and south east, have deteriorated and national and international assistance actors have increasingly lost access to the rural hinterland. The assumption that reconstruction and

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<sup>106</sup> Martin Howard, NATO Assistant Secretary General for Operations, a presentation given to the JFCB PRT Conference, Maastricht, 14 May 2008.

<sup>107</sup> Q17 and Q19 of author's questionnaire.

development would buy stability in Afghanistan created a chicken and egg situation in which the “egg” of improvements to human security has so far not been laid.’<sup>108</sup>

NATO recognises that there is a need to obtain evidence of progress, not only to defend its actions, but also to try to decide which PRTs should be considered for revision and restructuring or even, if their role is no longer required, wound up. At present HQ ISAF attempts to assess the level of security in each district using a simple colour-coded system, (green, yellow, orange or red), and then averages them up to get the province status. These assessments are based on the commander’s view in the field and are purely subjective – there is no standard hard number measurement attempted. It is recognised that something better than this is required and a great deal of thought is being put into this area, but many are wary of becoming mired in the collection and collation of meaningless data, which in the end can be proven to show anything you want it to.

### **Evaluating the Hamlets**

The US attempts in Vietnam to measure the progress of the war gained an extremely poor reputation, despite the fact that an enormous amount of time and effort was expended to try and get a system that was reliable. Whilst some of this criticism was undoubtedly justified, in many respects the efforts made by the CORDS team was worthy of merit. Computers were just coming into vogue in the mid-1960s and the Hamlet Evaluation System (HES) attempted to make use of their ability to number-crunch large amounts of data. It was originally developed at the request of the Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, and then later revised by CORDS.<sup>109</sup> Komer took a very close personal interest in HES and even long after he left Vietnam was still very defensive of what CORDS did in this area, considering it to be one of the great achievements of the programme. Looking back in 1971 he said this of the HES:

‘In fact, the most controversial of the pacification measurement systems — the HES, initiated in January 1967 — was designed specifically to overcome the flaws inherent in previous, more subjective efforts to assess what was really happening in the

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<sup>108</sup> Stapleton, 2007, p47.

<sup>109</sup> *Item For weekly Telegram*, dated 18 Sep 1967, Montague Papers, US AHEC.

countryside. These consisted of largely narrative reports based on Vietnamese sources that had proved consistently over optimistic.<sup>110</sup>

Komer's description of the HES as controversial reflects the fact that it was viewed by some as being part of the wider attempts by the establishment to show how successful they were being in prosecuting the war. Ironically, despite being designed to support the very different strategy of pacification, HES became seen as another propaganda tool for those who argued that winning conventional battles against the enemy would eventually result in victory. As Vietnam dragged on, the view at home in the US became increasingly that Westmoreland's attritional strategy and his efforts to reach what he described as the crossover point, (the point at which the enemy were taking more casualties than they could replace), were not only proving to be unacceptably costly in American lives, but also unlikely to ever be successful.<sup>111</sup> Whilst many attempts were made to prove otherwise and to find ways of measuring the claimed success, the most unpalatable manifestation of this was that was used by many of the advocates for the attritional approach - the now infamous body count. Lewis Sorley suggests that, 'body count may have been the most corrupt – and corrupting – measure of progress in the whole mess.' He goes on to quote typical comments of senior generals who commanded in Vietnam who describe the body count system as 'a fake – totally worthless' and 'a blot on the honor of the Army'.<sup>112</sup>

This bad experience of the use of metrics to assess progress by the US in Vietnam is often in the back of senior officers' minds even today when considering this issue. However, not everything that was done with metrics at that time should be considered as worthless or tainted in the same way. HES had its own faults, but it was at least an attempt to get away from the body count mentality that insisted on linking progress in achieving stability and security with killing enemy insurgents, and it did achieve this.

HES looked at two separate areas - the state of security and the political situation. About twenty different subjects were covered, and detailed questions were asked on such

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<sup>110</sup> Robert Komer, *Impact of Pacification on Insurgency in South Vietnam*, *Journal of International Affairs* 25 (1971), pp48-69.

<sup>111</sup> Krepinevich, 1986, p198.

<sup>112</sup> Sorley, 1999, pp21-22.

diverse topics as contact with enemy forces, population movement into and out of the hamlet, school attendance and the ownership of TV sets. All of these had to be evaluated by the staff and given a numerical score, and then were aggregated up by the computer using complex formulae to produce an overall value which determined the security category, or HES Rating, for that village. Appendix 6 shows the schematic used in a briefing in January 1971 to explain how the revised system of aggregation worked. The HES ratings ranged from A (top grade) to E (the lowest grade above total VC control) with A, B and C grades often being lumped together and referred to as the 'secure hamlets' and D and E being referred to as being in the 'contested' category.<sup>113</sup> In this way, it was believed, progress could be measured village by village and district by district across the country.

One distinct downside of the system was that, in order to obtain the necessary level of data that HES required, district staff had to spend a disproportionately high amount of their time filling in forms. This often required making assessments of almost un-measurable factors, which then later appeared in a spreadsheet or briefing chart as apparently objective assessments of security. Every month the District Senior Advisor (DSA) would have to evaluate the answers to a huge number of detailed questions and then enter them on special ledger cards held for each village and hamlet. Examples of the question sets for Enemy Presence and for Public Health are shown in Appendix 7, and from these it can be seen how detailed the questions were and also how the DSA was required to make definitive judgements, often concerning things that he really could have no genuine knowledge of.

In November 1968 MACCORDS Operational and Analysis Division issued the Revised Hamlet Evaluation System (RHES) Handbook that was intended to act as 'a ready reference serving as the basic guidance for accomplishing the monthly RHES report.'<sup>114</sup> As well as containing the RHES questionnaire that was required to be completed, it also gave helpful advice as to how a busy DSA might carry out this extremely manpower-intensive task, including the following advice: 'It is recommended that the DSA, as well as members of his team, carry the RHES handbook and appropriate ledger cards during routine visits to hamlets and villages in the district so that collection of required information becomes a regular part of advisory

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<sup>113</sup> *Item For weekly Telegram*, 18 Sep 1967, AHEC.

<sup>114</sup> RHES Handbook, November 1968, US AHEC, p7.

activity during the month.<sup>115</sup> This makes it all seem very simple; however, the truth was that it was anything but. Eric Bergerud quotes one DSA, Richard O'Hare, who worked in Duc Hue district and who recalled: 'The reporting mechanism was something of a joke. I was supposed to visit every hamlet every month. I was also on operations with the RF/PF nearly every day. You couldn't do them both. So, sometimes I visited the hamlets, sometimes I didn't. Aside from that, it was bookkeeping, and nobody liked to do it.'<sup>116</sup> As a result, inevitably, unreliable data was sometimes entered.

Accuracy of reporting was always an issue with any of the statistical approaches taken. One of the biggest criticisms of the body count measurement system, (apart from the fact that it didn't actually give any indication of real success in the campaign), was that it was particularly prone to falsification as a high enemy body count was often linked to positive personnel assessments and promotions for commanders. Whilst nowhere near as bad, HES still had certain problems in this area which could lead to unreliable results. As well as DSAs entering incorrect answers, another problem was that there was a close connection between the security status awarded to a hamlet and the amount of money that was available for its development. In July 1967 Richard Holbrooke, then working as a member of Komer's staff, explained in a memo how this could create circumstances in which province chiefs, in order to obtain extra funds, would, 're-classify hundreds of hamlets from "completed" back down to such arbitrary and meaningless levels as "being consolidated", "undergoing reconstruction" etc.'<sup>117</sup>

Overall, the system had both benefits and drawbacks and these are well summed up by a quote from a book by David Elliot in Kalyvas' and Kocher's analytical paper on the HES:<sup>118</sup>

'One of the paradoxes of the HES is that as its designers sought less subjectivity, they also increasingly attempted to measure more subtle indicators of "progress" in the complex struggle...By attempting to take the judgments out of the hands of the district advisors, who were closest to the scene, the HES managers in Saigon and Washington also created an ever-widening gap between the local reality and what came out of the computers at the other end...Despite the fact that they

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid, p8.

<sup>116</sup> Eric M. Bergerud, *The Dynamics of Defeat – The Vietnam War in Hau Nghia Province*, 1991, p279.

<sup>117</sup> Richard Holbrooke, *The Need for Longer-Range Pacification Planning*, memo to Komer and Leonhart, 12 July 1967, Montague Papers, US AHEC.

<sup>118</sup> Kalyvas and Kocher, *Violence and Control in Civil War: An Analysis of the Hamlet Evaluation System (HES)*, August 2003, p4.

themselves often did not know the exact situation in many of the areas in their jurisdiction, they certainly knew where they were most likely to be shot at.’<sup>119</sup>

However, on the whole HES was as accurate as could be expected in the circumstances and generated a reasonable set of data about the situation in the countryside, (albeit perhaps through a clumsy and potentially erratic entry mechanism), and it allowed sophisticated analysis of the trends in the pacification situation to be carried out. The real problem was that the data was often used in ways for which not originally intended. The MACCORDS monthly briefing reports, which went into a huge amount of detail especially regarding HES data, had an extraordinarily high level circulation; the September 1968 report from COMUSMACV to CINCPAC for example had nearly seventy information copies distributed to, amongst others, the Joint Chiefs, the Pentagon, the State Department and the CIA.<sup>120</sup>

Komer was always irritated that, particularly back in Washington, HES results were used as a method by which those who knew nothing about the reality of the situation could drill down into the data in an attempt to discover information on a particular village, district or province a certain point in time. If any inaccuracies were found, as was always likely given the difficulties of data collection as described, then those who did not like what was being reported could easily decry the whole system. Komer was adamant that producing answers to such questions was not what HES was supposed to be about, but rather that the statistics should be used as indicators of trends. To illustrate this he used the comment that someone had made that with Vietnam the press always looked at the bottle as half empty, whilst the establishment saw it as half full; his view was that this missed the point and what actually mattered was whether it was filling up or emptying. His contention was that this was precisely what HES allowed you to judge.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> David Elliott, *The Vietnamese War: Revolution and Social Change in the Mekong Delta 1930 – 1975*, 2003, pp858-859.

<sup>120</sup> MACCORDS Report, *Pacification In Vietnam During September 1968*, 5 November 1968, Vietnam Papers, US AHEC.

<sup>121</sup> Scoville interview with Komer, 1969, AHEC, pp341-346.

## **ISAF's Approach to Metrics**

Whilst nothing like the time and effort that went into developing the HES in Vietnam has yet been put into looking at the question of measuring progress in Afghanistan, the need for some form of assessment is clearly recognised within ISAF, and work is being undertaken to find a method by which to do so. It is seen as essential that something is done in this area if criticisms over the effectiveness of the PRTs are to be properly addressed. Even more importantly, it is also seen as being a critical part of the process by which an exit strategy for PRTs can be properly discussed – ie at what point can the job be considered to have been completed and a PRT then withdrawn? This essentially gives two distinct aspects that need to be able to be measured – effectiveness and progress.

The need for the former was clearly enunciated by Ingrid MacDonald of the Norwegian Refugee Council at the JFCB Conference, where she made the following recommendation:

‘PRTs should ensure proper, continuous and independent evaluations of the impact and effectiveness of their projects in meeting stated objectives. A common and consistent system is required across all PRTs, with nation state control being limited as much as possible. These systems should include needs assessments against best practice development standards and guidelines and conflict analysis tools, as well as the application of do no harm and last resort principles. Accountability and transparency in application is key, there is no use in having systems if they aren't implemented on the ground. PRTs should reduce the use of private for profit contractors to undertake development aid activities.’<sup>122</sup>

Interestingly the issue of progress, whilst being one which is much more of direct concern to the troop contributing nations of ISAF, is also well articulated by an HNGO. In a draft paper on the subject of civil-military relations in Afghanistan, Marit Glad, the Advocacy Coordinator of CARE International in Afghanistan, talks about the need for ISAF to elaborate on its indicators for withdrawal. She says, specifically: ‘Across all PRTs in Afghanistan there should be consistent criteria and indicators for evaluating when PRTs should remain or withdraw. Transition strategies should also be included to ensure that government and civilian actors are able to fill the gap.’<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Ingrid MacDonald, 14 May 2008.

<sup>123</sup> Marit Glad, *An NGO perspective on Civil-Military Relations in Afghanistan*, a draft paper, 2008.

This is almost an identical issue to that which is being addressed within HQ ISAF itself at the moment, although so far no results have been made public. DCOMISAF, Lt Gen Jonathan Riley, has been considering the relationship between Reconstruction & Development (R&D) spending and security in a study entitled 'A Data Analysis of What the PRTs are Doing and What They Ought to be Doing'.<sup>124</sup> The study attempts to map levels of spending against levels of security on a province by province basis to see if there is any correlation, and it also looks at the correlation between security and governance. The obvious problem with this is that you immediately come up against the circular argument that requires you first to be able to have some meaningful way of measuring security before you can see if PRTs are contributing to it – which was the reason for conducting the study in the first place. In the end HQ ISAF have used the fairly loose four-colour coded system described earlier as the basis for assessing the security factor, and the governance assessment is based on an even more subjective view given by the field commanders. Perhaps not surprisingly this very basic analysis did not produce any statistically significant results, (except the obvious one that security and governance are closely linked), but it does indicate that ISAF is starting to recognise the need for more complex statistical analysis of some kind. Clearly there needs to be a more functional way to measure both effectiveness and progress than the simple methods used in DCOMISAF's study, possibly using data gathered more along the lines of the HES used by CORDS - a system with a sound conceptual basis, even if the actual implementation and interpretation of it later caused problems.

On the second day of the NATO PRT Conference in Maastricht a workshop was held, part of which addressed the subject of metrics and monitoring impact and which produced some interesting results. So far no officially published outcome from this workshop has yet been produced for high level discussion, let alone endorsed as policy. Six separate syndicates met under Chatham House rules to look at a variety of PRT related questions, but one in particular dealt with metrics and actually addressed certain aspects of both effectiveness and progress. This question was posed to a specially selected syndicate, which comprised a very wide group of actors involved in all aspects of PRT operations, including an Afghan minister, several senior

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<sup>124</sup> An early draft copy of the study results was given to the author by Lt Gen General Riley on 15 May 2008.

NATO staff, a few diplomatic staff from coalition nations and some current and past PRT personnel. The question asked, 'What broad criteria should be developed in monitoring and developing PRT impact?' The recommendations that were presented to the plenary session and which were taken away for consideration and further action by HQ JFCB were as follows:

1. Broad criteria assessed as:
  - What stage are lead nations able to civilianize/dissolve PRTs?
  - What stage is responsibility for Security transferred to ANSF?
  - The degree to which PRTs are developing capacity at the local level.
2. Criteria need to be based on implementation of the Provincial Development Plan.
3. Measures of impact:
  - Are the PRTs coordinating with all the right agencies and the degree of coordination between national and local level?
  - Facilitation of coordination.
  - Assessment in terms of problem solving.

Whilst on the face of it, these do not seem to be great in-depth contributions to the exceptionally difficult problems of measuring effectiveness and progress, in fact they do indicate a major shift in thinking in two areas. The first is that the mere fact that there was consensus on the whole subject of how an approach should be made to deriving criteria for transition and withdrawal goes a long way to meet Marit Glad's issue with ISAF needing to elaborate consistent criteria and indicators for withdrawal 'across all PRTs'.

The second is hidden in the somewhat bland bullets for point 3, 'Measures of impact'. In fact the syndicate dialogue was much more detailed than the final presentation slide suggests. In normal circumstances this diluted report of the discussion would mean that any worth that had been obtained in syndicate would simply be lost in the bureaucracy of the follow up work; however, it may just be that this time this will not be the case. One of those in the syndicate who was most innovative and most vocal, (and who was happy to be named), was Major General (MG) Daniel A. Hahn of the US Army and the current Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations at HQ JFCB. MG Hahn made the point that ISAF should be measuring the success of a PRT in output terms for its province, not in achievements or milestones for the PRT itself. The Afghan National Development Strategy (ANDS) is implemented at province level as a Provincial Development Plan (PDP) and he suggested that it should be from this that PRT goals

are set. It would then be against the delivery of these goals that the effectiveness of a PRT would be measured using some form of HES style assessment mechanism, (although preferably with much simpler questions for field staff to interpret and with a more user-friendly method of entering the data than HES used).

MG Hahn's unrefined first thoughts were that detailed measures of effectiveness should be based around the broad themes of the PRT's ability to coordinate local actors, to facilitate the government's ability to implement the PDP and to practically solve problems on the ground. If his ideas were to be taken forward and developed into something that truly measured the effectiveness of a PRT in terms of its meeting its commitments to the provincial government, instead of just the number of schools opened in their area, or the number of policemen that have been issued with new uniforms, then some genuine progress might actually be achieved in this area. It would not directly address Ingrid MacDonald's specific concerns about the quality of projects that PRTs deliver, but it would indirectly solve some of her issues by potentially taking PRTs out of the business of delivering aid altogether and into the area where they more properly belong, that of Security Sector Reform and the provision of security for the government to start its own development projects that can be properly managed by themselves on a long-term, self-sustaining, basis.

Whether or not this happens remains to be seen, but it is a sign that at least some senior officers in NATO are thinking more laterally. All of this is assuming that the degree of consensus that was briefly achieved by a limited representation from the PRT community around a table in Maastricht can be replicated again at the higher level. One thing that comes out of both the CORDS HES experience, and the Maastricht debate on the subject, is that measurements of progress need to be derived from movement towards a desired end-state, and that end-state needs to be carefully defined.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

### **Issues With ISAF**

The overarching question that was posed at the beginning of the dissertation was in two parts: first, how is ISAF approaching the problem of integrating the military, political and development strands of the PRTs in Afghanistan; and second, how, if at all, can the US experience of pacification in Vietnam inform NATO's attempts to tackle this problem?

From the perspective of the research carried out for the study, the problems that NATO is facing with regards the integration of the PRTs may perhaps be expressed in the form of the following requirements:

- To establish a chain of command that is capable of directing the work of the PRTs within the totality of a COIN campaign, (both the political and military elements), and delivering an integrated, '100%' solution.
- To achieve a coordinated and structured approach to managing PRTs that allows sufficient flexibility to meet national and local requirements, and yet remains consistent across the theatre of operations .
- To create a coherent and mandatory set of goals for the PRTs, which are focussed not on contributing nations' agendas, but on the wider needs of the Afghan government, and which are directed primarily towards security focussed issues.
- To develop a set of criteria by which PRTs can be objectively assessed as to their progress towards their goals, and the ultimate aim of their own departure.

### **The Significance of Komer and CORDS**

The answer to the second part of the question - to identify which enduring lessons from CORDS may safely and usefully be drawn forward into the present day conflict in Afghanistan - has emerged from the detailed look at the Vietnam campaign, and how Robert Komer approached the task of delivering an effective pacification programme there. It has been established that whilst the precise nature of the conflicts and the enemies faced may differ, the problems that the US confronted in Vietnam in 1965 and those being addressed by NATO in Afghanistan in 2008, are very similar in many ways.

In the aftermath of a war that was by its end widely seen in the US as flawed, both in terms of the moral justification of America's involvement and its execution, and which took over 58,000 American lives,<sup>125</sup> the overwhelming reaction even amongst the establishment was to reject anything associated with it. However, in recent years, particularly since the invasion of Iraq, America has rediscovered COIN theory and has come to recognise that not all aspects of the Vietnam War were a disaster, and that some successes were achieved there. Pacification may be considered as one of those successes, and for this reason Robert Komer's assessment of the situation whilst he was in Washington, and his subsequent implementation of the CORDS programme when in Vietnam, is of relevance to the problems facing coalition forces in Afghanistan.

### **Putting It Into Practice**

Each of the requirements previously identified as facing ISAF in Afghanistan can be examined to consider what the relevant aspects of CORDS are which might apply to them. Taking them one at a time:

Establishing an effective chain of command. In the 'governing concepts' that Komer briefed to Westmoreland he listed three things that he believed had to exist at every level of from Saigon down to district for a successful pacification structure.<sup>126</sup> These were:

- A single Chain of Command.
- Integrated civil/military planning, programming, operations, evaluations, logistics and communications.
- One voice speaking with the Vietnamese.

It is essential that similar principles are established by NATO in Afghanistan if ISAF is going to begin to drive the totality of the campaign. In Kabul there must be a single HQ giving joined-up, coherent orders to all PRTs - both the civil and the military sides. The issues of national caveats and national agendas must be resolved out of theatre at Brunssum or SHAPE. In HQ

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<sup>125</sup> Figures taken from DOD, SIAD website.

<sup>126</sup> Footnote 39 refers.

ISAF there needs to be a coalition civil/military structure similar in scope to MACCORDS, headed by a civilian NATO Ambassador in charge of stabilization, working to COMISAF and with full powers of command.

Achieving a flexible and coherent management structure. Komer managed to achieve the situation whereby MACCORDS laid down the framework within which each Province Senior Advisor must operate, but then left the detailed organisation to them to meet their specific local needs. NATO needs to create a similar situation for its troop contributing nations to operate within. If ISAF can specify a rigid framework that lays down minimum requirements, then within those boundaries nations can design and deliver PRTs to meet their own constraints and aspirations, and which are also tailored to the situation in each province. This can only be done if NATO is prepared to mandate, and then enforce, the guidelines that already exist in the PRT handbook. The consequences of doing so may well be that a number of nations would find themselves unable, or unwilling, to comply and would withdraw their PRTs, which may create some problems at first. However, the consequences of not doing this may quite possibly be a gradual, but inevitable, failure in Afghanistan. If the mission in Afghanistan is as important for NATO's future as many commentators believe that it is, then a lack of success in this enterprise may present the alliance with an even greater problem longer-term.<sup>127</sup>

Creating common, Afghan-focussed goals. CORDS always saw their role as assisting the Vietnamese to do the work but not doing the job for them, and the purely local nature of the RD Cadres, and the advisory role of CORDS staff at province and district level, supported this. However, NSSM 36 and the specific instruction to develop a timetable for Vietnamization made this guiding principle an obligatory White House directive. Retrospectively perhaps the tone of NSSM 36 as written by Kissinger reads as more one of abandonment and withdrawal than one of a positive, gradual transfer of tasks. However, the concept of drawing up a plan, mandating it and then monitoring its progress is still one that could usefully be employed by ISAF. PRTs should be directed to recruit more local staff into senior positions, (as most HNGOs and IOs

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<sup>127</sup> Paul Gallis, *NATO in Afghanistan: A Test of the Transatlantic Alliance*, CRS Report for Congress, updated 6 May 2008, p1 & p27.

already do), and ISAF should involve Afghan officials in their planning from national level in the PRT EC, right down to district level. In addition, the advisory nature of the guidance on the use of the PDPs when developing PRT plans should be made mandatory. Closer links with UNAMA, and where possible HNGOs themselves, would also help. Goals could then be developed that are based on the Afghan government's overall plan, (not just on a contributing nation's own agenda), and that are also consistent with the security-based nature of the PRTs, steering them away from humanitarian projects.

Developing an objective assessment scheme. CORDS strove to find a rigorous, analytical evaluation system which allowed them to make judgements based on something more scientific than the earlier, unreliable, subjective judgements of local advisors. Unfortunately in the process they probably made the HES too complicated for advisors to use in the field, and it eventually proved to be too remote from the reality of the situation on the ground to be of any real use. ISAF now finds itself in the similar position of needing a mechanism that provides more useful and objective results than the current intuitive reporting and self-assessment that is provided by PRT commanders. The lesson from CORDS' use of the HES is that a balance needs to be struck between the two extremes of absolute objectivity and subjectivity, and it must be accepted that a practical system has to contain elements of both. The focus of the assessment needs to be kept on how the PRT is delivering against the goals that have been set for it, which should be based on empowerment of the local government. MG Hahn's initial thoughts on how this might be achieved seem to show a great deal of promise and should be followed up by JFCB.

### **Coalitions and COIN**

When examining the stabilization situation in Afghanistan today and how ISAF is running the PRTs, and then comparing this with the way in which Robert Komer set about tackling similar issues in Vietnam, one differential factor continually comes up. Komer was dealing with a single nation's divisions amongst its own organisations, whilst ISAF is now led by a multi-national alliance and coalition operations are an order of magnitude more complex. The US did

eventually learn the lessons of how to manage their internal divisions in Vietnam, and as a result finally began to see real progress in 1968/69, however, by then it was too late and the public and political will to see it through was gone. The question is, even if NATO were to accept the validity of the premise that some of the CORDS' enduring principles are applicable to the situation in Afghanistan, is it simply too multifaceted an organisation to be able to implement them? Does the need for consensus and agreement within NATO, (which is essentially a military alliance), automatically preclude making the hard political decisions necessary to implement a single chain of command, with coherent structures aiming towards non-partisan goals? Based primarily on the very narrow evidence of what was seen and discussed at the NATO PRT Conference in Maastricht, the answer would seem to be yes.

If that is the case, it may be that NATO cannot wholly be held to blame. It is possible that no alliance, (except perhaps a loose coalition composed of a few supporting allies under the dominance of a single lead nation), can ever be successful in a counterinsurgency campaign, which by its nature requires strong political direction. This is a bold conclusion to arrive at based on the research carried out for this dissertation alone; however, it does have a ring of truth to it, and is surely worthy of more serious consideration.

### **Further Study**

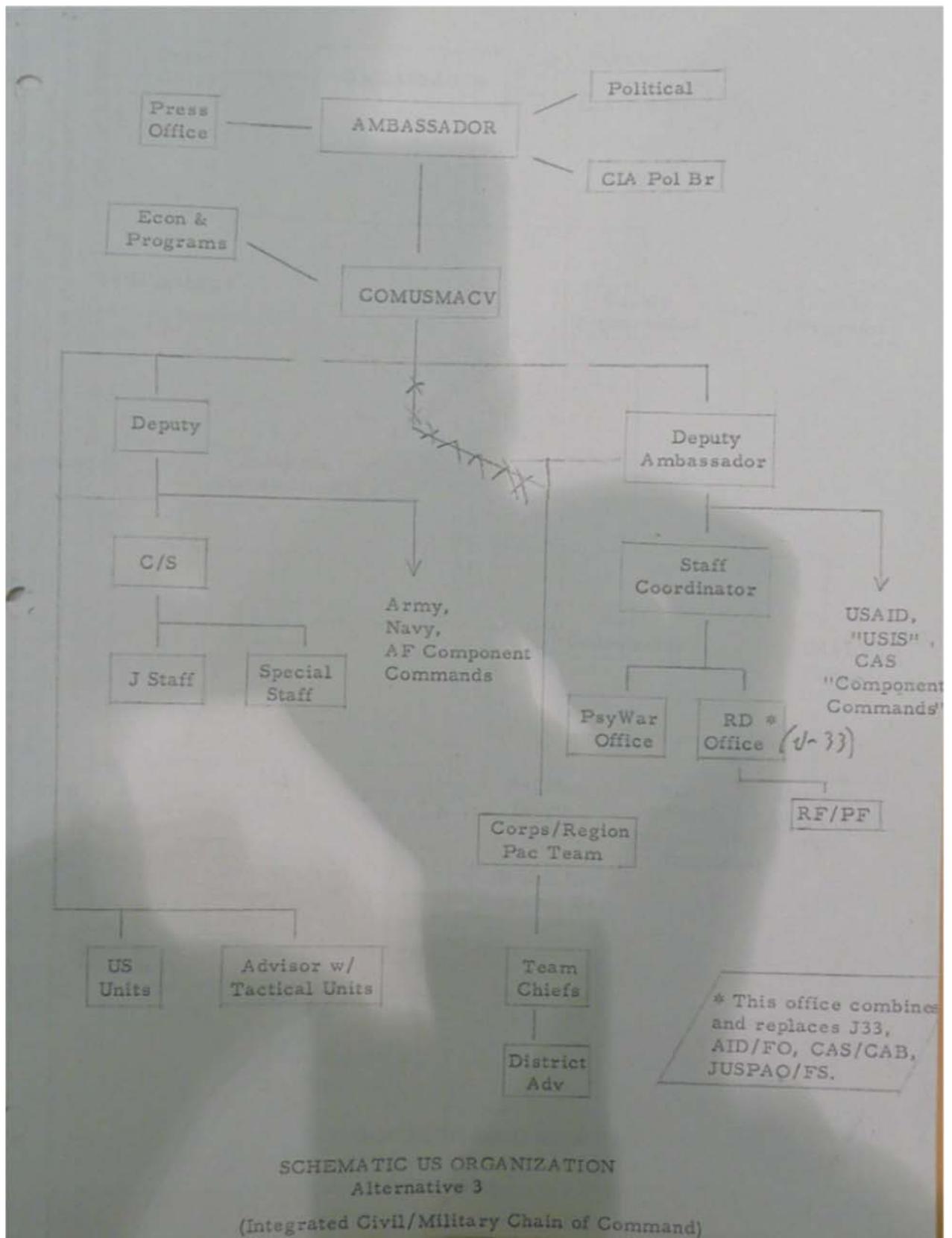
As identified above, there are two key issues that remain undetermined at the end of this thesis and that would benefit from further study. The first is whether or not NATO accepts this assessment of the current problems facing it in Afghanistan, and even if they do, are they willing or able to tackle them using the lessons identified from CORDS? To fully explore this requires more than just attendance at a two day conference, and needs some considerable time to be spent getting deeper into the heart of NATO and asking more detailed questions of the decision makers there. Additionally it is known that HQ ISAF itself, (Lt Gen Riley specifically), is currently conducting an internal review of the future of PRTs within Afghanistan and when the results of that are made available closer discussions with HQ ISAF would also be of value.

The second question is the wider one of the capability of broad military alliances, in which members all are likely to have differing views on any one campaign, to conduct politically

driven operations such as COIN campaigns. This is a more philosophical question and would require a serious study of both the nature of COIN operations and also the nature of complex alliances. However, the results would be of great interest to anyone concerned about the future of military intervention in world affairs.

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Appendix 1



Alternative 3, an attachment to 'Giving a New Thrust to Pacification' Draft 3 – a memo by Robert Komer dated 7 August 1966, John Paul Vann Papers, US AHEC.

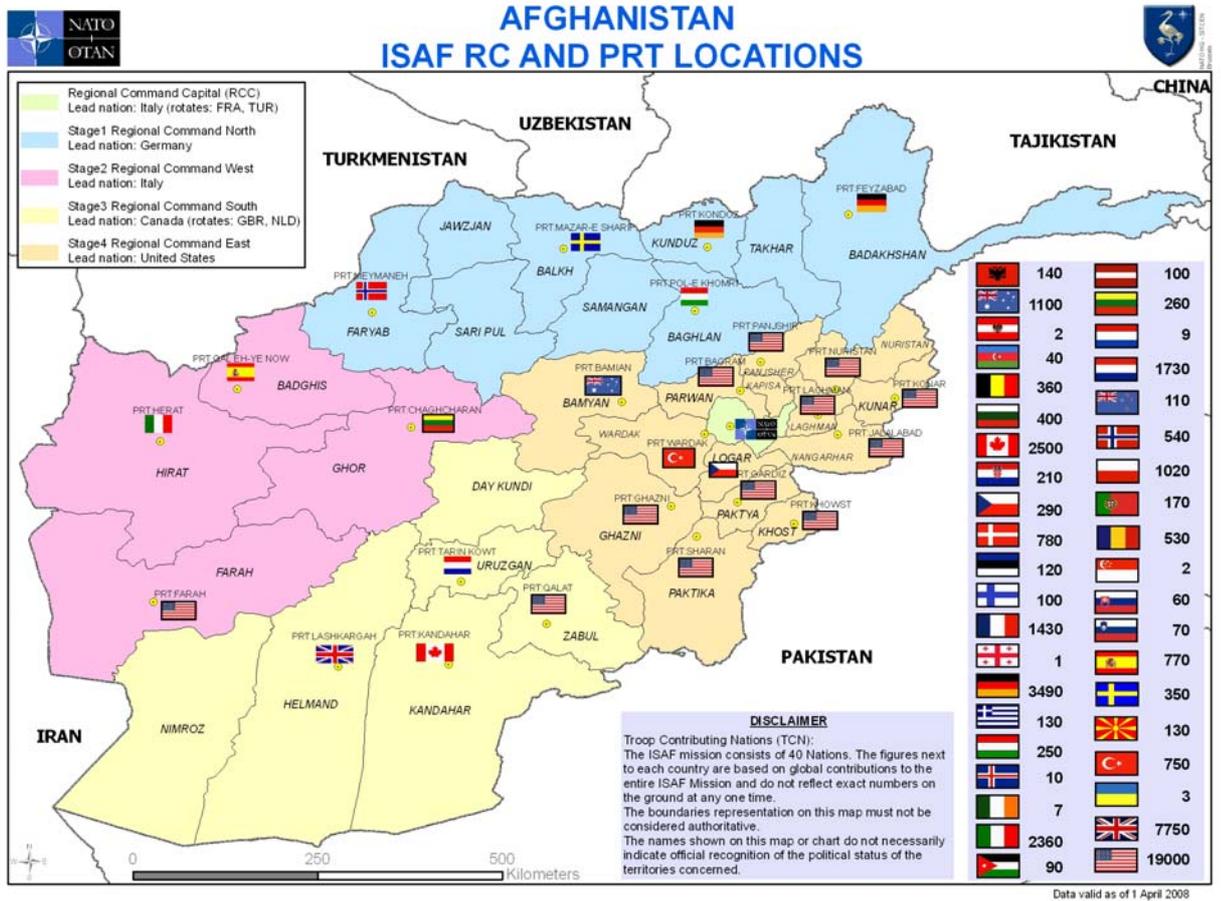
**Appendix 2**



Base 802827AI (C00240) 9-01

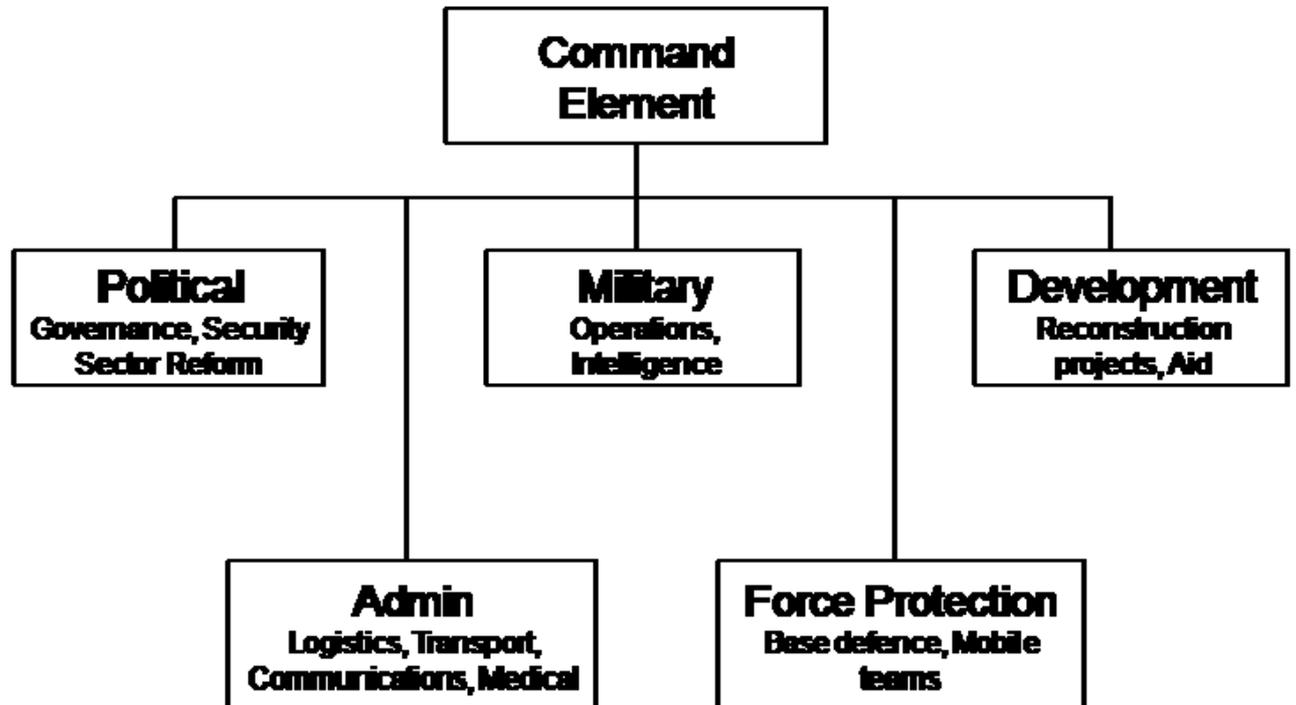
Map showing the locations of the original 6 PRTs, in relation to Kabul.

**Appendix 3**



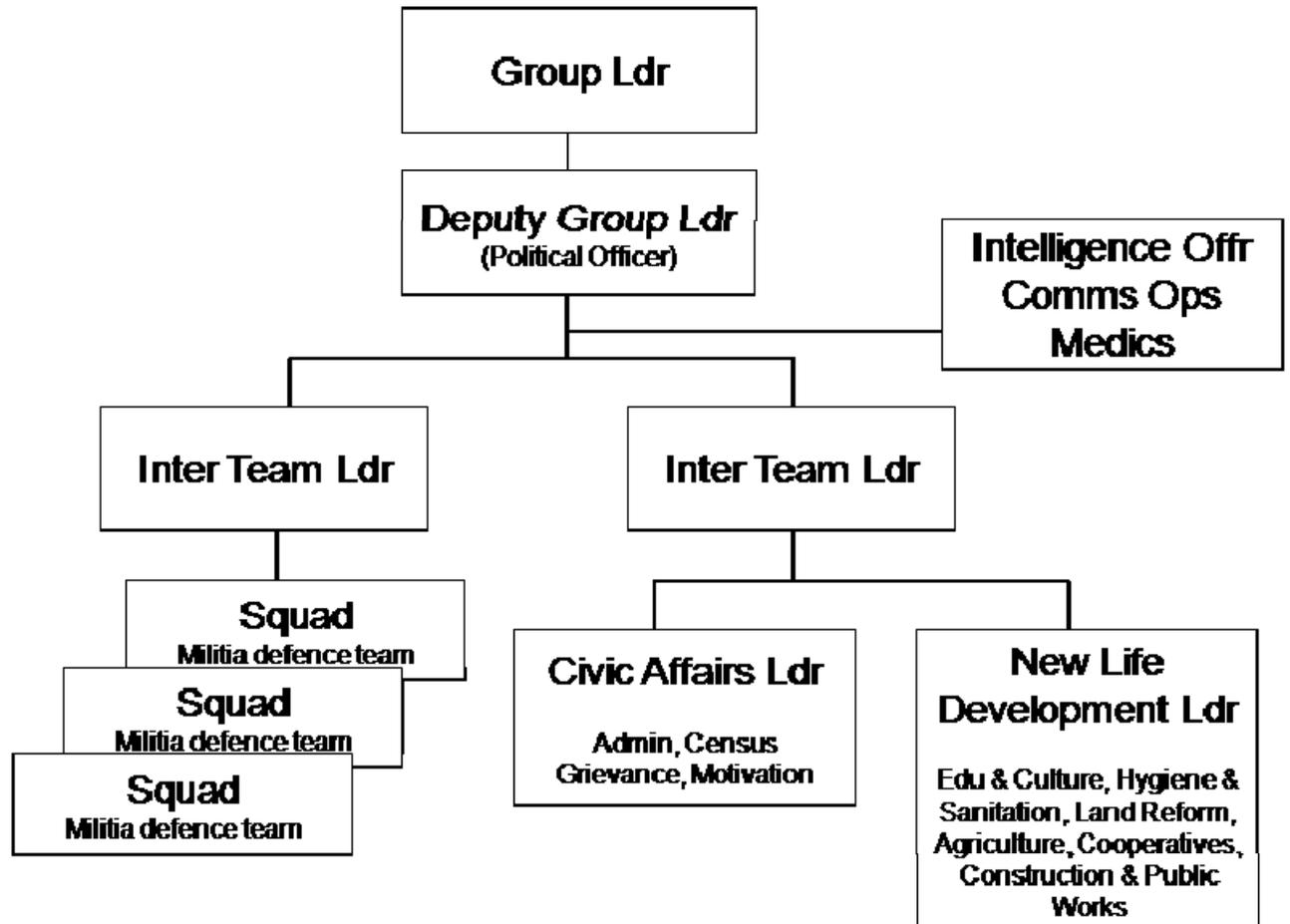
NATO map showing PRT locations and lead nations, plus total troop contributions to ISAF, (including non-PRT units) as at 1 April 2008 (<<http://www.nato.int/multi/map-afghanistan.htm>> accessed 1 July 2008).

Appendix 4



Basic PRT Structure

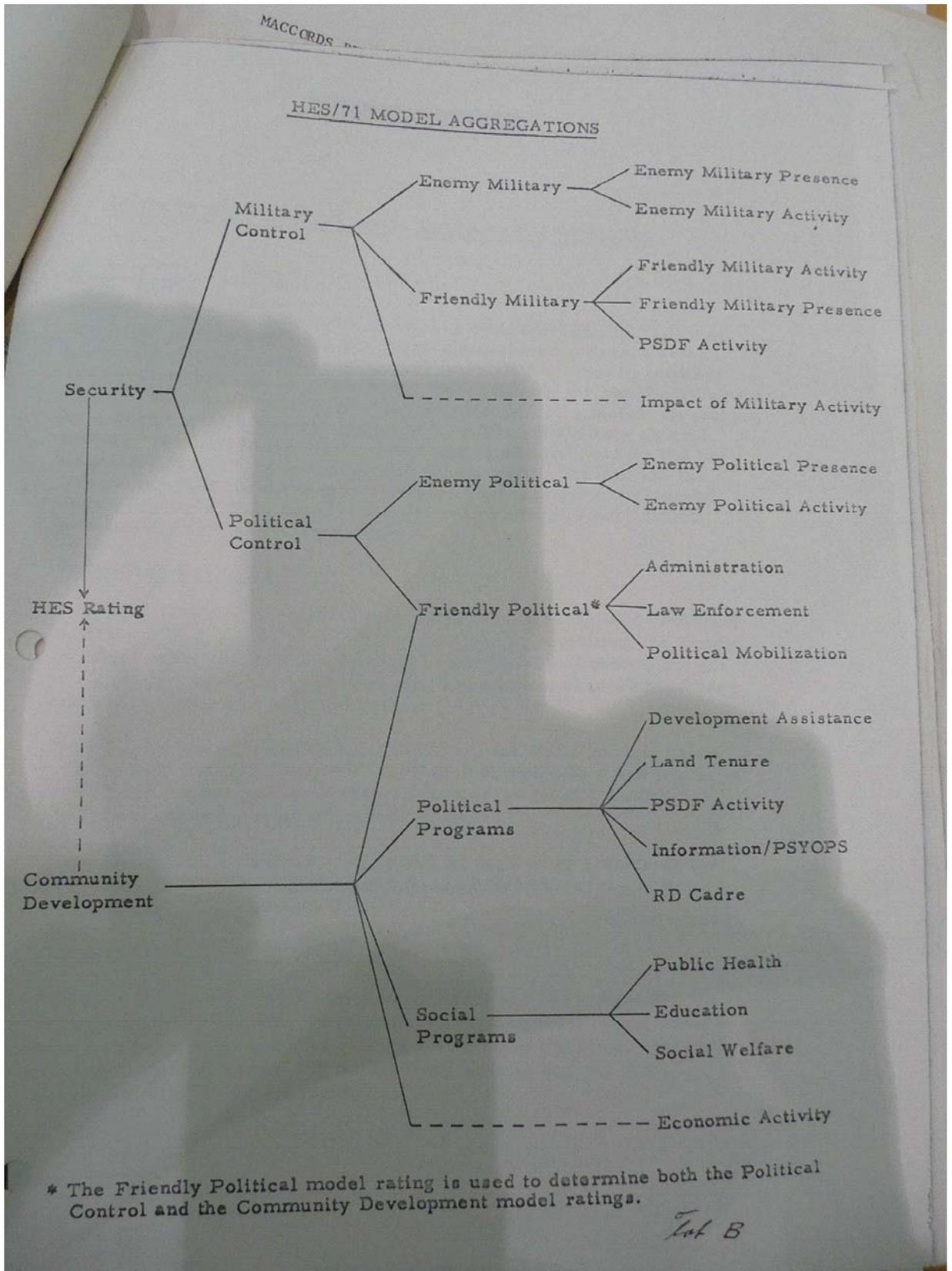
Appendix 5



Organization of a typical 59-man RD Cadre.

From MACCORDS briefing 29 June 1967, US AHEC)

**Appendix 6**



HES/71 Model Aggregations. From a letter by BG Forrester, Deputy ACofS, CORDS, entitled Changes in the HES for 1971, 20 Jan 1971, AHEC.

## Appendix 7

C.2.1

Village Level

**B. ENEMY PRESENCE**

1. Does an enemy Liberation Committee exist in this village?
  0. No
  1. Yes, mode of selection unknown
  2. Yes, appointed
  3. Yes, elected
  9. Unknown
  
2. Which of the following most closely reflects the activity of the Village Liberation Committee?
  0. Believed inactive
  1. Sporadic covert activity, little or no overt activity
  2. Regular covert activity, sporadic overt activity
  3. Regular overt activity, but not firmly established
  4. Unchallenged authority in the village
  8. Not applicable, no Liberation Committee
  9. Unknown/unable to judge

C.2.7

Village Level

**P. PUBLIC HEALTH**

1. Does a GVN-sponsored health technician maintain a public health station (dispensary) in this village?
  0. No
  1. Yes, part time
  2. Yes, full time
  
2. Are activities of the GVN village health technician impeded by lack of medical supplies?
  0. No
  1. Yes, occasionally
  2. Yes, frequently
  
3. Does a midwife operate a GVN sanctioned maternity clinic or dispensary in this village?
  0. No
  1. Yes, but inadequate relative to local birth rate
  2. Yes, adequate
  
4. Is a hospital (or a private physician practicing western medicine) located in this village?
  0. No
  1. Yes

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### Presentations

Martin Howard, NATO Assistant Secretary General for Operations, a presentation given to the JFCB PRT Conference, Maastricht, 14 May 2008.

Ingrid MacDonald, *Challenges and Ways Forward for PRTs in Afghanistan – an NGO perspective*, a presentation given to the JFCB PRT Conference, Maastricht, 14 May 2008.

General Egon Ramms, Commander NATO Joint Force Command Brunssum (JFCB), a presentation given to the JFCB PRT Conference, Maastricht, 14 May 2008.

### Other Sources

Questionnaire prepared by the author and circulated to all military and civilian heads of PRTs through HQ ISAF in May 2008. Comprised forty-five questions. Only eight responses received.

Discussions and subsequent exchange of e-mails with a middle-ranking member of the Afghan Foreign Ministry serving in a diplomatic post abroad, (this individual asked to remain anonymous).