

Company Level Tactical Intelligence and Targeting

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Introduction

Infantry rifle companies on operations today are increasingly likely to find themselves operating independently and in isolation from the traditional brigade and battle group context for which they normally prepare. Depending on the role and terrain, this can present significant challenges in terms of resources, mission command and operational design. No 1 Company 1st Battalion Coldstream Guards found itself in such a position during Operation HERRICK¹ 7 in the role of Kabul Patrols Company operating from Camp Souter (STR). With a very different mission and environment from Task Force Helmand (TFH) the Company had the role of ensuring the security of the UK base and all force elements and dependants in the capital. It was also the operations company for the Multinational Regional Command-Capital (RC-C) in the city, with few other International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) elements able to operate in their mandated Areas of Operation (AOs)². Tasks ranged from the expected intelligence-led Counterinsurgency (COIN) operations in the city to providing Quick Reaction Force (QRF) and deliberate support to UK and allied specialist agencies and other government departments.

In direct support of these tasks No. 1 Company had an intelligence cell responsible for fusing products from allies and agencies to produce the tactical J2 and situational awareness picture for the city of Kabul and much of the Northern Afghanistan AO on behalf of all UK force elements in the city.

Having prepared rigorously for the Battle Group Centre role in Gereshk³ we were re-tasked and had three weeks to re-orientate to urban skills and attempt to understand the cultural and contextual differences between Kabul and Helmand. At this point we had no tactical or intelligence picture other than that gleaned from a 2-day theatre reconnaissance. The lessons learned during the deployment drove the development of the tactics, techniques and procedures as well as processes described here. Although shaped by the Kabul patrols role, it is hoped these lessons will be of use to company commanders elsewhere.

Evolution

There has been much thought about the contemporary operating environment and how best to meet its challenges. Much of this maps our institutional memory (or amnesia) from COIN and Peace Enforcement operations in the Balkans, Northern Ireland and Malaya against the new myriad of cultural, political, legal and military challenges. Concepts such as '3 block war'⁴, Fourth Generation War⁵ and the Comprehensive Approach⁶ are now familiar terms in

¹ Operation HERRICK is the name for all British operations in Afghanistan since 2002.

² Other troop contributing nations found their forces fixed in FOBs outside the city, or restricted by national caveats.

³ A town in Helmand province in central Afghanistan,

⁴ USMC General Charles Krulak's description of coterminous warfighting, PSO and Humanitarian operations.

our lexicon and most are generally accepted and understood, even if all their implications are not totally accepted. What is clear from Iraq and Afghanistan is that we have moved away from the era of Manoeuvre Warfare into one of Precision Warfare and this in turn is morphing into a further evolution which may be described as Discriminatory Warfare. For political and legal factors, and more importantly for reasons of operational effectiveness where consent, legitimacy and perception are more important than attrition, our use of force cannot focus solely on the enemy's destruction. Clumsiness will inflict greater self-harm than damage to the enemy. We must be more than precise; we must discriminate between supportive populations, aggrieved locals, coerced fighters, criminals and committed insurgents and target the appropriate effects. We live in an age of post-modern warfare⁷ and the 2006 Israeli-Lebanon war is a good example of how clumsy military action had the effect of politically strengthening a conventionally weaker opponent.

Good intelligence has always been required for military operations, Sir Robert Thompson's counterinsurgency principles⁸ enshrined the critical importance of intelligence-led operations in a COIN context from the Malayan experience. But how can they work at subunit level where the last thing a company headquarters (HQ) needs is the imposition of complex staff processes? The complexities hidden beneath the apparently simple veneer of the 4-stage Intelligence Cycle⁹ (principally concurrency and inter-relationship of stages) which are self evident to seasoned practitioners require resources in the form of expertly trained staff and collection assets. Information cannot be automatically transformed into actionable intelligence without a well directed effort. This requires reliable corroboration, cultural and contextual awareness and information that is pragmatically handled to exploited fleeting opportunities, rather than sequestered in darkened recesses of process and protocol. Sources and capabilities must always be protected, but tactical intelligence that is not translated into operational activity is a waste of time and effort. Sidney Jary describes the importance of 'will' over 'skill' in overcoming a determined enemy, and a timely 75% solution will trump a 90% solution that is late or ephemeral. Commanders selected and trained for their judgement and intuition must be supported and not fettered by process. The intelligence cycle therefore provides a logical framework, but a more focussed rubric is needed at the tactical level in a disaggregated battlespace where subunits must rely on their own initiative to succeed. This is what we strived to develop, and is described below.

Company Organisation

Company Intelligence Cells. Rifle Companies are not normally scaled for intelligence cells, yet informed opinion¹⁰ recognises their indispensability for the operations we conduct today. The days of spoon fed combat intelligence regarding the arrival of combat reconnaissance patrols are over. The best source of actionable intelligence comes from the company's own patrols and the relationships they make with the local communities and like-minded allies and neighbours, be they non-governmental organisations, private security companies or coalition partners. Differing agencies have differing cultures and capabilities. Self-forming, decentralised and localised 'coalitions of the willing' – or more accurately 'coalitions of the able' are the reality. Company commanders operating in isolation and in austere locations should expect superior HQ to have different priorities to themselves for all manner of

⁵ 4GW, or network on network conflict, described by Col Thomas X Hammes USMC in "The Sling and the Stone".

⁶ The application of the instruments of national power and influence.

⁷ Kiszely "Post-modern Challenges for the Modern Warrior".

⁸ Political primacy and aim; Coordinated Government Machinery; Information and Intelligence, Separate the insurgent from his support; Neutralise the insurgent and Longer term post-insurgency planning.

⁹ Direction, Collection, Processing and Dissemination.

¹⁰ Kilcullen, 28 Articles.

legitimate reasons, and they will be required to meet the imperatives of many masters¹¹. They should anticipate not being the resource priority, to manage their own expectations and foster self-reliance. Self-help therefore is the order of the day, and if the required trained manpower is not available it must be generated internally. Self help solutions will require simple and robust processes which can be mastered swiftly.

The best and brightest Non Commissioned Officers (NCOs) and Guardsmen must be placed in the intelligence cell, because rubbish in will produce rubbish out. This will cause friction if not addressed early enough. The best and brightest infantrymen have hardwired DNA which impels them to destroy trenches and win boxing matches and they are not inclined toward link analysis. However, after the initial protestations have been overcome their experiences and exposure to operational design and planning will be invaluable for their future professional development. They must also be kept current and frequent time out on lurks, Observation Posts (OPs) or liaison officer tasks with more exotic agencies can keep these frustrations in check. One junior officer or senior NCO and three junior NCOs or senior Guardsmen are required to man a cell 24hrs. *Ability and knack rather than rank is the defining requirement.* By the half-way point of the tour the Company had overseen an exponential improvement to a tactical J2 picture that had been left in fallow (given the pinch point on the Intelligence Corps staff) after the UK shift in effort to Helmand. For a variety of reasons continuity in Kabul had been lost and relationships and networks had to be re-energised. Beginning with no visibility of enemy players or organisation in the city, the company identified over 300 targets in the city AO without meaningful direction or information from the RC-C. This was achieved by an infantry sergeant and infantrymen. Although no small achievement, the translation of situational awareness into serviceable target packs is extremely difficult without assigned Human Intelligence or covert surveillance capabilities - the 'last yard' of accurate intelligence. Lt Col John Nagl¹², having studied the Vietnam and Malayan campaigns in detail was still shocked at the sheer level of hard work required to produce the most basic levels of success in COIN, simply because of the degree of care required and the scale of friction that had to be overcome.

Non Kinetic Cell. Non Kinetic (NK), or influence effects are another important area now and it is right that thought should be paid to more subtle, and often more important 'influence' activities. Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC), or Consent Winning Activities (CWA), has been an All Arms activity for decades, but it must be totally synchronised with intelligence and conventional COIN efforts. However NK and CWA operations require resources and commanders should be empowered to deliver meaningful results to achieve their mission. Only limited effect can be generated internally and this will always smack of superficiality and tokenism which can be more damaging than no effort at all¹³. No 1 Company was fortunate in having a Late Entry Officer¹⁴ to organise and coordinate the CWA, media and Information Operations (IO) activities. A single point of focus is a bonus, but if not available these issues must be considered in all that the company group does.

Kinetic application of force. In approaching the application of hard and soft activity, a 'kinetic=bad, non-kinetic=good' mindset must be avoided. All activity must aim at frustrating the aims of the insurgent and securing the support of the population. What has

¹¹ The Kabul Patrols Company had command relationships with the Multinational Regional Command Capital in Kabul, UK Joint Force Support Kandahar, and had to operate within the intent of COMBRITFOR (Comd Task Force Helmand). Guidance was also received from DCOMISAF (the Senior British Military Representative) and the Company, operating on the doorstep of HQ ISAF and HM Embassy had to ensure that its activities were harmonised within coalition and national intents and concerns.

¹² US author of 'Eating Soup with a Knife' and other studies of modern COIN successes and failures.

¹³ No 1 Company had £250 a month to deliver CIMIC effects in Kabul, and relied almost entirely upon US HA material and funding to deliver Consent Winning Projects in the AO.

¹⁴ Officer commissioned from the ranks as 'Late Entry' or LE officers.

changed is the way in which we do it, in recognition of the diminished likelihood of the enemy allowing us to kill him without causing collateral damage. A company needs to retain full spectrum infantry capabilities in order to deliver the high standards of soldiering required for subtler activities in a high threat environment and to react with speed and ruthlessness when the enemy is finally exposed. Certain subjects continue to elicit a state of high excitement with the uninitiated and if their context is not explained can challenge expectations ('sniper', 'media', 'CBRN', 'machinegun'). Some of the best kinetic capabilities can deliver some of the best non kinetic effects (surveillance, search, reassurance). Aside from their ability to discriminate and perform precision attack, snipers (for example) provide some of the best observation and reporting capabilities in the battalion and their utility and flexibility is priceless, not least their effect as force multipliers on the rest of the company group to train and develop observation and reporting skills.

Operations Officer. The company second in command is one of the busiest men in the company, and it is a great benefit if he can be helped by an operations SNCO as an operations room manager, training officer and coordination lead. This allows the company commander to conduct the G5 function, set the objectives, review effects, command deliberate ops and spend enough time on the ground to understand the environment and shape relationships in detail.

Ends

Effects. COIN is a long game and a company group will not win the war on its own. Winning itself becomes a highly subjective concept, and will entail a fundamentally political solution within an acceptable level of insecurity and violence. We are the enablers of rapprochement. The best a company commander can do is try to bring his particular AO closer to the next campaign milestone and if this is not explicitly given, make his best educated guess based on the third Hippocratic principle of 'do no harm'. Dr. David Kilcullen's wisdom is an excellent guideline – 'fight the enemy's tactics, not his forces'¹⁵. If insurgents are planting IEDs and coercing locals, the main effort must be to interdict bomb teams at Target¹⁶ or Named¹⁷ Areas of Interest divined from operational analysis to clear and dominate routes and provide security for communities. If they are conducting shoots and ballistic attacks then longer term lurks, overwatch operations and reactive observation posts perhaps come into play. And if the local populace is in dire need of basics which can be alleviated through Quick Impact Projects or Humanitarian Assistance (HA) deliveries, or if they have suffered from collateral damage and their support needs to be regained, clearly NK activities take primacy. In reality, the picture is likely to be a combination of all of these, competing against the company's limited time and resources. The best one can hope is to set the ball forward another five yards for the next subunit.

Although unlikely to decisively defeat the insurgency in the space of six months, we can nonetheless frustrate its ambitions and deny its objectives. If we can do this and retain the support of the people, then we are winning (and in many places we are doing exactly this, and should take heart). Harmonisation of kinetic and NK effect is critical, and there is real leeway for imagination and creativity at all levels. Examples include use of NK activity (such as HA deliveries and Medical Civil Aid Programmes) to gather information or to conduct consequence management (CM) after 'harder' activity which may have risked alienating local national support. Deconfliction of both kinetic and NK activities at the planning stage must happen on a daily basis to ensure contradictory messages aren't sent.

¹⁵ David Kilcullen - 28 Articles.

¹⁶ The geographical area where high-value targets can be acquired and engaged by friendly forces.

¹⁷ A point or area through which enemy activity is expected to occur. Activity or lack of activity within an NAI will help to confirm or deny a particular enemy course of action.

Again, tokenism and superficial activity (such as undirected 'framework patrolling or random CIMIC events) are to be avoided, as they are wasteful and risk mixing messages.

<p>'4D's</p> <p>Deter insurgent activity through lowering their probability of success and increasing their risk of death or capture.</p> <p>Disrupt insurgent activity by dominating their operating space and constraining their freedom of action.</p> <p>Detain positively identified insurgents wherever possible. This requires painstaking preparation and precision to secure a prosecution by the national judicial system.</p> <p>Develop targets by acquiring more intelligence for subsequent ops - either by us or other agencies.</p> <p>'4R's</p> <p>Reassure locals that we operate in their local interests.</p> <p>Relieve suffering, poverty within means, without unrealistically raising expectations or becoming fixed.</p> <p>Regain trust, consent, support or lost networks through disaffection or lack of continuity.</p> <p>Reinforce our own Force Protection through local sympathy/goodwill and creation of a non-permissive environment for the insurgent.</p>
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Figure 1: Company Urban COIN Enduring Effects

No 1 Company sought to achieve these effects through the '4Ds' of security operations and the '4Rs' of non kinetic effects. They are not mutually exclusive kinetic/NK effects, but the respective approaches were taken given the balance of capabilities in the Company.

Ways

Intelligence Process. At the company level (arguably at all levels) planning and analysis tools need to be simple and easily understood because these tools are likely to be employed when fatigued and in austere conditions. The Company Commander will need to get his IO, Ops Officer, NK Officer and CSM together for some creative thinking during various pauses in activity to try to get a handle on what he thinks is going on and what he wants to do about it. He will be thinking hard about seizing and retaining the initiative without being clumsy or inflicting collateral damage and without unnecessarily jeopardising the lives of his men. At the start of the operation he will also be trying to divine the difference between what he thinks he knows, what he actually knows and what he needs to know. It should go without saying that the company process must be flexible and agile enough to adapt and react to direction and feeds from superior and flanking formations. Tempo demands simplicity.

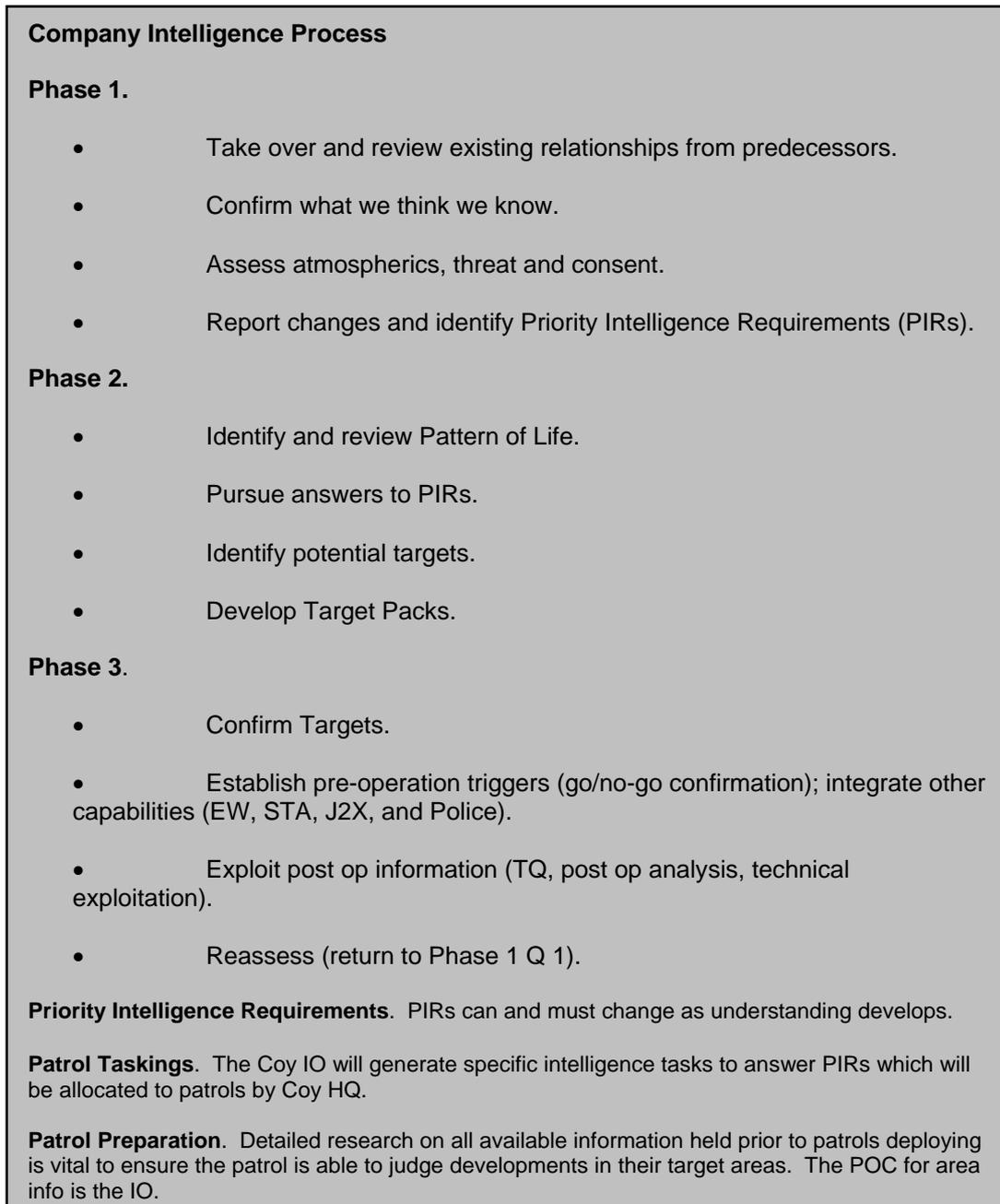


Figure 2: Company Intelligence Process

We used the process above, which was found to be helpful and provided a natural progression for each line of inquiry. The process was not rigidly cyclical; and several points were conducted concurrently depending on available information. When enough was developed to move on to the next degree of analysis, patrols and activities were dedicated to investigate those questions.

Targeting Process. Prior experience in a divisional HQ in Iraq gave an idea of how targeting *should* work, but also how resource-hungry the staff process can be to be effective. A formation HQ has a large staff to process numerous feeds, drive a conventional targeting cycle (Decide, Detect, Track, Deliver, and Assess) and produce target packs for operations. A rifle company, with limited resources, two thirds fixed by static guard and QRF obligations and further degraded by the R&R cycle, has fewer options. It can confine itself to a minimalist ‘framework activity’ posture to maximise force protection and reduce risk. It can

engage targets of opportunity (be they CWA events or suspect vehicles or individuals) if and when they appear. Or it can try to maximise efficiencies with the available information and create opportunities rather than wait for them. The key to the last option requires the ability to sort the wheat from the chaff and to direct those limited resources most intelligently. The balance between simplicity and rigour is the aspiration. Our initial efforts were complicated and time consuming, but were refined until a company level targeting board was standard practice to provide unity of effort.

Targeting at the company-level is simply the prioritisation of information gathering until there is enough of a picture to achieve an effect with an acceptable degree of assurance. It applies to any effect, be it a building project to reduce child road deaths, a medical aid clinic conducted in an area vulnerable to insurgent influence or a search and detention operation against a suspect, or 'Bravo', who has finally been tracked to a known location.

The complexity of the effect and the potential for collateral damage clearly defines the fidelity of intelligence and the body of evidence required to meet the operational 'go' criteria. Getting an HA drop in the wrong block will rarely backfire; arresting or killing the wrong man most certainly will. Not for the first time, the language of this business resembles police terminology, and there are obvious parallels, not least because under current Kabul policy any detainee must be passed to the Afghan authorities shortly after detention. For this to be worthwhile sufficient physical, circumstantial and forensic evidence must be gathered as a drill to allow prosecution and sentencing. This is much easier said than done, and requires police-levels of forensic awareness and evidence handling on an objective. In lieu of sufficient evidence to secure a prosecution, detention for questioning could be conducted in order to disrupt insurgent nodes, gather low level intelligence and enable engagement by other agencies.

Subject	Delivered by	Comments	Output
Collection Plan update. Key threats. Targets Kinetic.	IO.	Int plan phase. PIRs being actioned. En key strengths. En key weaknesses.	Targets prioritised. Lines of Activity identified.
NK Plan update. Targets Non-Kinetic.	NK Offr.	Engagement plan update. Opportunities for influence in general: (water, education, sanitation, etc). Funding lines.	Ptl G2/G9 tasks
Fusion.	Coy Comd/all.	Harmonise and integrate kinetic and NK activity.	Coy Comd's Direction. Ops to coord and amend Ptl activity.
Summary.	Coy Comd.		Direction.

Figure 3: Company Targeting Board Format

The targeting process was influenced by prior staff experience (unwieldy for company ops) and advice from UK Police and UKSF who enjoy a far greater breadth of experience in this type of operation than adaptive foundation training delivers (useful at this scale).

Means

Operations. The 'why' and 'what' is therefore clear, and to a reasonable degree today so is the 'how'. The British Army is more battle-hardened and operationally experienced than at any time since the end of WW2, and most infantry battalions will have corporate knowledge of strike operations in either Basrah or Helmand, or first hand access to that knowledge from those only too willing to pass it on. How far we have come should not be underestimated. In Iraq, regular infantry conducted precise, discriminatory operations by day and night against targets in a densely packed, confusing Arabian city of 2 million, inserting by boat, helicopter and armoured fighting vehicle simultaneously. This sort of operation was once the sole province of UK Special Forces. As needs must, so necessity can become a virtue. We should capitalise on the capabilities that differentiate us from others which secure increased influence and credibility for the UK effort.

Enduring Operations. We categorised our operations into Enduring and Deliberate operations. Enduring operations are always required to maintain situational awareness, a degree of dominance and deterrence, and to fulfil the basic mission of stabilising our sector of Kabul. We shied away from the term 'framework patrolling', which didn't seem to mean much, and meaningless activity is fatiguing. Enduring operations must be targeted as carefully as deliberate ones. By their nature they can function with less prior intelligence and their purpose is generally to gather information, confirm assumptions and promote key IO themes. Example activities are obvious, and include patrols, surveillance, IO dissemination (such as leafleting or passing a message verbally through interaction with influential individuals), routine Key Leadership Engagement, popular surveys to assess attitudes and vital Security Sector Reform (SSR) work. SSR was delivered by osmosis through joint operations with the Kabul City Police and the development of interpersonal relationships. Training opportunities were sought, but without dedicated resources or mandate, the Long Term Training group in Kabul rightly retained SSR primacy.

Deliberate Operations. Deliberate ops were conducted whenever a particular threat or target developed to the point where intervention was necessary, or when the amount of combat power necessitated the deployment of Company Tactical HQ (Tac) to command and coordinate activity. Examples include company level deliberate surveillance operations to interdict IDF and IED teams, deployments as outer cordons for allied SF strike ops within the city, securing of sites and establishment of security for VVIPs (our own Secretary of State for Defence, President Karzai and assorted foreign dignitaries), protected CSS moves during high threat periods and larger scale CIMIC projects such as the facilitation of community medical treatment and relief to orphanages. The most demanding operation in terms both of target acquisition and training remains the 'Strike' operation - either a Search and Detain or Detain and Search op onto arms caches or player residences respectively. Not only do they require the greatest degree of preparation, but also meticulous deconfliction and authorisation from all appropriate agencies and the chain of command.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Early education. Commanders at all levels must acquire a basic cultural and historical understanding of their operating environment as a foundation before pre-deployment and special to theatre training. There simply is not the time for junior officers and NCOs to digest lengthy reading lists in immediate months prior to deployment and also to master the breadth of skill sets required in sufficient detail. A continuous interest in the countries of our campaigns must be maintained by all.

Early integration. Intelligence at the company level has long been recognised as vital in COIN, but there is unlikely to be a permanent uplift in infantry company establishment. Therefore Intelligence cell members should be selected, trained and integrated from the start of the Force Operational and Readiness Mechanism (FORM) process prior to deploying in order to begin the tour with slick and well rehearsed processes.

Intelligence awareness and training. All training should emphasise the importance of intelligence and the supporting skills of observation and reporting by all. A-H and SCRIM¹⁸ are an adequate start point, but memorisation techniques such as Kim's Game and number and picture association techniques should be practiced¹⁹. Commanders at all levels should understand the company intelligence process and how they can assist it. They must be as well 'read in' to the picture in the AO as possible, and should be encouraged to analyse and consider the 'game' and communicate their thoughts and assessment with the intelligence cell and command element. The intelligence cell should be fed as much 'live' detail from theatre as possible before deploying, from military and open source reporting. They should deploy at least 2 weeks before the main body. This was not permitted for us, given the pressure on airframes for the HERRICK 6/7 Relief in Place. The cell should practice link analysis, the production of target packs and receive as much cultural and language training as practical. Asiatic naming conventions, different phonetic spellings and multi-nationality all make the simple complicated and the complicated difficult.

Think multi-dimensionally at all levels. No single issue exists in isolation. Everything will be perceived differently from various perspectives, often in ways that seem bizarre. There will be genuine 'big picture' aspects, but also genuine ignorance and incompetence which must be met with diplomacy and persuasion. This is unavoidable and reinforces the need for all activity to be as well considered as possible. Implications must be considered, and managed by either adjusting the original course of action or phasing a mitigating effect during or after the original. Priorities will shift and the independent company commander will find himself answering to many masters. The golden thread is thus; do first what can be done and then work toward what should be done. Do everything with as much support as possible, both locally and from allies, and ensure your aims are understood beforehand. In the absence of a decisive victory, take heart from the absence of defeat and the aggregation of small wins. In many respects the political dimension is yet more important than the intelligence effort, and this can change extremely swiftly indeed. Ultimately, if in six months not a single terrorist is killed or captured but the people are still waving, telling you what's going on and asking for your help, you have won your battle. It is a marathon rather than a sprint, and if the line is held for long enough the enemy will eventually marginalise and defeat himself, because, frustrations notwithstanding, what we are doing is right.

Major Wayne Hennessy-Barrett is a serving Company Commander with 1st Battalion, the Coldstream Guards. He and his Company returned from Afghanistan in April 2008 after a 7 month tour as the British Kabul Patrols Company, conducting urban counter-terror and stability ops in support of a number of allied agencies. Prior to that he served in Iraq as the lead operations SO2 J3 for HQ Multi National Division (South East), a tour in the MOD and as an instructor at Sandhurst and tours in Bosnia, Macedonia and Kosovo. He is currently attempting to finish his Masters in Conflict Studies at Kings College London.

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¹⁸ SCRIM and A-H are reporting formats similar to SALUTE.

¹⁹ Tony Buzan has published a number of guide books to assist in this.

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