



## Tribal Engagement Workshop Information Paper

### Background

Several recent essays<sup>1</sup> by military professionals have identified and made a case for the adoption of a tribal engagement and / or a bottom-up approach in the conduct of operations in Afghanistan. These papers, and subsequent discussions and commentary in both the mainstream and new media, have generated significant – but informal – scrutiny of the value and feasibility of such an approach. To date, there has been no formal analysis that addresses the following:

- Is a tribal approach, and by extension a bottom-up approach, viable and feasible in Afghanistan?
- What are the baseline requirements at the international (NATO / ISAF / UN), national and operational levels to enable a tribal approach in Afghanistan?
- Is a tribal approach suitable for Afghanistan as whole, or only for certain geographical / tribal regions?
- How would a tribal engagement approach compliment and integrate with other NATO / ISAF efforts at the national, regional and district government levels?
- What conditions are required in Pakistan to enable a tribal approach in Afghanistan?
- What is the relationship of a tribal approach to other efforts in Afghanistan to include counterterrorism, counterinsurgency, stabilization and foreign internal defense efforts? What needs to be done to ensure these efforts are mutually supporting?
- What are both the desirable and the feasible / attainable construct of units / organizations to conduct tribal engagement?
- What are the operational (intelligence, logistics and command and control for example) and training requirements to adequately support a tribal engagement approach?
- What alternatives exist, other than tribal engagement, in implementing a bottom-up approach in Afghanistan?

### Tribal Engagement Workshop

- A Tribal Engagement Workshop is scheduled for 24-25 March 2010 at the Gari Melchers Home and Studio, Fredericksburg, Virginia. This workshop is cosponsored by the Small Wars Foundation, the U.S. Joint Forces Command Joint Irregular Warfare Center, the U.S. Marine Corps Center for Irregular Warfare, the U.S. Army / U.S. Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Center, and Noetic Group.

---

<sup>1</sup> *One Tribe at a Time: A Strategy for Success in Afghanistan* by Major Jim Gant, October 2009. *Don't Try to Arrest the Sea: An Alternative Approach for Afghanistan* by Major Mehar Omar Khan, October 2009. *Going Tribal: Enlisting Afghanistan's Tribes* by Dan Green, August 2009.

- The objectives of this workshop are to:
  - Evaluate the value and feasibility of a tribal engagement approach in Afghanistan.
  - Assess what secondary effects adoption of a tribal engagement strategy would have on the political and military situation.
  - Identify the operational components of a tribal engagement approach in Afghanistan.
- The Tribal Engagement Workshop will consist of three sessions conducted over a two-day period as described below:
  - *Introductory Remarks, Keynote Address, Panel Discussions and “Charge” to Participants.* Half a day plenary of formal briefings, panel discussions and Q&A covering workshop agenda, objectives, methodology and subject matter expert presentations on tribal engagement and the Afghanistan / Pakistan theater of operations.
  - *Tribal Engagement Working Groups.* One day of guided / facilitated discussion by subject matter expert participants structured to specifically address the workshop objectives and document insights, observations and recommendations.
  - *Working Groups Brief Out.* Half a day of briefings and Q&A / discussion on working group findings.
- The Tribal Engagement Workshop final product will consist of a written report detailing the event’s structure and methodology, objectives, presentation content and working group insights, observations and recommendations. An accompanying executive-level brief on the report’s content will also be constructed.
- This workshop will be relatively small in terms of the number of participants and *participation is limited to those directly invited by one of the cosponsors.*

-----

David P. Dilege  
Director  
Small Wars Foundation  
ddilege@smallwarsjournal.com