



COMISAF ADVISORY AND ASSISTANCE TEAM

CAAT SPECIAL REPORT

A DISCUSSION ON THE NEGATIVE STRATEGIC EFFECTS OF TACTICAL KINETIC EVENTS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

(NIU) COMISAF directed CAAT to provide input regarding the recent cross-border fires incident. The lethal methods of the Coalition Forces (CF) can certainly contribute to mission success, but often the misuse or indiscriminate application of force can have severe consequences such as unintended civilian casualties (CIVCAS) with international political ramifications. The mastery in the employment of these weapon systems is not exclusive to the tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) but, also includes the training of the individual CF member who makes decisions regarding the proper use of force and application of joint fires to achieve their military objective.

(NIU) This is a complex distributed decision-making process. Every component of this system from troops in contact to the air or gunnery crew members all play a role, and each has key decisions to make: whether employing control measures to ensure time and space is created to aid decision making, making positive identification, clarifying intended target(s), or even ceasing the action or fire mission in order to reassess the situation.

(NIU) Fundamentally, a problem exists with our understanding of the use of lethal fires. Some CF engagements resulted in negative effects to the ISAF campaign. In studying this problem, we must ask ourselves: Are there significant issues with the adoption of a counterinsurgency (COIN) mindset, is the legal framework (ROE) of the conflict too restrictive, are the rules for use of force not understood, are CFs making bad decisions, and are we providing our forces with the appropriate tools to make timely and accurate decisions that reduce negative consequences impacting the campaign?

- Hold commanders accountable for ensuring re-training and currency training (e.g. JTACs) are accomplished to a level of understanding and proficiency as directed by COMISAF.
- Emphasize the strategic implications of operations in the border region and add them to pertinent sections of the sourcing documents.
- Educate units who operate along the border region in understanding the strategic implications of their actions.
- Post all source documents on every command portals' front page.
- Develop an IO campaign to counter insurgent's indiscriminate acts that cause harm to civilians. Insurgent use of civilians as shields, and the occupation of a civilian residence as a base for operations, should be publicized.
- Develop an education campaign that promulgates "what right looks like" in regards to:
 - The application of ISAF ROE and EoF guidance and published COMISAF Tactical Directives; the application of combat principals which indirectly impact the use of force; and the connection to CIVCAS and COIN.

- The balancing of the COIN campaign objectives and force protection has strategic implications.

COIN MINDSET

(NIU) Negative strategic effects of tactical kinetic events can stem from the mindset of decision-makers when aiming to employ effective COIN outside the wire.

Commanders at all levels must balance two factors in their decisions: the relentless pursuit of the enemy and protecting the population.

(NIU) There is, of course, no universal answer to the proper application of counterinsurgency operations. However, commanders must apply COIN theory and be willing to assume a degree of risk to protect the population and not revert to the use of unnecessary and disproportionate force. Failing to do so leads to the strategic, operational, and tactical failure, and ultimately undermines our goal of developing security and cooperation with the Afghan populace. To understand this mindset it is important to consider how COIN directives translate into action at the tactical level, particularly where a commander's mindset is such that an unseen enemy could kill his warfighter by ones and twos and he is resolute in his determination to bring every individual home alive.

(NIU) In many cases, on today's battlefield the commander's ethos often reflects a greater weight applied to the reduction of force protection risk; and in some cases, a conscious tradeoff in accepting CIVCAS (i.e., the notion that it is better to deal with the losses of an Afghan civilian than a Coalition warfighter). As a result, snap judgments with strategic impact are driven by the desired endstate of zero unit loss. In effect, this mindset has fostered significant risk aversion and the non-judicious use of force in the means to capture or kill the enemy.

(NIU) Second, perhaps the most critical factor determining the effect of kinetic events is the extent to which commanders and fighters understand and embrace counterinsurgency. In the Afghan theatre, the fight is often carried out by the platoon leader. Conventional battles are won or lost in moments; whoever can bring combat power to bear in seconds. Yet in the 21st century information age, the strategic implications of any single engagement have the potential to affect the overall counterinsurgency campaign. This necessitates that the leaders of units on the battlefield both understand and implement tactics with a COIN mindset. Stronger guidance is even more crucial where a stagnated base-camp mentality, whether due to a lack of understanding, acceptance, or inability to execute COIN, has festered.

(NIU) As the graduate level of warfare, COIN requires substantial leadership, with commanders that can fight intelligently and appropriately without orders. In a conventional force, only a few individuals will master the actual implementation of COIN. However, gifted "COINdinstas" exist. If we are to get irreversible transition right, it is crucial that we identify these leaders and put them into positions of command. Rank matters far less than talent, which means tough decisions will be required to ruthlessly replace the commanders on the ground who do not make the grade—especially in highly strategic AOs where ISAF is facing a formidable foe. A small group of dedicated warfighters under a smart COIN officer can succeed in

counterinsurgency and turn around an entire AO (as we have seen with SOF Village Stability Operations). Inversely, hundreds of well-armed warfighters under the command of a mediocre company officer will not simply fail, but quite possibly exacerbate the situation and escalate a CIVCAS situation to an international scale.

(NIU) Recommendations:

- Revise and reprioritize COMISAF guidance to emphasize the importance of pursuing two objectives simultaneously:
 - Pursue the enemy relentlessly
 - Secure and Serve the Population
- Because such guidance contains seemingly contradictory advice, COMISAF himself should deliver it in writing and via Armed Forces Network (AFN), which will help ensure that the right message gets across to not just commanders, but all ISAF members in the field, a by-product of which may provide some leverage with Karzai.
- If at all possible, tie the revised COMISAF Guidance to Commanders' OERs.

Reinforcing Good Behavior

Discussion

(NIU) ISAF is faced with a serious environment challenge in eliminating civilian casualties on the battlefield. In a counterinsurgency, protecting the populace and winning their support is a crucial objective. CIVCAS runs counter to this effort. Therefore, commanders and staffs, even down to the basic infantryman, must consider the strategic impact that force may have on ISAF's COIN campaign. The Command has provided tactical directives and FRAGOs to emphasize actions needed to address the shortcomings of how units and individuals are conducting themselves. Commanders have conducted training on all the pertinent subjects. Essentially, leaders are trying to explain "what right looks like." These efforts have had some overall effect. While CIVCAS is down, the potential relevancy of CIVCAS has increased. Every new event causes tension. We must do better.

(NIU) Leadership, education and training are the recipe for success in addressing "what right looks like." Leaders have a duty to describe to our forces "what right looks like." We frequently read and hear about events that went wrong. It is natural that we use these to demonstrate to others that someone could have handled the situation better. In light of the pressure involved in investigations and media scrutiny, it is reasonable to assume that many lessons that could have been learned have been lost. However, if we emphasize good behavior, and there is plenty of that in Afghanistan, we can improve the methods of how leaders educate and train their subordinates. Our troops have done amazing things on the battlefield in very ambiguous, complex environments under the extreme stress of being under fire.

(NIU) These are the stories we need to promulgate in leaders' discussions with as many individuals as possible. The fact that privates, corporals, or even lieutenants are hesitant to use fire is not because of ambiguous ROE or EoF guidelines. It is

because they are not getting clear guidance from their leaders frequently enough. Leaders at all levels must take every opportunity to communicate to the force “what right looks like” and simultaneously, reinforce the basic tenets learned in combat training and professional development, such as proportionality and tactical patience. Staffs should facilitate this “education campaign” by providing commanders case studies and descriptions of the proper and innovative uses of force that support our COIN objectives, one which is to eliminate CIVCAS. Leaders need to leverage stand ups, commander’s update briefs, radio and TV segments, and commander’s calls to communicate “what right looks like.” Why not fence off time at every commander’s conference to talk about examples of “what right looks like?” We all have confidence in our Soldiers, Sailors, Marines and Airmen that once they see “what right looks like” and understand why, a reduction in CIVCAS events and other positive second and third order effects will follow.

Recommendations

(NIU) Develop an education campaign that promulgates “what right looks like” in regards to:

- The application of ISAF ROE and EoF guidance and published COMISAF Tactical Directives; the application of combat tenets that indirectly impact the use of force; the connection to CIVCAS and COIN.
- Focus efforts on leveraging conferences, stand ups, meetings, and media vehicles to highlight “what right looks like” in handling the complex scenarios where lethal force was used or considered that soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines face every day on the battlefield.
- Create training packets (maintained with new material) based on real events in Afghanistan in which the use of force was utilized and provide them to leaders throughout ISAF so they can war-game, teach and mentor their units.

THE INTENT OF CAAT SPECIAL REPORT IS TO SHARE UNCLASSIFIED REPORTS TO UNITS DEVELOPING TRAINING PLANS IN PREPARATION FOR DEPLOYMENT INTO THE AFGHANISTAN THEATER OF OPERATIONS. ALTHOUGH UNCLASSIFIED, THESE REPORTS CAN CONTAIN SENSITIVE INFORMATION ON CURRENT TACTICS, TECHNIQUES AND PROCEDURES. RESPECTFULLY REQUEST THAT LEADERS HANDLE THIS INFORMATION TO BOTH SUPPORT TRAINING REQUIREMENTS AND PROTECT EFFECTIVE PRACTICES.

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