



## CALL Lesson of the Day

SUBJECT: Combat Outpost Baraki Barak Mission

Theater: Afghanistan

Date: 12 April 2012

1. (U//FOUO) Observation: What is the strategic benefit of Combat Outpost Baraki Bark (BBK) in the plan of stabilization and force protection? The following discussion tries to answer that question.
2. (U//FOUO) Discussion: The construction of Combat Outposts (COPs) by the U.S. military in Afghanistan has been almost unanimously described in positive terms by defense analysts and strategists as a means through which to carry out US Forces counterinsurgency efforts. Soldiers in today's battlefields routinely reference COPs from a patrol base to anything smaller than a Forward Operating Base.

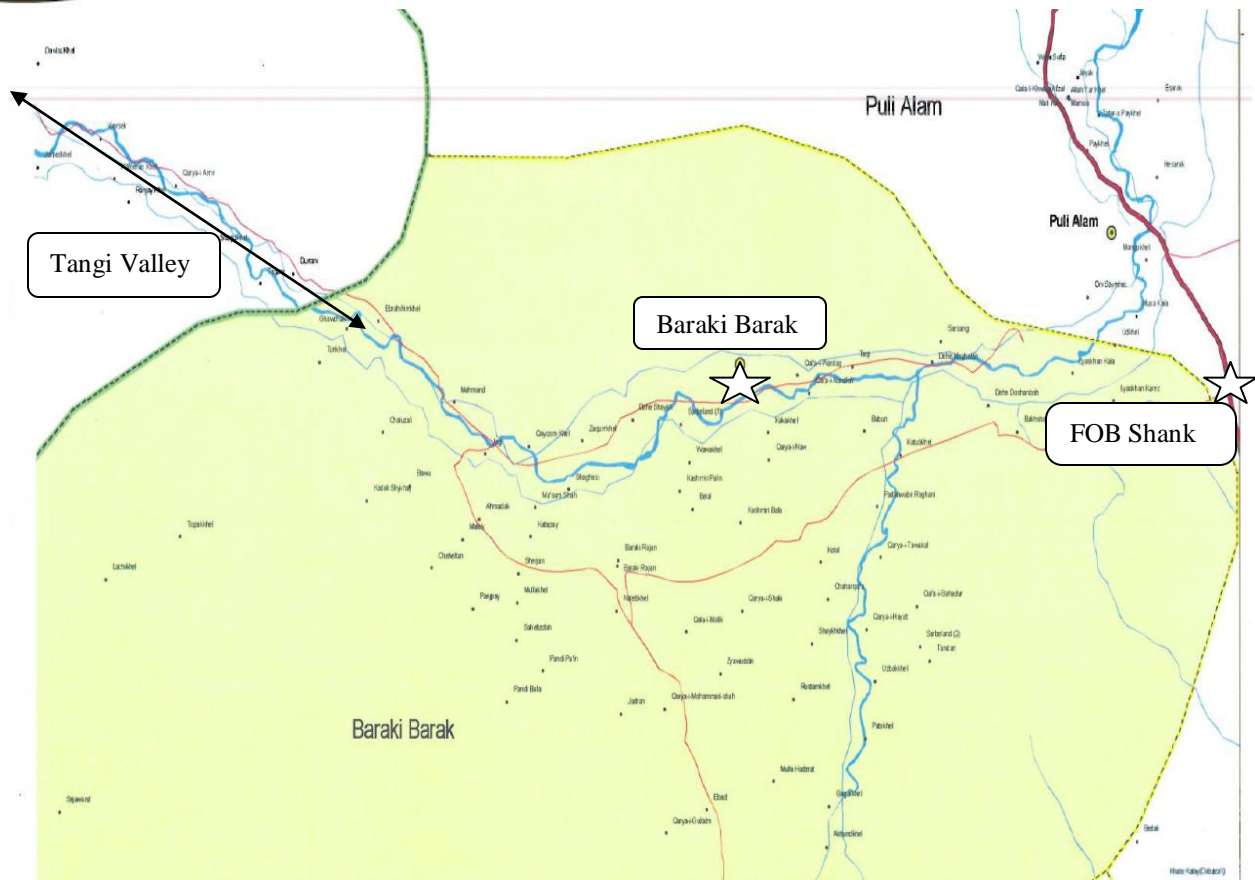
No two COPs are alike. The most significant difference between any two COPs is its relation to an urban center. Urban COPs require much greater security requirements and oftentimes less infrastructure development, whereas COPs established in rural locations often have better natural defensive measures (stand-off distance) while requiring more logistical and engineering support in order to sustain forces occupying the COP. (Ref: A Quick Review of Combat Outposts)

The following topics of interest will assist in establishing the requirement of a COP; location, contracted logistical support, engineering requirements, communications, rapid equipment fielding for new technologies, and additional considerations.

- a. Location; The town of Baraki Barak (BBK) is the center of Baraki Barak District, Logar Province, Afghanistan with a population of approximately 22,500. The city was also the former capital of Logar Province and is located in a mountainous area in the valley of the Logar River. A main route for transportation connecting Puli Alam to the east and to Highway 1 in the west passes through BBK and into the Tangi Valley, an insurgent stronghold.



## CALL Lesson of the Day



**Figure 1 Tangi Valley, Baraki Barak District, FOB Shank locations.**

By placing a COP at the BBK District Center, the center of gravity for the district, insurgent activity is interdicted quickly halting the freedom of movement (FOM) of men, weapons, and equipment (MWE). Afghanistan National Security Forces (ANSF) occupies a portion on the BBK District Center and a portion of COP BBK. By placing a Joint Coalition Outpost at the District Center the local nationals will recognize the COP is not a primary US outpost but a joint venture at restoring security and eliminating the insurgency.

- b. Engineering Requirements; A COP housing a company of Infantry Soldiers and supporting elements (Field Feeding Team, Civil Affairs Team, Military Police, civilian Embed Mentor Police, and Medics) have capabilities that provide the infantry unit with a broad range of capabilities: Civil Military Operations Center (CMOC), Company Tactical Operations Center (TOC),



## CALL Lesson of the Day

Dining Facility, Aid station, motor pool, a living space area (LSA), and a Helicopter Landing Zone (HLZ).

Force protection of the COP is the primary objective as the facility is utilized as a secure staging area to interdict insurgent activity. Incorporating appropriate standoff distances around facilities is the most effective and desirable tool in meeting force protection requirements in site design. The need for standoff distances varies with the type of facility, its location, and the asset it contains. Utilizing guard towers for direct observation of the perimeter provides immediate notification if suspicious activity, an attack, or a breach occurs. The earlier the notification of danger to the COP, the higher a state of readiness that can be brought to bear on the threat.

The most common barriers utilized for COP protection is the HESCO and Alaska concrete walls. Both are available and are effective against small arms fire (SAF), rocket propelled grenades (RPG), and indirect fire (IDF). Both barriers are currently utilized at COP BBK.



**Figure 2 Guard tower at BBK with HESCO Barriers.**



## CALL Lesson of the Day



**Figure 3 Dining area at BBK.**

- c. Contracted Logistical Support; Conventional COPs are not inexpensive and the cost for contracted equipment and labor can cost more than 1 million dollars. Below is a sample listing of items for contracts submitted on behalf of a COP;

A large fuel tank will enable the unit at the COP to not be completely reliant on combat logistical patrols for power generation.

500KW generator with monthly maintenance plan: A maintenance plan is a necessity for generators and the contracting office now mandates all generators purchased to have a maintenance plan. Ensure that the vendor drops off a generator that matches the statement of work. Some local national vendors will try to shortchange the unit and deceive the contracting office by dropping off used generators or generators that do not match the requirements set forth by the contract.



## CALL Lesson of the Day

Local National fuel deliveries must be tested for purity and the correct volume as notated on the bill of lading. Selling contaminated fuel and delivering less fuel than the bill of lading calls for should result in a change in the contract or refusal to accept the product.

Clean water resupply enables Soldiers to maintain hygiene while black water removal ensures that latrines and the camp area are free of human waste. Upon delivery of water the unit should ensure that Preventive Medicine personnel test the water for cleanliness.

Guard Towers, T-walls, and Jersey barriers: Absolutely necessary force protection items.

Security guard contracts require the vetting of local nationals to ensure force protection of the COP is not breached from green on blue incidents.

Electrical Supplies: Wiring, switches, and HVAC components.

Gravel: An absolute necessity in some areas where mud and dust are omnipresent and a luxury for some other sites.

Beds, Mattresses, and Wall Lockers: Unit dependent, not an absolute necessity.

Tents: Soldier living areas.



**Figure 4 Living area on BBK.**

Trash removal from the dining facility, living areas, and non-classified work areas.



## CALL Lesson of the Day



- d. Communications Requirements; Today's military units have multiple communication platforms: FM, SATCOM (Harris PRC-117), Force XXI Battle Command, Brigade and Below (FBCB2), Blue Force Tracker (BFT), Tacticomp, Thuraya satellite phones, local cell phone coverage, Very Small Aperture Terminal (VSAT), and Initial Ku Satellite System (IKSS). Despite this wide array of systems and bandwidth coverage even COPs situated on high ground or in urban areas should plan for reduced communications effectiveness.
- e. Rapid Equipment Fielding; New technologies provide additional support for surveillance and early warning intrusion devices. The Rapid Aerostat Initial Deployment (RAID) tower provides persistence capabilities using infrared sensors on elevated platforms. Gyrocam, an additional surveillance platform with high resolution color, has continuous zoom thermal imaging and night vision technologies contained in a single unit. Gyrocam camera systems can see through darkness, smoke, fog, and haze – just as clear as daytime. Inclement weather, sandstorms, and night time conditions are no longer limiting factors for surveillance mission. While having guards in the towers with continuous observation of the surrounding terrain is the optimum situation, limited manpower and difficult locations for observation may require the use of Rapid Deployment Integrated Surveillance System (RDISS). RDISS provides improved situational awareness to a Tactical Operations Center with a minimum of manning requirements. Maintaining persistence surveillance without exposing Soldiers to unnecessary dangerous situations is the key role of RDISS.

Field Service Representatives for new equipment should be available for training and repairing the equipment in a timely manner.

- f. Other details; Commanders should never forget that maximizing US personnel on the ground is the primary rationale for COP establishment. Commanders should not build COPs simply on a whim. There are considerable force protection controls, time, labor, and money costs associated with COP construction. COP construction should be preceded by detailed planning. In the final analysis, COPs should be built if they allow US Forces to better protect the populace, enable greater FOM, secure lines of operation, and enable Soldiers to better interact with the local populace. COPs should not become an anchor to hold on to. They are designed for a



## **CALL Lesson of the Day**

transitional time period to assist in stability operations and then transitioned to ANSF control or dismantled.

3. (U//FOUO) Lesson Learned: The location of COP BBK is positioned in the path of insurgent East to West movement along the Logar River valley roadway. The disruption of the FOM of MWE to insurgents has been greatly affected by COP BBK. Recent operations designed to force insurgents and anti-coalition forces to react have been very successful. Coalition Forces using COP BBK as a staging area have cleared several areas of insurgent activities and greatly disrupted the FOM of insurgents. Local nationals are locating weapons and equipment and leaving the material for US Forces to find or notifying the ANSF of the locations for pick-up and disposal.
4. (U//FOUO) Recommendation: Continue to use COP BBK as a staging area. Improve the living standard and force protection at COP BBK while preparing for another shaping and clearing operation in the BBK District with ANSF in the lead.
5. (U//FOUO) Related CALL publications:
  - A Quick Review of Combat Outposts (COPs) CPT T Hsia
  - Joint Forward Operations Base (JFOB) Force Protection Handbook
  - Army Antiterrorism Force Protection: Rokasz and Hash
6. (U//FOUO) CALL LNO: SGM Ronald Peters, Regional Command East, Task Force Bulldog, 3<sup>rd</sup> IBCT, 1<sup>st</sup> AD, FOB Shank: [ronald.d.peters@us.army.mil](mailto:ronald.d.peters@us.army.mil)