

8.4: Role of the Afghan National Police in Counter-Insurgency Operations

Summary

This chapter discusses the role of the Afghan National Police in counter-insurgency operations.

Introduction

The Afghan National Police (ANP) are currently performing both traditional police duties and engaging in counter-insurgency operations (COIN).¹ The National Police Strategy (NPS) and the National Police Plan (NPP) recognize the unique security situation in Afghanistan and the unique role the police play in combating terrorism. The Afghan Police Law specifically obliges the police to combat terrorism and insurgency.² Daily combat activities involving terrorist forces occur in 12 of the 34 provinces with an active police presence.³ Six provinces are considered medium-threat; six provinces are considered low-threat; and only 10 “are considered to be without any significant terrorist activity.”⁴ “There are at least five districts where actual governmental control is in question.”⁵ Although the Ministry of Interior’s long term vision is to end police participation in combat operations and return them to traditional police duties, the current security situation requires the police to engage in counter-insurgency operations.⁶ To that end, the NPS and NPP set forth specific COIN roles for the different police pillars.

Counter-Insurgency

“Counterinsurgency may be defined as ‘comprehensive civilian and military efforts taken to simultaneously defeat and contain insurgency and address its root causes.’”⁷ “COIN differs from other civil-military operations both in the methods employed and in the purpose of the undertaking. The purpose of COIN is to build popular support for a government while

¹ See U.S. Department of Defense Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, July 2013 (hereinafter DOD Progress Report July 2013), p. 78:

http://www.defense.gov/pubs/Section_1230_Report_July_2013.pdf.

² Police Law, Official Gazette No. 994, August 27, 2009, Art. 5, translated by NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan (NTM-A)/ Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan (CSTC-A), Wasseel Ahmad Jamal Esq., Naikan Afghan Logistic/Service Company.

³ Afghan National Police Plan Solar Years (SY) 1392-1393, March 2013 (hereinafter National Police Plan), p. 6, provided by CSTC-A Ministry of Interior Ministerial Advisory Group (MOI-MAG).

⁴ Ibid. A “medium-threat” province is defined as having “some terrorist activity that can be normally dealt with by local police.” Ibid.

⁵ Ibid, p. 6.

⁶ Ten-Year Vision for the Afghan National Police: 1393-1402 (2013-2023), p. 2:

<http://ipcb.files.wordpress.com/2013/06/13-04-02-ten-year-vision-english-final-version.pdf>.

⁷ U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, *U.S. Government Counterinsurgency Guide*, January 2009 (hereinafter COIN Guide), p. 12: <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/119629.pdf>.

suppressing or co-opting insurgent movements.”⁸ “Best practice COIN integrates and synchronizes political, security, economic, and informational components that reinforce governmental legitimacy and effectiveness while reducing insurgent influence over the population.”⁹

The stages of COIN are commonly referred to as four sequential phases – shape, clear, hold, and build. The “clear-hold-build” terminology is “useful, but is probably interpreted as more of a set sequence than is always necessary or advantageous.”¹⁰ Security is not “necessary [a] precursor to economic and governance activity: rather, security, economic and political efforts should ideally be developed simultaneously.”¹¹ In Afghanistan, the COIN doctrine was incorporated into the United States’ operational plan in 2009. “The stated aim was to secure the Afghan people by employing the method of “clear, hold, and build” -- in other words, push the insurgents out, keep them out, and use the resulting space and time to establish a legitimate government, build capable security forces, and improve the Afghan economy. With persistent outside efforts, advocates of the COIN doctrine asserted, the capacity of the Afghan government would steadily grow, the levels of U.S. and international assistance would decline, and the insurgency would eventually be defeated.”¹² Afghanistan has adopted the clear-hold-build strategy in its strategy for the ANP.

ANP’s role in COIN

As previously noted, Afghanistan is committed to taking over full responsibility for its own security from international military forces by 2015. All provinces and districts in Afghanistan will transition to complete Afghan control, *regardless of the security situation*, at the end of December 2014.¹³ According to the National Police Plan, only 10 out of the 34 provinces are currently considered to be without any significant terrorist activity.¹⁴ The police in the northern and western regions of Afghanistan are able to focus on more traditional policing duties, but the police in the south, southwest, and east are still engaged in COIN “due to the more kinetic environment.”¹⁵ “The [Afghan Border Police (ABP)] and [Afghan National Civil Order Police (ANCOP)] continue to be used to support traditional COIN efforts as well as to enable or support

⁸ Ibid, p. 13.

⁹ Ibid, p. 12.

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 23.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² *The Limits of Counterinsurgency Doctrine in Afghanistan: The Other Side of the COIN*, by Karl W. Eikenberry, Foreign Affairs, Council on Foreign Relations, September/October 2013 Issue: <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/139645/karl-w-eikenberry/the-limits-of-counterinsurgency-doctrine-in-afghanistan>.

¹³ U.S. Department of Defense Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, November 2013 (hereinafter DOD Progress Report NOV 2013), p. 5 (emphasis added): http://www.defense.gov/pubs/October_1230_Report_Master_Nov7.pdf.

¹⁴ National Police Plan, *supra* note 3, p. 6.

¹⁵ DOD Progress Report July 2013, *supra* note 1, p. 78.

[Afghan National Army] operations. Although the ABP continues its COIN mission, the force is making an effort to shift more of its focus towards the traditional border mission, including training, equipping and professionalizing the force at the major border control points (BCPs) and airports of entry.”¹⁶

According to the NPS and NPP, the “Afghan National Police are at the frontline of the counter-insurgency.”¹⁷

Countering an insurgency requires a police force that is visible day and night. The legitimacy of the Government will be questioned if the populace believes that insurgents and criminals control the streets and villages. Well located and protected police stations establish a presence in communities as long as the police do not isolate themselves in those stations. Police presence deters insurgent and criminal activities, provides security to communities and builds support for the government. When police have daily contact with the local populace, they can collect information to counter insurgents.

The Ministry of Interior acknowledges that the police “have critical roles” in the “hold” and “build” phases of COIN and play a supporting role in the “shape” phase.¹⁸

Shape

Shaping operations are designed to set conditions for the successful completion of clear/hold/build operations. Shaping operations consist of information operations, intelligence-surveillance-reconnaissance, disruption, and planning activities that improve understanding of the human and physical terrain. These activities are principally focused on collecting information on and preparing for future operations in the area. This type of operation should enable commanders to synchronize efforts in subsequent operations. Shaping operations should have little to no adverse impact on the population. Shaping operations must convince the local populace that the Government intends to protect the population and restore legitimate control of their territory. The lead for this phase will rest with the Afghan National Army, but the Afghan National Police will offer intelligence information to the maximum extent possible.¹⁹

“Intelligence is critically important to counter-insurgency.”²⁰ “Few military units can match a good police unit in developing an accurate human intelligence picture of their area of

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 79.

¹⁷ National Police Plan, *supra* note 3, p. 27; Afghan National Police Strategy 1389 (December 2010)(hereinafter National Police Strategy), p. 34-35: <http://ipcb.files.wordpress.com/2012/01/nps-final-version.pdf>.

¹⁸ National Police Plan, *supra* note 3, p. 27.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

operation.”²¹ The AUP and ANCOP are both tasked with providing intelligence information in support of COIN.²² ANCOP is also tasked with providing tactical support during the ‘shape’ phase.²³

Clear

The clear phase consists of tactical operations designed to secure a population center. A clearing operation enables freedom of activity for civilians, denies influence from external insurgents, and prevents activities by local insurgents or malign actors. In clearing operations, insurgents will be expelled, rendered unable to engage in violent activity, detained, or eliminated. A clearing operation need not be offensive or violent. A normal clearing operation is intended to displace insurgents and malign actors from a populated area, or dissuade them from fighting so they cannot harm or intimidate the populace. Clearing operations should be planned and executed in a manner that has the least possible adverse impact on the populace. Clearing operations provide security by virtue of a physical presence that is respectful of and beneficial to the local populace. The Afghan National Army has primary responsibility for the clear phase.²⁴

ANCOP is tasked with providing intelligence information and tactical support to the ANA during the ‘clear’ phase.²⁵ ANCOP is described as “the lead police organization for counter insurgency operations.”²⁶ Operations conducted by ANCOP “should be fully supported by military forces or conducted jointly with the military to support the ‘clear’ phase of counter-insurgency operations.”²⁷

Hold

After clearing the area of anti-government elements, the Afghan National Security Forces must then assign sufficient personnel to the cleared area to prevent their return, defeat any remnants, and secure the population. Success or failure depends on effectively and continuously securing the populace. Although offensive and stability operations continue, this phase uses defensive operations to secure the population.

In high-threat areas, the [Afghan National] Civil Order Police (Gendarmerie) [ANCOP] or Afghan Border Police will have primary policing responsibility for conducting operations designed to hold areas that have been cleared of anti-government elements. In low- to medium-threat areas, the [Afghan] Uniform

²¹ Ibid.

²² National Police Strategy, *supra* note 17, pp. 24.

²³ Ibid, p. 26.

²⁴ National Police Plan, *supra* note 3, p. 28.

²⁵ National Police Strategy, *supra* note 17, p. 26.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

(Civilian) Police [AUP] and Afghan Border Police will have primary responsibility for the hold phase of counter-insurgency operations. Deterrence and reassurance patrolling must be implemented to prevent enemy activities and infiltration, and to provide security. This activity must be integrated with the activities of the Afghan National Army to ensure that a framework of operations is established that best employs the skills of both organizations. If the requirement to return to the clear phase emerges, the Afghan National Army must re-engage with the opposing force.²⁸

The Afghan Border Police are expected to deter and counter insurgency within the Border Security Zone (50 kilometers inside the border).²⁹ The Afghan Border Police struggle with being used as a more conventional security force.³⁰ “Many [Afghan Border Police] outposts remain static and rarely conduct border security missions beyond the vicinity of their outposts.”³¹ According to the U.S. Department of Defense, the Afghan Uniform Police have “successfully executed the ‘hold’ phase of counterinsurgency (COIN) operations in some areas.”³² The AUP or Afghan Local Police, however, do not always relieve ANCO from their assignment as the ‘hold’ force in a timely manner.³³

Build

The build phase of counter-insurgency operations consists of carrying out programs designed to remove the root causes that led to the insurgency, improve the lives of the populace, and strengthen the Government’s ability to provide effective governance. Stability operations predominate in this phase, with many important activities being conducted by non-military agencies. During this phase, the Afghan National Police should have primary responsibility for security. Progress in building support for the Government requires protecting the local populace. Otherwise, people who do not believe they are secure from insurgent intimidation, coercion, and reprisals will not risk overtly supporting counter-insurgent efforts.

During the build phase, efforts will shift from counter-insurgency activities to community policing. The Afghan National Police will focus on the traditional police roles of providing security for society and enforcing the rule of law, which will build public confidence.³⁴

²⁸ National Police Plan, *supra* note 3, p. 28.

²⁹ National Police Strategy, *supra* note 17, pp. 27-28.

³⁰ DOD Progress Report NOV 2013, *supra* note 13, p. 64.

³¹ U.S. Department of Defense Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, December 2012 (hereinafter DOD Progress Report DEC 2012), p. 73: http://www.defense.gov/news/1230_Report_final.pdf.

³² DOD Progress Report NOV 2013, *supra* note 13, p. 64

³³ See *Ibid*, p. 63.

³⁴ National Police Plan, *supra* note 3, p. 28.

During the final phase of COIN, the ANP continue to have primary responsibility for security and are expected to focus on traditional police functions.³⁵ The AUP, however, “remains ineffective in regard to traditional police functions.”³⁶

Conclusion

The security situation in Afghanistan requires the police to play a significant role in combating terrorism. The vision of the Ministry of Interior is to transition the police from a counterinsurgency force to a traditional law enforcement agency. Afghanistan does not have a history of a civil-police force. Moreover, the current police force was generated as a security force. Reforming the police into a law and order force will require institutional reform, reorientation, retraining, and on-going support from the international community. In the meantime, the police continue to be on the frontlines of the insurgency; suffering the largest numbers of casualties.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ DOD Progress Report NOV 2013, *supra* note 13, p. 64.

Resources

- Police Law, Official Gazette No. 994, August 27, 2009, translated by NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan (NTM-A)/ Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan (CSTC-A), Wasseel Ahmad Jamal Esq., Naikan Afghan Logistic/Service Company.
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