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VOICES
FROM THE FIELD

Fixing Intel: A Blueprint for Making Intelligence Relevant in Afghanistan

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Center for a
New American
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Cover Image

U.S. Army Brig. Gen. Anthony Tata, left, deputy commanding general for Security, Combined Joint Task Force 76, 10th Mountain Division, meets with Afghan Gen. Mulwana, right, and village elders during a key leaders engagement in the village of Landikheyl, Afghanistan, November 25, 2006.

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E X E C U T I V E S U M M A R Y

This paper, written by the senior intelligence officer in Afghanistan and by a company-grade officer and a senior executive with the Defense Intelligence Agency, critically examines the relevance of the U.S. intelligence community to the counterinsurgency strategy in Afghanistan. Based on discussions with hundreds of people inside and outside the intelligence community, it recommends sweeping changes to the way the intelligence community thinks about itself – from a focus on the enemy to a focus on the people of Afghanistan. The paper argues that because the United States has focused the overwhelming majority of collection efforts and analytical brainpower on insurgent groups, our intelligence apparatus still finds itself unable to answer fundamental questions about the environment in which we operate and the people we are trying to protect and persuade.

This problem or its consequences exist at every level of the U.S. intelligence hierarchy, and pivotal information is not making it to those who need it. To quote General Stanley McChrystal in a recent meeting, “Our senior leaders – the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Secretary of Defense, Congress, the President of the United States – are not getting the right information to make decisions with ... The media is driving the issues. We need to build a process from the sensor all the way to the political decision makers.” This is a need that spans the 44 nations involved with the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF).

This paper is the blueprint for that process. It describes the problem, details the changes and illuminates examples of units that are “getting it right.” It is aimed at commanders as well as intelligence professionals, in Afghanistan and in the United States and Europe.

Among the initiatives Major General Flynn directs:

- Select teams of analysts will be empowered to move between field elements, much like journalists, to visit collectors of information at the grassroots level and carry that information back with them to the regional command level.
- These items will integrate information collected by civil affairs officers, PRTs, atmospheric teams, Afghan liaison officers, female engagement teams, willing non-governmental organizations and development organizations, United Nations officials, psychological operations teams, human terrain teams, and infantry battalions, to name a few.
- These analysts will divide their work along geographic lines, instead of along functional lines, and write comprehensive district assessments covering governance, development and stability. The alternative – having all analysts study an entire province or region through the lens of a narrow, functional line

(e.g. one analyst covers governance, another studies narcotics trafficking, a third looks at insurgent networks, etc) – isn't working.

- The analysts will provide all the data they gather to teams of “information brokers” at the regional command level who will organize and disseminate – proactively and on request – all the reports and data gathered at the grassroots level.
- These special teams of analysts and information brokers will work in what the authors are calling Stability Operations Information Centers. (The authors discuss how these Information Centers cooperate with, and in some cases replace, “Fusion Centers”.)
- These Information Centers will be placed under and in cooperation with the State Department’s senior civilian representatives administering governance, development and stability efforts in Regional Commands East and South.
- Leaders must put time and energy into selecting the best, most extroverted and hungriest analysts to serve in the Stability Operations Information Centers. These will be among the most challenging and rewarding jobs an analyst could tackle.

The highly complex environment in Afghanistan requires an adaptive way of thinking and operating. Just as the old rules of warfare may no longer apply, a new way of leveraging and applying the information spectrum requires substantive improvements. The ISAF Joint Command (IJC) under the leadership of Lieutenant General David M. Rodriguez has made some recent innovative strides with the advent of the “Information Dominance Center.” This type of innovation must be mirrored to the degree possible at multiple levels of command and back in our intelligence community structures in the United States. In no way is this a perfect solution and the United States will continue to adapt. However, the United States must constantly change our way of operating and thinking if we want to win.

Eight years into the war in Afghanistan, the U.S. intelligence community is only marginally relevant to the overall strategy. Having focused the overwhelming majority of its collection efforts and analytical brainpower on insurgent groups, the vast intelligence apparatus is unable to answer fundamental questions about the environment in which U.S. and allied forces operate and the people they seek to persuade. Ignorant of local economics and landowners, hazy about who the powerbrokers are and how they might be influenced, incurious about the correlations between various development projects and the levels of cooperation among villagers, and disengaged from people in the best position to find answers – whether aid workers or Afghan soldiers – U.S. intelligence officers and analysts can do little but shrug in response to high level decision-makers seeking the knowledge, analysis, and information they need to wage a successful counterinsurgency.

This problem and its consequences exist at every level of the U.S. intelligence hierarchy, from ground operations up to headquarters in Kabul and the United States. At the battalion level and below, intelligence officers know a great deal about their local Afghan districts but are generally too understaffed to gather, store, disseminate, and digest the substantial body of crucial information that exists outside traditional intelligence channels. A battalion S-2 shop will, as it should, carefully read and summarize classified human intelligence (HUMINT), signals intelligence (SIGINT), and significant activity (SIGACT) reports that describe improvised explosive device (IED) strikes and other violent incidents. These three types of reports deal primarily with the enemy and, as such, are necessary and appropriate elements of intelligence.

What lies beyond them is another issue. Lacking sufficient numbers of analysts and guidance from commanders, battalion S-2 shops rarely gather, process, and write up quality assessments on countless items, such as: census data and patrol debriefs; minutes from shuras with local farmers and tribal leaders; after-action reports from civil affairs officers and Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs); polling data and atmospheric reports from psychological operations and female engagement teams; and translated summaries of radio broadcasts that influence local farmers, not to mention the field observations of Afghan soldiers, United Nations officials, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). This vast and underappreciated body of information, almost all of which is unclassified, admittedly offers few clues about where to find insurgents, but it does provide elements of even greater strategic importance – a map for leveraging popular support and marginalizing the insurgency itself.

The tendency to overemphasize detailed information about the enemy at the expense of the political, economic, and cultural environment that supports it becomes even more pronounced at the brigade

and regional command levels. Understandably galled by IED strikes that are killing soldiers, these intelligence shops react by devoting most of their resources to finding the people who emplace such devices. Analysts painstakingly diagram insurgent networks and recommend individuals who should be killed or captured. Aerial drones and other collection assets are tasked with scanning the countryside around the clock in the hope of spotting insurgents burying bombs or setting up ambushes. Again, these are fundamentally worthy objectives, but relying on them exclusively baits intelligence shops into reacting to enemy tactics at the expense of finding ways to strike at the very heart of the insurgency. These labor-intensive efforts, employed in isolation, fail to advance the war strategy and, as a result, expose more troops to danger over the long run. Overlooked amid these reactive intelligence efforts are two inescapable truths: 1) brigade and regional command analytic products, in their present form, tell ground units little they do not already know; and 2) lethal targeting alone will not help U.S. and allied forces win in Afghanistan.

Speaking to the first point, enemy-centric and counter-IED reports published by higher commands are of little use to warfighters in the field, most of whom already grasp who it is they are fighting and, in many cases, are the sources of the information in the reports in the first place. Some battalion S-2 officers say they acquire more information that is helpful by reading U.S. newspapers than through reviewing regional command intelligence summaries. Newspaper accounts, they point out, discuss more than the enemy and IEDs. What battalion S-2 officers want from higher-up intelligence shops are additional analysts, who would be more productive working at the battalion and company levels. The same applies to collection efforts. Officers in the field believe that the emphasis on force protection missions by spy planes and other non-HUMINT platforms should be balanced with collection and analysis of population-centric information. Is that desert road we're thinking of paving really

The tendency to overemphasize detailed information about the enemy at the expense of the political, economic, and cultural environment that supports it becomes even more pronounced at the brigade and Regional Command levels.

the most heavily trafficked route? Which mosques and bazaars attract the most people from week to week? Is that local contractor actually implementing the irrigation project we paid him to put into service? These are the kinds of questions, beyond those concerning the enemy as such, which military and civilian decision-makers in the field need help answering. They elicit the information and solutions that foster the cooperation of local people who are far better than outsiders at spotting insurgents and their bombs and providing indications and warnings “left of boom” (before IEDs blow up).

The second inescapable truth asserts that merely killing insurgents usually serves to multiply enemies rather than subtract them. This counterintuitive dynamic is common in many guerrilla conflicts and is especially relevant in the revenge-prone Pashtun communities whose cooperation military forces seek to earn and maintain. The Soviets experienced this reality in the 1980s, when despite killing hundreds of thousands of Afghans, they faced a larger insurgency near the end of the war than they did at the beginning.

Given these two lessons, we must ask why, out of the hundreds of intel analysts working in brigade-level and regional command-level headquarters, only a miniscule fraction study governance, development, and local populations – all topics that must be understood in order to prevail. “Why the Intel Fusion Center can’t give me data about the population is beyond me,” remarked the operations officer of one U.S. task force, echoing a common complaint: “I don’t want to say we’re clueless, but we are. We’re no more than fingernail deep in our understanding of the environment.” If brigade and regional command intelligence sections were profit-oriented businesses, far too many would now be “belly up.”

The next level up represents the top of the intel pyramid. Dozens of intelligence analysts in Kabul, along with hundreds more back in Tampa, at the Pentagon, and throughout the Washington, D.C. area, are committed to answering critically important questions about the state of the conflict in Afghanistan and the impact of U.S. and allied military actions. They seek to respond to the queries posed by U.S. Forces-Afghanistan and ISAF Commanding General Stanley McChrystal, Lieutenant General David M. Rodriguez of the ISAF Joint Command, and other decision-makers, up to and including the President of the United States. Their answers are essential to making informed strategic decisions.

The problem is that these analysts – the core of them bright, enthusiastic, and hungry – are starved for information from the field, so starved, in fact, that many say their jobs feel more like fortune telling than serious detective work. In a recent project ordered by the White House, analysts could barely scrape together enough information to formulate rudimentary assessments of pivotal Afghan districts. It is little wonder, then, that many decision-makers rely more upon newspapers than military intelligence to obtain “ground truth.” While there is nothing wrong with utilizing credible information gathered by reporters, to restrict

decision-makers so narrowly when deep and wide intelligence information is available shortchanges military personnel and needlessly jeopardizes the successful prosecution of the Afghanistan war.

Ironically, the barriers to maximizing available intelligence are surprisingly few. The deficit of data needed by high-level analysts does not arise from a lack of reporting in the field. There are literally terabytes of unclassified and classified information typed up at the grassroots level. Nor, remarkably, is the often-assumed unwillingness to share information the core of the problem. On the contrary, military officers and civilians working with ISAF allies, and even many NGOs, are eager to exchange information. True, there are severe technological hurdles, such as the lack of a common database and digital network available to all partners, but they are not insurmountable.

The most salient problems are attitudinal, cultural, and human. The intelligence community’s standard mode of operation is surprisingly passive about aggregating information that is not enemy-related and relaying it to decision-makers or fellow analysts further up the chain. It is a culture that is strangely oblivious of how little its analytical products, as they now exist, actually influence commanders.

It is also a culture that is emphatic about secrecy but regrettably less concerned about mission effectiveness.¹ To quote General McChrystal in a recent meeting, “Our senior leaders – the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Secretary of Defense, Congress, the President of the United States – are not getting the right information to make decisions with. We must get this right. The media is driving the issues. We need to build a process from the sensor all the way to the political decision makers.”

This document is the blueprint for such a process.

The authors of this document outline changes that must occur throughout the intelligence hierarchy. Its contents should be considered as a directive by

the senior author, who is the top intelligence officer in Afghanistan. We chose to embody it in this unconventional report, and are taking the steps to have it published by a respected think tank, in order to broaden its reach to commanders, intelligence professionals and schoolhouse instructors outside, as well as inside, Afghanistan. Some of what is presented here reinforces existing top-level orders that are being acted on too slowly. Other initiatives in this paper are new, requiring a shift in emphasis and a departure from the comfort zone of many in the intelligence community.

We will illuminate examples of superb intelligence work being done at various levels by people who are, indeed, “getting it right.” We will explain what civilian analysts and military intelligence officers back in the U.S. must do in order to prepare, and what organizational changes they should anticipate. (As an example, some civilian analysts who deploy to Afghanistan will be empowered to move between field elements in order to personally visit the collectors of information at the grassroots level and carry that information back with them. Analysts’ Cold War habit of sitting back and waiting for information to fall into their laps does not work in today’s warfare and must end.)

We will devote substantial attention to the changes that must occur at the regional command level so that intelligence professionals can serve as clearing-houses of information and comprehensive analysis. Many of these reforms will occur immediately, others will take more time. All are realistic and attainable.

In addition to reflecting the thinking of the war’s senior intelligence officer, this memorandum combines the perspectives of a company-grade officer and a senior executive with the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) who have consulted the views of hundreds of people inside and outside the intelligence community before putting pen to paper.

This memorandum is aimed at commanders as well as intelligence professionals. If intelligence is to help us succeed in the conduct of the war, the commanders of companies, battalions, brigades, and regions must clearly prioritize the questions they need answered in support of our counterinsurgency strategy, direct intelligence officials to answer them, and hold accountable those who fail.

Too often, the secretiveness of the intelligence community has allowed it to escape the scrutiny of customers and the supervision of commanders. Too often, when an S-2 officer fails to deliver, he is merely ignored rather than fired. It is hard to imagine a battalion or regimental commander tolerating an operations officer, communications officer, logistics officer, or adjutant who fails to perform his or her job. But, except in rare cases, ineffective intel officers are allowed to stick around. American military doctrine established long before this war began could hardly be clearer on this point: *“Creating effective intelligence is an inherent and essential responsibility of command. Intelligence failures are failures of command – [just] as operations failures are command failures.”*²

Nowhere does our group suggest that there is not a significant role for intelligence to play in finding, fixing, and finishing off enemy leaders. What we conclude is there must be a concurrent effort under the ISAF commander’s strategy to acquire and provide knowledge about the population, the economy, the government, and other aspects of the dynamic environment we are trying to shape, secure, and successfully leave behind. Until now, intelligence efforts in this area have been token and ineffectual, particularly at the regional command level. Simply put, the stakes are too high for the stability of Afghanistan and Pakistan, for NATO’s credibility, and for U.S. national security for us to fail in our intelligence mission. The urgent task before us is to make our intelligence community not only stronger but, in a word, “relevant.”*

*The intelligence community referred to throughout this document is the thousands of uniformed and civilian intelligence personnel serving with the Department of Defense and with joint inter-agency elements in Afghanistan.

ALL POLITICS IS LOCAL: TACTICAL INTEL EQUALS STRATEGIC INTEL

Why would four-star generals, and even the Secretary General of NATO and the President of the United States, require detailed district-level information and assessments on Afghanistan? For many in the intelligence chain of command, the answer, regrettably, is “they don’t.” Intelligence officers at the regional commands and below contend that the focus of higher echelons should be limited to Afghanistan’s large provinces and the nation as a whole – the “operational and strategic levels” – and not wander “into the weeds” of Afghan districts at the “tactical level.” In fact, top decision-makers and their staffs emphatically do need to understand the sub-national situation down to the district level. For the most part, this is precisely where we are fighting the war, which means, inevitably, this is where it will be won or lost.

One of the peculiarities of guerrilla warfare is that tactical-level information is laden with strategic significance far more than in conventional conflicts. This blurring of the line between strategic and tactical is already widely appreciated by infantrymen.³ They use the term “strategic corporal” to describe how the actions of one soldier can have broader implications – for example, when the accidental killing of civilians sparks anti-government riots in multiple cities.

The tactical and the strategic overlap in the information realm, too. If relations suddenly were to sour between U.S. troops and an influential tribe on the outskirts of Kandahar, public confidence in the government’s ability to hold the entire city might easily, and predictably, falter. In such a situation, the imperative to provide top Afghan and ISAF leaders with details about the tribal tension and its likely causes is clear. Leaders at the national level may be the only ones with the political and military leverage to decisively preempt a widening crisis.

Top decision-makers and their staffs emphatically do need to understand the sub-national situation down to the district level.

Consider another example. Development officials earn goodwill through small-scale but quick irrigation projects in one district, while officials in a neighboring district see little public enthusiasm as they proceed with an expensive but slowly developing road construction project. Policymakers in Europe and the United States need the “nitty-gritty” details of these projects to detect the reasons for their different outcomes and to assess whether similar patterns exist with projects elsewhere in the province. In short, strategy is about making difficult choices with limited people, money and time. The information necessary to guide major policy choices, for better or for worse, resides at the grassroots level.

To understand the dynamics of this process, it is useful to think of the Afghanistan war as a political campaign, albeit a violent one. If an election campaign spent all of its effort attacking the opposition and none figuring out which districts were undecided, which were most worthy of competing for, and what specific messages were necessary to sway them, the campaign would be destined to fail. No serious contender for the American presidency ever confined himself or herself solely to the “strategic” level of a campaign, telling the staff to worry only about the national and regional picture and to leave individual counties and election districts entirely in the hands of local party organizers, disconnected from the overall direction of the campaign. In order to succeed, a candidate’s

pollsters and strategists (the equivalent of a J-2 staff) must constantly explore the local levels, including voters' grievances, leanings, loyalties, and activities. Experienced campaign strategists understand that losing even one or two key districts can mean overall defeat. (Recall, for example, the defining impact of two Florida counties – Miami-Dade and Palm Beach – on the national outcome of the 2000 presidential election.) To paraphrase former Speaker of the House Thomas P. “Tip” O’Neill’s famous quote, “all counterinsurgency is local.”

Information gathering in a counterinsurgency differs from information gathering in a conventional war in another important respect. In a conventional conflict, ground units depend heavily on intelligence from higher commands to help them navigate the fog of war. Satellites, spy planes, and more arcane assets controlled by people far from the battlefield inform ground units about the strength, location, and activity of the enemy before the ground unit even arrives. Information flows largely from the top down.

In a counterinsurgency, the flow is (or should be) reversed. The soldier or development worker on the ground is usually the person best informed about the environment and the enemy. Moving up through levels of hierarchy is normally a journey into greater degrees of cluelessness. This is why ground units, PRTs, and everyone close to the grass-roots bears a double burden in a counterinsurgency; they are at once the most important consumers and suppliers of information. It is little wonder, then, given the flow and content of today’s intelligence, that they are seriously frustrated with higher commands. For them, the relationship feels like all “give” with little or nothing in return.

While there is no way around the ground operator’s burden – and duty – to send large quantities of information up the chain of command, there are ways for higher command elements to improve their integrated reciprocation. One is to send analysts

to the ground level, whether on a permanent or temporary-but-recurring basis, to help already-busy PRTs and S-2 shops collate information and disseminate it accordingly.

A second way is to ensure that higher-level analysts are creating comprehensive narratives by pulling together all aspects of what occurs in the field. Brigade and regional command intelligence summaries that regurgitate the previous day’s enemy activity tell ground units little they do not already know. But periodic narratives that describe changes in the economy, atmospherics, development, corruption, governance, and enemy activity in a given district provide the kind of context that is invaluable up the chain of command and back down to the district itself. (We examine these two methods further in the section on regional commands.) Reforms of this kind have not only immediate, practical value, but also the potential to catalyze a more powerful, relevant, and holistic intelligence system.

INTEL AT THE GRASSROOTS: THE BATTALION AND BELOW

In late June 2009, a small number of U.S. Marines and British soldiers were the only foreign forces in Nawa, a district of 70,000 farmers in Afghanistan's Helmand province. The American and British troops could not venture a kilometer from their cramped base without confronting machine gun and rocket fire from insurgents. Local farmers, wary of reprisals by the Taliban, refused to make eye contact with foreign soldiers, much less speak with them or offer valuable battlefield and demographic information.

The tide began to turn in Nawa on July 2, when 800 Marines descended in helicopters and began sweeping across the district on foot, establishing nearly two dozen patrol bases in villages and cornfields along the way. Five months later and with few shots fired by Marines after their initial operation, the situation in Nawa is radically different. Insurgents find it substantially more difficult to operate without being ostracized or reported by farmers; government officials meet regularly with citizens to address their grievances, removing this powerful instrument of local control from the Taliban's arsenal; the district center has transformed from a ghost town into a bustling bazaar; and IED incidents are down 90 percent. Nawa's turnaround, although still fragile, could not have occurred without population-centric counterinsurgency techniques. This evolution illustrates the pivotal role intelligence plays when a battalion commits itself to understanding the environment at least as well as it understands the enemy.

The men of 1st Battalion, 5th Marines who fanned out across the district that hot July morning had to operate with no more supplies than they could carry on their backs. For weeks, they had no hardened bases, little electricity, and only radios for communication. The battalion S-2 and deputy intelligence officers, finding their unit widely

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dispersed across an alien environment without classified or unclassified data networks, responded with two particularly farsighted decisions. First, they distributed their intelligence analysts down to the company level, and second, they decided that understanding the people in their zone of influence was a top priority.

By resisting the urge of many intelligence officers to hoard analysts at the command post, the S-2 and his deputy armed themselves with a network of human sensors who could debrief patrols, observe key personalities and terrain across the district, and – crucially – write down their findings. Because there were not enough analysts to send to every platoon, the infantry companies picked up the slack by assigning riflemen to collate and analyze information fulltime.⁴

While the concept of forming mini S-2 shops at the company level is not new (the Army calls them Company Intelligence Support Teams; Marines call them Company-Level Intelligence Cells), it is uncommon for them to be staffed with more than a

pair of junior soldiers. First Battalion, Fifth Marines saw things differently. Alpha Company, for instance, dedicated five non-commissioned officers to their intelligence cell.

The battalion intelligence officers refused to allow the absence of a data network to impede the flow of information. Each night, the deputy intelligence officer hosted what he called “fireside chats,” during which each analyst radioed in from his remote position at a designated time and read aloud everything learned over the last 24 hours. Using this approach, daily reports incorporated a wide variety of sources: unclassified patrol debriefs; the notes of officers who had met with local leaders; the observations of civil affairs officers; and classified HUMINT reports. The deputy intelligence officer typed up a master report of everything called in by analysts and closed each “chat session” by providing them with an updated list of questions – called “intelligence requirements” – for the companies to attempt to answer.⁵

In the earliest days of the operation, many of these questions dealt with basic logistical matters, such as the location and conditions of roads, bridges, mosques, markets, wells, and other key terrain. Once these were answered, however, the focus shifted to local residents and their perceptions. What do locals think about the insurgents? Do they feel safer or less safe with us around? What disputes exist between villages or tribes? As the picture sharpened, the focus honed in on identifying what the battalion called “anchor points” – local personalities and local grievances that, if skillfully exploited, could drive a wedge between insurgents and the greater population. In other words, anchor points represented the enemy’s critical vulnerabilities.

The battalion soon found one to exploit. Many local elders, it turned out, quietly resented the Taliban for threatening their traditional power structure. The Taliban was empowering young fighters and mullahs to replace local elders as the primary

authorities on local economic and social matters. Despite this affront to the elders, they were too frightened to openly challenge the Taliban’s iron-fisted imposition.

Based on its integrated intelligence, 1st Battalion, 5th Marines took steps to subvert the Taliban power structure and to strengthen the elders’ traditional one. The battalion commander partnered with the district governor, traveling with him constantly and participating in impromptu meetings with citizens to build their confidence in Afghan and U.S. security. To demonstrate the benefits of working with the Afghan government, the battalion facilitated development projects that addressed grievances identified through coordinated surveys of the populace by Marines and civilian officials. These efforts paid off. The district governor persuaded elders to reconstitute a traditional council featuring locally selected representatives from each sub-district. The council now serves as the primary advisory board to the Afghan government in Nawa.

To be sure, various chips had to fall the right way in order for our forces to enable this positive turn of events. Nawa was lucky to have a charismatic governor and a modern battalion commander who, together, ran their joint effort like a political campaign as much as a military operation. The robust presence of security personnel (there was one Marine or Afghan soldier or policeman for every 50 citizens) was also vital.⁶

But the battalion’s intelligence effort was equally decisive. Battalion leadership understood that driving a wedge between the people and the insurgents would advance the U.S.-Afghan mission, and it geared its intelligence toward understanding the environment, knowing this would ultimately make Marines safer than would over-concentrating on the IED threat. Crucially, the battalion commander took an active role in feeding and guiding the collection effort. His priority intelligence requirements, which he frequently updated, asked

who the local powerbrokers were and what social dynamics were ripe for exploitation. A visitor to the district center of Nawa last June, before the battalion arrived, would today not recognize the bustling marketplace. Farmers who last summer would have said nothing upon spotting the Taliban burying a roadside bomb now chase them away themselves.

First Battalion, Fifth Marines is hardly the only unit to get it right. The 1st Squadron, 91st Cavalry Regiment set a similar example in the socially complex eastern provinces of Nuristan and Kunar by relentlessly engaging elders and strengthening traditional power structures, thereby deflating the local insurgency. The commander, then-Lieutenant Colonel Christopher D. Kolenda, had ordered his intelligence shop to support this effort by devoting their energy to understanding the social relationships, economic disputes, and religious and tribal leadership of the local communities. While more than 30 American and Afghan soldiers had been killed in this area during the five month period leading up to this new approach, only three were killed over the subsequent 12 months, from October 2007 to October 2008, as the approach bore fruit. “Intelligence is a commander’s responsibility,” Kolenda, now a colonel, said recently. “Intel automatically defaults to focusing on the enemy if the commander is not involved in setting priorities and explaining why they are important.”⁷

The ongoing work of 3rd Squadron, 71st Cavalry in Logar Province also serves as a beacon, as do the efforts of several other Army and Marine units. Our detailed review of the battalion in Nawa is intended to demonstrate how fully integrated counterinsurgency (“COIN”) intelligence under any command contributes to success in the conduct of the war. It is a lesson that needs to be understood and applied widely in order for us to succeed.

REGIMENTS AND BRIGADES MUST FIGHT TO BE RELEVANT

Moving up the hierarchy, we examined regimental and brigade-level intelligence shops on large, forward-operating bases isolated from population centers. Although these bases are usually only a few dozen geographic miles from battalions, operationally they are worlds apart. Regimental and brigade-level shops face problems diametrically opposed to those of battalion S-2 shops. Resources are abundant; there are broadband classified and unclassified networks and technicians to keep them running, printers and map plotters that actually work, hot chow and showers, and, at least at the brigade-level, scores of military intelligence analysts. What they lack is what the battalions have in abundance – information about what is actually happening on the ground.

Brigade intelligence officers keep their analysts busy creating charts linking insurgents, building PowerPoint “storyboards” depicting violent incidents within the area of operations, and distilling intelligence summaries from units in the field. They direct their efforts toward keeping the brigade commander updated with news from the battlefield.

But the most competent regimental and brigade intelligence shops, according to the battalions they support, are the ones that do three specific things. First, they make every effort to advertise collection and production capabilities and to make these capabilities available to the battalions. Second, they send analysts down to augment battalion and company-level intelligence support teams even if only on a rotating basis. And third, they produce written summaries that incorporate everyone’s activities in the area of operations – civil affairs, PRTs, the Afghan government, and security forces – rather than merely rehashing kinetic incidents already covered in battalion-level intelligence summaries.

Battalion S-2 officers give high praise to brigade-level officers and NCOs who routinely determine what maps, imagery, surveillance, and SIGINT⁸ support the battalions need. The hallmark of good regimental and brigade-level intelligence support is a proactive approach. Officers use telephones or show up in person to walk the battalion’s S-2 through the support they can provide, like tailors fitting a customer for a new suit.⁹ Too often, battalion S-2s are in the dark about the full spectrum of collection platforms that can be tasked on their behalf by the brigade. And too often they are frustrated to learn that these capabilities are devoted primarily to serving brigade staff rather than battalions in the field.

The regiments and brigades that do rotate their analysts down to the battalion and company levels benefit themselves as well as the units they support. Time spent by analysts away from the brigade is amply compensated by the knowledge they bring back, the personal contacts they establish and maintain, and the sense of urgency and equity they develop about the fight being waged at the ground level. They now personally know the soldiers going out on patrol each day, and as one would expect among fighting men and women, this makes a difference.

Ultimately, those regiments and brigades that embrace an ethos of supporting field units are the most effective. In a properly ordered intelligence system, competing demands on personnel and resources should be resolved in favor of supporting battalions rather than satisfying brigade-level projects. One intelligence officer, describing the adjustments he had to make after moving from a battalion S-2 to becoming a brigade-level intelligence officer, put it this way: “You are dramatically less relevant at the brigade level than you were in your previous job. At the higher level, you have to fight to be relevant in some way.” A major objective of this report is to help make the enormous resources available to brigades and regiments more relevant to sustaining the overall war effort.

COIN WARFARE CALLS FOR COIN ANALYSTS

The success of the battalion in Nawa became known not through intelligence channels, but from reports by American news outlets. In our search for details, we were unable to find significant information in official reports and summaries reaching headquarters level. Ultimately, one of us had to fly to Nawa to get the full story in person. As an investigative effort, this is acceptable. As a coherent and effective intelligence system, it is a failure.

In the end, however, the Nawa anecdote is doubly instructive. While it demonstrates the extent to which the intelligence community above the battalion level is out of touch – officers are oblivious even to big successes in the field – it also offers clues about how to fix the problem.

To begin, commanders must authorize a select group of analysts to retrieve information from the ground level and make it available to a broader audience, similar to the way journalists work. These analysts must leave their chairs and visit the people who operate at the grassroots level – civil affairs officers, PRTs, atmospheric teams, Afghan liaison officers, female engagement teams, willing NGOs and development organizations, United Nations officials, psychological operations teams, human terrain teams, and staff officers with infantry battalions – to name a few.

People at the grassroots level already produce reams of reports and are willing to share them. Little of what they write, however, reaches Afghanistan's five regional commands, and even less reaches top decision-makers and analysts in Kabul and beyond. Some reports remain trapped at the ground level because of a lack of bandwidth, while others get pushed up only to be “stove-piped” in one of the many classified-and-disjointed networks that inevitably populate a 44-nation coalition. But even where there is a commonly

available network, such as the unclassified Internet, little from the ground level in Afghanistan reaches a central repository where customers who need information can access or search for it. Instead, vital information piles up in obscure SharePoint sites, inaccessible hard drives, and other digital junkyards.

Although strenuous and costly efforts are underway to move to a common, classified network and to establish a few master databases, eight years of disunity has shown that technology alone is not the answer. To solve the problem, specially trained analysts must be empowered to methodically identify everyone who collects valuable information, visit them in the field, build mutually beneficial relationships with them, and bring back information to share with everyone who needs it.

This is easier to do in Afghanistan than it might appear. Helicopters routinely shuttle between PRTs and brigade and battalion headquarters, offering analysts what their predecessors in the Cold War and in conventional conflicts could only dream of – firsthand, in-person access to the ground-level environment they are analyzing. Information essential to the successful conduct of a counter-insurgency is ripe for retrieval, but analysts that remain confined to restricted-access buildings in Kabul or on Bagram and Kandahar Airfields cannot access it.

There are, of course, limits on how far analysts can or should go in pursuit of information. Concern for physical safety is one. Rules that govern the difference between collection and analysis represent another. The plan we are advocating respects these boundaries. The idea is not to send civilians on combat patrols, but to deploy them in ways that allow them to function as analysts. Nor would they be “collectors” – a technical term denoting those authorized to elicit information from sensitive or covert sources. Rather, they would be information integrators, vacuuming up data already collected

by military personnel or gathered by civilians in the public realm and bringing it back to a centralized location.

Once gathered, information must be read and understood. This select team of analysts would take the first pass at making sense of what they have gathered by writing periodic narrative reviews of all that is happening in pivotal districts: who the key personalities are, how local attitudes are changing, what the levels of violence are, how enemy tactics are evolving, why farmers chose to plant more wheat than poppy this winter, what development projects have historically occurred or are currently underway, and so on. Ideally, this would entail dividing their workload along geographic lines, instead of along functional lines, with each covering a handful of key districts.

The importance of an integrated, district-focused approach is difficult to overstate. The alternative – having all analysts study an entire province or region through the lens of a narrow, functional line (i.e., one analyst covers governance, another studies narcotics trafficking, a third looks at insurgent networks, etc) simply cannot produce meaningful analysis. Before analysts can draw useful conclusions along these specialized lines, they must first have comprehensive reviews of everything that is happening in the various districts. With rare exceptions, such written reviews do not exist currently.¹⁰ Consequently, analysts throughout the intelligence hierarchy lack the necessary context and data needed to detect patterns of governance and other specialized topics across provinces and regions.

This approach may be novel to the current U.S. military intelligence model, but it is not unusual in other information-dependent enterprises. Consider, for instance, the sports page of a metropolitan newspaper. When the editor assigns reporters to cover football, one covers the Jets and another covers the Giants. The editor does not tell the first to write about all NFL linebackers and the second to write

about the league's punters. Determining whether teams have a shot at the Super Bowl requires analysis of them as a whole, not in vertical slices.

The most obvious pool of qualified talent – those who can write reasonably well and have security clearances – are civilian analysts with the Defense Intelligence Agency and their NATO ally equivalents.¹¹ Some are already on their way to Afghanistan as part of the “civilian surge.”¹² Under our proposal, analysts would train for one week at the COIN Academy in Kabul before beginning work in the field.

STABILITY OPERATIONS INFORMATION CENTERS

Where will these special teams of analysts work? They will form the analytic nucleus of what we are calling Stability Operations Information Centers. (How these Information Centers cooperate with and in some cases replace “Fusion Centers” is something we discuss later in this paper.) The analysts will start their jobs at the Information Centers researching and writing meaty, comprehensive descriptions of pivotal districts throughout the country, after which they will generate periodic updates – every six weeks, ideally – reviewing changes in the overall situation in these districts. District assessments will contain thoroughly and clearly cited references (a rudimentary practice that the U.S. intelligence community has unfortunately drifted away from in recent years). Each paragraph of every report will be kept to the lowest classification level possible. The reports will inevitably incorporate classified data, but unclassified versions of every report will be available.

The other core mission of the Information Centers involves serving as clearinghouses for information gathered from the field. Information Centers will organize and disseminate – proactively and upon request – all reports and data analysts gather from the ground level. Because analysts will be too busy to shoulder this organization and dissemination role alone, they will be augmented by “information brokers” who are focused on storing information and making it available to all elements with a demand for information—including Afghan partners and non-government actors. Through commonly used databases, information brokers will organize and make available the data gathered by analysts.

The information brokerage function does not stop there, however. Until all customers have access to an overarching database, Information Center brokers will take whatever steps are necessary

to convey information to customers, including: burning CDs and “air-gapping” the information to other networks; emailing reports on distribution lists; providing summaries showing the varieties of data collected; and setting up hotlines to answer queries from customers. The Information Centers will each have a Foreign Disclosure Officer whose mission will be to ensure the widest possible dissemination by pushing for the lowest classification. They will also have geospatial analysts who can enter data into mapping software, allowing customers to use Google Earth and military applications to pinpoint local projects, incidents of violence, major landowners’ holdings, and related information.

Visitors to the Information Centers should be able to walk in and obtain mission-related information with ease. Customers would include: Regional commanders and their civilian counterparts; the ISAF Joint Command’s Information Dominance Center and the Joint Intelligence Operations Center in Kabul; partner nations at embassies and PRTs; military task forces; representatives of the Afghan government and security forces; key ministries and agencies of ISAF nations; and private civilians involved in stabilizing and rebuilding Afghanistan.

The benefits of the Information Centers promise to be significant. For the first time, people will have single nodes for obtaining the information they need. Information Centers will provide additional benefits for military task forces and PRTs in the field. Currently, both are deluged with emails, phone calls, and formal “requests for information” from analysts all over the globe. These requests have only increased with the renewed strategic focus on Afghanistan, hindering PRTs and task forces from performing their primary jobs. For example, an analyst may call from Kabul looking for comprehensive information on corruption in Helmand Province; an hour later, another calls from Washington asking for the locations of all

cell-phone towers and power-lines in southern Afghanistan. And on it goes. Often, the information that analysts seek is embedded in reports already written by task forces and PRTs, but has been “lost” by higher commands.

Task forces and PRTs simply do not have the time or personnel to play “go fetch” in this manner. Once the Information Centers begin shouldering this burden, PRTs and task forces will only need to deal periodically with a few Information Center analysts rather than the entire intelligence community. The Information Centers, having gathered all available data in each region, will be the clearinghouse for queries from Kabul and elsewhere.

Units in the field will also benefit from the Information Centers’ stores of data covering a broad geographic area. At present, there is no centralized repository for information concerning the thousands of development projects across Afghanistan. Records covering these projects exist, but they are scattered in countless locations. By aggregating even a modest cross section of data on these projects, the Information Centers would provide an invaluable cache of practical information and lessons learned for next-generation project administrators, engineers, and military commanders.

An NGO wanting to build a water well in a village may learn, as we recently did, about some of the surprising risks encountered by others who have attempted the same project. For instance, a foreign-funded well constructed in the center of a village in southern Afghanistan was destroyed – not by the Taliban – but by the village’s women. Before, the women had to walk a long distance to draw water from a river, but this was exactly what they wanted. The establishment of a village well deprived them of their only opportunity to gather socially with other women.¹³

Swedish troops operating in northern Afghanistan also found that new wells could create animosities

between neighboring tribes by depleting the aquifer in one area in favor of another. This is a problem well known to water engineers the world over, but not necessarily to every executive agency or military commander operating in Afghanistan. The Swedes now repair wells rather than dig new ones. Without the ability to capture this simple history, prosaic as it may be, others are doomed to repeat it. Equally important is the cumulative effect of thousands of other small but important histories and cultural vignettes of this type.

An NGO representative or a civil affairs soldier should be able to contact an Information Center and receive valuable information about topics such as digging wells, the cost of building one kilometer of gravel road, or the best way to administer polio vaccines.¹⁴ Currently, information this basic to a coordinating a successful counterinsurgency literally is inaccessible to the people who need it most. This failure not only jeopardizes an operation, but also exposes international efforts to ridicule for their ineptitude. The demoralizing ripples of a needless failure, like the buoying ripples of a well-earned success, travel far and wide.

INFORMATION AT THE REGIONAL COMMANDS

The regional commands are the logical level for basing our proposed Stability Operations Information Centers. They have large airfields, making it possible for analysts to travel onward to the various task forces and PRTs. They also provide the connectivity and infrastructure needed for analysts to write their reports and for information brokers to input and disseminate data.

Where, specifically, at the regional commands should Information Centers reside? For Regional Commands South and East, where most international forces are concentrated, the best placement is under the State Department's senior civilian representatives administering development and stability efforts. Information Center analysts would work closely with their counterparts in the regional command intelligence shop (CJ2) and Fusion Centers in order to integrate relevant information about the insurgency into their district assessments. But the Information Center would operate under separate leadership.

Why not combine Information Centers with existing Fusion Centers? There are several reasons this cannot occur in the South or East, at least not in the near term. First, the Fusion Centers do their work in Sensitive Compartmented Information Facilities (SCIFs), which are not the sort of venue an Afghan NGO worker or United Nations official can visit casually to exchange knowledge. The Information Centers must have a room where even customers without security clearance can chat with analysts and information brokers over a cup of tea. Second, certain civilian customers valuable to the intelligence-gathering process might decline to associate themselves with lethal targeting – a mission supported by Fusion Centers, but not by Information Centers.

The third and most compelling reason lies in the nature of their intelligence culture. Fusion Centers

and CJ2 shops are overwhelmingly focused on “red” activity – concerning the enemy – devoting relatively little effort to “white” activity – the Afghan population, economy, development, and government. This culture is so entrenched that it would inevitably compromise the mission of the new Information Centers. This is evident from observing the handful of analysts who study “white” activity for the Fusion Centers. Generally assigned short-term projects of limited value, they typically analyze vertical slices of districts rather than holistic organic entities. In effect, their job is to cover the punters and linebackers instead of the whole team.

The candor of this analysis should not be taken as a denigration of the contributions of Fusion Centers in Iraq or Afghanistan. Their overwhelming focus on “red” is a legacy of their mission in Iraq, with good reason and some great results. By assembling small groups of bright, capable individuals under the same roof, Fusion Centers were able to coordinate classified SIGINT and HUMINT, and real-time surveillance video, allowing commanders to “action” the information with airstrikes and special operations that led to the death or capture of notorious terrorists. Al Qaeda's top terrorist in Iraq, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, died as the result of a successful Fusion Center mission. The concept has been replicated in Afghanistan and has achieved important successes.

It is the question of balance we are addressing in this report. When General McChrystal took command in Afghanistan in June 2009, he sought to expand the mission of Fusion Centers to provide “white” information in addition to their “red” analyses. Similarly, Lieutenant General Rodriguez, head of the ISAF Joint Command, sought to rectify the imbalance by ordering regional commands to begin answering a wide-ranging list of questions about governance, development, and local populations. His order makes clear that answering these “Host Nation Information Requirements” is a critical priority. Change, however, has come more slowly than the war effort can

afford. The intelligence community has been hard pressed to answer Lieutenant General Rodriguez's full range of requirements. Some intelligence officers contend that "white" topics are not intel's job but the responsibility of civil affairs and stability staffers – the CJ9. However, CJ9 lacks the analysts, training, and resources to systematically gather, process, and disseminate relevant "white" information.

Redressing this imbalance requires taking the most talented civilian analysts and assigning them a new home and mission in the proposed Stability Operations Information Centers. In the north, west, and capital regions of Afghanistan, Fusion Centers are still nascent enough to be reorganized immediately as Information Centers. Unlike their counterparts in the south and the east, these Information Centers would be under the direct control of regional commanders rather than civilians, in large part because of differences in the way NATO forces are organized.

It is our firm belief that Fusion Centers should not abandon their mission of finding, fixing, and finishing off key insurgents. At the same time, we assert that any further growth of their "red" missions – particularly in Regional Command South and Regional Command East – would fail to achieve results commensurate with the resources and energy expended. Virtually the only customers for the Fusion Centers' enemy-centric analyses are special operations forces focused on kill-and-capture missions. We asked numerous individuals working in the PRTs and conventional task forces that make up the majority of the international effort in Afghanistan what they had gained from the Fusion Centers' labors, and the answer was, simply, "not much." "I'm not getting data from the Fusion Center that goes into the weeds, per se, and that's the level of information we need," said the S-2 officer of one task force, echoing a common refrain. "We don't need IED network analysis from the Fusion Center," he added.

To the extent that intensive intelligence analysis pays dividends against IEDs, it appears to occur when analysts are closest to where the problem lies – at the ground level.

To the extent that intensive intelligence analysis pays dividends against IEDs, it appears to occur when analysts are closest to where the problem lies – at the ground level. Even then, the effort seems to have less impact than analysis aimed at exploiting social networks and associated powerbrokers to marginalize insurgents across the board. As an example, one brigade in Regional Command East devoted a robust multi-functional team of intelligence collectors and analysts solely to countering IEDs and without a doubt, they had a positive impact. There was only a 20 percent increase in IEDs in their area, compared to triple-digit percentage increases in IED attacks in neighboring brigade battle spaces. But these results pale in comparison to the experience of 1st Battalion, 5th Marines in Nawa, where they not only saw a zero increase in IED attacks, but experienced a 90 percent decrease in IED activity. The 1st Squadron, 91st Cavalry Regiment in Nuristan and Kunar, and the 3rd Squadron, 71st Cavalry in Logar experienced comparable drops in violence. This evidence is admittedly anecdotal, but it is not irrelevant. Any comparison of approaches with results this divergent merits investigation and replication of the successful model.

CONCLUSION

The U.S. intelligence community has fallen into the trap of waging an anti-insurgency campaign rather than a counterinsurgency campaign. The difference is not academic. Capturing or killing key mid-level and high-level insurgents – anti-insurgency – is without question a necessary component of successful warfare, but far from sufficient for military success in Afghanistan. Anti-insurgent efforts are, in fact, a secondary task when compared to gaining and exploiting knowledge about the localized contexts of operation and the distinctions between the Taliban and the rest of the Afghan population. There are more than enough analysts in Afghanistan. Too many are simply in the wrong places and assigned to the wrong jobs. It is time to prioritize U.S. intelligence efforts and bring them in line with the war's objectives.

Doing so will require important cultural changes. Analysts must absorb information with the thoroughness of historians, organize it with the skill of librarians, and disseminate it with the zeal of journalists. They must embrace open-source, population-centric information as the lifeblood of their analytical work. They must open their doors to anyone who is willing to exchange information, including Afghans and NGOs as well as the U.S. military and its allies. As General Martin E. Dempsey, commander of the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, recently stated, "...[T]he best information, the most important intelligence, and the context that provides the best understanding come from the bottom up, not from the top down."¹⁵

Leaders must invest time and energy in selecting the best, most extroverted, and hungriest analysts to serve in Stability Operations Information Centers. These will be among the most challenging and rewarding jobs an analyst could tackle.

Meaningful change will not occur until commanders at all levels take responsibility for intelligence.

The Cold War notion that open-source information is "second class" is a dangerous, outmoded cliché. Lieutenant General Samuel V. Wilson, former director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, captured it perfectly: "Ninety percent of intelligence comes from open sources. The other 10 percent, the clandestine work, is just the more dramatic. The real intelligence hero is Sherlock Holmes, not James Bond."¹⁶

Meaningful change will not occur until commanders at all levels take responsibility for intelligence. The way to do so is through devising and prioritizing smart, relevant questions – "information requirements" – about the environment as well as the enemy. Of critical importance to the war effort is how a commander orders his or her intelligence apparatus to undertake finite collection, production, and dissemination. "If a commander does not effectively define and prioritize intelligence requirements," Marine Corps doctrine warns, "the entire effort may falter."¹⁷

The format of intelligence products matters. Commanders who think PowerPoint storyboards and color-coded spreadsheets are adequate for describing the Afghan conflict and its complexities have some soul searching to do. Sufficient knowledge will not come from slides with little more text than a comic strip. Commanders must demand substantive written narratives and analyses from their intel shops and make the time to read them. There are no shortcuts. Microsoft Word, rather

than PowerPoint, should be the tool of choice for intelligence professionals in a counterinsurgency.¹⁸

Employing effective counterinsurgency methods is not an option but a necessity. General McChrystal routinely issues distinct orders and clear guidance on the subject. When he states, “The conflict will be won by persuading the population, not by destroying the enemy,” it is not just a slogan, but an expression of his intent. Too much of the intelligence community is deaf to these directions – this must be remedied, and now. The General’s message must resonate throughout the entire community – top to bottom.

Historical lessons run the risk of sounding portentous, but disregarding them comes at a high price. History is replete with examples of powerful military forces that lost wars to much weaker opponents because they were inattentive to nuances in their environment. A Russian general who fought for years in Afghanistan cited this as a primary reason for the Soviet Union’s failures in the 1980s.¹⁹

A single-minded obsession with IEDs, while understandable, is inexcusable if it causes commanders to fail to outsmart the insurgency and wrest away the initiative. “A military force, culturally programmed to respond conventionally (and predictably) to insurgent attacks, is akin to the bull that repeatedly charges a matador’s cape – only to tire and eventually be defeated by a much weaker opponent,” General McChrystal and U.S. Forces-Afghanistan Command Sergeant Major Michael T. Hall recently wrote.²⁰ “This is predictable – the bull does what comes naturally. While a conventional approach is instinctive, that behavior is self-defeating.”

The intelligence community – the brains behind the bullish might of military forces – seems much too mesmerized by the red of the Taliban’s cape. If this does not change, success in Afghanistan will depend on the dubious premise that a bull will not tire as quickly as a Russian bear.

E N D N O T E S

- 1 The CIA's Center for the Study of Intelligence invited an anthropologist to study the analytic culture of the U.S. intelligence community. One of his observations was: "... [W]ithin the Intelligence Community, more organizational emphasis is placed on secrecy than on effectiveness." See Rob Johnston, *Analytic Culture in the US Intelligence Community: An Ethnographic Study*, (Washington D.C.: Center for the Study of Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency, 2005): 70, at <http://www.fas.org/irp/cia/product/analytic.pdf>.
- 2 The italics are as they appear in the original text, which is contained in Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication (MCDP) 2, *Intelligence*, (Secretary of the Navy: 1997) p. 77. U.S. Joint Doctrine makes the same point, stating, "Intelligence oversight and the production and integration of intelligence in military operations are inherent responsibilities of command." Joint Publication 2-0, *Joint Intelligence* (Joint Publications: 22 June 2007) p. I-1.
- 3 In this respect, counterinsurgency warfare shares something in common with nuclear war. The strategic, operational, and tactical spheres are compressed to the point where they overlap with one another, so much so that the actions of one soldier, like the detonation of one atomic bomb, can affect all three spheres simultaneously. For a useful discussion on the levels of war, see Secretary of the Navy, MCDP 1, *Warfighting*, (1997): 28-32.
- 4 In our view, it is advisable to augment Company Intelligence Support Teams and Company Level Intelligence Cells with trained intel analysts from the battalion S-2 who are in direct support of, but not attached to, the companies. The direct support status protects the analyst from being misused by a company commander while giving the analyst an incentive to provide information to the battalion S-2 and beyond. A succinct discussion of intelligence at the company level can also be found at Major Rod Morgan, "Company Intelligence Support Teams," *Armor* (July-August 2008): 23-25 & 50. See also LtCol Morgan G. Mann, USMCR & Capt Michael Driscoll, USMCR, "Thoughts Regarding the Company-Level Intelligence Cell," *Marine Corps Gazette* (June 2009): 28.
- 5 First Battalion, Fifth Marines was commanded in Nawa by Lieutenant Colonel William F. McCollough.
- 6 A useful analysis of force ratios in counterinsurgencies is contained in the following report: Seth G. Jones, Jeremy M. Wilson, Andrew Rathmell, and K. Jack Riley, *Establishing Law and Order after Conflict* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, 2005).
- 7 Our account of the approach of 1st Squadron, 91st Cavalry Regiment comes from media reports and conversations with Colonel Kolenda. A narrative of the squadron's approach, including a description of its intelligence focus, is also contained in the book *Stones into Schools: Promoting Peace with Books, Not Bombs, in Afghanistan and Pakistan*, by Greg Mortenson (Viking: 2009) Chapter 12. See also: Kolenda, "Winning Afghanistan at the Community Level," *Joint Force Quarterly* (Issue 56, 1st Quarter 2010) pp. 25-31. An account of 3rd Squadron, 71st Cavalry achieving a drop in IED attacks by focusing on the population rather than the enemy is related in a brief profile of the squadron's commander, Lieutenant Colonel Thomas B. Gukeisen, in: Denis D. Gray, "In Afghan War, Officer Flourishes Outside the Box," *The Associated Press* (20 December 2009).
- 8 For a discussion of how SIGINT should adapt itself to counterinsurgencies, see Major Matthew Reiley, USMC, "Transforming SIGINT to Fight Irregular Threats," *American Intelligence Journal* (Winter 2007/2008): 68-72.
- 9 A passive approach to intelligence support does not work. Intelligence shops that merely set up a "Request for Information Portal" and wait for customers to fill out formal requests online are not doing their job. Civilians and military officers who need support usually are either unaware of the location of such portals, cannot access them due to bandwidth constraints, or need to speak with a person via telephone in order to explain and shape the products or collection support they are requesting.
- 10 The closest thing to a substantive district-level assessment that we were able to find was produced not by the intelligence community, but by a research team commissioned by the Canadian government to explain the general situation in Kandahar City. This 75-page unclassified product, widely read in Regional Command-South, offers a rough model for the sort of district assessments Information Centers would write. See *District Assessment: Kandahar-city, Kandahar Province* (Commissioned by the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade: November 2009).
- 11 Uniformed personnel will also work in the Information Centers. In our experience, however, civilians are on average better trained at analysis and writing than military personnel, who are typically cultivated for leadership and management roles rather than analytical jobs. A frank after-action report by XVIII Airborne Corps underscores how far military intelligence training still must go to make analysts relevant in a counterinsurgency. The following is an excerpt from their report: "Intelligence analytical support to COIN operations requires a higher level of thinking, reasoning, and writing than conventional operations. In general, neither enlisted nor officer personnel were adequately trained to be effective analysts in a COIN environment.... In an overall intelligence staff of 250, CJ2 leadership assessed four or five personnel were capable analysts with an aptitude to put pieces together to form a conclusion." From: *Center for Army Lessons Learned*, "06-27 XVIII Airborne Corps/Multi-National CORPS-Iraq," https://transnet.act.nato.int/WISE/test/LessonsLea/CALL/TheOIF0EFJ/file/_WFS/JIIM%202007%20Gap%20Report%20.pdf (accessed 28 December 2009).
- 12 Analysts need not come solely from the intelligence community. People who qualify for a secret clearance, are sociable enough to build good working relationships, disciplined at working with large amounts of information, and can write well should be eligible. Seasoned print journalists who have been laid off in the current industry retrenchment, and who want to serve their country in Afghanistan, might be a source of talent that the State Department or other agencies could consider hiring for year-long assignments.
- 13 This instructive vignette, contained in a classified report by the Kandahar Intelligence Fusion Center, is the type of unclassified information that warrants inclusion in intelligence summaries disseminated to a broader audience. See "KIFC/CJ2 WINTER OUTLOOK, SUPPLEMENT III: BUILDING GIRoA CAPACITY" (15 September 2009).

- ¹⁴ In Afghanistan, which is one of a handful of countries still suffering from polio, there is evidence that using an attenuated live-virus vaccine produces greater benefits than a “killed”-virus vaccine. The excrement of children immunized with the live vaccine contains harmless viral matter that finds its way into well water. Ironically, this “contaminated” water ends up boosting the polio immunity of the community as a whole.
- ¹⁵ Excerpt from a speech by General Martin E. Dempsey, “Our Army’s Campaign of Learning,” delivered on 4 October 2009 at the Association of the United States Army’s Chapter Presidents’ Dinner in Washington, D.C., and published in *Landpower Essay* (Institute of Land Warfare: No. 09-3, November 2009).
- ¹⁶ Reported by David Reed, “Aspiring to Spying,” *The Washington Times*, 14 November 1997, Regional News: 1.
- ¹⁷ MCDP 2: 77-78.
- ¹⁸ For an incisive critique of military commanders’ appalling abuse of PowerPoint, see: T.X. Hammes, “Dumb-dumb bullets: As a decision-making aid, PowerPoint is a poor tool,” (*Armed Forces Journal*: 2009) <http://www.afji.com/2009/07/4061641> (accessed 19 December 2009).
- ¹⁹ Public comments of LtGen Ruslan Aushev (retired).
- ²⁰ Stanley A. McChrystal and Michael T. Hall, “ISAF Commander’s Counterinsurgency Guidance,” (Headquarters International Security Assistance Force): 2.

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