



CASE STUDY NO. 2
COMPLEX OPERATIONS CASE STUDIES SERIES

Dynamic Tension: Security, Stability, and the Opium Trade

Peter Curry

KAREN GUTTIERI
SERIES EDITOR
Naval Postgraduate School



COMPLEX OPERATIONS CASE STUDIES SERIES

Complex operations encompass stability, security, transition and reconstruction, and counterinsurgency operations and operations consisting of irregular warfare (United States Public Law No 417, 2008). Stability operations frameworks engage many disciplines to achieve their goals, including establishment of safe and secure environments, the rule of law, social well-being, stable governance, and sustainable economy. A comprehensive approach to complex operations involves many elements—governmental and nongovernmental, public and private—of the international community or a “whole of community” effort, as well as engagement by many different components of government agencies, or a “whole of government” approach. Taking note of these requirements, a number of studies called for incentives to grow the field of capable scholars and practitioners, and the development of resources for educators, students and practitioners. A 2008 United States Institute of Peace study titled “Sharing the Space” specifically noted the need for case studies and lessons. Gabriel Marcella and Stephen Fought argued for a case-based approach to teaching complex operations in the pages of [*Joint Forces Quarterly*](#), noting “Case studies force students *into* the problem; they put a face on history and bring life to theory.” We developed this series of complex operations teaching case studies to address this need. In this process, we aim to promote research and to strengthen relationships among civilian and military researchers and practitioners.

The [Center for Complex Operations](#) (CCO) emphasizes the importance of a whole of government approach to complex operations and provides a forum for a community of practice and plays a number of roles in the production and distribution of learning about complex operations, including supporting the compilations of lessons and practices.

Dr. Karen Guttieri at the [Naval Postgraduate School](#) provided the research direction and overall leadership for this project.

Center for Complex Operations, National Defense University, Washington, DC 20319.
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Dynamic Tension: Security, Stability, and the Opium Trade

Peter Curry

Poppies were the first thing that British Army Captain Leo Docherty noticed when he arrived in Afghanistan's turbulent Helmand Province in April 2006. "They were growing right outside the gate of our forward operating base," he told me. Within two weeks of his deployment to the remote town of Sangin, he realized that "poppy is the economic mainstay, and everyone is involved right up to the higher echelons of the local government."

Poppy, of course, is the plant from which opium and heroin are derived.

Docherty was quick to realize that the military push into northern Helmand Province was going to run into serious trouble. The rumor was "that we were there to eradicate the poppies," he said. "The Taliban are not stupid, and so they said, 'These guys are here to destroy your livelihood, so let's take up arms against them.' And it's been a downward spiral since then."¹

NO REST FOR THE WEARY

Colonel Dan Thompson, U.S. Army infantry, remembered reading Captain Docherty's (Captain, U.K. [United Kingdom] Army) account soon after Thompson's Fourth Brigade Combat Team (4BCT) was told it would be deploying to Afghanistan.² He also remembered reading a British general's scathing review of the U.S. military's counterinsurgency strategy. Thompson thought it ironic that a British captain was taking to task his own army for the same thing. It was Thompson's experience that while he agreed with some of the general's remarks, he did not think the British fully understood their situation in Iraq, or apparently in Afghanistan either.³ But unlike Captain Docherty, who resigned in protest, Colonel Thompson believed that mistakes were an opportunity to improve and that if the American troops stayed the course long enough, they would get it right.

That was long ago in a much different place. As a battalion commander in Iraq, Thompson had learned some hard-won lessons. He saw how things can turn around as long as you stick with it and learn from your mistakes. He

was also hopeful because the army saw fit to give him some well-deserved rest at the War College and a promotion. Now, in early 2009, a plane loaded with some of the Fourth Brigade and its equipment touched down in the Hindu Kush, along with the brigade's more realistic commander. The "new" Dan Thompson was a little older, a little wiser, and a little more confident about his abilities. As part of the increasing U.S. presence in Afghanistan, his unit had been ordered to the southern part of Regional Command-East, a rugged area on the edge of the opium heartland.

Although opium production is largely outside the 4BCT area, its impact is significant to the local economy and creates instability. The drug trade supplies the insurgency with weapons and supports most of the underground economy. Recent international and Afghan efforts had shut down production in many provinces, but the drug trade still was having a significant impact.⁴

YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW

While in Kabul, shortly before taking over the mission, Thompson met a civilian during his in-country orientation who was working as a contractor for the United Nations (UN) Assistance Mission-Afghanistan (UNAMA). He was an affable Canadian who had extensive experience in Afghanistan and parts of Africa and was willing to tell Thompson anything he wanted to know.

The contractor started, "I'm going to tell you about the average Afghan farmer. I'm telling you about him, because the chances are the farmer will never tell you anything in your short time here, unless he absolutely trusts you.

"The first thing to know is that the average farmer doesn't grow poppy—and if he does it probably is not his only crop. He may grow it for his own financial benefit, but more likely he grows it to repay debt. Either way, the reason he grows anything for profit is based on his local and family needs and crop prices that year. His decision to grow opium or not is based on market forces. Period.

"The average farmer is not all that ideological in a political sense. He's a businessman and a provider for his family. In this society, saving face and honor are critical. Providing for your family is central. If we take away his ability to provide, to earn a living, he may or may not find another line of work. But if we strip him of his honor, either knowingly or unknowingly, you have cultivated something much different.

"Regardless, farming is highly localized, therefore the reasons for growing anything are a complex mix of forces. For instance, there is little production historically in your area, but we have seen other areas, similar to yours, begin poppy production in the last few years. Since your area borders the higher poppy-producing provinces, you may see evidence of transportation, smuggling, or maybe even refinement instead of large poppy fields.

“In most parts of Afghanistan, there is a great disparity of relative wealth—even in agribusiness. The more money one has, the more land one has, then the more you control not just economically, but politically as well. If you are a poor farmer, chances are that many of your male family members left for economic opportunities elsewhere, while the farmer remains to protect the family and farms the land. A poor farmer is most likely to be in a sharecropping arrangement with a larger farmer. The larger farmers and ‘bankers’ extend credit to poor farmers in exchange for a production quota as driven by the creditor. A poor farmer can grow whatever else he wants, but he must make those quotas. Usually those quotas are driven by the most profitable crop at the time. But remember, the average farmer isn’t the linchpin of the drug trade; the larger, wealthier farmers are.

“This same disparity, incidentally, exists for nonfarm labor. A poor family will earn a wage doing low-end, manual labor. A more wealthy family is usually more connected, is more likely to secure higher-paying employment, and is more likely to receive patronage from some government officials. That’s why any project that can employ a large number of people, even if it is less efficient, is preferable to the local population.

“And that, my friend, is the crux of your problem. If you try to eliminate poppy through eradication or interdiction because it fuels the insurgency (your problem), you may be pouring petrol on the burning embers, at least for the short term. You may take away a man’s livelihood and his manhood at the same time. Although he’s still not likely to join up with the insurgency, you have quite possibly created one more hurdle in the ‘hearts and minds’ part of your campaign.

“If the economic situation gets bad enough, that farmer may even sign up for the insurgency on a limited basis, to be used as fodder by the insurgency. It is one way to restore his honor in a martial society and bring a few dollars home to his kin. He may get paid ‘by the ambush’ so to speak. I understand that you cannot make such a distinction in the middle of a fire-fight, but economics and the amount of enemy activity usually have a relationship.

“If you go after the rich farmers and businessmen—let’s not call them ‘warlords’ for now, and you upset their apple cart too much, you will probably cause cascading economic consequences for the local population. The rich guy will somehow survive, probably with a well-timed visit to the local government official who will tell you to back off. Meanwhile, the poor guy at the bottom of the economic pile is hanging on by a thread. Any disruption to his tenuous hold on life could be catastrophic for his family. Even if the guy at the end of the line is not a poppy grower, he may still feel it.

“So the farmer does what he has to, says whatever he has to, in order to survive. There are few courts in the country, fewer that are competent, so he has no way of clearly redressing injustices. He doesn’t have many choices; he’s poor, illiterate, and often at the mercy of others. That’s why he’s extremely guarded and fiercely independent when he has to be. He looks out for himself and his family. So he plots a course of action that will reap the

most return based on the least amount of risk to his family. If he feels that opium can bring in more money with less risk, then he's going to do it. If the risk increases, then the farmer and large producer may change their behavior. How growers change their behavior is the 'million-dollar question.'

"I'm not saying that going after poppy producers should not be done, but what I am saying is that the approach should be a comprehensive one with both incentives and disincentives for producers, a plan for interdiction of the opium trade, probably some sort of eradication, a system of justice in place, and a market for alternative crops. Your group is only part of that plan.

"I know that saying what needs to be done and developing a plan of what needs to be done are two very different tasks.

"So you have quite a dilemma. You have to maintain stability, and when I say 'stability', I'm not just talking about the absence of violence. In Afghanistan, real stability is local and relative to all kinds of social forces. You have to work with people that don't trust you, don't like you, or just want you to go away. You have to work with many groups who have different agendas than you do. They are not the enemy, but some days you may feel like they are working against you. If it's any consolation, those other groups sometimes feel the same way about you. One thing is certain, you will not be able to accomplish your mission without the locals, the government, and the non-governmental and international organizations. We should all be in this together as much as we can be. I hope this helps you a little more. Thanks for the coffee."

WHERE THE RUBBER MEETS THE RING ROAD⁵

Thompson distrusted the reports, since they tended to reflect a more rosy assessment than what was visible on the ground. Sure, the Afghan government probably had made progress, but the causes for the opium reduction were varied. Production had gone down in 2007, but the massive drought may have done more damage to the poppy crop than any change in policy.

But pretty poppy flowers and bulbs were someone else's issue. The Fourth Brigade was part of the NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization)-U.S.-led, International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). The 4BCT was told to establish a presence in their area, and then accomplish several tasks:

OPORD (Operations Order) 1-09.⁶

Establish security and stability in your area of operations (AO) . . .

Key tasks:

1. Kill, capture elements of Al Qaeda in your area of operations. . . .
2. Reduce Taliban-Al Qaeda influence among the population. . . .
3. Gain and maintain control by establishing local security for the population. . . .

4. Extend the reach of the Afghan government. . . .
5. Continue to support and train the Afghan National Army in the area. . . .
6. Strengthen and support the local police forces. . . .

Thompson knew from experience that accomplishing these tasks was not going to be easy or simple. His initial studies of the region seemed to echo Captain Docherty's comments: "You can't get there from here without a good plan for addressing the issue of illegal opium production." Thompson also knew that he could not achieve *his* assigned tasks without the help of many people outside of his sphere of control. He knew that he was probably going to have to help others in order to help himself.

The good news was that he was still in the first weeks of a deployment that was scheduled to last thirteen months—if all went well. Colonel Thompson's brigade was still making unit adjustments on the best places to set up in the middle of largely enemy territory. His troops knew, as he did, that as your unit organizes and establishes local security, your job is to constantly improve your understanding of your environment.

Question: What do we know about Colonel Thompson, his unit, and his mission? What can be inferred at this point?

EXPERIENCE: A DECISION SHORTCUT OR JUST SHORTSIGHTEDNESS?

Colonel Thompson was not completely out of place. With a tour in Kosovo and two previous tours in Iraq under his belt, as well as his initial impressions on the ground in Afghanistan, Thompson felt he was beginning to make some sense of the place. He knew that the quicker he could understand his surroundings, the better he could give guidance to his leaders.

Thompson began the process that had been inculcated into him since he had joined the military, namely knowing to start with the end in mind: Visualize what the environment *might* look like—or what one might expect it to look like—in thirteen months, if he accomplished his mission well. Thompson understood that the outcome would not match his initial vision.

Colonel Thompson had internalized several "rules," or assumptions, about small wars over his twenty-four-year army career. He knew his rules would be tested. His pride wanted to cling to these lessons, but his training and professionalism made Thompson a realist. He knew he would have to be willing to chuck every single rule out the window if it did not fit.

With the absence of knowledge, he had to start somewhere, so he wrote down some notes. Thompson chuckled to himself. He had written what he called his seven rules of thumb—perhaps his repeated readings (or "beat-

ings,” as his officers would say) of T.E. Lawrence’s 1926 book, *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, had rubbed off.⁷ Regardless, these rules served as a decent point of departure. He reviewed his notes:

Rule One. Do no harm. You have learned the hard way that some of your actions, while intending to do good, may actually make providing stability and countering an insurgency harder to accomplish. All your actions may have strategic consequences.

Rule Two. What you currently see is only a snapshot. This area is not Iraq or Kosovo or anywhere else—even another part of Afghanistan. Be careful not to make assumptions based on past history. There are too many factors, such as geography, social structures, the local economy, and the political situation, that are different here. While having a background in similar situations, avoid putting an Iraqi solution on Afghan problems.

Rule Three. Expect corruption and a weak government. Most people are not evil, although enough are. Remember that people do what they have to do in order to survive. Stable governments at the local level may have a noticeable degree of corruption. You’re not going to change that anytime soon, and while thirteen months is a long time for you, it is a blip in the local history. Lesson: Set realistic expectations.

Rule Four. Coercion will work—for a while. It is, however, just one technique in your toolkit. While the manuals tell you that coercion is counterproductive, you have found that it is the imprecise application of coercion that is the problem. Failure to employ this tool accurately but sparingly is the problem.

Rule Five. Violence and peace coexist in these situations. Just because violence increases does not mean that peace decreases. For instance, clearing a village may temporarily increase the violence level, but if you stay to protect the villagers, lasting peace has a chance to flourish.

Rule Six. Pay attention to what you hear, but understand that everyone has an agenda. Think less about good guys versus bad guys, and focus on those people whose agendas will advance, and counter, your own.

Rule Seven. What works today may not work tomorrow. Always question your assumptions, always question people’s motives, and always analyze your own actions. Make a decision, create an action, and then see the reaction.

Question: What do you think about these seven rules? Are they useful or counterproductive? Why? Do they point to a way forward for Colonel Thompson in accomplishing the task assigned him?

Colonel Thompson knew that he would have to get away from the base camp that was being built and quickly gain an understanding of his AO by driving around, meeting people, and establishing relationships with key players in the area—all the while avoiding getting killed by an ambush or IED (improvised explosive device, or roadside bomb). To make sure he was as prepared as possible, he checked the notes about Afghanistan that he had taken during briefings and meetings prior to his deployment, and he reviewed what he knew about opium production in particular.

Thompson pulled out his green, government-issued notebook from his ACU⁸ (army combat uniform) cargo pocket; released the rubber band that served as a keeper; and leafed through the smudged, worn pages. Under the heading “Facts about Afghanistan and opium production,” Thompson reviewed his notes.⁹

- The 4BCT will operate in two provinces covering over 23,000 square kilometers divided into twenty-six districts. Each district has its own form of government that consults, to varying degrees, with the provincial government. Currently, both provincial governors are supportive of the central government.
- The total population for both provinces is over 1,400,000 people divided into several clans and tribes. The main language is Pashtu, but Dari and Baloch are spoken in the higher elevations and the more remote areas. The illiteracy rate is around 60 percent for males and 87 percent for females. Median age is 17.6 years. Life expectancy is 44.6 years.
- There is extensive U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) presence in the region with several ongoing projects. There is little known about some of the nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), as many have a policy, either explicit or implicit, to not be seen as working directly with the U.S. military. A few NGOs work in direct and indirect opposition to U.S. military efforts.
- Only 23 percent of the population has access to safe drinking water.
- The annual per capita income is \$250 U.S.D. The average income for an unskilled worker is less than one dollar a day.¹⁰
- Afghanistan is the world’s largest opium producer. The bulk of heroin in Europe originates from Afghan opium.¹¹ The opium trade is believed to make up at least half of the Afghan economy.

AMONG THE PEOPLE

Thompson ordered his driver to make a left upon leaving the last checkpoint of the austere forward operating base. The base’s access road was a clear

demarcation between everything that made him comfortable and this foreign land. He immediately felt that same old feeling of being the outsider looking in. His four-vehicle convoy, which included his personal security team, or “the entourage,” as Thompson referred to it, created quite a stir in the local villages. Given the security precautions for brigade commanders, there was little he could do at this early stage to blend in. As people began staring at this strange sight, all of Thompson’s senses became instantly alive, and sometimes overwhelmed. People were sizing him up. Taking stock. Weighing their agendas and wondering what the American objectives were.

“Be alert but not skittish,” Thompson told himself. “Be aware, begin to understand things as they are, and forget how things have been. Remember to watch your backs, watch your buddies’ back, pay attention to the little things, and never forget what your mission is.”

The mission was to continue what other units had started well before the 4BCT arrived. Now that there were more troops, the 4BCT was ordered to protect the population and extend the reach of government. Thompson understood that in this area at least, his allies had a different view of his mission and his purpose. He had already talked to the NATO forces operating in other parts of the province. He knew that they were well-meaning, professional, and forthright; however, they were operating with several caveats. Caveats, he knew, were a fancy term for restrictions from their governments. From where he sat, he felt that these caveats put the entire multinational mission at a great disadvantage. Most restrictions were short-sighted attempts at reducing casualties, like limiting the distance, scope, and types of missions. It was a bit like grounding airplanes for a year; the safety record goes up, but the airlines lose market share. Few of the caveats made sense to Thompson, and he wondered why some of the NATO troops even bothered to deploy. In any case, most of the NATO members did not deploy enough of these troops for the task at hand, which is why his brigade was there covering an area the size of West Virginia. It was what it was, and, whatever the restrictions, he had to make it work.

Thompson knew that the differences in approach would be a problem, but he vowed to be part of the solution and to work with everyone in the region if he could. He put his doubts aside and refocused on the immediate task—understanding the environment. One of the best ways to achieve stability in the province was to help reduce dependence on opium production. Surely reducing opium production and trafficking would reduce the flow of money and weapons that fueled the insurgency. Insurgents were Thompson’s military problem, but the insurgency existed because the people lacked viable governance, basic education, a viable judicial system, and a working economy. The government was struggling with providing an alternative to the insurgent’s narrative. If this alternative could not be accepted by the locals, it didn’t matter how many insurgents the 4BCT killed or captured. The 4BCT could only set the conditions; drugs were “not in his lane.” How can you make an impact when you have little control over the solution?

The first step was to convince those who still needed convincing that it was in their best interest to reduce opium production. Everyone seemed to understand that opium was the nexus of much of the instability, but in many quarters there was little political will to fix the problem. Everyone seemed to be waiting for someone else to take action first, unwilling to be the “bad guy.” The other problem was that many who could change the opium situation were also part of the problem.^{12,13}

Thompson had his own challenges. Unknown groups had probed his forward operating base and several of his outposts. So far, the intelligence could not pinpoint the group or groups, much less their motivations. The enemy could be Al Qaeda, Taliban, drug lords, or any number of groups operating in the area. Thompson knew that Taliban had operated near the base and that the drug lords did not like anyone getting in their business. The American presence could be bad for business.

Not all drug lords were Taliban, but from Thompson’s viewpoint, he would deal with anyone trying to hurt his troops, and deal with them swiftly and convincingly. The 4BCT had already lost one soldier to a mortar attack a few nights ago, and eight soldiers had already been medevac’d.¹⁴ The most likely aim of these probes was to provoke a disproportionate, overly aggressive response from the brigade. So far, his new Kandak¹⁵ (Afghan National Army) partner in the southern provinces had started operations against “antigovernment forces” but had trouble pursuing the enemy due to limited logistical support. The 4BCT could help there. The military solution was relatively easy. What Thompson did not know was whether the provincial governor could be trusted. Since the Taliban still controlled much of the province, the governor had given Thompson a cool reception the other day.

What was clear to Colonel Thompson was that not everyone in the local government was on board with fixing the opium problem. The rumor mill around the province suggested that the relatives of the governor did not want to solve the problem, which in a perverse way was logical, given that they were the largest producers of opium in the area. Another challenge was that people wanted stability but were growing tired of the presence of foreign troops. Foreigners were perceived as disingenuous and heavy handed; they had promised a lot but delivered little and had killed too many innocent people in order to get to the Taliban. Thompson knew that locals were always suspicious of outsiders. An outsider in Afghanistan was not just a foreigner; but so, too, was also almost anyone not from the immediate area or clan. The Taliban capitalized on that predisposition with good effect. Taliban rumors were wildly exaggerated, but the rumors kept the 4BCT guys on the political defensive, constantly on the road, and in the villages drinking a lot of chai (tea) with the village elders and local officials and explaining to them the other side of the story, all the while knowing that the Afghan president was saying many of the same things.¹⁶

The Taliban-inspired rumors of excessive force being used by the international military forces were confirmed by various international and non-governmental organizations that worked in the area. Thompson had talked

to several representatives in the last week in an effort to understand their views of the problem. Some, primarily U.S. organizations, were open and helpful. Most NGOs operated independently, were wary of an increased military presence in the area, and constantly sought a balance between their neutrality and their cooperation with international military forces. Thompson always tried to respect these groups' charters while working with them to create a more secure area.

Colonel Thompson had heard that in the past there had been friction with a few NGOs and U.S. and NATO military forces in general. Former commanders had told stories that these kinds of NGOs simply resisted or ignored U.S. forces until their support was needed. These NGOs were problematic from the military point of view. Playing "both ends against the middle," these groups resisted cooperating with U.S. forces until they were in trouble. If U.S. forces failed to respond in a fashion to their liking, they would criticize the international military effort in Afghanistan for being unresponsive. In spite of increased Taliban activity, these groups continued to operate with few security precautions. NGOs and international governmental organizations (IGOs) were, as Thompson's predecessor related, "a bag of mixed nuts." Colonel Thompson knew that his predecessor had a rough time, mainly due to being overtasked and undermanned. He decided to take such comments critically and in context. He would try to improve relationships with all entities that were willing to work with him and his unit. He adopted a wait-and-see attitude about these few particular NGOs.

The policies were as varied as the organizations. Despite the myriad organizations present in the region, Thompson had to focus on the pivotal actors that would have a significant impact in his area of operations. First, he had to know all of the stakeholders that operated in his area, regardless of whether they communicated with military forces or not. Next, he had to understand which stakeholders were critical for his unit's success. Finally, he had to know which of them could undermine his mission and then develop a plan to deal with all of them in some capacity.

Colonel Thompson, a dedicated military man, firmly believed that in the absence of guidance, it was best to do something—anything. Action, rightly or wrongly, would make things clearer from his perspective. At this point, he decided not to react in an overly aggressive manner to the armed pressure from enemy elements in his region. He pushed patrols out into the villages, not to find and kill the enemy (although if the opportunity presented itself, he would take it) but to pressure the enemy, to be "in his backyard." This action had another effect. He felt he could better secure the locals by forcing the enemy to go to ground, to either hide or withdraw for a while. Colonel Thompson hoped he would gain some breathing space, to buy time so his unit could establish relationships with the local people and enter the fight on his own terms. Those tasks, however, were for his subordinate units; his task was to find out more about the area by establishing communications with stakeholders and to build an understanding of the networks, both formal and informal, that were at work in the area.¹⁷ By taking action on the ground

and getting out among the people the 4BCT was there to protect, Thompson felt he could have success. But there was just one nagging issue—opium. No matter how well his troops performed, the drug problem was always the eight-hundred-pound gorilla in the room.

ENDNOTES

1. Misha Glenny, "The Lost War," *Washington Post*, August 19, 2007, p. B01.
2. Colonel Thompson is a composite character. For some good links to articles and interviews with BCT commanders in Afghanistan, see <http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=2580>.
3. Brigadier Nigel Alwyn-Foster, "Changing the Army for Counterinsurgency Operations," *Military Review*, Ft. Leavenworth, KS (November-December 2005), <http://usacac.army.mil/CAC/milreview/download/English/NovDec05/aylwin.pdf>.
4. United Nations (UN) Office on Drugs and Crimes, "Opium Survey 2008, Executive Summary" (Kabul, Afghanistan, August 2008), p. vii.
5. The Ring Road is the major road in Afghanistan that links most of the larger cities together. It resembles a ring, or loop. A massive construction effort is underway to make the road usable throughout the country, but in some places it is still a "road" in name only.
6. OPORD is military jargon for Operations Order, which gives commanders the essential information from a higher headquarters. OPORDs vary in length, depending on detail. This OPORD is only to introduce a few concepts and is by no means representative of an actual OPORD in format or completeness.
7. T.E. Lawrence's *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (1926) has been required reading for many U.S. military officers over decades but found renewed popularity during the first few years of Operation Iraqi Freedom.
8. The Digital Pattern uniform in service since 2004.
9. See <http://afghanistan.usaid.gov/en/province.9.aspx>, <http://afghanistan.usaid.gov/en/Province.27.aspx>.
10. UN Office on Drugs and Crime, "The Opium Economy in Afghanistan: An International Problem" (Vienna, Austria: 2003).
11. CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] Factbook, March 19, 2009, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html>.
12. UN Office on Drugs and Crime, "The Opium Economy in Afghanistan."
13. A deep understanding of the opium trade and its influence on governance is beyond the scope of this case study. The author highly recommends the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the World Bank's report, *Afghanistan's Drug Industry: Structure, Functioning, Dynamics, and Implications for Counter-Narcotics Policy*, edited by Doris Buddenberg and William A. Byrd (2007).
14. Medevac: medical evacuation, usually by helicopter. Medevac is for the most seriously wounded troops with injuries that exceed the local medical unit's capabilities.
15. Afghan National Army battalion, about three hundred to four hundred-lightly equipped infantry troops. Many Kandaks operate at less than full strength due to a lack of equipment and personnel accountability.
16. Kim Barker, "Afghan Leader Hamid Karzai defends his rule in exclusive Tribune Interview," *Chicago Tribune*, December 19, 2008.
17. Networks, in this sense, are all types of human interaction, not just insurgent networks. There are networks of international assistance groups, security forces, and criminal networks, to name a few.

Dynamic Tension: Security, Stability, and the Opium Trade

Peter Curry

As written, this case study is not really about the opium trade in Afghanistan. Instead, it is about managing a set of complex or wicked problems in an uncertain environment. This case study is about influencing events or potential outcomes when you do not have direct control over the stakeholders. The overall question is, “How do you get your mission accomplished when you are just one actor on the stage with several actors—each of whom is reading from a different script?”

Military officers at the War College level (executive or near-executive level) are undergoing a professional maturation process. They are leaving the tactical world, where issues tend to be fairly defined and bounded, the outcomes are relatively known, and decisions are made to fix the most urgent problem. That kind of thinking was absolutely essential when they were commanding units at the “pointy end” of the spear. Now, they are a bit more removed from the front lines. If these students rely too much on their intuition and experiences at their new level, they tend to bind and define the problem too narrowly and to default to a solution with which they are comfortable rather than making the best choice for the mission.

This case study is designed to push them out of their comfort zones. As they mature as leaders, they will operate in a different world. They must move from a primarily tactical mindset to a more operational or strategic world view as they begin to lead ever-larger organizations. In these organizations, issues tend to be undefined. The answer is not linear; the answer will probably be part of a larger iterative process, requiring constant assessment and reappraisal. Victory, or end state, is not clear. This issue cannot be solved or fixed; rather, the issue might have to be managed over a long period of time to achieve an acceptable set of conditions.

Flexibility was the touchstone when constructing this case study. This study can have several applications: a decision-making exercise, a consensus-building study, or an adjunct to a policy lesson. Additionally, it could serve as a compare–contrast case with a similar one for U.S.-Colombia efforts showing the similarities and differences.

The case study assumes that the instructor will have some familiarity with the issues in Afghanistan or the issues presented prior to the case study. For instance, if your prior class is about the principles of collaborative, inter-agency processes, then your focus would be there. Some modification of the

lesson would be necessary. Currently there is no bibliography; however, many of the footnotes in the case study are also an excellent representation of the latest work on the subject. In addition, the Marine Corps War College Lesson Plan (Enclosure One) discusses many of the policy issues about security in Afghanistan.

LESSON ONE

1. Introduce the Problem

This lesson is designed for two classes. The first will have a guest speaker, instructor lecture, or discussion of the policy options for reducing drugs or instability in Afghanistan, followed by the introduction of the case study. The next lesson will focus on policy execution. Most of the time, guest speakers and instructor lectures focus on the policy issues only. The overall lesson is designed to highlight the complexities of policy execution. It serves as a way to reinforce the idea that policy is “easier said than done.” The lesson is designed to drive home the idea that issuing policy in a national capital is very different from executing that policy on the ground.

Enclosure One is a key part of the lesson plan that we teach at the Marine Corps War College for the guest speaker lesson. It is attached at the end of these teaching notes. Obviously, you will have to modify the lesson plan in accordance with your learning objectives. While you might not have access to guest speakers, etc., this lesson is designed to be complementary to a larger course or subsection of a course. Again, flexibility is key; emphasize what you want.

2. Introduce the Case Study

After the lecture or discussion is complete, introduce the case study toward the latter part of the first lesson as a way of reinforcing the lecture. The case study is to gain an understanding of Colonel Thompson’s dilemma of trying to establish security and stability without causing significant damage to or weakening the social, economic, and political systems that are in place. No solutions should be elicited other than perhaps generalized, long-range plans. If the students jump right into solving the problem, then it offers up an opportunity to discuss how framing a problem set too early can anchor the group in an overly narrow solution set. The first step is to understand the problem. The case study ends purposely with an open-ended issue; the students provide their own conclusions later.

The study revolves around a fictitious brigade combat team (BCT) commander named Colonel Dan Thompson. He is an amalgam of the author’s personal experiences, the experiences of other officers gained in informal interviews, and of the military’s lessons learned from Afghanistan. Please note: It is not designed to be 100 percent accurate, and a certain

ambiguity and incompleteness has been built in to see where the students will go with the study. Also note that the case study is purposely written from one soldier's point of view, with some biases built in. At no time is it designed to represent Department of Defense (DoD) policy, but some of these biases have appeared when researching this case study. Some of the criticisms of other organizations (in this case the NGOs) are not official policy but have been expressed by troops privately, and some of those criticisms have leaked into the media. The intent is to highlight that those criticisms are present; it is up to the instructor how best to handle that issue. The bottom line is that many in the military, privately at least, feel that the military is shouldering most of the load for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. As one soldier told the author, "The military was told to go to war, but America was told to go to Wal-Mart." Including these biases is intended to elicit a student reaction. In spite of our best efforts, many high-level practitioners state that personality traits and biases inform our decision-making more than we care to admit. Part of making collaborative decisions at the strategic level is to understand as many group and individual biases, norms, and cultures as possible. To sanitize the military biases would take something away from the study. In fact, we want students during role-playing to bring some of those organizational positions, biases, and norms into the discussion. The instructor, however, needs to ensure that the case study doesn't degrade into a series of caricatures during student role-play. Emphasize realism. Ask the question, "Would that official make that kind of a statement? Why?"

Some Background Information

Opening Quotation

Captain Leo Docherty was a British Army officer in the Scots Guard who resigned after his tour in Afghanistan. He has since been an outspoken critic of both the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, contributing many op-ed pieces around the world. He wrote a book in 2007 about his experiences, called *Desert of Death: A Soldier's Journey from Iraq to Afghanistan*. He is not without his detractors, who portray him as self-serving and lacking a deep understanding of the issue. Nonetheless, his quotation serves as an opening into the case study.

The BCT Organizational Unit in the U.S. Army

A BCT is a flexible organization within the U.S. Army that consists of five thousand to six thousand soldiers in a combat zone. In Afghanistan, a BCT can be responsible for several provinces encompassing thousands of square miles. By contrast, in a conventional war scenario, a BCT might be responsible for a few square miles, depending on the situation. Units go where the enemy is; in an unconventional environment, enemy units are small and dispersed. Consequently, counterinsurgent units must also disperse into smaller-than-usual units over greater-than-usual distances. A BCT has also grown to be a mini-interagency element on the ground. Many

BCTs have some interface, either directly or indirectly, with a number of law enforcement and intelligence agencies. A BCT also works with the Department of State within its area of operations.

Military Rank and Experience

A captain in the U.K. armed forces is usually in his late 20s or early 30s with between five and twelve years of military experience. Captain Docherty had seven when he resigned. A U.S. Army colonel who is a commander is generally between forty-two and forty-five years old with at least twenty-two years' experience as an officer. He or she is a product of extensive military schooling throughout his/her career. A colonel in the U.S. Army has survived a very rigorous promotion process. Only 5 percent of the entry-level officers (lieutenants) ever make "full colonel." Of that group, about 5 to 10 percent of all colonels become brigade commanders, depending on circumstances and the needs of the army.

The ISAF (International Security Assistance Force)

The ISAF are the military forces assigned to help establish security in Afghanistan. The ISAF's charter supports the UN mandate. In 2003, the United Nations authorized NATO to assume operational control of the ISAF effort. At the time, the United States kept most of its forces under a separate command in order to operate more freely within the country. In 2005 to 2006, both headquarters merged into a new headquarters under the ISAF charter. Since then, the United States has taken a major role in providing troops, resources, and direction to the ISAF effort. (See Enclosure Two in the teaching notes for more information.) The ISAF runs its own Web site, which is a great source of most current open source information. Also, the ISAF link to its "placemat" shows the current force laydown. The link is http://www.nato.int/isaf/docu/epub/pdf/isaf_placemat.pdf.

The case study's story line begins with a short synopsis of Colonel Thompson's personal experience. This is a critical step in understanding that self-awareness is important to executive decision-making. Personal and organizational biases quickly tend to anchor a problem. (The old adage, "If you're a hammer, then all your problems look like nails," comes to mind.) Students can provide some personal accounts or viewpoints at this time. Encourage them to do so—it adds richness and immediacy to the problem set at hand.

The other key area is to get students who have little or no experience in the military to discuss their views of the military. It is always interesting to see both sides of the discussion work through factual accounts and stereotypes. It is an "eye-opener" for both groups.

You will notice 4BCT's specified tasks. A specified task in military parlance means what the boss specifically tells you to do. Thompson's military commander may not have issued this order in the exact manner described, but allowances were made for the potentially broad range of experience

levels in the class, especially among the civilian and international students who may or will attend the War College. The case study was also intended to add a little ambiguity for the military students so they can discuss the importance of key words in such documents. Colonel Thompson's focus is security; however, you'll notice that he doesn't have a specified task for stopping opium production. Although his unit does not have direct responsibilities, any changes to the current system by his BCT or by other stakeholders in the area, or any changes to the current system in opium production, will cause reactions and instability in other areas. Going after drug lords, for instance, will have an effect on the local economy. If opium drives the local economy, then farmers lose money to pay off debts. This will certainly cause instability in the short term.

The first lesson ends with an introduction of some of the stakeholder's interests. Assign roles for the next lesson. Hand out Enclosure Two to the students as a primer of stakeholder interests and viewpoints. The viewpoints match well with the stakeholders' stated or real policies, but they are purposely broad. The students would be expected to conduct additional, outside-the-classroom research on the policies and positions of their assigned group and be ready to role-play. At this point, for War College students, we would tell them that the quality of their role-playing and their knowledge of the role will be graded.

QUESTIONS

1. What should Colonel Thompson do?

- Go back to his commander and have opium tasks specified
- Travel around to understand the local people
- Study what?
- Ignore the opium—it is someone else's problem
- Opium is a symptom of bad governance—fix that and the opium problem will go away. (Ask students, "Is this solution in Thompson's 'kit bag' of responsibilities?")
- Others?

2. What do you make of Thompson's "Seven Rules?" Do they stand up to scrutiny? Do they point to a way forward for him in accomplishing the task assigned him?

The issues are varied; take time to explore as many as time allows.

Ask, “What’s the issue?” That should introduce the concept of problem or issue framing. How you frame an issue generally drives solutions.

3. Student preparation for the following class/Issue the handout with instructions.

Once the class has formulated some mental model of the kinds of issues that Colonel Thompson must manage, the class is given the stakeholder background handout. This handout gives only rudimentary guidance. It is up to the instructor or the students to add depth to the stakeholders through additional research outside the class. The students will be divided into a number of stakeholders (the instructor decides how many groups the students will role-play). The instructor gives the students a basic set of interests that are not in the handout or allow the students to decide what those interests might be based on. Source notes in the case study represent a good background for both student and teacher preparation. There are pros and cons to each approach based on the class’s experience level or creativity. The instructor could also allow the students to build an “avatar,” or virtual identity to go along with their role-playing and the instructor should provide a “tilt chart” for the group. That “tilt chart” could simply be green “up” arrows or red “down” arrows on the whiteboard, representing each group’s “tilt” toward Colonel Thompson’s or the U.S.’s agenda. This helps provide some structure to the outcome. You could allow “free play” if you are comfortable with a different scenario each time the lesson is presented. Names should be provided or created using traditional Afghan/U.S./European names. (Do not allow students to come up with Russian or Arabic names, for example, if they are role-playing a local warlord.)

LESSON TWO

The instructor will role-play Colonel Thompson. You will simulate visits to each stakeholder. (Remember to tell the students that you are doing this step in X minutes, but in actual, real conditions, Colonel Thompson’s dialogue with each stakeholder could take several weeks or months through a series of conversations and meetings to arrive at the level of knowledge that we’ll get in a few minutes in the classroom.) Colonel Thompson must ask leading questions that will elicit an understanding of each stakeholder’s interests and positions. If students have role-played well, the rest of the class will also gain an appreciation not only of the dialogue but also of the tone of the spoken words and the body language of the people involved. These cues help reinforce the idea that many messages are received on a lot of levels and filtered differently through different cultures.

A key point is not to make anyone role-play Colonel Thompson—the facilitator will assume that role. In lesson two, the facilitator “drives” or “flies” over to each stakeholder and begins a conversation. Somewhere in

the conversation, Colonel Thompson should elicit an answer to the question, “If you were me, what do you think I should do?”

Then discuss the potential pitfalls if Colonel Thompson

- overpromises,
- under-promises,
- is not vigilant about being “worked” or set up by the other stakeholders, or
- can’t decide.

The best answers from the role-players will be a workable solution, but also informed by their own agenda, not Colonel Thompson’s. This does two things. First, we teach the students not to offer only problems, but to formulate solutions or recommendations. A key skill for executives is quickly to sum up complex issues and provide answers. The second goal is to get the students to understand not only what their organizational goals are but also what the other stakeholders’ interests are. Encourage the students to put a “human face” on their organization, rather than just to recite organizational policy. At the risk of stating the obvious, perceptions about an organization on the ground have a lot to do with how a person represents his/her organization.

This class is not intended to be a negotiation exercise but could be modified to be one. This lesson is designed to discuss the complexities of the opium trade while Colonel Thompson tries to build a strategy where he can gain some consensus and reduce the resistance to his security plans as he begins his operations.

Some resistance should be expected. Colonel Thompson has a lot of power, and he’ll have to wield it to accomplish his task. His plan, by design, should have winners and losers and, in that sense, this is not a classic, business school negotiation exercise, where the aim is to seek common ground to get a “win-win” solution. Colonel Thompson, the Afghan government, and the local population are aiming to “win” and extend their authority over the provinces. If Thompson has to use force, there will be winners and losers. Force can be everything from mild coercion by implied force to armed conflict.

This would be a good time to discuss exactly what “winning hearts and minds” really means. There is a misconception about “winning hearts and minds.” For Colonel Thompson, he is not trying to be popular or to get people completely to accept the BCT’s program. At a minimum, he is trying to get the locals to reject the insurgency, the drug lords, and the Taliban ideology through the actions of his unit and its support for local initiatives. The locals, however, do not have to like the troops, but the locals must realize that the troops can be an enabler for their goals. The more those goals coin-

cide with the goals of the local, regional, and national governments, the more support the troops will receive. It is this disconnect between the goals of the security forces, the locals, and the government that prevents winning hearts and minds. The Taliban, or any other insurgency for that matter, must only prevent that synergy between the locals and their government from happening. It is much easier to prevent those goals from coming together than it is actually to bring them together. For instance, if the locals view the government as ineffective or part of the criminal enterprise, the troops will never win the local hearts and minds, no matter how admirably the troops can perform their mission. Sounds like the current reality, which makes the situation dire indeed. Similarly, if the troops operate in a heavy-handed manner, few development projects will succeed.

Somewhere in the process, the students will attempt to clarify the situation, but don't allow them to clarify too much. Ambiguity is essential for this case study to work. Anticipate relevant and irrelevant questions such as, "Where is the unit located?" "What are the motivations of the (stakeholder)?" and more. Remember Colonel Thompson has only been in the area for two weeks. He has several tasks to manage other than the drug trade. His plate is overflowing, which is typical for a military leader in these situations, so he must prioritize his tasks while optimizing his resources. Without a plan, he will quickly respond to the urgent while forgetting the important.

Force the students to get into the arena with Colonel Thompson. Make them create the key elements or lines of operation for his plan. The lesson should end with basic outlines for two workable options that Colonel Thompson could use. Make sure you ask the students what their "take-aways" are about policy execution and the military mission.

QUESTIONS

Now that you have read the info, what jumps out at you? What is your "take-away?"

Anticipated responses might be: "It's a circus where no one is in charge." "Typical international operation—no one can trust anyone." "The takeaway is that we should do things on our own."

What stakeholders can Colonel Thompson "leverage?"

What stakeholders will have to change, be defeated, or be marginalized?

What does "hearts and minds" mean to you?

Can everyone be brought under one plan? Is that the goal? Is it even possible to attempt such a task?

What is the acceptable outcome or the acceptable set of circumstances?

How long will it take to achieve such a goal? How does the goal determine the resources required? (Resources: time, money, people, political will, and more.)

How do these agendas from each stakeholder influence Colonel Thompson's mission?

In broad strokes, if you were in Colonel Thompson's boots, how would you prioritize tasks? How can Colonel Thompson be most effective, when he might not be able to influence all elements of stability in his AO?

**ENCLOSURE ONE: COURSE CARD INFORMATION ON
LESSONS FROM THE MARINE CORPS WAR COLLEGE****SUPPORT FOR STABILITY, SECURITY, TRANSITION, AND
RECONSTRUCTION (SSTR)**

Introduction: Department of Defense Directive 3000.05, Military Support for Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction (SSTR) states that “Stability operations are a core U.S. military mission that the Department of Defense shall be prepared to conduct and support. They shall be given priority comparable to combat operations and be explicitly addressed and integrated across all DoD activities including doctrine, organizations, training, education, exercises, materiel, leadership, personnel, facilities, and planning.” This will have a tremendous impact on every aspect of planning, programming, and budgeting as well as on operations. We have discussed many aspects of SSTR at the War College, and doubtless we will discuss this topic in more detail throughout the course.

Lecture, Guest Speaker, or Seminar Discussion (3-hour seminar, four hours preparation): This lesson discusses aspects of the current operational environment related to nation-building. Part Two examines the complexities of SSTR operations in a multinational, multi-agency setting where traditional, command-directed control is nonexistent. The oft-used phrase, “herding cats,” is an appropriate term. The layers of complexity can be seen in the opium abatement and eradication efforts in Afghanistan. Each year opium production in Afghanistan has increased despite greater reduction efforts by the Afghan government and the international community. This “wicked problem” continues to have a significant impact on the international community and on U.S. national security. For the second lesson, a case study of present operations in Afghanistan will be used to examine multinational and international operations and Afghanistan’s burgeoning opium trade; we will explore the challenges of building a failed state in a multinational environment.

Educational Objectives

- Evaluate the Department of Defense’s role in SSTR and how this role conflicts with the charters or mandates of nation states and civilian organizations from both international government organizations and nongovernmental organizations. Analyze possible points of friction.
- Evaluate strategies for employing the instruments of national power in SSTR operations.

Required Reading and Other Preparation

- The Atlantic Council. *Saving Afghanistan: An Appeal and Plan for Urgent Action*. Issue Brief, January 2008, pp. 1–13.
- Center for the Study of the Presidency. *Afghanistan Study Group: Revitalizing our Efforts, Rethinking our Strategies* (Washington, DC: January 30, 2008), pp. 5–39.
- Curry, Peter. *Case Study No. 2: Dynamic Tension: Security, Stability and the Opium Trade*. Quantico, VA: Marine Corps War College, April 2009.
- Department of Defense Directive 3000.05. *Military Support for Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction (SSTR) Operations* (Washington, DC: September 16, 2009), pp. 1–11.
- Department of State. *US Counternarcotics Strategy for Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: August 2007. Executive Summary only, pp. 1–12.
- Glaze, John A. *Opium and Afghanistan: Reassessing U.S. Counternarcotics Strategy* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, October 2007), pp. 1–14.

Recommended Readings

- Felbab-Brown, Vanda. *Opium Licensing in Afghanistan: Its Desirability and Feasibility*. Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, Policy Paper Number 1, August 2007.
- Dobbins, James, et al. *The Beginner's Guide to Nation Building* (The RAND Corporation, 2007).
- International Crisis Group. "Reforming Afghanistan's Police," *Asia Report* 138 (August 30, 2007).

Discussion Topics

How has the move away from conventional war toward combating insurgency and regional instability challenged the nation?

What challenges lie ahead as the U.S. military spends more resources on SSTR? As the skill set increases for all leaders, how should the military change or transform to meet these challenges?

Evaluate U.S. national-level policy and interagency coordination for SSTR operations. What changes must be made as the military's operating environment increases in size and complexity?

JOINT PROFESSIONAL MILITARY EDUCATION JOINT LEARNING AREAS

1. Analyze the integration of all instruments of national power in achieving strategic objectives, with a focus on the employment of the military instrument of national power both as a supported instrument and as a supporting instrument of national power.

2. Evaluate the national military strategy, especially with respect to the changing nature of warfare.
3. Evaluate how joint, unified, and multinational campaigns and operations support national objectives and relate to the national strategic, national military strategic, theater strategic, and operational levels in war.
4. Apply an analytical framework that incorporates the role that factors such as geopolitics, geostrategy, society, culture, and religion play in shaping the desired outcomes of policies, strategies, and campaigns in the joint, interagency, and multinational arena.
5. Analyze the capabilities and limitations of multinational forces in achieving the appropriate strategic objectives in coalition operations.
6. Analyze the integration of joint, interagency, and multinational capabilities across the range of military operations and plans—both in the preparation and the execution phases—and evaluate its success in achieving the desired effects.
7. Analyze the principles, capabilities, and limitations of information operations across the range of military operations and plans—to include pre- and postconflict operations.

ENCLOSURE TWO: INFORMATION ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL SECURITY ASSISTANCE FORCE

From the ISAF Web site, <http://www.nato.int/issues/afghanistan/index.html>.

Note: The ISAF uses British English spelling, not American English.

NATO'S ROLE IN AFGHANISTAN

NATO's main role in Afghanistan is to assist the Afghan government in exercising and extending its authority and influence across the country, paving the way for reconstruction and effective governance. It does this predominately through its UN-mandated International Security Assistance Force.

Since NATO took command of the ISAF in 2003, the alliance has gradually expanded the reach of its mission, originally limited to Kabul, to cover Afghanistan's whole territory. The number of ISAF troops has grown accordingly from the initial five thousand to around fifty thousand troops coming from forty-one countries, including all twenty-eight NATO members.

- ISAF Missions
- ISAF Mandate
- The Evolution of the ISAF

ISAF MISSIONS

The ISAF is a key component of the international community's engagement in Afghanistan, assisting the Afghan authorities in providing security and stability and creating the conditions for reconstruction and development.

Security

In accordance with all the relevant UN Security Council resolutions, the ISAF's main role is to assist the Afghan government in the establishment of a secure and stable environment. To this end, ISAF forces are conducting security and stability operations throughout the country together with the Afghan National Security Forces and are directly involved in the development of the Afghan National Army through mentoring, training, and equipping.

Conducting Security and Stability Operations

The ISAF is conducting security and stability operations across Afghanistan, in conjunction with the Afghan National Security Forces. A large and increasing proportion of these operations are led by the Afghan forces.

Supporting the Afghan National Army

In addition, the ISAF is helping to bring the Afghan National Army up to operating capability in support of the United States, which is sponsoring the overall Afghan Army training and equipping program through its Combined Security Transition Command Afghanistan.

In concrete terms, the ISAF is leading a number of Operational Mentoring and Liaison Teams that are embedded in Afghan National Army Battalions (Kandaks), brigades, and corps headquarters, to support training and deploy on operations in an advisory role. These teams join Afghan units after the latter have received initial training at the Afghan-led Kabul Military Training Centre.

The OMLTs also play a key liaison role between Afghan National Army units and nearby ISAF forces, coordinating the planning of operations and ensuring that the Afghan Army units receive enabling support. ISAF personnel deploy for periods of at least six months in order to build enduring relationships with the Afghan Army and maximise the mentoring effect.

In addition to training and mentoring the Afghan National Army, NATO-ISAF nations provide donations to help equip the Afghan Army. Equipment donations include individual equipment such as small arms, ammunition, and uniform items as well as larger equipment to include tanks and helicopters.

Under the NATO Equipment Donation Programme, Allied Command Operations, with its headquarters in Mons, Belgium, coordinates equipment donations on behalf of ISAF contributing nations. The determination of requirements and the validation process is further coordinated with the United States.

An Afghan Army Trust Fund has also been established to cover the transportation and installation costs of the equipment donations, the purchase of equipment, the purchase of services for engineering and construction projects, and in/out-of-country training.

Supporting the Afghan National Police

Providing support to the Afghan National Police within means and capabilities is one of the ISAF's key tasks. In this sphere, the ISAF works in coordination with and in support of the United States as well as the European Union Police Mission in Afghanistan, which was launched in June 2007.





The Combined Security Transition Command Afghanistan officially assumes the lead role in terms of police training on behalf of the U.S. government in the reformation of the Afghan National Police.

The ISAF assists the Afghan National Police, primarily at the tactical level, with military support to operations, advice, shared information, and informal mentoring and guidance. Local support involves both niche training of non-police-specific skills provided by ISAF units, and indirect support, mentoring, and joint patrolling. Much of this assistance is delivered through the medium of security committees and coordination centres.

The Afghan Compact, a five-year plan between the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the international community, established a framework for security sector reform and included the overall goals for and objectives of the Afghan National Police. This agreement established the original goal to develop a sixty-two thousand professional police service committed to the rule of law. This was later modified by the Afghan National Development Strategy and subsequent decisions made by the Government of Afghanistan, which set the new goal at eighty-two thousand police officers.

Disarming Illegally Armed Groups

The ISAF is collecting illegal weapons, ordnance, and ammunition from armed groups and individual persons. Weapons are then catalogued and safely destroyed so they no longer represent a threat to the local population, Afghan National Security Forces, or ISAF personnel.

Facilitating Ammunition Depots Management

NATO administrates a Trust Fund Project aimed at enhancing physical security at the Afghan Army ammunition depots and at supporting the development of the army's ammunition stockpile management capabilities. In 2008, the project was agreed to by the Afghan government, ISAF contributing nations (including three lead nations, namely Belgium, Canada, and Luxemburg), and the NATO Maintenance and Supply Agency.

Providing Postoperation Assistance

An ISAF Post-Operations Humanitarian Relief Fund was established in 2006 to provide quick humanitarian assistance in the immediate aftermath of significant ISAF military operations. This assistance includes the provision of food, shelter, and medicines as well as the repair of buildings or key infrastructure. Such assistance is provided on a short-term basis, and responsibility is handed over to civilian actors as soon as circumstances permit.

The fund, established under the auspices of the commander of the ISAF, consists entirely of voluntary donations from ISAF troop-contributing

nations. The North Atlantic Council is regularly updated on its use through NATO's senior civilian representative in Afghanistan.

Reconstruction and Development

Through its Provincial Reconstruction Teams, the ISAF is supporting reconstruction and development in Afghanistan, securing areas in which reconstruction work is conducted by other national and international actors.

Where appropriate, and in close cooperation and coordination with the Government of Afghanistan and UNAMA (United Nations Assistance Mission–Afghanistan) representatives on the ground, the ISAF is also providing practical support for reconstruction and development efforts, as well as support for humanitarian assistance efforts conducted by Afghan government organizations, international organizations, and NGOs.

Providing Security to Permit Reconstruction

Provincial reconstruction teams are at the leading edge of the alliance's commitment to reconstruction and development efforts in Afghanistan.

They consist of teams of civilian and military personnel working together to help extend the authority of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan throughout the country by providing area security and supporting the reconstruction and development activities of Afghan, international, national, and nongovernmental actors in the provinces.

In addition to providing area security, provincial reconstruction teams also use their diplomatic and economic capabilities to support security sector reform, encourage good governance, and enable reconstruction and development.

While the provincial reconstruction teams' civilian components take the lead on the political, economic, humanitarian, and social aspects of the teams' work in support of the Afghan government's national development priorities, military components focus on increasing security and stability in the area and building security sector capacity. The provincial reconstruction teams' military components are also in charge of directing assistance to the civilian elements, in particular at the levels of transport, medical assistance, and engineering.

Overall, various kinds of projects are underway, facilitated by the NATO-ISAF provincial reconstruction teams: Schools are being rebuilt with the mentoring or assistance of ISAF engineers, allowing children to resume their education; irrigation ditches, pipelines, reservoirs, and wells are being constructed to bring water to the local population and farmers; infrastructure is being repaired and/or built to facilitate mobility and communication; and local people are being provided with greater access to medical assistance.

Currently, there are twenty-six provincial reconstruction teams operating throughout the country. Some consist of military forces and civilian



personnel from a single nation; others are multinational, with contributions from several different countries. They are all led by individual ISAF nations. However, their military components come under the ISAF command and are coordinated by the relevant regional command.

Humanitarian Assistance

Upon request, ISAF provincial reconstruction teams are assisting the Afghan government and international actors with humanitarian relief. In particular, ISAF soldiers have launched several relief missions, distributing medication, food, and winter supplies to help villagers cope with severe weather conditions in different parts of the country.

Governance

The ISAF, through its provincial reconstruction teams, is helping the Afghan authorities strengthen the institutions required to fully establish good governance and rule of law and to promote human rights. The teams' principal mission in this respect consists of building capacity, supporting the growth of governance structures, and promoting an environment within which governance can improve.

Counternarcotics

In May 2003, the Afghan government adopted a National Drug Control Strategy aimed at reducing the production of illicit drugs by 70 percent by 2007 and at eliminating all production by 2012. A Counter-Narcotics Directorate is embedded in the Interior Ministry, and a fully-fledged counternarcotics minister is presently one of the central actors of the Afghan government.

Afghan capabilities in fighting narcotics and properly implementing its Drug Control Strategy, however, remain largely dependent on international assistance. Against this background, supporting the Afghan government's counternarcotics programmes is an ISAF key supporting task.

Accordingly, when requested by the Afghan government, the ISAF supports counternarcotics efforts by sharing information, conducting an efficient public information campaign, and providing in extremis support to the Afghan National Security Forces' counternarcotics operations.

The ISAF also assists in training Afghan National Security Forces in counternarcotics related activities and provides logistic support, when requested, for the delivery of alternative livelihood programmes.

As reflected in recent assessments by the United Nations and NATO's own military commanders, there is also a growing nexus between the narcotics industry and the insurgency in some parts of the country. As a result, the Afghan government formally requested that NATO-ISAF provide greater

support in counternarcotics efforts, which the allies agreed to do at the NATO Defence Ministers' meeting in Budapest on October 10, 2008.

This enhanced support by the ISAF includes the destruction of processing facilities and action against narcotic producers, if there is a clearly established link with the insurgency. Such action by ISAF forces can be taken only upon request of the Afghan government and with the consent of the national authorities of the forces involved.



ISAF MANDATE

The ISAF has been deployed since 2001 under the authority of the UN Security Council, which authorised the establishment of the force to assist the Afghan government “in the maintenance of security in Kabul and its surrounding areas, so that the Afghan Interim Authority as well as the personnel of the United Nations can operate in a secure environment.”

The ISAF is a coalition of the willing—not a UN force properly speaking—which has a peace-enforcement mandate under Chapter VII of the UN Charter.

Nine UN Security Council resolutions relate to the ISAF, namely: 1386, 1413, 1444, 1510, 1563, 1623, 1707, 1776 and 1833 (on September 23, 2008). A detailed military technical agreement between the ISAF commander and the Afghan Transitional Authority in January 2002 provides additional guidance for ISAF operations.

NATO took command of the ISAF in August 2003 upon request of the United Nations and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. Soon after, the United Nations gave the ISAF a mandate to expand outside of Kabul.

THE EVOLUTION OF ISAF

Origin of the ISAF

The ISAF was created in accordance with the Bonn Conference in December 2001. Afghan opposition leaders attending the conference began the process of reconstructing their country by setting up a new government structure, namely the Afghan Transitional Authority. The concept of an UN-mandated international force to assist the newly established Afghan Transitional Authority was also launched at this occasion to create a secure environment in and around Kabul and to support the reconstruction of Afghanistan.

These agreements paved the way for the creation of a three-way partnership between the Afghan Transitional Authority, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and the ISAF.

NATO Takes on the ISAF Command

On August 11, 2003 NATO assumed leadership of the ISAF operation, ending the six-month national rotations. The alliance became responsible for the command, coordination, and planning of the force, including the provision of a force commander and a headquarters on the ground in Afghanistan.

This new leadership overcame the problem of a continual search to find new nations to lead the mission and the difficulties of setting up a new headquarters every six months in a complex environment. A continuing NATO headquarters also enables small countries, less likely to take over leadership responsibility, to play a strong role within a multinational headquarters.

Expansion of the ISAF's Presence in Afghanistan

The ISAF's mandate was initially limited to providing security in and around Kabul. In October 2003, the United Nations extended the ISAF's mandate to cover the whole of Afghanistan (UNSCR 1510), paving the way for an expansion of the mission across the country.

Stage 1: To the North

In December 2003, the North Atlantic Council authorised the Supreme Allied Commander, General James Jones, to initiate the expansion of the ISAF by taking over command of the German-led provincial reconstruction team in Kunduz. The other eight teams operating in Afghanistan in 2003 remained under the command of Operation Enduring Freedom, the continuing U.S.-led military operation in Afghanistan.

On December 31, 2003, the military component of the Kunduz provincial reconstruction team was placed under ISAF command as a pilot project and first step in the expansion of the mission. Six months later, on June 28, 2004, at the summit meeting of the NATO heads of state and government in Istanbul, NATO announced that it would establish four other provincial reconstruction teams in the north of the country: in Mazar-e-Sharif, Meymana, Feyzabad, and Baghlan.

This process was completed on October 1, 2004, marking the completion of the first phase of the ISAF's expansion. The ISAF's area of operations then covered some three thousand six hundred square kilometres in the north, and the mission was able to influence security in nine northern provinces of the country.

Stage 2: To the West

On February 10, 2005, NATO announced that the ISAF would be further expanded, into the west of Afghanistan.

This process began on May 31, 2006, when the ISAF took on command of two additional provincial reconstruction teams, in the provinces of Herat and Farah and of a forward support base (a logistic base) in Herat.

At the beginning of September, two further ISAF-led provincial reconstruction teams in the west became operational, one in Chaghcharan, capital of Ghor Province, and one in Qala-e-Naw, capital of Baghdis Province, completing the ISAF's expansion into the west.

The extended ISAF mission led a total of nine provincial reconstruction teams, in the north and the west, providing security assistance in 50 percent of Afghanistan's territory. The alliance continued to make preparations to further expand the ISAF, to the south of the country.

In September 2005, the alliance also temporarily deployed two thousand additional troops to Afghanistan to support the September 18 provincial and parliamentary elections.

Stage 3: To the South

On December 8, 2005, in a meeting at NATO headquarters in Brussels, the Allied Foreign Ministers endorsed a plan that paved the way for an expanded the ISAF role and presence in Afghanistan. The first element of this plan was the expansion of the ISAF to the south in 2006, also known as Stage 3.

This was implemented on July 31, 2006, when the ISAF assumed command of the southern region of Afghanistan from U.S.-led coalition forces, expanding its area of operations to cover an additional six provinces—Day Kundi, Helmand, Kandahar, Nimroz, Uruzgan, and Zabul—and taking on command of four additional provincial reconstruction teams.

The expanded ISAF led a total of thirteen teams in the north, west, and south, covering some three-quarters of Afghanistan's territory.

The number of ISAF forces in the country also increased significantly, from about ten thousand prior to the expansion to about twenty thousand after.

Stage 4: The ISAF Expands to the East, Takes Responsibility for Entire Country

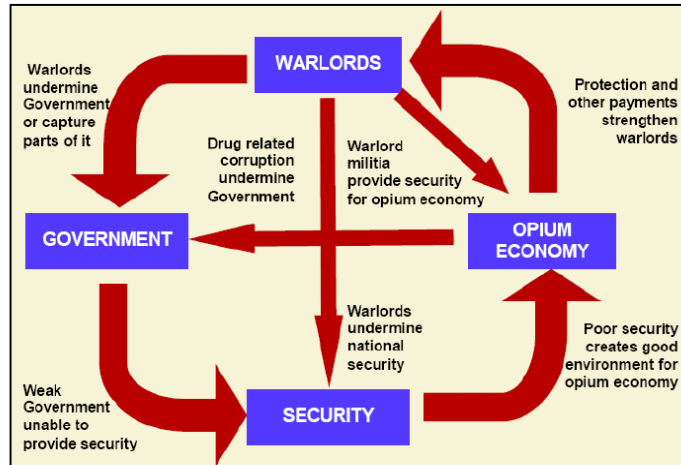
On October 5, 2006, the ISAF implemented the final stage of its expansion by taking on command of the international military forces in eastern Afghanistan from the U.S.-led coalition.

In addition to expanding the alliance's area of operations, the revised operational plan also paved the way for a greater ISAF role in the country. This included the deployment of ISAF operational mentoring and liaison teams to Afghan National Army units at various levels of command.

ENCLOSURE THREE: BOARD PLAN

This source forms the basis of a good board plan that not only shows the complexity of the problem but also shows the dynamic tension between competing demands. As the students speak, the facilitator could start by drawing the boxes and connections as they emerge in the discussion.

Figure 4. Narcotics and Security in Afghanistan



Source: World Bank, Afghanistan: State Building, Sustaining Growth, and Reducing Poverty, Country Economic Report No. 29551-AF September 9, 2004, p. 87.

Additional Materials

Map of ethnic tribes: Most commonly used maps divide the ethnic tribes into ten or eleven basic groups. The Afghan landscape is more complex, so if you use one of these maps (such as the *National Geographic*), explain to the students these complexities.

**ENCLOSURE FOUR: HANDOUT:
KEY STAKEHOLDERS AND THEIR POSITIONS**

Student task: Be prepared to make your agenda known to Colonel Thompson using this handout and out-of-class preparation. The quality of your preparation and discussion with Colonel Thompson will be graded.

1. NATO FORCES

- Severely limited by operational caveats. Each of the twenty-eight nations has caveats or restrictions on the employment of forces. Some limits include the conditions under which forces will be employed, the circumstances permitting units to support another country's military forces, the countries that will command their forces, or the locations where those forces can be employed.
- The countries operating in Regional Command South (RC-South) have all agreed to limit their caveats and understand that their situation could include combat. The Dutch, U.K., and Canadian forces have admirably fought the Taliban and the drug problem; they are still restricted by their countries' mandates and inadequate combat support elements. This has limited their effectiveness and has put 4BCT "on call" for support if problems arise along the RC-South and RC-East boundary.
- These forces are less aggressive than the U.S. forces partly due to an adherence to what the United Kingdom would term "The Comprehensive Approach," or "the softly-softly" approach, emphasizing the need for the proper mix of security, economic, social, and political tools. This approach has had mixed results; it has been successful in areas where insurgent activity is low, but it has been less successful in areas where there is an entrenched insurgency.
- This approach does not differ significantly from the US approach; however, the U.S. approach favors security and some low-level economic impact projects as a precondition for other advances.
- NATO forces are loath to be seen as the implementer of any counter-narcotics efforts, certainly ones that disrupt stability such as interdiction and eradication with no alternative livelihood programs. NATO sees itself as a stabilizing, somewhat impartial force, although the locals may not see the situation the same way.

2. NATO

- Despite leaders' summits issuing proclamations that NATO is of one voice, this is far from the truth. NATO is a coalition, where much wrangling goes on behind the scenes and, indeed, in the open press. In order to create some semblance of consensus from a twenty-eight-member group, there is a tendency to adopt "low hanging fruit" strategies, which reduces the alliance's leverage.
- The Bonn Agreement allowed NATO to act in support of the UN resolution. It was intended to give the United Nations more "teeth," which it has done, but it has fallen short of expectations both internally in Afghanistan and on the world stage. One result of the agreement created a zero-sum game on the ground. While the alliances that supported the United States early on were clear "winners," it disenfranchised the largest ethnic group, the Pashtuns, but did not take away their ability to resist due to NATO's lack of troop commitment.¹ As a consequence of NATO's conducting operations on the cheap, large swaths of Afghan territory are under the control of local leaders—not the Government of Afghanistan.

1. Jonathon Goodhand, "Corrupting or Consolidating the Peace? The Drugs Economy and Post-Conflict Peacebuilding in Afghanistan," *International Peacekeeping* 14, no. 2 (April 2007): p. 411.

3. U.S. GOVERNMENT

- The State Department is the lead U.S. agency for the counternarcotics program. Although the United Kingdom has the lead for the international effort, the United States has key enabling assets and is the indispensable partner. The U.S.'s counternarcotic strategy contains five pillars: Eradication (the most resourced pillar since 2001), Alternative Livelihoods, Interdiction/Law Enforcement, Justice Reform, and Public Information.²
- The Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) has significantly increased its efforts to train Afghan counternarcotics forces. While there has been measureable improvement in the quality of some Afghan forces, the DEA remains a small element with a large mandate ahead. Its primary focus is improving the interdiction efforts of Afghan MOI (Ministry of Interior) units.³

For more, review the U.S. Department of State's *U.S. Counternarcotics Strategy for Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: August 2007), <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/90671.pdf>.

2. Departments of State and Defense, "Interagency Assessment of the Counternarcotics Program in Afghanistan" (Washington, DC: July 31, 2007), pp. 28–46.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 39.

4. U.S. MILITARY

- While recognizing the risk of destabilization of the area in the short term, the military advocates a “strong and robust” antidrug policy on the ground.
- The military would prefer not to lead or show major support of the effort; however, due to the lack of civilian resources, it feels obligated to “do whatever it takes” to get the problem under control.
- The military understands the need for a comprehensive approach, but with limited U.S. government resources, it would prefer actions such as interdiction and eradication as the immediate first steps aimed at disrupting the drug network.
- It considers the drug trade as the “rear area logistics,” or the lifeblood, to the insurgency. Eliminate the drugs, and the enemy withers on the vine.

5. AFGHAN GOVERNMENT

- The Ministry of Interior, which is responsible for drug trade law enforcement, has been riddled with corruption and graft, according to several reports.⁴ The ministry has been implicated as being an enabling actor to favored drug lords.
- The current Afghan government's power base remains primarily around Kabul's environs, with little influence in distant provinces except where there is a significant NATO or U.S. presence.⁵
- There is a network of patronage and protection for favored drug lords throughout the government, from the local to the national level, making enforcement difficult.
- The Afghan National Army is the main institution that is respected by most of the population. This has been primarily because the army has engaged in counterinsurgency operations near the border but not in efforts to eliminate opium production.

4. Andrew Wilder, "Cops or Robbers? The Struggle to Reform the Afghan National Police" (Kabul, Afghanistan: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, July 2007), p. ix.

5. Seth G. Jones, "The Rise of Afghanistan's Insurgency: State Failure and Jihad," *International Security* 32, no. 4 (Spring 2008): p. 20.

6. LOCAL POPULATION

- The Taliban, albeit corrupt in its own right, was seen as a stabilizing force following the post-Soviet era of lawlessness, criminality, and corruption. Its eventual opium production ban was seen by the local population as good; however, the ban's unintended consequence was that it made the opium trade more risky and therefore more lucrative. Opium prices shot up tenfold, and farmers were forced to grow poppy to pay off debts to warlords.⁶
- People do not believe that any national institution has legitimacy to govern, a political idea that the Taliban tries to leverage, with limited success, and that the drug lords exploit.
- The farmers also have strong views: "Many Afghan farming households cultivate opium poppy in order to improve their access to land, water, agricultural supplies, and credit—inputs that remain in short supply in many of the rural areas where opium poppy is grown. Experts have identified high levels of household debt as a powerful structural determinant of the continuation of opium poppy cultivation among some Afghan farmers."⁷

6. Goodhand, "Corrupting or Consolidating the Peace?"

7. Congressional Research Service (CRS), "Afghanistan: Narcotics and US Policy" (Washington, DC: CRS Report to Congress, September 14, 2007), p. 9.

7. LOCAL GOVERNMENT

- Throughout much of the southern region, local governments have been sacked and installed frequently. Assassination and intimidation make it difficult to install effective governors and provincial leaders. Those that do survive are primarily doing so by acquiescing to local power broker demands while depending on a corrupt, untrained police force for personal protection.
- The Taliban physical presence is relatively small, and support for the Taliban in general is limited. However, Taliban influence extends fairly deep into the government. Some influence is through clan relations; some influence is gained by familiarity with its members. Increasingly, the Taliban has resorted to bribery, graft, and extortion to make local government more compliant to Taliban aims.

8. UNITED KINGDOM

- Prefers a multidimensional, comprehensive approach that reduces the dependency on the drug trade in the local and national economies.
- Opposes certain tactics, such as eradication through aerial spraying of crop-killing chemicals, because, the argument goes, these tactics are ineffective at best and counterproductive at worst. Considers aerial spraying only one tool at its disposal, but a tool used only under extraordinary circumstances.

9. INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS (UN)

- The United Nations, through its various organs, has issued several comprehensive reports on reducing opium production. The action on the ground, however, has been limited at best. From the beginning of the UN mission in 2002, the purpose of the United Nations has been to guide the Afghan people, and hence their government, to solve the issue with international support. By dealing with local power brokers, the counterdrug mission has been working at cross-purposes. Many local power brokers, who are needed for their knowledge and support of the security mission (counterterror/counterinsurgency) are also profiting, either directly or indirectly, from the drug trade.

See the UN Office of Drugs and Crime's Web site on drugs in Afghanistan for more: <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/afghanistan.html>.

10. NONGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

- Although not monolithic, many NGOs see the United States as a contributor to the problem. The United States paid millions of dollars to anti-Taliban commanders during the initial phase of the war in 2001. While the campaign successfully drove the Taliban from power, the money flooded the meager Afghan economy, which incentivized power brokers to expand opium operations while floating loans to farmers to increase opium production in 2002. The NGOs believe that the Americans ignored the increasing drug profiteering and corruption in order to get good intelligence to fight Al Qaeda and its Taliban supporters.
- NGOs have commented that their ability to implement programs safely and effectively is increasingly jeopardized by the deteriorating security situation. In some districts, NGOs have significantly reduced their operations or even withdrawn entirely as their staff, projects, and beneficiaries have come under attack.
- NGOs insist that reconstruction should be aimed at long-term development, where partners can be vetted and projects can be more effective. The military is focused on short-term impact projects, which potentially work at cross-purposes with development programs.⁸
- NGOs believe that the military is insufficiently sensitive to cultural and social norms which define individual security and dignity.⁹

8. British Agencies Afghanistan Group and European Network of NGOs in Afghanistan, "Aid and Civilian-Military Relations in Afghanistan," p. 4, at [http://ocha-qwapps1.unog.ch/rw/rwfiles2008.nsf/filesbgrwdocunidfilename/jbrn-lsjyt-full-report.pdf/\\$file/full-report.pdf](http://ocha-qwapps1.unog.ch/rw/rwfiles2008.nsf/filesbgrwdocunidfilename/jbrn-lsjyt-full-report.pdf/$file/full-report.pdf).

9. Ibid.

Center for Complex Operations
National Defense University
300 5th Avenue SW
Fort Lesley J. McNair
Washington, DC 20319

Telephone

Commercial: 202-685-2529
DSN: 325-2529
Fax: 202-685-3581

Web Site

<http://ccoportal.org>

Dr. Karen Guttieri
Naval Postgraduate School
1411 Cunningham Road
GE-306
Monterey, CA 93943

Contact Information

831-656-2294
guttieri@nps.edu

