

THE CANADIAN ARMY IN AFGHANISTAN

VOLUME II, PART 2: COUNTER-INSURGENCY IN KANDAHAR

Sean M. Maloney, PhD



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INTRODUCTION

The Canadian Army's odyssey in Kandahar Province continued into 2009 with the hand-over from BGen Denis Thompson to BGen Jon Vance. With crucial strategic issues unresolved at the coalition level and confronted with increasingly disconnected Canadian aims, Joint Task Force Afghanistan took the initiative and forged ahead with an approach developed by the Vance headquarters team during its work up training in the latter half of 2008.

This headquarters contained officers who had experience from the 2006 deployment, personnel who retained personal and professional interest as the situation in Afghanistan evolved in the intervening two years. Equally important was BGen Vance and his team's receptiveness to advice and commentary from sources that had real (as opposed to theoretical) experience with Afghanistan, and specifically, experience with Kandahar Province and its discontents. These sessions were instrumental in transitioning the concepts developed in June 2008 to a concrete plan by December 2008. Constant observation of events on the ground in January-February 2009 further refined this new approach. In essence, the Vance headquarters hit the ground running and moved rapidly to take advantage of the pre-harvest period to set the conditions for success and generate space so that momentum could be regained in 2009.

KEY VILLAGE APPROACHES:

FEBRUARY-AUGUST 2009

From 2006 to 2008, Task Force Kandahar fought a disruption campaign west of Kandahar City while the international community struggled to implement a viable strategy to assist Afghanistan. Challenged constantly in the key districts of the province by Canadian and Afghan forces, and worn down by special operations forces and American airpower integrated into the Canadian effort, the Taliban leaders could not achieve their objectives. By the end of 2008, they were forced to pause and reconsider their approach, and the resulting stalemate lasted into early 2009.

By the fall of 2008, Washington had come to accept that more American forces were needed to deal with the insurgency, but full implementation of this strategy had to wait until several months after the American national elections. It was clear by spring 2009 that the Americans would reinforce the effort in Afghanistan massively, but it was less evident exactly how or where that would play out. Over the next four chapters, we will see how the American influx in Kandahar Province altered the trajectory of the Canadian effort.

Despite the new Canadian strategy for Afghanistan, implementation of the Canadian agenda in Kandahar Province was fragmenting to the point of irrelevance. Little or no synergy existed between Joint Task Force Afghanistan and the activities of some of the other Canadian government departments working in Kandahar Province. If Kandahar City were lost to the insurgency, then none of the reconstruction and development aspects of the Canadian program mattered. As BGen Jon Vance put it, “You could achieve 100 percent on all of those benchmarks and you could still lose the insurgency.”¹

In 2009, the Canadian effort began to lose prominence in Afghanistan. As JTF Afghanistan’s area of responsibility shrank and the ratio of Canadian to American forces and aid funding decreased, so did Canada’s ability to project influence in the Kandahar provincial environment. The Strategic Advisory Team–Afghanistan (SAT-A) had been dismantled in 2008, so the loss of primacy in Kandahar Province sharpened the decline in Canada’s ability to generate strategic influence in Kabul. The heady days of Canadian involvement in the Afghan National Development Strategy and the Policy Action Group, and of Canadian command of Regional Command (South), were well in the past. On the other hand, the greater concentration and integration of Canadian resources in certain

districts that began in 2009 did achieve tactical and operational effects. Given this situation, what could the incoming Canadian headquarters and its two successors realistically expect to accomplish before the announced pull-out date of July 2011?

Strategic Dimensions

The transition from the second Bush administration to the first Obama administration highlighted the unresolved issues surrounding American strategy in Afghanistan, and the question of continuity of effort arose time and again. The first unresolved issue involved identifying and determining the most appropriate focus of the American effort: should the United States work to influence events in Pakistan, in Afghanistan, or in both countries at the same time? The Bush administration had already decided to step up cross-border activity against certain safe havens in Pakistan with a modest program that quadrupled the number of Predator strikes from four to 20 and added some limited special forces operations, with the estimated result of seven of 20 top Al Qaeda leaders killed throughout 2008.² The second issue was the request for 30,000 additional American troops for security operations to support the 2009 Afghan national elections, made by two successive commanders of the International Security Assistance Force, Generals Dan McNeill and David McKiernan.³

The third issue was the deteriorating relationship between the international community and President Karzai's administration. The mechanisms established to coordinate action between the Afghan government and the various assisting nations and international organizations, notably the Policy Action Group and the Joint Coordination and Management Board, were all dismantled in 2008 at Karzai's behest. An attempt by the British to anoint one of their diplomats as the senior "international" in Kabul failed dramatically, damaging Britain's relationship with Karzai. Some believed that Karzai was being deceived by his own advisors, or otherwise manipulated by anti-Western entities. Others thought he might be distancing himself to take up a position that would be advantageous in future peace talks. In any event, the situation in Kabul was progressively worse going into 2009.⁴ (The fallback position for international discourse was an informal grouping of the American, British and Canadian ambassadors in Kabul, but the closure of SAT-A in August 2008 may have undermined Canadian influence with the Karzai government at this crucial time.)

Based in part on these problems, and in part on high-profile attacks by Pakistan-based terrorists against Indian targets in the region, the Bush administration initiated a strategy review in the summer of 2008. The Lute Report, which arrived in November 2008 during the American election campaign, stated that too many agencies were waging uncoordinated wars in Afghanistan, resulting in complete stalemate. Any solution to the Afghanistan problem had to start with Pakistan (by no means a new observation); the Afghan government

was too corrupt to be legitimate; and narcotics production had to be reduced significantly. This statement of the obvious was subsumed by the change in administration. Ultimately, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Michael G. Mullen, told President-elect Obama that there was, in fact, no strategy.⁵ This assertion was incorrect. As we have seen in previous chapters, there was both a national and a military strategy in Afghanistan, but they were not American-made, and they were under-resourced by both NATO and the international community.

The new request for 30,000 more troops for elections security was submerged in larger attempts by the Obama administration to formulate an approach to Afghanistan. Was it worthwhile to invest another 30,000 troops, even temporarily, when the United States had yet to decide on the direction it should take in the region? Another strategy assessment was initiated, with a due date of March 2009. Meanwhile, an acrimonious meeting between Karzai and Vice President Biden that touched on — among other issues — the illicit activities of Ahmad Wali Karzai, the leader of the Kandahar Provincial Council, escalated into a threat that the United States might not send any more troops at all.⁶ Another meeting with President Asif Ali Zardari of Pakistan proved to be a damp squib. The Obama administration was stuck; they could commit more American forces now, or wait for the strategy review. Concerned that insurgents would disrupt the 2009 Afghan elections, on 17 February 2009 President Obama announced that 17,000 more American troops would deploy to Afghanistan and increased the number of Predator strikes against targets in Pakistan.⁷

At the same time in early 2009, the senior American staff handling the Afghanistan file underwent a complete shake-up that reached even the pro-eradication American ambassador, William “Chemical Bill” Wood, and the ISAF commander, Gen David McKiernan. Meanwhile, administration newcomers were generating more and more friction with Karzai through public and private statements questioning his ability to continue leading Afghanistan. This discord exacerbated an already serious situation and alienated an already isolated man; note, however, that not all the critics were wrong, especially those focused on the career of Ahmad Wali Karzai. The literature on this subject depicts a situation rife with crosscutting personality clashes that hindered the Americans’ effort to sort themselves out on Afghanistan, even if an acceptable strategy could be found.⁸ The Canadian task force in Kandahar continued to hold the line and provide breathing room while the new American administration struggled to gain purchase.

The Riedel strategy review published in early March 2009 reminded readers that the purpose of the Afghanistan effort was to assist the anti-Al Qaeda effort in Pakistan. In Pakistan, Islamist insurgent groups, including the Taliban, shielded Al Qaeda much as the Taliban had harboured Al Qaeda in Afghanistan, a situation that produced instability in Pakistan. Any measures to defeat Al Qaeda in Pakistan had to prevent Al Qaeda from

returning to Afghanistan; therefore, as well as assistance to Pakistani security forces, the effort would require a better-resourced counterinsurgency campaign in Afghanistan. The Riedel strategy review also acknowledged that elements of the Pakistani security forces supported the Taliban in Afghanistan, and suggested a variety of carrot-and-stick responses to be directed against the Pakistani government and other elements as required. On 20 March 2009, President Obama accepted the basic tenets of the Riedel strategy review and gave his subordinates until 2011 to make it work. For that, a new command team was desired. As part of that change, ISAF commander Gen David McKiernan was out and Gen Stanley McChrystal was in. Not to be pushed by the administration into precipitous action, McChrystal took the time to produce his own assessment of the situation in Afghanistan.⁹

After weathering Taliban attempts to influence the Canadian national election, the Harper government was re-elected in mid-October 2008, and the March 2008 motion that had extended Canadian military operations until July 2011 remained in place.¹⁰ Outwardly, little changed: the six Cabinet priorities and three signature projects still represented Canadian objectives in Afghanistan. Internally, however, the situation was somewhat tumultuous. There was even greater emphasis on increasing the civilian components of the Canadian mission and, especially, on enhancing the public profile of their contributions, regardless of efficacy. This familiar theme would dominate the events of 2009, reflecting a failed coordination effort back in Ottawa that was likely rooted in personality conflicts as much as anything.

On 1 March 2009, however, Prime Minister Stephen Harper told an American journalist on CNN, “We’re not going to ever defeat the insurgency. My reading of Afghan history is that it’s probably had an insurgency forever of some kind.”¹¹ This quote was reported by global media outlets without context, and other allies involved in Afghanistan used it for their own purposes to question the veracity of Canada’s commitment. Historically inaccurate and defeatist, the remark undermined Canadian morale in Afghanistan and drove a wedge between some American and Canadian officers working in multinational headquarters. Opponents of Canadian involvement even used this quote to question Canada’s sacrifices in Afghanistan. In the field, some soldiers wondered what they were fighting for and whether they were dying in vain. For some Canadian officers, it confirmed the presence of, at worst, a strategic vacuum or, at best, a failure in Ottawa to understand the psychological aspects of warfare. Why should Canadian soldiers continue to fight if their own leaders did not think they could succeed?¹²

This stance posed problems for the incoming headquarters and its units. As one study noted,

It also meant that efforts of TFK HQ in 2009 were politically unsupported because it was not deemed appropriate to change the course of the mission so close to completion, despite the fact that its current course would continue to produce thwarted efforts and result in the death of Canadians and Afghans alike ... Successes of the Canadian mission in Afghanistan were never effectively publicized and therefore the iconic image for the mission was the “Ramp Ceremony”.¹³

When all of these factors were combined, the Canadian effort in 2009 was not off to a good start. Was there any way to recover the lost ground?

Handover: Thompson to Vance

Led by BGen Jonathan Vance, the incoming Task Force Kandahar Headquarters arrived in late February 2009. Outwardly, the Vance headquarters resembled its predecessors in that it was designed to handle the diverse elements of the Canadian contribution in Afghanistan: the battle group, the Operational Mentor and Liaison Team (OMLT), the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT), the JTF Afghanistan Air Wing (also known as Task Force Silver Dart) and the National Support Element (NSE), plus an American infantry battalion. But the Vance headquarters arrived out of phase with the rest of Task Force 1-09 as the relief in place was scheduled for April. The two-month overlap gave the new headquarters staff time to get the lay of the land, wind down the exhausted out-going task force, and prepare to adjust and implement concepts that they had worked out while preparing to deploy.

The Vance headquarters included veterans of Combined Task Force Aegis — Maj Quentin Innis, Maj Harjit Sajjan and Capt Darcy Heddon among them — with extensive experience in planning, analysis and influence operations. Understanding the Canadian intelligence community’s limitations, BGen Vance and his staff built several organizations to supplement the work of the All Source Intelligence Centre, which maintained a tactical focus on insurgent networks in the province. These new structures included a “white situational awareness” cell and a group dedicated to conducting detailed link analyses of the Kandahari power structure. Operations research analysts were also brought in to support the staff. The unwieldy Effects-Based Operations machinery of previous rotations was replaced with a more streamlined process. Psychological operations and influence operations moved to the J3 under LCol Michael B. Patrick, who integrated them into his Ops team. Finally, the Vance headquarters benefitted from a potent J5 structure under the leadership of LCol Lee J. Hammond.



Photo Credit: Author

BGen Vance and his staff brought a new approach to dealing with the discontents of the districts west of Kandahar City, but found themselves hindered by Canadian bureaucratic politics almost as much as by the insurgency. They regained vital momentum with the Deh-e Bagh experiment.

At Camp Nathan Smith, a new Representative of Canada in Kandahar (RoCK), Ken Lewis, took over from Elissa Golberg. Tall, greying and energetic, Lewis quickly discerned that there were substantial personality and structural issues between the civilians from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) — collectively referred to as the “other government departments” or OGDs — and the military leadership of the headquarters. Where exactly did the RoCK fit? In reality, the RoCK did not command the OGDs in parallel with the commander of TF Kandahar; he was a coordinator like the PRT Director. At the same time, TF Kandahar had no command authority over the PRT; theoretically, the PRT reported to ISAF in Kabul, but the civilians actually reported to their departments back in Ottawa,¹⁴ and took their direction from the Kandahar Action Plan and its successor documents. There was no civilian equivalent of command in its military sense, and the only way to synchronize the OGDs’ activities with military operations was through coordinating meetings and personal contacts. This liaison and coordination were conducted between the J5 Branch of the headquarters and the civilian OGD representatives at both the TF Kandahar headquarters and the PRT.¹⁵

TF Kandahar's relationship with Regional Command (South) remained problematic. Regional Command (South) was commanded by Maj Gen Mart de Kruif of the Netherlands, and many key positions in the Operations and Plans branches of the headquarters were held by British officers. BGen Vance and his staff rapidly learned that Kandahar City and Kandahar Province may have been vital ground but, for Regional Command (South), the main effort was in Helmand. Vance's officers, especially those who had served with CTF Aegis in 2006, decried the ongoing British obsession with counter-narcotics operations in Helmand, not least because operations in Kandahar were constantly rescheduled around the availability of helicopters and ISTAR assets for which Helmand took priority.

In this, Regional Command (South) was supported by the new ISAF commander, Gen Stanley McChrystal. In his 2013 memoirs, Gen McChrystal justified the Helmand focus by arguing that "Helmand was where our forces already were", and that he was interested in some form of success in information operations. Additionally, "President Karzai's government naturally wanted to allow more Pashtuns to vote by securing Helmand," which in turn would "enhance Afghan confidence, or at least increase their involvement, in the governance of their own nation." Furthermore, the ISAF commander believed that, "while Kandahar's security was a serious concern as the districts around the city were enflamed, it was not besieged or in imminent danger of falling."¹⁶

This backhanded compliment to three and half years of Canadian-led efforts in Kandahar Province notwithstanding, Gen McChrystal was convinced that the situation in Helmand was worse. Some Canadian officers believed that McChrystal was overly influenced by his British advisors, with whom he had more affinity because he had served with British troops in Iraq. Canadians in Kabul were not straining themselves to make a counter-argument for Kandahar, however.¹⁷

Regional Command (South) even took control of an American route-clearance battalion operating in Kandahar and reassigned most of it "temporarily" to Helmand. This was a new manifestation of an old problem, and the Kandahar Air Field Cigar Club remained open for business. The situation was mitigated to a great extent by BGen Vance's willingness to build on established information relationships and, importantly, facilitate his staff's informal connectivity with incoming American units that controlled the vital enablers. For example, both LCol Mike Gilmore, the Task Force Engineer, and the commander of Task Force Thor, the American route-clearance outfit, were cigar aficionados, and almost everyone in both camps liked Alberta beef. Barbecues led to "handshake con" and "bubba con" access to more aviation coverage, increased daily route-clearance patrols in Canadian areas of operation, and more ISTAR assets when needed. The British could be as adroit and focused in their aims but, once Canadians caught on, mitigation strategies were available to those who dared to employ them.¹⁸

The Operational Mentor and Liaison Team: Changing Focus

The incoming OMLT commanded by Col Gregory Burt had to shift on the fly to adapt to the rapidly changing situation in Kandahar. LCol Joe Shipley handed over command of the OMLT in March 2009, passing on the football trophy signed by the previous OMLT commanders with the admonition, “Don’t drop the ball!” Under LCol Shipley, the OMLT had achieved a steady state with BGen Abdul Basir and the troops of 1-205 Brigade ANA; the kandaks could conduct framework operations and their sustainment capacity had improved. The familiar red-yellow-green training and readiness cycle was abandoned as more and more Afghan troops moved into Kandahar Province. Each kandak received a new company, while preparations for the arrival of a sixth kandak were under way.

In April 2009, 1-205 Brigade had 1st Kandak in Zharey District, 2nd Kandak on leave and about to return, and 3rd Kandak spread out from Mushan in Panjwayi District to Jelawur in Arghandab District. The combat support unit, 4th Kandak, was in Camp Hero, with its D-30 artillery battery at Patrol Base Sperwan Ghar. No longer bound by the red-yellow-green rotation system by the summer of 2009, 1-205 Brigade deployed all three of its rifle kandaks: 1st Kandak in Zharey, 2nd Kandak in Panjwayi, and 3rd Kandak in Kandahar City and Arghandab¹⁹ (see Figure 5-1).

Initially, the OMLT could mentor two infantry kandaks with three company-level teams each plus a team at each kandak headquarters, but in 2009 this commitment increased to all three infantry kandaks. Like his predecessors, Col Burt mentored BGen Basir. BGen Vance wanted more policing resources in Kandahar City, so he departed from precedent by moving the Police Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team (P-OMLT) to the PRT. As in previous rotations, Camp Hero hosted Canadian mentoring activities focussed on engineering, explosives ordnance disposal (EOD), logistics and medical functions, usually with personnel drawn from Canadian units at KAF and coordinated by the OMLT. Tactically, the company-level teams were reorganized under Col Burt to accommodate increased demands for force protection; his company-level OMLT teams now consisted of eight soldiers instead of four. The additional personnel were scrounged from the rest of the incoming task force through requests for volunteers.²⁰

With more Afghan National Army units in Kandahar, and the sketchiness of their formation-level skills, this OMLT rotation had to focus on planning at the brigade and kandak levels while also maintaining their mentoring capability at company level. Col Burt set himself the task of “assist[ing] in the force employment and capability development of 1-205th Brigade in order to progress it towards executing independent operations synchronized with other partners.”²¹ That meant working not only with BGen Basir to build up his planning capacity but also with 1-205 Brigade to improve its ability to mount complex operations, especially in terms of sustainment. In particular, Col Burt wanted to develop

FIGURE 5-1:
Afghan National Army/Operational Mentor
and Liaison Team Dispositions,
 April 2009

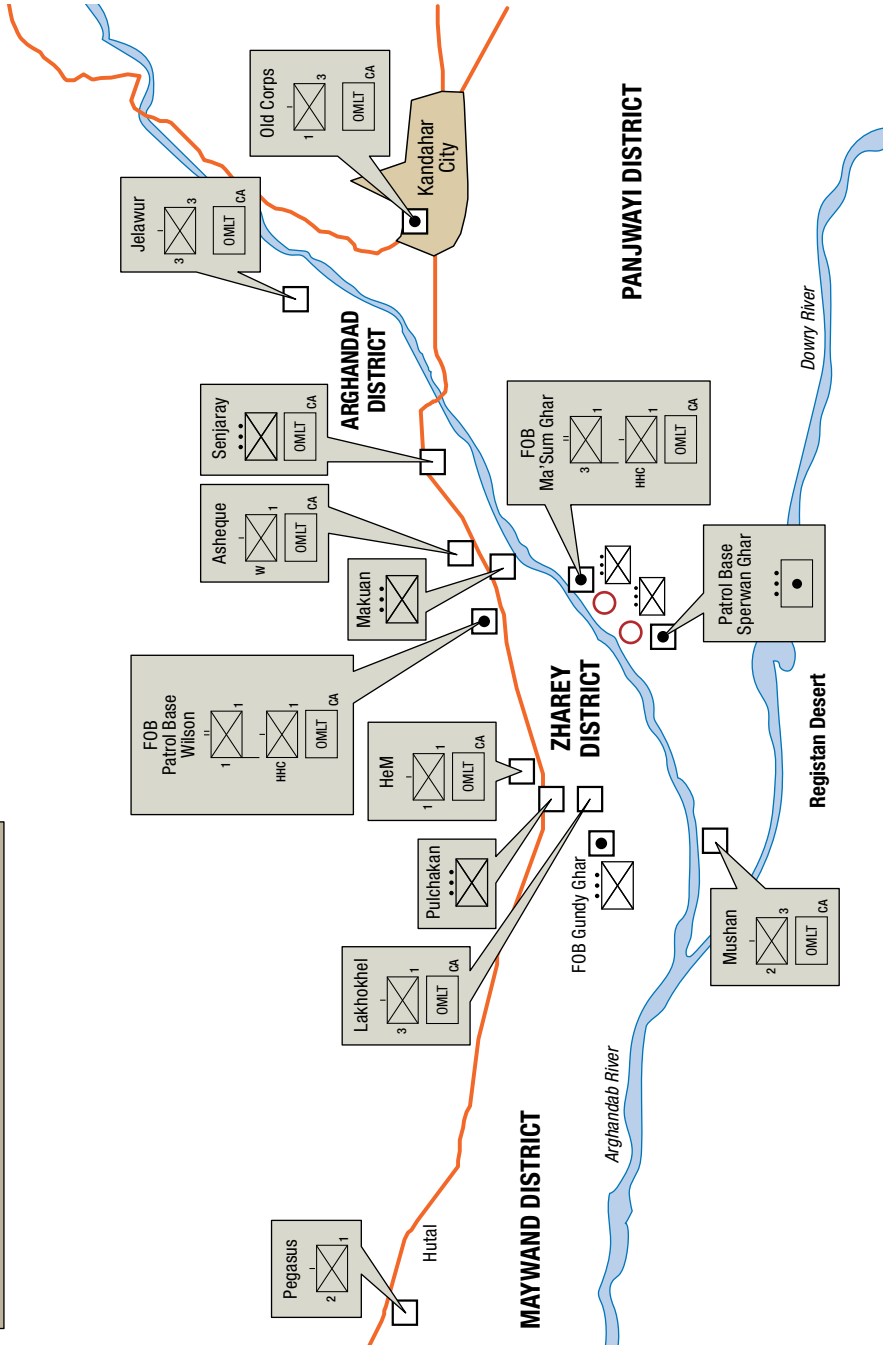


Figure 5-1: Afghan National Army/Operational Mentor and Liaison Team Dispositions, April 2009



Photo Credit: Author

As more and more Afghan National Army units arrived in Kandahar Province, the Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team shifted to improving unit-level planning and operations. This is an ANA sketch of positions in Panjwayi District.

the intellectual, as opposed to physical, domain. The OMLT's secondary responsibility was ensuring that Canadian and Afghan operations were “harmonized”; for example, Basir was briefed on Operation Plan KANTOLO so he could decide how those operations would affect his dispositions and intent. Burt and Vance wanted the ANA in Kandahar to be able to sustain itself autonomously, continue to trend upward in improving its capabilities, and retain the hard-won credibility it had achieved with both the local people and ISAF.²²

The crucial role the OMLT played as intermediary between the battle group and the kandaks in the Canadian area of operations increased in importance as the battle group adopted a more dispersed posture in eastern Panjwayi and western Dand districts. Before, the battle group and the local kandak would coordinate their activities for offensive operations and then return to their respective steady states, but now they were practically living cheek by jowl. Col Burt encapsulated his mentoring philosophy as “[t]he Wisdom of Solomon, the Courage of David, and the Patience of Job,” which translated well into Afghan religious culture.²³

The American influx gave cause for concern. The OMLT was already providing liaison between TF Kandahar and 1-205 Brigade, and the arrival of the Stryker Brigade presented the challenge of potential command confusion: Canadian mentors with Afghan companies in American battle space. The Canadian OMLT managed to ease the Stryker Brigade in, with Col Burt working with Col Harry Tunnell to build a personal relationship with BGen Basir.²⁴

There were several problems, however, within the Afghan chain of command. The first was the Afghans' tendency to compress tactical, operational and strategic levels into one, with the result that the Ministry of Defence might intervene in company-level operations. For example, in the first iteration of Operation ATAL in Kandahar City, after the Sarposa prison break in June 2008, troops arrived from Kabul without coordination, and corps commanders dispersed companies. Another example involved tactical meddling by the 205 Corps Commander. On one occasion, a retired *mujahid* related to the commander of 205 Corps demanded help to retrieve a mutual kinsman who had been kidnapped, so 205 Corps ordered 1-205 Brigade to deploy a whole kandak for this mission on the eve of a major operation in Panjwayi District. The Canadians worked to separate the command levels so that 205 Corps connected to Regional Command (South) and the Ministry of Defence talked to ISAF, leaving TF Kandahar to deal with 1-205 Brigade.²⁵

And most importantly, Afghan kandaks and their Canadian mentors would no longer be hived off to support British operations in Helmand. BGen Vance and Col Burt held firm on this but, when 1-205 Brigade was instructed to establish and protect polling stations in Khakrez for the upcoming elections, this new policy posed serious problems for TF Kandahar headquarters, which had staved off many past attempts by 205 Corps to deploy units of 1-205 Brigade to Ghorak and other northern districts. 1-205 Brigade strained to sustain this task, and an entire infantry company was deployed on the mission for months with their mentors. Throughout this tour, 205 Corps remained a significant source of interference.²⁶

When all was said and done, however, 1-205 Brigade mounted six brigade-sized operations in 2009, including three security operations in Kandahar City and a major sweep operation in Senjaray. 1-205 Brigade also led the planning for elections security, working closely with the critical Operations Coordination Centre–Province (OCC-P) team at the governor's palace. In addition, when the decision was made to cease operations in Mushan, 1-205 Brigade led the operation to remove the strong point and realign its forces.²⁷

The Canadian mentors at kandak level continued to live and work alongside their Afghan counterparts, prepared to bring fire and close-air support and medical evacuation to bear when necessary. The Afghan companies in their strong points deployed every morning for anti-IED route sweeps, a task made all the more dangerous by the antipersonnel mines

the insurgents had begun laying to protect their larger IEDs. When the route sweeps were completed, the Afghan soldiers conducted mounted and dismounted patrols in the vicinity of the tactical infrastructure. When a larger operation was on the agenda, the Canadian RG-31s and the Ford Ranger pick-up trucks of the ANA deployed the troops to their start lines, sometimes in conjunction with police but usually alongside companies of the Canadian battle group. And the war continued.

The Joint Task Force Afghanistan Air Wing and Aviation Operations

By February 2009, the build-up of the JTF Afghanistan Air Wing under Col Chris Coates and his staff and crews had reached “initial operational capability” — the point where operations could begin. Dubbed Task Force Silver Dart, the formation comprised the Canadian Helicopter Force (Afghanistan) with Chinooks and Griffons; the Sperwer Tactical Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (TUAV) squadron; the Canadian Heron Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) Detachment; and the Theatre Support Element with its CC-130 Hercules transports.

The Engineer Support Unit made Canadian helicopter operations possible. KAF had only so much ramp space, and the base was already handling 5,000 flights a day. If Canada wanted to conduct its own air operations, ramp space had to be built; it could not be borrowed from anybody else. The Engineer Support Unit’s expertise in dealing with Afghan contractors and some skillful stiff-arming of glacial Ottawa-based bureaucracy paid dividends, and X-Ray Ramp was ready on time. It was simple: no ground facilities, no air operations.²⁸

The recovery of the lost Canadian airmobile capability was facilitated in discreet ways with allied assistance. The CH-147 Chinooks came from American units in Afghanistan. The CH-146 Griffons, now equipped with M-134D Dillon Gatling guns, were a new system for Canada. The Department of State Air Wing operating from KAF also used the M-134D, and provided welcome advice. The Royal Air Force also provided theatre-specific information on Chinook operations as well as advice on their airmobile doctrine.²⁹

By March, TF Silver Dart was significantly augmenting Canadian capabilities in Kandahar Province. Small airmobile operations were now possible. Ground combat logistics patrols from KAF to the forward operating bases were considerably reduced. Both types of operations reduced exposure to IEDs. Counter-IED capability was significantly enhanced; Griffons and Herons flew night over-watch missions on the main service routes as the American OH-58D Kiowa Warrior helicopters had in 2008. All Canadian UAVs were used to cue air and artillery strikes on insurgents caught laying IEDs. TF Kandahar could now deploy Counter-IED Squadron exploitation teams and National Investigative Service officers to IED strike sites without going through Regional Command (South). Finally, the

Canadians could conduct their own “angel flights” to recover their dead, although medical evacuations were still handled by the specialized and highly experienced U.S. Air Force and U.S. Army HH-60 and UH-60 units stationed at KAF.

In April 2009, after six years of hard service in Afghanistan, the Sperwer TUAVs were retired and their crews, made up from the Royal Regiment of Canadian Artillery and the Royal Canadian Air Force, shut down operations at their southwestern KAF launch site. There were now more ScanEagle SUAVs, enough for three lines of operations per day in addition to the coverage provided by CU-170 Herons, MQ-1 Predators and MQ-9 Reapers.

Several functions usually performed by air formations remained outside the purview of TF Silver Dart. The ScanEagle SUAVs were still tasked by the battle group, and TF Kandahar continued its close relationship with the 451st Expeditionary Air Group of the U.S. Air Force and its UAVs. The battle group and TF Kandahar Headquarters did not agree on who employed the MQ-1 Predators and MQ-9 Reapers cut to Canada by the U.S. Air Force, but the established process — involving a forward air controller, a gunner, a lawyer and the battle group commander’s deputy, all working from the battle group’s Tactical Operations Centre — remained in place.

The Canadians’ close relationship with Task Force Eagle Assault ended in January 2009, when the Americans reorganized their aviation forces for the influx. The new American helicopter force was the 4th Battalion, 101st Aviation Regiment, known as Task Force Wings, led by LTC James Benson. Consisting of four companies operating the OH-58D Kiowa Warrior, AH-64 Apache, UH-60 Blackhawk and CH-47 Chinook helicopters, TF Wings was part of the 159th Combat Aviation Brigade, an American formation mostly dedicated to operations in Regional Command (East). The informal relationship that developed between TF Eagle Assault and TF Kandahar continued with BGen Vance and LTC Benson, and the OH-58D Kiowa Warrior helicopters of TF Wings worked alongside the Canadian Griffons on the crucial counter-IED route-security tasks.

TF Silver Dart had its teething troubles. Rotor erosion nearly grounded the Griffons before the problem was identified and solved. The Canadian supply system had difficulty acquiring the correct lubricants for the Chinooks, while the new Herons encountered technical issues with their IFF (Identification Friend or Foe) systems. Often working informally with allies, the mechanics and technicians kept the aircraft flying and the troops on the ground supported.³⁰

Col Bruce Ploughman, an experienced maritime helicopter pilot, took over TF Silver Dart in May 2009, when the nascent formation had developed enough that it was ready to mature in the Afghanistan environment. All the complex pieces of a military organization — procedures, communications, relationships with allied units and formations — had to be assimilated and passed on to the next rotation while the current

rotation was still learning them. During this challenging period, TF Silver Dart suffered its first casualties on 6 July 2009 with the loss of MCpl Patrice Audet of 430 Squadron and Cpl Martin Joannette of 3 R22eR in the crash of a CH-146 Griffon in Zabul Province.

One of the most significant developments of this time was increased army-air force integration in TF Kandahar through TF Silver Dart. Unlike the Sperwer TUAV team, in which soldiers worked with air force people from the tactical helicopter community, the Heron crews were all air force, drawn from squadrons operating the CP-140 Aurora maritime patrol aircraft. Most of these crews had worked with ground forces only when conducting limited tests in applying Aurora sensors to the ground environment. They had no idea how ground operations were contextualized, structured or commanded, so an “Army 101” course was run for two weeks. Another important change was a philosophical movement away from scheduling aircraft like buses. The deeper concepts underpinning why and how they were to be used to support the battle had to be understood by all involved.³¹

On the army side, the battle group had to give up two bilateral relationships, its link to the TUAV detachment (now ended) and its connection with its forward air controllers, to form what some called the “triangle of love” — the cooperation between the tactical air control party, the Heron controllers, and the aviation operations staff to support the battle group commander and his staff at their Tactical Operations Centre. Col Ploughman and his staff worked closely with BGen Vance to push understanding of Heron capabilities all the way down to platoon level, and worked on ways to get the platoon and company commanders to know they could ask for support when they required it. This was a major departure from the old HELQUEST system, with which a low-level ground commander would ask, hoping against hope, whether he *might* get lift, usually did not, and ended up cursing the air force.³²

Like all the other units and supporting arms, TF Silver Dart conducted daily framework surveillance operations. This was tedious work, but it influenced enemy freedom of movement. The insurgents learned very rapidly that almost anything flying could cue an airstrike or artillery if its crew could make a positive identification. Ironically, the more ISAF tactical infrastructure a district had, the more likely it was to be resupplied by air. That meant greater air presence, which suppressed insurgent freedom of movement and forced them to adapt their operations. In time, the insurgents started to move about individually during the day and, when in groups, usually no larger than three or four fighters. TF Silver Dart prepared for push-back in the form of anti-aircraft artillery, assuming that the Taliban would exploit the predictability of resupply operations. Heavy machine guns appeared in Zharey to engage some of the Americans’ OH-58D Kiowa Warriors, but anti-helicopter operations were rare and no one used surface-to-air missiles. During this critical period, TF Silver Dart eventually added its capabilities to the web of sensors and shooters expanding over the western rural districts.

Finally, TF Silver Dart took part in Operation APPLANIX, the deployment of CP-140 Aurora maritime patrol aircraft to Kandahar Province to acquire the data and imagery required to make high-quality tactical maps. The maps available to the ground troops were not detailed enough for counterinsurgency operations. On a 1:50,000-scale map, a cluster of Afghan compounds might look like a brown blob with a place name — not enough granularity when specific compounds had to be identified, labeled, catalogued, and monitored for hostile activity. In the past, the Canadian Forces Mapping and Charting Establishment had a relationship with an American team that collected geological information with an NP-3D Orion aircraft,³³ but that capability had long since departed, leaving a critical gap.

The first Canadian mapping mission over Afghanistan was flown by LCol James Irvine on 13 May 2009 in a CP-140 Aurora carrying a team of 12 from the Mapping and Charting Establishment and their Applanix mobile mapping and positioning camera system. Over several days, the Auroras mapped Helmand, Kandahar, Oruzgan and Zabul provinces, and certain areas of Kandahar City. Dodging sandstorms, civilian airliners, and aerial refuelling operations, the Desert Demons gathered exceptionally high-quality imagery, and collected so much data that Col Ploughman called an operational pause so it could all be processed. Most importantly, the data was turned into a product usable by TF Kandahar's ground forces within 11 days.³⁴

Changes at the PRT

On 9 February 2009, LCol Carl Turenne took over the PRT from LCol Dana Woodworth, and the PRT and its operations changed significantly over the months that followed. The PRT was still responsible for enabling the Canadian civilian departments (the OGDs), acting as the battle-space commander in Kandahar City and reacting to incidents within its boundaries. By the end of the summer, however, the American influx had changed everything.

By this point, the PRT was suffering from the combined effects of organizational fluctuation and an insistence from elements in Ottawa that risk be reduced to zero. Both factors served to drive wedges between the military component and the “whole-of-government” partners on several levels. Some military personnel “thought the OGDs were gutless and did not want to go ‘outside the wire.’” The critics had to be closely ‘gripped’ by LCol Turenne, who reminded all hands that everyone at the PRT wanted to go out but the civilian departments in Ottawa were severely skittish about letting their people do so.³⁵

A plan dubbed Rolling Start, then in the process of implementation, was designed in part to civilianize the PRT. It established the position of PRT Director, ostensibly reporting to the Representative of Canada in Kandahar, but no one could be found to fill it. As a result, the director post was a revolving door for several months, producing discontinuity. It was only with the arrival of Jess Dutton in July 2009 that the PRT achieved some semblance of stability.³⁶

Under these conditions, LCol Turenne had to respond to the Vance Headquarters plans and also to resolve the substantial issues of how the Americans fit into the broader schema of reconstruction and development programming in Kandahar Province.

When Turenne took command, one of his first priorities was restructuring the military component of the PRT, which comprised a three-platoon force-protection company, a civil-military cooperation (CIMIC) company, plus the Specialist Engineer Team and an EOD-Counter-IED detachment. Using a concept conceived by LCol Woodworth, Turenne reorganized his troops to form two Stabilization Companies, known as Stab A and Stab B, one to work in Kandahar City and the other to support TF Kandahar's units. Turenne believed that the previous rotation had focused on tactical CIMIC, and there was not enough linkage between tactical CIMIC and provincial-level programmes. This, as we have seen over the years, was not a new issue at the PRT.

Turenne was exceptionally concerned about those provincial-level programs. The CIDA, DFAIT and Correctional Service Canada teams, and the Canadian Civilian Police (CIVPOL) contingent, continued with their work and manning levels. Fortunately, the PRT Synchronization Board was still in place to handle coordination.

The PRT achieved important successes, but the requirement to capture and articulate them in a constrained reporting system meant that they remained obscure. For example, an activist four-man detachment from Correctional Service Canada instigated significant changes at Sarposa Prison: its corrupt warden was fired; its defences were improved; staff began collecting intelligence on and from the politically motivated prisoners; and staff training was improved. The PRT's most impressive change, achieved over time, was in the provincial education system, but there were problems communicating successes to a broader audience:

You know how many people go to school in Kandahar City right now? 95,000, of those 35,000 are girls. How many girls went to school under the Taliban? Zero. We achieved that over a number of years ... Did that achieve a stabilizing effect inside Kandahar City? Well, yeah, obviously. Is it measured anywhere? No. Is that captured anywhere? No. The Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice is saying, "Can't you guys give me a clear picture of what you are achieving?" Well, USAID and CIDA don't work that way. Their type of programming works through third parties. They have a hard time because they don't have the resources to be able to exactly capture the effects they are achieving on the ground. Do you change their organization culture in like a year, a year and half, just because we want to achieve effects tomorrow morning?³⁷

The Justice portfolio remained the PRT's "weakest link" because DFAIT under-resourced it. LCol Turenne recalled that "it's not like putting one 24-year old girl in as the head of the Justice file [will] change justice in Kandahar." For Turenne, the problem with development and the PRT was that

The civilians were still not achieving cruising speed ... in my view the civilians were very much focused on their little programming regardless of what was happening in the overall counterinsurgency effort ... the fundamental problem [wasn't] the team itself, it was the fact that the team had to report up to Ottawa every night. And they didn't have freedom of action. They were told by the powers that be "You stick to the six Canadian priorities", but when you read the six Canadian priorities it doesn't talk about counterinsurgency. It doesn't talk about how it all fits into the overall ISAF strategy. Therefore, because it doesn't talk [about the insurgency], it doesn't exist.³⁸

When BGen Vance reallocated the P-OMLT to the PRT, he added 60 Military Police and combat arms personnel to the PRT, increasing its military component to 450 all ranks, so the facilities at Camp Nathan Smith needed significant expansion. The policing "Tower of Babel" was also evolving in early 2009. By this point, the American Police Mentoring Teams had little or no focus, and hardly any coordination with the Canadian elements of the PRT. The P-OMLT team in Kandahar City came to be seen as unsustainable and was pushed out to the districts where Canadian forces were operating, all the while remaining under PRT command. The CIVPOL contingent conducted vital literacy and leadership training at Camp Nathan Smith, while the DynCorp operation at the Regional Training Centre was scrutinized by American auditors and investigators from the Special Inspector General for Reconstruction in Afghanistan. Eventually, CIVPOL was pulled out of the Regional Training Centre as part of a major regional police reorganization, but continued its work at Camp Nathan Smith and with the police in Kandahar City.³⁹

The American civilian presence at the PRT was increased to prepare for the influx of American forces. Overnight, six more people arrived at Camp Nathan Smith to represent the U.S. State Department, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, adding a new layer of issues. How did the Americans and their substantially larger budgets fit in? Where did the new people fit into the PRT command structure? How did their activities relate to TF Kandahar's operations? There was friction, and no easy answers, in the first half of 2009. The Americans at the PRT generally viewed their Canadian counterparts as "too narrowly focused" on the Cabinet priorities and signature projects. The Canadian civilians' habit of spending their evenings on the phone with Ottawa, coupled with the amount of leave they took every eight weeks,

meant that American development personnel, who lived and worked in Afghanistan for one or two years at a stretch, were increasingly frustrated in their efforts to connect with their Canadian counterparts: “One of the biggest problems with the Canadian civilians was: they’re not there.” Eventually, the Americans started running their own activities in parallel with Canadian programs where possible.⁴⁰

For the most part, however, LCol Turenne and the military component of the PRT supported a wide variety of development activity. For example, PRT reporting in February 2009 shows that all PRT elements attended regular coordination and planning meetings with their Afghan provincial-level counterparts, while the Specialist Engineer Team sortied regularly to assess infrastructure improvement contracts for the police, Kandahar University, and accompanied the Correctional Service Canada team at Sarposa Prison.⁴¹ It is less clear what those meetings accomplished, but at least the Specialist Engineer Team could produce measurable results.

On the down side, the inclination of the various Canadian civilian entities to rely on third-party mechanisms to accomplish objectives using Canadian money had its drawbacks. One example involved the Afghan government’s contracts with the non-governmental organization Afghan Health Delivery Services. Encouraged by UN organizations in Afghanistan, Afghan Health Delivery Services operated in areas not necessarily under the control of pro-government security forces.⁴² The previously discussed problems of having a neutral entity deliver government programming in an insurgency continued to apply; while the NGO got the job done, its presence undermined public confidence in the government.

Governance and Development

The Canadian Army’s involvement in provincial-level governance slowly decreased during the early months of 2009. The freedom of movement in those circles enjoyed by the Canadian commanders of 2005 and 2006 was waning, a result of several processes. First and foremost, the American influx meant that Canada’s forces would be outnumbered, and the proportion of Canadian development and contracting funds, compared to what the Americans would bring, would be much smaller. Over time, these changes translated to substantially less influence.

Second, the bureaucracy around the provincial governor had added layers since 2005. This development was not necessarily negative; among other things, it meant that Afghans were taking more responsibility for governance. But it also meant that Canada had rivals for Afghan attention in Kandahar. A major source of competition was the UN and its various organizations. The UN special representative, Kai Eide, wanted to increase the role of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in

sub-national governance and had shifted resources to do so. (Incidentally, this was done with support from the ISAF commander, Gen McKiernan, and his successor, Gen McChrystal.) The UN was now represented on the provincial-level Steering Committee.⁴³

A flood of new UN and UN-supported acronyms descended on Kandahar City to meet with Afghan leaders and the Canadian civilian staff at the PRT, but their activities appeared less relevant to Canadian operations as they evolved through 2009. The danger remained that there would be now three more international entities vying for influence in Kandahar: the Americans, the insurgency, and the UN.

As for the UN, Kai Eide believed that

It required closer UN cooperation with the Afghan government and the international military forces, but a number of UN agencies saw such cooperation as a threat to the independence of the UN. It could blur the lines between civilian and military activities, make the UN staff more vulnerable, and harm its efforts to provide humanitarian assistance to areas where the Taliban was present. It could certainly have a negative impact on attempts to play a role in reconciliation, since the Taliban would see the UN as being too close to the enemy, the international military forces. These views were widely shared among the non-governmental organizations in Afghanistan.⁴⁴

The prospect of having all of these international agencies acting as neutrals while in support of a government that was under attack by an externally-supported insurgency was truly mind-bending. So was the prospect of having TF Kandahar defend their efforts. That said, senior Canadian leaders generally retained unfettered access to the governor and district leaders.

Building on staff experience dating back to CTF Aegis in 2006, BGen Vance decided to create a liaison and coordination position at TF Kandahar headquarters. The Reconstruction and Development Officer was supposed to connect with the Development Advisor, the Political Advisor and their staffs at the headquarters, and then with the reconstruction and development personnel at the PRT so that everyone was on the same planning page.⁴⁵ Once the Vance headquarters deployed, however, the interface between TF Kandahar and the CIDA and DFAIT teams became extremely problematic. The Plans staff responsible for coordinating military support to their operations “had a lot of drive. A lot of us who were there had this desire to want to make up for what we couldn’t do in 2006.” However, as Capt Darcy Heddon noted, “as the boots hit the ground, CIDA and DFAIT looked at me and were like, ‘Who the fuck are you?’” The atmosphere was exceptionally unprofessional:

To tell you the truth, it seemed that [DFAIT and CIDA] just ran around like chickens with their heads cut off ... so many times it just seemed they didn't know which way to turn. And it's not the CIDA operators on the ground. I'd get frustrated with the people themselves, but I came to understand they were receiving orders from Kabul, and they're receiving orders from Ottawa ... I found that they were threatened by the fact that my [title] said "Reconstruction and Development". That to them was like, "You wear a uniform. That cannot be in your [title]." So right away, I was shunned because I was a threat to what *they* should be doing. They said, "Your focus is on killing people." And, funnily enough, I've never killed anyone in my life. I can think of a few people I'd *like* to ...⁴⁶

In time, the DFAIT and CIDA staff at the PRT accused their counterparts at TF Kandahar HQ of being "military sympathizers" because they tried to move governance and development forward. The issue, according to Capt Heddon, was "limelight":

I really think that they wanted to be able to say "We were in Afghanistan and we fixed the problem." We [TF Kandahar] couldn't fix the problem, let alone them with the bureaucracy that they have. We were trying to create an immediate effect, really, because people were dying, and people were dying way too much.⁴⁷

The Origins and Demise of Operation Plan GRIZZLY

BGen Vance learned in mid-2008 that he would command TF Kandahar in 2009. Like his predecessors, Vance took every opportunity to assess the situation in Kandahar as it unfolded throughout 2008 and conceptualize how he and his headquarters staff would approach the problem during training and while deployed. He understood that previous plans and ideas were not all necessarily outdated; they had been under-resourced, and Vance would have more resources than had been available to previous rotations.⁴⁸

Several factors influenced Vance's thinking in the summer of 2008. The first was the break-out at Sarposa Prison, which demonstrated that Kandahar City was not secure. The lessons of Fallujah in Iraq were also clear: sending conventional forces to fight insurgents in the city proper was not an option. Realizing that a substantial proportion of the province's population was in Kandahar City and the districts closest to it, Vance thought, instead of trying to secure districts, why not secure people? From his experience in the Balkans, Vance recalled the UN Protected Area concept used in Bosnia: a UN force patrolling and enforcing a protective zone outside a designated population centre. The Protected Areas in Bosnia failed because the UN lacked the political will to defend them effectively, but the idea of protecting the population was sound, even on the larger scale of Kandahar Province.

Vance dubbed his protected areas “Stabilization Zones.” Creating and then announcing a Stabilization Zone could have a significant psychological impact on the wider population. This was the crucial aspect of Vance’s concept as it evolved.⁴⁹

Vance refined this concept to include a Disrupt Zone outside his Stabilization Zone, and envisioned a brigade for each zone. The Stabilization Zone forces would include police, the PRT infantry company, another Canadian infantry company, units of the Afghan National Army, and special operations forces. The Disrupt Zone forces would comprise the Canadian battle group, allied battle groups, and special operations forces. The Disrupt Zone forces would live in the field without tactical infrastructure and conduct 30-day operations.⁵⁰

As the situation progressed in Afghanistan, BGen Vance realized that he and his staff might have to drill down to a lower level:

Our Canadian whole of government effort ... really wasn’t getting down and really changing the lives of substantial swaths of the population. They were left without demonstrable, tangible proof of what ISAF was about ... no Afghan community felt the sum of the parts. ... Every commander before me had done similar things but they just didn’t have those factors in play, more force available particularly.⁵¹

These and other ideas gestated as the Vance headquarters of TF Kandahar stood up in September 2008. Knowing what he wanted to do, Vance requested a mission analysis from his J5, LCol Lee Hammond. How did his concepts fit into existing plans? The campaign plan developed at Canadian Expeditionary Force Command (CEFCOM) was deemed incomprehensible and too complex. Crucially, “our [whole-of-government] partners ignored it completely — only the Memorand[a] to Cabinet and the Six Government Principles guided their work.” And more importantly, the CEFCOM plan “did not lay out steps to win.” The Shape–Clear–Hold–Build concept adopted for Operation TOLO by Regional Command (South) under MGen Marc Lessard was deemed important, and retained. The Dutch-led headquarters staff that replaced Lessard’s team at Regional Command (South) in November 2008 “had nothing to offer ... there was no real ISAF campaign plan.”⁵²

Vance and his headquarters staff understood the Kandahar Action Plan as the first real attempt at a whole-of-government plan and a deliberate effort to get all the OGDs to “follow a similar path”, but they had no confidence in it: “KAP was not a plan: it was a framework to create district-level plans.” There was no agreement on common terminology between the departments, and the document was rife with huge compromises that undermined its intent. Furthermore, with the American influx under way, the KAP was rapidly becoming irrelevant — indeed staff at TF Kandahar headquarters circulated a cartoon that depicted a book labeled “KAP” being subsumed beneath Hokusai’s famous *Great Wave off Kanagawa*.⁵³

CHAPTER FIVE



Photo Credit: Author

The enemy focused more and more on the once-placid district of Dand in their effort to influence the population in nearby Kandahar City. From this northeast facing aerial photograph one can see the slow progression from Dand to District 6 of Kandahar City. Note the chimneys for the brick kilns, a Dand economic staple.

Looking at the Stability Boxes in Panjwayi and Zharey, the incoming headquarters concluded that “it was the right idea, in the wrong place, and simplistically applied. The initial box was perfectly square and had no relationship with tribal boundaries, economic realities, etc.”⁵⁴

To complicate matters further, CEFCOM commander LGen Michael Gauthier deposited 32 pages of detailed guidance onto the planners’ desks in early January 2009. There was no more campaign planning coming from CEFCOM, only ‘direction’ and ‘guidance’. Along with other materials, CEFCOM’s package was the product of intense discussions held in November 2008 on the future of Operation ATHENA and what it might or could possibly achieve by 2011.

In November 2008, the Chief of the Defence Staff directed Canadian forces in Kandahar to:

1. support Whole-of-Government and meet Canadian Forces objectives;
2. support Afghan National Security Force capacity-building through partnered operations as the only viable exit strategy;
3. maintain key ISAF leadership role until late 2009 at least; and
4. accept that, after late 2009, there would be a transition phase until Canadian forces withdrew in 2011.

CEFCOM identified that there were several factors working at cross purposes that had to be reconciled.⁵⁵ They were:

1. The demand by the government for measurable effects in a short time between 2009 and 2011.
2. The fact that the tools for measuring and reporting these effects were not agreed to by all involved Canadian government entities, despite the 2008 Cabinet benchmarking project;
3. The demand to publicly report any progress derived from this process;
4. Ottawa’s demand to expand the role of Whole-of-Government in Kandahar and for this to *be seen* to have taken place;

5. The American forces were going to deploy in substantial numbers which would reduce Canadian influence and saliency;
6. The Canadian signature projects were not going to be completed before 2011.

CEFCOM directed that Canadian efforts should focus on Kandahar City and its key approaches, and freedom of movement on main lines of communication. If possible, objectives should be tied to human geography. The Kandahar Action Plan would remain in effect until March 2009.⁵⁶ Summed up, TF Kandahar HQ should deliver security, enable governance, and enable reconstruction and development.

According to CEFCOM, the Canadian Army's main effort was to conduct security operations. The draft guidance noted: "Notwithstanding the Government of Canada policy priorities, a secure environment is the *sine qua non* for the delivery of positive Governance and R&D effects. These operations will take place in ... key districts and be focused ...". After American forces flowed in, building capacity in the Afghan national security forces, especially the Afghan National Army, would become the main Canadian effort. At some point in the future, "as the campaign matures ... civilian-led efforts will likely become the main effort" in "enabling whole-of-government outcomes." In effect, CEFCOM subtly ranked its agenda for TF Kandahar, and the priority was "deliver security" before "enabling governance" or "reconstruction and development".⁵⁷

As CEFCOM envisioned things, success by 2011 would look like this: "[T]he majority of the provincial population in our three focus areas have security provided by ANSF, mentored and partnered with the CF," with a functional Joint District Coordination Centre and police mentored by CIVPOL in those districts. There would be a Kandahar City security plan, fully resourced and tested. Afghan National Army units should be at Capability Milestone 1, while Canadian forces would have handed over to American forces stabilized districts. Ideally, the national and provincial elections would have taken place without insurgent interruptions, and all the Canadian priority and signature projects would have been completed.⁵⁸

TF Kandahar planners noted that a defeated insurgency did not seem to figure in this guidance and planning. As for incorporating development into the planning, the PRT refused to provide the incoming TF Kandahar planners with basic information on the locations of completed and ongoing projects and the locations of schools. BGen Vance's planners wondered whether the PRT even possessed this information. Notably, CIDA and DFAIT personnel at TF Kandahar were consulted as GRIZZLY took shape.⁵⁹

The premise underlying Plan GRIZZLY was that 75 percent to 85 percent of the provincial population lived in Kandahar City and its surrounding districts. The idea was to identify communities that could influence the main routes into the city or key adjacent terrain and turn them into “Stability Towns”, as opposed to laying a large Stability Box over a particular area. The Shape–Clear–Hold–Build–Enable process would be applied to each identified community, one at a time, with maximum acceptance and cooperation from the Afghans — especially the ANA, the Afghan National Police and the National Directorate of Security. The whole range of PRT capabilities would then follow. The local Community Development Council would be reinvigorated and linked, not only to the district leader and district government, but also to the Afghan provincial government reconstruction ministries where it could reconnect with the National Solidarity Program. It was crucial that each community be tied to the government and derive benefit from that connection. Each community would be offered an opportunity to establish its own police force, with appropriate training, to replace the Afghan Uniformed Police. This concept was dubbed the “Key Village Approach” or KVA. GRIZZLY was programmed to mount such an operation every 60 days until all 36 KVA communities were “enabled”.

The flip side of the KVA was the Key Village Insurgency, or KVI. The mass influx of assistance of all types would tip the hands of those sitting on the fence who would, in theory, pass on who the local insurgents were. These opponents could be either co-opted or taken out by police or the National Directorate of Security, as the situation demanded. Non-local insurgents would flee and be susceptible to other coalition methodology. The incoming Americans would find KVA and KVI consistent with their concepts of operations, so Plan GRIZZLY could be implemented by both Canadian and American units working alongside Afghan forces.⁶⁰

Plan GRIZZLY drew on three years of Canadian experience in the Kandahar operating environment. It recognized the centrality of Kandahar City. It looked back and it looked forward, noting past deficiencies and acknowledging that force levels would change in 2009. It incorporated Afghan organizations at every step of the way, and even the governor supported it. But by 9 March 2009, Plan GRIZZLY was dead in the water. Why?

Both CEFCOM and the Vance headquarters recognized that the Kandahar Action Plan would be overtaken by events, but other organizations did not. Where the Thompson headquarters had used the Kandahar Action Plan to include CIDA and DFAIT working along its three lines of operations, others saw the Kandahar Action Plan as the only plan, and one carved in stone. When GRIZZLY was briefed back in Ottawa, the military leadership signed off on it. When LGen Gauthier briefed GRIZZLY to the Privy Council and Cabinet-level committees, however, David Mulroney and others got upset.

They saw GRIZZLY as a change in strategy foisted on them by “the military,” a replacement for the Kandahar Action Plan that the civilian departments had not been consulted on and did not accept. Viewing GRIZZLY as a tactical plan supported with PRT resources, Vance and his headquarters were surprised that it had been briefed at Cabinet level at all. Mulroney insisted that Canadian strategy was to adhere to the six priority programs and signature projects and nothing more. Vance argued that GRIZZLY could fit easily under the umbrella of the Kandahar Action Plan, but to no avail.⁶¹

The impasse continued throughout March. On 18 March, BGen Vance instructed his staff to reformulate GRIZZLY and remove all references to whole-of-government programs and departments from the plan. In keeping with the October 2008 Regional Command (South) Plan TOLO, the revised plan would be called KANTOLO and placed under the NATO umbrella, not the Canadian one.⁶²

As Vance noted in retrospect:

It is very, very clear to me that the major factor of not having enough forces available prevented us from doing counterinsurgency properly. But there was another factor and it was a factor that I ran into and basically exploded on us as we were in theatre and that is that it wasn't perfectly clear at the highest levels of CIDA, DFAIT and the Afghanistan Task Force that we were there in a counterinsurgency effort as an alliance partner to achieve the first-order effects ... [we were there] to produce counterinsurgency effects in Kandahar. Counterinsurgency effects take more than one partner to deliver. And it was not uniformly agreed upon at the highest level and in fact there were some ideological differences between the departments as to what their purpose was and therefore what techniques would be used to support that purpose in Kandahar.⁶³

Capt Darcy Heddon said the same thing a different way:

I don't think the Canadian government actually really gave a shit about whether or not the issue in Afghanistan was fixed. Because if they did, they wouldn't have put a timeline on something that takes 20 years to do [when they established the benchmarks and priorities]. And all they cared about was being able to see — and we saw this throughout the tour — all they cared about was whether or not they could report back to Ottawa that they had made a little bit of progress. The appearance of progress was important to them. I truly believe that those operators on the ground really did care and wanted to make progress. And they were frustrated too.⁶⁴

KANTOLO would have to wait. Vance and his planners would try again.

TF Kandahar Shaping Operations

Meanwhile, LCol Mike Patrick and his J3 staff formulated and implemented a series of shaping operations which in effect became a campaign plan to support the implementation of KANTOLO. The Operations staff defined and prioritized three approaches to Kandahar City. The first was from the Horn of Panjwayi through Nakhonay, into Dand District and then into the city. The second was the “Heart of Darkness” in Zharey District, through Asheque and Senjaray into the western suburbs of the city. The third was the northern approach from Ghorak to Shah Wali Kot and Khakrez, into Arghandab District, and then into the city. Canadian and Afghan forces held part of Panjwayi and part of Zharey (see Figure 5-2), but lacked the resources to handle all three at once, as previous rotations had demonstrated.⁶⁵

The decision was made to clear eastern Panjwayi to take the pressure off Dand while KANTOLO went to work there. Zharey was just too ecologically diverse to occupy, so that district would be subjected to a series of disrupt operations to secure Highway 1 as much as possible. The planners wanted to execute a block as far north as possible in Arghandab to shut down the Ghorak–Arghandab ratline, but it was not clear that sufficient forces would be available. Consequently, the shaping and disruption operations came to focus on the Horn of Panjwayi and Zharey District. Once KANTOLO went into effect and started to push insurgents out of Dand, they would move to Arghandab and western Panjwayi, where they would be cleared and pushed into western Panjwayi and the Zharey “Heart of Darkness,” where they could be continually disrupted.⁶⁶

To achieve all these objectives, the TF Kandahar planners had to gain bureaucratic concurrence and extract resources from Regional Command (South). This was no easy task. Regional Command (South) wanted a say in any operation larger than platoon level, and there were certain rules of engagement restrictions that they could impose. To push back against restrictive bureaucracy, LCol Patrick and the planners created “extant operations”, ongoing disruption operations with forces assigned temporarily or opportunistically, that could react faster than the approval bureaucracy at Regional Command (South) could. As a result, under Operation SHREDDER, forces in Zharey could probe and disrupt actively south of Highway 1 without having to formulate repeated named operations, each requiring specific approval before it could be mounted.⁶⁷

For a time, TF Kandahar managed to pry loose more helicopters “so that Canadian, American and British forces could launch airmobile operations into western Zharey.” The same went for ISTAR resources whose employment was influenced by Regional Command (South).⁶⁸

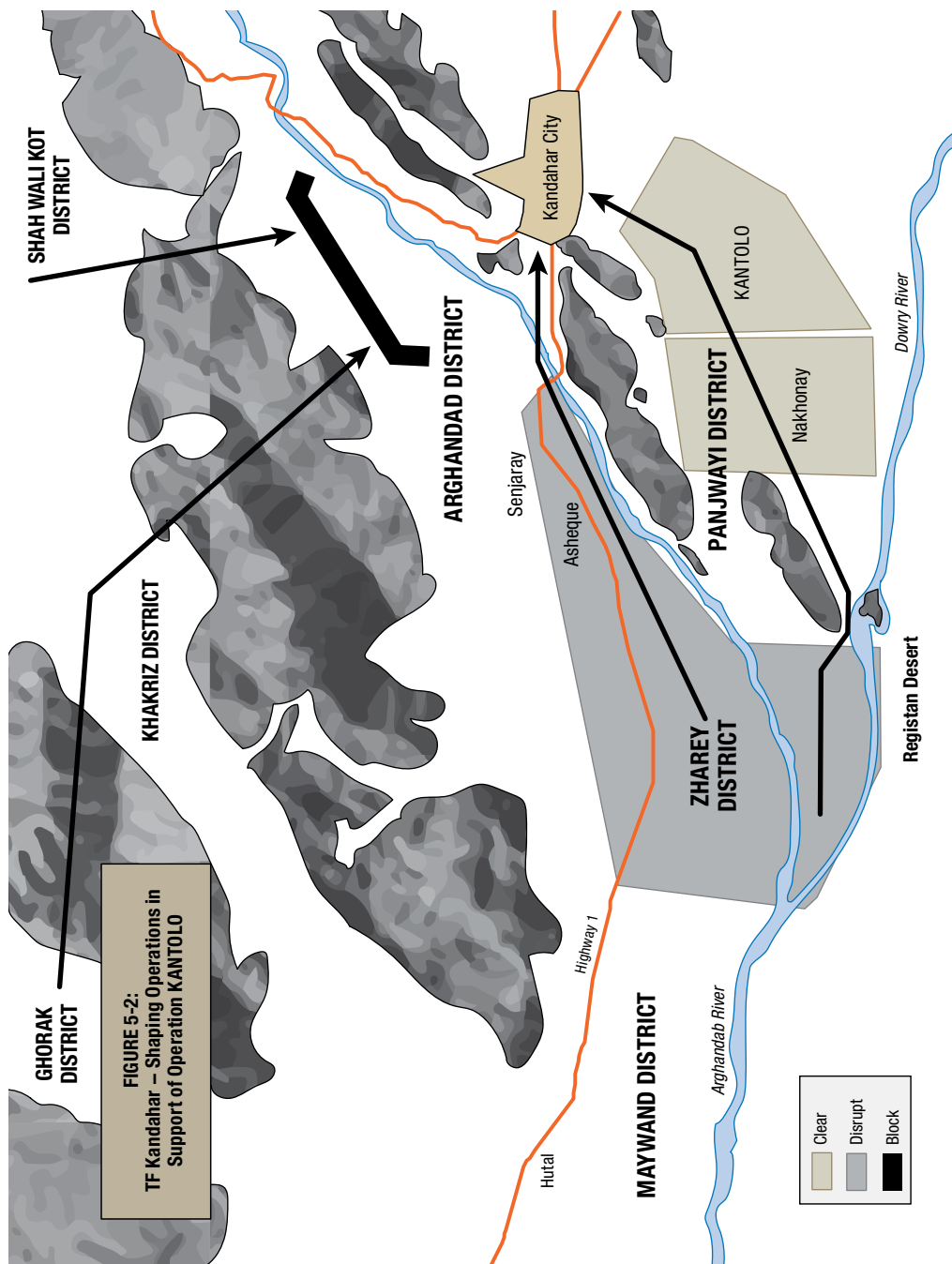


Figure 5-2: TF Kandahar – Shaping Operations in Support of Operation KANTOLO

The Character of the Insurgency in Early 2009

The main issues confronting the Quetta Shura and the other insurgent shuras based in Pakistan revolved around the Afghan national elections and what to do if or when the American influx arrived. At this point in the war, the Taliban leadership in Pakistan believed that the war had reached stalemate and were putting out reconciliation feelers through Saudi Arabia. This development was not new; the Taliban and the Karzai government had been in contact several times since late 2007 or early 2008, but the Taliban's simplistic demand that foreign troops leave Afghanistan was not a realistic basis for discussion.⁶⁹ The variety of schools of thought on the Taliban position related to how much Inter-Services Intelligence in Pakistan controlled or influenced the Taliban, how much Al Qaeda influenced the Taliban, and, therefore, how much autonomy to negotiate the Taliban leadership really had.⁷⁰ One analysis baldly stated that:

Powerful forces in Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan would prefer indefinite warfare to any peace settlement, not least because of the vast sums of American money being spent on both sides of the Durand Line. In Afghanistan, these potential spoilers include local contractors (particularly security contractors), corrupt officials, and drug dealers, all of whom would find it more difficult to prosper in a peacetime environment. Pakistan would also lose considerable revenue from American assistance and NATO transit traffic were the war to end.⁷¹

Canadian analysts in Kandahar believed that the reconciliation feelers were stall tactics designed to give the insurgent leaders time to figure out the dimensions of the American influx and its larger implications. The Quetta Shura discussed whether to mount their own surge before the Americans arrived in 2009, or ride out the influx. Canadians also discovered that some insurgent groups in Helmand and Kandahar wanted to stop fighting but were frustrated by the under-funding and unreliability of the Afghan government's reconciliation program. In any event, some of these fighters and their leaders believed that Pakistan-based leaders would order them killed if they laid down their weapons and quit fighting. In an attempt to resolve these and other issues, the Quetta Shura conducted an unprecedented series of shuras in regions facing the Regional Command (South) area of responsibility, and not their counterparts to the north.⁷²

In May, the Quetta Shura finally distributed its operations plan dubbed Operation NASRAT. In the run-up to the 2009 elections, insurgent units were to mount "high-profile" attacks targeting prominent Afghan political and security leaders, and Afghan companies that worked for ISAF and the Afghan security forces.⁷³ Later in the summer, the Quetta Shura issued more specific orders to disrupt the elections by intimidating the Independent Election Commission and its personnel by means of kidnappings and assassinations in Kandahar, Helmand, Zabul and Oruzgan.⁷⁴



Photo Credit: DND IS2009-0158r

By 2009, the entities behind the Taliban determined that there was a need for increased plausible deniability. As a result, there was a shift away from factory-made anti-tank and anti-personnel mines and towards the use of homemade explosives and plastic jugs. These were virtually undetectable by Canadian systems and could catastrophically destroy any vehicle in the Canadian inventory if enough of them were used.

To sustain this kind of pressure, the insurgency had to secure and retain routes for supporting and facilitating terrorism in Kandahar City (see Figure 5-3).⁷⁵ This requirement increased the importance of the eastern Panjwayi-Dand-Malajat-District 6 route. Similarly, the insurgents wanted a better disposition in Arghandab District, closer to the city. This meant applying pressure in northern Arghandab, lower Shah Wali Kot, Zharey and western Panjwayi to keep the security forces occupied. Senjaray was a critical geographic node connecting the northern and central insurgent groups.

This program also involved consolidating control over the populations of Zharey and western Panjwayi. Consolidation took several forms. First, the insurgents mimicked the Canadian-Afghan approach to local projects by, in effect, fielding their own version of the Construction Management Organization. Second, Taliban judges arbitrated local grievances. Third, insurgents attempted to co-opt the Red Cross, Red Crescent and other non-governmental organizations to provide health care, collect intelligence, and provide cover for insurgent activities. Fourth, the insurgents once again exploited the government's poppy-eradication policies to gain support from farmers whose crops were selected for destruction by district leaders and police.⁷⁶ These efforts were always to be shielded by mass use of IEDs to hinder the movement of Canadian and Afghan forces, and harassing attacks on tactical infrastructure to distract them. The Quetta Shura and its allies now stepped back to see what would happen.

Maywand District Operations, February–March 2009

The 2nd Battalion, 2nd Infantry Regiment (2-2 Infantry) of the U.S. Army remained deployed in three locations in Maywand District: Forward Operating Base Ramrod, Forward Operating Base Hutsal, and Combat Outpost Terminator. Also in Maywand, a Canadian-mentored Afghan company held Strong Point Pegasus on Highway 1. 2-2 Infantry was supported by: G Troop, a Canadian M-777 gun detachment led by Lt Mike Lavery; UAV coverage downlinked from SUAVs and other ISTAR resources; a tactical psychological operations detachment (on occasion); and a CIMIC team from the Provincial Reconstruction Team. The Canadians at FOB Hutsal worked closely with C Company led by Capt Trevor Voelkel, who troops protected Construction Management Team-1 in Zharey. Coordinating 2-2 Infantry, the American Police Mentoring Team and CIMIC activity in Maywand could be problematic, but 'BBQ' diplomacy did much to improve relations.⁷⁷

Enemy activity tended to focus in and around FOB Ramrod in the west and on COP Terminator on the Maywand-Zharey boundary. The pattern of activity remained constant: insurgent IED emplacements were spotted by ScanEagle SUAV, the outpost fired 120mm mortars (or the FOB fired 155mm artillery) at the emplacements, and sent out a patrol

FIGURE 5-3:
Enemy Dispositions and Activity,
Early to Mid-2009

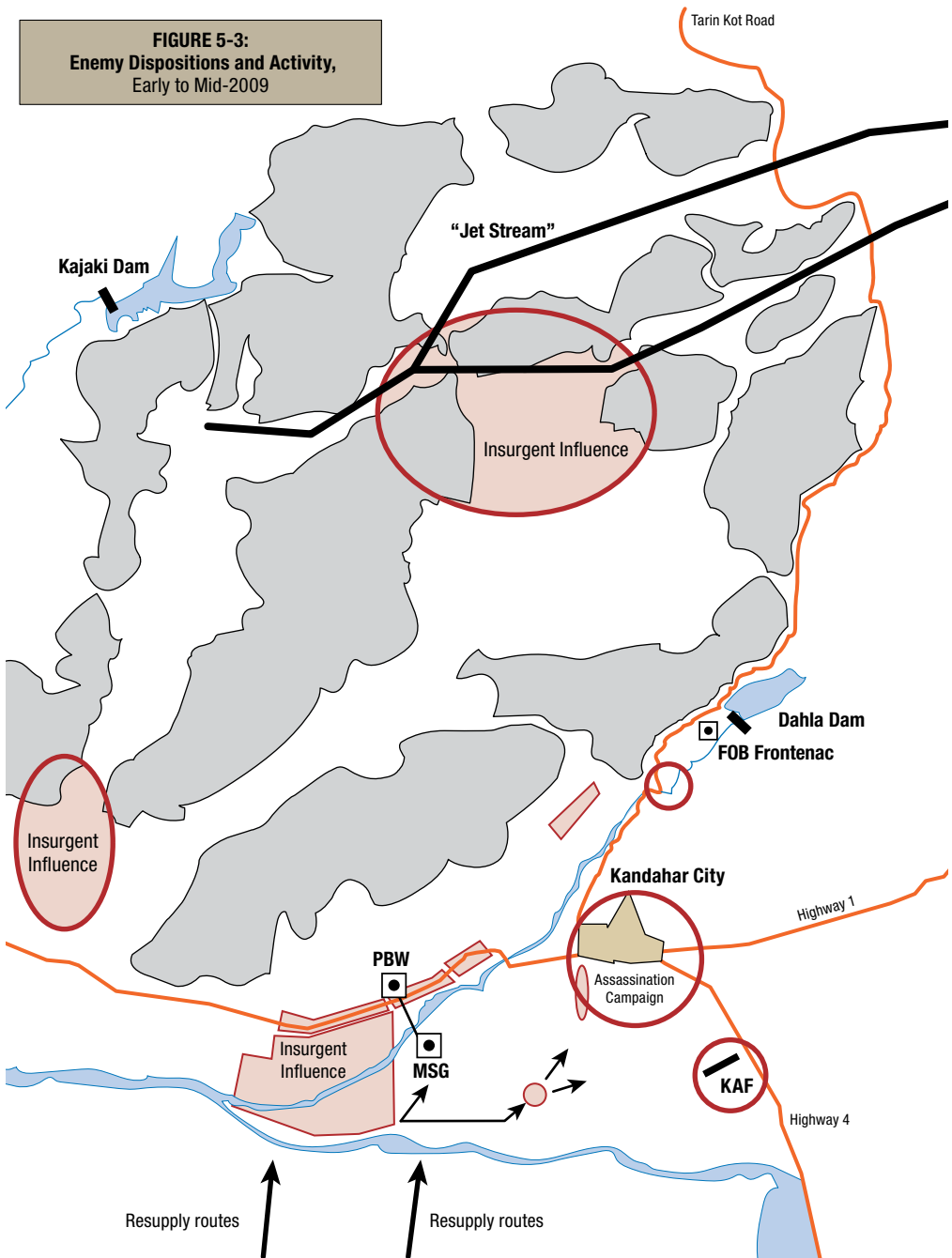


Figure 5-3: Enemy Dispositions and Activity, Early to Mid-2009

to conduct battle damage assessment. Occasionally, small arms fire would be directed at the outposts, but nothing on the scale seen over in Zharey. On one occasion a Canadian Heron UAV was used to vector in a B-1B bomber and a pair of F-18s against six insurgents engaged in emplacement.⁷⁸

For the most part, however, the enemy wanted the coalition forces to leave Maywand alone. During presence patrols in Band-e Timor, 2-2 Infantry found two insurgent aid stations or hospitals, indicating the area was used as a support node. When the Maywand insurgent networks wanted to distract 2-2 Infantry and the Afghan security forces, they instigated demonstrations in Hutaal bazaar using civilian casualties as their primary grievance. The only other serious violence involved the back-to-back ambush of USPI convoys on Highway 1 but it was unclear whether this was insurgent or commercially-motivated violence.⁷⁹

The Focused District Development process was deemed successful, and a top-notch National Directorate of Security commander was now assigned to Maywand District. Local people noted an improvement in the police, but district governance remained a problem. District Leader Haji Massoud, who was at odds with the new police force, was called out for his attempts to bribe the Canadian CIMIC team with project money, and people complained that he took a piece of the action. On the other hand, the district leader gave out a consistent anti-Taliban message in all venues, including radio and television broadcasts.⁸⁰

The Americans were not shy about religious engagement; using their Civil Affairs chain, they distributed mosque refurbishment kits in outlying communities as they patrolled with the Afghan National Army.⁸¹ In time a USAID representative deployed out to Maywand and worked to bring American aid money and programmes to bear. Working with the CIMIC team, attempts were made to ascertain how functional the District Development Assembly and Community Development Council system was. The DDA was not working, mostly due to interference from the district leader's insistence that he receive his due. It would take time to reinvigorate this structure. Debbie McCosham, a Canadian White Situational Awareness specialist, also arrived to build up knowledge on Maywand and support the effort in parallel with the American Human Terrain Team.⁸²

In terms of operations, 2-2 Infantry mounted a snap airmobile operation into Mandowzai village in March but little turned up. Another ground operation flushed out some enemy leadership who were subsequently dispatched with a SOF strike. 2-2 Infantry's companies then uncovered a small anti-Taliban militia in one area who claimed they were armed "by the President's brother" back in 2004 and told to maintain security. In another village, locals had seized a Taliban team and were threatening to execute them until Afghan security forces intervened. Local information in other areas led to the apprehension of a Taliban financier and a facilitator. Finally, an Afghan source in Maywand passed on that

Mullah Azim, the Taliban leader responsible for the mass murder of 29 bus passengers back in October 2008, was found murdered in Quetta. It looked like the enemy was on the run in Maywand but it would take time to consolidate these successes.⁸³

Zharey District Operations, February–March 2009

Zharey District remained the preserve of N Company under Maj Rob McBride, 1st Kandak and its mentors, and, when possible, a police detachment and their P-OMLT mentors. Enemy activity in February remained light: three USPI convoys were shot up on Highway 1 (and again, it was not clear whether this was insurgent violence or commercial violence) as were strong points Spin Pir, Lakokhel, and the Pashmul South police station. The enemy cells in eastern Zharey complained that they were low on IED components and there was only one strike against a Canadian vehicle that month.⁸⁴

In order to generate space for voter registration efforts in both Panjwayi and Zharey, TF Kandahar assembled forces for Operation SHAHI TANDAR 3 (see Figure 5-4 and Figure 5-4a). Once again, the main target area was Nahlgam and vicinity. L Company from Regional Battle Group (South) was available, and an air-assault force was formed with CH-47 helicopters and escorts from the Regional Command (South) pool. Company A from 2-2 Infantry was tasked to block west of the target area. N Company was the dismounted element, sweeping into the main target area, while M Company conducted a feint west of Sperwan Ghar into Talukan and Zangabad to shape insurgent thinking and draw off or expose enemy forces to the south.⁸⁵

M Company deployed and moved onto its objectives on 31 January with no contact and no finds except a “scarecrow” equipped with a dummy weapon that drew a few shots from the snipers before they realized what it was. N Company found several ammunition caches including a sniper rifle, police uniforms, ten pressure-plate IEDs, and a Canadian DAGR (Defense Advanced Global Positioning System Receiver) system. A car-bomb factory was also found and exploited. Chinooks arrived to extricate L Company while N Company joined the Zulu LAV IIIs. While N Company moved back down Route Edmonton, an engineer LAV hit an IED that wounded six Canadians and killed Sapper Sean Greenfield of 2 Combat Engineer Regiment.⁸⁶

After Operation SHAHI TANDAR 3, Maj McBride and N Company conducted two company-sized patrols in early February along the first and second wadi lines south of the area between Spin Pir and Howz-e Madad, and then another west of Pashmul. These patrols produced no contact with the enemy. At the end of February, N Company surged into Senjeray, where they uncovered an insurgent madrassa loaded with weapons and cellphones.⁸⁷

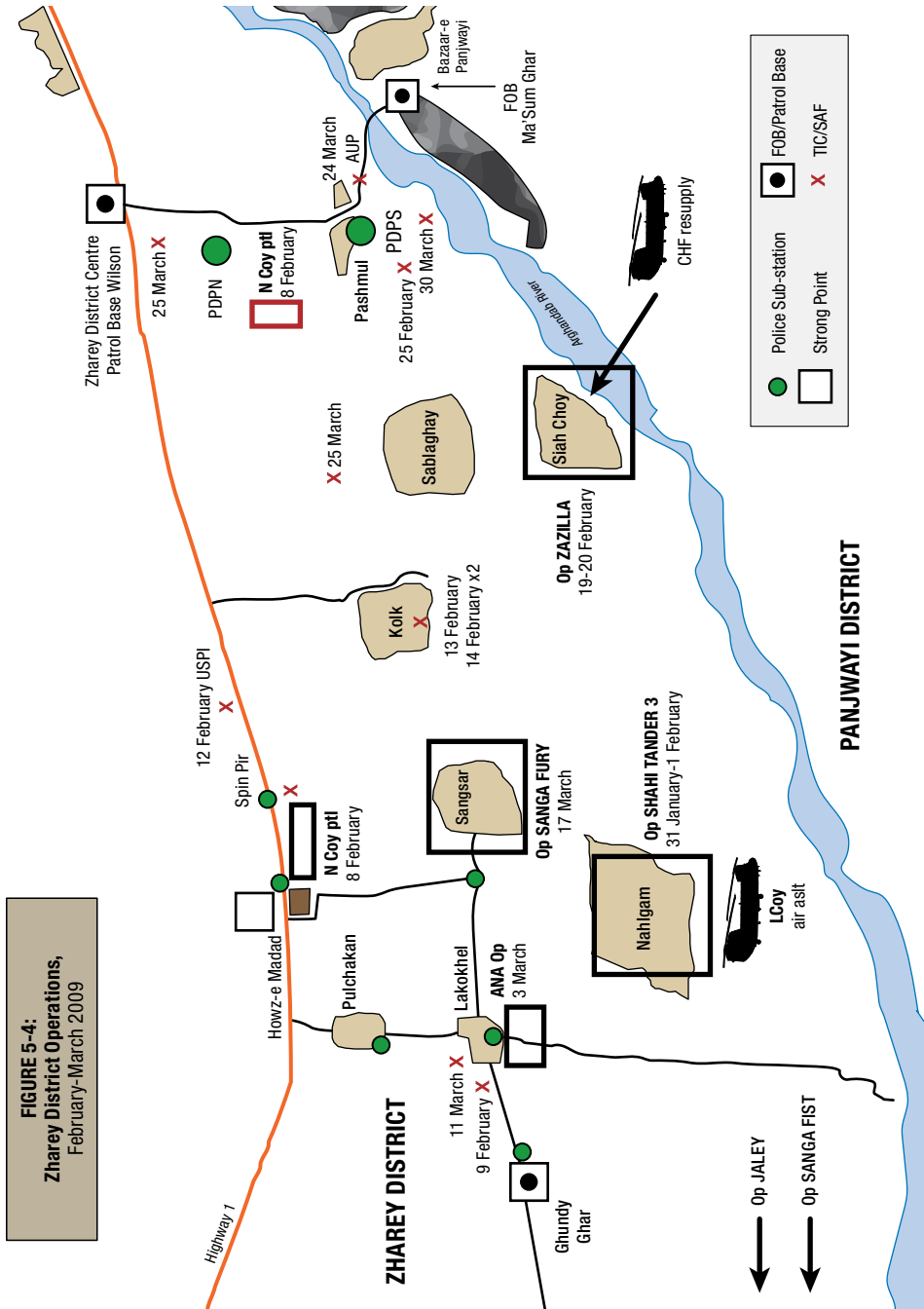


Figure 5-4: Zharey District Operations, February-March 2009

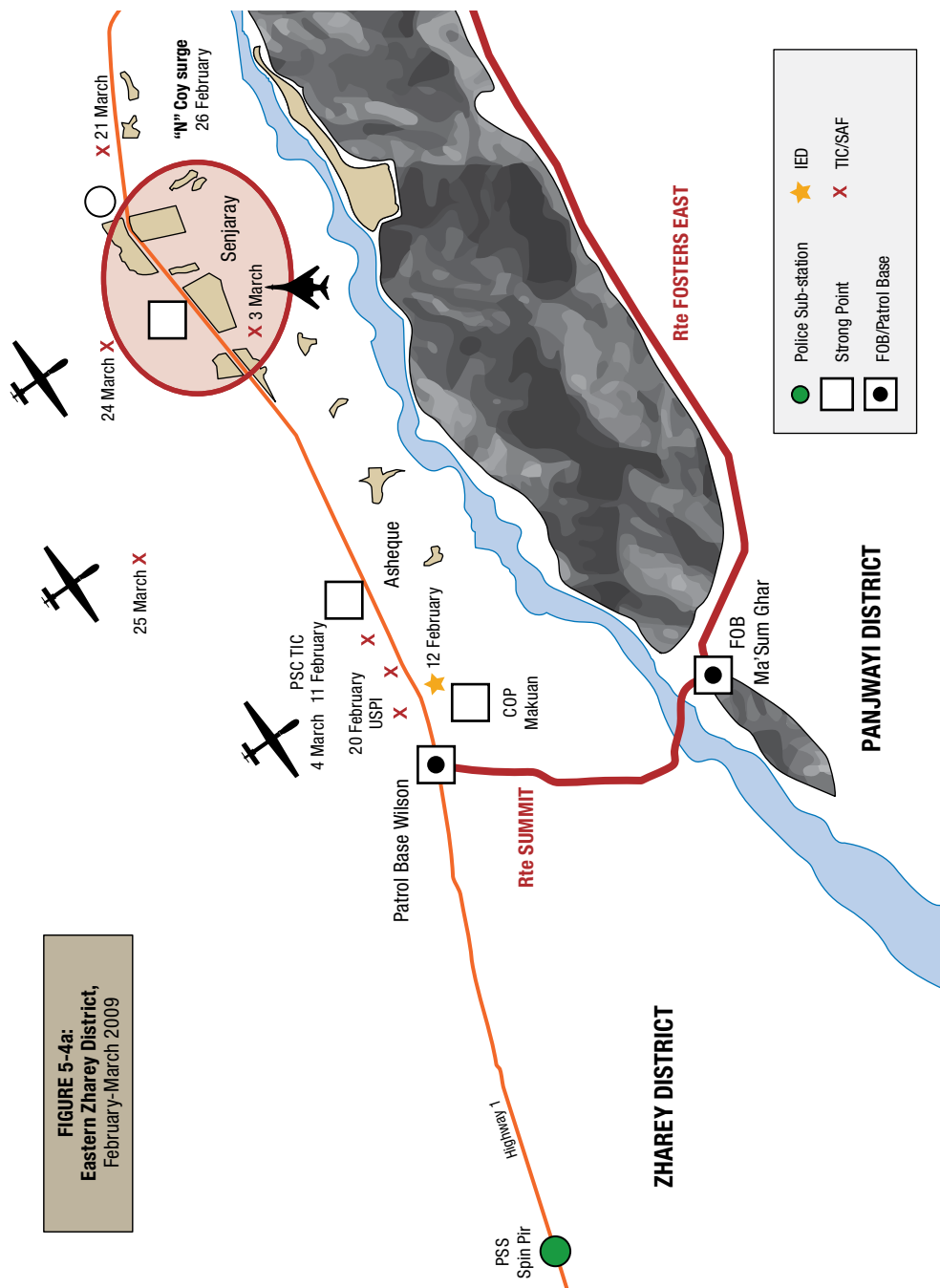


Figure 5-4a: Eastern Zharey District, February-March 2009

Meanwhile, 1st Kandak was preparing for assessment by the validation team. Without going through their mentors, Kandak 1 was able to secure Zharey police support on their own, an event which came as a pleasant surprise. After being launched on a disrupt patrol near Kolk supported by a platoon of N Company LAV IIIs, the weather turned foul and a sandstorm was imminent. The enemy tried to capitalize on this turn in events, knowing full well air cover would be impossible. 1st Kandak and the Canadian LAV III platoon shot their way out of an ambush and withdrew in good order as M-777 artillery dropped smoke to screen them.⁸⁸

When the weather cleared the next day, the Afghans and Canadians returned to the area and were caught up in three separate contacts, including an intense attack on the LAV IIIs. This time, however, the battle group had an armed MQ-9 Reaper on station; it killed six insurgents, one of them later identified as Mullah Salaam of Band-e Timor, an enemy commander from Maywand District.⁸⁹

On 19 February, N Company and 1st Kandak launched Operation ZILLILA into Sia Choy to keep the insurgents off balance. Resupply flights by Canadian CH-47 Chinook helicopters gave TF Silver Dart some much-needed experience but operations on the first day produced no insurgent reaction.⁹⁰ On day two, however, the forces were engaged on two occasions, both of which were suppressed with two F-15s in one case and twenty two 155mm rounds in the other.⁹¹

On the development and governance side, the situation in Zharey was not radically different from what it had been over the past six months. District Leader Niaz Mohammad Sahardi continued to attend all the right meetings, as did CIMIC operators and representatives of the PRT, but it was not clear exactly what was being accomplished. Afghans with claims were told that the PRT was waiting for Canadian ministerial approval and that “they must be patient.” Down to only two serviceable vehicles, Construction Management Team-1 was unable to conduct operations.⁹²

District Chief of Police Bismillah Khan was at odds with the ethnic Hazara officers under his command: they had not been paid in months and threatened to quit. Local people told CIMIC operators that they thought the police were effective but overenthusiastic during their searches, while the P-OMLT noted that “burning every ounce of marijuana, hash and poppy in Pashmul will only alienate [the police] from the simple farmers whose livelihoods they are destroying, not the drug traffickers which pay for their crops.”⁹³

The enemy, however, had taken a leaf from the Canadian playbook. Using taxes levied from the communities south of the wadi lines, and employing confiscated or rented construction equipment, Taliban cells started building a road and a madrasa in the area south of Howz-e Madad and Sangsar, and urged the locals to help lay gravel on two other roads.⁹⁴

In effect, the Taliban now had their own version of the Construction Management Organization and, with the taxation and school, were well on their way to establishing competitive governance in part of Zharey District.

The initial response to these developments was minimal. 1st Kandak launched a company-sized patrol south of Lakokhel with N Company screening to the west. After a brief skirmish, they withdrew under an M-777 smokescreen. Other operations were continuing.

LTC Dan Hurlbut and LCol Roger Barrett had discussed the possibility of a joint operation by 2-2 Infantry and the 3 RCR Battle Group in western Zharey. The intent was to disrupt the insurgent linkages between Maywand and Zharey while at the same time gathering information for future operations that might go into the area once the American influx came in. The enemy's leadership was somewhat discombobulated and it was possible that if they were forced to move, they could be targeted by other assets. These ideas gelled into three separate but related operations once the Vance headquarters was on the ground and operating. The larger intent was to generate disruption (that is, in the enemy's camp) in preparation for the upcoming Canadian task force relief in place. The phased operations included Operation SANGA FIST, a Canadian airmobile probe into Nar Karez southwest of Ghundy Ghar; Operation SANGA FURY, an Afghan feint between Sangsar and Howz-e Madad; and Operation JALEY ('Net') which would bring both battle groups to blanket the area once the enemy had settled in.⁹⁵

In Operation SANGA FIST, N Company 3 RCR, augmented with coalition forces, launched into southwestern Zharey against a possible command-and-control node. They were inserted on 7 March by three CH-47 Chinooks, one Canadian and two British, escorted by four CH-146 Griffons. The operation confirmed that insurgents had used the compounds there for a variety of activities, but any leaders who may have been present left before the coalition force arrived. Very little was found. The insurgents tried to reinforce with fighters from the Lakokhel area, but coalition communications jamming deterred further action.⁹⁶ Operation SANGA FIST was the first airmobile operation in Afghanistan involving both Canadian troops and Canadian helicopters.⁹⁷

Operations SANGA FURY and JALEY overlapped. On 17 March, while Canadian CH-47s prepared to move M Company and Recce Platoon to Strong Point Mushan, 1st Kandak and their OMLT mentors launched into a sweep south of Howz-e Madad with support from N Company. On their way south, shoot-and-scoot teams engaged them five times; UAVs tried to gain positive identification for an orbiting MQ-9 Reaper, but with limited results. Compound searches produced nothing, and the sweep returned to the strong point. N Company moved on to Strong Point Lakokhel in preparation for Operation JALEY.⁹⁸

Operation JALEY, 18–20 March 2009

Operation JALEY turned into one of the largest coalition airmobile operations undertaken to this point. In addition to the Canadian CH-47 lift to Mushan, the operation brought the 4th Battalion, 101st Aviation Regiment under LTC James Benson with their CH-47 Chinooks and AH-64 Apaches to lift 2-2 Infantry while their OH-58D Kiowa Warrior helicopters worked with the CH-146 Griffons in the armed reconnaissance role. Australian Chinooks also participated. The plan was to blanket western Zharey with simultaneous air and ground assaults using the bulk of 2-2 Infantry and 3 RCR. An ancillary part of the operation was a cordon-and-search of several communities in Arghandab District conducted by Recce Squadron and Afghan police accompanied by American police mentors (see Figure 5-5).⁹⁹

Early in the morning of 18 March, the Leopard tanks of A Squadron linked up with N Company near Lakokhel, and part of Recce Squadron situated its Coyotes on Ghundy Ghar. Recce Platoon 3 RCR crossed the Arghandab River from the south to secure the crossing point for M Company. With stacked UAVs screening to the east, N Company, tanks, and police accompanied by P-OMLT mentors established a west-to-east block to the north of six objective areas. M Company advanced to clear the compounds of each objective area. There was no opposition.

After a delay due to deteriorating weather, LTC Benson launched the air assault at first light. The American and Australian Chinooks swooped in to COP Terminator and FOB Ramrod and progressively moved all four of 2-2 Infantry's companies to landing zones west of Ghundy Ghar. Spreading out like oil on water, the companies flooded the communities with detailed cordon-and-search operations partnered with police and supported by a Canadian PSYOPS team. The Human Terrain Team (with a Canadian augmentee) built a detailed picture of the communities as the searches progressed. Again, there was no opposition.

The insurgents in the 3 RCR and 2-2 Infantry objective areas were caught by surprise and either went to ground or tried to flee the area. These fighting-age males could not be engaged because they were unarmed and wearing civilian clothing. Loading themselves up in trucks, they behaved like migrant workers and skirted areas where coalition forces were operating. UAVs, Griffons and OH-58D Kiowa Warriors tracked as many as possible but were unable to engage. There was a significant amount of enemy communication, but it was clear to TF Kandahar that the insurgents were completely disrupted by the sheer size and geographical dispersion of the operation.

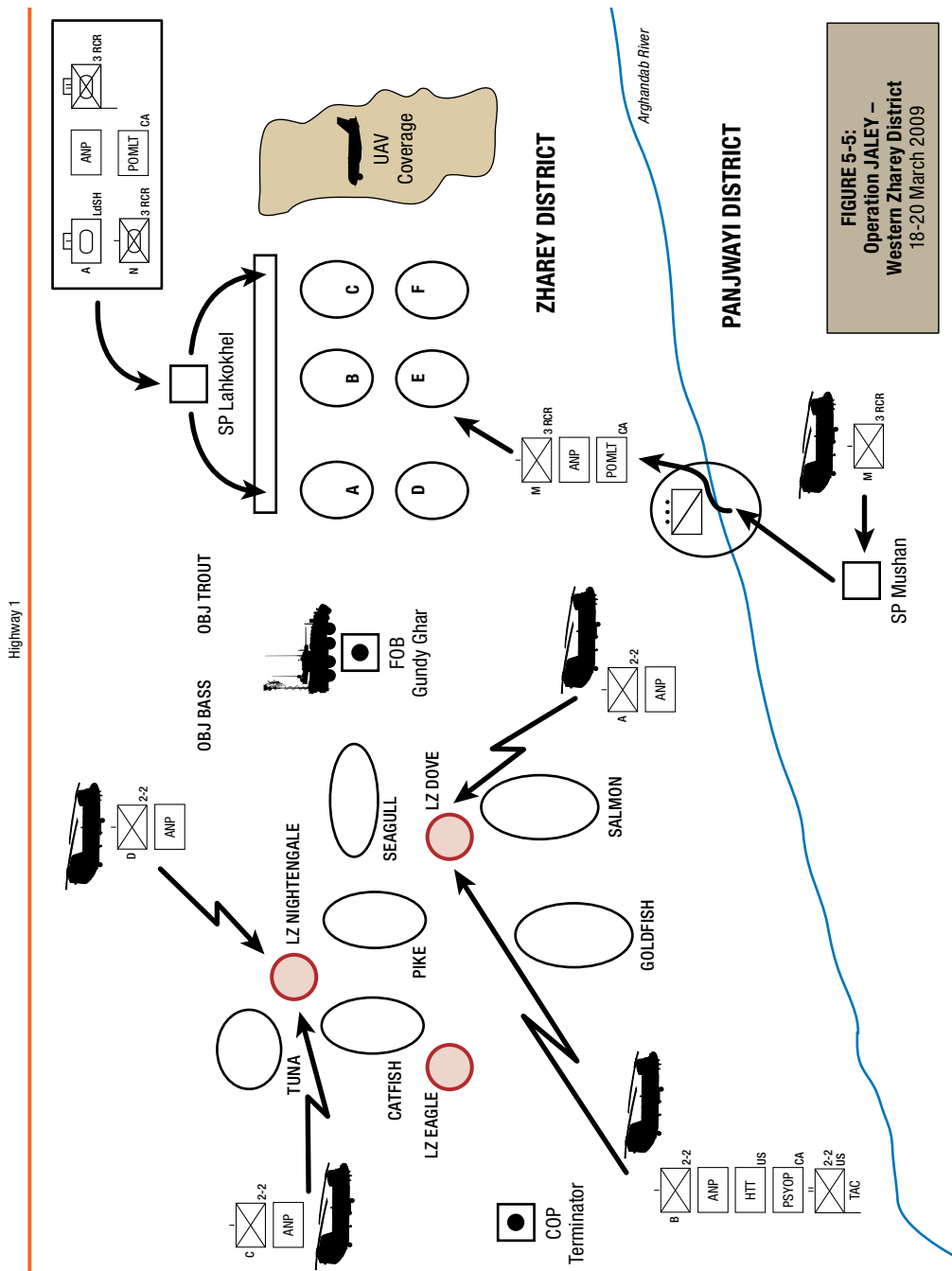


Figure 5-5: Operation JALEY – Western Zharey District, 18-20 March 2009

CHAPTER FIVE



Photo Credit: Author



Photo Credit: Author

Operation JALEY was an ambitious Canadian-American-Afghan operation that saturated western Zharey District with a battalion-sized air assault and a battle group ground assault. It was cut short when the UN demanded that ISAF respect the so-called “Days of Tranquility.” Four Canadians were killed and nine more were wounded during the unscheduled withdrawal.

By the second day, 3 RCR and 2-2 Infantry troops uncovered many small, dispersed caches, some containing factory-made Iranian IED components as well as medical supplies and the odd mortar tube. Two IED-makers were apprehended. Then N Company found a factory where insurgents were making IEDs out of Canadian 155-mm illumination carrier rounds. The Human Terrain Team determined from its interaction with the population that those which were from the area were classic fence-sitters who would side with whoever was on the ascendency in their community; lacking a permanent government presence, they would tacitly support the insurgents if they were in town. The Human Terrain Team also observed that the insurgents used boys as their eyes and ears in these communities, and that many elders were afraid of these clearly indoctrinated children. Further east, many people were tenant farmers without any ties beyond their landlord, and Afghan landowners could as easily be living in Germany as in Kandahar City. This rootlessness posed problems for any counterinsurgency efforts, as people who were not permanent residents of Zharey District had no bond to the district leader, the District Development Assembly, or any other governance mechanism.¹⁰⁰

Operation JALEY ended two days ahead of schedule. The Canadian Development Advisor at TF Kandahar HQ disagreed with its timing and asked that it be shut down because it conflicted with the Days of Tranquility, a truce advocated by the UN and associated organizations so that polio eradication could take place. When BGen Vance resisted this overture on the grounds that the disruptive effect of JALEY in preparation for the relief in place was more important, Regional Command (South) insisted that the Days of Tranquility be respected. On 20 March, BGen Vance halted JALEY and ordered a withdrawal.¹⁰¹

As N Company pulled back to be airlifted out, an IED killed three men: MCpl Scott Vernelli and Cpl Tyler Crooks of 3 RCR, and their interpreter. Five more Canadians and another Afghan interpreter were seriously wounded. Canadian helicopters evacuated the dead and wounded. Hours later, a Recce Squadron Coyote patrolling in Shah Wali Kot hit an IED that killed Tpr Jack Bouthillier and Tpr Corey Hayes of the Royal Canadian Dragoons, and wounded three more Canadians.¹⁰² The toll of four dead and nine wounded in a matter of hours during the so-called Days of Tranquility strained UN credibility in the eyes of many Canadians, and did not exactly endear Regional Command (South) to TF Kandahar.

Operations in Panjwayi District, February–March 2009

The situation in Panjwayi District was muted but volatile from February to March. An Afghan company with Canadian mentors patrolled Mushan, while M Company sortied from Sperwan Ghar to maintain the Stability Box surrounding the patrol base.

The Construction Management Team paving Route Fosters lacked vehicles but kept working nonetheless. A Squadron sortied with their Leopards from Ma'Sum Ghar when they were needed, while American and Canadian police mentors worked with the police in Bazaar-e Panjwayi and on main routes. The Joint District Coordination Centre remained the hub of security activity, and CIMIC teams continued with their work — especially dealing with District Leader Haji Baran. The balance of a kandak with its Canadian mentors was also based in Ma'Sum Ghar (see Figure 5-6 and Figure 5-6a).

As we have seen, there was substantial tension in the security line of operations in Panjwayi. Mushan was isolated, and there was increased enemy activity south of Senjaray towards Salavat. Insurgents based in Nakhonay were harassing Dand District. To make matters worse, the insurgents intimidated the cellular telephone companies into turning off their networks at night so local people could not call the Joint District Coordination Centre to report insurgent activity or ask for help. The police were not present in every community.

The demand to increase the security focus on Kandahar City led to Operation DAREDELAY (Bludgeon), a joint Canadian-Afghan operation that ran through the first half of February. In DAREDELAY, the PRT's Force Protection Company and the city police mounted a series of operations in District 2 and District 6, pro-insurgency neighbourhoods in the southwest quadrant. At the same time, Afghan police with American and Canadian mentors conducted cordon-and-search operations in Panjwayi District communities immediately west of District 2 and District 6, and the Leopards of A Squadron patrolled around and through them. Little turned up during these operations, and people told the P-OMLT mentors that it was widely known that the coalition forces were coming.¹⁰³

According to assessments, however, DAREDELAY displaced enemy leaders, personnel, transportation, and other resources from those communities. They joined their *confrères* in Nakhonay, Khenjakak, and the communities clustered on the line of hills that became known as the Adamzai Chain.¹⁰⁴ LCol Barrett launched M Company on day-long company-sized patrols into Nakhonay on 10 February and into Khenjakak on 18 February. Again, little was found, but elders in Salavat and other nearby villages who watched DAREDELAY requested a permanent Afghan National Army presence in their communities.¹⁰⁵ Only one insurgency-related incident took place between Nakhonay and Bazaar-e Panjwayi in February, and people seemed more confident in the security forces. Information fed to the American mentor teams working with the Afghan police led the security forces to several significant insurgent facilities: safe houses, IED factories and caches. In one cache, twelve 155-mm shells, twenty 82-mm rounds, ten illumination carriers and accompanying explosive material were found and confiscated.¹⁰⁶

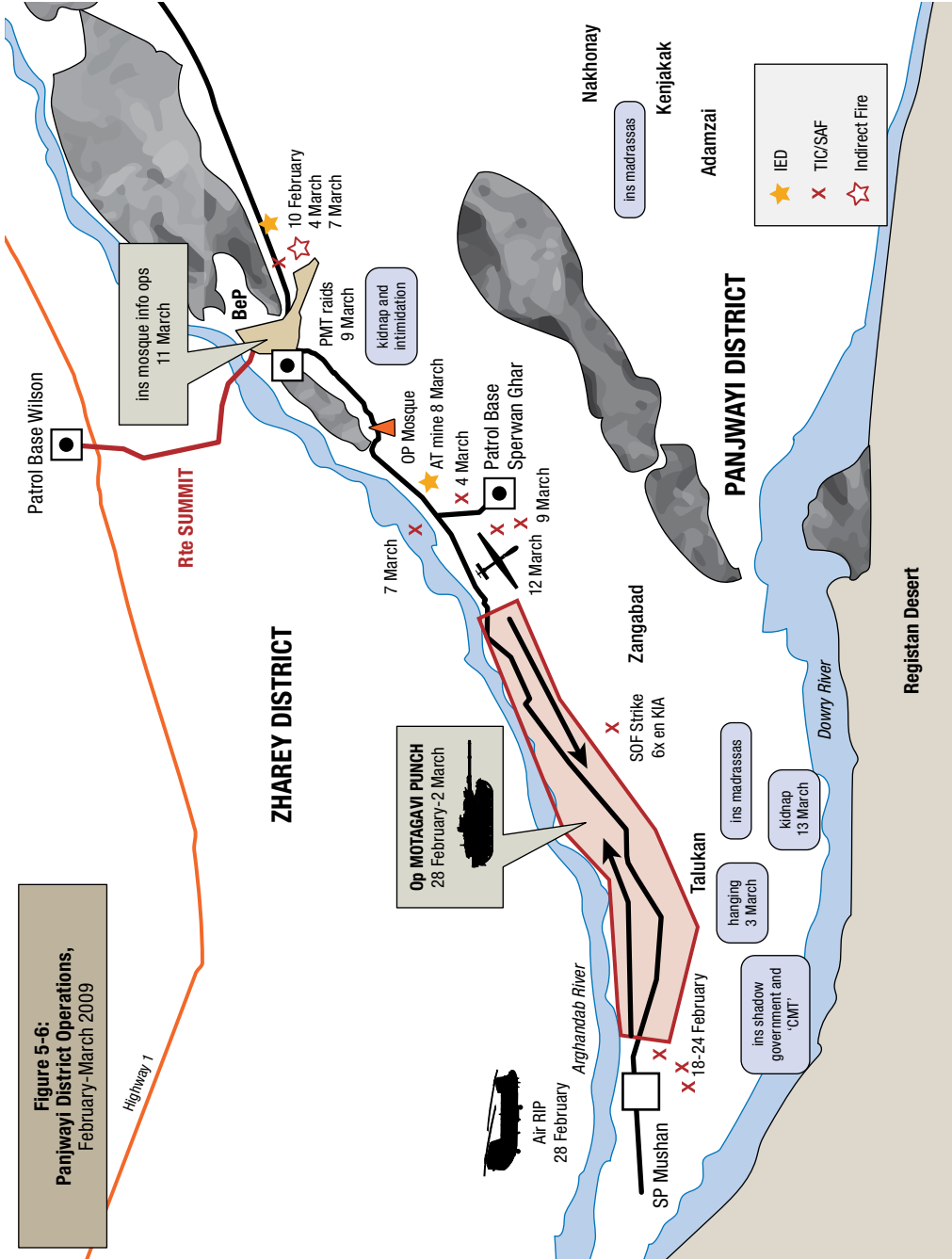


Figure 5-6: Panjwayi District Operations, February-March 2009

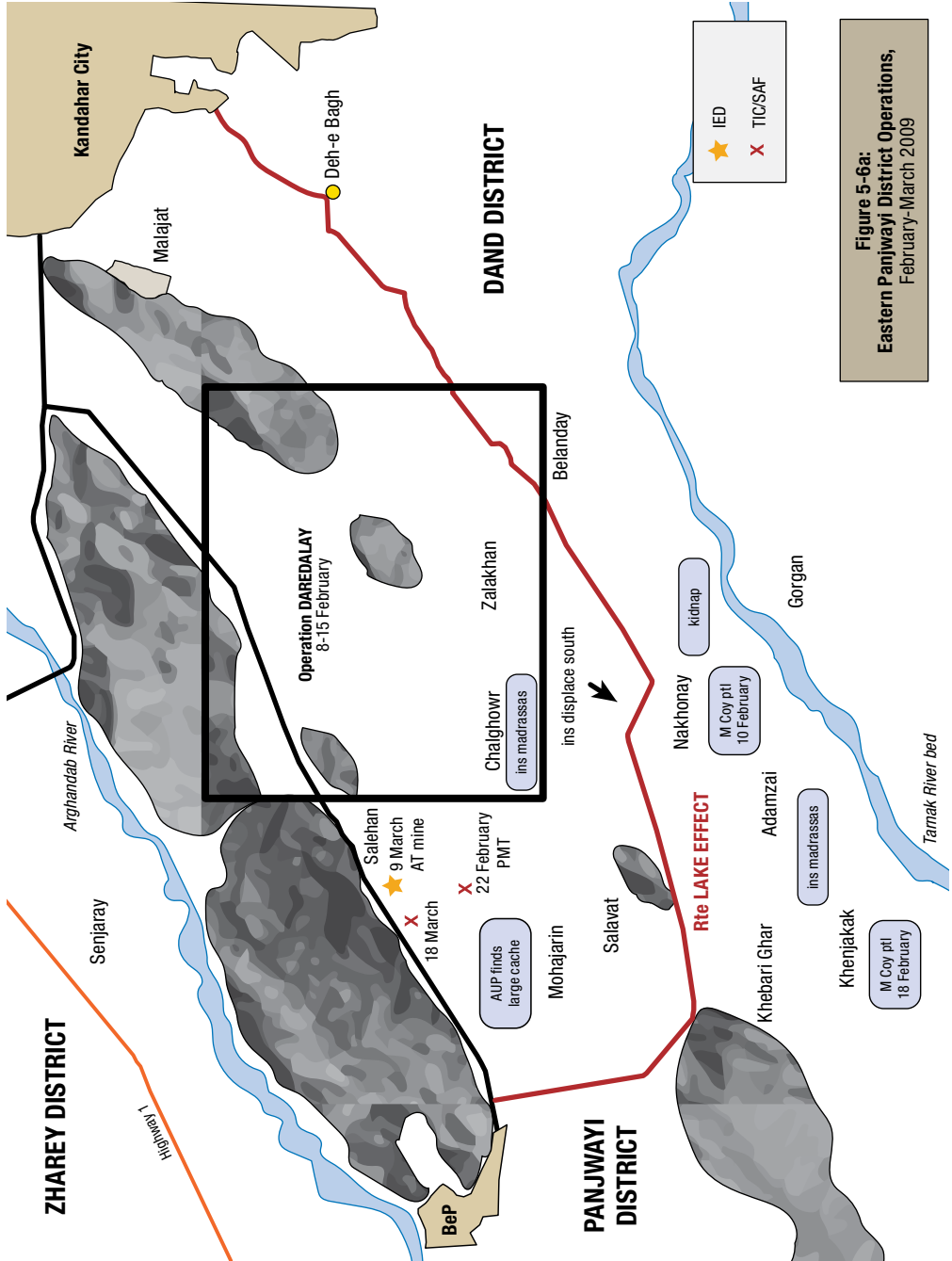


Figure 5-6a:
Eastern Panjwayi District Operations,
February-March 2009

Figure 5-6a: Eastern Panjwayi District Operations, February-March 2009



Photo Credit: Author

The Joint District Coordination Centre concept reached new levels of maturity by 2009. This is the Panjwayi Joint District Coordination Centre, located in the new District Centre east of Bazaar-e Panjwayi. Eventually a District Support Team, akin to a small Provincial Reconstruction Team, took up residence.

The action shifted to Mushan towards the end of February. Afghan and Canadian patrols were in contact with enemy forces on three occasions but for the most part had freedom of movement even though they could not bring CIMIC, PSYOPS or development resources to bear on the community. One of these fire-fights is worth particular mention because it was the first direct-fire engagement by Canadian helicopters in Afghanistan. When an Afghan platoon on patrol with their mentors came under fire, the Tactical Operations Centre diverted a ScanEagle SUAV to help find the attackers. A pair of CH-146 Griffons armed with Gatling guns soon arrived to engage the ambush party and, when the Griffons ran low on fuel, they were replaced by an OH-58D Kiowa Warrior. The insurgents withdrew to escape the helicopters, and the patrol made it back to Strong Point Mushan.¹⁰⁷ Of note, the enemy made an abrupt shift from ICOM radios to cell phones in the middle of this engagement, indicating they were aware of various coalition ISTAR capabilities.

As for Mushan, 1-205 Brigade wanted the Afghan company at the strong point to conduct a relief in place and, with helicopters, the manoeuvre took only the few days between 28 February and 2 March. However, LCol Barrett decided to mount

Operation MOTAGAVI PUNCH down Route Fosters West at the same time as the Afghan troops were flying out. M Company and A Squadron with engineers in support launched into Talukan and fought through five contacts, taking no casualties. Orbiting UAVs spotted numerous fighting-age males, but were unable to gain the positive identification required to engage them. It was evident that the enemy understood the Canadian rules of engagement and did not unmask any capabilities that could be spotted and targeted from the air. On the second day, small groups fired on M Company three times with small arms but, again, none of the insurgents could be positively identified for targeting. On 2 March, MOTAGAVI PUNCH ended and the forces returned to base.¹⁰⁸

Enemy influence continued to grow in the district despite these moves. As in Zharey, insurgents in Panjwayi levied taxes, formed their version of the Construction Management Organization, and started building roads; this activity was uncovered in late February, when observers saw requisitioned construction machinery at work west of Mushan in the “Taliban bazaar” area. There were several kidnappings throughout the district, including relatives of district shura members. Two were hanged at a mosque near Zangabad in March. Coalition forces found a pro-Taliban mullah proselytizing at a mosque right in Bazaar-e Panjwayi and a 10-man insurgent cell operating from the Bazaar-e Panjwayi area. Even more disturbing was the discovery of four insurgent madrassas, located in Chalghowr, Talukan, Mushan and Khenjakak, where fighters received indoctrination and training in the use of explosives and weapons. Far more serious than using the district as a manoeuvre area for attacks on ISAF or as a rest area for fighters operating in Zharey, this state of affairs was a direct challenge to the government of Afghanistan for control of the population in areas beyond the reach of coalition influence. Formulating a response to this challenge, however, was extremely difficult given who the district leader was, who he was connected to, and what his proclivities were.¹⁰⁹

Good information came in through the Canadian-mentored police, and particularly from Colonel Faiz Mohammad Khan, the local representative of the National Directorate of Security. Police working with American mentoring teams had significant successes in taking down caches. The problem, once again, was district-level governance, in this case Haji Baran.

Governance in Panjwayi District continues to suffer under the leadership of Haji Baran. Rumours that Baran has been fired circulated throughout Panjwayi and, while they turned out to be false, it is possible that the governor may take action on this issue next month. A number of elders in the district shura continue to boycott the weekly shura leaving it dysfunctional and unproductive.¹¹⁰

A senior Afghan intimately familiar with the situation in Panjwayi opined to Canadians that:

If Baran is removed as district leader, it is believed he will go to Pakistan and become a senior insurgent commander. However, [Baran] is attempting to make alliances with other tribal leaders in Panjwayi to consolidate his position ...

This is where the situation really got into provincial politics beyond the district-level governance layer. Provincial Council leader Ahmad Wali Karzai's brother-in-law, Arif Noorzai, a key Noorzai power-broker, intimidated the seven Noorzais on the council into encouraging Haji Baran to remain as district leader.¹¹¹ The inevitable conclusion was that, no matter what he did or did not do, Baran was protected by Ahmad Wali Karzai. The conclusion that no one really wanted to address at the time was that Ahmad Wali Karzai could influence the situation in Panjwayi, but apparently chose not to support Canadian efforts to bring professional policing, security and good governance to the people of the district.

District Chief of Police Essa Khan insisted on holding a security shura without Haji Baran present, and rebuffed CIMIC and P-OMLT personnel when they asked questions about a suspicious ambush against police on Route Fosters to which Essa's force did not respond. Baran claimed to control Bazaar-e Panjwayi, but insurgent operations were suspiciously frequent and more questions were asked. By the end of March, the National Directorate of Security commander in Kandahar City had accused the dedicated and effective Col Faiz of being too close to his Canadian mentors and abruptly told him to retire. Faiz, who worked hard to bring security to Panjwayi, was "distracted" and refused to retire.¹¹²

More indicators of serious rot appeared in the activities surrounding the Route Fosters paving project, which Haji Baran disliked so much that he shared his feelings with the CIMIC team. People associated with Baran extorted money from the workers, who were local Panjwayians paid out of Canadian coffers. In March, violence directed against the workers spiked, with kidnappings, small-arms fire, and even an IED in their rest area. It was easy to assume the intimidation was insurgent activity designed to block an important infrastructure project, but Construction Management Organization personnel believed that Haji Baran was behind it because he did not get his slice of the action back in the Laroche days when the project was implemented.¹¹³

With increased emphasis and attention on Kandahar City operations, what would become of troubled Panjwayi District?

Arghandab and Lower Shah Wali Kot District Operations, February–March 2009

By early 2009, governance had collapsed in Arghandab District. District Leader Ghulam Farooq had walked away from his post in December, and it was not until mid-February that his successor Haji Abdul Jabar agreed to take over.¹¹⁴ CIMIC, which had reduced its coverage of Arghandab, eventually managed to get some development contracts signed by the remnants of the District Development Assembly.¹¹⁵ When the CIMIC operators delved deeper into the situation in Arghandab, however, they discovered that most of the shura members were unfamiliar with PRT development programming. Probing further, the team came to believe that “most of the village elders live in Kandahar City and rarely venture out to the villages they represent due to security concerns.”¹¹⁶

In Shah Wali Kot, the Chief of Police Haji Daro Khan, did not like the fact that the titular District Development Assembly requested bids from certain communities that wanted access to CIMIC funds. CIMIC operators were divided: was this because the DDA members were not aligned with him and he was not getting a cut, or was the DDA itself dirty? There was ongoing tension over this issue. At the very least, voter registration in Shah Wali Kot was proceeding better than in Arghandab.¹¹⁷

Maj Dean Tremblay and his Recce Squadron were in serious trouble. They remained responsible for keeping the main service route open to Tarinkot; manning FOB Frontenac; and supporting surveying and assessment operations around that jewel in the crown of Canadian development, the Dahla Dam, which was being refurbished by SNC Lavalin under Operation SAY. Due to IED strikes, Recce Squadron had already taken casualties and was down several vehicles. Spares for the Coyote surveillance vehicles had also dwindled to nothing¹¹⁸ (see Figure 5-7).

As for Recce Squadron’s Afghan allies, the outstanding land issues regarding Strong Point Jelawur remained unresolved into March which left the now unmentored Afghan army company in a state of limbo. The OMLT decided not to force the issue with the Afghan National Army, and instead used it to “influence 1/205 Brigade to make maximum use of their integral engineering assets to establish a new ANA strong point.” The OMLT and the Task Force Engineer had prepared the ground, but awaited Afghan compliance before work could commence.¹¹⁹ The ANP force under Zmaray Khan was undergoing Focused District Development during February, which in turn reduced security coverage in the district.¹²⁰ The American Police Mentoring Team remained on station to bolster the Afghan National Civil Order Police backfilling for Khan’s men.

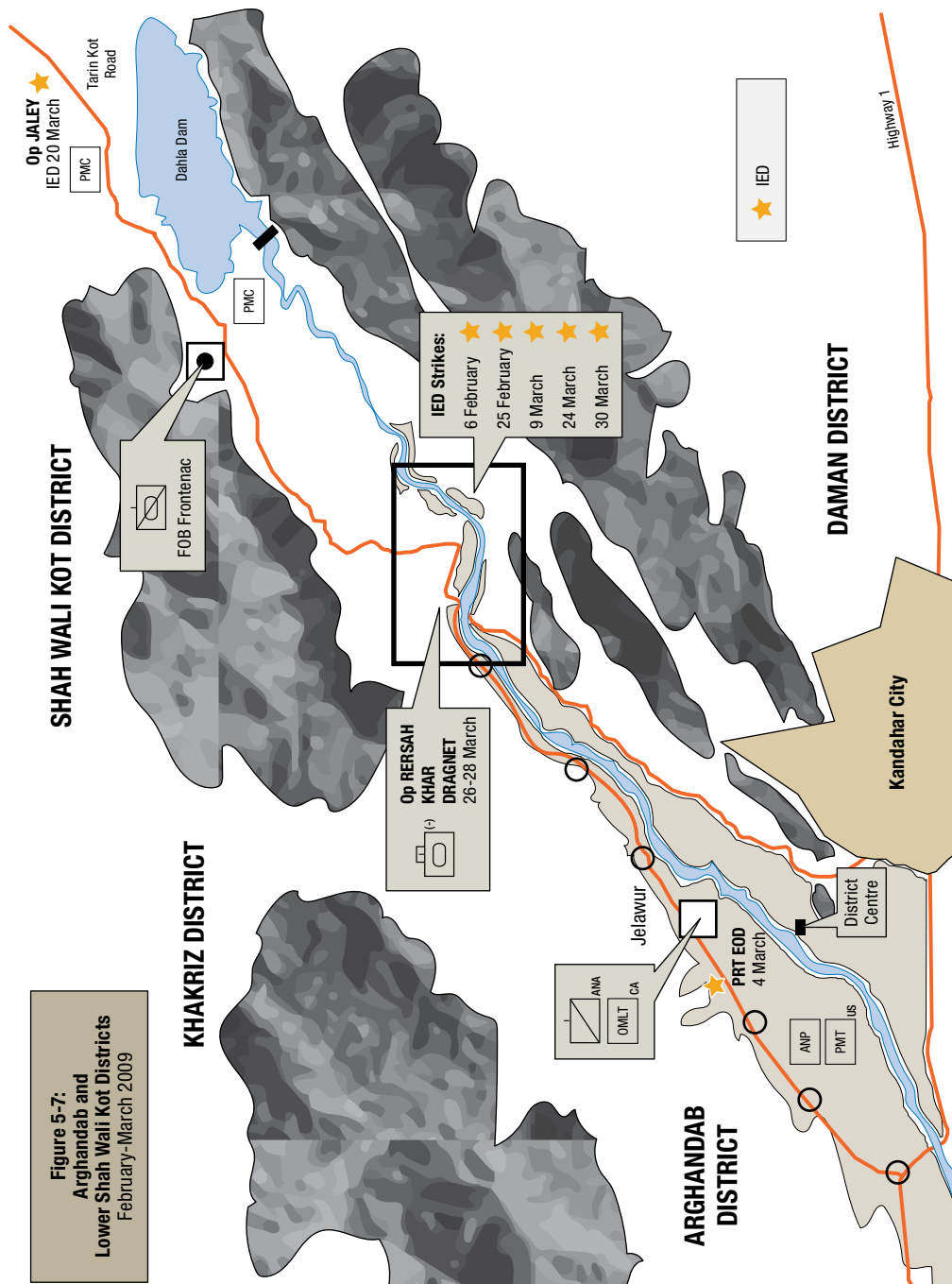


Figure 5-7:
Arghandab and
Lower Shah Wali Kot Districts
February-March 2009

Figure 5-7: Arghandab and Lower Shah Wali Kot Districts, February-March 2009

During the flurry of activity in and around the Dahla Dam, Recce Squadron and their allies took severe casualties from IEDs. Most of the strikes took place on Route Oregon just past Control Point Darryl, where various routes converged at the bridges over the Arghandab River. A LAV III observation post vehicle was taken out on 6 February with two wounded, then on 8 March a security recce for the dam was hit, killing Trooper Marc Diab and wounding four other soldiers. On 20 March, Trooper Jack Bouthillier and Trooper Corey Hayes died when their Coyote detonated an IED.¹²¹

The American police mentors were in the wrong place at the wrong time while they were assessing the community near Mansurabad on 24 March. Their up-armoured Hummer detonated a large IED, catastrophically destroying it and killing Capt Brian Bunting, Sgt Schuyler Patch, Sgt Scott Stream and Sgt Daniel Thompson. Canadian police mentors and a Recce Squadron patrol moved to assist, but it was too late. As Maj Tremblay's driver backed their vehicle, it struck an IED that did not detonate fully, forcing engineers to sweep the area.¹²²

Afghan police found an IED on Route Red Dog on 4 March. The PRT quick-reaction force, which included the EOD team, responded to the find and dealt with the device. As they were withdrawing, the EOD Bison detonated another IED, a huge one that killed WO Dennis Brown of The Lincoln and Welland Regiment, Cpl Dany Fortin of 425 Squadron, and Cpl Kenneth O'Quinn of 2 CMBG Headquarters & Signals Squadron. By the end of March, coalition forces had suffered 23 casualties — 11 killed (six Canadian, five American) and 12 wounded — in the effort to keep the road open to the Dahla Dam.

BGen Vance attempted to work through Governor Wesa, Ahmad Wali Karzai of the Provincial Council, and District Leader Haji Abdul Jabar in order to “hold them accountable and responsible for the security of their regions.”¹²³ Stern warnings issued to the people of Arghandab and Shah Wali Kot districts had little or no impact, even after a 60-man shura was held with the Arghandab and Shah Wali Kot elders; the IEDs continued. Clearly it was not in Ahmad Wali Karzai's best interests to put too much effort into Arghandab. His motives remain obscure but, when placed in the context of Arghandab events since November 2006, lack of intervention in March 2009 is not surprising.

CHAPTER FIVE



Photo Credit: Courtesy of LCol Dean Tremblay



Photo Credit: Courtesy of LCol Dean Tremblay

Recce Squadron in Arghandab District bore the brunt of enemy improvised explosive device attacks and paid a high price in what was designated an economy of force mission tasked with keeping routes open to the Dahla Dam project.

The Canadian response was to examine establishing aerial surveillance over the area on the model similar to the programme used over Highway 1. After some analysis TF Silver Dart concluded, “Transfer of TFK ISR from Zharey-Panjwayi to Arghandab would likely return the IED threat to Zharey-Panjwayi.”¹²⁴ BGen Vance told them to find a way. When CH-146 Griffons were diverted to Arghandab to provide over-watch for police operations, one was engaged with small arm fire.¹²⁵ The battle group then cut a Leopard tank troop, a LAV III infantry platoon, an engineer section, and a pair of Armoured Engineer Vehicles to Recce Squadron. The deployment of an Expedient Route-Opening Capability (EROC) suite of counter-IED vehicles was proposed, but none were available due to severe maintenance problems.

Using minimal resources, the battle group designed and mounted Operation RERSHAH KHAR DRAGNET to surge into the communities along Route Oregon between Arghandab and Shah Wali Kot to “interdict IED emplacement and boost the confidence of D Sqn soldiers.”¹²⁶ The force moved to the Sayeed Alim Kalay/Dameneh area. With the Leopard tank troop in support, the infantry platoon mounted cordon and searches of the compounds. The engineers found and blew in place homemade explosive materials and then used a Badger to “deny” (i.e., destroy) the storage compound. With the operation completed by 26 March.¹²⁷ The question remained: what was to be done about Arghandab and Shah Wali Kot?

Kandahar City Operations, February–March 2009

When we last looked at operations in Kandahar City, the insurgency shifted from an assassination campaign directed against the police to a campaign targeting the voter registration process. Canadian assessments asserted that “the insurgents have undertaken a multi-pronged campaign to deter locals from taking part in the voter registration process. This campaign includes spreading rumours that voter registration centres will be targeted by suicide IED attacks, distributing night letters, physical threats and the targeting of [Voter Registration] security personnel.”¹²⁸ However, it was difficult to differentiate between a specific anti-voter registration campaign and the larger campaign objectives expressed by Mullah Omar to the Quetta Shura and its Kandahar City network commanders. The Taliban leader demanded an “increased operational tempo” in the City; the networks were to “increase insurgent attacks in Kandahar City, expand insurgent recruiting and propaganda efforts in the city’s mosques.”¹²⁹ A significant amount of ISTAR horsepower was directed at unearthing and pre-empting enemy action in this area.

The Voter Registration Center in Kandahar was, apparently, bombed on 3 February but there was no damage, giving the Provincial Election Security Officer an excuse to close the centre ‘temporarily.’ Reading between the lines, Canadians at the provincial coordination centre were suspicious but had no evidence of wrongdoing.¹³⁰

A THREATWARN issued on 2 February was deemed credible enough for TF Kandahar to surreptitiously evacuate all of the Canadian and American civilian employees from Camp Nathan Smith to Kandahar Air Field.¹³¹ A Canadian CH-47 Chinook and its CH-146 Griffon escorts handled the personnel move in what became the Canadian Helicopter Force's first operation.¹³² As the intelligence community worked to expose the threat in more detail, TF Kandahar worked up responses with allied organizations. One of these Operation DAREDELAY (Bludgeon). DAREDELAY involved a series of disrupt manoeuvres by the battle group and Afghan National Police in Panjwayi District communities southwest of the city. The PRT's Force Protection Company, working with the Afghan police, generated a patrol matrix that took them into District 2 and District 6, again to have a disruptive function. Later, DAREDELAY expanded to add Canadian CIVPOL, psychological operations personnel and EOD detachments to Force Protection Company who conducted both mobile and foot patrols with the police.¹³³ In addition to its disruptive and presence function, DAREDELAY clearly spooked some insurgent cells that were later assessed as part of the Jabar Agha network. After DAREDELAY, special operations forces identified and targeted two of the network's leaders; when replacements were dispatched from Pakistan, coalition forces bagged them in Spin Boldak.¹³⁴

Flailing about, the Jabar Agha network used what it had on hand to attack what targets it could. Coalition operations also disrupted an assassination attempt against Ahmad Wali Karzai, a plot that may have included infiltrating his inner coterie or his personal security force. The OCC-P passed a THREATWARN to Karzai based on Canadian information.¹³⁵ On 16 February, an IED attack on provincial Chief of Police, Matiullah Qati Khan, nearly succeeded, leaving one bodyguard dead and four wounded. A large but ineffective attack near the governor's palace on 17 February was evidently designed to take out Ghulam Haider Hamidi, the mayor of Kandahar City. Then, on 24 February, a motorcycle-borne IED targeted LGen Sardar Mohammad Zazai, commander of 205 Corps, missing him but wounding four others. The Mayor was 're-targeted' on 15 March but the assassination team missed, killing six. The opposition were obviously down to their C Team, and the insurgent leadership temporarily suspended operations to lick their wounds and contemplate their lack of success.

The Afghans had had enough, and told the Canadians that they intended to conduct a series of intelligence-led cordon-and-search operations using forces from the ANA, the ANP and the National Directorate of Security. The Afghans had drawn up ambitious plans for two major operations per week in the city and, with neither fanfare nor detailed planning or coordination, they launched the first one on 29 March, moving 100 police, 100 soldiers and 20 National Directorate of Security officers into District 9 in the north end. The take was 15 people on an NDS watch list, three fake police officers armed with AK-47s but possessing no identification cards, a bomb-maker who specialized in suicide vests,

and several weapons caches. Though uncoordinated, the operation demonstrated to the somewhat surprised Canadians that the Afghans were quite capable of getting things done—when they wanted to and on their own time.¹³⁶

All the while, the CIMIC teams from the PRT sortied out of Camp Nathan Smith. The new direction taken by TF Kandahar meant that detailed assessments of the city's basic services were required, something that involved visits to the water plant and the fire services. Their assessment of the water treatment plant was particularly telling.

[The water treatment plant] employs 63 persons. Apparently, no employee has a post-secondary type level of education. Many of the employees have 20–30 years of field experience. The World Bank has provided 3,000 water meters for the purposes of metering homes and other users to facilitate the collection of revenue. These meters have been delivered, along with other flow-measuring devices approximately eight months ago and are sitting in sea containers. ... Previously purchased lab equipment is untouched in the lab building covered in dust. All instructions and directions are in English.¹³⁷

As for the fire services:

The det commander was not impressed that the patrol was there. There have been many visits in the past and nothing has come from them. The fire station responds only to fire calls. To do this they have two operational vehicles that are approximately 40 years old and are showing their age. Training is hands-on and verbally from what the commanders learn when they go to Kabul. There is no formal training for firefighters. The Station Commander said the department responds to three or four calls per day averaging about 15–16 per week.¹³⁸

CIMIC operators and CIDA staff did all they could to help the mayor and his fledgling staff build a picture of what worked and what did not, but the task was gargantuan.

The staff at TF Kandahar HQ improved their awareness of the situation in Kandahar City throughout 2009 as more resources were directed at understanding what was going on. The city's key power-brokers and their activities were by now generally associated with particular districts (see Figure 5–8). Haji Murcha Agha, the anti-Taliban religious leader, retained widely varying levels of influence in District 3, District 6 and District 7. The Popalzai and Barakzai communities dominated District 3, a stable, mixed urban-rural area with little insurgent presence. District 6 had Barakzai, Alikozai and Popalzai residents in its urban portion and Noorzai in its rural portion, while District 7 was a rural area with a mixed Noorzai-Alikozai population. Both District 6 and District 7 were considered transit points for insurgents moving in from Arghandab, Zharey and Panjwayi districts.¹³⁹

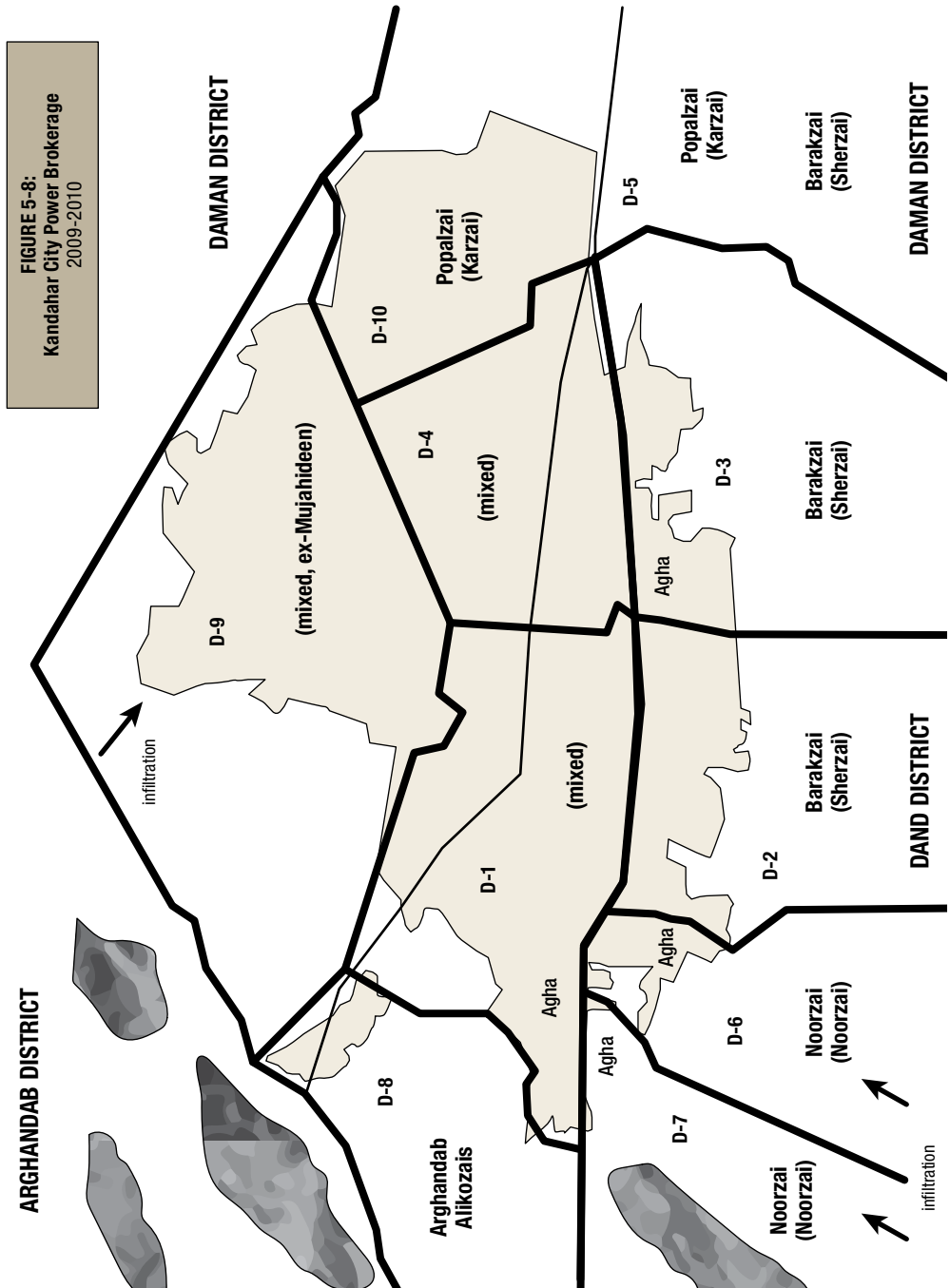


FIGURE 5-8:
Kandahar City Power Brokerage
2009-2010

Figure 5-8: Kandahar City Power Brokerage, 2009-2010

Haji Arif Noorzai, the brother-in-law of Provincial Council leader Ahmad Wali Karzai, was connected to the police in Kandahar City through his brother Mirwais. Noorzai's area of influence tended to be in the Malajat area south of Districts 6 and 7, which, not surprisingly, was dominated by the Noorzai people. Malajat, as we have seen, was the historical terminus of the Taliban rat-line from Panjwayi District.

The Sherzais, forced out of the governance game by the Karzais, had by this point consolidated their commercial activities into several construction companies and were deeply involved in land development in Districts 2, 3, and 5. District 2 was mostly Barakzai, and the population of District 5 was a mix of Popalzai and Achakzai, and sedentary Kutchie nomads. The Karzais were influential in District 5 and District 10, which was mostly Popalzai. Ahmad Wali Karzai had substantial interests in transport and security companies based in District 10 and major real estate holdings in District 2, District 3, District 5 and District 10.¹⁴⁰

Districts 1 and 4 consisted of the Old City and were tribally diverse: they were in effect the governance and economic centres of the city where all entities met to do business. District 8 was in many ways an extension of Alikozai power in Arghandab in the rural areas, but of mixed tribal makeup in the city proper. Finally, in District 9, a significant number of retired or unemployed 1980s-era *mujahideen* lived alongside service workers, displaced people, and a variety of transient unskilled labourers. None of the Kandahar power-brokers appeared to have or desired any significant influence over District 9.¹⁴¹

Insurgents infiltrated into the urban parts of District 9 from the countryside of northern Arghandab District and received support for their operations through the southwestern rat-line from Panjwayi and Dand. Clearly, the dynamics of District 6 interested TF Kandahar because of the connection to Dand and Panjwayi, and then back to Zharey and Maywand districts. If TF Kandahar was to defend Kandahar City in close, the relationship between Dand, Malajat and District 6 had to be understood and developed.

Where Will the Americans Go?

By early 2009, the Americans had solidified their plans for the incoming force laydown, with the Stryker Brigade Combat Team and a combat aviation brigade slated to deploy to Kandahar Province immediately and, later, a divisional headquarters to take over Regional Command (South). To accompany this expanded American military presence, the State Department, USAID and other agencies would flow in as well, including seasoned veterans of the war in Iraq.¹⁴² This flood of resources had the potential to completely destabilize the structure, strategy, measures of effectiveness, and programs built by the David Mulroney's Afghanistan Task Force in Kandahar. On the military side, it had the potential to significantly reduce Canadian saliency in the overall coalition effort, not just in the province.

Canadian commanders had fair warning in the fall of 2008 that the Stryker Brigade was coming to Kandahar as part of the McKiernan surge but it was unclear as to where it would operate.¹⁴³ TF Kandahar believed that Alikozai advocate Sarah Chayes was influencing ISAF commander Gen McKiernan to get a Stryker battalion stationed in Arghandab District. This assessment became a significant issue in some Ottawa quarters because of the optics of having the Dahla Dam project protected by Americans.¹⁴⁴

There were concerns in Canadian quarters, however, regarding the Stryker Brigade's structure and its suitability to the Kandahar environment. It was a high-tech mechanized infantry brigade "enabled" for "network-centric" warfare against a more conventional opponent. It had no integral CIMIC or PSYOPS teams, UAVs or a white situation awareness cell, and it had little or no construction engineering capability. In effect, the formation lacked the tools it needed to combat a decentralized counterinsurgency, though the nuclear-biological-chemical detection unit was re-roled to handle some of these tasks. Stryker Brigade units tended to be wedded to their vehicles and their technology, unlike Canadian infantry who easily transitioned from mounted operations in LAV IIIs to dismounted patrolling to air assaults with helicopters and back again. Some Canadian planners worried that Stryker Brigade units in Kandahar Province would become road-bound and subjected to the insurgency's favourite weapon, the IED. And, as we have seen over the past several chapters, not all operating areas were accessible by road.¹⁴⁵

While the staff at TF Kandahar HQ worked out the geographical aspects of the American influx with their U.S. Army counterparts, DFAIT and CIDA struggled to come up with an approach to maintain Canadian influence in the province. They wanted an integrated Canadian-American team, building on the existing PRT relationships. They offered to let the Americans co-sign the Kandahar Action Plan review document when it was completed. They asked the Americans to deploy somebody equivalent to the RoCK. They expressed the idea that Canada retain control of the civilian aspects of the mission until 2011 through the RoCK and by extension the civilian component of the PRT. The Americans were fully aware of Canadian concerns which revolved around "Canada's desire to have a say in the building and tasking of allied military and civil missions in [Regional Command (South)]",¹⁴⁶ and were willing to go some distance to "placate" Canada in the hope that Canada would extend its combat mission past the 2011 deadline.¹⁴⁷

What really concerned DFAIT and CIDA was the fate of the signature projects, especially the Dahla Dam, recognizing that "[l]ack of Canadian participation will degrade Canadian influence in Kandahar Province". What concerned TF Kandahar, on the other hand, was how the Americans intended to handle district-level development programming and how that fit in with the Vance headquarters plans. CIDA was not really focused on the districts, TF Kandahar noted, there was "little engagement from the civilian side",¹⁴⁸ and TF Kandahar

was not really interested in the Dahla Dam. Both civilians and soldiers acknowledged that the Americans intended to deploy District Support Teams, small district-level organizations resembling the Canadians' "evolved" Joint District Coordination Centre or "PRT forward" but with permanent civilian staff. A pseudo District Support Team comprising USAID staffers, a Police Mentoring Team and Canadian CIMIC operators was already working with 2-2 Infantry in Maywand District, but more formalized American District Support Teams were coming with Stryker Brigade for the districts they would operate in. DFAIT believed that the PRT Project Synchronization Board was a key tool to retain Canadian influence in development and, when alerted to the possibilities of the District Support Teams, they explored asking the Americans to integrate their people into them.¹⁴⁹

The matter came to a head over the issue of who would command Arghandab District in the new order. Arghandab was seen as a disrupt zone by TF Kandahar, (like Senjaray, Zharey and Panjwayi), with the main effort about to go into Operation KALAY in Dand district and then into follow on KALAYs in Panjwayi. One KALAY might go into Arghandab if the conditions presented themselves. The Afghans were certainly not prioritizing Afghan army deployment for Arghandab, nor was the Kandahar political leadership prioritizing that district either. The only plan that recognized Arghandab as a primary effort area was the nearly-obsolete Kandahar Action Plan championed by CIDA and DFAIT.¹⁵⁰

The long-standing insistence by the civilian Afghanistan Task Force that the six priorities and three signature projects should be the only focus of the Canadian effort combined with personal antagonisms between civilian and military personnel generated a toxic environment. This effectively alienated the Canadian military leadership of the Afghan mission who now were quite willing to turn Arghandab over to the Stryker Brigade. The fact was that the Afghans were not prioritizing Arghandab and it was their country. TF Kandahar's view was that they simply did not have the Canadian resources required to cover Arghandab, the Americans were coming in, we were both allies in Kandahar, and who cared who controlled Arghandab as long as it was not the enemy?¹⁵¹ In other Canadian quarters, an unofficially expressed attitude was that, if CIDA and DFAIT wanted so badly to distance themselves from the Canadian military effort, so be it. It was now up to CIDA and DFAIT to negotiate with the Americans on fitting security for the Dahla Dam project in among the many issues and priorities of the new structure.

In briefings given in May 2009, the incoming task force commanding officers were told that the American battalion in Maywand would remain under Canadian command for the time being, and TF Kandahar would continue to handle Zharey, Panjwayi, Dand and Kandahar City. The Stryker Brigade would cover Spin Boldak, Arghandab, Shah Wali Kot,

Khakrez and points north and east, and a squadron of the Royal Air Force Regiment would continue to handle Kandahar Air Field and its vicinity. The question remained: when would all of these movements happen?¹⁵²

Relief in Place: April 2009

The relief in place brought with it several structural changes to TF Kandahar. The All Source Intelligence Centre, now with even more personnel, was led by Maj Alain Chabot. The Task Force Headquarters signals organization was designated a Signals Squadron under the command of LCol Gary Whelan. The Engineer Support Coordination Centre, the Engineer Support Unit, the Construction Management Organization and the Counter-IED Squadron were placed under the Task Force Engineer, LCol Mike Gilmore.

The primary units of the new rotation were:

- the 2 R22eR Battle Group under LCol Jocelyn (Jo) Paul;
- the PRT under LCol Carl Turenne;
- the OMLT under Col Gregory Burt;
- the NSE under LCol Ann-Marie Tardif;
- Military Police Company under Maj Martin Laflamme; and
- Health Support Services under LCol Danielle Savard.

LCol Hurlbut's 2-2 Infantry was also scheduled to rotate out in June, to be replaced by the 1st Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment under LCol Reik Andersen.

The battle group reverted to three infantry companies mounted in LAV IIIs: A Company (Maj Charles Bolduc); B Company (Maj Tim Arsenault) and C Company (Maj Steve Jourdain). Its armour elements were C Squadron, The Lord Strathcona's Horse, commanded by Maj John Cochrane in Leopard tanks; and B Squadron, 12^e Régiment blindé du Canada, under Maj Jean-François Cauden, in Coyotes. The artillery component was Batterie X, 5^e Régiment d'artillerie légère du Canada, commanded by Maj J.P. Duval, and the field engineers were 51^e Escadron du Génie de combat under Maj Yannick Pepin.¹⁵³

The military component of the PRT underwent a significant reorganization. The P-OMLTs were transferred from the OMLT to the PRT, and there were discussions about moving the Construction Management Organization there as well.

Implementing LCol Dana Woodworth's Stabilization Company concept, BGen Vance and LCol Turenne merged the personnel of Force Protection Company, CIMIC Company and the P-OMLT to form Stab A and Stab B. Stab A, commanded by Maj Frédéric Jean, was responsible for activities in Kandahar City, while Stab B under Maj Marc Verret was the spearhead for operations in the rural districts.¹⁵⁴

BGen Vance's intent, as briefed to the incoming task force, remained the following:¹⁵⁵

1. stabilize Kandahar City;
2. stabilize the key village approaches with plan KANTOLO;
3. maintain a focus on the population;
4. work with the Afghan security forces on domestic operations in the city;
5. maintain close coordination of all moving parts; and
6. disrupt enemy forces with combat forces away from the population.

This last point is important. President Karzai increasingly intervened in any incident where coalition forces accidentally killed civilians throughout early 2009. This was not only a personal issue with Karzai, it was also an election issue. Too much attention focused on this issue could have jeopardized the political process.¹⁵⁶ And, in any event, the insurgency exploited these tragic events for its own purposes. Note also that all of these points were geared towards immediate and pressing security needs related to the city and its inhabitants, not long-term development efforts.

Capacity-Building: Policing

The ongoing need to coordinate all police mentoring and training activities in the province was recognized by the previous Canadian headquarters in 2008 and, as a result, TF Kandahar chaired a coordination meeting that included representatives from all of the American and Canadian military and civilian police organizations. The lack of Afghan participation was deliberate: "It was acknowledged that this house was in such disarray, there's no point in bringing the Afghans in to see it. We need to get this in order, then bring the Afghans in with a coherent plan."¹⁵⁷

Working with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police contingent, Maj Darren McCrank and Capt Mike Gaber played a role in identifying the entities involved in policing and building a matrix of their various mandates. This took some time, but they learned that the key issue was how the Americans funded overseas policing activities. Under American law, the US armed forces could not be allocated money from the US Government to train police. That was a State Department task, who contracted it out to DynCorp. Yet American military personnel were mentoring Afghan police. Where were the financial resources for that activity going to come from? The Canadian issue was that DFAIT would or could only fund certain aspects of police training, while the RCMP had no money of its own to disperse on it. The Canadian Army, however, had the Commander's Contingency Fund. And military police. Goals also differed. Some organizations prioritized "briefing statistics to Congress" as opposed to generating quality forces on the ground.¹⁵⁸

Another understated Canadian success was identifying which organization wanted to train which type of police ('beat cops', militia, or gendarmerie) and then allocate or push them in that direction. For example, ISAF and Regional Command (South) wanted to train professional policemen, the 'beat cops.' However, the specialists at the two commands were forced to acknowledge that the Afghans were "illiterate" and had to "acknowledge they don't have the abstract tools to understand what a constitutional rule of law is." The American Afghan Regional Security Integration Commands also wanted to train beat cops, but "they were a lot less patient and would just try and achieve tactical effects by treating them like militia, even though they knew their mandate and their end state was to create trained cops." The Canadian Police OMLTs, on the other hand, generally focused on "combat survival of those ANP, making sure they stayed alive. Sometimes it was logistical and well-being support, life skills." The Canadians cut across all three models. The RCMP and CIVPOL focused on "investigations, forensics, actually convicting criminals."¹⁵⁹

By 2009, the Canadians involved in police capacity building realized that it was increasingly difficult to leverage influence in provincial policing structures. This related directed to the American influx and it "was hard for people in Ottawa to realize we'd given up a lot of battle space ... It seemed almost an arrogance to not acknowledge that we're playing a smaller role in the province."¹⁶⁰ That said, several important contributions were made in the policing realm in 2009.

The first was the realization of Superintendent Joe McAllister's dream of establishing an officer training academy at Camp Nathan Smith next to the PRT. Instead of traveling to Kabul to attend the German-run facility there, officer training could take place in Kandahar itself. Canada later expanded this training to a facility east of the city which in turn laid the groundwork for another important achievement.

More police were required for security during the 2009 elections, and they would not come from Kabul. Run over three months, the Rapid Accelerated Security Course was responsible for deploying 170 more police by August 2009. The P-OMLT and the American police mentors worked with district chiefs of police throughout the province to recruit suitable candidates, and the CIVPOL trained them. Canadian mentors also discovered lost or forgotten sea containers of weapons, vehicles and equipment, and arranged for this materiel to be used to equip the new police.

Fundamental cultural issues made it difficult to link the evolving police force with Afghan law. The illiteracy rate was astronomical. There was a vast gulf of difference “over the concept of the value of human life”, and the whole population appeared to be suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. Societal despair and fatalism were other obstacles the Canadians confronted. There were serious disconnects between ground truth reality in Kandahar and what was happening back in Canada. Capt Mike Gaber noted that, while they were trying to coordinate police and rule-of-law activities:

We would discuss how to reconcile Canadian government priorities with what actually mattered to an Afghan. Canada’s signature projects were great — if brief. They were noble and lofty in their ideal but whether a girls’ school mattered to the Afghans, the answer was no. We even discussed it with DFAIT. It was recognized they were put between a rock and hard place ... there were cultural differences between the DFAIT people in Afghanistan and the DFAIT folks who were actually pulling the strings back in Ottawa. It was scary ... [there was a climate of fear] and also the cliques and power groups within that whole organization and who they’re subscribing to and whose intent they want to accomplish in Afghanistan.¹⁶¹

Supporting TF 1-09

The National Support Element for TF 1-09, led by LCol Ann-Marie Tardif resembled the NSEs of previous rotations in structure and size, weighing in at 751 personnel (426 military and 325 civilian). The supply and transport, maintenance, contracting support and welfare functions at Kandahar Air Field remained as before.

With the change in operational concept under Vance as well as increased airlift capabilities, however, the NSE detachments in the forward areas required some modification. The NSE laydown significantly evolved during this period. When the new rotation arrived, Canadian elements needed support in 14 locations: Camp Nathan Smith in Kandahar City, and thirteen bases and outposts in the districts of Zharey and Panjwayi. By mid-tour, several police sub-stations in Zharey had been turned over to the Afghan National Police, and a series of facilities — including a new district centre — had been built in Dand to support the key village approaches set out in the plan for Operation KANTOLO.

These changes increased the dispersion of forces at platoon level (instead of company level). Close cooperation with TF Engineers was required for the transfer of existing Canadian-built infrastructure to the Afghans and Americans, and the construction and stocking of new facilities.¹⁶²

Ultimately, the NSE's forward elements remained based around the NSE Detachment as a basic sub-unit. Each detachment retained supply, fuel, recovery, food, ammunition management, transport and welfare functions. These were located at FOB Wilson; FOB Ma'Sum Ghar; Patrol Base Sperwan Ghar; and later in Dand. The Provincial Reconstruction Team also had a detachment that was geared more towards postal and welfare functions. The NSE also maintained a quick reaction force at Camp Nathan Smith.¹⁶³

The NSE detachments were co-located with detachments of the Engineer Support Unit that were responsible for site utilities: power and water supply, and services such as ablutions, wastewater handling and electrical distribution. These tradesmen, who were usually employed as base maintenance personnel in Canada, were in short supply and had to move back and forth from site to site. As LCol Mike Gilmore noted, "In Afghanistan space does not equal time. Even though FOB Wilson and FOB Ma'Sum Ghar were 15 kilometers apart, that could be a half-day patrol at the platoon level." In time some ESU personnel even cross-trained themselves in a variety of skills.¹⁶⁴

As in previous rotations the NSE generated Combat Logistics Patrols as required. Contract Jingle Trucks were employed for noncritical commodities and construction materials, while CCAT Mi-17 helicopters handled transportation delivery tasks in permissive environments, which in turn freed up the CH-47 Chinooks for tactical employment. These movements were all coordinated in the LOG Ops Centre at Kandahar Air Field. For the most part logistics support movements were uneventful during this rotation.¹⁶⁵

One of NSE's most serious challenges in the first half of 2009 was the high rate of battle damage among fighting vehicles, which threatened to overwhelm the maintenance and repair facilities at KAF. When TF Kandahar reported that "there are no longer any operational stock vehicles", the resulting plan to redistribute the functioning fighting vehicles caused "a degradation to the overall operational capabilities of TFK." The staff modelling on projected vehicle losses concluded that "conservative analysis predicts that, if losses continue at the current rate, an entire sub-unit will be without [fighting] vehicles" by July or August. Even more shocking was the operational toll on the Coyote recce and surveillance vehicles, which were "being depleted at a rapid rate."¹⁶⁶ The technicians and mechanics did what they could to return as many vehicles as possible to service, but those judged BLR — Beyond Local Repair — needed to be replaced outright.

Signals support had evolved considerably by 2009. Back in 2007, the signals effort was decentralized. There was a signals troop; the J6 Branch at JTF Afghanistan HQ; the Mobile Electronic Warfare Teams; and as many Technical Assistance Visits from Canada as possible to bolster numbers. There were still issues with budgeting, mid-term planning, and operations (there was no operations cell). In an earlier rotation the J6, a major, was also designated as the CO of the Signals Squadron, but this was more of a paper change than anything as there were still personnel caps restricting the structure. Later that year, the rank of the J6 position was raised to lieutenant-colonel, and 15 more signals personnel were added permanently.¹⁶⁷

In 2009, signals in JTF Afghanistan shifted from a staff- and infrastructure-driven organization to an operations-oriented one. This was in part due to the intense workups that the signals personnel at 1 Canadian Mechanized Brigade Group did prior to deploying with TF 1-09 which in turn was based on experience gained over the previous two years. For the most part, there was tension between those who focused on 'strategic' level garrison, day-to-day communications in Canada and those signals personnel involved in 'tactical' level communications and their interaction with 'operational' level issues in the Afghanistan environment.¹⁶⁸ In some ways, this awkward relationship replicated the All Source Intelligence Centre problem of 2006. Was the communications system in Afghanistan supposed to be focused on meeting Ottawa's requirements, or Kandahar's? How should the organizational structure at Kandahar Air Field reflect both requirements?

By 2009, the signals laydown included both microwave and VHF radio in every piece of Canadian tactical infrastructure. Canadian signallers even managed to extend the range of their VHF systems from 30 to 100 kilometers by tweaking the equipment and siting it skillfully. The TacNet secure communications system, originally deployed in mid-2007, was completely rebuilt by 2008 and improved still more by 2009; when TF 1-09 took the field, TacNet was considered a stable system. Its data were pushed down to the lowest possible level of operations, which reaped dividends once the battle group started to conduct more distributed operations. Wiki-based unit and formation communications, also pioneered in 2007, were also considered mature systems in 2009.¹⁶⁹

The Counter-IED Fight Continues

By 2009, counter-IED efforts included a combination of daily dismounted route sweeps by Afghan police and army units; over-watch by UAVs and helicopters; EROC vehicles clearing routes ahead of operations or on their own; and combining surveillance systems with airstrikes against emplacement teams. As before, the Counter-IED Squadron handled site and device exploitation, and in-theatre training and awareness. Armed and unarmed UAVs worked with aircraft carrying precision-guided munitions were assigned to 'kill boxes',

areas selected based on IED event frequency. This system, Operation KASSAT, was in play by December 2008. When the ground sweeps were coordinated with Operation KASSAT, two new operations emerged: Operation SANGA and Operation RERSHAH KHAR. These were in place by January 2009 covering routes in Zharey including Highway 1.¹⁷⁰

In February the whole system was revamped to include route sweeps, sweeps by EROC and route-clearance packages, and coverage of Highway 1, Route Summit, Route Fosters and Route Lake Effect by helicopters and UAVs patrolling in dedicated boxes. As more and more Canadian UAVs arrived and TF Silver Dart started aerial patrols, the combined counter-IED effort was re-designated Operation DALBOR (Acrobat). When the kill boxes were renamed “shield boxes”, it became DALBOR SHIELD.¹⁷¹



Photo Credit: Author

With an increase in dismounted patrolling and cordon-and-search operations, the need for tactical protection from enemy improvised explosive devices resulted in the deployment of explosive detection dog teams, brought in under contract. This is one such team preparing to lead a foot patrol in Panjwayi district.

TF Kandahar already had access to constant surveillance in the form of its Hostile Artillery Locating (HALO) sound-ranging system, Lightweight Counter-Mortar Radars (LCMRs), Mobile Electronic Warfare Teams (MEWTs), and Coyote reconnaissance and surveillance vehicles but, due in part to doctrinal obstacles, Canadian commanders never fused these

capabilities into a system. Only the Coyotes were electro-optical, and the battle group kept them deployed in Arghandab District to patrol roads in classic recce fashion. In 2008, the Thompson rotation noted that an ally was emplacing unattended ground sensors (UGS) in the Spin Boldak area and sought to acquire a similar capability. When tested on Route Lake Effect, however, the Scorpion UGS proved to be “marginal at best”: the sensors were mistaken for IEDs and destroyed by friendly forces, stolen by locals, or otherwise disappeared.¹⁷²

UAVs had to land, patrolling troops had to return to base, and sensor crews needed rest. Systems were overtasked and sometimes used for targeting purposes that did not involve C-IED. One system was promising, however. Balloons have more than a century of use in warfare, but balloons fitted with high-resolution thermal imaging cameras were new. The US Army used these ‘aerostats’ in Iraq for surveillance in 2006 and interest in employing them for what became known as ‘persistent surveillance’ grew in Canadian circles throughout 2008. TF Kandahar put in a request for such a system in September 2008 to cover the Highway 1-SUMMIT junction but the Canadian acquisition process was glacial at best.¹⁷³ Pressure to get aerostats deployed as quickly as possible continued to build from Kandahar.

The deadly one-upmanship game between the explosive ordnance disposal teams and the IED makers continued. The insurgents eventually caught on to the EROC’s capabilities and developed low-tech means to defeat them. For example, fertilizer distributed under the CIDA Wheat Seed programme and acquired by the insurgents was used to produce homemade explosive which was then loaded into plastic jugs. There was little metal content. The anti-IED culvert covers were prised off by enemy emplacers, who then tunneled at right angles to the culvert and stuffed the cavities full of home-made explosive jugs. A casual look into the culvert would reveal nothing, especially after the grate was reattached. When Operation DALBOR resulted in dead IED emplacers near culverts, the insurgents started tunnelling under Highway 1 from nearby compounds; in one case, 19 jugs containing 700 pounds of homemade explosive — enough to destroy any vehicle in existence — were secreted under the pavement.¹⁷⁴ During the course of 2009, Counter-IED personnel learned that IED factories in Pakistan were supplying devices equipped with radio-controlled detonators that could not be jammed by existing Canadian systems. This intelligence led to a crash effort to develop new countermeasures.¹⁷⁵

When Operation DALBOR generated significant casualties among the more experienced enemy emplacement teams, the insurgents shifted to use teenagers and children to do the job. This approach was first identified in June 2009, when a horrified Canadian exploitation team found and evacuated five wounded children who had accidentally triggered their own pressure-plate IED; the Afghan soldiers protecting the engineers told them that the lead

emplacer was a 15-year-old boy. Clearly, the enemy was putting children on the roads to be killed by Operation DALBOR and, thus, generate bad press for the Canadians, inflame the local population, and people back home in Canada.¹⁷⁶

Careful observation of Canadian and Afghan techniques led the insurgents to lay IEDs after the morning route sweep. Coalition forces countered this pattern by changing their timetables and adding a second daily route sweep. Then the insurgents placed “defensive” antipersonnel mines next to their “offensive” route devices. C-IED recommended that all sub-units be equipped with mine/metal detectors to the lowest possible level. This would in theory reduce the dependency on combat engineers and reduce dismounted casualties. Once again, the glacial Canadian procurement process would not supply these detectors until 2010.¹⁷⁷

Similarly, during this time the number of Explosive Detection Dog teams increased from 12 to 48. Previous rotations requested this increase due to the IED threat but were blocked by Public Works and Government Services Canada because that entity was afraid to deal with anything resembling a private security contractor after the Blackwater revelations in Iraq. LCol Mike Gilmore, the Task Force Engineer, brought the issue directly to the Associate Deputy Minister from PWGSC, François Guimont, when the ADM was in Kandahar. Guimont promised to look into it, but follow-up by TF Kandahar hit a wall of silence. This stalemate forced TF Kandahar to find another way to acquire this capability and, by the summer of 2009, “bomb dogs” and their handlers accompanied Canadian patrols whenever possible, saving untold numbers of Canadians from death or maiming.¹⁷⁸

It was not clear if the insurgents deliberately targeted EOD robots, but one machine, the venerable Johnny 5, triggered and was “killed” by a pressure-plate IED while rendering safe another device.¹⁷⁹ On the plus side, the exploitation lab was partially up and operating by July 2009. The MDEC ultimately gave the counter-IED fight significantly expanded local analytical capability and reduced reliance on allies in this field once the bugs were worked out. There were also three full suites of EROC vehicles that were available for operations just in time for the summer fighting season.

From GRIZZLY to KANTOLO, April-May 2009

BGen Vance and his staff refined Plan KANTOLO and continued to build political support for it: “The hardest part about it was not convincing Afghans; ISAF loved it; it was convincing Ottawa”¹⁸⁰. David Mulroneu continued to block KANTOLO well into April. It took the rest of the month, with RoCK Ken Lewis working the Ottawa system, to make any headway, but “certain personalities in that group basically destroyed all possible movement forward.”¹⁸¹ One officer credited Ken Lewis with “talking Mulroneu off the ledge ... He suggested Mulroneu solve our staff shortages and get out of our



Photo Credit: Author

Explosive ordnance disposal robots were given nicknames from science fiction films (this may be a picture of the legendary 'Johnny 5', 'killed' by a pressure-plated improvised explosive device), and were used time and again to render safe enemy bombs. On one occasion, a critically wounded Taliban suicide bomber fought back against a 'bot as the crew manoeuvred to dismantle his bomb vest.

shorts.”¹⁸² The face-saving argument was that the concept was not the problem, but elements in Ottawa “weren’t sure they could program funds and level of effort to the stabilization equation of their whole-of-government actors, but they agreed and they did.”¹⁸³

According to another officer, Vance’s words to Mulroney and the other bureaucrats in Ottawa could be paraphrased as follows: “I will not have another Canadian soldier die going out doing useless benchmarks and shuttling you guys around and fighting for areas without doing KALAY. I will not allow this to continue to happen.”¹⁸⁴

TF Kandahar staff rebuilt bridges with the Other Government Department representatives and looked for ways to support KANTOLO. There was continued resistance:

[BGen Vance] would say “This needs to happen in order to ensure our soldiers stop dying.” And people didn’t want to buy into it because that somehow would take away the limelight, the importance, the focus of the money that’s being spent on benchmarks and signature projects. You don’t want the military to take the lead. You don’t want the military to be successful.¹⁸⁵

Yet more opposition emerged from a new direction:

It's one thing to force CIDA at the PRT to participate in the tactical planning for the development line of operation Vance's headquarters ... already had made up their mind that the civilians at the PRT would be point on the village plan, which was a ridiculous assumption because the civilians at the PRT didn't know what planning was, let alone the OPP process. The assumption was that CO PRT would direct civilians in contributing to the plan ... [it failed in that] it assumed that the UN and the NGOs (and Afghan ministries for that matter, given that the village was not a priority for health coverage for the Director of Public Health) would naturally alight to TF Kandahar's KALAY.¹⁸⁶

Therefore,

When UNAMA suggested that the UN clusters get involved in KALAY, WHO, the UNHCR, OCHA and UNICEF heads of office for the south voiced complete disagreement at the UN meeting in participating in KALAY, mostly for the following reasons. 1). There were no humanitarian needs distinguishing that village from any other, and, since UN agencies and humanitarian NGOs work on humanitarian benefits, not stabilization/governance/COIN priorities, that was a non-starter. 2). It was perceived to be a direct breach of the blue UN and NGO neutrality to become involved in KALAY as a not-so-subtle way of building up Afghan government credibility.¹⁸⁷

BGen Vance soon learned that the UN had developed their own Critical District Plan and were believed to be trying to co-opt ISAF into adopting it. KANTOLO was a rival Canadian plan, and therefore coexistence was impossible. It was the UN way or the highway.¹⁸⁸ On the Ottawa front, sources told TF Kandahar staff that elements there saw KANTOLO "as a new strategy" and worried that it would "detract from our six priorities."¹⁸⁹ The situation stalemated again.

The log jam finally broke in May, when David Mulroney was appointed Ambassador to China. BGen Vance noted that, "Mulroney left and we got rid of all of that churn and the Clerk of the Privy Council [Kevin Lynch] left and we got rid of more of the churn. And it was good."¹⁹⁰ The staff also noted that "It was really different. Things really started to steam ahead."¹⁹¹ On 16 May KANTOLO was finally approved by the Chief of the Defence Staff. By that point there was trouble was brewing again in the other districts.

Dand District at Risk

Though it appeared as though Dand district was in the eye of the hurricane of violence swirling around Kandahar City, district leader Abdul Nazek and his police force were still subjected to terrorist violence and, without coalition forces stationed in Dand, it was up to them to absorb the hit and keep moving on the development activities that were progressing in the district. February was a particularly bloody month for Dand's police force, with 15 officers killed and three wounded in three attacks on police infrastructure. On another occasion, when American police mentors were ambushed with their Afghan counterparts, a passing OH-58D Kiowa Warrior helicopter took out the terrorists' car, killing four and wounding two. A particularly savage attack took place on 2 March, when a man posing as a local resident entered a checkpoint asking for help, and then drugged seven police officers as they had tea together. An insurgent team then came in, bound and murdered the policemen, and stole their weapons.¹⁹²



Photo Credit: Author

A key player in the fight was district leader Abdul Nazek, here seen with the author in January 2008. Nazek was an able and respected leader who understood the fine balance between economic, secular and religious dynamics in his district.

There was even a feud between entities in Nakhonay and Dand, but how much was due to insurgent action was open to question. When a team from Nakhonay kidnapped a village elder from Ruhabad, an armed team from Ruhabad infiltrated Nakhonay and took 24 Nakhonaians back to their village under some duress. District Leader Nazek facilitated an exchange of hostages.¹⁹³

Nazek himself was nearly assassinated on 19 March when he heard his brother was under attack and responded. The bomb narrowly missed him. The Dand police continued to hold things together, and CIMIC continued to work closely with the Dand District Development Assembly, whose members refused to be intimidated and went about their work. The intimidation stepped up. A woman was found murdered and stuffed into a bag with a note attached: “Every person who works as a spy for ANSF and CF will be like this.”¹⁹⁴



The Dand District Centre became a point of main effort for Canadian and Afghan forces and a potent symbol as they fought to maintain control of the district. Attacked by a suicide bomber, the building was rebuilt and enhanced.

Finally, at 1130 hours on 30 March, a suicide bomber blew himself up on the second floor of the Dand District Centre, killing eight people, wounding five more, and severely compromising the structure. The target was the district shura meeting with CIMIC. This was no feud, but a major attack on the district leadership and people who were not the slightest bit interested in the Taliban or their ideology. In his conversations with the CIMIC team, Abdul Nazek was very clear that he understood what was going on and what to do about it:

[Nazek] expressed his feelings that security will improve if they take care of their neighbours ... if you take care of the people around you, they will protect you. [Nazek] feels very strongly on this issue ... President Hamid Karzai asked the Dand district leader why he felt he was being targeted so much. [Nazek] could not explain but felt it may be due to his age and political views ... Contractors are using their cousins and other relatives, and are filling their pockets with money. [Nazek] stressed that you have to win the people ... that local national concerns are not being heard or focused on within KAF; [he] recommended that they should hire more people from Dand and Daman areas to instill confidence in ISAF.¹⁹⁵

Fundamentally, Canadian analysis was that “the insurgents are attempting to expand their influence in Dand and are employing tactics similar to those in Arghandab.”¹⁹⁶

Maywand District Operations, April-May 2009

2-2 Infantry wound down operations in April and May in preparation for their relief in place by the 1st Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment of the U.S. Army (1-12 Infantry). The draw-down coincided with the poppy harvest, which in turn reduced hostile activity in the district. CIMIC and USAID used this time to range out and continue to find projects to support and villages to assess. There was, for example, only one school out of sixteen operating in the district and it was, not surprisingly, in Huta. There had been 20 teachers in the past but now there were only two. In a positive development, two Afghan contractors expressed interest in projects in the district. One of them, who had not been able to work in Maywand for 18 months, told the CIMIC team that Maywand “is more secure than last year.”¹⁹⁷ In an inexplicable move, the bulk of the Maywand police were suddenly fired by the Kandahar police chief and replaced. This forced the Police Mentoring Team to start over with a whole new slate.

Overt enemy activity was limited to the area around Combat Outpost Terminator. A series of five IED attacks (which resulted in no deaths) and sporadic direct fire was assessed as an attempt to keep the American infantry company fixed inside its tactical infrastructure while the enemy moved around it. Patrols continued to sortie from Terminator nonetheless. After one IED strike, UAVs and OH-58D’s tracked the bombers back to a compound, where a pursuing patrol raided the facility and found IED making equipment.¹⁹⁸ A pair of SOF operations netted enemy leaders who were passing through the district.

As long as the insurgents were either unwilling or unable to engage coalition forces in Maywand seriously, the district’s main problem was governance. Governor Wesa had ordered District Leader Haji Massoud to mount poppy-eradication operations, but Massoud resisted, arguing that, “if poppy eradication policy is applied, the [Afghan National Police] will not be able to ensure security in Maywand.”¹⁹⁹ In a matter of days, President Karzai had

replaced Massoud with Obaidullah Bawari. Governor Wesa was informed later. Massoud was incensed and claimed that his replacement was a Noorzai connected to Ahmad Wali Karzai, whom he blamed for his removal, not Wesa.²⁰⁰ When Obaidullah arrived in Huta to take charge, he was greeted by a crowd of supporters; clearly, Maywand Noorzais who were aligned with the Popalzai power structure had cause to celebrate. Obaidullah did not initiate eradication operations either.

The subtext of this interfactional “dialogue” was that competing groups of narcotics producers wanted access to Maywand’s crops and transit routes. Whoever held the district leader position could selectively eradicate poppy to favour his patron(s) at the expense of their competitors, and still look good to the “internationals” handling the counter-narcotics agenda in Afghanistan. As we have seen in earlier chapters, control over the district police was a key factor in this dialogue. ISAF forces were caught in the middle of this dynamic while trying to kill Taliban and implement reconstruction and development programming. Maywand, with its pro-Taliban Noorzai population, was now in the Popalzai power structure’s camp. That did not necessarily mean it was in the Government’s camp.

Operations in Zharey District, April–May 2009

Reporting from Zharey in April indicated that there was little or no overall progress in the district. CIMIC teams confirmed what their predecessors had written in nearly identical reports: “[source] mentioned he doesn’t trust the Zharey district shura members, mentioning that they are all corrupt and that their representatives can’t understand the situation in the area because they never come down to the villages ... [source] reported that the shura member sold the seeds in the bazaar instead of giving them to the population.”²⁰¹ The district police chief, Bismillah Khan, told Canadian police mentors, “the Taliban have influence everywhere including the district shura, mentioning that [source], a Zharey district shura member, is linked with his brother to the Taliban.”²⁰² There was only one operational government-affiliated clinic in the district. As for the Canadian-supported polio vaccination campaign, “the persons in charge are coming from Kandahar City [and not from the district] and were not coming into Zharey District.” District Leader Sahardi also told the Canadians that he expected less than 20 percent of the population to turn out for the elections.²⁰³

What was starting to work, however, was the Joint District Coordination Centre, its 911-type emergency telephone system and, to a certain extent, the police. There were local people who understood the system, particularly in Asheque and Senjaray, and were using it to report enemy activities and even make suggestions on infrastructure projects.²⁰⁴ Callers reported the presence of insurgents from Waziristan in the area.²⁰⁵ Police even initiated contact in Senjaray without help from mentors; they reported that a local man who

had lost a brother to the Taliban “went into a rage and attacked the insurgents, helping the Afghan police kill three insurgents.” One of the dead was a local Taliban sub-commander.²⁰⁶ The Afghan army personnel at the Joint District Coordination Centre started to receive calls from informants who had previously made contact with Afghan army patrols in the district.²⁰⁷ Unfortunately, almost all these positive developments remained limited to Asheque and Senjaray, and did not spread to the rest of Zharey District.

The security force laydown meant that most of the district was not patrolled and lacked an enduring security presence. Half of the existing tactical infrastructure in Zharey was on Highway 1 to keep it patrolled and open to east-west commercial and military traffic, with a significant proportion of police tactical infrastructure dedicated to keeping Route Summit open. Previous problems in Senjaray and Asheque ensured a significant Afghan presence there; 1st Kandak deployed two of its four companies in the area, along with their Canadian mentors.

In terms of enemy activity, Canadian ISTAR resources determined that the enemy main effort in the district was Asheque and Senjaray, and that the insurgent leadership even wanted to build an operations centre in Senjaray to support its urban terrorist operations in Kandahar City. About ten ambushes were recorded in April and May. Taliban fighters attacked USPI convoys on Highway 1, but the days of massive IEDs on the road were over for the time being. There was practically no visibility on what was going on in the Sangsar-Nahlgam-Sia Choy ‘heart of darkness’ as ISTAR resources were focused elsewhere. The insurgents maintained their pattern of moving supplies into western Zharey through Band-e Timor, building up and consolidating in central Zharey, and then proceeding to forward operating locations in eastern Zharey. The difference was increased activity in Senjaray, which was likely supported and supplied from the enemy’s Zharey district system as well as the Arghandab system which was in turn supported from Khakrez and Shah Wali Kot. New enemy leaders were also starting to come in to Zharey.²⁰⁸

In April, N Company 3 RCR prepared to hand off to B Company 2 R22eR, but operations were necessary to keep the insurgency off balance. N Company’s last operation was SANGA TSUNAMI conducted on 9-10 April (see Figure 5-9 and Figure 5-9a). This operation was a probe south of Highway 1 near Kolk that essentially was a manoeuvre-to-collect mission. Moving south, N Company and American police mentors moved south and encountered an enemy warning system that fired small arms and RPGs at them while an IED took out a police mentor vehicle. The entire enemy command system down to Sia Choy unmasked itself for the benefit of the ISTAR systems, including some of the new leaders coming into the district.²⁰⁹

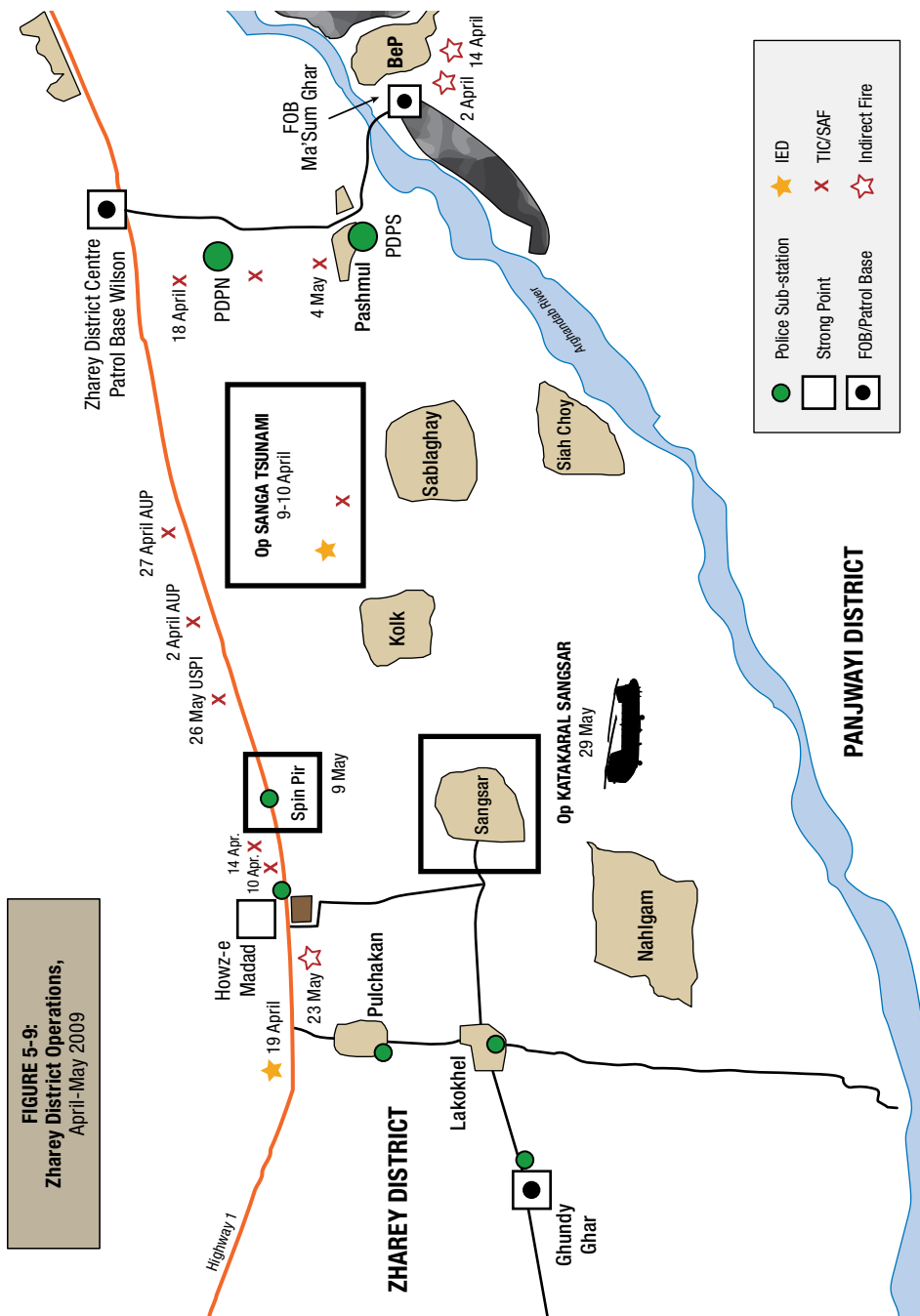


Figure 5-9: Zharey District Operations, April-May 2009

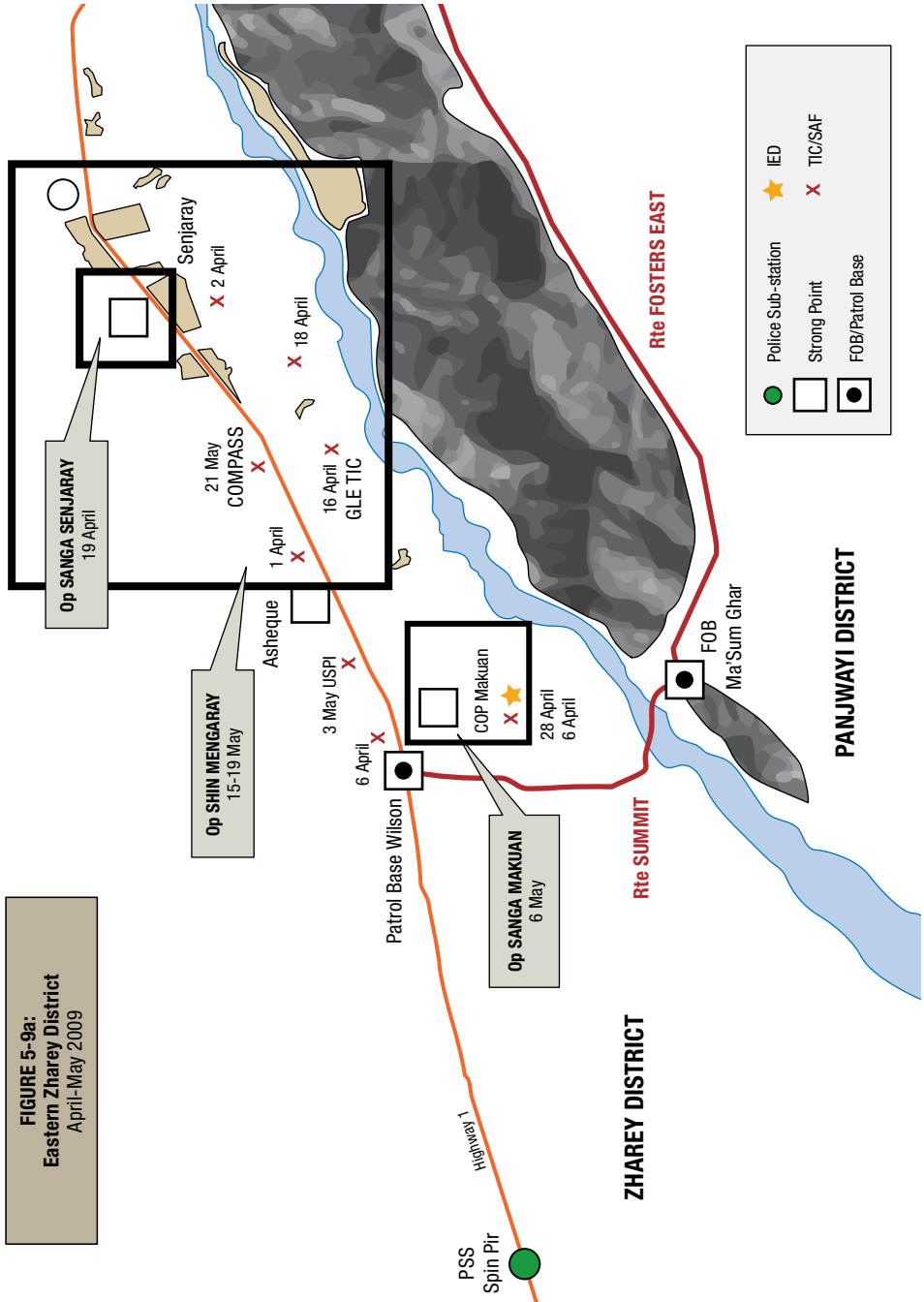


Figure 5-9a: Eastern Zharey District, April-May 2009

Over in Senjaray, Canadian intelligence ascertained that the enemy was increasing their forces with four groups of about 65 fighters total. On 19 April, LCol Paul launched B Company into the area to work with the local Afghan forces in Operation SANGA SENJARAY. It was designed not only to disrupt hostile movement in southern Senjaray and to scoop up caches of weapons and IED materials: it was also a manoeuvre-to-collect. B Company and engineers from 51^e Escadron linked up with the Afghan infantry company based at Strong Point Senjaray and their Canadian mentor team, and commenced clearing compounds of interest. Small quantities of IED materials were found, and several dehydration casualties were evacuated from B Company.²¹⁰

Operation SANGA SENJARAY had an intriguing effect on the people of Senjaray. The next day, 40 community leaders told the district security shura that they “have resolved to move against the insurgents in their town.” District Leader Sahardi told the Canadian CIMIC teams that the local people “will take it upon themselves to force the insurgents out of the town” but, in his view, “an enhanced ANSF and/or CF presence would be required in order to ensure that insurgent influence and presence in the area did not return.”²¹¹ The insurgents responded to this temerity with a complex ambush of an ANA patrol that left two Afghan soldiers dead and seriously wounded one Canadian and four other Afghans.²¹²

The Canadians and Afghans intensified their patrolling in Senjaray, but their efforts produced only small, ineffectual contacts. On 6 May, B Company and the Afghan force in Makuan cooperated in Operation SANGA MAKUAN but turned up nothing. Insurgents moved south and shot up both the Pashmul North and Pashmul South police sub-stations along Route Summit from positions to the east.

The insurgents increasingly interdicted district cell phone communications to interfere with locals who were passing information to the Joint District Coordination Centre. This was of serious concern, given that this ‘911’ system was now bearing fruit. The National Directorate of Security commander, unfortunately, lost contact with all of his sources overnight. A project to build a tower outside FOB Wilson was supposedly under way, but no one seemed to know anything about it except that CIDA might be involved. Meanwhile, all three of the district’s cellphone service providers suspended operations.²¹³

Labour problems at the Pashmul South police sub-station left authorities in Kandahar City throwing up their hands in frustration at the prospect of dealing with the Zharey police in any area that was not Senjaray. The reallocation of the Canadian P-OMLT to support operations in Kandahar City meant that there were fewer police mentors for Zharey District. The American police mentors were still sorting out what their level of involvement in the district would be. Consequently, a decision was made to close the police sub-stations at Spin Pir and Pashmul South and withdraw the Canadian mentors. In Operation MIKIERANDAL 2, Canadian engineers removed the facilities so the insurgents could not use them.²¹⁴

These developments alarmed District Leader Sahardi:

The DL commented on the situation of ISAF being seen by local nationals and insurgents as withdrawing from Zharey and Panjwayi. Shura members made direct reference to Mushan, Spin Pir, and Pashmul South patrol bases and police sub-stations and stated that local nationals view these as indicators that the insurgents have forced ISAF from these areas. Also there were numerous pleas from shura members for development projects in their sub-districts.²¹⁵

Zharey District west of Senjaray was now part of the Disrupt zone. Without the forces required to clear and hold it, and with the priority now on Kandahar City and its approaches, TF Kandahar wrote off most of Zharey District. The Canadian planners focused on reinforcing success in Senjaray and launched random disrupt operations just south of Highway 1 to keep insurgents in the Sangsar-Kolk area away from the road.

In mid-May, TF Kandahar decided to go back into Senjaray with Operation SHIN MENGARAY. What was sauce for the goose was sauce for the gander, so 2-2 Infantry deployed on Operation BOBCAT to get insurgents in Maywand District to activate their communications system so their radio repeaters in the hills north of Highway 1 — designated Objective PLAGUE — could be spotted and destroyed before the main body launched into Zharey. Objective PLAGUE was temporarily denied after repeated artillery and air strikes at 0300 hours on 16 May and, at 0800 hours, C Company 2 R22eR moved into southern Senjaray. At the same time, Recce Platoon and C Squadron moved to blocking positions south of the Arghandab River. Company D from 2-2 Infantry blocked from the west, Company B cleared Highway 1 with engineers, and Recce Squadron moved into a block in the northeast. 1st Kandak, 4th Kandak and their Canadian mentors moved to Strong Point Senjaray preparing to move into the cordoned area when several of their interpreters suddenly quit, claiming that the Americans paid more and they were going to the highest bidder. This action unexpectedly stalled that part of the operation.

The enemy immediately went to ground and cached their weapons. Wearing civilian clothes, many of them escaped to the west down wadi systems and along the river — unarmed, they could not be targeted by air assets or artillery. IED material and an 82-mm recoilless rifle were found, and the Afghans detained 30 suspected insurgents. One insurgent produced an AK-47 from under his clothing and engaged Canadian troops, but was cut down before he could generate casualties. In another incident, an IED wounded members of an American patrol, but there was no further contact.²¹⁶

The next day, the radio repeaters at Objective PLAGUE were up and running again. A ScanEagle SUAV deployed to the area so that M-777 artillery fire could be brought down on the sites. While Company B was withdrawing, they encountered multiple

IEDs and requested airmobile extraction. CH-47s lifted them back to FOB Wilson while the blocking units progressively fell back on their bases. TF Kandahar deemed that Operation SHIN MENGARAY achieved a disruptive effect on the insurgents in Senjaray.

B Company 2 R22eR conducted Operation KATAKAWAL SANGSAR, an airmobile insertion with Canadian helicopters into the Sangsar area that was designed to disrupt the insurgent network targeting Highway 1. After getting into a two-hour firefight on 29 May, B Company conducted a ground withdrawal, first to Strong Point Lakokhel and then to FOB Wilson.²¹⁷

Panjwayi District Operations, April–May 2009

In Panjwayi, Haji Baran continued on as District Leader, but the bi-weekly district shura remained sparsely attended with little or no activity being conducted by the District Development Assembly. The incoming CIMIC team met with Baran and asked him for a prioritized list of projects that he wanted to see done. Baran had been told by Afghan government personnel that a lawyer, a prosecutor, and a judge were going to be assigned to Panjwayi, and therefore needed office equipment. He wanted a secure storage site for wheat distribution. He also wanted a large mosque established close to the New District Centre. And he wanted a playground.²¹⁸ This was, he explained, supposed to be surrounded by a whole new city to be built west of Bazaar-e Panjwayi and called Dastagiri. The CIMIC operators were not quite sure how to respond to these grandiose requests. Baran played to Canadian proclivities and arranged a women’s focus group to satisfy them, but the CIMIC team learned that “the women had been selected by district leader Haji Baran...it is believed that they are relatives or relatives of close personal friends of Baran.”²¹⁹

Baran continued to complain about the Route Fosters Paving Project. Workers were still getting blown up and progress was slow, and the Canadians became convinced that Baran was somehow, paradoxically, undermining it. In early May, the Construction Management Organization ceased work on the road and turned it over to the only company that bid on it: Bennett-Fouch Associates.²²⁰ Weeks later, when CIMIC and the Construction Management Office checked in with Bennet-Fouch, nothing had been done on Route Fosters and the contractor reported that Baran had ordered them to stop work.²²¹

On the policing front, manning problems continued. Mentors learned that 50 police officers assigned to Panjwayi District lived in Kandahar City and refused to work in Panjwayi because it was “too dangerous”.²²² The US police mentoring team assessment was that the Tajik cops were reliable but the Pashtun ones were not and agreed that “the AUP in Bazaar-e Panjwayi are generally more professional than in some other districts.”²²³ The chief of police successfully convinced the Canadian and American police mentors to hold a separate “sub-committee” of the Security Committee because he didn’t trust Baran.

This ‘sub committee’ led to improved Afghan police–army interactions and delineations, especially regarding operations in Bazaar-e Panjwayi, which had been a point of contention in the past.²²⁴ In any event, the police were good enough to identify a team of fake Afghan police operating in Panjwayi.²²⁵ Ultimately however the chief of police was frustrated and ready to quit:

He has complained on many occasions that he is willing and wants to conduct operations. However, he feels he is not getting the support he needed. He is constantly short of personnel and he has lost over 20 of his men [in action] since his arrival in the area. He is not seeing progress and therefore sees no reason to remain in Bazaar-e Panjwayi and wants to be in an area where he can effect change ... The departure of the chief of police could have a significant effect in the improved effectiveness of the AUP that has been since the arrival of the current district chief of police and an impact on the relative stability that has been achieved in Bazaar-e Panjwayi.²²⁶

Summoned to Kabul, he met with the Minister of Justice who provided him with a letter of response to the issues surrounding police support in the districts. On return he read this out to the Panjwayi police. The police mentors noted that “This letter seems to answer all of the complaints aimed at the [police]....This is fantastic progress as long as those measures are applied. Knowing the district Chief of Police these will be stringently enforced....these will also improve relations with both the local nationals and the ANSF.”²²⁷

And despite his imminent dismissal for being too honest, Col Faiz continued to provide the Joint District Coordination Centre significant and detailed information on enemy activities. For example, the enemy was consolidating in Zangabad with seven different groups, one of which was completely Arab and who were mentoring a seven-man team of teenagers. There were insurgent checkpoints all around Zangabad. Another new node was Chowlghor, where a force of some 60 foreign fighters was quartered along with their civilian-pattern vehicles. Faiz’s sources also informed him that a large meeting in Quetta chaired by Mullah Baradar instructed their deployed forces to mount a large attack on some piece of ISAF infrastructure and overrun it for propaganda effect.²²⁸ The insurgents, in fact, were holding shuras in Chalghowr and had set themselves up as a parallel power with twenty local fighters residing there.²²⁹

The Joint District Coordination Centre continued to receive a regular flow of information from local people on enemy movements in areas of the district that the insurgents did not control. Afghan police detachments working with American police mentors found several significant caches south and southeast of Bazaar-e Panjwayi, undermining the insurgents’ operational capabilities. One of these caches, which included a set of bloodied doctor’s cloths, was in a Bazaar-e Panjwayi mosque. The suspected insurgent was a mullah who was from the community.²³⁰

In April and May 2009, Canadian and Afghan security operations centered on three areas: Mushan, Sperwan, and the communities south of Route Fosters East, which had been recently renamed Route Hyena. A rise in reports of insurgent movements into Chalghowr, Salavat, Nakhonay and Khenjakak, and their relationship to continuing operations in Dand and Kandahar City, forced the battle group commanders (who were conducting the relief in place) to revise priorities. CIMIC surveyed the situation around Salavat to gain an impression from the population of what was going on, but got conflicting information: the police from the Salehan Police Sub-Station were ripping people off, but others were happy with the Salehan police. Nobody wanted to talk about insurgents.

On 4 April, M Company and the tank squadron conducted Operation ARGHANWANI PIL II. While the police patrolled Route Hyena and the tanks moved into a supporting position, a single RPG was launched at them without result and later on a police vehicle struck an IED that wounded two men. There was no organized resistance but progress was slow because of the IED threat on Route Lake Effect. ISTAR coverage gleaned more data on hostile activities in eastern Panjwayi, but the enemy did not react to the combat team's movements²³¹. (see Figure 5-10 and Figure 5-10a)

The action then shifted to Mushan, where an infantry company from 3rd Kandak and their Canadian mentors had been aggressively patrolling to keep the insurgency off balance. The insurgents generally kept to the area west of Mushan and east of Talukan. Pushing out east on 7 April, the Afghans and Canadians made contact with a surprised group of insurgents and found themselves in a running gunfight. As the patrol pulled back, the newly deployed Batterie X at PB Sperwan Ghar conducted their first M-777 fire mission to cover them, and OH-58D Kiowa Warriors conducted gun runs on identifiable insurgents.²³² The next day, the Afghan infantry and their mentors pushed east again just to see what would happen. They bumped a patrol of insurgents and called in close air support from a pair of U.S. Marine Corps F-18s. As the M-777 battery prepared to engage, the enemy dispersed. On their way back to the strong point, the patrol took fire from two insurgents who fled when heavy fire came back at them.²³³ Probing an aggravated chancre sore, the Afghan infantry from Mushan returned to Talukan, but they were forced back to Mushan when a soldier was wounded. The Canadian mentors in Mushan concluded that they had bumped into an IED factory and a staging area north of Talukan.²³⁴

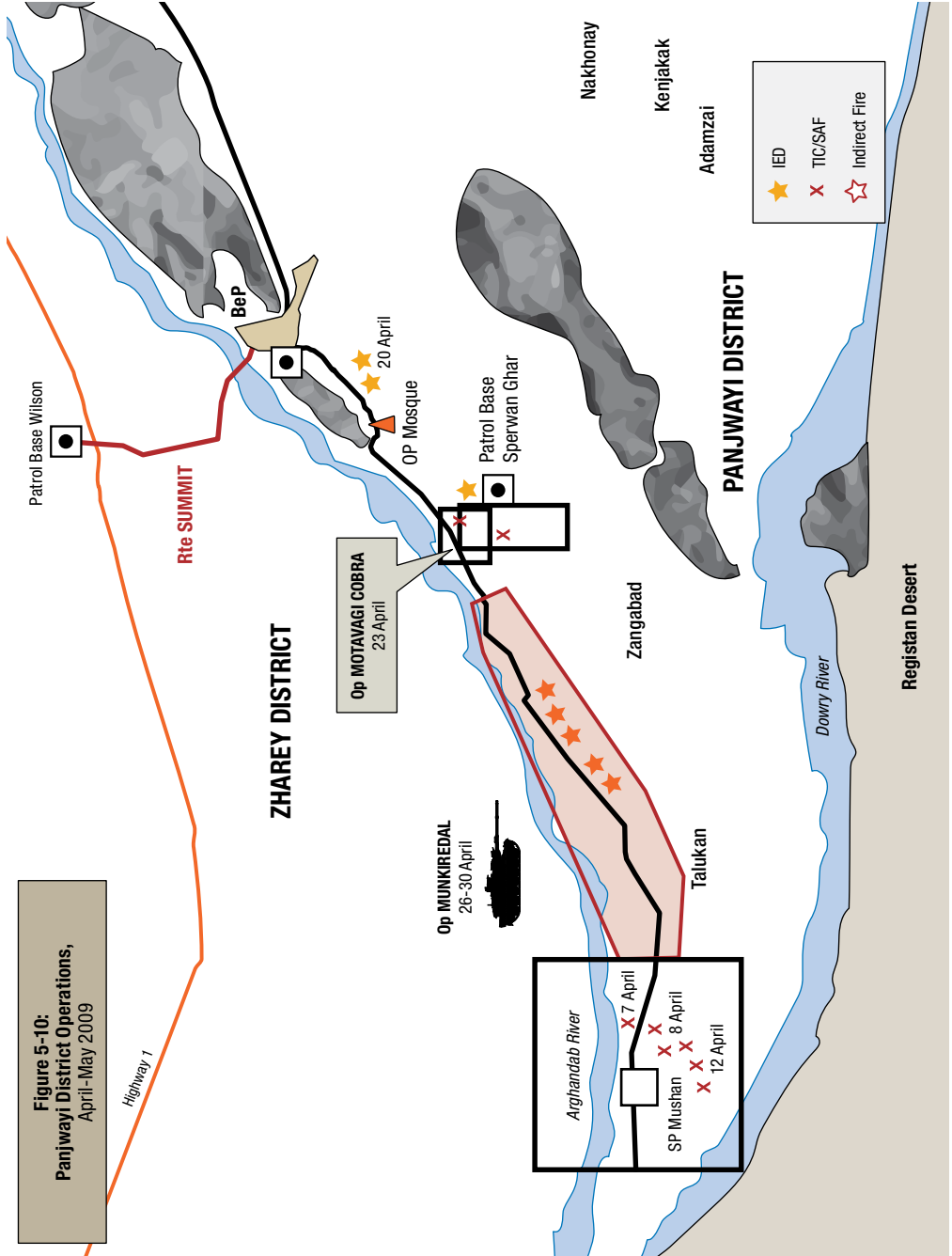


Figure 5-10: Panjwayi District Operations, April-May 2009

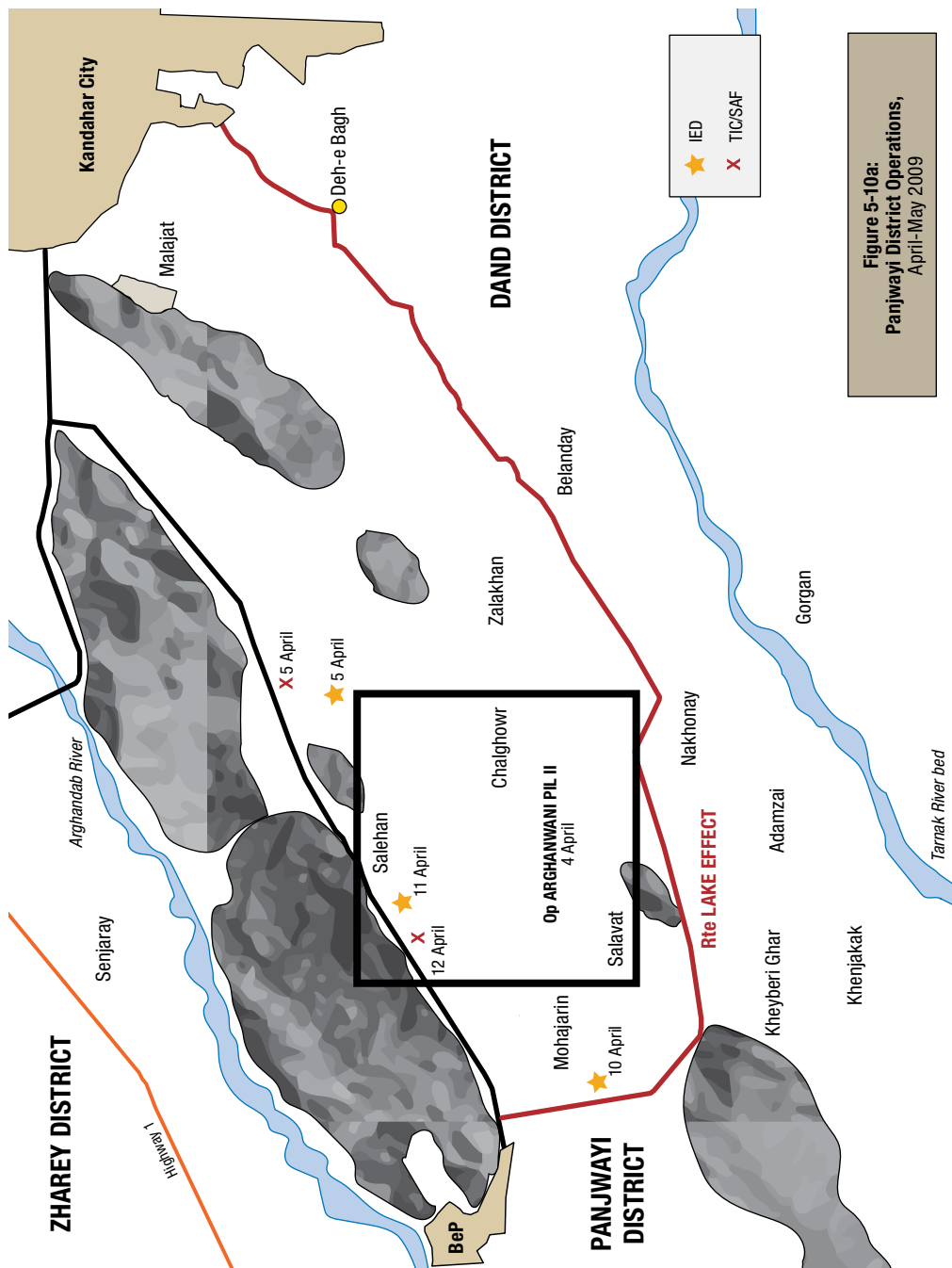


Figure 5-10a:
Panjwayi District Operations,
April-May 2009

Figure 5-10a: Eastern Panjwayi District Operations, April-May 2009



Photo Credit: Courtesy of C Squadron, LdSH, TF 1-09

This picture, which was taken near Talukan in the Horn of Panjwayi, shows the constrained terrain along Route Fosters that increased the vulnerability of resupply convoys.

BGen Vance's decision to contract from western Zharey and Panjwayi in order to focus on the Kandahar City approaches and a reorientation of Afghan army kandaks in 1-205 Brigade led to Operation MUNKIREDAL at the end of April. Simply put, this operation was the tear down of Strong Point Mushan. This was not an easy decision to implement, especially since some of the troops in the battle group had operated from there back in 2007 and a lot of Canadian blood had been spilt on Route FOSTERS. It became a "major leadership issue" for LCol Paul, who had to carry the operation out but in the end it was done.²³⁵

For the most part, Operation MUNKIREDAL was a larger version of operations that had been conducted on Route Fosters West (now Route Hyena) since 2007. In this case, a compound of interest assessed as a command and control node was targeted first with a GBU-38 bomb strike (similar to Operation TIMUS PREEM in August 2008), followed by a feint by the Leopard tank squadron south of Sperwan Ghar, followed by an EROC-led thrust straight down Route Hyena to Mushan. Not surprisingly, "Progress was slow for B and C Companies ... there were several minor UXO/IED finds that hampered progress ... lead elements (tanks with rollers) struck an IED ... mobility problems slowed the operation's progress. This was due to the width of the road." The move of about 20 kilometers took 28 hours — remarkably like similar previous operations.

The teardown went ahead while two companies from 2-2 Infantry patrolled Route Hyena West to ensure there was no IED placement by the insurgents. Because the Arghandab River was running high, the force returned to Sperwan Ghar on Route Hyena West, suffering five IED strikes on the way; one hit a Leopard tank and wounded two crew members. There was no other enemy contact as “reporting indicated that the insurgents were still confused about the true purpose of Operation MUNKIREDAL, with some insurgents thinking that ISAF was coming to eradicate poppies, while others thought ANSF/CF were expanding Strong Point Mushan or building a new base.”²³⁶ The force returned to its bases on 30 April. There was now no Afghan or Canadian presence west of the 28 easting and the Horn of Panjwayi was now completely in the hands of the insurgency.²³⁷



Photo Credit: DND AR2009-Z051-01

When Strong Point Mushan was deemed to have outlived its usefulness, the 2 R22eR Battle Group conducted Operation MUNKREDAL to tear it down and redeploy the Afghan infantry company and Canadian mentors based there.

As a result, C Company launched Operation KATAKAWAL STRIKE west of Sperwan Ghar in the direction of Zangabad to a depth of two kilometers in order to generate intelligence for “future strikes”. The operation confirmed that the population was firmly on the fence because of the Taliban presence. The operation also generated significant enemy communications activity and determined that insurgents had freedom of movement west of the 28 Easting.

Maj Jourdain believed that a combination of patrolling and observation posts west of Sperwan Ghar was the best course of action to take to reduce enemy freedom of movement and generate stand off from the base.²³⁸ This plan led to an aggressive patrolling schedule. In the context of this plan, MCpl Simon Frigon was awarded the Medal of Military Valour for his actions. Frigon led two fighting withdrawals on two separate patrols after his section was ambushed and nearly trapped by enemy forces on 7 and 20 May. On 21 May, a platoon from C Company probed the enemy early-warning system, killing two fighters, but the insurgents anticipated the platoon's movements and poured fire on them each time they repositioned, wounding three soldiers. Artillery was called in while LAV IIIs moved to extract.²³⁹ In a similar encounter on 26 May, insurgents on motorcycles with RPGs and mortars in support hit an eight-man patrol from two locations. As the soldiers called in M-777 fire from Sperwan Ghar, they noticed that the enemy forces moved on parallel routes in order to cut them off. They made it back to safety with only one man wounded. The more patrols C Company sent out, however, the more inclined the locals were to provide information on enemy activities.²⁴⁰

And so it continued, with a line drawn on the map at the 28 Easting.

Operations in Arghandab and Lower Shah Wali Kot Districts, April–May 2009

The dominant theme throughout April and May in Arghandab District was the steady loss of governance. Haji Karimullah Naqibi, the leader of the Alikozai, remained obstinate and uncooperative with the provincial government and particularly with the Afghan National Army and TF Kandahar. It was now more than eight months since the Afghan army planned to establish a strong point in the town of Jelawur, and Karimullah was blocking its construction because it was supposed to be built on his land.²⁴¹ It was well known throughout Arghandab that the insurgents were strengthening their hold on the people of Jelawur but, with no tactical infrastructure in the village, it was almost impossible to project governance there.²⁴² The insurgents were bold enough to conduct a shura in a village near the Arghandab District Centre in mid-April, but “TFK was unable to push sufficient force dispositions into the green belt to interdict these insurgents.” The OCC-P “was contacted to get the Afghan National Army involved; however, they did not deploy.”²⁴³ When the Canadians went to Governor Wesa, “it was pointed out that the current situation could not be fixed with kinetic operations alone. More police presence through checkpoints and patrolling was required to generate ground-level intelligence while disrupting insurgent freedom of movement.”²⁴⁴ The governor said he would discuss the issue with Matiullah Qati Khan, the Provincial Chief of Police. He eventually held a shura with some Arghandab elders, but it proved unproductive.²⁴⁵

On the plus side, the two Taliban specialists who commanded the Arghandab IED network and were deemed responsible for many of the strikes against Recce Squadron were killed by “Regional Command (South) elements” on the night of 4 April.²⁴⁶ Over the next two months, Canadian forces suffered only four IED strikes. Only one of these resulted in Canadian casualties: on 13 April, while Maj Dean Tremblay and Maj Jean-François Cauden were conducting the Recce Squadron handover, Tpr Karine Blais of 12^e Régiment blindé du Canada was killed and four others were wounded in an IED strike on their Coyote.

Cauden and his troopers understood from the outset that their task in lower Shah Wali Kot and Arghandab constituted economy of effort. They had no illusions. Vance spoke with Cauden directly and limited the squadron’s tasks to keeping access to the Tarin Kot road open, to disrupt the enemy when possible, and do what could be done locally to keep the population on the government side in preparations for the August election. It was clear from the outset that there were incoming forces to conduct a relief in place but not when this would happen.²⁴⁷ LCol Paul noted that “Recce Squadron was all over the district. It was extremely difficult and the squadron had a light footprint on the ground. So I told my boys to do their best to avoid casualties. Do the right engagement, because I knew that the American forces were going to arrive. You have to have a main effort at some point. The main effort was Deh-e Bagh.”²⁴⁸

The staff at TF Kandahar concluded that the enemy had achieved:

... some success and will continue until networks operating in this area are the focus of a sustained targeting campaign. Although it is assessed that some networks in the [Shah Wali Kot-Arghandab] border area are local, many Taliban also stage out of or receive support from Khakrez and other areas of Shah Wali Kot to conduct operations in this region.²⁴⁹

That is, Regional Command (South) was technically responsible for these areas and should have been using its own battle group or special operations forces to mount effective disrupt operations. (As seen in previous chapters, the combination of an American special operations task force and the Regional Command Battle Group was effective at generating disruption.) That said, those forces were no longer consistently employed in upper Ghorak, Khakrez or upper Shah Wali Kot, and so the Canadians and Afghans in Arghandab and lower Shah Wali Kot were on the receiving end of renewed enemy activity.

Indeed, when ISTAR resources were directed at the problem in mid-April, the assessment was that the insurgent network in Arghandab District had so many cells in it that they had to identify areas of operations to prevent “red on red” incidents. There was now even a Taliban district shadow governor in the area and reports came in that the insurgents were preparing an assassination campaign against the elders, shura members, and police.²⁵⁰

On the government side, Arghandab had not seen a CIMIC patrol in nearly a month, although resources were made available for a secure VIP tour of the Dahla Dam.²⁵¹ When CIMIC operators did meet with the district leader, he glowingly told the team that all the schools were open, the teachers were teaching, and children of both genders were attending. Discussions with the District Development Assembly indicated that the government only controlled, and could push projects to, the three villages that were in the vicinity of the Arghandab District Centre.²⁵² Meanwhile, the infamous Jabar Agha was seen all over the district, organizing and proselytizing in Jelawur, Mansurabad, Salam Kalachah and Khvajehmolk.²⁵³

On 19 May, Arghandab's long-suffering District Chief of Police, Zmaray Khan, was severely wounded by a suicide IED attack on his headquarters that also killed several of his closest officers. He was taken to hospital in an Mi-17 helicopter flown by the Afghan National Army Air Corps from KAF.²⁵⁴ Immediately after the hit on the police, the enemy placed an IED near Jelawur in order to lure in a Canadian quick reaction force but their ambush was overmatched by the presence of a Leopard tank troop and a Canadian-mentored Afghan infantry company.

As his predecessors had in the past, Governor Wesa and his wife suddenly departed Kandahar, leaving the deteriorating situation in Arghandab to Provincial Chief of Police Matiullah Qati Khan, who told TF Kandahar that the people of Arghandab thought the government "does not have the ability to act" and that they needed a security presence immediately. Meanwhile, the ISTAR system received constant reports of planned and proposed enemy actions. When insurgents destroyed the cellphone towers, Matiullah Qati led a police force with American mentors into western Arghandab. The force was hit with IEDs and ambushed, but the chief led two groups of police in pursuit, killing one insurgent. A responding Canadian recce patrol also hit an IED, taking no casualties. It was the end of May, and Arghandab was on the brink again.

Kandahar City Operations, April-May 2009

Kandahar City endured an urban terrorist assault throughout April. On April Fool's Day, an attack on the Provincial Shura Building by four suicide bombers dressed as Afghan soldiers resulted in 17 wounded and seven dead, including the Director of Education and the Deputy Director of Health. Shura members took up arms and defended themselves under the leadership of ex-*mujahid* Haji Agha Lalai Dastagiri. Then FOB Walton was hit with a single rocket, somebody threw a grenade at a police patrol, and USPI convoys on Highway 4 east of the city hit two IEDs, the first in months. That was just the first week.²⁵⁵

When a road contractor was kidnapped and a suicide bomber on a bicycle blew up the USPI headquarters building, the attacks could have been either commercial violence or insurgent action, but the IED that hit telecom workers heading to Zharey to repair the cellphone towers was probably laid by the Taliban to degrade security in that district indicating a link between insurgent operations in Zharey District and terrorism in Kandahar City²⁵⁶. Further confirmation came with the interception by ANP and National Directorate of Security officers of a suicide vehicle-borne IED on its way into the city from its construction point in Senjaray.²⁵⁷

On 13 April, four men gunned down Provincial Council member Sitara Achakzai as she left her home. This high-profile assassination received extensive media attention that magnified the belief that Kandahar Province was spinning out of control.²⁵⁸ Only seven vendors showed up at the women's market, and those few told a CIMIC patrol that "they were afraid to participate due to the killing of a female shura member earlier in the week ... they mentioned that they were afraid to travel within Kandahar City."²⁵⁹

And the violence did not stop. Another suicide bomber on a bicycle struck a police patrol outside Mirwais Hospital. The Governor's Palace was next. On the afternoon of 26 April three suicide bombers dressed as Afghan security force personnel got into the security zone and detonated, killing five people and rocking the provincial coordination centre. A CU-170 Heron UAV came on station and BGen Vance and LCol Turenne moved with their tactical headquarters to the palace in order to support Governor Wesa. Notably, "The site was effectively secured and jointly exploited with ANSF/CF. The combined efforts of the ANA and ANP quick-reaction forces demonstrated that significant progress has been made in the development of their soldiers and officers."²⁶⁰

The Governor and TF Kandahar initially worked through the Provincial Security Meeting and its Working Group to plan for more frequent foot patrols near schools and for increased control at five major Kandahar City access points. It was like the long-forgotten Operation PORTCULLIS had been resurrected. The first surge operation went down on 29 April and was designed to screen for unauthorized vehicle traffic and deter enemy infiltration on key routes. The plan was to man the five gates into the city with increased personnel. This was an Afghan police operation, coordinated by the provincial coordination centre and mentored by them.²⁶¹

The next phase was a coordinated surge by the Afghan National Police, the Afghan National Army and the National Directorate of Security into key districts for cordon-and-search operations. It was planned by the new Kandahar City Joint Patrolling and Planning Meeting where the ANA, ANP and NDS were all represented, and Stab A attended to represent TF Kandahar. When Stab A visited the five entry-control points on the city boundary, however, they found nobody there.²⁶² It took another 48 hours before that

situation changed. LCol Turenne directed the PRT's Specialist Engineer Team to assist the police reinforce the five Entry Control Points. By this time, the ANA and the police agreed to mount joint patrols day and night. The Canadians noticed, however, that the NDS were not providing the detailed information required for intelligence-cued operations. Then the generals from Kabul arrived.

Taking over, they ordered a joint sweep of the entire city by the Afghan security forces to start on 3 May. Planning started on 2 May at a coordination centre hastily erected at the Old Corps Headquarters in the city. Three companies from 2nd Kandak and two companies from 3rd Kandak were brought in from Camp Hero and other positions in the districts. Canadian observers were extremely concerned: "Once they carried out a façade consultation, they briefed the governor of Kandahar in a generalized fashion and executed their plan in isolation." Operation TOLO ATTAL 26 was now on, with 500 Kandahar City police, regional police and border police working independently of each other and the NDS. Canadian CIMIC, P-OMLT, CIVPOL, and American police mentors all joined the effort.²⁶³

The entire force worked two districts at a time; District 9 and District 8 were the highest priorities, and District 9 was a known anti-government stronghold. District 4 and District 7 were next. Canadian forces were brought in to handle the screen around the city. Recce Squadron deployed patrols from Shah Wali Kot to positions northwest of District 9, while Canadian UAVs orbited the city.²⁶⁴

This massive effort produced a number of small caches and a three-man IED cell. Canadian analysts believed that the insurgents had moved their key personnel and caches out of the way before the searches went in. TOLO ATTAL 26 concluded on 10 May and was deemed a success from the perspective of joint interagency command and control.²⁶⁵ When all was said and done, Stab A visited the five entry-control points five days later, and found they were neither effectively manned nor functioning.²⁶⁶ CIMIC teams measuring the atmospherics noted, however, that "there are enduring positive effects" and that people reported feeling "more secure, principally because they knew the ANA and ANP were successful in finding ordnance and weapons."²⁶⁷

For the rest of May, high-profile terrorism dropped off but soft targets remained in vogue. Two drive-by shootings occurred and, in another case, two interpreters who worked for special operations forces were shot and wounded. Two suicide attacks and a radio-controlled IED strike against police targets resulted in 15 casualties: two dead and 13 wounded. Police at a vehicle checkpoint in District 9 found 193 antipersonnel mines being smuggled in an official Ford Ranger pick-up truck driven by police officers in uniform and carrying credentials.²⁶⁸

With all the violence and security activity in April and May, the PRT had trouble focussing on development. One depressing CIMIC report written after the team had talked with local people, including a judge, suggested that the Taliban were gaining ground in more than one crucial sector:

The court judges think ISAF has been making empty promises to the justice departments for 6 years and that nothing has changed. This comment was directly aimed at CIMIC. This judge claims to have been in Kandahar City Court over the past six years. He claims that the Taliban can provide expedient and efficient justice which the local nationals can and do turn to since they do not believe in their current justice system. He feels that improving security in the Government Circle will only scare local nationals not to use the justice system and that Government Circle must remain an open place with little security ... Questions towards local nationals focused on the upcoming federal elections. If the local nationals knew the elections were approaching, they were not familiar with the date or had no idea of who was actually running for president.²⁶⁹

Reorganizing for Operation KALAY

Dand District was the arena to test the Key Village Approach concept. PRT analysis, White Situational Awareness, and a variety of analytical tools led to the selection of Deh-e Bagh village as the focal point of the effort, called Operation KALAY.²⁷⁰ Geographically, Deh-e Bagh consisted of three communities that sat on Route Lake Effect between western Panjwayi District and Kandahar City. A force controlling Deh-e Bagh could interdict routes into Malajat (and, from there, northwest to Sarposa Prison and Highway 1) and into District 6 of the city. Increased presence in Dand emanating from Deh-e Bagh and other communities might also have an effect on insurgent routes leading from Lake Effect over to rocket launch sites in Daman district targeting Kandahar Air Field (see Figure 5-11). Consequently, operations in Deh-e Bagh could have a direct impact on the security of Kandahar City, in accordance with KANTOLO planning.

The “human terrain” in the area consisted mostly of Barakzai clans, but also included a small village of Kutchie nomads. Overall, the population was assessed as pro-government, in contrast to the insurgent havens of Nakhonay, Khenjakak and Chalghowr. There were very few security incidents associated with Deh-e Bagh. The village was also across the road from the now heavily-damaged Dand district centre compound complex.²⁷¹

As for governance, Dand was in the Sherzai camp and the Barakzais had been progressively marginalized by the Popalzai power structure, though not yet in the same way the Alikozais had been in Arghandab.²⁷² Propping up the Barakzais in Dand reassured them that the decapitation of Alikozai power in Arghandab by both insurgents and power

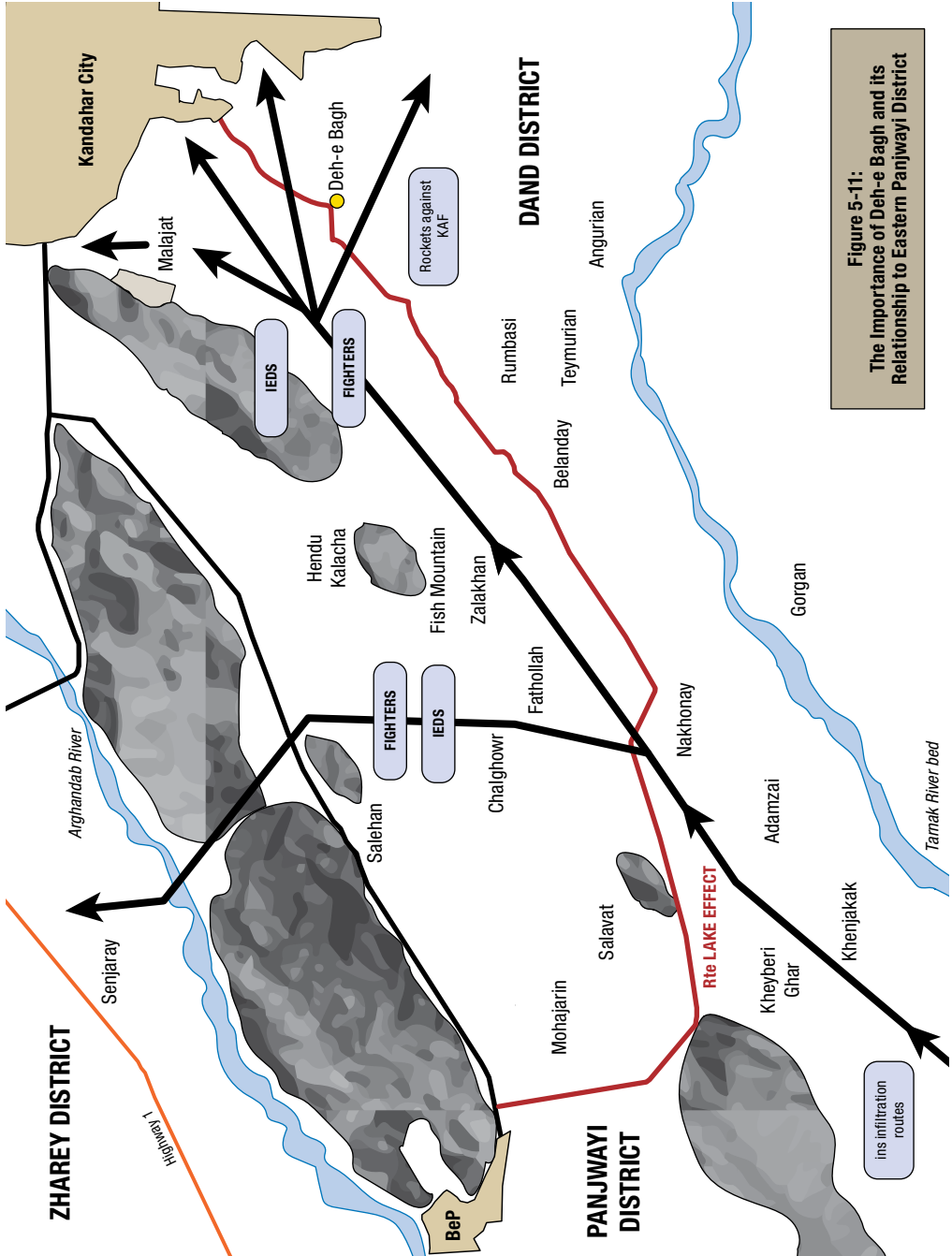


Figure 5-11: The Importance of Deh-e Bagh and its Relationship to Eastern Panjwayi District

Figure 5-11: The Importance of Deh-e Bagh and its Relationship to Eastern Panjwayi District

structure opportunists would not happen to the Barakzais in Dand on Canada's watch. Indeed, some of the police in Dand were firmly associated with the Popalzai power structure and were paid for by Ahmad Wali Karzai,²⁷³ while it was unclear how many Barakzai police there were or if they could counterbalance the Popalzais if it came to confrontation. Operation KALAY, according to BGen Vance, was, in the background, an attempt to demonstrate that the Barakzai and Popalzai could co-exist.²⁷⁴ In terms of provincial-district dynamics, BGen Vance believed that the Canadians could work with Afghans to "bypass the bad actors because we're at the village level",²⁷⁵ much in the way the PRT worked through the district development assemblies and community development councils to bypass the dysfunctional Provincial Development Committee.

The Vance headquarters could now build on a relatively permissive community, generate negative effects on enemy activity in the area, and promote positive messaging at all levels: local, district, provincial, national and possibly international. Up to now BGen Vance believed that the dominant Canadian narrative consisted of dead Canadians in coffins coming home via transport aircraft at Trenton. Operation KALAY could provide a new and positive Canadian narrative if handled properly.²⁷⁶

To implement KALAY, TF Kandahar reorganized its forces substantially. To implement this, TF Kandahar initiated a substantial reorganization of forces. Major Marc Verret, leading the P-OMLT, had been warned by his predecessor Major Alex Haynes that there were going to be changes when he arrived. The Police OMLT became the basis for Stabilization B Company, better known as Stab B. The sixty P-OMLT members were joined by an infantry platoon from Force Protection Company and an American Police Mentoring Team. There was Construction Management Organization's CMT-2 (eventually augmented with personnel from CMT-1) led by the extremely able Captain Gary Silliker. Two-thirds of the CIMIC Company also became part of Stab B, as did three PSYOPS detachments and a MEWT. The combat engineers contributed a Badger AEV. The National Support Element created a detachment to support the Stab B's vehicle fleet which now included everything short of Leopard tanks. Vance referred to Stab B's 160 personnel as the "Combat Team of Love".²⁷⁷

The scheme of manoeuvre for Operation KALAY adhered to a shape-clear-hold-build process. During the shaping process Major Verret placed particular emphasis on bringing in the Afghan leadership at village and district level at the earliest stage and generating an atmosphere of inclusivity. Some elements were uncomfortable with this so the plan was adjusted so that Stab B would handle the clear phase rather than the battle group, which was shifted to handle an outer cordon. The clear itself, as Stab B made evident to all, was that 'clear' did not mean 'destroy.' Removal of the insurgents from the target area and keeping them out was the goal so that build could take place.²⁷⁸ To make all of this happen,

however, Major Verret had to develop a personal relationship with district leader Nazek and convince him that Operation KALAY was not some temporary measure. Laying that groundwork took time but eventually Nazek and Verret reached an accommodation and KALAY could proceed.²⁷⁹

Operation KALAY, May–July 2009

Operation KALAY was then delayed by the Kandahar City security operation TOLO ATAL. At the same time, negotiations with General Matiullah Qati Khan regarding Afghan police participation in KALAY took time. Insulted by lack of consultation, he had to be assuaged. After receiving the full brief from Major Verret, Matiullah enthusiastically offered up 50 officers for augmented training.²⁸⁰ The Shape phase commenced on 5 May and continued for five days. CIMIC teams established contact with the Kutchie nomads and held shuras with the Deh-e Bagh village leader, Haji Asadullah Khan.²⁸¹ (see Figure 5-12).

One of the first orders of business for the CIMIC team was to meet with the Community Development Council and inquire as to the status of development projects: the Council proved to be moribund. Another team from Stab B met with district Chief of Police to see where the thirty police officers that were undergoing training at Camp Nathan Smith by CIVPOL would fit in the Deh-e Bagh security plan. As it turned out, of the thirty police only one was Focused District Development qualified, which temporarily attenuated efforts on that line of operations.²⁸²

Stab B deployed to Deh-e Bagh on 19 May and established the operations command post. During this time, CIDA elements at the PRT worked to develop a long-term development plan with the Kandahar provincial representatives from the Department of Rural Rehabilitation and Development and Department of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock. Some entity pushed back by firing a 107mm rocket over the Dand District Centre on 21 May, but there was no damage. A joint Stab B–police patrol conducted an assessment patrols and no issues were identified.²⁸³

On 23 May, A Company 2 R22eR deployed into platoon-sized leaguers west and south of Deh-e Bagh while most of the accompanying Canadian-mentored kandak established a leaguer to the north and then moved opposite the Kutchie village. The Afghan National Police platoon staged out of the Dand District Centre. The next day, the whole force established a web of vehicle checkpoints, observation posts and traffic-control points around Deh-e Bagh, while combat engineers from 51^e Escadron built bed-down facilities and assessed the canal. Splitting the community in half, A Company cleared west and south while the Afghan army and police cleared the northern part. Close in behind, the Construction Management Organization and a road contractor were already establishing dumping areas for road-building materials. During the clear the only weapon found was a 107-mm rocket pointed at the district centre. It was destroyed by the EOD team.²⁸⁴

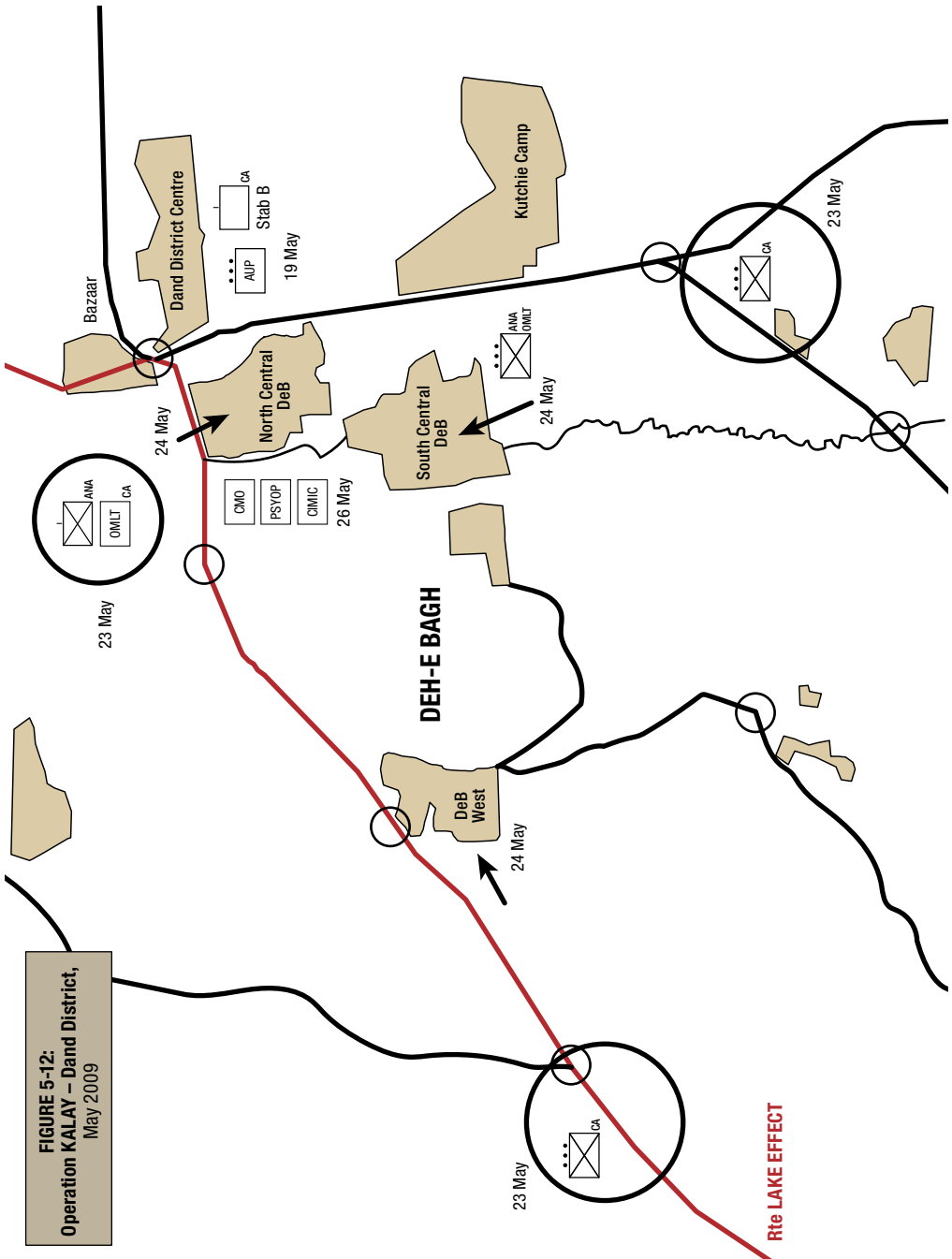


Figure 5-12: Operation KALAY – Dand District, May 2009



Photo Credit: DND AR2011-0200-09

2 R22eR moves into eastern Panjwayi District in preparation for Operation KALAY, the development and protection of Deh-e Bagh in neighbouring Dand District.

As of 26 May, Stab B moved on to the build phase of the operation, which broke down into several components. Stab B determined, with the local Afghan leadership, that the main project focus should be a canal project, followed by the remediation of large craters left over from the Soviet period, and then road improvement to ensure connectivity among the Deh-e Bagh communities. The methodology involved local hiring for the work, employing one male per family. Importation of outsider workers by power brokers would not be tolerated as this had negative effects in Zharey district back in 2008. The Construction Management Organization took on all these projects.²⁸⁵

Major Verret was *au fait* with previous issues in Canadian religious engagement policy and as a result he focused CIMIC's quick impact projects on supporting the Deh-e Bagh mullahs. There were ten mosques in the area, with two mullahs moving between them. The biggest problem, they explained, was the lack of ablution facilities. Verret ensured resources were shifted to construct them. Verret received "'push back' from almost everybody" except Vance and those experienced staff in the TF Kandahar headquarters who understood the need for religious engagement. Another CIMIC project was the school. The teacher was making more money on the canal project as a digger than he would in the classroom, so incentives were provided to convince him to return to teaching and the school was refurbished. The quick-impact projects went forward.²⁸⁶

On the security front, Stab B worked to establish a purely Afghan Joint District Coordination Centre with associated help lines, and PSYOPS distributed cards with the number. On one occasion the centre received a call from a group of citizens who, on their own, arrested Taliban in their community. And, within the first week of operation, sixteen IEDs were reported to the coordination centre by local people.²⁸⁷ The IEDs were found on several in and out routes around Deh-e Bagh and destroyed by an EOD team. A Company patrolled the edge of town but made no contact with the emplacements. A pair of 107-mm rockets were launched from the community of Chineh to the south, but they missed and caused no damage.²⁸⁸

Ensuring that the Kutchie were not kept out of events, a CIMIC team deployed to the Kutchie village and delivered aid to the leader, Dilawey Khan. Afghan police and Police OMLT mentors handled the security for this part of the operation. The Kutchie were surprised and welcomed the Canadian-Afghan team. The CIMIC team leader asked Khan if any of the Kutchie were interested in joining the Afghan police and, as it turned out, he was positively inclined.²⁸⁹

The need to firmly re-establish the Dand District Centre as the functional symbol of governance meant that it had to be repaired as quickly as possible. To this end the Specialist Engineer Team deployed from the PRT to survey the situation and initiate a bidding process for reconstruction. The Construction Management Organization already had a

local contract established to clear away the debris and this effort was well advanced by the time the Specialist Engineer Team arrived.²⁹⁰

Consultations with the Deh-e Bagh population through the re-invigorated Community Development Council established that seven projects were required: the bazaar needed work to improve trade; the children needed a playground; the irrigation canal needed work; a new connector road to improve traffic flow and increase trade were required. The Kutchies needed a road to their site and wells. Their local mosque needed repair and refurbishment. The plan was to have all of these projects completed within 60 days.²⁹¹ By 2 June, District Leader Nazek received several “calls from other villages in the district soliciting aid” as word got out to the rest of Dand District.²⁹²



Photo Credit: DND IS2009-1025-04

Operation KALAY brought resources to enhance policing and security in Dand District, which covered the southwest approaches to Kandahar City.

ISTAR reports indicated that Operation KALAY alarmed the insurgents, and they were preparing a reaction designed to weaken its positive effects. On 29 May, an Afghan police patrol accompanied by Canadian mentors was ambushed in Belanday. Amidst the close-quarter fighting in the village, medical technician LS Pier-Vincent Michaud treated the wounded while under intense fire and extracted them from the kill zone. LS Michaud received the Medal of Military Valour for these actions.

The enemy eventually probed the KALAY stabilization zone from the Belandy area instead. The Afghan police detachment in Belandy came under assault and called the provincial coordination centre via cell phone for back up. The Canadians at the provincial operations coordination centre called TF Kandahar who were able to direct a pair of OH-58D Kiowa Warrior helicopters to Belandy. The enemy hid, so the OCC-P staff instructed the helicopters to back off and told the police to fire in the direction of the insurgents when the enemy came out again. The helicopters came back on station and destroyed the enemy with rockets and .50 cal fire.²⁹³

The enemy had more in store for Deh-e Bagh. Stab B facilitated a Dand district security shura which included all of the participating forces in Deh-e Bagh and environs. From this meeting they learned that the Quetta Shura allocated 250 Pakistani Taliban to wipe out the Op KALAY project. Another Taliban plan involved rotating Dand-based fighters with Helmand-based fighters “to enable the insurgents to operate without remorse.” To maintain stand off from Deh-e Bagh an Afghan army-Afghan police joint patrol plan was established by the security shura, with particular focus on Chineh village to the south.²⁹⁴ An insurgent team hit a peripheral checkpoint six kilometers from Dand proper and shot it out with the police, killing two and wounding four.²⁹⁵

Meanwhile, the Construction Management Organization and local people worked together to clean up the canal system, with the canal itself being completed on 21 June. The list from the Community Development Council grew to include a community ablution facility, solar powered lights, and repairs to the village shura building and a mosque.²⁹⁶ District Leader Nazek, however, was “concerned that the line ministries from Kandahar City do not want to play an active part in Dand.”²⁹⁷ They were likely being influenced not to do so by the ‘UN cluster’ agencies who did not want to be involved in the Deh-e Bagh operation because they were supposedly ‘neutral’.²⁹⁸ Ken Lewis, the RoCK, attempted to cajole the line ministries into providing service delivery.²⁹⁹

The enemy kept trying Deh-e Bagh on and launched an IED attack against a police checkpoint three kilometers west of Dand at Walakan. This strike killed three and wounded two police officers.³⁰⁰ By 24 June, Operation KALAY had made enough progress that all three levels of the Afghan government — district, provincial and national — were willing to hold a news conference in Deh-e Bagh to show it off to the national and international media. Two days later, the new ISAF commander, General Stanley McChrystal, flew in to visit the community. This was a significant development. McChrystal was in the process of assessing his new command in order to feed into the ongoing Obama strategy evaluation, which continued throughout 2009. What McChrystal saw in the Canadian and Afghan achievements in Dand District was the possibility of moving beyond the stalemate in Afghanistan, at least at the local and district levels, and that there was a new way of doing so.³⁰¹

CIMIC ranged out from Deh-e Bagh into neighbouring communities. In Teymurian,

The security of the village appeared to be normal; there were a lot of children. Those persons [the CIMIC team] approached for direction greeted us with courtesy. [source] indicated that it is not good for ISAF to visit his village as the insurgents threaten the local populace. He asked that, when the [CIMIC team] would like to meet with him, that they meet at the Dand District Centre ... the local population avoids taking LAKE EFFECT road because of the number of IEDs on the route. This has had a negative impact on trade and supplies in the village ... [The CIMIC team] asked him what he thinks about the ISAF presence in Deh-e Bagh. He indicated that, since the arrival of ISAF troops, the presence of the insurgents in the area has decreased.³⁰²

The Hold part of Operation KALAY ran into complications. The Canadian police mentors learned that Dand District had, in fact, four separate police groups. The District Chief of Police and his men fell under the provincial headquarters of the Afghan National Police in Kandahar City. The district Chief of Police and his men came under the provincial police headquarters in Kandahar City. The district leader had Afghan police controlled by him in the name of the Governor; there were Afghan police controlled by the Sherzai family; and there were several checkpoints manned by the “ANP reserve”.³⁰³ This balance of power worked, for reasons inexplicable to the Canadians. Despite the tangle of relationships, however, the Canadian mentors could get commanders from all four groups into one room with the Afghan National Army, the National Directorate of Security, the P-OMLT and CIMIC to make things happen. There was friction between the ANA and the official Dand force and this had to be gripped before it spun out of control.³⁰⁴

And Deh-e Bagh continued to improve. The community asked for a bypass route so they could access Route Lake Effect, a move that required the district leader’s involvement to acquire private properties so it could be constructed. By using a consultative process to forestall land use grievances, a major source of antigovernment behaviour was avoided.³⁰⁵

Other agencies continued to resist involvement in Deh-e Bagh, however. CIDA and DFAIT repeatedly met with UN-HABITAT to see how the Deh-e Bagh Community Development Council might transition to the new UN construct, the Clustered Community Development Council. There was push back from a UN-HABITAT representative:

They did not agree with the strategy of injecting money into the district shura, as that will only empower one tribe. He believes this will marginalize other tribes as they are not represented at the district shura and will not receive the benefits of the KVA. He stated that the KVA is a poor strategy and does not believe it will prove to be successful in helping defeat the insurgency.³⁰⁶

CIDA and DFAIT representatives also worked with district leader Nazek, who by this time acted as a bridge between the Deh-e Bagh village leader and the Dand District Department of Rural Reconstruction and Development representative. How would the new Clustered Community Development Councils relate to the existing District Development Assembly and then how would or could that be applied to Deh-e Bagh? Nazek wanted to meet with UN-HABITAT and get their input.³⁰⁷ And that proved to be the sticking point, as it had been back in Kandahar in 2002 and in Kabul in 2003: How to bring in development on the heels of stabilization.

Meanwhile, A Company continued with presence patrols in the villages on the perimeter of Deh-e Bagh. Chineh West, which was supposed to be empty, was in fact populated and the locals fled when the Canadian patrol arrived. ISTAR reportage picked up an enemy IED emplacement team operating east of their patrol area. A CU-170 Heron moved into an orbit to observe and further ISTAR information indicated a Taliban commander was present, so the TF Kandahar operations centre brought in an airstrike with a B-1B bomber. The PRT's quick reaction force deployed to conduct exploitation and assessed that there were three enemy dead, including a known enemy commander.³⁰⁸

The enemy kept trying to insert suicide vehicles into the KALAY stability box but the checkpoint cordon forced them to detonate them against the police instead. Two IED attacks took place against the northern cordon. One of these was a new type of weapon, the Directionally Focused Fragmentation Charge or DFFC which was essentially a large homemade Claymore mine. The suicide car was directed against Afghan army and Canadian mentors after insurgents sprayed small arms fire at the northern gate. One soldier was killed and another seven wounded.³⁰⁹ And the insurgents tried again. Another IED detonated on Route Lake Effect against a police target, killing two and wounding five. A pair of secondaries designed to target first responders were also uncovered. And, since Deh-e Bagh remained impervious, the Taliban instigated anti-government activities in neighbouring Belanday by kidnapping the village leader.³¹⁰

The people of Deh-e Bagh refused to be intimidated. By the end of July an estimated 359 locally-employed people supported reconstruction and development projects in and around Deh-e Bagh.³¹¹ There had not been an attack against the Dand district centre in over five weeks.³¹² And this was the height of the summer fighting season. NATO Secretary-General Anders Rasmussen visited Deh-e Bagh with COMISAF General McChrystal and was overheard to say "I have got the very best impression. This is exactly the approach we will pursue in the coming years."³¹³

Panjwayi District Operations, June–July 2009

In response to Operation KALAY, the insurgent leadership in Panjwayi district agitated the population in order to distract the security forces while preparing to escalate active measures against Deh-e Bagh. They ordered their local commanders to have villages under their control send one elder and one mullah from each community to Zangabad, clearly an escalatory move in providing parallel governance.³¹⁴ The Taliban also attempted to influence district leader Haji Baran by using a combination of missives from Sperwan elders and demonstrations in Bazaar-e Panjwayi. The Canadians wanted to defuse the demonstrations and counter the elder's messaging:

The elders all agreed that the insurgents are the cause of the problems, they complain about ISAF, ANA and AUP because they can. The elders basically stated that they are the middlemen who are stuck within a struggle for power. This demonstrates that they do not yet see themselves as the beneficiaries of the actions of [the security forces]. They also alluded to intimidation within their villages.³¹⁵

CIMIC teams in Bazaar-e Panjwayi reported that “the perception of a deteriorating security situation is having a negative effect on business in the bazaar ... [the insurgents] discourage residents from speaking with ISAF and ANSF and they have been disseminating information that discredits the ANSF.”³¹⁶ CIMIC and PSYOPS worked with Haji Baran to counter the insurgent messaging.

At the same time, Baran was undercutting the Construction Management Organization on the HYENA Paving Project (the former FOSTERS paving project). Blue Hackle, the new private security company protecting the Bennett-Fouch contracted paving crew, was engaged by small arms fire during its morning clearance operations and CMO ceased work. Baran was “upset about Blue Hackle getting the tender for security on the site” and the implications were that it was not necessarily insurgent action against the project.³¹⁷

Meanwhile, the 2 R22eR Battle Group launched Operation CONSTRUCTOR to generate breathing room for Operation KALAY in Deh-e Bagh³¹⁸ (see Figure 5-13). For the most part, Afghan army participation in the operation was limited by the need to maintain forces as part of Operation TOLO ATAL, while the Panjwayi district police were distracted with problems elsewhere in the district. Recce elements moved on to the Girowal Ghar feature late on 3 June but were immediately hit with small arms and mortar fire as they deployed. Harrier fighter-bombers and MQ-1 Predators took out the enemy positions. The EROC vehicle suite cleared Route Lake Effect on the morning of 4 June so that A Company could pull out of its positions and deployed west to Belanday, while B Company moved in from Zharey and situated itself west of that community.

As A Company moved in, it came under fire from an RPG team, which was dispatched with M-777 fire. An orbiting MQ-9 spotted reinforcing enemy and dropped a GBU-38 bomb and a Hellfire missile, killing nine insurgents.³¹⁹

The next day, A Company moved into blocking positions so that B Company could clear Fatollah. LCol Paul instructed C Company to be prepared to deploy from Sperwan Ghar to clear Chalghowr. When B Company entered Fatollah, they “were received by pro-ISAF/GIRoA local nationals.” A Company then moved to clear the area between Belanday to Nakhonay. Some small caches were found, notably inside the mosques.³²⁰ On day three, B Company secured Fatollah, while C Company completed its clearance of Chalghowr. A Company continued to block south towards Nakhonay. There was no contact. ISTAR reportage suggested that the insurgents dispersed to Malajat and Khenjakak.³²¹

A Company and B Company then moved into Nakhonay. As B Company patrolled west of the community, Pte Alexandre Péloquin of 3 R22eR triggered an antipersonnel mine; he was evacuated to the Role 3 hospital at KAF, but succumbed to his wounds. A Company found an IED factory protected by antipersonnel mines, and uncovered a small-arms cache with three machine-guns and ammunition. An engineer LAV from 51^e Escadron was damaged when it struck an IED while manoeuvring.³²²

While Operation CONSTRICTOR continued to disrupt the insurgents in the Nakhonay, District Leader Haji Baran called the Joint District Coordination Centre and told the staff that his three brothers had been kidnapped, and that the perpetrators were going to behead them one by one if a particular insurgent detainee was not released. Baran then proceeded to the Route Hyena road paving project and ordered the workers to cease activities: “he told the workers that he is the person who has the authority to hire workers, that the workers don’t need Blue Hackle [security] and that he can provide security.” There was some consternation among Canadian CMO and CIMIC personnel. However, district Chief of Police Naeem spotted Baran meeting with insurgents in Sperwan later that day and passed that information on to the to the Joint District Coordination Centre.

Baran drove to Kandahar City, and then returned on 14 June for a shura with BGen Vance. He told Vance that “he believed that either he or the district chief of police would need to be removed” because they did not get along. Baran called Naeem and asked him to come to the meeting as Vance moved on to discuss the paving project issue. In the middle of the meeting, word came in that District Chief of Police Naeem was dead, along with EOD technician Cpl Martin Dubé of the 5^e Régiment du Génie du combat. The police had found and cordoned a two-device trap near a culvert on Route Hyena East, and called in the quick-reaction force. One device detonated while it was being exploited.³²³

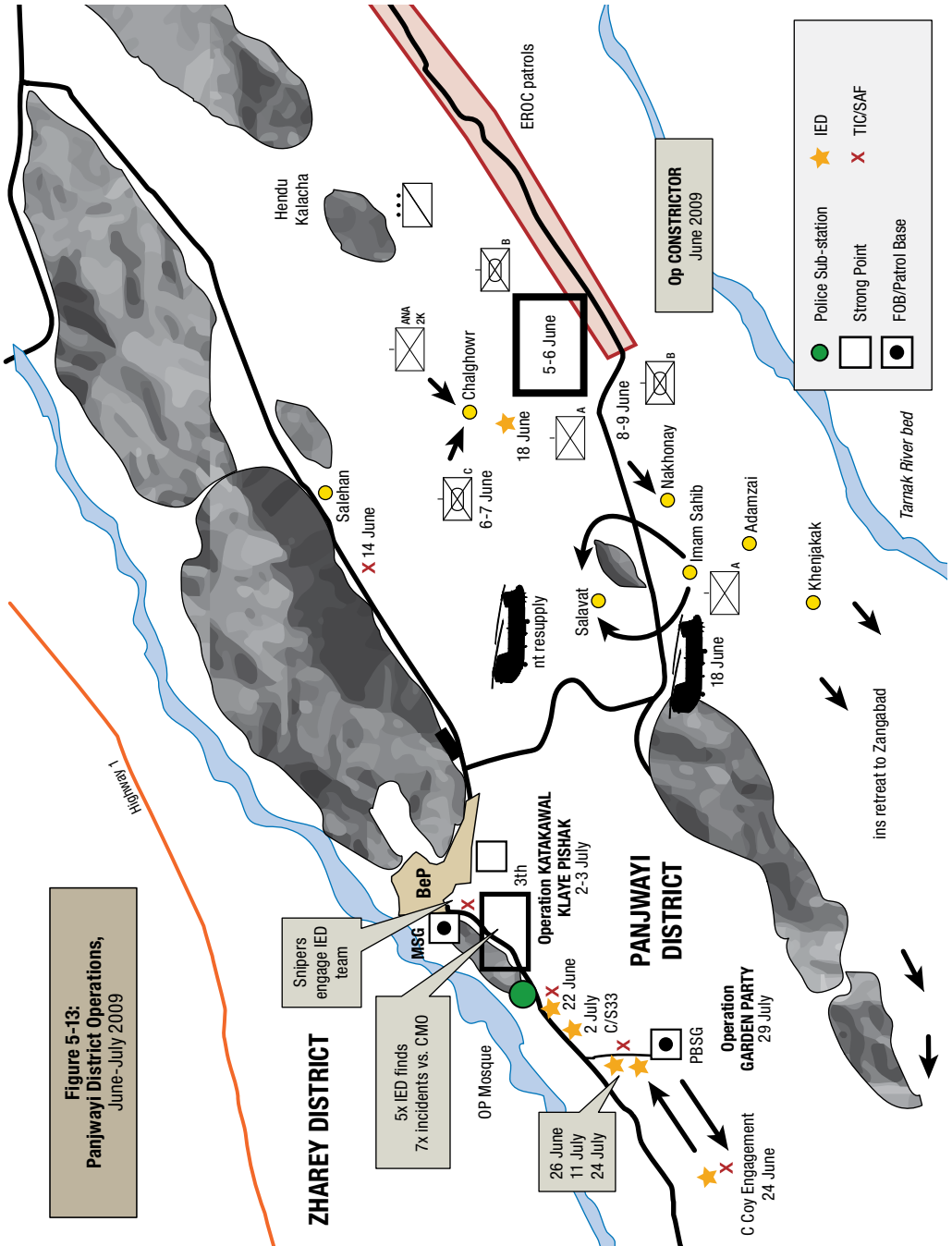


Figure 5-13: Panjwayi District Operations, June-July 2009

Canadian police mentors reported that Naeem's death destabilized policing in Panjwayi. A significant percentage of the police force had personal loyalty to him and were not from the district. Some would stay out of loyalty to Naeem's son. Thrown into disarray, the P-OMLT told TF Kandahar that police support was withdrawn from Operation CONSTRICTOR.³²⁴ The enemy then focused operations in the Sperwan Ghar-Op Mosque area along Route Hyena West while CONSTRICTOR was still in play. A number of IEDs killed and wounded police and army personnel over the course of three days, which drew out the quick reaction force. These were complex ambushes involving IEDs and small arms fire.³²⁵

Meanwhile, the Canadian Helicopter Force inserted A Company on both sides of Salavat to block while Recce Platoon and snipers moved to the south. C Company was supposed to conduct the sweep but its lead engineering vehicle hit an IED as it reached the start line south of Chowlghor, wounding the crew. The EROC vehicles also hit an IED. The sweep went in anyway and recce and snipers reported several engagements into the night. There was no resistance. Significant information on the local Taliban cell and its parent network was discovered, as were a number of weapons caches. That night CH-147 Chinooks came in to resupply the forces leaguered near Salavat. The next day, two IED caches were discovered. Back in Bazaar-e Panjwayi, the quick reaction force deployed on five occasions to IED finds in the area.³²⁶

With CONSTRICTOR wrapping up, the Route Hyena paving project pushed to the fore. Work stopped for a week while the Construction Management Organization was locked in intense negotiations with Bennett-Fouch and Blue Hackle. To assuage Haji Baran, the paving sub-contractor was fired, and Baran and his partner took over the job. While negotiations were underway, seven IEDs were either found, triggered, or otherwise detonated by Afghan security forces patrolling Route Hyena West between OP Mosque and Route Brown. The workers felt "unsafe" and refused to continue. The Construction Management Organization and CIMIC were forced to approach Haji Baran to get the project going again.³²⁷

C Company, which was down to two platoons as one was deployed to Spin Boldak to provide security for the large FOB being built for Stryker Brigade, aggressively patrolled around Sperwan Ghar after their return from CONSTRICTOR. Every time patrols moved they were tracked by three separate teams of fighting age males. CU-170 Heron UAVs were brought in to develop pattern of life data and enemy activity peaked. After patrols were engaged with small arms fire, M-777 fire was brought to bear when identification could be established. The return patrol routes, however, were seeded with antipersonnel mines, one of which wounded a Canadian soldier. C Company reported that "The fact that insurgents were capable of installing the IEDs within 1 km of [Patrol Base Sperwan Ghar] indicates that they have complete freedom of movement in the area. This is also preventing us from having a presence amongst the local population."³²⁸

Consequently, LCol Paul ordered 51^e Escadron to survey and widen Route Brown. CIMIC operators came in to handle the land-acquisition process, and the Badger AEVs dropped their blades and plowed a stand-off zone. (Route-widening for security extended to other areas in Panjwayi District under Operation GARDEN PARTY.) Any enemy forces wishing to head east would have to either emerge into the open as they crossed BROWN, go along HYENA WEST or the river bed, or skirt all the way south of Sperwan Ghar.³²⁹

As the hot summer transitioned from June into July, however, there were simply not enough forces to maintain ‘eyes on’ these areas and the enemy slipped through. C Company was down a platoon, the police in Panjwayi were completely ineffective now that Chief Naeem’s son no longer wanted to lead the district police. Haji Baran tried to get an untrained shopkeeper appointed chief of police, and the Afghan army was frequently pulled away to other tasks like TOLO ATAL in the city. Just when the CMO, CIMIC, P-OMLT and Blue Hackle had sorted out security on the paving project, the police reneged and negotiated for more money. C Company suffered an IED strike on Route Hyena West while transiting from Sperwan Ghar to Ma’Sum Ghar. Fortunately, one of the enemy IED teams killed itself with a premature detonation and the IED activity dropped off temporarily.³³⁰ Increased enemy use of anti-personnel mines claimed the life of MCpl Charles-Philippe Michaud of 2 R22eR, who died on 4 July of wounds sustained during a patrol on 23 June, and Pte Sébastien Courcy, also of 2 R22eR, who died on 16 July when he fell off a cliff after triggering a mine.

On 2–3 July, when the Afghan infantry companies had finally returned from Kandahar City, they mounted Operation KATAKAWAL KLAYE PISHAK to sweep the area around OP Mosque, and work on Route Hyena ceased for the duration. That night, Canadian snipers engaged an insurgent IED emplacement team on Route Hyena West. Paving resumed the next day, and soon 300 local men showed up for work — and to get paid for the previous three weeks: “This should assist in keeping the economy of Bazaar-e Panjwayi flowing since the local shopkeepers are no longer extending credit to the project workers.”³³¹

The PRT tried to increase its involvement in Panjwayi at this time and sent a DFAIT representative to work with Haji Baran on a “District Administrative Assembly” which looked like a replacement for the dysfunctional district development assembly. The District Administration Assembly drew in the main nongovernmental organization operating in the area, the Central Asian Development Group. District leader Baran considered these to be positive developments.³³² None of these changes, however, were able to attenuate the infiltration of the Bazaar-e Panjwayi area. Afghan security forces found eight IEDs in two days, one of which destroyed the shrine in a cemetery near the new district centre.³³³

A poem written by an insurgent was found at one IED site.³³⁴

Karzai Sahib
 This is a death battlefield
 Playing with the country
 You are not the Afghan Peoples leader
 And you are not doing what you have to do
 Gul Zade (you were brought up better than that)
 Karzai Sahib
 This is a death battlefield.
 —Haji Bakht Mohammed

Kandahar City Operations, June–July 2009

In June, Provincial Chief of Police Matiullah Qati Khan approved several new approaches to security operations in Kandahar City, including daily early-morning counter-IED route patrols based on similar operations that were underway in Zharey and Panjwayi.³³⁵ During the reorganization of the Kandahar City security plan, 205 Corps agreed to maintain a company-sized quick-reaction force at the Old Corps Headquarters. The idea of Joint Patrols with the Kandahar City police emerged; the army had more credibility, but the police needed added firepower to protect them while they carried out policing duties (as opposed to militia-type duties). Throughout June, Canadians in the P-OMLT and on the provincial coordination centre worked with the army, police, and the National Directorate of Security to conduct intelligence-cued operations. Stab A got involved as well, eventually accompanying the Afghans to assist with the outer cordon because Stab A had access to ISTAR resources.

One of the first Joint Patrols was actually subsumed by a security alert at Sarposha Prison in early June. Stab A sortied to Sarposha to deliver Correctional Service Canada and DFAIT personnel for an assessment of the facility and its surroundings. Discussions with the District 2 police commander revealed that

Some allegations of jail staff having links to Taliban or insurgents have been reported but not confirmed in any way. These difficulties could have security repercussions since power games internal to the jail could jeopardize the unity of command and open leadership to corrupt procedures or decisions. It appears likely that, even near Kandahar City, the Taliban have control of cellular coverage [with] the full knowledge of local nationals, Afghan security forces, and the government.³³⁶

Daily Joint Patrols sortied, and the OCC-P resurged as a focal point for Afghan-Canadian coordination. They were, however, reporting information in ways that it could be compiled and employed by field forces, so that was a start.³³⁷ Canadians noticed, however, that something was not quite right. During the course of three consecutive operations in the Malajat area, the police changed their target at the last minute, claiming new information.

It became clear that the ANP had again set the ANA and CF cordon away from the designated target area ... it is believed this was done with the intent to either extort and perform abusive searches or conduct security ops and not be associated with [coalition forces] or [Afghan National Army].³³⁸

That said, police tracked and intercepted, on their own, a suicide bomber headed for the NDS headquarters building.

In addition to the Joint Patrols, 205 Corps launched Operation TOLO ATAL II with little warning and no mentor support, and 5th Kandak and part of 4th Kandak deployed into checkpoints southeast of the city. The operation lasted two days but it was unclear to the Canadian mentors what it turned up.³³⁹

Sorting out the Panjwayi police occupied General Matiullah Qati Khan throughout late June and on the second last day of the month, he decided that Azim Khan would take over in that district. Haji Baran was now pushing for an untrained gas station owner to occupy that position, presumably under Baran's tutelage, but General Matiullah wasn't buying into it and planned a trip down to the New District Centre to make the announcement. Before he could do so, however, a group of ANP officers assigned to an American special operations team burst into the compound housing the office of the Provincial Attorney General to demand the release of a comrade held for forging documents. Matiullah Qati arrived to investigate and a firefight broke out. When the shooting stopped, ten men were dead and eight wounded. Among the dead were General Matiullah and his chief criminal investigations officer, Abdul Khaliq Hamdard, as well as their entire escort team. LCol Turenne deployed the PRT quick reaction force, who were instrumental in calming the situation down, while BGen Vance ordered an increased force posture for coalition forces within the city.³⁴⁰

The assault rocked Kandahar City. Matiullah's death was massively destabilizing to the security situation and especially the Kandahar police force, which was just starting to gain momentum in city security.³⁴¹ But the battle at the attorney general's compound was not an insurgent attack and, when probed, it revealed deeper problems in the governance-police line of operation. The Afghan organization that mounted the attack were personally recruited in 2002 by President Hamid Karzai to work with U.S. special operations forces in the campaign against Al Qaeda and the Taliban.³⁴² They had later been grouped with other organizations to act as a supporting force for various special operations forces, including

Ahmad Wali Karzai's Qandahar Security Force. Indeed, Ahmad Wali Karzai called for amnesty after the unit was arrested.³⁴³ Forty-one members of the unit were arrested, sent to Kabul, and tried. In late December 2011, four were sentenced to death and the other 37 were sentenced to prison terms ranging from one year to 20 years.³⁴⁴

Back in Kandahar, BGen Mirwais Noorzai of the ANP took over as Provincial Chief of Police. Canadians involved with policing in Kandahar studied the attack on Matiullah and his escort, reading into it all sorts of possible motives related to the provincial power structure and what Matiullah and Khaliq may or may not have done to contribute to their demise. In stark terms, this case was a significant setback for the security effort in both Kandahar Province and the city.

There were few IED attacks in the city in June and July, though there was a nasty one directed at a US mentoring team that killed two people. By early July, Canadian assessments noted that:

ANSF capacity to respond to intelligence leads that have resulted in triggering intelligence-led operations have uncovered numerous weapons-IED cache finds, countered suicide threats, and has accounted for approximately 1-2 IED finds a day. These are promising indicators.³⁴⁵

Unable to gain momentum in the city, the insurgency initiated another intimidation campaign. One of DFAIT's Afghan facilitators was kidnapped, along with his family, and interrogated in depth about Canadian PRT operations. A policeman was kidnapped and hanged, and two women were found dead with letters attached claiming that this is what would happen if people talked to ISAF.³⁴⁶ Joint Patrols reported:

...the insurgents are intimidating the majority of the local nation[al]s in the area. One local national stated that there have been a number of night letters put up in the local mosques. When asked which mosque, he refused to answer stating that the insurgents have a strong intelligence network in the area and will take action against him.³⁴⁷

Indeed, there was concern that the intimidation and propaganda campaign might influence the elections. The insurgents would "go to mosques in order to misinform the local nationals about the elections."³⁴⁸

The sporadic cellphone system, which was the only night-time link between the people and security forces, remained a huge issue. The PRT explored ways and means of improving police communication, including acquiring and installing Motorola repeater stations. The PRT also wanted to coordinate "efforts between ANSF and cell companies to improve security of transmission towers, thus improving the cell coverage to the local

nationals and in turn the local nationals' capacity to call in an IED and insurgent activity day and night."³⁴⁹ Stab A participated in efforts to coordinate the response to this problem but, when coverage resumed, "the insurgents reinforced their threat to local nationals and the restriction from using cell phones by apparently putting a nail into three local nationals' [ears] as retaliation for breaking this directive."³⁵⁰

Kandahar City continued to suffer on the development front. Stab A patrols reported that the price of electricity was abnormally high, so much so that most families could afford only one hour of power per day. The potable water situation remained critical. CIMIC met with UN HABITAT, which had a budget of \$7 million for water projects, but the UN agency rejected a hydrological survey by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and refused to "begin building new capabilities until they have a study conducted by an outside consulting firm."³⁵¹ Stab A "facilitated a conference call between Mayor Hamidi and the Mayor of Edmonton" so Hamidi could "gain knowledge on municipal management." Such connections were important. DFAIT, which held the governance portfolio, was culturally structured for nation-on-nation interaction and its staff had no expertise in municipal management.

The enemy's use of the mosques was a subject that previous Canadian task forces had been reluctant to get involved in, and in any case, the Other Government Departments were loathe to have anything to do with religion. In the Vance headquarters, however, this policy changed, and most particularly in the city. One important entity, the Kandahar Ulema Shura, had been devalued during Governor Assadullah Khalid's time and was in the process of re-gaining its footing under Governor Raufi when he was deposed as Governor. The Kandahar Ulema Shura was at this point recovering from years of assassinations and intimidation. Left unprotected by Khalid during his tenure, Wesa changed that policy and had the shura relocated to the Old Corps compound where they were secured by an army presence. Notably, the Afghan army's unit-level Religious Officers (mullahs) branch expanded in 2009 and played a significantly increased role in local operations. This synergy was beneficial to the counterinsurgency effort at all levels and in all directions.³⁵²

By reinvigorating the religious authorities, a key component of society crucial to legitimacy could be coaxed off the fence and over to the government side. Efforts by the J5 Branch at TF Kandahar played a role in this, and BGen Vance met with Haji Murcha Agha, an extremely influential man in religious circles:

During the reign of the Taliban, Haji Murcha Agha rejected Mullah Omar's request to join the Taliban because he wanted to stay true to his followers. The Taliban could not harm Haji Murcha or his family because of the potential backlash of the population ... [his] visiting the governor and the commander at the governor's palace is of great significance because normally people go to see Haji Murcha Agha and he does not visit people regardless of appointment or rank.

However, Haji Murcha Agha knew the governor's father and made this exception. In the meeting, Haji Murcha Agha explained his frustration with the Taliban and with security forces because he felt they were destroying the villages in Kandahar. However, he enthusiastically supported the [KVA] initiative to help Kandaharis one village at a time. Upon departure, Haji Murcha Agha honoured the Commander with a formal blessing.³⁵³

When a Taliban IED damaged a mosque in Bazaar-e Panjwayi, a member of the staff at the Office of Religious Affairs accompanied the CIMIC team while it conducted its assessment. After a talk with the representative, the mullah condemned the insurgents and blamed them for the lack of security, and both men agreed that security forces repairing the mosque in good faith had a role to play in restoring faith in the government.³⁵⁴

Operations in Arghandab and Lower Shah Wali Kot Districts, June–July 2009

As the summer deepened, Maj Cauden's Recce Squadron maintained their focus on keeping the main service routes connecting to the Tarinkot road open in the summer. Various special operations forces units tracking insurgent leaders on occasion needed Recce Squadron's support as they went about the business of interdicting insurgents coming in from Khakrez and transiting through the 'seam' between the districts and into the city.³⁵⁵

Because of the deteriorating security situation, the attitude of the governor and the Afghan security forces to Arghandab and lower Shah Wali Kot districts changed overnight in early June. Recce Squadron deployed a command post to the Arghandab District police headquarters in anticipation of establishing a proper Joint District Coordination Centre along the lines of ones operating in Zharey, Panjwayi and Spin Boldak.³⁵⁶ Governor Wesa directed that an Arghandab representative attend regular weekly security meetings, while pressure was applied to Haji Karimullah Naqibi, the Alikozai leader, to get over his issues related to Strong Point Jelawur.³⁵⁷ 1-205 Brigade assigned two companies from 3rd Kandak to the Arghandab strong points, and arrangements were made to deploy Canadian mentors and engineers with them. On arrival, the Afghans and Canadians immediately launched patrols into Adirah and Babur communities. More NDS were assigned to Arghandab to improve intelligence collection and flow.³⁵⁸ The police, however, were problematic and did not want to conduct joint patrols with the Army (though they agreed to joint operations). After some investigation, the Canadians learned:

The ANP checkpoint commanders have been neglecting their duties since that attack on [chief of police Zmaray Khan] and ... villagers are starting to either tolerate or support the Taliban / insurgents as they feel that the government cannot provide proper security for them.³⁵⁹

The Afghan National Army, however, was collecting information from its own local sources and through the OCC-P. With that information 3rd Kandak launched a snap cordon and search operation and was able to employ police, police mentors, OH-58D helicopters, Canadian UAV support, as well as CIMIC-like humanitarian aid drops in Jelawur. B Squadron supported 3rd Kandak with vehicle checkpoints and patrols.³⁶⁰

As the patrols ranged out, they learned that there was an insurgent base in Char Bagh, which was only 3 kilometers from Sarposa Prison. The Taliban set up a parallel governance structure that taxed the local farmers and laid an IED ring to discourage patrols.³⁶¹ In other areas, local people told patrols that “no one from the government had been around to take their names for the voting registration as of yet but they had all intentions of voting in the upcoming elections, even if they had to use their old cards.”³⁶²

There was little enemy contact in June after these forces came into the district. A larger surge, called RAMBAGH, was planned for late June, but the availability of sub-units from 2 R22eR Battle Group was in question. There was little enemy contact in June after these forces came into the district. The American police mentors wound up in an engagement, as did a Recce Squadron patrol, but nothing remotely resembling the contacts in previous months. By this time a Route Clearance Package was operating in the district, clearing the roads on a regular basis. The worst event was an IED that targeted an Afghan army units and its OMLT, killing three Afghan soldiers and wounding seven others. Canadian police mentors learned of “two separate incidents ... involving local nationals assisting [ANA] checkpoints that were under contact in Arghandab and Khakrez districts by joining in the fight against the insurgents.”³⁶³

Operation RAMBAGH went ahead on 26 June and was quickly followed by two other intelligence-cued quick-pulse operations, WARYAZ and SABUN. These were packages of Afghan army, police, American and Canadian mentors, and Recce Squadron Coyotes launched into areas against compounds of interest and, if nothing was found, the forces would fan out, patrol, then move on. Chief of Police Zmaray Khan assessed that these pulses “put the insurgents on edge and they are avoiding staying overnight in villages. They are establishing small camps in the desert north of Jelawur” — that is, away from the district’s population centres.³⁶⁴

The Arghandab district leader, meanwhile, tried to rally his weary population. Collecting project proposals, he approached CIMIC during a shura but the Canadians refused to accept them in front of the assembled elders, stating that projects would not be approved until security was improved. The shura members walked away from the meeting. Meanwhile, the insurgents conducted a systematic intimidation campaign. Villagers were threatened with death after an American mentoring team dropped off food in one community. When put together, these threats were assessed as having “an effective coercive effect”.³⁶⁵ As in other districts, the security forces could not be everywhere and the Joint District Coordination Centre system had only just been established. It was almost too little, too late but Recce Squadron and the OMLT continued to hold the line with their Afghan counterparts until the American forces designated for Arghandab could deploy in August.

Zharey District Operations, June–July 2009

With the focus on Operation KALAY and the eastern Panjwayi area, Zharey district was by now considered to be a disrupt zone by TF Kandahar planners. Enemy activity in the district was an extension of previous operations: infiltration of the Asheque/Senjaray area east of Route Summit with the intent of ambushing convoys on Highway 1. Suffering from logistical problems limiting the insurgents to one weapon for every two fighters, the enemy threw themselves into the fight anyway. In one such engagement in Makuan, B Company brought the M-777's to bear and reported that shelling killed two local Taliban commanders along with their men. While this action was ongoing, another enemy cell detonated a huge IED east of Patrol Base Wilson, completely cratering Highway 1. The new Afghan contractor for the roads assisted by the Culvert Repair Service Agreement (brokered by the PRT Specialist Engineer Team and CIMIC) swung into action but it would take at least eighteen days to completely repair the highway. Canadian engineers worked to construct a bypass to handle the traffic flow.³⁶⁶ (see Figure 5-14 and 5-14a).

CU-170 Herons and MQ-1 Predators continued to observe enemy activity in the district and from time to time were able to gain positive identification and cue F-15s and OH-58D's to engage careless enemy fighters moving around their 'safe havens' in Nahlgam and Sia Choy. The IEDs continued on Highway 1 resulting in the loss of a Canadian EOD team robot that backed over a pressure-plate IED.³⁶⁷

BGen Vance worked with Regional Command (South) to gain the use of the Regional Battle Group (South) for Operation TORA ARWA, beginning on 10 June, and this time the tasking went to the 3rd (Black Watch) Battalion, Royal Regiment of Scotland (3 Scots). An airmobile raid of a type that was by now almost routine, TORA ARWA put 3 Scots into landing zones around Nahlgam with a company of Afghan infantry and their Canadian mentor team, all travelling in CH-147 Chinooks once CU-170 Herons had

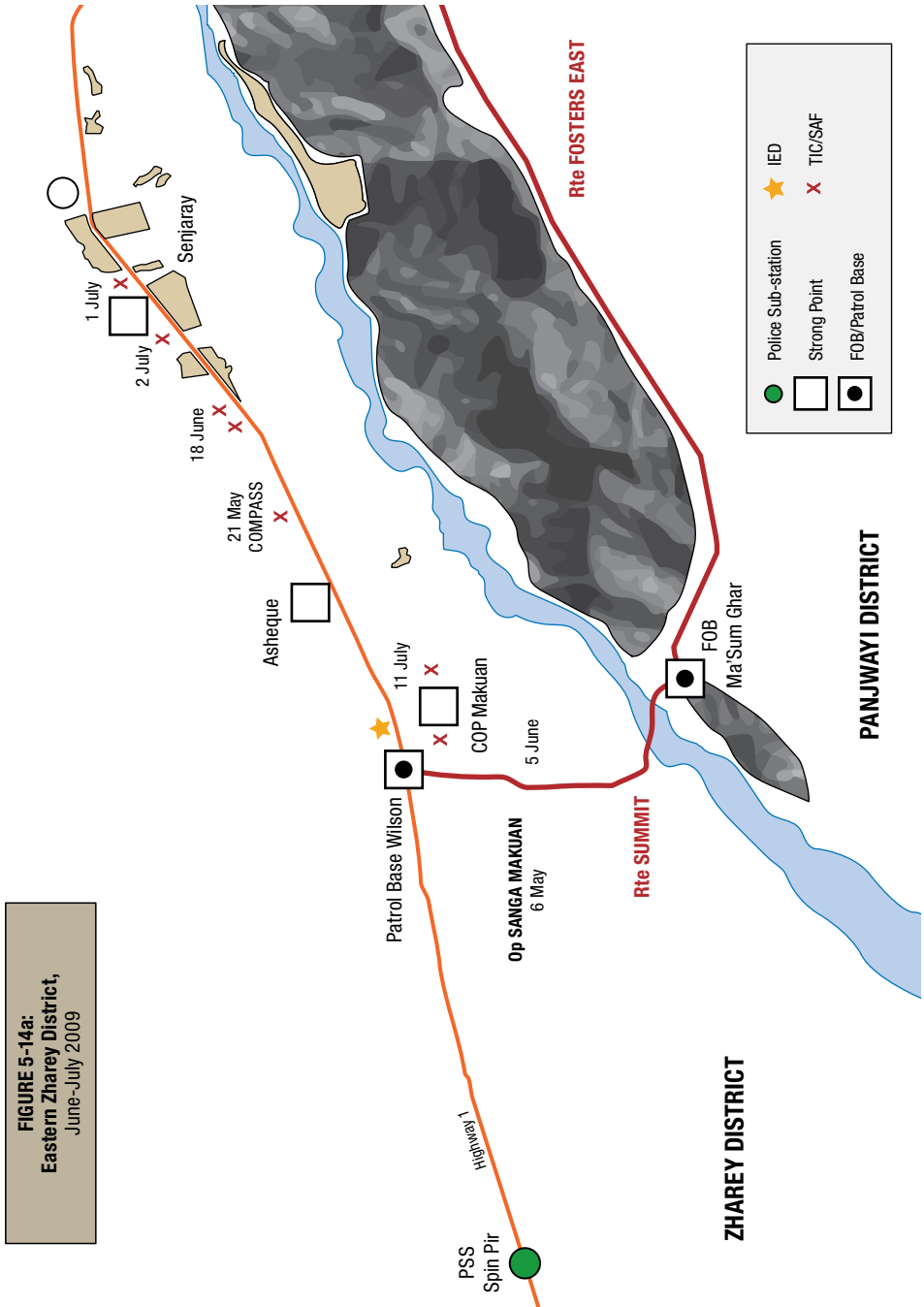


FIGURE 5-14a:
Eastern Zharey District,
June-July 2009

Figure 5-14a: Eastern Zharey District, June-July 2009

cleared the area. Immediately upon landing, the composite force was attacked “from all cardinal points.” Snipers and mortars quietly established on Ghundy Ghar provided support as the three infantry companies combed the compounds of Nahlgam for IED factories and caches. The Afghan and British troops started taking casualties: they discovered IEDs and booby traps “planted in the walls ... targeting troops in an area [where] they would normally ‘stack’ prior to entry”; in these conditions, Pte Robert McLean of 3 Scots was killed by an anti-tank mine triggered by an antipersonnel mine. Sergeant Joseph Ranger, working as a mentor with the Afghan recon company, came under serious mortar fire after landing. The Afghan troops took several casualties, but Sergeant Ranger and the Afghans were able to lay down heavy suppressive fire. With mortars still falling, he organized a casualty collection point and secured it while the Afghans and other mentors drove back the enemy so that the MEDEVAC could get in. Sgt Ranger was awarded the Medal of Military Valour for his actions.

The Canadian helicopters resupplied the force at night while the Scots patrolled aggressively around the clock. When a 3 Scots platoon came under sniper fire from a compound of interest, a fire mission using an M982 Excalibur extended-range guided artillery shell was authorized, and it took out a four-man insurgent team. At 0200 hours on 15 June, Operation TORA ARWA ended with the withdrawal of the coalition force by Canadian helicopters. The after-action assessment concluded that the TORA ARWA force had dropped into the middle of an insurgent staging area.³⁶⁸

After TORA ARWA, there remained a whole host of issues regarding the district police and their chief. Reports of extortion and intimidation against contractors could not be staunched. And, to make matters worse, the Pashmul South police station was engaged daily. As these were unmentored police, it was impossible to use Canadian artillery to support them while they were in contact. On one occasion 2nd Kandak conducted an uncoordinated operation in the area, which confused matters further. Pashmul continued to heat up again as rocket attacks increased against FOB Ma’Sum Ghar. One night an enemy mortar joined in. The M-777 battery was active and, using counter-mortar radar and HALO to spot the firing positions, Batterie X pumped out nearly forty 155mm rounds to suppress the indirect fire.³⁶⁹

The insurgents applied pressure on Howz-e Madad at the same time. The number of ambushes against civilian convoys jumped again east of the strong point, so LCol Paul had B Company initiate Operation KATAKAWAL SANGSAR II to move south from the strong point to the first wadi line, then clear west to east in order to destroy several structures that the enemy were using as fire bases for the ambushes. KATAKAWAL SANGSAR II escalated from a routine sweep and clear into a series of serious engagements on 22 June. B Company dismounted and moved east and south, while Canadian electronic warfare

teams jammed enemy communications. When the jam was lifted the enemy reacted with ambush teams. B Company's lead platoon was engaged and they responded by calling in artillery. While this was happening a second enemy force engaged the rear of the company: the guns were re-laid and fired onto them. When a third enemy team opened up to the front, the artillery adjusted again with similar results. As B Company changed direction, they stumbled across two IEDs, which were destroyed. CH-146 Griffons were also able to engage enemy fighters with their Gatling guns. As the Canadians were returning to Howz-e Madad, an Afghan platoon patrolling south of the strongpoint was hit with a suicide bomber, killing three and wounding seven. As the Canadian quick reaction force deployed from Patrol Base Wilson, its lead LAV III was taken out with a command wire IED. The blast was large enough to produce a gap 10 meters wide and 3 meters deep. Analysis indicated that the insurgents "have modified their method of installing IEDs by digging tunnels deep enough that current detection methods are ineffective."³⁷⁰

Operation TORA ARWA II was designed to clear out Sia Choy and disrupt the indirect fire that was originating from that area. In this case, B Company, an Afghan company and Canadian mentors were inserted by the Canadian Helicopter Force at 0400 hours on 28 June. As in previous operations an enemy command node situated in a compound of interest was targeted with six GBU-38 bombs dropped from a B-1B Lancer to disrupt the enemy while the airmobile lift was in progress: a pair of enemy leaders were apparently caught in the blasts and were killed along with twelve other fighters. Significant caches were uncovered, including a ZPU-1 anti-aircraft gun but there was virtually no contact on the first day. The next day there were several sharp and short engagements where artillery was used by patrols to break contact. Several Canadians were wounded when an RPG detonated near their position.³⁷¹

Elsewhere in Zharey District, chaos reigned. District Chief of Police Bismillah Khan threatened to abandon the sub-stations at Pashmul North and Pashmul South unless coalition forces were stationed there permanently. Local men working for Blue Hackle at FOB Zettelmeyer rioted, which forced the quick-reaction force to deploy until the police could stabilize the situation. BGen Vance was observing American operations in western Zharey when a LAV III in his convoy struck an IED killing Cpl Nicholas Bulger of 3 PPCLI and wounding five others. As if to punctuate events, a IED attack nearly took out LCol Paul's vehicle as it transited down Route SUMMIT. This blast seriously damaged the culvert system and threatened to disrupt agriculture in the area, and led to a confrontation between locals and security forces. The culvert repair contractor refused to fix the site because he claimed that the Zharey police chief wanted 50% of his earnings. CIMIC and the Specialist Engineer Team were called in to resolve the situation.³⁷²

As a result of the deteriorating situation along Route Summit, the next two iterations of TORA ARWA swept Pashmul and the communities on Summit from 8 July to 10 July. There were no engagements nor were there any cache finds, which surprised B Company. Relations with Bismillah Khan were untenable, but when District Leader Sahardi was asked to remove him, Sahardi claimed that Bismillah was in Kabul for training. And, to make matters worse, the Pashmul North police commander was arrested for sexually abusing his personnel. No work had been done to repair the culverts on Route Summit. In the understatement of the year, CIMIC reported that “a lot of confidence with the Shura members has been lost”. The enemy, sensing the disarray at Pashmul North, launched daily and nightly attacks for 72 hours against the station and its personnel.³⁷³

LCol Paul reported to TF Kandahar on 20 July that “The situation in Zharey is deteriorating. USPI and ANSF are in contact with insurgents on a daily basis on ring road south and on Route Summit. The attacks are occurring within 2 km west, south, and east of FOB Wilson.” By the end of July, “the situation around Pashmul North and Pashmul South has progressively become worse and we are seeing Pashmul South attacked approximately every second day. If the insurgents succeed in cutting off Route Summit, they will have effectively cut off B Company from the rest of the battle group and access to the quick-reaction force.”³⁷⁴

Maywand District Operations, June–July 2009

It was time for 2-2 Infantry to head home, and on 9 June LTC Dan Hurlbut and his staff handed off to LTC Reik Andersen and the 1st Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment (1-12 Infantry). The Canadian CIMIC team assisted the transition through its governance and development contacts. District Leader Haji Obaidullah Bawari was supposed to be replaced, but he remained in office. Bawari had serious problems to discuss with LTC Andersen: the wells in Hotal were drying up, and water was second only to security in district priorities. Indeed, Maywand was plagued with an anti-cell phone campaign much like the one waged in Zharey and Panjwayi, so security was further compromised because citizens could not call the Joint District Coordination Centre.³⁷⁵

1-12 Infantry had trouble getting out the gate. Within the first two weeks, the battalion headquarters staff realized that their platoons were not fully manned. Rusted ammunition found on vehicles and in storage had to be cleaned, and lack of spare parts forced a halt to vehicle maintenance. The overworked maintenance platoon did what they could with what they had, but the battalion’s Cougar and Mine-Resistant Ambush-Protected (MRAP) vehicles — including its MaxxPro MRAP ambulances — were grounded. The Canadians could not help because the MRAP vehicles were incompatible with Canadian equipment.

As it turned out, aggressive driving wore out the axles, and the pace of patrolling had to drop so the maintainers could catch up. By early July, the entire 1-12 Infantry vehicle fleet was at Amber state. The unavailability of the armoured ambulances forced 1-12 Infantry to curtail vehicle patrols and convoys.³⁷⁶

1-12 Infantry shifted to dismounted patrols in the vicinity of their tactical infrastructure and started to score some hits. Operation TIGER was a disruption patrol launched into the Mandowzai area. A ScanEagle SUAV spotted a mortar team harassing the 1-12 Infantry FOBs and was able to bring Canadian artillery to bear to take out the insurgent team. Contact was made with a Canadian-mentored Afghan infantry company operating from FOB Pegasus on Highway 1, so a series of joint patrols were arranged. This was followed by Operation LAMRAY ZANG, which brought two 1-12 Infantry companies and the Afghan company to the Maywand-Zharey border to act as a block for TF Kandahar operations in Zharey district.³⁷⁷

1-12 Infantry and the CIMIC team worked to overcome Afghan army-police animosity that had been growing in the district under Haji Bawari. People told the CIMIC patrols that Bawari was an absentee leader: “the locals do not see much of the district leadership out in their towns and most of their leadership lives in Kandahar City.” In fact, CIMIC reported that “all shuras have been canceled due to lack of district participation.” Faced with disarray at the District Coordination Centre, the 1-12 Infantry staff reported, “We will have to find some way to tie Combat Outpost Rath, CIMIC, USAID, PRT, future civilian mentors, Afghan National Police HQ, new district center, and the future agricultural center.”³⁷⁸ At the same time there were reports that local people started shying away from patrols, “a clear deterioration from two months ago.” With no PSYOPS capability in Maywand, “we have no other way to pass [information operations] messages other than on foot patrols.”³⁷⁹

In the absence of competing coalition messaging and accompanying action, the enemy made serious inroads on the psychological front in Maywand throughout July: “Villagers desperately need diesel fuel to get clean water from their wells but refuse to accept it from us out of fear of reprisal.” The insurgents assassinated water contractors who supplied 1-12 Infantry infrastructure and, in one case, customers and shopkeepers in the Hutsal bazaar refused to help a contractor who had been shot and left there to die. Most of the CIMIC-assisted projects had halted; the gravel for the bazaar, the solar lighting, the schools and clinics — nothing was under way. The surveillance tower in Hutsal was out of action, and the insurgents’ boldness was blamed on the lack of coverage.³⁸⁰

Crippled by broken-down equipment and with no foreseeable relief, 1-12 Infantry continued to push out dismounted patrols, and the villages around Combat Outpost Terminator were responsive. Quite correctly, 1-12 Infantry opted for more traditional CIMIC solutions to local force-protection problems while also trying to spur economic

development — for example, “putting more money in the pockets of locals and working a system where everyone is harvesting or planting crops 365 days a year.” Another potential solution was a convoy bypass around the Hutaal bazaar so the vehicles would not become canalized and subject to IED attack as they exited west out of town. LTC Andersen pushed for completion of the New District Centre so that there was at least a symbol of governance in preparation for a new district administrative staff that has not yet materialized. District Leader Bawari eventually returned from a meeting with President Karzai in Kabul and suddenly agreed to “establish a district council that will share in the decision making in the district.”³⁸¹ With the national elections looming, the appearance of progress was obviously paramount and 300 community elders packed a Bawari-led shura dealing with the elections process.

The Dawn of Persistent Surveillance

The first steps towards an integrated persistent surveillance system were taken by June but they encountered “serious problems during implementation.” Ottawa decided, in May 2009, to lease an Israeli system for six months instead of acquiring an existing and functional American system. To make matters worse, Ottawa refused to allow additional personnel to deploy to TK Kandahar to man the system. When it arrived, the PSS-112 consisted of three pieces: an STS 12000 ground-based radar; a Spider camera; and a SkyStar 300 Aerostat. The system had a range of 5 to 12 kilometers. It was deployed to FOB Wilson as soon as it arrived, but personnel had to be drawn from across the task force to man it. And, as there was no doctrine for its use, the system had to be integrated into the TF Kandahar operations centre and other facilities so that imagery and data could move back and forth. The targeting process at Task Force Kandahar Tactical Operations Centre also had to change. This all took time.³⁸²

With the American influx came a recce team looking for a site for a Persistent Threat Denial System (PTDS) that Gen McChrystal had ordered deployed over Kandahar City to support both the elections and the incoming American forces. BGen Vance lobbied that the system be deployed to FOB Wilson, but he was overruled; Camp Nathan Smith was the chosen site. Operated by American contractors, the PTDS consisted of a large aerostat equipped with a stabilized high-resolution MX-20 WESCAM system and a HALO-like unattended transient acoustic measurement and signature intelligence system for locating indirect-fire teams. The PTDS was operational by mid-July.³⁸³

The aerostats and their sensors significantly increased the coalition forces’ ability to monitor the road networks and counter IED placement — the more “eyes in the sky”, the better. With their arrival, the ISTAR web expanded even further, forcing the insurgency to adapt again and again. In time, no one could imagine insurgents operating like the forces

encountered in 2006 during Operation ZAHAR and Operation MEDUSA. Any build-up of insurgent fighters large enough to be spotted and identified could also be engaged. As a result, Canada ordered persistent surveillance systems in order to create a web across the TFK area of operations. Five PSS-112 systems similar to the one leased from Israel but with an even better surveillance package were deployed and operational by November 2009.³⁸⁴

This important technical improvement had a drawback, however. Homeowners near Camp Nathan Smith were dismayed to learn that the balloon had a camera that could see into their compounds, which violated social norms when it came to unveiled women. The insurgents played to these fears and spread rumours that the infidels were spying on men's property. On 28 July, an RPG hit the Camp Nathan Smith aerostat, damaging the envelope. Whether it was fired by an aggrieved local or by an insurgent was never determined.³⁸⁵



Photo Credit: Author

The need for 24/7 surveillance in a counterinsurgency and IED-heavy environment produced a 21 century twist on 19th century technology: the tethered balloon. Instead of gondolas and observers, the gas-filled envelopes carried cameras and other sensors. The Canadian Army employed two types in Afghanistan: the Persistent Threat Denial System and the Persistent Surveillance System-112.



Photo Credit: Author

The U.S. Influx and the Kandahar Coordination Program

As we have seen 1-12 Infantry replaced 2-2 Infantry in Maywand, with the incoming American battalion remaining under Task Force Kandahar command. But soon American officers tasked with preparing for the influx into Kandahar Province began appearing unannounced in the battle space, particularly in Arghandab District.³⁸⁶ Their uncoordinated activities generated confusion about where units would go, and who would hand off to whom and how. At the PRT, the Canadian civilian staffers had similar issues. With little warning, a VIP party including the U.S. Deputy Head of Mission from the U.S. Embassy, the incoming commander of Regional Command (South), the head of USAID in Afghanistan and three U.S. senators descended on them for discussions on relationships between Canadian projects and programs and what the American “civilian surge” wanted to accomplish. Out of these meetings, TF Kandahar reported, the Americans “recognized the Canadian whole-of-government approach along the three lines of operations as well the sacrifices of Canadian soldiers in support of signature projects such as Dahla Dam.”³⁸⁷

Relief-in-place operations commenced at the end of July with the arrival of the 8th Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment (8-1 Cavalry) from the 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team. A 2 R22eR platoon and a CIMIC team that were in Spin Boldak to support the U.S. Navy Construction Battalion preparing a FOB for 8-1 Cavalry returned to their parent units and, with that, TF Kandahar was done with Spin Boldak. The port of entry on the Afghan-Pakistani border was now an American responsibility.³⁸⁸

The 1st Battalion, 17th Infantry Regiment (1-17 Infantry), a mechanized infantry battalion from the Stryker Brigade, was scheduled to take over Arghandab District. On 1 August, its command team arrived at the All Source Intelligence Centre for “an exhaustive joint [All Source Intelligence Centre and Kandahar Intelligence Fusion Centre] handover brief to the CO and key members.”³⁸⁹ When the Canadian CIMIC team assigned to Arghandab District informed District Leader Haji Abdul Jabar that a Civil Affairs team from the Stryker Brigade would take over, Jabar “was not happy and seems reluctant to work with U.S. Forces, as [he told the CIMIC team] the U.S. Forces have been allegedly belligerent and disrespectful to the people of Arghandab in the past.”³⁹⁰ Canadian CIMIC also started to hand over Shah Wali Kot District to Civil Affairs in the first week of August.³⁹¹

As of 8 August, the Stryker Brigade was responsible for Spin Boldak, Shorabak, Maruf, Arghistan, Arghandab, Shah Wali Kot, Neish, Mianishin and Khakrez districts in Kandahar Province, splitting the responsibility between 8-1 Cavalry and 1-17 Infantry. The All Source Intelligence Centre reported that “All sharable ASIC data (including geo and imagery) was provided to TF Stryker G2 and each battalion received detailed briefings and a handover package in collaboration with [Kandahar Intelligence Fusion Centre], before moving into their area of operations.”³⁹² Similarly, TF Kandahar engineers gave the Stryker Brigade terabyte after terabyte of geospatial information on the entire province, information painstakingly compiled since 2005. They used hours of plotter time to print the maps, as the Stryker units arrived with no such capability. Having been quickly re-tasked from Iraq to Afghanistan, the Americans arrived with virtually no knowledge of the ground itself and were dependent on Canadian efforts in this area.³⁹³

Other American units and formations were in-bound. The Afghan Regional Security Integration Command South, the organization that worked with TF Kandahar on Afghan army and policing issues, was replaced with an entire brigade of the 82nd Airborne Division converted into police and army mentors. The 4th Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, reported to Task Force Phoenix, the American-led training and mentoring command in Kabul. One of its units, the 2nd Battalion, 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment, was scheduled to handle tasks in Kandahar Province. Personnel started to flow in during August, and the whole command would be up and running by the end of September.

The 4th Engineer Battalion — Task Force Thor — which consisted of nine Route-Clearance Packages (the equivalent of nine Canadian EROC suites) was already on the ground and taking casualties from IEDs.³⁹⁴

In addition to these organizations, a specialized counter-IED task force, TF ODIN, was also deploying to Kandahar province. TF ODIN (Observe, Detect, Identify, Neutralize) was an US Army initiative in Iraq, similar to what TF Kandahar was mounting with Operation DALBOR. Unlike DALBOR, however, TF ODIN had dedicated forces for the counter-IED route protection mission. Alpha Company flew Warrior Alpha UAVs, an upgraded version of Predator called the MQ-1C Grey Eagle. Bravo Company was equipped with several C-12 Cessna aircraft carrying a variety of sensors, including one that “detects change over time in terrain beneath a selected route of flight.” TF Odin also accessed U-2 aircraft sensors that “even from 13 miles up. . . can detect small disturbances in the dirt.”³⁹⁵ TF Kandahar welcomed this added aerial surveillance capacity; by the end of August, all three of the CU-170 Herons were grounded and awaiting parts from their Israeli manufacturer.³⁹⁶ Together, TF Thor and TF Odin significantly enhanced the coalition’s ability to keep the highways open in Kandahar and relieved the burden on TF Kandahar’s three worn-out EROC suites.

Finally, there was the 97th Military Police Battalion. Gen McChrystal leaned toward assigning them to Kandahar City, but it was unclear how the unit would fit into the command structure or what exactly they would do in the larger scheme of the city security plan. A recon party arrived at Camp Nathan Smith in early August to look at buildings and land.³⁹⁷

As with the 97th Military Police Battalion, the command relationship between TF Kandahar and the units of the Stryker Brigade was unclear at first; likewise, relationships between the U.S. government agencies and the PRT remained vague. To deal with this and other potential sources of misunderstanding, the Canada-U.S. Kandahar Coordination Plan was signed on 21 August. BGen Vance and Ken Lewis, the RoCK, signed for Canada, while Frank Ruggiero, the Senior Civilian Representative for Southern Afghanistan, and BGen John Nicholson Jr., the deputy commander of Regional Command (South), signed for the United States.³⁸⁹

The purpose of the plan was “to strengthen Afghan ownership of the stabilization of Kandahar Province” through a coherent partnership to meet “Afghan priorities, working through Afghan constructs, fostering Afghan solutions, and building Afghan capacity is essential to the success of our plan.” Notably:

The Plan is linked to Afghan priorities described in, *inter alia*, the Afghanistan Compact and the Afghan National Development Strategy. It is also fully nested within the guidance and direction provided by the NATO-led ISAF in cascading strategic plans and operational documents, including the regional campaign plan for Regional Command (South) and the ISAF counterinsurgency strategy.³⁹⁹

Structurally, the Kandahar Coordination Plan created a Kandahar Senior Coordination Team made up of the senior military and civilian representatives so there could be “complementarity in their respective national programs.” The RoCK was designated the lead official to interact with Governor and the PRT as “the focal point for coordinating all Canadian and American programming related to governance, rule of law, reconstruction and development in Kandahar.” The document recognized both Canadian and American strategic objectives. The Canadian strategic objectives remained the six Cabinet priorities and three signature projects. The American objective was to “Disrupt, dismantle, and defeat Al Qaeda, its allies and safe havens in Pakistan and to prevent their return to Pakistan or Afghanistan.” From that flowed:

- secure the population;
- extend the writ of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan;
- transition to licit, agricultural-based society;
- develop and secure the border; and
- counter the nexus of narcotics, corruption, insurgency, and criminality.

Militarily, this meant:

Increase focus on securing the surrounding districts to Kandahar City, allowing the Afghan National Police and Task Force Kandahar the freedom of movement to effectively provide security in this key population centre. In coordination with Task Force Kandahar, increase security on Highway 1 and Highway 4 to enable freedom of movement for the population and to help set the conditions for the expansion of agricultural value chains throughout the region. Build the capacity and capability of the ANP and Afghan Border Police and continue Afghan

National Army capacity building in order to transition to Afghan lead in provision of security in the south within five years. Increase focus on the border region between Chaman and Weish and interdict the insurgent “jet stream” flowing into Afghanistan.⁴⁰⁰

A new organization, the Regional Platform, would be formed at KAF next to Regional Command (South). Though not created by the Plan, the Regional Platform was conceptually a “super PRT” for American development programming in southern Afghanistan. In addition, the plan also recognized that there would be American District Support Teams deployed. How would all this relate to the PRT?

The KPRT will be an integrated, bilateral organization with members from Canada and the U.S. coordinating its activities in cooperation with Task Force Kandahar and the USG Regional Platform and supporting District Support Teams. The U.S. will stand up DSTs in Kandahar Province ... these DSTs will coordinate operations with the KPRT. To ensure full integration Canada will detail an advisor to at least some of the DSTs ... each DST will develop a District Support Plan in collaboration with the KPRT, other U.S. and Canadian elements operating in the district, and multinational partners.⁴⁰¹

TF Kandahar and the Stryker Brigade would “exercise military command and control in their respective areas with the intent on meeting ISAF and national objectives.” ISAF Focus Districts remained in effect for ongoing Shape/Clear/Hold/Build operations (see Operation TOLO, Chapter 4) in Kandahar City, Arghandab, Zharey, Maywand, and Spin Boldak. KANTOLO was acknowledged as the dominant Canadian operational plan, though one could discern traces of the defunct Kandahar Action Plan buried in the new agreement.

The Kandahar Coordination Plan was obviously a compromise document that merely affirmed the facts on the ground: that Canada and the United States had different agendas; that some of those agendas were simpatico; that TF Kandahar and the Stryker Brigade had their own battle spaces; and that reconstruction would be coordinated by the Americans at the district level, and by Canadians at the provincial level. DFAIT and CIDA got what they wanted — the provincial-level involvement and, possibly, influence in the arenas of governance and reconstruction — while TF Kandahar got what it wanted — the counterinsurgency fight in the districts, and the counterterrorism fight in the city. DFAIT and CIDA’s fears were addressed and they could go about meeting the demands of the Cabinet priorities and signature projects without having to be concerned about the ongoing war or responding to the vagaries of Joint Task Force Afghanistan.

The Pre-Election Situation: 1-19 August 2009

The districts west of Kandahar City experienced low levels of enemy activity while the Afghans, Canadians, and Americans continued with their framework operations. In Maywand District 1-12 Infantry patrols picked up that “the local nationals were optimistic about the upcoming elections. They said they planned on voting. They did not think that President Karzai was doing a good job protecting the country or preventing corruption.”⁴⁰² In Zharey, preparations were made to turn the district over to TF 1-12 and reconstitute B Company with the rest of the battle group in Panjwayi district. Strong Point Lakokhel continued to be a focal point for enemy harassing fire. On one occasion the Canadian mentors with the Afghan company in position dropped 24 rounds of 155mm fire on an enemy position and the situation quieted down temporarily. Over in Senjaray, an Afghan patrol was engaged, taking casualties, and a route-clearance team from TF Thor cleared the road. On 1 August, a B Company patrol coming through the area hit an IED that disabled one vehicle. A sweep for secondary devices resulted in another detonation that killed Cpl Christian Bobbitt and Spr Matthieu Allard of the 5^e Régiment du Génie de combat.⁴⁰³

To set the conditions for future operations in Zharey, 1-12 Infantry supported by the tanks from C Squadron mounted Operation TORA ARWA V to clear compounds of interest in the western part of the district. It was 4 August, the peak of summer, and the heat was intense. The tanks screened along the Arghandab River while 1-12 Infantry moved into the communities to their north. When their task was completed, C Squadron headed back to Ma'Sum Ghar as escort to an Afghan unit accompanied by their own Canadian mentors and a party of American police mentors. On the way, the lead Leopard C1, equipped with rollers, hit a mine or an IED. The blast was so powerful that it lifted the tank, breached its hull, and dropped it 45 degrees off its axis of advance. A three-sided ambush was unleashed, hitting and damaging other vehicles in the convoy. At this point in the action, four men were already wounded.⁴⁰⁴ MWO Richard Stacey, the Squadron Sergeant Major, sorted through the confusion as tanks and LAV IIIs engaged the ambush positions and artillery was called in. Stacey organized the recovery and extraction of the stricken vehicles. As the column moved out, an Afghan army Ford Ranger pickup truck hit an IED, killing or wounding all aboard. Stacey organized the treatment and evacuation of those casualties too. C Squadron and the Afghans clawed their way out of the ambushes and finally made it back to Ma'Sum Ghar eight hours later. MWO Stacey received the Medal of Military Valour for his actions.

After TORA ARWA V was completed, 1-12 Infantry left a company in Hotal and FOB Ramrod while the other three companies packed up and headed east. They took most of August to complete the move to FOB Wilson in Zharey, which had been expanded for them by Canadian engineers. To set the insurgents back on their heels, two companies

of Afghan infantry with Canadian mentors teamed up on 15 August with B Company to conduct Operation KATAKAWAL LAKOKHEL, beginning with an ISTAR survey of the area and artillery bombardment of compounds suspected of housing enemy activity. A huge cache of homemade explosives totalling hundreds of pounds was discovered and destroyed during the operation.⁴⁰⁵

The dominant issue in Panjwayi throughout early August remained District Leader Haji Baran and his ability to govern. The Route Hyena Paving Project, now in the hands of Bennet-Fouch protected by Blue Hackle and monitored by the Construction Management Organization, was subject to “rising tensions” between all three stakeholders and Haji Baran. Bennett-Fouch then abruptly pulled out of the project and refused to have anything more to do with Baran. The Construction Management Organization decided to suspend the project. Baran “was very distraught” and “at a loss of what he was going to tell the people of Panjwayi.” CIMIC was seriously worried: “the real concern is the approximately 300–400 locally employed persons who are now unemployed.” Furthermore, “[t]he withdrawal of [Bennett-Fouch] has left the Hyena Paving Project in a precarious position. The 300–400 employees from the site have been laid off which is a cause for concern as to what their future activities might be.” CIMIC and the Construction Management Organization hoped to mount a new project after Ramadan, knowing that hundreds of disaffected, unemployed, fighting-age males was a Taliban recruiter’s dream.⁴⁰⁶ The governance situation in Panjwayi was so bad that none of the District Development Assembly members showed up for a shura on 12 August, leaving the CIMIC team and the representative of the Central Asian Development Group to drink tea with Haji Baran.⁴⁰⁷ Meanwhile, C Company launched a search operation in some compounds near Chalgowr, found nothing, and hit an IED. There were no casualties.

In Kandahar City, the OCC-P continued to expand and remained the focal point for security operations in the city. There were indicators that another assault on Sarposa Prison was planned and, with a full moon in the offing, Stab A increased patrols to the site. On 2 August, a 30-man joint patrol (with P-OMLT accompanying) got into a major firefight in District 6, a shoot-out that escalated when the insurgents started to lob mortar bombs, and Stab A responded with 25-mm cannon fire from its LAV IIIs. A return patrol confirmed that the local population was uninterested in cooperating with government forces. Another joint patrol ran across a group of armed anti-Taliban *ex-mujahideen* who took care of their own neighbourhood and its people; their school was in operation. However, on 12 August, Police Sub-Station 8 was engaged by long-range heavy machine gun fire. An OH-58D Kiowa Warrior helicopter was vectored onto the firing position, while American-mentored police manoeuvred to seize the insurgents, who disappeared into the built-up area.⁴⁰⁸

By 30 July, the Independent Electoral Commission had opened 223 polling stations in Kandahar Province, and this total eventually rose to 262. Only three districts — Khakrez, Mianishin and Ghorak — had no polling stations open.⁴⁰⁹ UNAMA was “impressed with the amount of campaigning under way in Kandahar City, which has taken multiple forms including large public rallies and one-on-one engagements.”⁴¹⁰ Security planning for the elections, Operation ENTEXAB (Elections), continued behind the scenes. One complicating factor was an orchestrated Taliban information operation personally authorized by Mullah Omar⁴¹¹ which produced propaganda posters that threatened, “Don’t vote as you may die during election day!” The Taliban confiscated voter registration cards in Zharey District, and night letters appeared at mosques in the city.⁴¹²

Canadian CIMIC reports suggested that

[T]he insurgents’ information operations campaign has been effective; local nationals are reporting that they are frightened of insurgent reprisals should they participate in the vote. Local nationals not only believe that CF/ISAF will not be able to protect them on election day but that local nationals will be even more vulnerable to insurgent retaliation in the days after the election once [the security forces] leave the area ... It is assessed that the insurgents will not have to use direct kinetic effects to deter local nationals from voting.⁴¹³

There were threats from within as well. A woman leading a group of tribal elders approached the OCC-P on 19 August to complain that the ballot boxes were already full before voting occurred. The complaint was passed to the Independent Electoral Commission.⁴¹⁴

On the eve of the election, the insurgents mounted simultaneous indirect fire attacks on FOB Ma’Sum Ghar, FOB Wilson, Ghundy Ghar, Kandahar Air Field, Strong Point Howz-e Madad, Pulchakan, Senjaray and Spin Pir. Then they hit Kandahar City with mortars and rockets. Indicators suggested that the enemy was massing in Arghandab District near Sarposa Prison. Without Canadian prompting, BGen Basir and his police counterparts met at the OCC-P and planned an operation into the community of Char Bagh, where the mortar fire originated. A company of Afghan infantry with 100 police and NDS officers plus Canadian mentors moved in on Char Bagh while the PRT Quick Reaction Force covered the prison. Canadian UAVs, the aerostat at Camp Nathan Smith, and American OH-58D helicopters provided the air support. TF 1-17 from the Stryker Brigade handled the blocks to the north. The Afghan security forces captured 17 insurgents, but took two wounded in the course of the operation.⁴¹⁵

On Election Day, the Canadian security assessment noted that

It is believed that the insurgents did not achieve their intent and in fact have incurred a major IO loss. Both Dand and Spin Boldak were commented on as a huge success and it was reported that many Afghans crossed the border from Pakistan in order to vote. Combining the total number of SIGACTs in Kandahar Province (TFK + TF Stryker) accounts for more than half the overall number of SIGACTS for all of RC (South) ... most SIGACTs had minimal impact on local national population and good level of degradation of the insurgents took place ... it was the ANSF who were the busiest and they proved themselves to be quite capable.⁴¹⁶

Furthermore:

On 20 August the Afghan Presidential and Provincial Council elections were held. These were the second national elections in decades, however the first to be Afghan-led. Afghan National Security Force performance was above expectations and there was no need for ISAF to assist the ANSF within the TFK area of operations ... the ANSF took the lead in securing elections facilities. The level of coordination among various ANSF organizations with ISAF forces was exceptional. Overall, the insurgency failed to significantly disrupt the electoral process ... not one suicide IED went off in Kandahar City.⁴¹⁷

But not all was well:

There are indications that fewer voters than expected participated in the south. If true, this would further complicate political calculations in the coming weeks, particularly if no single presidential contender emerges with 50 percent of the popular vote.⁴¹⁸

The legitimacy of the Karzai government was about to come under attack. Without a legitimate government in place, success in a counterinsurgency campaign became all the more difficult. Mohammad Hanif Atmar, the Interior Minister of Afghanistan, told Gen McChrystal, "If the elections fail ... I would recommend that the international community not waste any more blood or treasure here."⁴¹⁹

ENDNOTES

1. Interview with BGen Jon Vance (Edmonton, 8 February 2010).
2. Bob Woodward, *Obama's Wars* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 2010), pages 3–8.
3. David E. Sanger, *The Inheritance: The World Obama Confronts and the Challenges to American Power* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2009), pages 117–118. See also Stanley McChrystal, *My Share of the Task: A Memoir* (New York: Penguin Books, 2013), pages 283–287.
4. Cowper-Coles, *Cables from Kabul* (Harper Collins, 2012), Chapters 8 and 10. See also Kai Eide, *Power Struggle Over Afghanistan* (Skyhorse Publishing, 2012), Chapter 6.
5. Woodward, *Obama's Wars*, pages 34, 43–44.
6. *Ibid.*, pages 67–69.
7. *Ibid.*, pages 96–98; See also Michael Hastings, *The Operators: The Wild and Terrifying Inside Story of America's War in Afghanistan* (Plume, 2012).
8. One merely needs to peruse Hastings' *The Operators*, Woodward's *Obama's Wars*, Sanger's *The Inheritance and Confront and Conceal* (Crown/Archetype, 2012), Cowper-Coles' *Cables From Kabul* and Eides' *Power Struggle Over Afghanistan* to get a sense of the chaos and confusion that infused the policy process..
9. Woodward, *Obama's Wars*, Chapter 10; Sanger, *Confront and Conceal*, pages 16–20; Hastings, *The Operators*, Chapter 14.
10. Report to Parliament, "Canada's Engagement in Afghanistan: December 2008," page 2.
11. CBC, "Foreign Troops Can't Defeat Afghanistan's Insurgency" (1 March 2009).
12. The author was present at both an American headquarters and a coalition headquarters in the Kabul region when this quote was rebroadcast over several media. There was palpable disdain exhibited by allied personnel. One senior Canadian officer I interviewed said that he believed the Harper government had already given up on the war in 2008 and that this remark was a *faux pas* but, nonetheless, confirmatory evidence. DFAIT personnel in Afghanistan informed the author at the time that the Prime Minister's statement was "carefully calculated" but did not elaborate further.
13. Darcy Heddon, "Keeping Promises and Fostering Hope for the Future in Kandahar, Afghanistan," MA Thesis (Royal Roads University, 2011), page 34.
14. Telephone interview with LCol Lee Hammond (10 July 2012).
15. JTF A HQ briefing, "Operations in Afghanistan: How We Did It February–November 2009," see "Operational Planning Challenge" slide.
16. McChrystal, *My Share of the Task*, pages 322–326.
17. Discussions with Canadian staff officers serving in the McChrystal ISAF headquarters.
18. Telephone interview with LCol Mike Gilmore (15 October 2012).
19. Briefing, "OMLT 1–09 Roto 7."
20. Interview with Col Gregory Burt (Kingston, 18 September 2012). See also briefing, "OMLT 1–09 Roto 7."
21. "OMLT Roto 7 briefing" (30 April 2010).
22. Burt interview.
23. *Ibid.* "OMLT Roto 7 briefing" (30 April 2010).

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24. Burt interview.
25. *Ibid.*
26. *Ibid.*
27. "OMLT Roto 7 briefing" (30 April 2010).
28. Gilmore interview.
29. JTF A HQ Air Wing briefing to the author (Kandahar Air Field, 8 March 2009).
30. Air Wing DSRs (February and March 2009).
31. Air Wing briefing to the author (Kandahar Air Field, 28 July 2010).
32. *Ibid.*
33. As discussed in Maloney, *Confronting the Chaos* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2009), pages 229–233.
34. Air Mapping Unit War Diary (April to July 2009). My thanks to Capt Dan Arsenault for providing information on Operation APPLANIX.
35. Interview with LCol Carl Turenne (Kingston, 15 April 2010).
36. Turenne interview.
37. *Ibid.*
38. *Ibid.*
39. *Ibid.*
40. Author's discussions with PRT personnel (July 2010).
41. Distilled from PRT DSRs (February 2009).
42. PRT DSR (3 April 2009).
43. JTF A HQ DSR (12 March 2009).
44. Eide, *Power Struggle for Afghanistan*, page 10.
45. TF Kandahar briefing to the author (Edmonton, December 2008).
46. Interview with Capt Darcy Heddon (Ottawa, 25 October 2012).
47. *Ibid.*
48. Interview with BGen Jon Vance (Edmonton, 10 February 2010).
49. Discussions between the author and BGen Jon Vance (Edmonton, 23 June 2008).
50. *Ibid.*
51. Vance interview.
52. Hammond interview. See also email correspondence, Hammond to Maloney (18 July 2012).
53. Author's observations.
54. Hammond interview; See also email correspondence, Hammond to Maloney.
55. The author participated in CEFCOM's deliberations on these issues in November 2008.
56. *Ibid.*

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57. *Ibid.* See also CEFCOM J5 Draft, "Commander's Intent for the Comd CEFCOM Directive for Conduct of Military Operations in Afghanistan: 2009–2011," (n/d).
58. *Ibid.*
59. Confidential interview.
60. Briefing to the author by BGen Vance (Kandahar Air Field, 8 March 2009).
61. *Ibid.* The author attended ancillary meetings and discussions when GRIZZLY was cancelled.
62. The author attended ancillary meetings and discussions when GRIZZLY was cancelled.
63. Vance interview (10 February 2010).
64. Heddon interview.
65. Telephone interview with LCol Mike Patrick (17 October 2012).
66. *Ibid.*
67. *Ibid.*
68. *Ibid.*
69. See Robert Hossal's media chronology, "Talking with the Taliban: A Timeline" at www.smartwar.org.
70. See James Shinn and James Dobbins, "Afghan Peace Talks: A Primer" RAND Corporation National Security Research Division (2011).
71. *Ibid.*, page 14.
72. Interviews with LCol Hugh Ferguson (Kandahar Air Field, 1, 2 and 10 February 2009).
73. JTF A HQ DSR (1 May 2009).
74. JTF A HQ DSR (14 July 2009).
75. JTF A HQ DSR (3 March 2009).
76. JTF A HQ DSR (1 January 2009); JTF A HQ DSR (6 February 2009); JTF A HQ DSR (11 February 2009); JTF A HQ DSR (2 March 2009); JTF A HQ DSR (17 March 2009); JTF A HQ DSR (20 May 2009).
77. Briefing to the author (FOB Huta, 14 March 2009).
78. JTF A HQ DSRs (3, 7, 13, 17 February 2009, 12–13 and 24 March 2009).
79. JTF A HQ DSRs (4–7, 10 March 2009).
80. JTF–A HQ DSRs (10, 12 February 2009).
81. JTF–A HQ DSRs (13 and 14 February 2009).
82. JTF–A HQ DSRs (13 February, 6, 13 and 15 March 2009).
83. JTF A HQ DSRs (24–29 March 2009).
84. Derived from 3 RCR Battle Group and OMLT DSRs (February 2009).
85. 3 RCR, "Operation SHAHI TANDAR 3" (31 January 2009).
86. Derived from SIGACT slides for Op SHAHI TANDAR 3 and JTF A HQ DSRs (1–2 February 2009).
87. Derived from 3 RCR Battle Group DSRs (8, 10 and 24 February 2009).
88. OMLT DSRs (13–14 February 2009).

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89. OMLT DSR, PRT DSR (14 February 2009).
90. 3 RCR Battle Group DSR (19 February 2009).
91. JTF A HQ DSR (21 February 2009).
92. JTF A HQ DSR (4 February 2009); JTF A HQ DSR (16 March 2009).
93. JTF A HQ DSR (19 February 2009).
94. JTF A HQ DSRs (6, 7 and 12 February 2009).
95. The author was present at FOB Ramrod when 2-2 Infantry planned Operation JALEY (13–14 March 2009) and at Kandahar Air Field for the JTF A HQ portion of the planning (15 March 2009).
96. JTF A DSRs (6–8, 15 March 2009).
97. JTF A Air Wing briefing to the author (Kandahar Air Field, 8 March 2009).
98. OMLT DSR (18 March 2009).
99. The author participated in Operation JALEY and recounted his initial observations in “Operation JALEY: An Air-mechanized Assault on Zharey District” in *War in Afghanistan: Eight Battles in the South* (Magic Light Publishing/Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2012), Chapter 13.
100. *Ibid.*
101. The author discussed the perceived reasons for the shutdown with senior JTF A HQ staff (20 March 2009).
102. Message JTF A HQ to CEFCOM (30 March 2009).
103. JTF A DSRs (1–15 February 2009).
104. J2 DSR (17 February 2009).
105. OMLT DSR (27 February 2009).
106. JTF A HQ DSR (15 February 2009).
107. JTF A HQ DSR (24 February 2009).
108. Battle group DSRs (28 February–2 March 2009).
109. JTF A HQ DSR (18 February 2009); OMLT DSR (19 February 2009); CIMIC report to PRT (9 March 2009); CIMIC report to PRT (11 March 2009); CIMIC report to PRT (13 March 2009); P OMLT and CIMIC report to PRT (16 March 2009).
110. JTF A HQ Monthly Assessment Report (February 2009)
111. JTF A HQ DSR (5 March 2009).
112. PRT CIMIC DSR (11 February 2009); JTF A HQ DSR (12 February 2009); JTF A HQ DSR (31 March 2009).
113. The author spent several days with the CMO and CMT-1 on the Fosters paving project (February 2009).
114. JTF A HQ Monthly Assessment Report (February 2009).
115. PRT DSR (2 March 2009).
116. CIMIC report from C/S 55: Arghandab (9 March 2009).
117. PRT DSR (3 February 2009).
118. JTF A HQ DSR (3 March 2009).
119. JTF A HQ DSR (1 March 2009).

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120. JTF A HQ DSR (6 March 2009).
121. JTF A HQ DSR (21 March 2009)
122. SIGACT reports "USPMT IED Strike IVO FOB Frontenac" and "BG IED Strike" (25 February 2009).
123. JTF A HQ DSR (9 March 2009).
124. JTF A HQ DSR (11 March 2009).
125. SIGACT report "Griffon Engaged with SAF West of Kandahar City" (17 March 2009).
126. Battle group DSR (24 March 2009).
127. Battle group DSRs (24–26 March 2009).
128. JTF A HQ DSR (5 February 2009).
129. JTF A HQ DSR (16 February 2009).
130. OCC-P DSR. Though the OCC-P did not come out and say it, the implication was that the voter registration centre could have been shut down by an individual connected to Ahmad Wali Karzai as part of an effort to reduce the number of registered voters who might vote against President Hamid Karzai in the upcoming elections, as opposed to insurgent action to interfere with voter registration. There was no proof, however, so the OCC-P did not elaborate further (4 February 2009).
131. The author had just arrived at JTF A HQ and was preparing to deploy to Camp Nathan Smith when the THREATWARN came in.
132. JTF A Air Wing briefing to the author (Kandahar Air Field, 8 March 2009).
133. JTF A HQ DSRs (5–15 February 2009).
134. JTF A HQ DSRs (6 and 8 February 2009).
135. OCC-P DSR (16 March 2009).
136. OMLT DSR (30 March 2009); JTF A DSR (31 March 2009).
137. PRT DSR (9 February 2009).
138. PRT DSR (12 February 2009).
139. Briefing to the author (Camp Nathan Smith, 17 July 2010).
140. *Ibid.*
141. *Ibid.*
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168. *Ibid.*
169. *Ibid.*
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171. JTF A HQ Briefing, "TFK C-IED Process, November 2009."
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175. JTF A HQ DSR (1 April 2009).
176. JTF A HQ DSR (7 June 2009).

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177. JTF A HQ DSR (25 March 2009); JTF A HQ DSR (12 June 2009); Author's discussion with personnel on patrol in Nejat, Panjwayi District (May 2011).
178. Gilmore interview.
179. JTF A HQ DSR (10 June 2009).
180. Vance interview.
181. Turenne interview.
182. Confidential interview.
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186. Correspondence with Patrick Ulrich (22 August 2012).
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195. PRT DSR (8 April 2009).
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197. PRT DSR (2 April 2009); PRT DSR (6 April 2009).
198. JTF A HQ DSRs (5, 11, 16 and 19 April 2009).
199. PRT DSR (16 April 2009).
200. JTF A HQ DSR (2 May 2009).
201. PRT DSR (1 April 2009).
202. PRT DSR (7 April 2009).
203. PRT DSR (24 April 2009).
204. PRT DSR (6 April 2009).
205. PRT DSR (17 April 2009).
206. JTF A HQ DSR (15 April 2009).
207. OMLT DSR (11 April 2009).
208. Derived from JTF A HQ J2 reporting (April and May 2009).

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209. Battle group DSR (10 April 2009); JTF A HQ DSR (11 April 2009).
210. JTF A HQ DSRs (19 and 20 April 2009).
211. PRT DSR (23 April 2009).
212. SIGACT report "OMLT C/S 71D TIC/IED Strike" (29 April 2009).
213. JTF A HQ DSR (5–6 May 2009).
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216. Battle group and OMLT DSRs (15–19 May 2009).
217. Battle group DSR (30 May 2009).
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219. PRT DSR (15 April 2009).
220. JTF A HQ DSR (9 May 2009).
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225. SIGACT report, "AUP Imposters at NDC Bazaar" (17 April 2009).
226. JTF A HQ DSR (8 May 2009).
227. PRT DSR (12 May 2009).
228. CIMIC report to PRT (5 April 2009).
229. JTF A HQ DSR (6 April 2009).
230. SIGACT report, "COWBOY 5 Cache Find" (31 March 2009).
231. Battle group DSR; JTF A HQ DSR (4–6 April 2009).
232. Battle group DSR (8 April 2009).
233. SIGACT report, "OMLT C/S 73A TIC IVO Mushan" (8 April 2009).
234. SIGACT report, "OMLT C/S 73A TIC IVO Mushan" (12 April 2009).
235. Paul interview.
236. Battle group DSR, JTF A HQ DSR (24–30 April 2009).
237. Paul interview.
238. Battle group DSR (12 May 2009).
239. Battle group DSR (21 May 2009).
240. SIGACT "BG C/S/ 32 TIC IVO Zangabad." (26 May 2009); Battle group DSR (27 May 2009).
241. PRT DSR (3 April 2008).
242. JTF A HQ DSR (8 May 2009).

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243. JTF A HQ DSR (10 April 2009).
244. OCC-P DSR (13 April 2009).
245. PRT DSR (24 April 2009).
246. JTF A HQ DSR (5 April 2009).
247. Telephone interview LCol Jean-François Cauden (19 March 2012). See also briefing, "Armoured Recce Operations in Afghanistan April to October 2009" (30 April 2010).
248. Paul interview.
249. JTF A HQ DSR (15 April 2009).
250. J2 DSRs (16 and 20 April 2009).
251. JTF A HQ DSR (17 April 2009).
252. PRT DSR (8 May 2009).
253. PRT DSR (10 May 2009).
254. JTF A HQ DSR (20 May 2009).
255. JTF A HQ DSR, OCC-P DSR; Bill Roggio, "Taliban kills 13 in suicide assault on Kandahar Government Center" (1 April 2009) http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2009/04/taliban_kills_13_in.php
256. OCC-P DSRs (10–15 April 2009).
257. JTF A HQ DSR (24 April 2009).
258. The author is aware of several conflicting theories regarding the assassination of Sitara Achakzai. Initially, it was chalked up as a Taliban assassination and exploited as such for information operations purposes because of the larger gender-equality aspects of the incident. However, the author was informed by both Afghan and Canadian sources that Achakzai was in the process of investigating allegations of human trafficking that related to a girls' school and a senior member of the provincial shura.
259. PRT DSR (18 April 2009).
260. JTF A HQ DSR (26 April 2009).
261. OCC-P DSR (29 April 2009).
262. Report from STAB A (30 April 2009).
263. JTF A HQ DSRs, OMLT DSRs, OCC-P DSRs (1–6 May 2009).
264. JTF A HQ DSR (10 May 2009).
265. JTF A HQ DSR (11 May 2009).
266. PRT DSR (15 May 2009).
267. PRT DSR (17 May 2009).
268. JTF A HQ DSRs (23 and 27 May 2009).
269. PRT DSR (24 May 2009).
270. Hammond interview.
271. Darcy Heddon, "Keeping Promises and Fostering Hope for the Future in Kandahar, Afghanistan," MA Thesis (Royal Roads University, 2011), page 28.

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272. Note also that Barakzai former governor Gul Agha Sherzai was a possible contender for Hamid Karzai's presidency in the 2009 elections. Empowering the Barakzai in Dand had possible spin-off benefits for Canada if he ran and won.
273. PRT DSR (4 June 2009).
274. Vance interview.
275. *Ibid.*
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277. Verret interview; Verret briefing, "Op KALAY: Application of COIN, Summer 2009."
278. Verret interview; Verret briefing, "Op KALAY: Application of COIN, Summer 2009."
279. Verret interview.
280. *Ibid.*
281. JTF A HQ DSRs (1–10 May 2009).
282. JTF A HQ DSRs (11–12 May 2009).
283. JTF A HQ DSRs; Verret interview (20–22 May 2009).
284. JTF A HQ DSRs (23–25 May 2009).
285. Verret interview.
286. *Ibid.*
287. *Ibid.*
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289. JTF A HQ DSR (29 May 2009).
290. JTF A HQ DSR (30 May 2009).
291. JTF- A HQ Briefing, "Operations in Afghanistan: How We Did It February – November 2009."
292. JTF- A HQ DSR (2 June 2009).
293. OCC-P DSR, SIGACT report, "ANP TIC at CP Belanday" (13 June 2009).
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295. SIGACT report "Insurgent Attack at Dand ANP CP" (14 June 2009)
296. JTF- A HQ DSR (12-13 June 2009).
297. JTF-A HQ DSR (13 June 2009).
298. Ulrich correspondence.
299. JTF-A HQ DSR (21 June 2009).
300. SIGACT report, "IED Strike IVO Walakan" (23 June 2009).
301. Vance interview.
302. PRT DSR (27 June 2009).
303. PRT DSR (28 June 2009).
304. PRT DSR (10 July 2009).

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305. Verret interview; PRT DSR (6 July 2009).
306. JTF A HQ DSR (9 July 2009).
307. PRT DSR (15 July 2009).
308. JTFA HQ DSR (11 July 2009); JTF-A HQ DSR (12 July 2009).
309. SIGACT report "SVBIED Strike and TIC at Dand ANA CP" (13 July 2009)
310. SIGACT report "IED Strike in Deh-E Bagh" (24 July 2009); PRT DSR (25 July 2009).
311. JTF-A HQ DSR (27 July 2009).
312. JTF-A HQ DSR (20 July 2009).
313. JTF A HQ DSR (7 August 2009).
314. JTF- A HQ DSR (1 June 2009).
315. PRT DSR (2 June 2009).
316. PRT DSR (4 June 2009).
317. JTF- A HQ DSR (1 June 2009).
318. Paul interview.
319. JTF-A HQ DSR (5 June 2009), SIGACT Report, "ARTY Engagement of INS W/RPG" (4 June 2009)
320. JTF-A HQ DSRs (6-7 June 2009).
321. JTF A HQ DSR (8 June 2009).
322. JTF A HQ DSR (9 June 2009).
323. JTF A HQ DSR (14 June 2009); SIGACT report, "BG CS 32 IED Strike" (14 June 2009).
324. JTF A GQ DSR (16 June 2009).
325. SIGACT report, "ANA Struck an IED" (16 June 2009); and SIGACT report, "ANP Attack IVO of OP BROWN" (17 June 2009).
326. Battle group DSR (19–20 June 2009).
327. JTF A HQ DSR (19 June 2009); JTF A HQ DSR (18 June 2009).
328. Battle group DSR (24 June 2009).
329. JTF A HQ DSR (19–30 June 2009).
330. JTF A HQ DSR (2 July 2009).
331. PRT DSR (7 July 2009).
332. PRT DSRs (3-11 July 2009).
333. JTF A HQ DSR (19 July 2009).
334. Pocket litter discovered by the 2 PPCLI Battle Group (24 July 2009).
335. PRT DSR (26 June 2009).
336. PRT DSR (12 June 2009).
337. PRT DSR (15 June 2009).

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339. OMLT DSR (28 June 2009).
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345. JTF A HQ DSR (7 July 2009).
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347. PRT DSR (8 July 2009).
348. JTF A HQ DSR (24 July 2009).
349. PRT DSR (3 July 2009).
350. JTF A HQ DSR (30 June 2009).
351. PRT DSR (9 July 2009).
352. JTF A HQ DSR (13 March 2009); PRT DSR (1 April 2009).
353. JTF A HQ DSR (9 April 2009).
354. PRT DSR (13 May 2009).
355. Cauden interview.
356. *Ibid.*
357. JTF A HQ DSR (3 June 2009); OCC-P DSR (5 June 2009).
358. OMLT DSR (7 June 2009); JTF A HQ DSR.
359. PRT DSR (10 June 2009).
360. OMLT DSR (9 June 2009); battle group and OMLT DSRs (14 June 2009).
361. JTF A HQ DSR (11 June 2009).
362. PRT DSR (14 June 2009).
363. JTF A HQ DSR (21 June 2009).
364. JTF A HQ DSR (9 July 2009).
365. JTF A HQ DSR (23 July 2009).
366. PRT DSR (1 June 2009); PRT DSR (6 June 2009).
367. JTF A HQ DSRs (9–10 June 2009).
368. JTF A HQ DSRs (10–15 June 2009).
369. JTF A HQ DSRs (15–20 June 2009).
370. JTF A HQ DSRs (22–23 June 2009).

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371. Battle group DSR (28 June 2009).
372. JTF A HQ DSRs (1–7 July 2009).
373. JTF A HQ DSRs (16–18 July 2009); PRT DSR (18 July 2009).
374. JTF A HQ DSR (24 July 2009).
375. PRT DSRs (7–8 June 2009).
376. JTF A HQ DSRs (24 and 26 June 2009); JTF A HQ DSR (11 July 2009); JTF A HQ DSR (12 July 2009).
377. JTF A HQ DSRs (26–27 June 2009); JTF A HQ DSR (1 July 2009).
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379. PRT DSR (11 July 2009).
380. JTF A HQ DSRs (12–15 July 2009); JTF A HQ DSR (18 July 2009); JTF A HQ DSR (22 July 2009).
381. JTF A HQ DSRs (24–30 July 2009).
382. JTF A HQ briefing, “Persistent Surveillance System (PSS) CONOP” (6 June 2009).
383. TFK briefing, “Persistent Target Detection System (PTDS) TFK CONOP” (3 July 2009).
384. Barry notes to the author on PSS/PTDS.
385. OCC-P DSR (2 August 2009).
386. JTF A HQ DSR (12 May 2009).
387. JTF A HQ DSR (27 May 2009).
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390. PRT DSR (3 August 2009).
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398. “A Common Mission: The Canada-US Kandahar Coordination Plan” (21 August 2009).
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400. *Ibid.*
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403. SIGACT report (1 August 2009); SIGACT report "C/S 22 IED Strike" (2 August 2009).
404. JTF A HQ SIGACT report "BG C/S T32B Ambush During Op TORA ARWA V" (4 August 2009).
405. Battle group DSR (17 August 2009).
406. PRT DSRs (2–7 August 2009).
407. PRT DSR (13 August 2009).
408. PRT DSRs (1–15 August 2009).
409. JTF A HQ WSR (24–30 July 2009).
410. JTF A HQ WSR (31 July–6 August 2009).
411. JTF A HQ DSR (19 August 2009).
412. JTF A HQ DSR (18 August 2009).
413. JTF A HQ DSR (16 August 2009).
414. OCC-P DSR (20 August 2009).
415. JTF A HQ DSRs (18–20 August 2009).
416. JTF A HQ DSR (21 August 2009).
417. JTF A HQ WSR (14–20 August 2009).
418. *Ibid.*
419. McChrystal, *My Share of the Task*, page 330.

BOUNCING OFF THE ROPES:

AUGUST 2009–FEBRUARY 2010

The Aftermath of the 2009 Elections

At the beginning of September 2009, a report from a PRT CIMIC team contained an important warning about the likely future of TF Kandahar – and, in fact, the entire Canadian mission in Afghanistan.

Callsign 45 drivers were tasked to escort [Independent Electoral Commission] members to the IEC compound located within the Old Corps Headquarters from 2–3 September 2009. C/S 45 was told of numerous cases of corruption in regards to the elections of 20 August 2009. It was reported that, at this point in time, all the ballots for Kandahar City are still located at the IEC and have not yet been sent to Kabul due to the fact that they are under review for possible corruption ... It was reported that a lot of the local nationals working for the IEC are corrupt themselves.¹

The 2009 national elections in Afghanistan were an unmitigated disaster for the Afghans and ultimately a major setback for international efforts in their country. President Karzai had deliberately delayed the entire process earlier in the year for dubious reasons, using dubious processes that could be viewed only as anti-democratic.² An accurate voter's list still did not exist, even though one was mandated by the Bonn Agreement of 2001. This deficiency in turn affected the voter registration process. There was a lack of prepared and trained polling staff. Problematic security in some districts meant that voter education prior to the election could not take place.³ Worse, the campaign and the vote were set for the middle of the summer fighting season — never a good time in Afghanistan. British Ambassador Sherard Cowper-Coles summed up in retrospect:

Thanks to ambiguities in the Afghan constitution, no one knew exactly when [the elections] had to be held, or when exactly President Karzai's five-year mandate ran out. More important, there were deeply divided views on whether security conditions in the south and east would allow a credible election to be held. But money had been raised, and a UN election team formed.

After all, people reasoned, elections and democracy were what we were in Afghanistan for. If, after seven years, we couldn't hold elections, what had we really achieved? The elections had somehow to go ahead.⁴

Moreover, the Canadian government had put up \$35 million as part of a “coordinated multi-donor effort led by the United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan,” and was leading the charge.⁵ Touted as the “first Afghan-run election”, especially after irregularities were detected, this proved to be polite fiction, as one independent report noted:

UNAMA, through the United Nations Development Program's Enhanced Legal and Electoral Capacity for Tomorrow (UNDP-ELECT) programme, was heavily involved in planning, preparations, and logistics. The international community was thus perceived by Afghans as an active participant in the flawed process.⁶

There was, however, a larger game in play related to Karzai's attempts to reach an accommodation with the Taliban earlier in the year, which in turn related to Karzai's attempts to strengthen his ethnic power base. Recall in Volume I that Karzai was initially an appointed leader, with virtually no power in Kabul, subject to the whims of power brokers like Fahim Khan, Abdul Rasool Sayyaf, Rashid Dostum and the others. Karzai was able to flourish while the international community, led by Canada, held back the power brokers, dismantled their armies, and assisted in assimilating them in the democratic process in 2004. This gave Karzai, and particularly the Popalzai Pashtuns, a chance to enhance their power base throughout Afghanistan which, as we have seen, they were doing in the south by at least 2007 and probably earlier. (see Volume II, chapters 2 and 3).

When he put out peace feelers to the Taliban in 2009, Karzai likely wanted them to back off and may have been willing to accommodate them by compromising on issues like the role of women in Afghan society. This possibility alarmed numerous observers who saw that there was a very real potential that Karzai might roll back post-Taliban gains in Afghan society in order to keep power. Other entities who were equally alarmed included those who profiting from trucking, transport, and development agency construction contracts that would dry up if the war ended. The only power faction that appeared not to be alarmed were those involved in the narcotics trade: they had a demonstrated ability to work with whoever was in power, including the Taliban.



Political legitimacy was the goal of both pro- and anti-government forces in Afghanistan. Provision or denial of government services was the means by which that goal could be achieved. Consequently, promoting voter registration and participation in elections was a key element of the fight for Afghanistan.

At the same time, Karzai tried to draw in his old opponent Mohammad Qasim Fahim by offering him the vice-presidency. That move alarmed those who had fought in 2003 and 2004 to reduce friction between the ethnic power-brokers and stave off another civil war. Abdul Rashid Dostum even returned from exile in Turkey with no repercussions from Karzai, who used him to get Uzbek votes.⁷ There was substantial media outcry in the West over Karzai's accommodation of these ostensible villains.⁸ Elements in the US State Department, led by Richard Holbrooke who was equally concerned at these moves, worked behind the scenes to ensure that there were other contenders for the 2009 election in addition to Karzai. Karzai got wind of these manoeuvres and his relationship with the United States eroded.⁹ That in turn contributed to his inflexibility on election issues.

For several weeks after the polls closed, the Independent Elections Commission (appointed by Karzai) did not report a clear result, but it looked like Karzai did not receive the 50 percent of the vote required to declare victory. This lack of resolution led to a period of serious instability from August to November. When the lead contender, Dr. Abdullah, charged the elections as fraudulent, and he turned out to be right: 1.3 million ballots,

or more than 25 percent of the votes cast, had been thrown out.¹⁰ A run-off election was necessary, but the anti-Karzai candidates seemed likely to boycott it. This protracted and very public procedural debate severely undermined the legitimacy of Karzai's rule and international confidence in him:

The head of UNAMA's [Kai Eide's] failure to take decisive corrective action when evidence of fraud surfaced has badly damaged the UN's standing in the country ... Karzai's retention of power under these circumstances has bolstered the impression that the international community is disinterested or incapable of checking the corruption that has metastasized under his watch. The electoral fraud was a direct consequence of failure to build the capacity of government institutions. Since the 2004 presidential vote, the international community — UNAMA in particular — repeatedly turned a blind eye to the looming crisis of credibility rooted in unsound process ... the polls severely damaged UNAMA's ability to function effectively, weakening its internal morale and sharply eroding Afghan confidence in Kai Eide ... the UN's mission to bring stability to the country has been severely jeopardized.¹¹

As for the election in Kandahar Province, the numbers were revealing. Of 912,778 eligible voters, only 252,866 (or 27 percent) voted. Of the eligible voters, 221,436 (or 24 percent) voted for Karzai. The voter turnout was one of the lowest in Afghanistan,¹² and it compared unfavourably with the 70 percent turnout achieved in 2004. The pattern of voting by selected district was also revealing. In districts with little or no security presence, such as Arghistan, Maruf, Nesh and Khakrez, close to 100 percent of the vote went to Karzai. In insurgent-dominated Zharey District, 24,085 votes were cast and 22,196 were for Karzai. In Panjwayi, 11,130 of the 13,905 votes cast went to Karzai. In Arghandab, it was 13,615 out of 15,669. Kandahar City, with a population of nearly one million, had a voter turnout of only 60,204, and 50,618 of the votes cast went to Karzai. Spin Boldak turned out more voters than Kandahar City.¹³ (Many observers, including those in the media, did not pick up on the fact that security forces connected to Karzai family members handled security for the UN in Kandahar for years, and that plans were underway for another Karzai relative to provide special militias to handle elections security in insecure districts).¹⁴

There was simply no way that results like these could give President Karzai a mandate from the people of Kandahar Province, let alone a nation-wide one. Ballot stuffing was the predominant form of fraud and thus an indication of significant preparation, planning and pre-meditation.¹⁵ It could be argued that, in Kandahar, the views and beliefs of the population remained unknown. It was clear, though, that the people had been intimidated out of voting, and they did not buy into the government message; 73 percent of eligible voters were either on the fence, or supported the enemy.

The upshot for the Canadian effort in Kandahar Province was that the government of Afghanistan, at either the national or provincial level, had questionable legitimacy. For Afghans who encountered Canadians on a day-to-day basis, the 2009 elections were the final straw. They did not trust the Karzai government, they especially did not trust the UN, and they were terrorized by the insurgents. It was easier for them to revert to survival mode instead of participating in political processes at the district level. This was the situation laid at TF Kandahar's feet in the fall of 2009.

There was irony in the situation. During the debate over holding a run-off election in November, the highly respected Dr. Sibghatullah Mojaddedi "received a call from someone close to the Taliban who allegedly said that 'we'll be on Karzai's side and keep the disturbances down — just don't negotiate with Abdullah'"¹⁶ which referred to the Tajik presidential contender who protested the election process and results based on the obvious and rampant fraud. Serious concerns were also raised over "the growing ethnicized nature of the rhetoric being used to get out the Pashtun vote."¹⁷ And, given the possibility that the Tajiks and others in the north could be aggrieved at Pashtun dominance of the new government, the possibility of a country-wide inter-ethnic war loomed over the Pashtun inter-tribal skirmishes that Canada were observing in the south. Rumours circulated of a possible *coup d'état*, this time led by the Afghan National Army; they continued well into 2010.

The McChrystal Report and Its Impact

While the Karzai government was dissipating, ISAF commander Gen Stanley McChrystal presented the strategy review initiated by the United States and NATO earlier in the summer. Simply put, McChrystal told his audiences that, because current approaches to the insurgency in Afghanistan were "under-resourced" (that is, in numbers of troops and surveillance systems), ISAF had adopted operational methods that were less than compatible with optimal counterinsurgency operations. That approach isolated ISAF troops from the population. When coupled with less-than-perfect Afghan governance at the provincial and district levels, this state of affairs permitted the insurgency to make inroads in exerting control over the Afghan population.¹⁸ The report was expansive on how to address these issues, if ISAF were properly resourced.

Fundamentally, the detailed contents in the McChrystal report was a statement of the obvious and was not new to Canadians who had fought in Kandahar province since 2005. Most of the report's points had already been identified by Laroche, Thompson, Vance and their staffs during their respective rotations. The importance of the McChrystal Report lay in who it was targeted at: the Obama administration, and the NATO-member countries with forces in Afghanistan. Although the Obama administration had agreed to the 17,000-man surge already under way, they still were withholding the additional 30,000 troops and other

resources that McChrystal and his predecessors recommended to be able to implement an effective campaign — pending yet another strategy review. In the NATO realm, there was extensive wavering after the Dutch announced that they would pull out of Oruzgan Province in 2010. The McChrystal Report brought everyone to the same table and forced them to see the situation in stark terms.

To add weight to McChrystal's arguments and to present a unified front, Minister of Defence Abdul Rahim Wardak wrote to the NATO principles and baldly stated: "We have arrived here by virtue of decisions made in the past that underestimated the enemy, failed to identify the true source of the threat, did not create a fully resourced civil-military counterinsurgency campaign plan that failed to deliver good governance and development for the people and that under-resourced the campaign." Success was achievable but only if NATO acted now: "The Taliban lacks strong leadership, popular support, and an ideology that Afghans can embrace. Yet the threat is growing due to its external support and the weakness of our joint efforts." He decried the current discussions about ISAF withdrawal in that "Any wavering of our resolve or suggestion of an exit strategy or deadline for withdrawal would be as Secretary Gates said, a strategic mistake and have catastrophic consequences for us all."¹⁹ It was now make or break time for all of the players in the Afghan drama, NATO, Afghan, UN and NGO.

This was easier said than done, however, because the means to resolve the impasse wound up enmeshed in the ongoing American strategy review. This in turn was fed by the 2009 elections issue and questionable legitimacy of the Karzai government. "Resourcing" McChrystal's way ahead was not a done deal. The issue increasingly revolved around what to do about Pakistan and Afghanistan as a single systemic problem, something that was outside of NATO ISAF's purview. The various American schools of thought on the problem by September-October 2009 were:²⁰

1. Pakistani safe havens keep the insurgency in Afghanistan going. Until this problem is addressed, do not send any more ground troops. The onus is on Pakistan.
2. The Taliban in Afghanistan do not have to be defeated, they need only be degraded enough so that the Afghan security forces can defeat them.
3. Must the United States defeat the Taliban to defeat Al Qaeda?

4. If the Taliban succeed in Afghanistan, will they take over nuclear-armed Pakistan next?
5. The Taliban should be fought and forced to the table for a political settlement in order to end the war.

Throughout November, the Obama administration thrashed out ways to reconcile these points of view with the McChrystal Report. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates achieved a consensus of sorts that argued that there should be six primary military objectives:²¹

1. reverse the Taliban momentum;
2. deny the Taliban access to and control of key populations and production centres and lines of communication;
3. disrupt the Taliban outside secured areas, and prevent Al Qaeda from regaining sanctuary in Afghanistan;
4. degrade the Taliban to levels manageable by the Afghans;
5. increase the size and capacity of the Afghan security forces; and
6. build the Afghan government, especially in key ministries.

President Obama absorbed this and told his staff, “There needs to be a plan about how we’re going to hand it off and get out of Afghanistan ... We need to make it clear to people that the cancer is in Pakistan.” As a result, the new American strategy in November 2009 consisted of deploying 30,000 more troops, but only until July 2011. Nation-wide counterinsurgency as envisioned by Gen McChrystal and the Afghan Ministry of Defence was not endorsed, nor was “nation-building”. Enough “space” was to be cleared and held so the Afghan security forces could be trained to take on the insurgency themselves. The aerial campaign against Al Qaeda in Pakistan was stepped up from Afghan bases, while special operations forces in Afghanistan were to ramp up efforts to take out Taliban leadership targets. The American president concluded that it was too expensive for the United States to engage in long-term counterinsurgency and nation building as “it would break the budget and it would leave the Afghan government more dependent on us.” He instructed American military commanders, “Don’t clear and hold what you cannot transfer [to the Afghans]. Don’t overextend us.”²²

None of this strategizing was designed to answer the troublesome question of Pakistan. American leaders really had no viable solution to that array of problems, so they deferred it once again. The new American strategy, and thus the new NATO strategy under McChrystal, was a compromise of positions. It was designed to throw the Taliban insurgency back on its heels and buy time for the Afghans to sort themselves out politically and militarily before the Americans and others pulled back and out. There was no longer any talk about defeating the insurgency. The key words remained, as they had for the past three years, “disrupt” and “capacity building”. The Afghans now had to step up, as there was a deadline: July 2011. There would be no more unqualified support.

In late 2009, the situation of ISAF contingents across Afghanistan mirrored the Canadian experience to date in Kandahar: holding the line and disrupting the insurgency until the Afghans could build up their forces and the Americans could reinforce with enough troops to defend the people. Despite all the heat and light it attracted, the new strategy had little impact at first on the Canadian contingent’s activities in their area of operations in Kandahar Province. They already had their withdrawal deadline, and they had implemented most of Gen McChrystal’s recommendations well before McChrystal wrote them.

A Faltering Insurgency in Kandahar Province?

Over the course of several years the Taliban established an annual pattern whereby their summer surge forces and senior commanders moved back to Pakistan in the fall while local forces and urban terrorists continued operations to remind the government and ISAF that the insurgency was still viable. For the most part these movements coincided with the reduction of foliage, which made the fighters more susceptible to detection and destruction from the air as the fall progressed into winter. It was also used by the insurgent leadership as a time to psychologically rally their fighters or, as one Canadian officer put it, “to get their jihad face on.”

In 2009 it initially looked to TF Kandahar intelligence people as though this pattern was repeating itself but for some reason was starting earlier. This shift was initially chalked up to an earlier start of the Ramadan period. However, ISTAR reportage asserted that Pakistani groups and Afghan groups in Kandahar were openly taunting each other, and the senior Taliban leadership in Quetta issued orders to local insurgents to increase activity during Ramadan. Coalition strikes against insurgent leaders west of Kandahar City also contributed to a leadership breakdown, which exacerbated command and control issues.²³ By the end of September, the assessment was that:

... the insurgency continues to appear dislocated, with multiple reports of rifts amongst the leadership, lack of clear direction from Quetta, and lack of resources. The insurgency in Kandahar province has yet to return to the pre-Ramadan pace of operations and significant acts are below seasonal norms.²⁴

Furthermore, local fighters were disengaging from Dand, Panjwayi, and to a lesser extent Arghandab. Those in Dand headed into the Malajat area, while others moved west into Maywand, where they were protected by District Leader Haji Bawari. Others moved into the Reg Desert south of Panjwayi.²⁵ Urban terrorism did not stop, but the Afghan security forces reported that “the Joint Patrols in Kandahar City have disrupted the insurgents and ... they no longer have freedom of movement.”²⁶ Yet another indicator was the movement of insurgent training camps on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border to points east at the behest of the Pakistani ISI.²⁷ (see Figure 6-1).

To what extent was this normal activity and to what extent was it not? This question intrigued the TF Kandahar J2 and the ASIC. There were the usual logistics issues — insurgent cells were complaining that they were not getting everything they wanted — but that was not new. The first clue was the forcible removal of the two Taliban commanders responsible for Dand and Panjwayi, Zia Ul Haq and Janan Agha. The infamous Jabar Agha was also disciplined in some fashion by Taliban authorities. The shadow governor of Zharey District was also removed and the dangerous Mullah Zergay moved from Zharey and Senjaray to Dand. It was increasingly evident that the Quetta Shura was not happy with their commanders’ failure to reduce the Operation KALAY salient.²⁸

Canadian analysts concluded that there were serious fractures developing in the insurgency in Kandahar Province. Local insurgents were increasingly dissatisfied with the effort and expressed this to their leadership in Quetta starting in the summer of 2009. Their issues related to the insurgency’s propensity to live off the land. Pashtunwali was regularly employed by the insurgents to garner this support. After three years of attrition, however, there were fewer local fighters and an increased number of outsiders: Pakistani Pashtuns, Afghan refugees, Islamist fighters, Pakistani Taliban and so on. These people abused the hospitality clause of the Pashtunwali tribal code to a greater extent than the local fighters and resentment was building. (To what extent this was assisted by Canadian information operations efforts is difficult to determine).²⁹

ISTAR reportage noted that the Quetta Shura was particularly concerned about three specific items. The first was the use of children by insurgent commanders to emplace IEDs. Early in October, three children were killed doing so. The second was an IED attack against a civilian bus in Maywand in late September which resulted in mass casualties. A Taliban

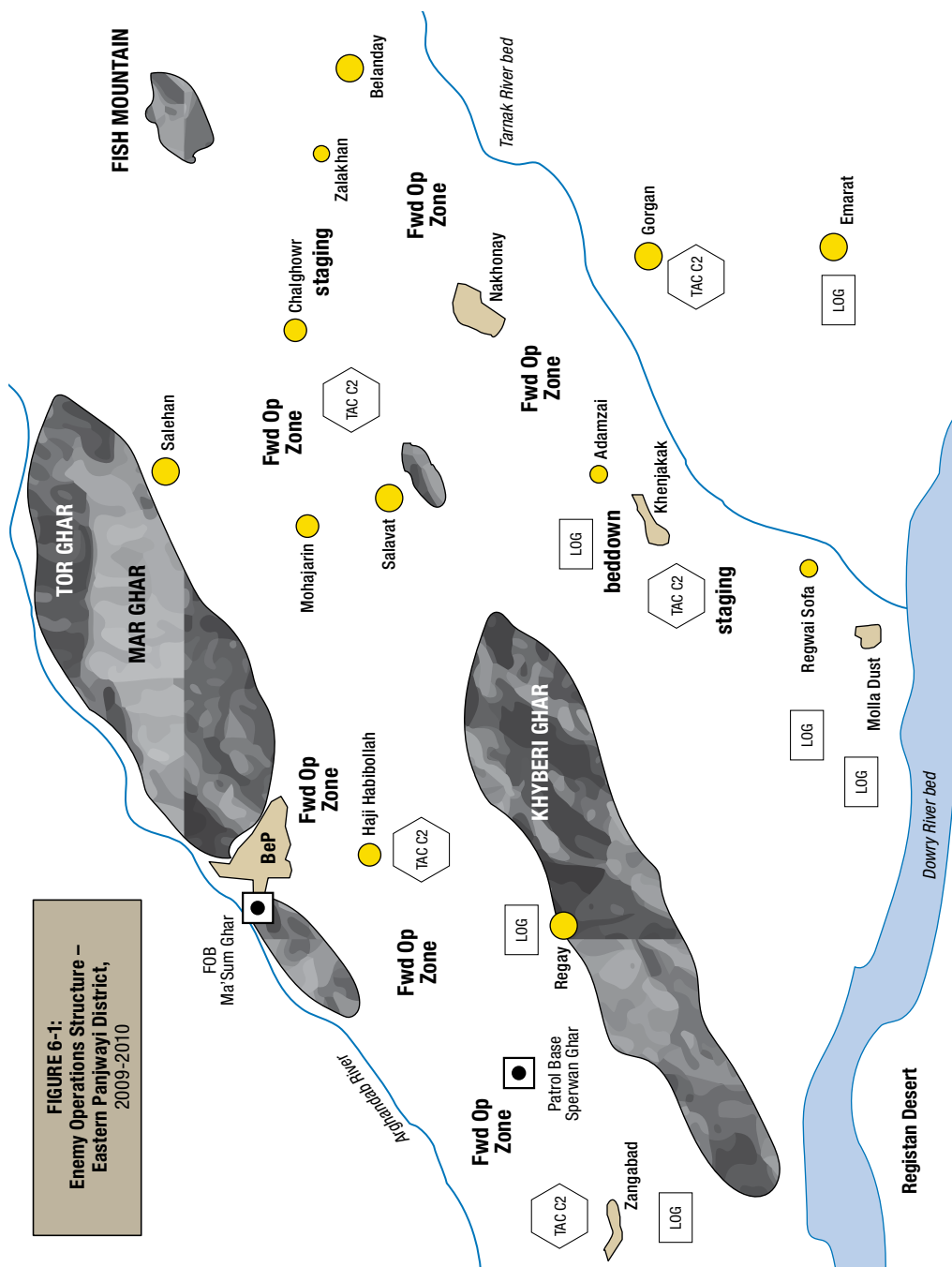


FIGURE 6-1:
Enemy Operations Structure –
Eastern Panjwayi District,
2009-2010

Figure 6-1: Enemy Operations Structure – Eastern Panjwayi District, 2009-2010

delegation travelled from Pakistan to conduct a board of inquiry and recommended that the insurgency stop using pressure plate IEDs against targets on Highway 1. They could still use them in villages if they warned local people where they were located. The third was a rocket attack against a compound that killed five children on 8 October. This was a major sea change: it was the first time the Quetta Shura appears to have been concerned about the negative publicity vis-a-vis killing civilians, especially children.

In fact, an insurgent shura held in Quetta in early to mid-October included Taliban leaders as well as representatives of the Pakistani ISI and delegates from Iran and Saudi Arabia. “One of the topics raised at the Shura was the issue of avoiding the injury of local nationals while conducting operations, in order to improve relations with the population of Afghanistan.”³⁰ For years, Canadian information operations highlighted the indiscriminate nature of terrorism in Kandahar Province, and now the enemy was adjusting to the Canadian narrative. At the same time, however, the shura noted that “the movement had lost the support of local Afghans, who now considered the insurgents to be the enemy.”³¹

The insurgent shura reportedly assessed the various ISAF members and their capability. Canadian analysts were proud to report that:

The final topic raised related to the disparity of how the insurgents viewed ISAF/CF members. Specifically, insurgents in Kandahar Province are to avoid attacking Canadian troops, and only engage in self-defence. The reasoning for this was that Canadian troops are fair, and just want stability in Afghanistan and Canadian troops should be respected for their efforts and not considered infidels like other ISAF members.³²

The fact that the enemy leadership in Quetta made all of these changes to their approach at once while internally paying tribute to Canadian soldiers leads us to the conclusion that the cumulative effects of three years of operations were starting, just starting, to pay off.³³ Could this sliver of hope prevail in the face of the failed 2009 national elections and the muddled nature of American strategy? That remained unclear. The Quetta Shura re-oriented its operations towards undermining security in Kandahar City and away from district operations for the rest of 2009. Perhaps there was a new way to invest the city and accomplish their aims, or simply wait out the American influx and eventual withdrawal.

Handing off Arghandab and Lower Shah Wali Kot, August 2009

Relations between Major J.F. Cauden’s Recce Squadron, the American SeaBee construction engineers who were enhancing FOB Frontenac and the private security force at that facility were exceptionally good. Indeed, former American special operations personnel that were part of that security force favourably compared Canadian operations

in Arghandab to American special operations “due to the way we were operating and the relative small size of our patrols”.³⁴ Relations with the incoming task force were, however, problematic. This manifested itself in a number of ways.

First, the 1-17 Infantry advance party was provided with contact information for the Recce Squadron. The main body, however, did not contact Major Cauden prior to its arrival. Second, 1-17 Infantry was a digitized Stryker battalion. In practical terms this mechanized unit relied on extremely sophisticated but fragile information management systems. For example, their electronic maps did not arrive with their advance force or main body for several weeks. Recce Squadron and TF Kandahar, anticipating this problem, ensured that enough paper maps were on hand to close the gap.

The deployment of the American battalion was, from Recce Squadron’s perspective, disturbing. The American unit moved by tactical bounds from Kandahar to FOB Frontenac, but did not inform Recce Squadron or attempt to coordinate with it. During the course of this deployment, 1-17 Infantry rolled a vehicle. On arrival at the FOB, the American commanding officer received a handover briefing from Recce Squadron, which provided all of the information they had available on the situation, to wit: “Recent int was somewhat limited due to the fact that the squadron was in an Economy of Effort with little resources and that TFK/BG int resources were focused on the south.”³⁵

There were significant attitudinal differences between the incoming American unit and the Canadians in Arghandab. Major Cauden’s view was that the incoming American commanding officer “wasn’t listening at all” when the Recce Squadron briefings identified where the IED ‘hot spots’ were in the district: these included Route Red Dog, the old checkpoint DARRYL defile, and the Mansurabad area. Cauden explained his task, that is, keeping the Tarin Kot road access open, and that he deliberately limited activity in and around the hot spots. The 1-17 Infantry leadership scoffed at this and conveyed to Cauden that, to them, Canada was like all the other countries that “weren’t fighting” and they were going to take offensive action and assert their presence. One company commander ordered his people to go everywhere the Canadians recommended they not go.³⁶

On their first day of operations, 1-17 Infantry rolled a vehicle. On day two, they rolled another, injuring the driver. Then a road move down Route Red Dog resulted in an IED strike. 1-17 Infantry had procedures that emphasized immediately bypassing an IED strike site and carrying on, instead of consolidating and supporting the recovery effort. That protocol led to yet another IED strike. On another occasion, a 1-17 Infantry vehicle bogged down near the river and, because they would not request assistance from non-American units, the vehicle stayed bogged for nearly three days before it could be recovered. Before their first week was out, 1-17 Infantry reported a soldier missing in action; in fact, he was vaporized by an IED, and the battalion took some time to figure out how he had died.

In yet another incident, Recce Squadron had to help 1-17 Infantry recover a vehicle. After these fiascos, lower-level leaders in 1-17 Infantry discreetly contacted Recce Squadron and asked for advice, but they made sure their senior leaders were unaware of this.³⁷

The Canadians also became aware that there were serious doctrinal differences within 1-17 Infantry. According to Maj Cauden, “The leadership did not believe in the counterinsurgency doctrine ordered by COMISAF and were firm believers in counter-guerilla doctrine.”³⁸ BGen Vance tasked Recce Squadron to remain in Arghandab and support 1-17 Infantry during the run-up to the elections but, according to Maj Cauden, “I offered our services but the [American] CO did not want our support.” The issue soon became moot; BGen Vance was increasingly concerned about the situation in southern Dand District and, by early September, Maj Cauden conducted his recce for the move south.

Kandahar City Operations, August–October 2009

The level of violence in Kandahar City spiked in August and September after the elections but then dramatically dropped off afterwards. All in all there were four IED attacks, four assassinations, one mortar attack, one rocket attack, and one direct fire attack. A breakdown is necessary as there were some nuances: not all acts of violence were demonstrably insurgent-generated. For example, the five assassinations included an assistant military prosecutor; a worker from the Independent Electoral Commission; a female worker from the Women’s Affairs Office; a security contractor; and a teenage male with a ‘night letter’ attached to his corpse. Only two were provably insurgent attacks. Similarly, most of the IEDs were directed against UNAMA, UN-HABITAT, and National Directorate of Security headquarters.³⁹ The UN-HABITAT bombing was particularly problematic: in addition to the three killed and four wounded, the attack reduced the probability that UN-HABITAT could or would continue supporting the vital Community Development Councils or otherwise be involved in other forms of sub-district governance support.

However, the huge truck bomb that detonated in the middle of the city on 25 August and killed 50 and wounded 70 civilians was suspicious. Initially, Canadian analysts were confused because it did not explode near any government or coalition forces facility. Some even theorized that it was a premature detonation. Two days afterwards, the Taliban propaganda machine distanced itself from the attack and claimed no knowledge of it.⁴⁰ It was left up to Provincial Council leader Ahmad Wali Karzai to announce to the media that the target was the Japanese construction company, Saita, a firm that employed Afghan and Pakistani workers on road-building projects using Japanese International Cooperation Agency aid money.⁴¹ To make matters even more interesting, Afghan police refused to search compounds believed to be associated with the attack’s preparations.⁴² Some Canadian observers concluded that the 25 August bombing was commercial violence over road construction contracting and not a Taliban attack.⁴³

With the American influx in August there were now more and more security organizations operating in Kandahar City and this had the potential to lead to serious problems in coordination. BGen Vance re-emphasized the importance of the city's security framework and especially the role of his Afghan partners in the police and army:

Firstly, the ANSF and CF must be able to control access to the City. He stated that this needs to be done by checking all of the vehicles entering the City; this process needs to be worked on by the Working Group and standards needed to be developed. Secondly, he stated that the joint patrols need to take place in the City itself ... these operations needed to be intelligence-led as provided by the National Directorate of Security. He indicated that if these patrols were very active, it would make it impossible for the insurgents to operate. Thirdly, he indicated that the Afghan National Police must conduct routine operations while the Afghan National Army needs to have a very strong quick reaction force.⁴⁴

In addition to the Afghan police, NDS, and army, there were now Canadian Police OMLT, American police mentors, Canadian CIVPOL advisors, Stab A from the PRT, the new Afghan Civil Order Police, and now 97th Military Police Battalion from the US Army. The OCC-P staff were ideally suited and situated to work on this problem, particularly in mentoring army, police, and NDS personnel in the art of coordination and division of responsibilities. They did everything they could to ensure Afghan ownership of the security tasks in Kandahar City. Stab A was represented in the Kandahar City Security Working Group, while the P-OMLT and the OCC-P reinvigorated the liaison systems connecting the Afghan organizations with coalition forces. The Afghan security forces were intrigued with the possibility of systematizing and standardizing the TOLO ATAL operations they successfully conducted earlier in the year. As a result, TOLO ATAL and the Kandahar City Security Plan merged as well and drew in the Joint Patrol operations.⁴⁵ These developments were facilitated by the arrival of the new Provincial Chief of Police, MGen Sardar Mohammad Zazai, who brought a fresh eye to the new activities.

Canadian CIVPOL and the P-OMLT worked on improving the city's rudimentary 911-like emergency telephone system. When a flood of calls to the insurgent tip line overwhelmed the system, one police communications officer added the number of his personal cellphone to emergency telephone system advertisements so he could take on part of the volume. The system ran into trouble when insurgents intimidated the cellphone service providers. Canadian observers were incredulous when this problem was eventually resolved in Kabul, where the cellphone companies and the government negotiated use of the phone system *with the insurgents*.⁴⁶ And that was not all. The Afghan Wireless Communications Company manager for the area, who had good relations with the OCC-P, reported a

disturbing situation where he and his staff were threatened by Provincial Shura members who wanted to tap free electrical power from the cell towers to their residences and, when they were told no “threatened to blow up the cell tower.” The Afghan Wireless staff took their concerns to the Governor for adjudication and noted that they didn’t want ISAF personnel to intervene but that they should be aware “in the event something happened down the road.”⁴⁷

As part of the consolidation of security activities in the city and the P-OMLT’s move to the rural districts, the 97th Military Police Battalion took over the mentorship of four police sub-stations at the end of September 2009 and the duties of the U.S. Police Mentoring Team in early October. Thus, 300 American military police assumed the mentorship of all the Afghan police in Kandahar City, previously handled by 60 Canadians and 60 Americans. This change nearly tripled coalition policing capacity and significantly boosted the number of Joint Patrols.⁴⁸

Stab A still tracked critical infrastructure in the city, especially the power plant and electricity supply — the Kajaki Dam provided Kandahar City with only two hours of power a day. Canadian CIMIC operators learned that the Taliban was extorting money from the power company in that “they were paid not to attack power lines” and they “mined maintenance stations along the lines so that they get paid to show [the power workers] where the mines are.”⁴⁹ By October the power company received funds to expand their facilities and became eligible to maintain a security force. Hart Security from South Africa arrived to handle this task, which added yet another private security force for the OCC-P to keep track of.⁵⁰ The CIMIC teams learned that, before the Kajaki Dam problems and insurgent interference, Kandahar City usually consumed 40 megawatts of power. Now, the city survived on 11 megawatts, four from the dam and seven from the city power station, distributed by means of manually controlled rolling blackouts. This was not an ideal situation but one that was better than in the previous year.⁵¹

The PRT quick-reaction force, with its explosive ordnance disposal capabilities, regularly deployed. One event stands out: on 28 September, the Afghan National Police from Sub-Station 9 reported an IED and cordoned it off. The device detonated, hurting no one, but the Canadian team that arrived to clear the area found not one, but three Directional Fragmentation Charges set to kill first responders:

While disarming the [fragmentation charge], C-IED heard the dial tone of the triggerman attempting to detonate the IEDs, however C-IED had removed the [dual-tone multi frequency receiver]. C-IED conducted a BIP [blow in place] on the IEDs and returned the evidence to Camp Nathan Smith.⁵²

On another occasion, the PRT quick-reaction force had to deal with 5,500 pounds of homemade explosive that had been delivered to Camp Nathan Smith for disposal — in the middle of the night.

In late September, children and young men in several districts had taken to throwing rocks and bricks at Canadian patrols; by early October, these assaults were widespread. When PSYOPS patrols went to work on the problem, they learned that residents of one area had heard about innocent people dying in ISAF airstrikes, so they “sometimes don’t know which side to take because the same things happen when the insurgents arrive as they also kill innocent people.”⁵³ Further investigation revealed that shura members in the city were trying to:

... educate adults to teach their children right from wrong and admit that it is likely their parents and the insurgents are promoting and provoking the incidents. The mullahs believe the insurgents are telling the kids to throw rocks and swarm ISAF vehicles in hopes that the kids might be arrested or injured which the insurgents would use as IO [information operations] against ISAF.⁵⁴

Once again, the insurgency was using the Canadians’ religious blind spot to undermine the coalition effort. The Afghan security forces decided on their own to launch joint patrols to cordon and search three suspect mosques. One of them contained a small insurgent hospital or aid station. Another had anti-American propaganda stockpiled in it.⁵⁵

Eventually, a decision was made to develop a closer relationship with the Kandahar Ulema Shura, and LCol Carl Turenne’s CIMIC and PSYOPS teams led the effort. In a meeting with Sayed Hanifi, the Kandahar Ulema Shura director, TF Kandahar was able to expand its knowledge of the religious dimension of the conflict:

They have solid friendships with different media outlets who provide them with technical support with their equipment. [Hanifi] had been the director for four years now and said there weren’t any tensions within the shura. When asked about a radio station called Talimul Islam, they reacted in fear as they had serious issues with that radio station. The station ... is directed by Mohammad Omar Khitabi ... [who] called them in order to challenge the moral authority of the Ulema Shura. Mr. Khitabi said nowhere in the Koran did it say that suicide bombings is not permitted and that jihad is not warranted against the foreigners. They asked [the Canadian team] who was funding the radio station, who responded that common knowledge seems to indicate that it is funded by businessmen and communities but they strongly suspect that insurgents are the predominant funding source. The Ulema Shura strongly encourages ISAF in investigating their funding sources.⁵⁶

With BGen Vance's blessing, LCol Turenne established formal relations with the Ulema Shura, whose membership "recognizes the great work KPRT does for the people." In response to Stab A's requests for help with the rock-throwing problem, the Ulema Shura publicly condemned this behaviour and admonished parents to have their children cease and desist. Sayed Hanifi explained to LCol Turenne that "the shura is confronted with serious challenges, such as the assassination of 23 of their members [in the past five years]." LCol Turenne told Hanifi that "he would make any project to the Ulema Shura a top priority for his team."⁵⁷ This was *three years* after Capt Suleyman Demiray, the imam who was the CAF's first Muslim chaplain, warned that the religious front, and specifically the Ulema Shura, had to be systematically addressed if Canada was to succeed in assisting the Afghans in Kandahar.⁵⁸

All the indicators pointed to continuing problems in District 6, which was no surprise as Mayor Hamidi had fired the District 6 manager as a prelude to cleaning up Malajat. On 8–9 October, 3rd Kandak with its Canadian mentors linked up with the Afghan police and *their* mentors for Operation KATAKAWAL KALAY PISHAK V, a sweep through District 6. Stab A deployed to positions south of Malajat to stop any insurgents exfiltrating in that direction as the sweep went in. There was no contact and little was uncovered.⁵⁹

During this operation, information was received about a suspicious madrassa in Malajat. Stab A went back in to Malajat on 12 October, partly to shape Operation KALAY III and partly to examine the possibility of establishing a platoon house. While gathering information on the religious school, the Stab A team was assaulted with rocks and cries of "Allah Akbar!" while children gestured with their left hands. Clearly, all was not well in Malajat.⁶⁰

Zharey District Operations, August–November 2009

The deteriorating situation in Zharey district seen over the summer and in the run-up to the elections prompted a re-allocation of forces in Task Force Kandahar. BGen Vance decided to move the bulk of 1-12 Infantry out of Maywand and into Zharey: this move, Operation LUR SAPA, commenced on 1 September. At the same time there were deliberations over the deployment of a sixth kandak to 1-205 Brigade. 6th Kandak was partially-trained and designated a 'road security kandak' to reflect its state. The problem was, who was going to mentor Kandak 6? The Canadian OMLT was completely tapped out. Planning commenced on replacing 1st Kandak in Zharey with 6th Kandak sometime in the fall of 2009.

The situation as it stood in Zharey in late August and into September had the enemy applying pressure on the strong points at Howz-e Madad, Lakhokhel, and Pulchakan in the west, and mounting a substantial harassment campaign on Highway 1 between FOB Wilson

and Strong Point Senjaray (see Figure 6-2 and Figure 6-2a). On the stretch between Wilson and Senjaray, coalition forces suffered six large IED strikes and 15 ambushes, and killed three emplacer teams in airstrikes in September alone. 1-12 Infantry lost PFC Matthew Wildes to an IED while the unit was moving to Zharey. Task Force Thor, the American route-clearance unit, suffered six strikes that wounded at least 12 soldiers and took the lives of Sgt Glen Stivison Jr, Spec Jesús Flores, Spec Daniel Lawson, PFC Jeremiah Monroe and PFC Brandon M. Styer.⁶¹

One of these attacks was accompanied by a direct-fire ambush that turned into a six-hour firefight. On 24 August, a TF Thor route-clearance team came under fire while exploiting an IED site on Highway 1. A Canadian quick-reaction force comprising Leopard 2A6M tanks and a platoon from B Company 2 R22eR sortied to support and soon took fire as well. The tanks opened up with 120-mm fire while the infantry advanced on the enemy positions south of the highway. An orbiting OH-58D Kiowa Warrior came on station, spotted enemy reinforcements, and engaged with rockets and .50 caliber machinegun fire. The helicopter crew spotted another enemy team and called down to the tanks, who took the enemy out with 120mm fire. The combined Canadian-American team was able to win the firefight against the ambushing forces and extracted to FOB Wilson.⁶²

TF Kandahar was increasingly concerned:

The size and targeting of IEDs along Highway 1 is becoming increasingly capable of routinely causing catastrophic kills when targeting CF armoured vehicles, and in several locations on three occasions due to large IED detonations (350 to 1,000 pounds of homemade explosives).⁶³

These “deep-chamber charges were more and more popular with insurgents and were used to specifically target TF Thor in order to reduce the route clearance capacity on Highway 1.”⁶⁴

In order to assist with the 1-12 Infantry redeployment, Task Force Kandahar, 1-205 Brigade, and the Regional Battle Group (South) were all employed to relieve the pressure the enemy exerted on the Lakokhel-Pulchakhan-Howz-e Madad area. 1st Kandak and B Company 2 R22eR had already mounted Operation KATAKAWAL LAKOKHEL on 16–17 August to generate breathing room south of that strong point, and M-777 artillery with ScanEagle SUAV overwatch made short work of insurgents attempting to interfere with a sweep by 1st Kandak.⁶⁵ Insurgent retaliation employing ‘shoot and scoot’ attacks on 1 September was brushed off by 1st Kandak and the OMLT mentors.

The incoming elements from from 6th Kandak arrived by 1 September and the following day launched Operation KATAKAWA KALAYE PISHAK IV with 1st Kandak 1 and Canadian OMLT in support. This operation consisted of a pulse south of Howz-e

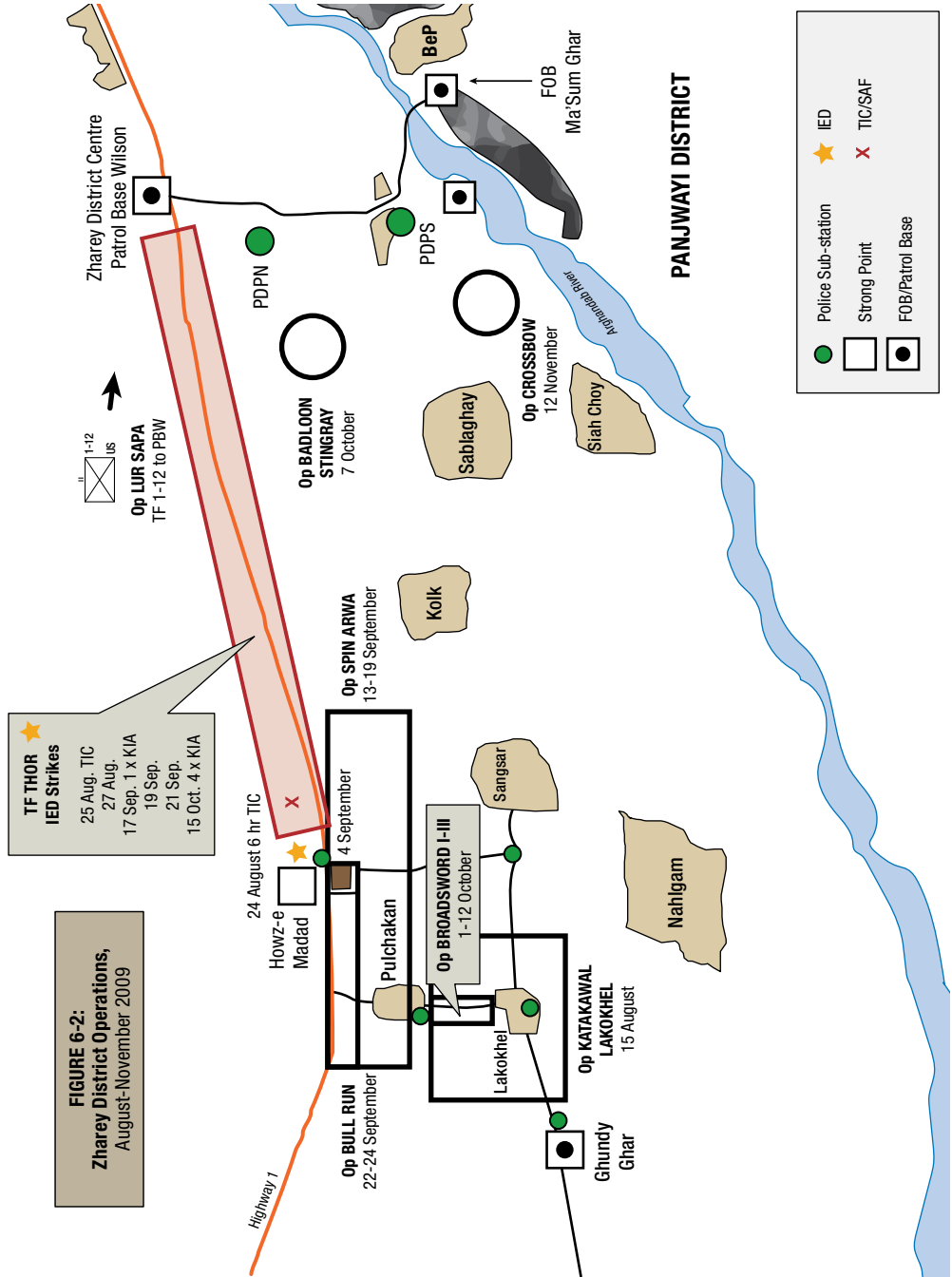


Figure 6-2: Zharey District Operations, August-November 2009

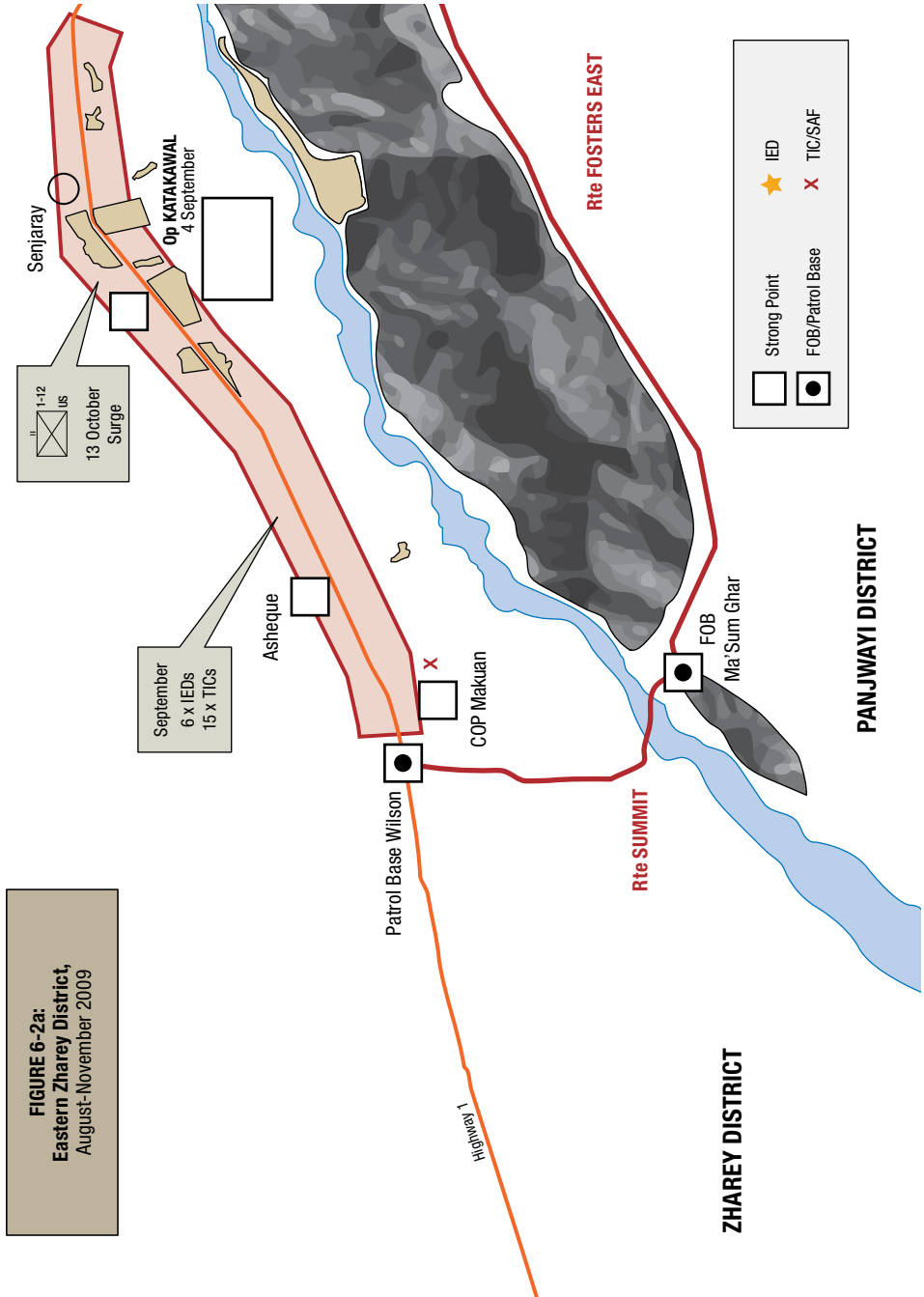


Figure 6-2a: Eastern Zharey District, August-November 2009

Madad to the first wadi line, followed by a second pulse south of Senjaray on 5 September. The Howz-e Madad phase ran into several contacts where 1st Kandak 1 had to extricate 6th Kandak covered by OH-58D Kiowa Warrior helicopters. An IED on Highway 1 wounded several Afghan troops as they reinforced the action.

As we have seen, enemy activity in and around Howz-e Madad was usually supported from the Sangsar-Kolk area. BGen Vance secured the services of Regional Battle Group (South) for an airmobile operation into that area. On the night of 13 September, Operation SPIN ARWA began with the 2 R22eR Battle Group deploying a company with tanks on the highway as a block, and part of another company into Howz-e Madad to backfill the police and their mentors as they moved to the wadi lines to block west during the airmobile insertion. Insurgents opened fire on the arriving transport helicopters, but AH-64 Apaches supporting the insertion killed 20 insurgent fighters and wounded 10 more. When searched, compounds of interest yielded mortars, recoilless rifles, and AGS-17 automatic grenade launchers. All coalition elements involved in SPIN ARWA came under fire at various points the next day and at least 16 insurgents were killed in the course of these actions. Canadian engineers moved in to assist with compound clearance but one team triggered an antipersonnel mine, wounding two. Initially moving east towards Spin Pir along the wadi lines, the retreating enemy shifted direction and headed south away from the coalition forces. They were harassed by helicopters as they dispersed.⁶⁶

On 23–24 September, 1-12 Infantry launched Operation BULL RUN with its reconnaissance unit south of Howz-e Madad to generate even more disruption as the battalion redeployed and conducted a relief in place at Ghundy Ghar. The idea was to catch insurgents flowing back after SPIN ARWA, but there was no substantial contact. To follow up and complement the previous action, the Afghan forces and mentors from the strong points in the area conducted a series of night ambush patrols from 10 October to 12 October. Again, no substantial contact was made.⁶⁷

The Canadian mentors noted that:

Op BROADSWORD III was conducted last night/early this morning. It entailed three squad-level ambushes (all mentored) [near Strong Points] Lakokhel, and Howz-e Madad. There was no contact. There were, however, no IEDs found in those locations during the road sweeps this morning. 1st Kandak 1-205 continues to locate between 2–3 IEDs a day. These soldiers, by necessity, become clever and astute detectors of IEDs. They have also paid a price — 19 soldiers from the kandak have been killed since March 2009 and another 40 seriously injured, mostly by IEDs.⁶⁸

Canadian CIMIC operators remained engaged in Zharey district for some time as the American battalion flowed in and took over district TOC operations on 7-8 September. The following day American police mentors took over dealing with what remained of the Zharey Afghan Uniformed Police. Their reports were discouraging. Little measurable progress had been made in Zharey. The local population abused the land and damage claims processes. The District Leader pointed out that “there is no way to confirm that the damages really happened” and “when the claimants receive the money ... many of them are leaving the district and are not rebuilding what has been destroyed.”⁶⁹ The Taliban were so confident they kidnapped a doctor and his driver right out of the clinic at the Zharey District Centre, next door to FOB Wilson.⁷⁰ 1-12 Infantry reported that “the villagers want to help us but stated that if they help us then the Taliban will cut their heads off.”⁷¹ The cell phone system remained down throughout the district. Locals told CIMIC teams that the enemy controlled Pashmul, and threatening night letters frequently appeared at every mosque in the district.⁷²

By mid-October, the many moving parts of Zharey District had to be reconciled. 1-12 Infantry had to regain lost ground so that a framework for aid and governance could be re-built and hopefully expanded in critical areas. Second, attacks on Highway 1 spiked again. The paved surface was heavily damaged in places, particularly in Senjaray, and needed remediation. There were the destroyed hulks of ambushed trucks everywhere. The coalition forces needed to regain the initiative in Zharey, but were there enough resources to address all of these problems?

Regional Command (South) was extremely concerned about the potential loss of freedom of movement out to Helmand and as a result re-prioritized ISTAR resources to Task Force Kandahar to monitor the road under a new operation called DALBOR SHIELD. Another operation, BAERBADI, was designed to clear the wrecks from the highway using engineer resources.⁷³ Elements of the Theatre Task Force (the 2nd Battalion 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment, better known as Task Force 2 Fury), were brought in from Bagram Air Field for DALBOR SHIELD, and Regional Command (South) also allocated special operations forces, with a Canadian PSYOPS team in support. To make room for DALBOR SHIELD, TF Kandahar postponed Operation BADLOON, which involved regaining ground and influence with the people of eastern Zharey, and another iteration of SPIN ARWA with the Regional Battle Group (South).

DALBOR SHIELD benefited from analysis conducted by Major Nils French and a small team in Task Force Kandahar who worked outside of existing paradigms to determine how, and more importantly, when the enemy conducted operations in particular locations. Using informal ‘bubba-con’ liaison with various American organizations, they were able to provide recommendations to LCol Mike Patrick on allocation of forces to protect Highway 1.

Regional Command (South) was too enthralled with operations in Helmand to express interest, but TF ODIN, the American C-IED task force, was impressed with the Canadian methodology and quietly re-allocated ISTAR assets from Helmand to Kandahar to support DALBOR SHIELD.⁷⁴

In addition to TF Thor and TF Odin operations, 1-12 Infantry mounted 12 combat patrols per day, on average, along Highway 1. 6th Kandak was finally fully deployed and its soldiers expanded their patrolling matrix alongside 1-12 Infantry. American mentors came in to work with 6th Kandak but Canadian mentor team remained in the area to assist with this effort. Vehicle checkpoints went up and snap inspections were conducted all along the highway. Air assets re-allocated to DALBOR SHIELD got their first kills on 22-23 October. One insurgent emplacement team operating near Howz-e Madad was engaged by an OH-58D Kiowa Warrior which resulted in the secondary detonation of a large amount of homemade explosives being transported in yellow jugs. An A-10 Warthog destroyed another IED team, killing three to five insurgents and wounding others. This last attack also wounded an enemy leader operating nearby and ISTAR resources were focused to find out who it was and what possible impact the strike could have on the insurgent command structure.⁷⁵

The insurgents backed away from using IEDs on the highway and resorted to ambushes. After several encounters, 1-12 Infantry concluded that these were 'come on' attacks designed to draw forces into even larger ambushes on IED-laden local routes. Teams of OH-58D Kiowa Warrior and AH-64 Apache helicopters patrolled the first and second wadi lines, hoping to catch insurgents moving up from Kolk and Sangsar to the road fights. On one occasion, a Canadian-mentored Afghan patrol triggered an IED, severely wounding an Afghan soldier and initiating an ambush. While under fire, mentor MCpl Gilles-Remi Mikkelson moved into the open to give the wounded man life-saving first aid while the patrol laid down covering fire so they could all withdraw safely. MCpl Mikkelson received the Medal of Military Valour for his actions.

In a daily report to TF Kandahar, 1-12 Infantry described their situation.

We have become separated from the population, and secondary roads the locals use are filled with IEDs ... The people in Zharey District are living in fear of the Taliban and now are becoming separated from ISAF, Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police forces due to the limited amount of patrols south of Highway 1. The battalion has not been able to focus on projects or economic development due to combat power focused upon the highway.⁷⁶

CHAPTER SIX



Photo Credit: Author



Photo Credit: Author

U.S. Army units operating in Zharey district with Joint Task Force Afghanistan did not initially have access to American brigade-level resources. In many cases, they were provided with the full range of Canadian Army support including psychological operations, civil-military cooperation, and an M-777 troop plus 81mm mortars.

By early November, a daily report from 1-12 Infantry indicated little change.

The battalion sustainment of Operation DALBOR SHIELD is causing a drain on the soldiers. The soldiers want to move beyond the security of the highway and begin the clear, hold, build of the Senjaray/Bagh-e Pol areas.⁷⁷

6th Kandak “suffered from a lack of mentorship” and was not turning out as effective as hoped. ISTAR resources were re-tasked away from the area when IED activity died down and, once they were gone, the IED strikes resumed. Then mortar bombs started to rain down on FOB Wilson. A stonk on 23 November seriously wounded several American soldiers and started fires in the FOB, including one in a sea container. After administering to the wounded in the open, Pte Tony Harris extricated a soldier trapped in the burning container and, with the help of Pte Phillip Millar, rendered first aid as the mortar rounds continued to fall. For their actions in saving several lives that day, Pte Harris and Pte Millar received the Medal of Military Valour.

The enemy shifted to attacking traffic on Route SUMMIT: a Canadian EROC suite was engaged with an 82mm recoilless rifle. This attack was followed by a day-long TIC on Route Summit between enemy forces and a police mentor team. Leopard 2 tanks sortied to engage in support, and mortar bombs crashed down from FOB Wilson. After five fatal casualties, the insurgents melted away to the west, harassed by helicopters as they dispersed. The Canadian Helicopter Force inserted part of 1-12 Infantry north of Pashmul, which resulted in no contact, while 1st Kandak and their Canadian mentors went hunting for the 82-mm recoilless rifle teams.

At the end of November, the lines were slowly redrawn. Route Summit was kept open, Highway 1 was still passable, and American and Afghan patrols were starting to have an effect in the communities in the eastern part of Zharey. The telephone companies had yet to be convinced to restore service, but significantly more information flowed into the Joint District Coordination Centre. A single USAID worker arrived to join the Canadian CIMIC operators in forming a small District Support Team.⁷⁸

Dand District Operations, August-October 2009

TF Kandahar remained focused on accentuating the positive in Dand district throughout the fall of 2009. As we will recall, Operation KALAY I stabilized the community of Deh-e Bagh and expanded the coalition presence southward to Chineh and Monar. The Construction Management Organization worked with local leaders to implement local infrastructure projects like roads and canals, while the Specialist Engineer Team focused on attracting construction companies to larger projects like refurbishing the

Dand District Centre, constructing a district police station, and paving main service routes. Stab B played a crucial role in facilitating all these activities by working closely with the increasingly impressive District Leader Abdul Nazek.

By late August, Dand had a functional Joint District Coordination Centre, but not enough police to backfill the Canadian military forces when they moved on. The Police OMLT could only do so much for so long. The P-OMLT worked in Deh-e Bagh, Chineh and Monar, awaited a solution to the police recruitment problem.⁷⁹

TF Kandahar launched Operation KALAY II concurrent with these movements. (see Figure 17-3) The KALAY II villages were Belanday, Rumbasi, and Teymurian, a trio of communities selected because of their proximity to Route Lake Effect (Belanday and Rumbasi) and because they screened the Deh-e Bagh stability (now called Stability Box TONKA), from the west and south-west (Rumbasi and Teymurian). As Deh-e Bagh acted as a gateway to Malajat and Kandahar City, Belanday, Rumbasi, and Teymurian acted as a gateway to Deh-e Bagh. The threat, as we will recall, emanated from the Nahkonay area, supported by the safe havens in the Horn of Panjwayi, Talukan and Zangabad.

The Shape-Clear-Hold-Build process was then applied to Belanday, Rumbasi and Teymurian. CIMIC and PSYOPS teams made contact with the village leaders in late August and early September, and, when possible, secured introductions to the district leader. A Company 2 R22eR followed to establish an immediate security presence, and then handed over to Stab B. CIMIC operators assessed the state of the Community Development Council (if any) and then worked with local leaders to identify projects. In October, assessment teams from the Construction Management Organization arrived to help the local leaders prioritize the projects, work out the engineering aspects, and then hire local people to work on them. By October road construction and canal projects were up and running in Belanday, Rumbasi and Teymurian.⁸⁰

These development projects were so successful that TF Kandahar decided to expand KALAY II to the community of Angurian and then consider communities south of the Dori River. B Squadron, now released from Arghandab District, moved its headquarters to Teymurian and projected its presence southwest towards Gorgan.⁸¹ Thus far all of the selected communities were receptive to Operation KALAY II. Indeed, KALAY I's success was noticed by the people in them, who now wanted in on the action. Poor leadership in Rumbasi was rectified with a visit from the district leader.⁸²

The main problem now was the Hold part of the plan. Thirty-eight new police officers arrived in Dand, but "only 17 were FDD qualified and only two had personal weapons." Some were "refugees" from Zharey with "no discipline; to keep them in a room for more than 20 minutes would require physical force." When 15 of these new officers were assigned to Teymurian, six deserted and the rest returned to the district police station. Even the cops

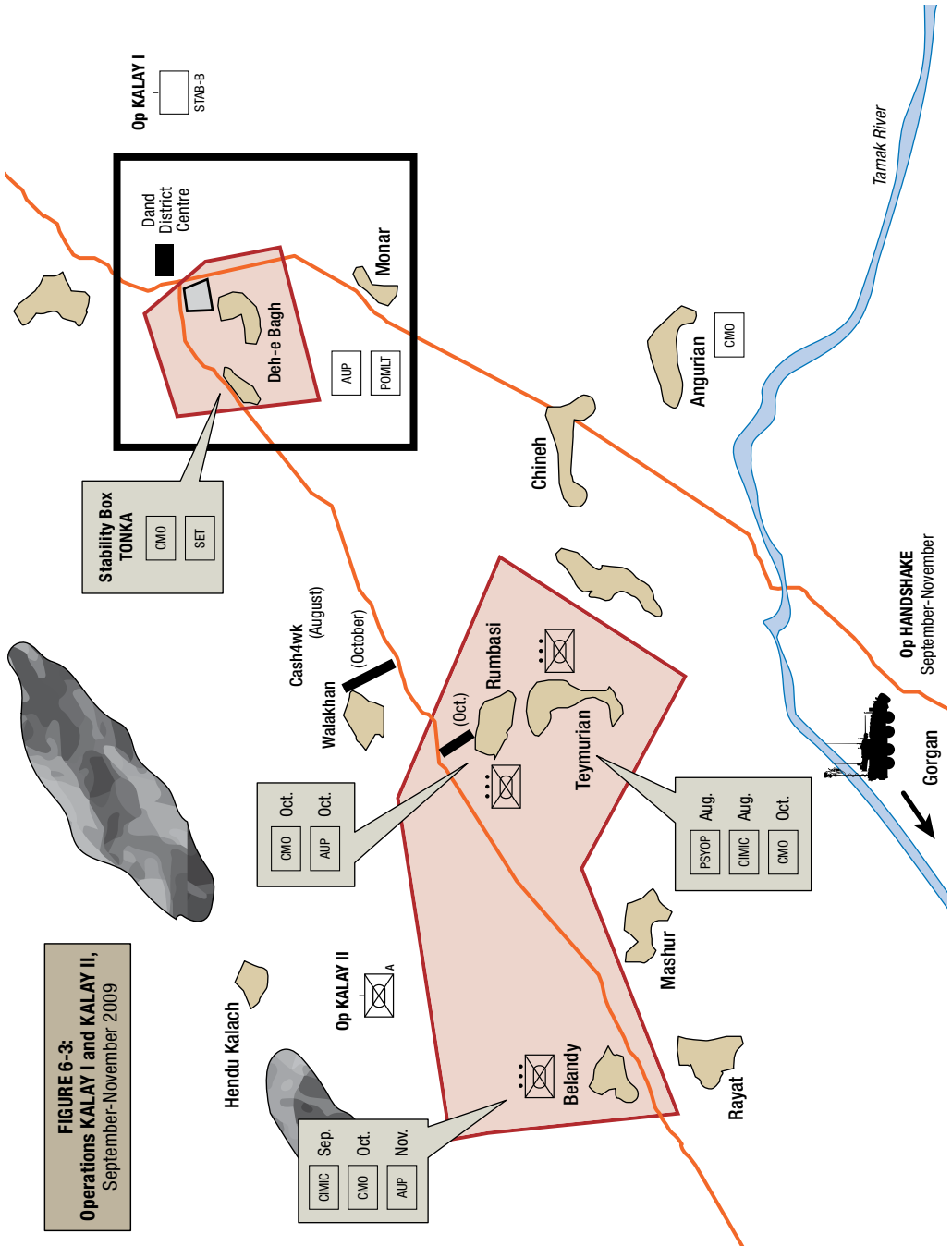


FIGURE 6-3:
Operations KALAY I and KALAY II,
September-November 2009

Figure 6-3: Operations KALAY I and KALAY II, September-November 2009



Photo Credit: Author

The improvement in Dand District's security was matched by significant economic progress. This is a pair of the famous Dand brick kilns and their wares along a paved highway, as opposed to the dirt roads and more agrarian activities in a more violent Panjwayi District. These same kilns lay derelict when the author drove through the area in 2005.

in Deh-e Bagh were absent.⁸³ The P-OMLT and the despairing District Chief of Police, Col Sher Shah, did what they could with what they had. The P-OMLT then fortuitously received information that an armed Barakzai militia belonging to the Sherzai family was operating in eastern Dand and into neighbouring Daman District. On making contact with their leader General Muhammad Dawood, the P-OMLT learned that there were "... eight Sherzai checkpoints [were] still operating. When the P-OMLT mentor asked why the security was so good ... Dawood answered that the families living there were all Barakzai tribe and have been living there for hundreds of years, therefore any stranger is expelled very quickly."⁸⁴ Arrangements were made to assimilate the Barakzai militia into the Afghan Uniformed Police as soon as possible.⁸⁵

Why was Dand getting the dregs of the Kandahar police force? This was likely related to the renewed emphasis on Kandahar City operations taking away quality police and the situation did not bode well for the KALAY operations. As for the Afghan army, 1-205 Brigade kandaks were fully engaged and only the recce company from 4th Kandak could be made available to support KALAY.⁸⁶ Eventually the American mentoring organization, Task Force 2 Fury, made arrangements to move a Police Advisory Team from Daman District to Dand.⁸⁷

In spite of these challenges, KALAY I achieved a steady state in early October. District Leader Nazek was instrumental in this by reaching out to the Deh-e Bagh communities and encouraging them to increase school attendance, a move that was reinforced with CIMIC resources.⁸⁸ By mid-October, TF Kandahar was comfortable enough with the situation to recommend transferring the reconstruction and development activities in Deh-e Bagh from the Construction Management Organization to the Whole of Government partners at the PRT.⁸⁹

The level of violence directed against the KALAY operating areas was relatively low throughout the fall. Enemy moves amounted to intimidation operations directed at Rumbasi and Gorgan, a suspicious fire at the clinic in Teymurian, and there was some IED activity on Route Lake Effect. The coalition forces responded by allocating an American route clearance package to the area to regularly sweep the roads. There was a suicide terrorist alert in Deh-e Bagh, but a surge of security forces (Operation GAME SHOW) deterred the bomber. Local people regularly provided tips to security forces wherever they were operating, and throngs showed up to join construction projects, but the population in Rumbasi was not as receptive as the other communities were.⁹⁰

District Leader Nazek understood the role of the mullahs in village life and took special measures to rebalance village governance. In the past the roles of the village leader (malik) and the mullah in each community were complementary but during the years of the Soviet occupation the mullahs were devalued in this capacity and primacy given to the malik. Under the Taliban, the mullah was then elevated above the malik. With the various reconstruction and development agencies not wanting to deal with the mullahs and more comfortable dealing with the malik as a point of contact, it appeared to some Afghans that the aid agencies were in line with the Soviet way of doing business. That perception increased their susceptibility to Taliban 'wandering mullahs' who activated grievances and stirred up trouble. (The community development council could include the local mullah and thus was a more valuable tool for the developers and reconstructors.)⁹¹ Nazek collected the mullahs for a shura at the Dand District Centre:

The district leader was impressive in dealing with the much older and opinionated mullahs. With [30–40 people] in attendance, he was forceful in stating their responsibility in dealing with those who would come to their villages to plant or hide IEDs. He explained that their silence could be costing them the lives of their women and children. He further stated the importance of what ISAF is doing in the area and that we are not the enemy. The shura lasted two hours and was quite spirited at times.⁹²

When Malajat was incorporated into Dand District in November, Nazek called another shura with all the mullahs and informed the contingent from Malajat that they were required to register both themselves and their madrassas, or they would have to leave the district. There was grumbling, but Nazek's approach might solve the problem of the subversive madrassa in Malajat without using overt means.⁹³

Maj Cauden and Recce Squadron arrived from Arghandab District and deployed to the southeastern part of the district with the task of maintaining situational awareness. Cauden selected two former Soviet OP 'mounds', one near Teymurian and another near Gorgan. With mast-equipped Coyotes, this afforded significant observation of what became known as the Adamzai Chain near Kenjakak, and the communities between the two positions and the Reg Desert. Recce Squadron, augmented with Recce Platoon, pushed out foot patrols in their areas and developed the pattern of life. Eventually a troop of Leopard tanks arrived and they were positioned at the Gorgan observation position mound. They could bring observation and fire to bear and interdict any movement from the west. In time small CIMIC projects were underway in Gorgan and Teymurian.⁹⁴

Maj Cauden also had to keep the PBR road under observation to ensure that IED emplacements did not cut off the squadron's resupply efforts. Recce patrols assessed that the population living in the area south to the desert were in survival mode but leaned toward the government. Indeed, District Leader Nazek was originally from Gorgan.⁹⁵

Throughout this period the Construction Management Organization continuously employed between 750 and 1000 people, almost all of them fighting-age males.⁹⁶ To ensure that those men remained out of the enemy camp they needed viable, long-term work and thus it was now time to hand off those CMO projects to the various 'implementing partners' managed by the UN and the Canadian whole of government partners. A lull in activity thus could prove to be extremely problematic if it gave the insurgents an opportunity to recruit these men. By early November the UNOPS road projects designated for Dand had not yet started. It was critical that this transfer be managed carefully during the upcoming relief in place between the incoming and outgoing Joint Task Force Afghanistan headquarters. Could continuity be maintained and momentum sustained in Dand while that happened?⁹⁷

Panjwayi District Operations, August–September 2009

By the end of the summer, Panjwayi District was in a state of turbulence on all levels. The Construction Management Organization was through with the Route HYENA Paving Project. The contractor, Bennett-Fouch, was intransigent, Blue Hackle security was exasperated, and the presence of 300 to 400 fighting age males with nothing better to do alarmed TF Kandahar. To curry favour with the Canadians, District Leader Haji Baran 'helpfully' stepped in and told the employees that the project was suspended because it

was Ramadan. That bought another month.⁹⁸ However, the problems with Bennett-Fouch were insoluble. Accused of defrauding the Afghan government of millions of dollars, the owner of Bennett-Fouch faked suicide so she would not be extradited to Kabul from the United States to stand trial. Bennett-Fouch came under increased scrutiny from American inspectors and was eventually suspended from conducting business in Afghanistan.⁹⁹ The irony of Haji Baran's magnanimous assistance in ending a project he had hindered so thoroughly was not lost on the CIMIC teams.

Attempts to get the District Development Assembly running completely stalled out. On the second meeting between the DDA and the Central Asian Development Group, Stab B and Canadian CIMIC were the only ones present. CIMIC noted that Baran adhered to his obligations to hold a DDA meeting monthly but it didn't necessarily mean that anything was actually accomplished during it.¹⁰⁰

As for policing, the situation had completely deteriorated: relations between the Police OMLT and the police "have hit an all-time low point." Ostensibly this related to accusations of theft over a set of night vision goggles but the underlying reality was that there was no police leadership:

the lack of support and authority that is given to the district chief of police and the constant threat of removal has resulted in his motivation being almost zero. The AUP is not patrolling or making their presence felt in the Bazaar-e Panjwayi area; they are however carrying on with the morning route sweeps and have conducted one deliberate operation with the PMT.¹⁰¹

To make matters worse,

The Afghan National Police shot and killed an individual that they believed was an insurgent, they then dumped his body in front of a mosque in Bazaar-e Panjwayi and then told the locals that he was Taliban and this is what happens to Taliban. The total lack of professionalism demonstrated by the Panjwayi Afghan National Police is very concerning and indicative of much larger problems.¹⁰²

A pair of suicide bomb attacks in the middle of Bazaar-e Panjwayi itself ramped up anxieties: one bomber leapt into an Afghan army Ranger vehicle and detonated, wounding eleven people. The other blew himself into oblivion and caused no damage whatsoever.¹⁰³ The incidents did highlight the lack of security in the town itself, but on 17 September the enemy went after a Canadian convoy as it negotiated Bazaar-e Panjwayi. This IED was emplaced to catch security forces conducting a vital point search: it wounded eleven and killed Private Jonathan Couturier of 2 R22eR.¹⁰⁴

Eventually, police gasoline thefts from FOB Ma'Sum Ghar led to them being banned from the base. The American police mentors eventually increased to 44 from 14, but then their interpreters started knifing each other, which led to investigation after investigation. The entire police effort in the district was completely attenuated by the end of September,¹⁰⁵ LCol Paul was extremely concerned that the problems with the Panjwayi police would negatively affect Operation KALAY II and the upcoming Operation BADLOON, which was supposed to highlight the shift from 'big operations' to platoon house operations in eastern Panjwayi.¹⁰⁶

As a result, ANP Regional Deputy Commander BGen Mirwais came down from Kandahar City to sort the situation out. He convinced the Panjwayi police chief to stay and the Canadians to be more patient and to support him. As it turned out the primary issue was police manning at the Three Tank Hill site. The police officers did not want to be used as infantry to defend it and wanted to conduct policing activities. Arrangements were made to shift the Afghan army to the Three Tank Hill positions and relieve the police. That arrangement had an anodyne effect on the situation.¹⁰⁷



Photo Credit: Courtesy of TF 1-09 Tank Squadron personnel

The lack of helicopters produced an unhealthy dependence on ground travel. The insurgency quickly realized this fact and employed IEDs that were both plentiful and nefarious. This is an Afghan National Police Ranger truck that has been completely destroyed, along with its occupants, in Panjwayi district.

Governance issues continued to plague the district. When the new CIMIC arrived in late September, the ‘usual suspects’ came out of the woodwork to curry favour: Haji “Dollars” Agha Lalai; Haji Mahmood; and District Leader Haji Baran. Baran immediately asked for fuel and phone cards but was told by the CIMIC team that a new organization, the District Administrative Assembly, would be activated and that all requests of that nature should be put to it, not CIMIC.¹⁰⁸ The Canadian CIMIC operators were not surprised when they learned that Baran told the local population a day after that confrontation “that they should demonstrate against the Canadians for not wanting to do their land claims and not wanting to give them money.”¹⁰⁹ Worse, when CIMIC arranged to pay compensation to the family of a man accidentally killed by the security forces, Baran sent friends to the ceremony who pretended to be relatives and they took a proportion of the compensation payment with them.¹¹⁰

Battle group operations in Panjwayi during the fall of 2009 focused on a transition from large district-level operations to dispersed community-level operations, all in preparation for Operation KALAY III.¹¹¹ As we have seen, KALAY I reached a steady state in the Build phase, while KALAY II was well on its way toward the shift from Hold to Build. Although police problems continued to hinder the Hold phase of KALAY II, the 2 R22eR Battle Group launched the Shape and Clear phases of KALAY III in September: “The mandate General Vance gave LCol Paul was very easy. ‘Jo, you will create those platoon houses and co-located with you will be the Afghan army sections living on the same piece of infrastructure. And I want those platoon houses to be capable of moving within 24 hours.’”¹¹²

The initial moves included Operation LEOPARD ASSERTION, a feint by C Squadron’s tanks into southern Panjwayi District, followed by a link-up with Recce Squadron on the Dand-Panjwayi boundary near Gorgan, southeast of Nakhonay.¹¹³ That part of the plan was initially marred by a mobility kill on one tank by an IED, but then the same day LCol Paul’s tactical headquarters convoy was targeted with a command wire IED. The blast flipped the engineers’ LAV III, killing Maj Yannick Pépin and Cpl Jean-François Drouin of the 5^e Régiment du Génie de combat and wounding five other Canadians. The triggerman was apprehended.¹¹⁴

LCol Paul then initiated a series of three operations called NAFIZ (see Figure 6-4), in which the Canadian Helicopter Force inserted Recce Platoon 2 R22eR into the villages of Chalghowr, Fathollah and Salavat for surprise sweeps with back-up from A Company on the ground. In Fathollah on 2 September, Recce Platoon went in and got out again with no enemy contact and no issues. On 7 September, Recce Platoon was engaged on the Landing Zone by a ten-man enemy party. Harassed by OH-58D Kiowa Warriors and tracked by Heron and Reaper UAVs, they succumbed to a flurry of Hellfire missiles and rockets from

the helicopters. Recce Platoon encountered no further opposition. One Canadian Chinook took some fire but was able to make it back to Kandahar Air Field with some damage. When NAFIZ moved into Chalgowr on 25 September, a similar situation played out: a ten-man enemy team applied PKM and RPG fire three times during the course of the day, which led to CH-146 Griffons and OH-58D Kiowa Warriors firing back, killing two and dispersing the rest.¹¹⁵ On 13 September, an A Company LAV III supporting NAFIZ hit an IED while screening along Route Lake Effect. This strike killed Pte Patrick Lormand of 2 R22eR and wounded four others.¹¹⁶

NAFIZ helped define the limit of overt enemy activity in eastern Panjwayi, and it was synchronized with B Company's advance on 25 September to the Mohajerin area to prepare the ground for platoon house operations — the start of Operation BADLOON. B Company encountered some harassing fire and uncovered a sophisticated daisy-chain IED but little else. Following B Company, the engineer squadron moved in and built platoon houses, while CIMIC contacted local leaders who were pleased to get some Canadian attention after hearing about positive events in Dand. Local people also reported insurgent activities, and, on one occasion, even chased the insurgents away.¹¹⁷ As LCol Paul noted,

It took a month to figure out that relationship and learn what was important to the locals. It's pure COIN theory. The locals are caught between a rock and hard place. They are sitting on the fence. Until you live amongst them 24/7 until you can provide them security, you don't stand a chance. They're not stupid. And I don't blame them. Who would blame them? To me the platoon houses were clearly a turning point.¹¹⁸

Low-level operations produced substantial, measurable benefits: “My two [intelligence] cells were extremely tight with the All Source Intelligence Centre, they would compare notes then we would fuse the information.”¹¹⁹ The community of Nakhonay, however, was noticeably problematic the closer 2 R22eR Battle Group moved their platoons towards it and the number of IED events went up: “We started to do the containment of Nakhonay; the PRT was flooding the area with money for projects. We knew the Taliban were there. They were upset because they were losing their manpower base. The young locals were working for us.”¹²⁰

Battle Group Relief in Place, October 2009

It was now time for the 2 R22eR Battle Group to depart and the 1st Battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry (1 PPCLI) Battle Group rotated in throughout October. 1 PPCLI Battle Group, led by LCol Jerry Walsh, was structured as its predecessors had been, with three rifle companies — A Company commanded by Maj Ryan Jurkowski, C Company under Maj Wade Rutland, and D Company led by Maj Wayne Niven — and Recce Platoon under

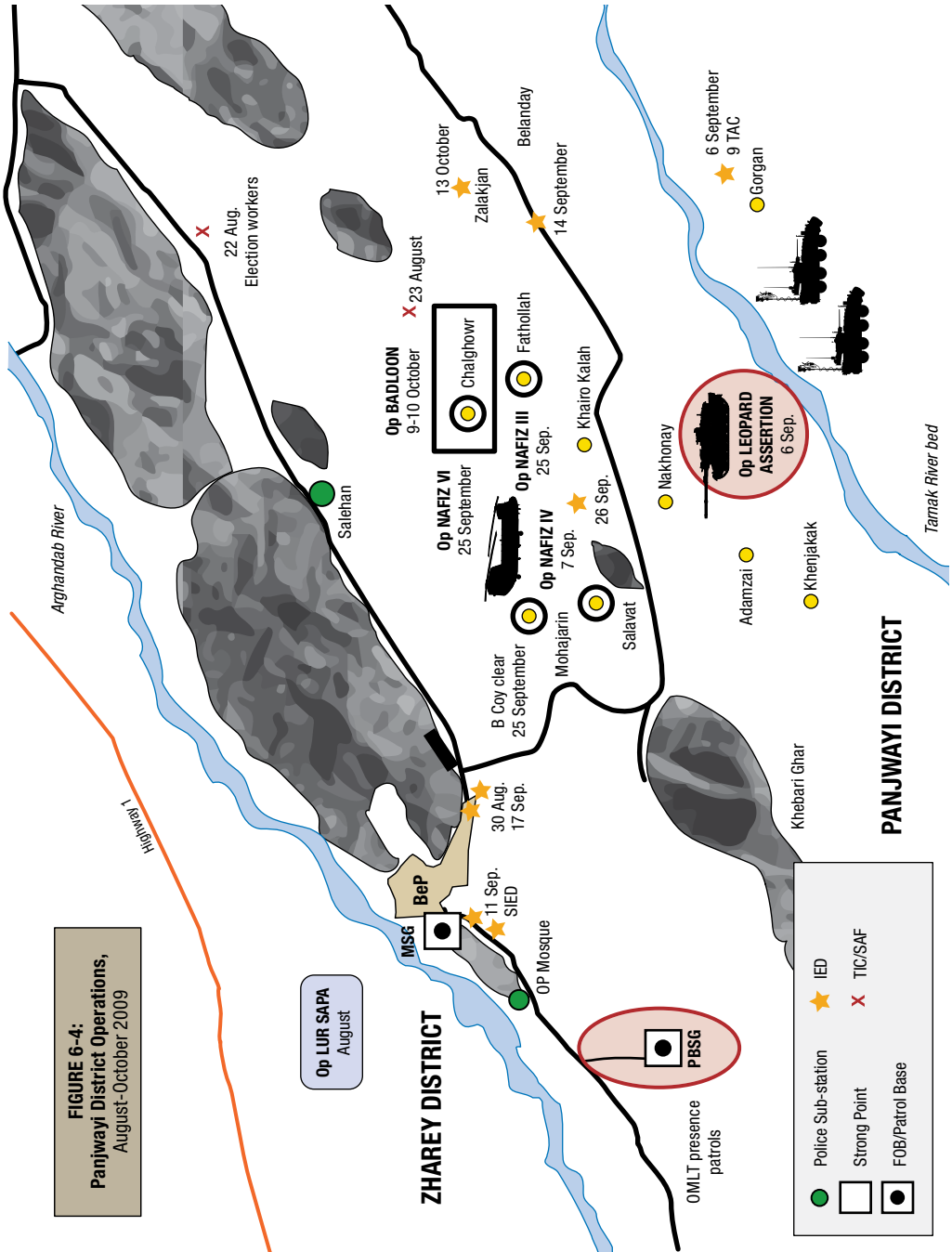


Figure 6-4: Panjwayi District Operations, August-October 2009

Capt Mike MacKillop. The tanks were B Squadron, The Lord Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadians), under Maj Rob Hume, and the armoured recce were B Squadron, Royal Canadian Dragoons, under Maj Mark Popov. The guns were C Battery from the 1st Regiment, Royal Canadian Horse Artillery, commanded by Maj Shawn Fortin, and the engineer element was 11 Field Squadron from 1st Combat Engineer Regiment, under Maj Trevor Friesen. Unlike its immediate predecessors, the 1 PPCLI Battle Group also had Admin Company under Maj Darcy Wright, a veteran of CTF Aegis in 2006. Its addition indicated a return to doctrinal normalcy.

The PPCLI Battle Group laydown initially mimicked that of their predecessors once they were ensconced in the platoon houses. A Company 1 PPCLI, working from Ma'Sum Ghar, had platoon-sized patrol bases in Mohajerin and Salavat. A Company 2 R22eR remained in Rumbasi, Zalakhan, Belanday and at a patrol base called A-10 (later renamed Shoja). Together, these two companies were responsible for KALAY-style operations north of Route Lake Effect to Route Hyena. C Company and Recce Platoon 1 PPCLI were in Patrol Base Sperwan Ghar, while the tanks remained based at Ma'Sum Ghar. Recce Squadron took over operations in Dand, with Patrol Base Marianne, Patrol Base Echo, and one Coyote deployed as an observation post. The guns were split between Sperwan Ghar and FOB Wilson in Zharey, while 11 Field Squadron was dispersed among the infantry companies. D Company 1 PPCLI was in the process of deploying to replace a 2 R22eR company by mid- to late October.¹²¹

1 PPCLI Battle Group arrived at a time of some turbulence. BGen Vance and MGen de Kruif were leaving, and BGen Daniel Ménard and MGen Nick Carter were coming in to replace them. The American influx was also in play, as were substantial changes in how the operational mentoring teams were going to restructure. As a result LCol Walsh and his planners held off issuing the battle group tactical action plan until the end of October. 1 PPCLI Battle Group was partnered with 2nd Kandak from 1-205 Brigade under LCol Baris, a leader who had substantial experience working with Canadians. Unfortunately, his kandak was under strength.¹²²

During the relief in place, BGen Vance established Joint Task Force Afghanistan's objectives for the remainder of October and November. The strategic priorities were:¹²³

1. convince higher headquarters and the Afghan government that Kandahar Province must be the main effort for 2010;
2. prepare for the new commander of Regional Command (South), MGen Nick Carter; and
3. eliminate extraneous visits during the relief in place.

Operational priorities included:

1. solidify Afghan National Army posture and laydown; and
2. obtain visibility of atmospherics in Kandahar City.

Tactical priorities were:

1. conduct operations against Nakhonay;
2. provide security on Highway 1;
3. secure interior lines of communication;
4. Dand District security and operations toward governance, reconstruction and development; and
5. secure counter-IED resources for protection of interior lines and Highway 1.

Operation BADLOON continued as the new battle group worked with the engineers and the Afghans to solidify their presence in the villages and towns north of Route Lake Effect.

Panjwayi District Operations, October–November 2009

The new laydown in eastern Panjwayi led to plans for establishing combat roads between the various platoon houses and patrol bases, which meant an expansion of CIMIC and Construction Management Organization activities, and thus the possibility of spin-off benefits for local residents. Extensive coordination was done with LCol Baris of 2nd Kandak while A Company and D Company were deploying. A Company had one platoon in Salavat, another in Mohajerin, and a third in reserve at Ma'Sum Ghar, while one of 2nd Kandak's companies deployed platoons to Salavat and Mohajerin partnered with the Canadians. 2 R22eR had been in place for a short time before the rotation, so it was critical to define the area with foot and mounted patrols. These were conducted with maximum deception at the company and battle-group levels, and designed to convince the enemy that the battle group was ignoring Nakhonay in the run-up to Operation HYDRA.¹²⁴

During this phase, A Company was able to define the situation more clearly. Working with the village elders, Maj Jurkowski discerned that each village had its own dynamic and was in fact a ‘village-state’ in some respects where religious interpretation, local or tribal culture, or vendettas governed behavior. Nakhonay and Chalgowr were “red”, that is, insurgent-dominated. Mohajerin was neutral but leaning to the pro-government side, and Salavat, the largest of the communities, was run by a population of indifferent fence-sitters. In Salavat locals would share information with the Afghan army yet complex IEDs were accidentally uncovered by patrols. Fatollah, on the other hand, was fence-sitting but leaning towards the government.¹²⁵

The enemy held counter-shuras at night after A Company and their Afghan counterparts had held meetings in the communities during the day. Anything provided to the local people by the coalition forces was confiscated and destroyed, including tools and food. When the Canadians wanted to go after these teams, their ANA partners said no, let the enemy bury themselves with the people. The result was more and better information started to flow from the locals.¹²⁶

An example of this involved one of the snipers assigned to A Company who was tasked as an intelligence assessor. His analysis led to a cache of IED components situated between Mohajerin and Chalgowr. A platoon was directed to the site which turned out to be a massive radio-controlled IED cache. On exploitation, the All Source Intelligence Centre’s excitement level increased to the point where a helicopter was dispatched from KAF to recover one specific item which in turn was immediately put on a transport plane to the United States for in-depth exploitation. A Company personnel were later told this find was the counter-IED equivalent of breaking the Enigma Code.¹²⁷

As the Construction Management Organization came in with money to hire local people for road construction, enemy intimidation started up in Mohajerin and Salavat to challenge it. Both A Company and their Afghan partners mounted night patrols to re-assure the population. This in turn led to significant amounts of information on local Taliban activities. The enemy expressed his annoyance at this by flinging a handful of mortar rounds at and then probing the Shojah patrol base. They were driven back twice with 155mm fire from C Battery. Canadian and Afghan patrols noticed that enemy observers used kites as signaling devices and informants passed on that the locals in Nakhonay were filling a lot of sandbags.¹²⁸ (see Figure 6-5).

Meanwhile, over in Sperwan Ghar, Maj Wade Rutland and C Company conducted an aggressive series of patrols in the Nal Bazaar and Pay-e Moluk communities west of Route Brown. Meanwhile, over in Sperwan Ghar, Maj Wade Rutland and his men from C Company conducted an aggressive series of patrols in the Nal Bazaar and Pay-e Moluk communities west of Route BROWN. This paid off in a matter of days as locals who

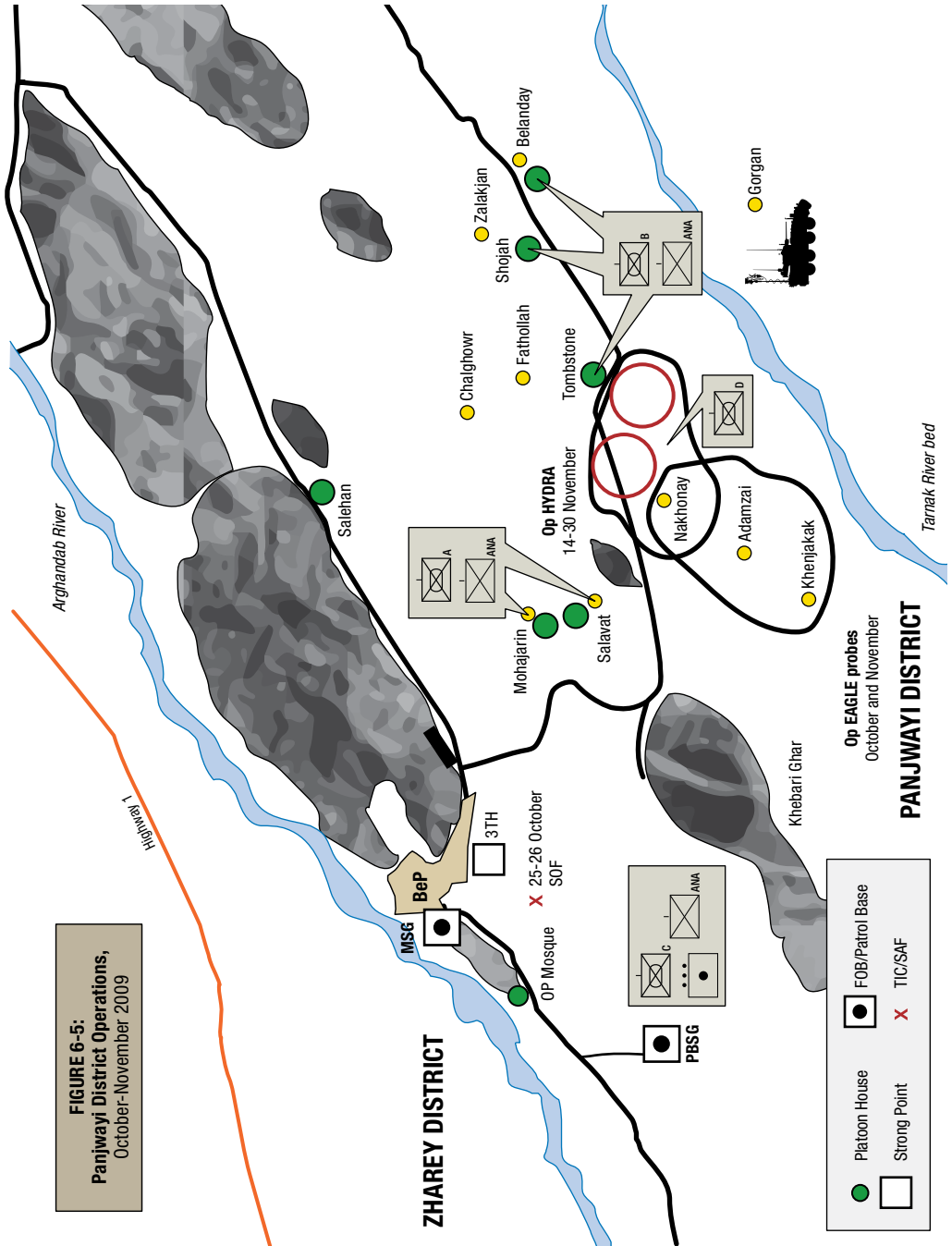


FIGURE 6-5:
Panjwayi District Operations,
October-November 2009

Figure 6-5: Panjwayi District Operations, October-November 2009

were tired of Taliban harassment from Zangabad started to pass on information. That flow dramatically increased after a number of children were blown to pieces by a Taliban IED sometime after 22 October. Rutland did not have the combat power to take on or occupy the area, but this didn't stop C Company from dominating it as much as they could.¹²⁹

BGen Vance had had his sights set on Nakhonay for some time. By no means a new problem, Nakhonay was known to have been part of the southwest ratline into Kandahar City as far back as 2005. Taliban were known to have taken refuge there after the Sarposha prison break of 2008, and insurgents were pushing west from Nakhonay to infect Dand District with violence. Since then, conflicting priorities had prevented TF Kandahar from establishing a permanent presence there. Regional Battle Group (South) had gone into Nakhonay and the Afghans had manoeuvred around the area, but all this activity amounted to nothing more than "emptying the garbage". Frankly, no one knew very much about the inhabitants of Nakhonay, but they and their friends were positioned to interfere with Operation KALAY. As KALAY II and III expanded west, something had to be done about Nakhonay.

Discussions between District Leader Haji Baran, Lt Col Baris and LCol Walsh produced vehement agreement on two major problems. First, there was a gap south of Bazaar-e Panjwayi, and the police patrol base at Three Tank Hill — the one with the ANP officers who would rather not serve as infantry — was not in position to control it. The community of Haji Habibullah was a staging point for movement between Zangabad and Sperwan Ghar to the west and the Nakhonay complex to the east. It also acted as some form of support node for enemy operations in Bazaar-e Panjwayi and something had to be done about that. The second major problem was Nakhonay itself; Baran "stressed the control that the Taliban have over Nakhonay and that if we do not keep a permanent force in the area, the Taliban will continue to control the local nationals."¹³⁰ BGen Vance concurred in his hand-over to BGen Ménard, and TF Kandahar ramped up its plans to deal with Nakhonay.

Capt Mike MacKillop and Recce Platoon were then tasked to conduct Operation EAGLE, a series of probes designed to figure out how the battle group and 2nd Kandak would get into Nakhonay. On 25 October, one of these probes resulted in a running battle that forced Recce Platoon to withdraw to Strong Point Gorgan. (For this action, among others, Capt MacKillop received the Medal of Military Valour.) More EAGLE probes helped develop the pattern of life in the area.

Superimposed on this were 'grasshopper' operations conducted by US Navy SEALs over a three-week period. A SEAL team would land by helicopter in a community, drop off aid, search, conduct a shura, and depart only to return seven or eight minutes later to the same location to see who emerged from the deep grape trenches in the area. These operations had significant psychological and shaping effects on the enemy cells in the area.¹³¹

The enemy intimidation campaign in Salavat was now in full swing. The Construction Management Organization showed up to hire local labourers to work on the roads while night letters were nailed to doors to intimidate the workers. A few mortar bombs were flung at patrols, to little effect. Eventually, enough information came in to develop a special operations strike on 26 October that either killed or severely wounded one of the major Taliban leaders operating south of Bazaar-e Panjwayi. On 28 October, however, an IED killed P-OMLT mentor Lt Justin Boyes of 3 PPCLI during a dismounted patrol south of Bazaar-e Panjwayi. On 30 October, Spr Steve Marshall of 11 Field Squadron tripped an IED near Zalakhan and died in the blast.¹³²

While Operation EAGLE continued, the battle group mounted Operation ROAMING DEVIL into the Salavat-Mohajerin area. The tanks and A Company conducted a show of force against enemy intimidation so the Construction Management Organization could recruit more workers: 74 signed up. Then, all of a sudden, there was a major turnaround in Mohajerin:

The people of Mohajerin told the [insurgents] to stop planting IEDs and to leave. The [insurgents] informed the villagers that they would stay and fight [the Afghans and Canadians] in the area. The villagers then regrouped with their women and children by moving them from the village at last light for their safety. The locals from Mohajerin stayed in their village most likely to defend it from the insurgents. [A Canadian infantry platoon] deployed in support of the local people and adopted blocking positions and over-watch.¹³³

Patrols also discovered that people in Fathollah were friendly, and disliked the instability emanating from Chalgowr. IED tips started to come in across the whole area.¹³⁴

EAGLE and ROAMING DEVIL were essential in shaping the environment for Operation HYDRA in Nakhonay, but serious problems remained unresolved. The main one was acquiring enough Afghan police to handle the Hold and Build parts of the operation. Pledges were made, but the realignment of the P-OMLT and the reduction of Canadian influence with the provincial administration may have played a role in reducing police enthusiasm for the project.¹³⁵

The conditions for Operation HYDRA were eventually set by mid-November. The enemy, however, had been watching and waiting for some time for an offensive. With the battle group finally assembled, elements of A and C Companies accompanied by Hume's Leopard tanks breached in on 14 November. This force had eleven separate IED events in the first day before it secured the objectives adjacent to Route Lake Effect. This state of affairs kept Maj Trevor Friesen and his combat engineers busy. Between 20 and 30 more IEDs were discovered in the first 500 meters of ground. The Clear phase

was slow and included a near miss ‘blue on blue’ incident. It took nearly four days before D Company was able to deploy into their positions in Nakhonay, after passing through A Company’s cleared route.¹³⁶

The first shura was held on 21 November with Haji Baran present. The leader of Nakhonay, it turned out, was a man named Haji Malim. Almost nothing was known about him or how he related or connected to elders in the community. CIMIC and PSYOPS moved in with additional ISTAR resources to figure this out as rapidly as possible. Engineers started building platoon houses. D Company was in Nakhonay to stay.

The initial enemy reaction to HYDRA was to fall back to the south and lay more IEDs. ISTAR reportage suggested that, by occupying Nakhonay, the Canadians and Afghans “had degraded insurgents freedom of movement from Northern Panjwayi to Kandahar City.” This in turn was assessed by TF Kandahar to have “created the conditions for the Build along Route LAKE EFFECT...as well as enabling the unhindered build and enable of Dand District.” Another assessed effect was the complete drop off of IEDs along Route Hyena East.¹³⁷ Additionally, the move set up the battle group and 2nd Kandak to clear insurgents out of Chalghowr later in December on Operation DEVIL’S STRIKE (an operation that led to some IED strikes against Badger AEV’s but no other significant activity). When IED emplacements tried to mine Route Lake Effect on other occasions, they were taken out by armed UAVs.¹³⁸

By the end of November, the Canadian intelligence apparatus was able to better define enemy activity in Panjwayi using all of its resources, which were now focused on one or two districts rather than four or five. There were essentially three separate but connected problems. First, and better defined after several years of operations, was the 28 Easting Line in the Sperwan Ghar area. Zangabad was the hub of all forms of enemy activity in the Horn, including parallel governance and it was supported through Mushan and points west as well as from the bomb-makers of Zharey. The enemy essentially had a defensive belt that ran north to south from the Arghandab River to the Reg Desert. Their forward operating zone was Sperwan Ghar. The second problem was the Nabi Network operating in the Sperwan Ghar-Bazaar-e Panjwayi area: it had a command node in Haji Habibullah and a logistics node that connected to Zangabad through Regay. This network focused on intimidation operations and IED facilitation.¹³⁹

The third problem was Nakhonay. The KALAY operations dramatically altered the enemy’s view of eastern Panjwayi. Nakhonay had been a way-station on a ratline, a place to cache weapons, and a safe harbour for insurgent cells projecting force and influence into Dand and Daman districts. Now, Nakhonay was a forward operating zone, the front line. There were two separate means for the enemy to support operations here. The first was through Emierin, which acted as a logistics node, with command and control in Gorgan.

The second, and more important, was the Adamzai Chain. Starting in the community of Molla Dust and continuing through Riglai Sofla, Kenjakak, Adamzai and all the way to Nakhonay, enemy weapons and fighters flowed in from Zangabad and all the way to Nakhonay. A separate network operated north of Route Lake Effect, with a command node in Fathollah and a ratline to support the Nabi Network to the west.¹⁴⁰ Insurgent leaders faced a challenge: What could they accomplish now that the situation in eastern Panjwayi had changed so much?

The Afghan and Canadian forces in Nakhonay, however, were still working on the Hold component of the operation well into December. The police forces necessary to assist with this phase did not arrive and the re-organization of the P-OMLT meant that D Company had to mentor the small number of Afghan police that arrived- none had gone through the Focused District Development process. There was an Afghan infantry company located in Haji Baba and it had Canadian mentors, but with the restructuring of the OMLT, there was turbulence in drawing it in to operations. By this time, D Company established and executed a day and night patrol plan.¹⁴¹

The Haji Baba community adjacent to Nakhonay was extremely cooperative and started to receive CIMIC and Construction Management Organization projects but all of a sudden it was “like someone turned a switch” and kidnappings and night letters started. Haji Malim, who welcomed D Company into Nakhonay during Operation HYDRA, it turned out, was playing a double game but more definition was required. ISTAR resources were focused on him and those around him to find out what exactly was going on.¹⁴² Maj Niven and D Company wanted to extend KALAY-like programs to Nakhonay once the CIMIC teams had completed their assessment, but they were about to learn that there were major disconnects in that sphere and this had an impact on their ability to gain control of Nakhonay.

Changes in Development and Governance Programs in the Districts

As discussed in previous volumes, the task of getting aid and reconstruction resources from the government in Kabul to the provincial government in Kandahar, and then out to the districts and communities, was problematic. The structure established by 2009 did not function efficiently in Kandahar for a myriad of reasons.

We are already familiar with the National Solidarity Programme run by the Ministry of Rural Reconstruction and Development, and its system of Provincial Development Committees, District Development Assemblies, and Community Development Councils. We have also described the organizations formed by the Canadian contingent to support that process: the PRT, the CIMIC teams, the Construction Management Organization, and

the Specialist Engineer Team. Recall that Canadian organizations often helped the Afghans bridge gaps in the bureaucracy and in governance systems in order to ensure progress in the face of insurgent violence and corruption.

The main issue with delivery of services at the district and community levels was the lack of security. The key mechanisms that Canada fostered to assist in overcoming this problem were the Joint District Coordination Centres and the Police OMLT. The Joint District Coordination Centre plus the District Development Assembly brought development and security together at the district level. In almost all cases, however, the problem was district-level governance and the inability of the Afghan personalities to meld the JDCC and the DDA together so they could communicate with and effectively service the communities. In many cases, the problem was the relationship between the appointed provincial governor and his appointed district leaders on one hand, and aggrieved or disenfranchised parties on the other, be they tribal, commercial, or both. Naturally, these fissures fueled the local insurgency as well as facilitated external insurgent information operations and their narratives. In effect, there was a crisis of legitimacy at the provincial and district levels as well as the national level. The district governments could not deliver security, justice, and development at the community level and this fed the enemy's parallel governance structures which could provide these things locally, if not district-wide.

This state of affairs revealed a major fissure between the military coalitions on one hand, and the civilian developers in the non-governmental aid organizations and the international organizations on the other. As we have seen in Volume I, the aid organizations were skeptical of military forces and there remained substantial issues with integrating CIMIC activity and transitioning that to development projects. For the most part this was ideological, whereby the developers saw themselves as neutral entities to help 'the people', and the military coalitions were there in support of the government. This problem expressed itself at the provincial level during the development of Provincial Reconstruction Teams back in 2004-2005.

ISAF commanders and Canadian TF Kandahar commanders instinctively knew that the root of any counterinsurgency campaign lay at the local level but without the right security force density, persistent security was not possible. Now, with the American influx, a higher troop density was possible. As a result, a quiet reassessment of district and sub-district governance and development was underway throughout 2009 and new programs implemented, most of them funded from American and British sources but to some extent Canadian as well. Some of the mechanisms were tested discreetly. Others wound up going public which led to various levels of outcry. In any event, a competing system to the National Solidarity Program and its mechanisms emerged. In the same way

that there were different types of PRTs in 2004–2005, there was now going to be two different but overlapping district governance and development structures. This new system was progressively implemented in Kandahar from late 2009 and throughout 2010 and had a significant impact on Canadian operations over time.

The system had no real name and appeared to be a conglomeration of existing and new programmes. In reality, it was a parallel system designed to be discreetly introduced into critically threatened areas to get around NGO squeamishness and challenge Afghan provincial-level corruption. The system even played off of the Operation KALAY successes, something that was carefully observed by the new system's proponents.

An important aspect of the new system was how it evolved in parallel with the existing mechanisms (see Figure 6–6) but by augmenting existing capabilities. The new addition was the District Support Team which, in addition to other tasks, worked to mentor the District Leader and the District Development Assembly. The District Delivery Program established in March 2010 created line ministry representatives at the district level and then moved money to them. Both the District Support Team and the District Delivery Program in theory reduced the district leader's ability to influence how the money was dispersed and situated him in a structure where he was under scrutiny and could be held accountable.¹⁴³

Another addition at the district level was the District Community Council which was like a 'security DDA' but in some cases the District Community Council took over from the dysfunctional development assemblies in some districts. Added in 2009, the DCC had three sub-committees: justice, security, and social. The Joint District Coordination Centre remained the coordination hub for the various security forces in their- day-to-day operations. Again, like the District Delivery Program, the District Community Council reduced the absolute power of the district leader and brought him into a systematized organizational framework. The District Community Council committees were supposed to use traditional and local dispute resolution mechanisms and reconcile them with the new justice system in order to reduce friction at the lowest level possible.¹⁴⁴

Unlike the District Development Assembly, the District Community Council was part of the Afghan Social Outreach Program (ASOP), established in 2008. Where the District Development Assembly was connected to the Ministry of Rural Reconstruction, ASOP was responsible to the Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG), a 2007 creation by President Karzai intended to grip the district-level governance problem but which was beset with credibility issues from its inception: instead of having provincial governors appoint district leaders, the IDLG in Kabul did so, which potentially undermined the governor's authority...and the governors were appointed by Karzai in the first place. ASOP was in part intended to reinvigorate IDLG and became the funding mechanism for the District Community Council programmes.¹⁴⁵

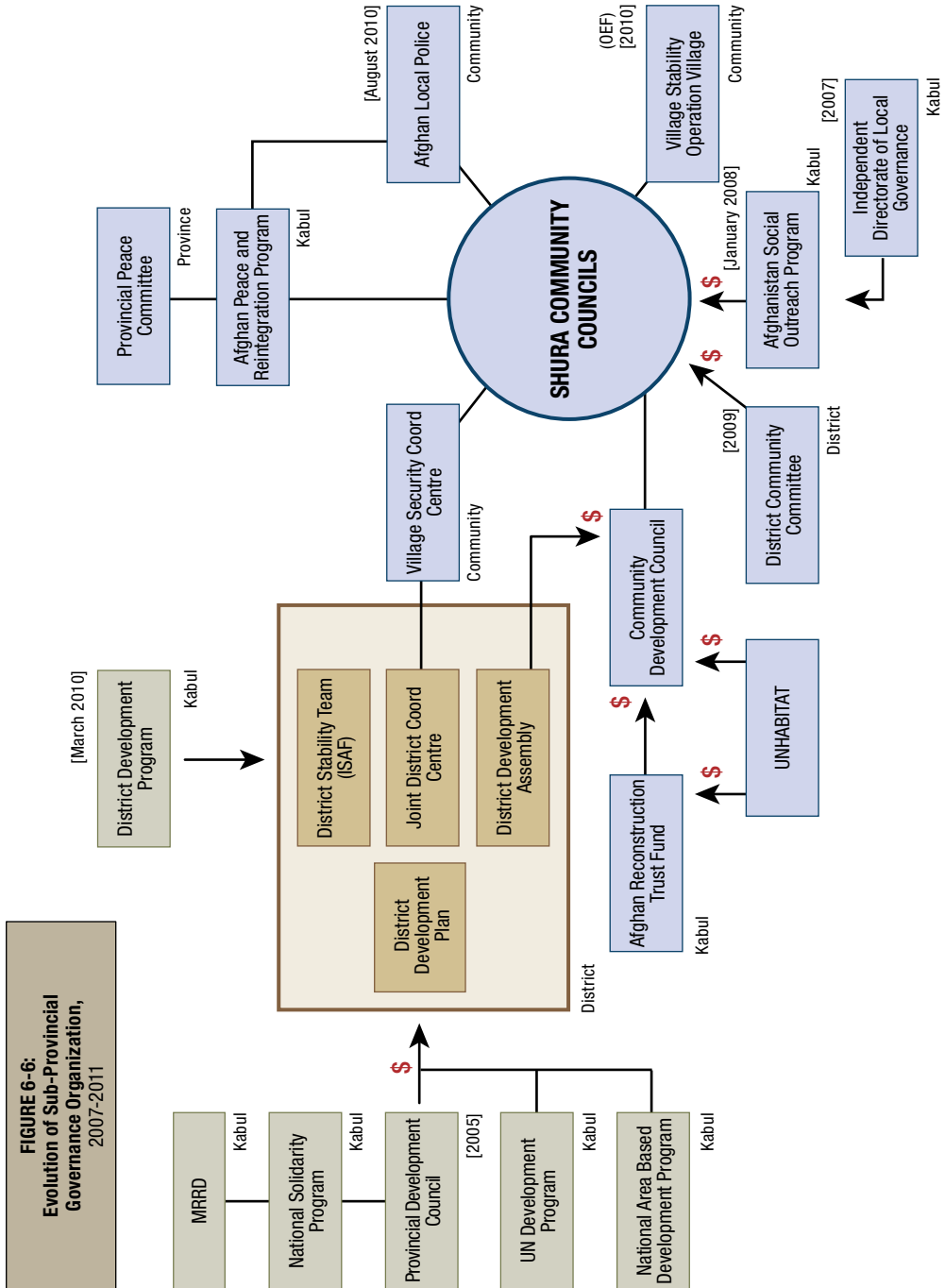


Figure 6-6: Evolution of Sub-Provincial Governance Organization, 2007-2011

There was overlap between ASOP activities and another structure/program called the Afghan Peace and Reintegration Program (APRP) established in June 2010. Recall the long-defunct Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) and the Disarmament of Illegally Armed Groups (DIAG) programs, and the failed Peace Through Strength and Taliban reconciliation program. The APRP was designed to reconcile and reintegrate local Taliban fighters at the community and district-level. APRP was supported at the provincial-level by the Provincial Peace Council which combined the Taliban reconciliation function with the deployment of grievance teams to work in the districts to resolve local grievances using the District Community Council and other mechanisms. The Afghan Social Outreach Program was part of the vetting mechanism for the Afghan Peace and Reintegration Program.¹⁴⁶

The Afghan Peace and Reintegration Program also had a relationship to the most controversial new structure, the Afghan Local Police (ALP) which came on-line officially in August 2010 but had been tested out in various forms throughout 2009. The ALP concept was to develop a village militia vetted by community leaders, trained by special forces, but reporting to the district chief of police. With a Village Stability Coordination Centre, the Afghan Local Police were supposed to be able to resist Taliban intimidation at the community level and then call in district-level Afghan Uniformed Police and then the Army if the level of enemy force escalated above intimidation. There was a concept whereby the Afghan Peace and Reintegration Program and Afghan Social Outreach Program could be used to reintegrate former local Taliban into the Afghan Local Police. Later on the umbrella term for this whole structure was Village Stability Operations (VSO) which were to be implemented in Key Terrain Districts (KTDs) which again looked very similar to Operation KALAY but with more policing.¹⁴⁷

In the Canadian camp, there were high levels of skepticism in DFAIT and CIDA regarding the new structures and programs as they percolated in late 2009 and deployed in 2010. The Afghan Local Police and Afghan Peace and Reintegration Program were seen by some to be turning back the work done by the Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration and Disarmament of Illegally Armed Groups program. Village Stability Operations raised the same objections that the original Provincial Reconstruction Teams did in that this was considered by some CIDA people to be ‘politicization’ of aid and a ‘violation’ of ‘humanitarian space.’ Foreign Affairs favoured building up the Afghan Uniformed Police and did not like ‘militias,’ especially ones that might be mentored by American special forces, which they viewed with some suspicion. What the critics failed to accept was that the fight in the districts was a community-level fight and that arms-length secular bureaucratic national and provincial-level programs were not going to address the realities of security, governance, and development in the communities.¹⁴⁸

The Operational Mentor and Liaison Team in Late 2009

By October 2009, BGen Basir's 1-205 Brigade had swollen to six kandaks. 6th Kandak, now a specialized road-security unit, handled positions on Highway 1, while 1st Kandak operated from FOB Wilson. 3rd Kandak was based in Kandahar City and Arghandab District, while 2nd Kandak worked alongside the 1 PPCLI Battle Group in Panjwayi District. The Canadian OMLT led by Col Greg Burt continued to mentor all but 6th Kandak; American trainers arrived in mid-fall to embed with that unit.¹⁴⁹

The primary issue was, as it had been throughout Canada's involvement with the Afghan army, the traditionally high absent without leave rates experienced by units and formations. In the case of 1-205 Brigade, Col Burt's staff estimated that 50 percent of the brigade was present, accounted for, and prepared for operations, while 25 percent was absent and the other 25 percent otherwise unprepared for operations.¹⁵⁰ The Afghan troops themselves were annoyed with the situation in the districts and disgusted by the behaviour of both local officials and some of their own leaders. This animosity clearly undermined their sympathy towards the population:

The XO replied that patrolling amongst the population merely endangered that population. When asked about delivering humanitarian aid, the actual CO said that when they did that in Zharey, it was merely pawned off by the village leadership in Kandahar City.¹⁵¹

There were continuous interventions from authorities in Kabul. During the Eid holiday in September, all Afghan army units were ordered to stand down from operations and not leave their bases. This placed an additional burden on ISAF forces who had to back fill on those operations which in turn had negative effects on future plans.¹⁵²

To complicate the situation further, 1-205 Brigade was deployed in districts that were under Canadian command and while others were deployed to districts under American command. Canadian mentors worked with Afghan army forces in American-commanded areas, while American mentors working with Afghan army forces worked alongside an American battalion that was under Canadian command. This did not always work seamlessly: there were different Canadian and American rules of engagement which generated friction into the fire support process, for example.

Continuing with the philosophy that 'every little bit helps,' Canadians from TF Kandahar worked through the OMLT with their 1-205 Brigade counterparts. This was particularly important in the counter-IED and medical areas. The TF Kandahar Brigade Surgeon initiated a basic medical course that was eight weeks long and trained 60 Afghan soldiers as medics.¹⁵³ Basic sanitation courses were also taught, but the low education levels of the Afghan troops made it difficult for them to comprehend the biology underlying the connection between unsanitary conditions and basic health.

One of the more annoying distractions came from Ahmad Wali Karzai's repeated attempts to get the Afghan army commanders in Kandahar to commit forces to the northern districts. These attempts started in early September and were routed through the provincial security steering committee. Karzai was partially successful in convincing the police leadership that the ANP should start operating in Khakrez District again, but the 1-205 Brigade deputy commander balked because 1-205 was busy in Arghandab. Governor Wesa then pushed for the permanent deployment of both police and army units to Khakrez. Ahmad Wali Karzai pressed further and argued that forces had to occupy the Khakrez community of Lam. Occupying Lam was critical, according to Karzai and Wesa. Karzai argued that forces based there could intercept enemy east-west movement between Helmand, Kandahar, and Oruzgan.¹⁵⁴

BGen Vance was exceptionally concerned about this development. Kandahar City and its approaches were the priority, not Lam, not Khakrez.¹⁵⁵ Already stretched thin, the OMLT could not support operations outside the areas to which they were already committed. The Khakrez situation was essentially a repeat of the problems encountered by previous Canadian TF Kandahar commanders over Ghorak. The motives were likely the same: protection of (or interference with, depending on the circumstances) the narcotics smuggling route out of Helmand. The Afghan police commanders, however, were cajoled into deploying to Khakrez for 'elections security' in the event of run-off elections in November. That in turn drew in part of an Afghan army kandak, plus mentors. Col Burt and BGen Vance successfully resisted this plan throughout the fall of 2009, but ultimately an Afghan company with mentors deployed to Khakrez — but, fortunately, not to Lam.¹⁵⁶

By October 2009, the six primary units of Brig Gen Basir's 1-205 Brigade were at Capability Milestone 1 or Capability Milestone 2: Brigade Headquarters, 2nd Kandak and 5th Kandak (the combat service support kandak) were at CM-1, fully capable of conducting operations, and 1st Kandak, 3rd Kandak and 4th Kandak stood at CM-2, capable of conducting operations with OMLT presence.¹⁵⁷

In three years, the Canadian-mentored 1-205 Brigade progressed from the ability to operate at partnered platoon level within the context of a single battalion, to conducting mentored and some independent operations with three infantry battalions plus a combat support battalion, and a combat service support battalion. These units mounted their own security operations in Kandahar City and were losing life and limb trying to keep Highway 1 open. Once again, Canadian involvement in Afghan National Army mentoring was paying substantial dividends, despite drawbacks associated with the demographically-damaged Afghan culture and low education levels. Importantly, Canadian soldiers in the OMLT demonstrated day in and day out to their Afghan counterparts at all levels that Canada was part of the fight for their country.

Col Greg Burt rotated out in the fall of 2009 and a new OMLT came into Kandahar led by Col Shane Brennan. Brennan's team included leaders who had multiple tours in Afghanistan: Majors Derek Prohar, Steve MacBeth, Andrew Vivian and Alex Watson. Prohar became the chief staff while the others mentored the three rifle kandaks in 1-205 Brigade that were deployed in Arghandab, Kandahar City, and Panjwayi district (6th Kandak, the highway security kandak, was unmentored until American embedded trainers could be deployed). Col Brennan worked with Brig Gen Basir on a daily basis.

At this point, the Red-Yellow-Green readiness cycle established in 2007 was still officially in place but, as Col Brennan put it, "it really didn't matter because you had to be Green all the time."¹⁵⁸ Indeed, the idea that TF Kandahar could use the OMLT as some form of manoeuvre unit was long gone; Regional Command (South) was in control, and ISAF was taking a new approach to its engagement with the Afghan National Army. This approach, called "partnering," meant that each ANA kandak would partner with an ISAF battle group or battalion, and company-level mentors would be reassigned:

The driving force behind the change was [MGen] Nick Carter ... He needed to ruthlessly reassign NATO forces in his battle space and [had] a shortage of advisors and mentors for police functions. They were trying to drive us away from mentoring the Afghan army because "It's all done, it's all looked after, we want you to become police mentors."¹⁵⁹

The "partnering" policy had the potential to dramatically affect how the Canadian OMLT handled its task. Brennan was extremely concerned and passed on to TF Kandahar that

The issue for Canada is, this is tactically an operationally driven change with significant strategic inputs for our contribution. It must be remembered that it is not a top-down, driven NATO policy request. This is RC (South) commander's assessment being cloaked among ISAF's higher direction. Partnering is being touted as the solution to improving the Afghan National Army in all aspects, that mentoring is passé. I didn't agree with [partnering] ... partnering meant dragging Afghans along on a mission that ISAF was running as opposed to mentoring them to do a mission.¹⁶⁰

Some thought that partnering was directly related to pressure from President Karzai on Gen McChrystal to reduce civilian casualties and cut down on unilateral night raids by special operations forces. Others speculated that partnering allowed the Afghans to "share the heat" if anything went wrong during an ISAF operation.¹⁶¹

Brennan's main concern was that Canadian interests were not being protected. "Canada needs to stand firm on controlling very specifically how Canadian soldiers are employed." He was exceptionally concerned that "our troops would be handed over piecemeal to be commanded by other nations. Especially in Helmand." This was a constant theme during the Brennan OMLT's tour as the transition from mentoring to partnering slowly took effect, and resources needed for the Canadian-Afghan counterinsurgency fight in Kandahar were increasingly susceptible to redeployment elsewhere.¹⁶²

Development and the PRT by Late 2009

PRT commander LCol Carl Turenne and PRT Director Jess Dutton worked steadily to improve cooperation between TF Kandahar and the other government departments — OGDs — while advancing development goals where they could.

Structurally, the PRT retained Stabilization Company A (Stab A) in Kandahar City and Stab B in Dand and Panjwayi districts. Each stabilization company now included a civilian Stabilization Officer from one of the OGDs. The P-OMLT, now part of the PRT, had four mentor teams deployed in Panjwayi and Dand districts, where they were incorporated into Stab B, and Zharey and Arghandab districts, where they operated independently. The Specialist Engineer Team and the Construction Management Organization under the PRT's operational command, a move designed to improve coordination in the districts. As we have seen, their tactical analogues were the Construction Management Teams.¹⁶³

In Dand and Panjwayi, Stab B connected with the Joint District Coordination Centres, which transitioned into Operational Coordination Centers–District (OCC-Ds) —which were essentially the same thing with a new American name. In Kandahar City, each district now had a Municipal Support Office that acted as a District Development Assembly but in an urban setting. Stab A related to the Municipal Support Offices just as Stab B worked with the District Development Assemblies. A new organization, the OCC Kandahar City was under consideration, but how it related to the OCC-P was a matter of debate until June 2010 when they merged to form the Operational Coordination Center–Kandahar or OCC-K. What is important here in this new sea of acronyms was that there were security, development, and governance coordination bodies at all levels of government in Kandahar province, including Kanadhar City. Not all were functional, not all had permanent officers, but the PRT Stab companies worked to improve this state of affairs wherever they deployed in order to get this system working.¹⁶⁴

The dominant *modus operandi* for the CIDA and DFAIT at the PRT was to work through and provide funding to other organizations and then claim success in the context of the measurement criteria established by Ottawa. For example, CIDA handed out Kandahar

Local Initiative Program money directly to two Afghan NGOs for nursery and playground rehabilitation, greenhouse growing schemes, and farmer self-help. CIDA money was also looped through the Integrated Alternative Livelihoods Program and then to aid organizations, including those that were part of the counter-narcotics effort.¹⁶⁵

As we have seen in the last chapter, headway had been made with ISAF and UNAMA in reinforcing the UN agency presence in Kandahar City and coordinating those organizations with the PRT. UNICEF and WHO were conducting a (redundant) ‘cluster assessment’ of the water and sanitation system in the City, while the Office of Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid established an office. UNHCR worked with the Zharey Dasht IDP camp to process people for relocation. UN HABITAT also got involved with the Kandahar City water and sanitation project, which resulted in three international agencies assessing the same problem, at the same time.¹⁶⁶

To what extent the Canadian departments could influence this activity or measure its effectiveness remained in question. If Canada gave money to the UN in New York, and the UN used a portion of that money from its funding to conduct programs in Kandahar, was that a Canadian success or not? The idea that allocating money to other non-Canadian organizations was a success in itself was at odds with what actually came out the other end in terms of improving the lives of Afghans in Kandahar, let alone attenuating the insurgency.

LCol Turenne believed that the PRT’s primary successes by late 2009 included the polio eradication program, Correctional Services Canada’s involvement with Sarposa Prison, and the improvement of the education system in Kandahar City. Another was the withdrawal of Canadian CIVPOL from the DynCorp-run Regional Training Centre and the increased emphasis on police officer training at the Camp Nathan Smith training centre. DFAIT’s increased funding of police infrastructure in the City was another positive move and, paradoxically, the withdrawal of DFAIT money for Afghan police equipment forced the police to use their own logistics system. Only the Justice portfolio had nothing to boast about. The Department of Justice in Canada was uninterested in sending people to Kandahar, and little progress was made in this area beyond that made by the Canadian military PRT Legal Advisors in 2007–2008.¹⁶⁷

Even the polio program’s foundations were shaky. CIDA, who wanted to use the World Health Organization as an ‘implementing partner,’ ran into a brick wall:

All [CIDA] did was give \$10 million to WHO to aid their program. So when WHO was getting pressure by CIDA to say, “Hey, get into these areas” and blah blah blah, they were, like, “Oh, you’re so sweet. Oh, how kind. Now go fuck yourself because we don’t take orders from you.” Patrick Oliver the WHO rep’s exact words were “We thank you very much for your

contribution to the WHO of this money. But you are a contributing partner. You don't actually set the priorities or tell us how to achieve this. We will work with you to be able to facilitate immunizations in this area, but CIDA doesn't have a say in how we do this."¹⁶⁸

The Taliban exploited the situation for their purposes. They conducted "a campaign to disrupt the actual WHO, because the Taliban did not want WHO in the area doing immunizations. They didn't want anything positive happening for the people." To ensure that they could get into contested or controlled areas, "WHO would talk to the Taliban to ensure they could go in and do immunizations on certain days." What actually happened, however, was that "There's a lot of times they'd claim they did vaccinations, but they didn't. And how did they enforce that? They had no method of enforcing the vaccination [program]. And it's the office in Kandahar that's talking to two and three intermediaries before you get to the villager on the ground. And that couldn't get verified at all."¹⁶⁹

As for the Dahla Dam project, SNC Lavalin, the overall Canadian contractor for dam refurbishment, needed a security force but had been told in Canada not to deal with any of the several security companies owned by Ahmad Wali Karzai. TF Kandahar patiently explained that dealing with Ahmad Wali Karzai was unavoidable as he held a monopoly on security company contracting in Kandahar.¹⁷⁰ Joint Task Force Afghanistan reported in mid-September 2009 that the dam road was 90 percent complete, but the Canadian implementing partner, the Central Asian Development Group's sub-contractor, had been fired and new bids solicited. The PRT approved a million-dollar contract with the Dastagiri Construction Company to finish the job.¹⁷¹ These and other commercial factors slowed the project but, once the Dastagiri and Ahmad Wali Karzai factions of the Kandahar power structure were appeased, things seemed to pick up.

That said, the decision to integrate the dam project with other irrigation and water projects into the Arghandab Valley Integrated Development Vision took hold. Arghandab was billed "Afghanistan's breadbasket" and more and more connections were made between stabilizing Arghandab security and the AVIDV. The Dahla Dam project was redesignated the Arghandab Irrigation Rehabilitation Project and now linked into a regional development vision. Was it development or was it security? Was it both? Nobody was sure, but Canada had by this point sunk \$50 million dollars and several lives into it, and then signed off on supporting it for another three years.¹⁷²

Water supply was crucial to security in Kandahar City; disease could undermine all aspects of reconstruction and could easily be exploited by the insurgency. That Kandahar City had serious problems with potable water was known to CIDA as early as 2007. A CIDA-commissioned water study found that, because the river level was so low and the delivery systems inoperable, the aquifers under the city were either exhausted or contaminated.

In September 2009, cholera outbreaks were reported in Shah Wali Kot and Maywand and, although they were contained, it was only a matter of time before something similar happened in Kandahar City.¹⁷³

Although public health was not ISAF's responsibility, it had unavoidable security implications. One problem lay in the belief by the Red Cross and some Canadian elements that the Chinese-funded Mirwais Hospital was somehow a neutral zone that security forces could not operate in. The reality was that Mirwais was an Afghanistan government facility, not a Red Cross safe haven, and it was understood that insurgents regularly used the facility for their purposes. Canadians mentoring the Afghan security forces and suggested that only the police should enter to conduct investigations.¹⁷⁴

Overall, Canada lacked the capacity to evaluate and confront the problems surrounding the use of non-governmental organizations to perform government functions, especially the parasitical relationship between the insurgency and the various agencies delivering aid and development programs. This failure struck right to the heart of legitimacy and service delivery, and the problems associated with the nature of the conflict. Canadians in Afghanistan were not peacekeepers and Canada was not neutral, yet the legitimacy of the Afghan government was eroded from within by factionalism, profiteering, corruption, and by ceding too much power to outside organizations. It is this deepening mire that the Canadians at the PRT sought to navigate using the flawed strategic framework of priorities and projects. At the very least, the PRT and CIMIC provided a window through which to view parasitical insurgent activity and commercial rivalries and try and keep track of it with the White Situational Awareness organizations.

Despite the successes, we cannot paper over the fact that there were severe personality conflicts and major ideological differences at all levels of the Canadian development, reconstruction and governance endeavor in Kandahar.¹⁷⁵ Turenne and his team were increasingly seen as Stockholm Syndrome victims by elements in the incoming TF Kandahar headquarters and the painstaking relationship building that took place and the incremental steps forward in 2009 eventually culminated by early 2010.

Command Changes, November 2009: From Vance to Ménard, from De Kruif to Carter

By mid-November, it was time for the Vance team to conduct a relief in place with its successor headquarters led by BGen Daniel Ménard. Based on 5^e Groupe-brigade mécanisé du Canada, the new TF Kandahar brought with it the new OMLT led by Col Shane Brennan. LCol Turenne remained in command of the PRT, and 1 PPCLI Battle Group under LCol Jerry Walsh continued its tour with TF Kandahar as the task force battle group.

A new Canadian Helicopter Force Afghanistan contingent led by Col Christian Drouin also arrived at this time. The new National Support Element led by LCol Jim Jensen arrived in October, and Maj Lisa Elliott led a new rotation at the All Source Intelligence Centre starting in November.

Over at Regional Command (South), Maj Gen Nick Carter of the British Army and a headquarters dominated by 6 (UK) Division took over from the Dutch-led multinational headquarters. One of Maj Gen Carter's first moves was to realign his forces in Kandahar Province, in particular the troubled Stryker Brigade. In only four months in Arghandab District, 1-17 Infantry had lost 22 soldiers and the battalion leadership could not agree on whether they were supposed to be conducting counterinsurgency or counter-guerilla operations. Critics were even calling the Stryker Brigade the "Motor Rifle Regiment" because of what some assessed to be an emphasis on heavy-handed tactics. During this debate, one 1-17 Infantry company commander was fired and his brigade commander, Col Harry Tunnell, argued frequently with Maj Gen Carter about the Stryker Brigade's operational methods. Carter pulled the Stryker Brigade out of the south and centre of Arghandab District and reassigned its battalions to the task of maintaining freedom of movement on main service routes. Canadian diplomat Neil Clegg, who originally deployed as a policy advisor with the Stryker Brigade, was reassigned to the PRT. 2-508 Parachute Infantry Regiment, also known as Task Force 2 Fury, replaced the Stryker Brigade in Arghandab.¹⁷⁶

The creation in Kabul of a new NATO headquarters called ISAF Joint Command led to other changes that affected Regional Command (South) and TF Kandahar.¹⁷⁷ The first act of ISAF Joint Command was to issue a standing operational order (IJC OPOD 001-2009 OP OMID) setting out a common concept of operations for the entire combined and joint operations area.

This construct consisted of five lines of operations throughout phase 3 of the strategic NATO campaign, spanning late 2009 to late 2010. The operational goal was to gain the initiative, but the exact wording was obscure. The five lines of operation were complemented by a set of supporting concepts, 17 in total, spanning from partnering, to reintegration and medical support. The tactical concepts of Shape, Clear, Hold and Build were explained in paragraphs, and the tactical succession of these was explained. The components were not summed up into a theater-wide operational concept of operation and stood more or less alone, and with no real priority assigned.

As we have seen, the key change was in 'partnering' with the Afghans at all levels.¹⁷⁸ There were others. ISAF Joint Command also introduced the "deep dive", a focused study of particular districts, communities, or groups of communities to act as a bellwether on progress. Another was a new directive on monitoring corruption. Ultimately these changes significantly increased the level of staff activity at TF Kandahar in order to meet

the reporting demands which in turn had an impact on the finite staff capacity available to the headquarters.¹⁷⁹ Pre-deployment training had not prepared the headquarters team for the reality they faced.

Maj Gen Carter also altered the operational planning concept for Regional Command (South). In the planning realm, Carter altered the RC (South) operational planning concept. Operation MOSHTARAK, as it was called, emerged initially from British concerns, amplified through the De Kruif-led Regional Command (South) headquarters, that Marjah district was an emergent enemy node that was detrimental to the survival of the Helmand provincial government in Lashkar Gah. That was back in June 2009.¹⁸⁰ Carter's approach was governed by a number of themes, of which the most important was that ISAF had to:

... support the re-establishment of the political organs at all levels. And make them accountable. And [to] have them be accountable, let them be accountable to themselves and to their people [and] ultimately break the cycle of corruption that was beyond the normally socially acceptable corruption that goes on in Afghanistan ... break the culture of impunity cycle.¹⁸¹

As BGen Ménard came to understand it, however, the battle being fought by ISAF and Afghan forces in Helmand Province was in effect a covering-force fight for Kandahar Province, and thus Kandahar City. Resources would be weighted to Helmand for the covering-force part, and then shifted to Kandahar. The overall plan would have its first two phases in Helmand, and phases 3 and 4 in Kandahar.¹⁸²

Planning Under Ménard: Toward Operation WADANA WAL

The Vance headquarters' intent was that the incoming TF Kandahar would take Operation KANTOLO and the KALAY series and continue on that trajectory. 1 PPCLI Battle Group and the OMLT were already positioned to do so and were in the middle of Operation KALAY III. KALAY I and KALAY II were progressing well with Stab B, the P-OMLT, the Construction Management Organization, and the Specialist Engineer Team. Operations in Kandahar City were also going well, with Stab A, the OCC-P and the 97th MP Battalion taking the lead in ensuring municipal and provincial government activities were well-supported. The American forces in Arghandab District, particularly the Stryker Brigade, were having a rough go with IEDs but nevertheless expelled the insurgents from critical parts of the district, especially areas close in to the city. Spin Boldak was as secure as it could be. And, as it had been in the past, it was unclear from the outset to the Ménard headquarters team how much of Regional Command (South)'s resources would be transferred to Helmand with a British officer in command.

That said, Regional Command (South) instructed TF Kandahar to prepare for a realignment of unit boundaries and to take tactical control of some American units. The new TF Kandahar area of operations included Kandahar City, Dand District, eastern Panjwayi District, south and eastern Zharey, southern Arghandab and part of Daman. TF 2 Fury would take over from 1-17 Infantry in Arghandab District and come under Kandahar control by the end of December. As for partnering, Regional Command (South) was still unclear on how it wanted it handled and basically said, “Wait. Out.”¹⁸³

The changes at Regional Command (South) and the character of the incoming American forces meant that BGen Ménard’s headquarters team faced an operational reality for which their pre-deployment training had not prepared them. Consequently, TF Kandahar planning was still in flux well into December, and Ménard’s deputy, Col Simon Hetherington, prompted him to issue interim planning guidance so the units of the task force could at least continue on the trajectory set by BGen Vance. Unwilling to accept this compromise, Ménard was not happy with the situation and told Hetherington that the existing plans were null and void.¹⁸⁴ During that time, the staff were not allowed by BGen Ménard to use the words KANTOLO or KALAY in the headquarters building, or to discuss KANTOLO’s operating concept. They were instructed to come up with something different. At the same time, however, LGen Marc Lessard at CEFCOM warned Ménard not to modify KANTOLO because of the “scar tissue” generated by friction with the other government departments during its creation in early 2009.¹⁸⁵

When it was issued on 12 December, the Ménard planning guidance stickhandled around the Other Government Department problem and asserted that the main effort and mission success lay in “the establishment and successful maintenance of the perception of security” for the population of Kandahar City. To achieve this, TF Kandahar would establish a “Ring of Stability” in the districts west of the city as a barrier to the insurgents. Stability was defined as “an atmosphere of order ... within which responsible government can function effectively and measurable progress [is] achieved.” Each district was to have, a “battle space commander” who would achieve the aim by applying Define-Shape-Clear-Hold-Build-Enable (the newest version of Clear-Hold-Build) to communities within their area of operation. The key communities were initially Nakhonay, Salavat, Asheque and Senjaray.¹⁸⁶

Outside of the Ring of Stability, TF Kandahar and ‘higher assets’ were to conduct disrupt and interdiction operations. This was to be called the ‘deep battle’ space. Importantly, Ménard strongly emphasized in his guidance that all activities were to be centrally coordinated and planned at the Task Force Kandahar level “with priorities established by me and nested within the operational design of Regional Command (South) ... no operations or initiatives will be planned or executed in isolation.”¹⁸⁷

Under the direction of the Chief of Staff, LCol Craig Dalton, the headquarters team rapidly came up with a plan they informally called “KANTOLO on steroids” or “KANTOLO PLUS” and then later, WADANA WAL (Progress) (see Figure 6-7). It was understood that it was not the summer fighting season, so major operations against insurgents were out of the question. Dand was successful, Panjwayi district was showing progress in certain areas. Zharey district was an enemy sanctuary with constant violence. Operations in Arghandab and lower Shah Wali Kot were believed to be successful. Given this state of affairs, the general idea was to have a “Ring of Stability” in place west of the City in Dand, eastern Panjwayi, and Arghandab, with everything west of that designated a “Deep Battle” zone. Define-Shape-Clear-Hold-Build-Enable would continue to be the operating methodology to secure the communities within the ‘Ring’ that had not received attention thus far. As well as those named in Ménard’s guidance, the expanded list of target communities included the Dand villages; Belanday, Nakhonay and Bazaar-e Panjwayi in Panjwayi District; Senjaray in Zharey District; and Jelawur in Arghandab.¹⁸⁸

The Ring of Stability described in the new plan essentially took KALAY III and pushed north into Senjaray. That left Jelawur. And, as we have seen, Jelawur was in Arghandab which was a Stryker Brigade responsibility, not TF Kandahar. At the time, however, thought was given to withdrawing the Stryker Brigade units from Arghandab and having the ‘Embedded Training Team’ battalion, 2-508 Parachute Infantry, assume responsibility, possibly under Canadian command.¹⁸⁹

An additional and highly significant change was LGen Lessard’s move to extract CEFCOM from the intricacies of tactical and operational planning in Kandahar Province. Lessard stopped work on any CEFCOM campaign planning for Afghanistan in Ottawa and told TF Kandahar that the campaign plan was the RC (South) campaign plan.¹⁹⁰ As KANTOLO PLUS was refined in late December, the plan now had to respond to Regional Command (South)’s new operations order. That conflicted with Ménard’s direction that the new Canadian plan was to be unique.¹⁹¹

While the headquarters relief in place was under way at TF Kandahar, a similar process was going on at Regional Command (South). Maj Gen Carter was beginning his second tour in Afghanistan, having served on the American staff of CJTF-180 in 2002, and had more recently completed a command tour with the British contingent based at Basra, Iraq. His British-dominated headquarters still had a number of Canadians in it but “strong personality conflicts” resulted in the early resignation and departure of BGen Gerry Champagne, the Canadian deputy commander for strategic effects, and the arrival of BGen Craig King to replace him.

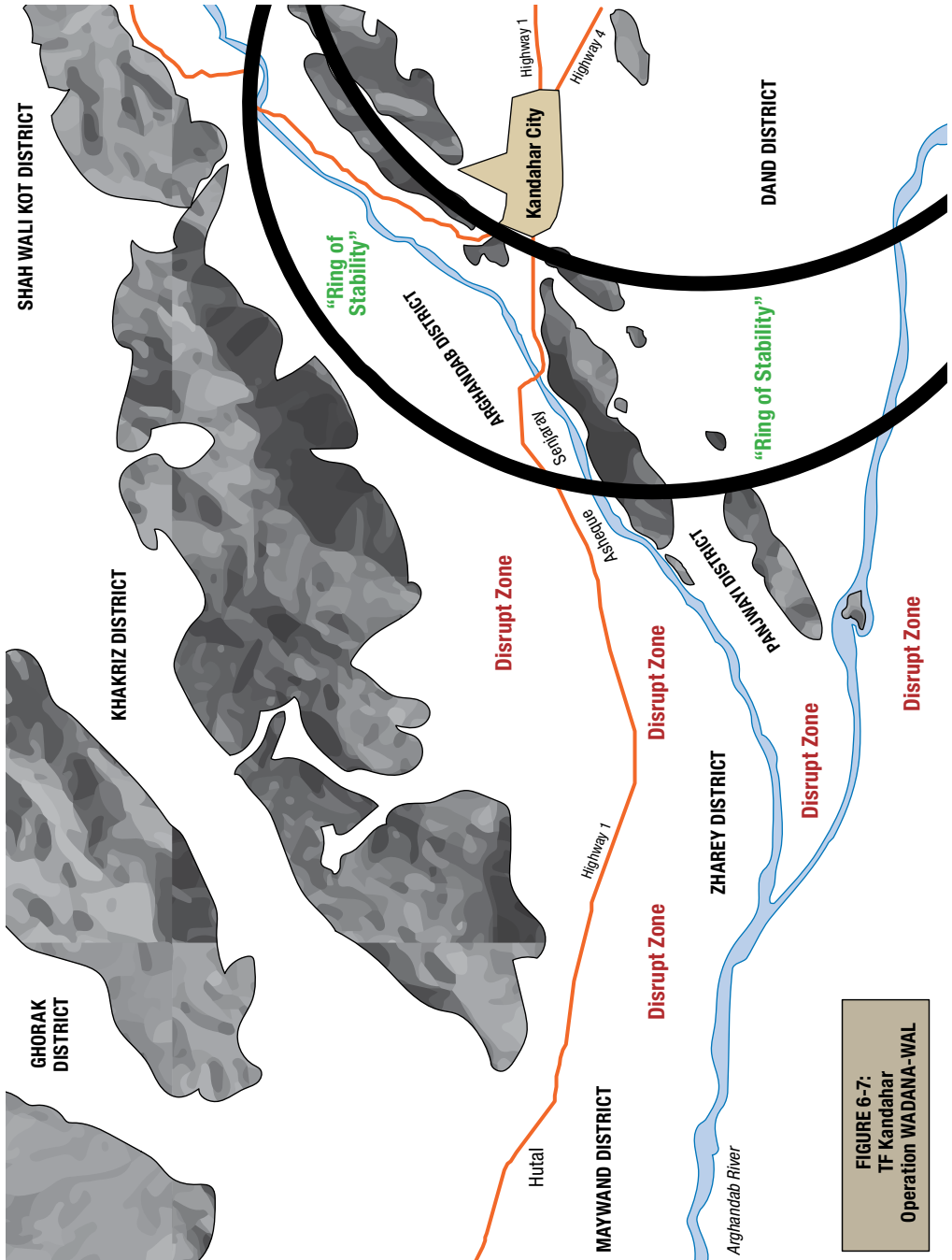


Figure 6-7: TF Kandahar Operation WADANA WAL

Yet another important change that November was the dissolution of the Regional Battle Group (South), previously used for disrupt operations in Kandahar Province. The American influx, particularly the increased number and variety of special operations forces that were arriving, meant that a light infantry unit was no longer required to handle the disrupt function in the province. The deployment of the various RBG(S)'s over the past two years to Kandahar went a long way to demonstrate that there remained tight army-to-army professionalism at the unit level between Canada and the UK, no matter what the politics were vis-à-vis Regional Command (South), Helmand province, and Kandahar province.

Task Force Kandahar planning clashed with the new RC (South) planning, in part because of poor personal relationships that developed at a number of levels. The nub of the problem, as it emerged, was that TF Kandahar resisted Regional Command (South) over several fundamental issues. The problems were, as before, the relationship between Helmand and Kandahar provinces in the larger scheme of the war, British versus Canadian interests, and how these factors related to resource allocation. This was all aggravated by the American influx, which was massive.

On another level, there was Carter's plan, MOSHTARAK, and Ménard's plan, WADANA WAL. Ménard later rationalized the relationship between the two and conceded that MOSHTARAK and WADANA WAL could, in fact, complement each other; MOSHTARAK was doing for RC (South) what WADANA WAL was doing for Kandahar province. Ménard understood that his Ring of Stability had to be in place before the summer fighting season started because he wanted fighting age males 'off the street' working on development projects and not subject to the predations of the Taliban. He also wanted local businesses in action providing basic needs so there was an air of stability. Therefore, his Ring of Security had to be established beforehand. The timings for this conflicted with the allocation of ISR, helicopters, engineering, SOF, and other resources to MOSHTARAK.¹⁹²

In addition, some of the Canadian planners believed that Kandahar City might, under RC (South), become "Iraqized" into becoming a "Green Zone" like parts of Baghdad.¹⁹³ When Regional Command (South) directed TF Kandahar to review its Kandahar City Security Plan, the staff checked in with their Afghan military and police counterparts, who reported they were happy with the existing plan which consisted of random checkpoints, joint patrols, and access-control points on the city perimeter. The Carter headquarters, taking their cue from Basra or possibly Kabul in 2002–2003, wanted a ring of checkpoints surrounding the city. The Afghans still preferred the plan they had developed on their own with the Canadians in the background. Regional Command (South) told TF Kandahar to "make them" conform to the Regional Command (South) plan.

Informed by Col Hetherington's experience with Kandahar City security issues from Operation PORTCULLIS, the Canadian commanders resisted and escalated the matter to the Ministry of the Interior, where it died.¹⁹⁴

There were other examples of Regional Command (South) thinking that, according to TF Kandahar planners, "drove them crazy" because they were unconnected with the reality that was handed off to them by the Vance headquarters. In one case, a Canadian officer saw the Regional Command (South) commander personally selecting the sites for checkpoints on a map.¹⁹⁵ Fundamentally, however, each headquarters team misunderstood the other. Under Maj Gen de Kruif, Regional Command (South) was "a multinational headquarters with no teeth" or a "coordinating headquarters," and TF Kandahar did what it wanted. Carter viewed Regional Command (South) as a divisional "command" headquarters and TF Kandahar as a brigade commanded by it.¹⁹⁶ This issue, and others, came out later under the pressure of Operation MOSHTARAK and during the reorganization of the OMLT.

The Ménard Reorganization

The entire Canadian joint task force was completely re-organized in December 2009. BGen Ménard later characterized these changes as crucial steps necessary because of the changing reconstruction/developmental landscape on one hand, and the incoming American forces on the other.¹⁹⁷ The reorganization was also driven by Ménard's penchant for doctrinal coherence, and it eventually had both positive and negative effects on Canadian operations.

The Provincial Operations Centre, established in the Canadian compound at Kandahar Air Field in 2007 which then became the Kandahar Provincial Operations Centre in 2008 and begat the Joint Provincial Operations Centre in 2009, was confusingly re-named the TF Kandahar Tactical Operations Centre (confusing because the battle group retained its own TOC in another compound). The TF Kandahar Tactical Operations Centre was the repository of 'deep battle' aerial strike operations: this responsibility had been weighted towards the Kandahar Joint Provincial Operations Centre and away from the battle group's operations centre under Vance, but was fully shifted to the new TF Kandahar Tactical Operations Centre by Ménard. That change forced the battle group to 'bid' for UAV resources from TF Kandahar. The special relationship established in 2008 between Maj Jay Adair and the American UAV units was now dissolved. The TF Kandahar Tactical Operations Centre remained responsible for higher engineer and air asset coordination and deconfliction as it had since the beginning. All of these functions became even more critical as more units entered the battlespace and thus more personnel were required. When the Ménard headquarters took over, the TF Kandahar operations centre was responsible for the Canadian battle group, and the American 1-12 Infantry battalion, plus the Canadian units in the City. It also had to interact with the Stryker Brigade unit in Arghandab,

1-17 Infantry. Over the course of the next five months, Task Force Kandahar had to coordinate and sometimes command the operations of those two units plus TF 2 Fury (the 2-508 battalion from the 82nd Airborne); 97th MP Battalion, 1-71 Cavalry Squadron (an American recon unit cut to TF Kandahar in April 2010) and later TF 1 Fury in June which replaced 1-17 Infantry. It also had to coordinate with the four 1-205 Brigade rifle or security kandaks.¹⁹⁸

This workload was never anticipated in the Ménard headquarters' pre-deployment training, so the TOC staff had to adapt to it on the job. Ménard was concerned that the Americans would refuse to place their units under Canadian command if they could not interact with doctrinally familiar structures, so he ordered headquarters branches responsible for engineering, signals and aviation to be restructured and renamed. For example, the TF Kandahar Engineer Regiment brought all of the Canadian engineering resources under a single commanding officer and became a brigade resource that could be used to support American units that were under Canadian control. Having a new American staff visitor deal with a Signals Squadron was easier to deal with than a mere headquarters staff position.¹⁹⁹

The J5 branch was significantly altered, in part to reflect the new and increased reporting demands that came in under McChrystal and collaterally with Carter's Regional Command (South) headquarters. J5 still handled Afghan National Security Force development, information operations, White Situational Awareness, and operations analysis. Added to these functions were an assessment cell, more cultural analytical capacity, and strengthened development and political "connective tissue" in the wake of the incremental centralization of PRT capabilities at TF Kandahar at Kandahar Air Field.

A new organization called Brigade Troops was also established by the Ménard headquarters. Changes at the PRT resulted in the transfer of Stab A company, CIMIC, and PSYOPS to Brigade Troops under the command of LCol Marc Fortier, who was double-hatted as Chief of Fires at the TF Kandahar Tactical Operations Centre.²⁰⁰ Brigade Troops also took over SUAV operations as well. Stab A continued operations but now was tasked by the PRT Commander to handle mobility and protection of the other government department personnel, as the Protection Company had in the past. Stab A patrols in Kandahar City also ended with the PRT reorganization.²⁰¹

One of the biggest changes was the re-organization of TF Kandahar's engineering units into a Task Force Kandahar Engineer Regiment. The new Force Engineer, LCol Jennie Carignan, now commanded all organizations less the battle group field squadron. The Construction Management Organization and the Specialist Engineer Team were merged into the Engineer Construction Squadron, and Construction Management Teams 1 and 2 were transformed, with the addition of more personnel, into four Engineer Construction Teams (ECTs).

When the Provincial Reconstruction Team was re-organized, an infantry-based Engineer Recce Troop was also created so that the TF Kandahar had a protected and mobile engineering recce capability. This was necessary so that TF Kandahar could verify and handle quality control for the myriad of contracted engineering projects that the PRT government departments funded but lacked the protected ability to assess. The Geospatial Support Team techs at the PRT were also re-patriated to Kandahar Air Field and the whole map-making structure rationalized. At the very least this centralized the minefield database, which was spread over three different organizations. By May 2010, the ANA Engineer Advisor Team working at Camp Hero was also brought under the Force Engineer. Finally, mine dog teams, a contracted capability, were also placed under the Force Engineer. Counter-IED operations were also re-organized.²⁰²

Ménard and his team also consolidated Military Police operations, putting the TF Kandahar Provost Marshal in command of the MP Company (which absorbed the P-OMLT) and the Canadian Forces National Investigative Service detachment. The move to the Provost Marshal was the P-OMLT's third command change in less than a year, and it was done because some believed that the stabilization companies had misused the P-OMLT for light infantry tasks instead of police mentoring. Unfortunately, the P-OMLT needed transport and maintenance support that the MP Company did not have the resources to provide, so their sortie rate dropped dramatically.²⁰³

The concept of the Battle Space Commander (BSC) progressively came into vogue during the Ménard re-organization. Each district that WADANA-WAL operated in generally conformed to the area of operations of one of the battalions or battle groups. In time 1-12 Infantry was assigned the Battle Space Commander for Zharey, 1 PPCLI Battle Group for Panjwai and Dand, and 97th MP Battalion for Kandahar City. The idea was to cut CIMIC, Engineer Construction Squadron, and Police OMLT resources from Task Force Kandahar right to the districts. This meant, of course, cutting out the Provincial Reconstruction Team and working directly with the districts. It was also considered an arrogant move by some Canadians who worked closely with the Afghan army and police forces and was seen by others as giving up hard-fought ground in the mentoring sphere. Shouldn't the Afghans be the 'battle space commanders' in their country? Was that not what Canada was supposed to be moving towards?²⁰⁴ On the other hand, Afghan command and control was also in a state of flux as the Afghan army was in the process of restructuring to being two brigades into Kandahar province and a firm foot on the ground was needed during this change. This in turn related to the substantial changes in OMLT operations that were to follow.²⁰⁵

Turbulence at the PRT

The linchpin of the Ménard reorganization was the Provincial Reconstruction Team and how it was perceived by him and others in the greater scheme of the Canadian effort in Kandahar. There were two key aspects of this problem. The first was the clash of philosophies: stabilization versus development. In some ways this was a re-boot of the projects versus programs problem that we have already seen through previous rotations going back to Kabul in 2003. In their deployment work-ups in 2009, the Ménard headquarters saw all the gory details of the civil-military GRIZZLY-KANTOLO struggle as it played out. Some were skeptical about the efficacy of development in an insecure environment. There was already a bias against development partly brought on by the poor reputation of other government departments that permeated the ranks of their colleagues coming back from previous tours.²⁰⁶

The second key aspect was the decreasing saliency of Task Force Kandahar going into 2010. As we have seen, the Provincial Reconstruction Team was a subordinate unit of TF Kandahar while TF Kandahar was the primary ISAF military entity for the province as it had been since 2006. With the American influx, TF Kandahar was no longer the sole military focal point for ISAF in the province. There was Stryker Brigade, the Afghan Regional Security Integration Command police units, increased numbers of SOF and so on. TF Kandahar was reduced to three districts, one of which was controlled by an American unit under Canadian command. In other words, TF Kandahar no longer had provincial-level saliency but the PRT, because it was working on provincial-level development, did.²⁰⁷

As a result of this and other factors, the Representative of Canada in Kandahar, Ben Rowswell, decided to move from KAF to Camp Nathan Smith. It was increasingly evident that the Canadian civilian efforts in Kandahar at the PRT were now becoming “Embassy forward” and progressively disconnected from TF Kandahar operations. Ménard’s attitude, according to members of his staff, was best summed up as “I don’t give a fuck what the civilians are doing.”²⁰⁸ This led to what was unofficially known as “the divorce”.

When less emotional analysis was employed later, it was clear that the American influx had a substantial civilian component that was more action-directed in the districts and less focused on provincial level projects, though they also brought a lot of programs to bear at the provincial level as well. The American aid component was perceived by Ménard to be more closely aligned with TF Kandahar’s district and village-centric operations than what Ben Rowswell and company were doing at the PRT, and it was more likely that the Ménard headquarters would gravitate to those who shared similar objectives.²⁰⁹

Stab A, as we have seen, remained at Camp Nathan Smith as an armoured taxi service for the other government departments, but under TF Kandahar control. Stab B became CIMIC Company and was transferred out of PRT control. The CIMIC Operations Centre

moved to Kandahar Air Field and the five teams in the CIMIC Company deployed to Panjwayi, Dand, and Kandahar City. CIMIC became responsible for quick impact projects and were removed from development programming. The CIMIC teams worked with the communities in the districts to define the projects and these were handed off to the Engineer Construction Squadron for implementation. The PRT was now out of the loop completely at the district level.²¹⁰

As a former PRT commander, TF Kandahar's deputy commander Col Hetherington was seriously alarmed by this point and concluded that Ménard was out of his depth. It was increasingly evident to him that Ménard did not comprehend the complex nature of the Kandahar political and social environment or the delicate mechanisms that Canada had created to interact with them. Doctrinal structures may be fine in a staff college environment, but were not necessarily useful in Kandahar in the middle of a war.²¹¹

Yes, there were serious problems in the civil-military relationship. Yes, Canadian strategy was convoluted and perhaps ill-suited to rapidly changing circumstances. The idea that TF Kandahar could go it alone in the districts without any governance or development leverage at the provincial level was, in a word, unsound despite the problems with CIDA and DFAIT.

LCol Carl Turenne, still in command at the PRT, opposed the Ménard reorganization and fought for three long months to hold onto the tenuous strands built in 2009 between the soldiers and their civilian counterparts at Camp Nathan Smith. Turenne was, however, fighting a losing battle. The incoming American deputy PRT director, Bill Harris, was a highly-experienced man who understood from years in Colombia and other conflict zones how raw power was wielded. Harris had access to financial resources that overwhelmed the PRT and threatened to seriously reduce Canadian saliency on the developmental front. At the same time, the leadership at Regional Command (South) as well as the Americans were reporting that Task Force Kandahar under Ménard "has limited the focus of the PRT" and that focus had expanded for the upcoming Operation MOSHTARAK series.²¹² As LCol Turenne noted:

The U.S. were coming in with a view to win, "we will achieve effects to win." And Ottawa said, "Well, we're pulling out in 2011 so slack off on the pedal there ... you guys aren't getting any additional funding." USAID was coming in with funding envelopes of \$300 million ... Meanwhile, we're saying, "Can CIDA get another fifteen, twenty million dollars to fill up the KLIP [Kandahar Local Initiatives Program]?" No. How about another two or three people with a bit of money so we can be more proactive and be more responsive to the counterinsurgency on the ground? Oh, God forbid, no. Jim Melanson and Jess Dutton [applied] pressure up their chains [of command] to get more funding and more people ... [No], we're good. Six Canadian priorities, three signature projects. We don't need to do more.²¹³

Ménard believed that Turenne and Rowswell were operating on obsolete assumptions based on what had happened in 2009 and not what was going to happen in 2010.²¹⁴ He moved LCol Craig Dalton in to replace Turenne in early February 2010. Under Dalton the military component was reduced to Stab A, what was termed “PRT Life Support”, and a small but effective organization called ‘ASIC Forward’. With the Construction Management Organization, the Specialist Engineer Team and the P-OMLT gone, Ménard argued, there was no real need for a military headquarters at the PRT.²¹⁵ Indeed, there was a prevailing attitude that if departments like CIDA and DFAIT wanted control so badly, fine. But not over military resources. They could ask the Americans for protected transport to Dahla Dam if they really needed it.

LCol Joe Pospolita eventually replaced Dalton and became a “military advisor” (MILAD) to the Representative of Canada in Kandahar at the PRT and, after nearly five years, the Army’s command function at Camp Nathan Smith disappeared. Pospolita’s brief from Hetherington, who was concerned about Ménard’s excesses regarding the PRT, was to “get [the PRT] squared away and make it work” and continue to act as ‘glue’ for the other government departments, who were sure to be at loose ends with the reorganization. Stab A remained *in situ* to provide protected transport.²¹⁶

The All Source Intelligence Centre (Forward) started as a few people assigned to the PRT to maintain databases associated with the collection activities of the other government departments. With the “divorce,” however, the J2 at TF Kandahar realized that a more robust analytical component was necessary to support the other departments. The All Source Intelligence Centre under Maj Lisa Elliott already had civilian personnel from DFAIT, DND and other departments to handle database work, so Maj Elliott and her staff swiftly converted this group into an analysis team. Major John McLearn was then tasked to run what became known as ASIC (Forward) (This organization became crucial in events in Kandahar City throughout the remainder of 2010 and its operations are discussed in the following chapter).²¹⁷

Task Force Kandahar was not completely out of the PRT business or out of Camp Nathan Smith yet, but its involvement in higher-level development and governance in the province was well on the wane. By March 2010 the civilian-led PRT aligned with Regional Command (South) and with what some hoped would be a regional “super PRT”, the Regional Platform (South).²¹⁸

The OMLT: Changes on the Horizon

As we have seen Colonel Shane Brennan and the OMLT were exceptionally concerned about the shift from mentoring to partnering. ISAF commander General McChrystal, after several visits to observe Canadian OMLT and battle group activities, liked what he saw and looked at the possibility of moving beyond specialized mentor units and examined the wholesale partnering of Afghan army formations, units, and sub-units with ISAF formations, units, and sub-units.²¹⁹ In late August, he issued the Partnering Directive:

ISAF has routinely planned and conducted combined operations with the [Afghan national security forces], referring to them as partnered operations. These “partnerships” were temporary, and ended when ISAF and ANSF returned to their separate forward operating bases upon completing an operation.²²⁰

McChrystal wanted to see a philosophical change whereby ISAF and ANSF units lived, worked, and planned side-by-side at all levels, even down to platoon. This was to be called “embedded partnering”. Each side would draw on the strengths of the other. The Afghan security forces were to be “the supported command” with ISAF as the “supporting command”.²²¹

McChrystal was driven by a strategic imperative. In American circles, there was a push for the concept of “Transfer” to be built into any new Afghan strategy, that is, from Clear-Hold-Build to Clear-Hold-Build-Transfer whereby ISAF should start turning over responsibility for security in certain parts of the country to the Afghan government. At the same time, the more areas that could be transferred over the next year could also be used as a measurement of effectiveness to demonstrate to critics that there was progress. It could also be a signal to the Afghan power structure that ISAF was not going to remain engaged indefinitely.²²² And by November 2009 President Hamid Karzai chimed in and announced “his ambition to have Afghan security provided entirely by Afghans by the end of his term in 2014.”²²³

To that end, NATO re-organized how it handled training and mentoring in Afghanistan. That rationalization occurred at the end of November 2009 when the NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan (NTM-A) stood up in Kabul. The creation of NTM-A was part of a more comprehensive policy that brought embedded partnering into the fold. In many ways NTM-A was a NATO version of Combined Security Assistance Transition Team-Afghanistan (CSTC-A) but how the two related was initially ill-defined. The definition problem in turn related to the creation of yet another new NATO headquarters, the ISAF Joint Command, which was created as a subordinate headquarters to ISAF HQ. The IJC commanded the ISAF Regional Commands but also was to act as a “partner” for Afghan National Army headquarters.²²⁴

The new approach was confused and in public statements ISAF HQ stated that “Traditional mentoring, enabled by Operational Mentor and Liaison Teams, has in the past and will in the future assist the commanders in improving ANSF skills and knowledge.”²²⁵ The question that was not answered, and it was a critical one for TF Kandahar, was this: what was to be done with the OMLTs? Did they report to NATO Training Mission Afghanistan? Did they cease to exist? Nobody at TF Kandahar seemed to know where all this would lead. This complicated planning significantly.

BGen Ménard’s response to the McChrystal Partnering Directive was that TF Kandahar was already doing it in Panjwayi District, where Afghan and Canadian platoons worked together and occupied the same tactical infrastructure. If a kandak and a battle group were co-located by platoons over an area like western Panjwayi, Ménard reasoned, there was no real need for the OMLT in the form it had been operating in since 2007. If the two units were not conducting company level operations, there was no need for a separate Canadian company-level mentor in addition to the Canadian company commander.²²⁶

That still did not sit well with the OMLT. Colonel Shane Brennan and his mentoring teams had been in action for several months and, with two months to go in their tour, the ability of the TF Kandahar commander to affect any dramatic change to OMLT operations was limited. At the same time Regional Command (South) under Carter explored how it wanted to interpret and implement partnering but that was taking time and the clock was running out. Brennan’s men continued in their company mentoring tasks alongside the 1-205 Brigade kandaks throughout the province.²²⁷

How did partnering affect operations in the districts? Maj Lee Mossop, the Operations Officer of 1 PPCLI Battle Group and a veteran of the 2007 OMLT, described the difference:

There had been operations with police, Afghan army, and Canadians together doing stuff, but it wasn’t as integrated and formalized as this. This [was] a huge change. To the point where they said, “If you do not have any army or police participation in an operation, even if it’s just a daily patrol — do not patrol. If the Afghan army, for whatever reason, in Sperwan said, “We’re not patrolling today, we’re taking the day off,” we didn’t send out patrols.”²²⁸

1 PPCLI Battle Group and 2nd Kandak formed a joint command post at Ma’Sum Ghar, while the rifle companies did the same with their counterpart Afghan companies. The Afghan police were supposed to take the lead on searches from here on. What was not clear was where the Police OMLT fit in.



Photo Credit: Author

The debate over the efficacy of partnering in 2009 raised many questions. The most important were: to what extent were Afghan security forces being mentored, and to what extent were they merely the Afghan 'face' on coalition operations?

The Canadian mentor teams with the Afghan kandaks remained engaged in mentoring at the company-level for the time being and remained dispersed in Arghandab, Kandahar City, and Panjwayi districts with 1-205 Brigade kandaks. The incoming American forces as well as a possible expansion of the Afghan army in southern Afghanistan loomed over the existing organization and structures for the time being.

Dand District Operations, October–December 2009

The incoming Recce Squadron under the command of Maj Mark Popov conducted a relief in place Major J-F Cauden's troops in October. The incoming Dragoon squadron was structured identically with only two troops of eight Coyote vehicles and included a pair of Engineer LAVs and their combat engineer sections, a CIMIC detachment, a Bison ambulance and medics. Recce squadron also had a troop of Leopard tanks attached from Major Rob Hume's tank squadron for the first month of operations.²²⁹

The existing task, established during the previous rotation, involved manning two observation post positions in southern Dand at Gorgan and at Nakudak (see Figure 6-8). As we have seen, most of the development activity was conducted by other units while recce screened to the south and west. These were austere locations and amounted to another “Lost Command” environment like Spin Boldak or FOB Frontenac. NSE combat logistics patrols did not venture into this area and Recce Squadron was forced to use its small echelon to go back to Kandahar Air Field for resupply. Communications connectivity was spotty. The only unit that came anywhere near Recce Squadron was an American Route Clearance Package that rolled the roads from the Dand District Centre.²³⁰

Major Popov had little or no direction from higher headquarters on his initial tasks beyond “observe and report and don’t get blown up.” He also had little or no intelligence from the ASIC as to what the enemy was up to. Concern over the deleterious effects of being tied to two pieces of tactical infrastructure and lacking knowledge about what was going on in the communities south of Gorgan and north of the Reg Desert, Major Popov initiated an aggressive patrol schedule partnered with the Dand police in this area. CIMIC had a project in Teymurian but the team was incorporated into the patrols to assess the communities and their needs. What Recce Squadron found was surprising: the insurgents had a ratline moving west to east into Dand and Daman and were trying to outflank the Operation KALAY area. As a result, Recce Squadron conducted a series of random disrupt and foot patrols in these communities throughout October and November.²³¹

Capt Mike McKillop’s Recce Platoon from 1 PPCLI was attached to Popov’s squadron after the tanks were withdrawn for a time and launched north from Gorgan into the Nakhonay area for a series of patrols. On one occasion McKillop’s platoon was observed by the enemy early warning spotter chain. The tanks and Coyote at Gorgan acquired the insurgent spotters and engaged them from 1,500 meters away, to the enemy’s surprise. When the insurgents attempted to reinforce, a pair of Griffons arrived on station and the enemy dispersed into the built-up area.²³²

Recce Squadron activities increasingly attracted enemy attention. The squadron took its first IED strike on 25 October 600 meters away from the Gorgan strong point. Recce night patrols pushed out to disrupt any enemy IED emplacements and to “rattle the cage”. When the patrols were completed, the communities south of the river were assessed as increasingly hostile the further west they went, with Gorgan assessed as neutral. Angurian and Teymurian in the east were stable with strong village leadership.²³³

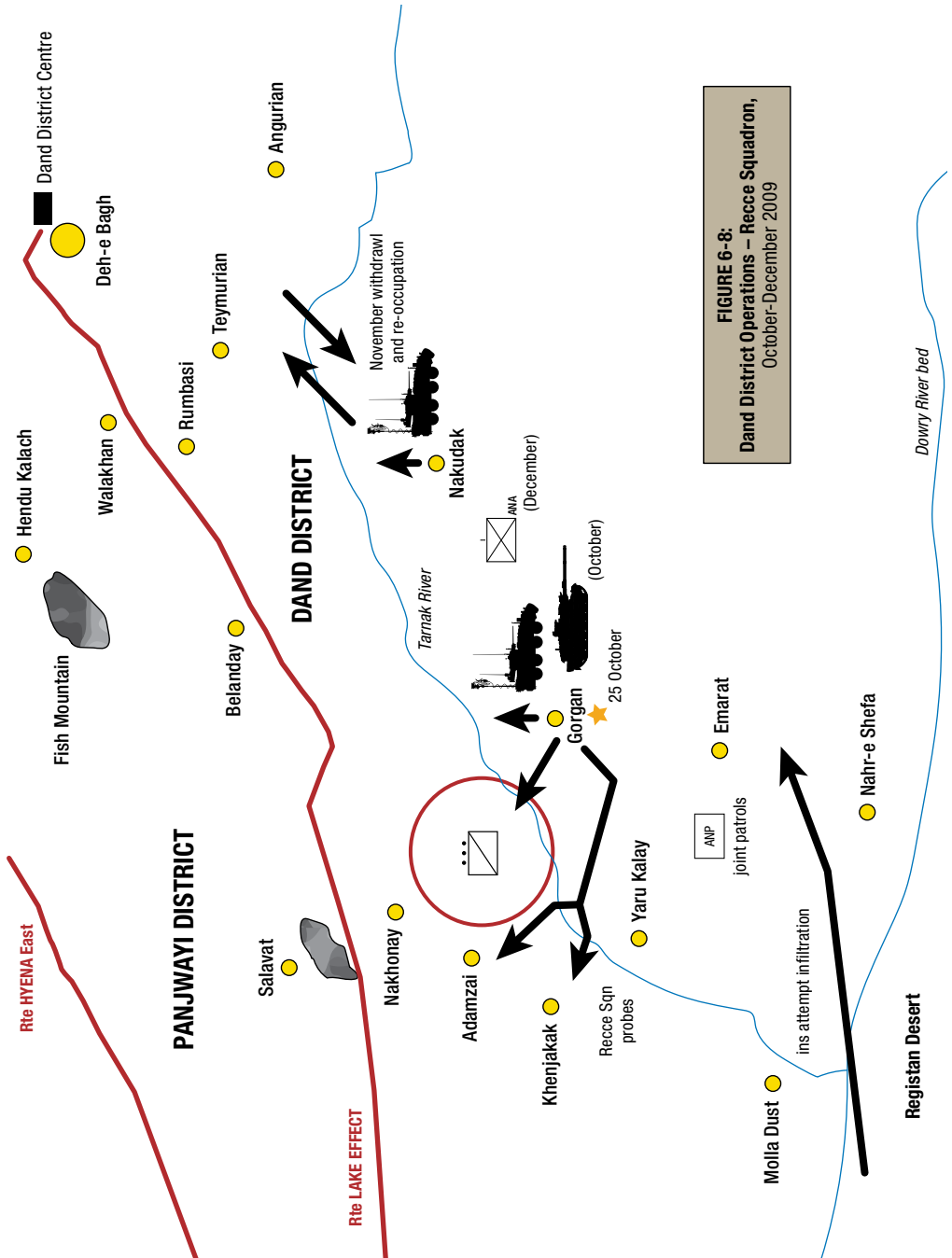


FIGURE 6-8:
Dand District Operations – Recce Squadron,
October-December 2009

Figure 6-8: Dand District Operations – Recce Squadron, October-December 2009

The November TF Kandahar relief in place altered Recce Squadron's dispositions and temporarily disrupted operations. Maj Popov was suddenly and without explanation ordered by LCol Walsh to abandon strong point Gorgan, redeploy to the strong point at Nakudak and then redeploy yet again to the Dand District Centre. After a precipitous pullout in which the contract ablutions truck was left behind, Recce Squadron was met by part of one of the PRT stabilization companies whose leaders breathlessly told Major Popov that they had instructions from TF Kandahar to "retake Gorgan" because it had, apparently, fallen to the enemy. At the same time the ablutions contractor wanted his truck back and made increasingly vocal complaints to the battle group.²³⁴

This disturbing disconnect in the command chain notwithstanding, Popov looked at the situation soberly. A UAV tracked the ablutions truck as it was stolen and driven into Nakhonay and a patrol was sent to recover it. The panic, as it turned out, was self-inflicted by TF Kandahar. District Leader Nazek inquired as to what was happening in his home town of Gorgan. This led to a flap between the battle group and the headquarters as to why Recce Squadron was being pulled out. Popov was ordered to re-occupy Gorgan.²³⁵

By this time, Maj Wayne Niven and D Company were operating in Nakhonay, and encountered enhanced insurgent activity. Facing north, Popov's recce troops screened Niven's activities from the two observation posts and were able to assist Niven in defining the enemy logistics chain coming in from Kenjakak and points west. Popov launched a series of probes from Gorgan into the Nakhonay-Kenjakak area which were essentially manoeuvre-to-collect tasks that also had disruptive effects. ISTAR resources attached to Recce Squadron were able to collect significant information and it significantly improved the ASIC's understanding of the problem in this particular seam. Similarly, the relationship between Recce Squadron and Major Lisa Elliott's ASIC team produced Operation FLASH LIGHT whereby Recce Squadron troops heading through Kandahar Air Field on leave were debriefed in detail on their experiences in Dand and Panjwayi districts. ASIC analysis concluded that Recce Squadron had a significant disruptive effect on enemy movement in the area both east into Daman and northeast into Nakhonay. The insurgents were forced to pause and reassess how they were going to tackle the Canadians and Afghans.²³⁶

The Ménard reorganization led to Recce Squadron being designated the battle space commander for Dand District. All the Canadian elements operating in Dand were assigned to the Dand District Combat Team, whether they originally came from the PRT, Kandahar Air Field, or were already based in the district. These elements included a lightweight counter-mortar radar (LCMR) detachment, a forward observation officer-forward air controller (FOO/FAC) team, a platoon from C Company 1 PPCLI, and a National Support Element detachment.²³⁷

In addition, Popov was instructed to establish the Operations Coordination Center-District (Dand), which was essentially a re-named joint district coordination centre. He was given no resources to do so, so Recce Squadron Battle Captain, Enno Kerchkoff, became the OCC-D(D) operations officer. Recce Squadron now had to rapidly assimilate all security, governance, development, and information operations matters. And there were new tasks: keep Route Lake Effect open and establish a position at Walakan near the shrine, while at the same time continue to maintain the observation posts south of Nakhonay and keep the route connecting Gorgan to Nakudak and the district centre open. Fortunately an additional company of Afghan infantry was deployed to Dand to assist in their effort:

When a partnered Afghan National Army unit started operating with us ... and started patrolling a critical ville, they spooked the insurgents so badly and worked into the population so well that the insurgents panicked. A local insurgent ordered his fighters to try and stop the Afghan National Army. Shortly thereafter, two teams of [IED] emplacements went out one night and brazenly tried to dig [command wire] IEDs with range of out OPs. We killed them.²³⁸

Recce Squadron's relationship with the Dand police was excellent. One reserve soldier from the Queen's York Rangers was a Toronto police officer in civilian life and became the liaison with the Dand police. Later on a P-OMLT team arrived, and the CIMIC team was boosted to include a Construction Management Team from the Engineer Construction Squadron. Maj Popov decided to synchronize Recce Platoon plans and priorities to patrolling and other operations ordered by the District Chief of Police, Col Sher Shah, with Recce Squadron supporting the police and not the other way around. "I have the combat power, you have the police and knowledge," Popov explained. Recce Squadron did everything they could to ensure that Col Shah and District Leader Nazek remained in front and seen to be in the lead at all times. The P-OMLT and the OCC-D(D) functioned as liaison organizations, as Col Shah's men did not need much mentoring; they mostly needed equipment that they could not get from the overly bureaucratic Afghan National Police supply chain. With Recce Squadron and other ISTAR resources in support, Col Shah's police mounted raid after raid and patrol after patrol. This high tempo frustrated insurgent efforts to get anything going in Dand.²³⁹

Recce Squadron had no experience in information operations. Despite this Popov and his subordinates came up with four key messages: we were asked to be here by your district leader, Haji Nazek; we found a lot of bombs under and near the roads and we will find them and protect your children; the Afghan and Canadian security forces must search compounds and vehicles for your safety and ours; and we respect you.²⁴⁰



Photo Credit: Author

Working closely with District Leader Nazek, Maj Mark Popov and Recce Squadron consolidated Canadian-Afghan security efforts in Dand District and ensured that Afghan security forces took the lead on all operations.

All the stuff was pretty much out of my head — I'd received nothing formal on that side of things ... The key messages, I made up and passed them higher. I got positive feedback from int, Info Ops/PSYOPS and the Ops O, no comment from the CO on them. To note, the Info Ops officer had nothing like that prepped or pushed from higher in terms of messaging, and nothing to give me when I asked. When he saw my points, he asked if he could use them.²⁴¹

As for development,

It seemed to me that the stuff in that realm was very high-level, i.e.: Dahla Dam-type messaging, but I needed stuff relevant to the farmer in my district who could either be friendly, neutral, or put bombs under the road, so I needed tactical items for immediate use. The farmers in Dand did not give a crap about Dahla Dam.²⁴²

Dand flitted between Hold and Build during this time. Recce Squadron's most important activities during this time were to define the situation, especially in the southwestern part of the district, and to generate increased coordination at the Dand District Centre. Recce Squadron self-generated Operation SALADIN to make their moves more systematic. SALADIN was essentially a White Situational Awareness collection effort designed to assist Nazek and Shah by providing an ongoing, updatable data set based on regular patrols and key leader engagements. SALADIN identified, connected and assessed each community, then fed that data back to the district coordination centre, cued CIMIC and construction resources, and then re-engaged with local leaders to confirm that the activities were useful.²⁴³ SALADIN's true impact would not be recognized until Recce Squadron was relieved by 1-71 Cavalry led by Lt Col John Paganini in spring 2010. TF 1-71 Cav was presented with a complete data set on what was occurring in the district, where, and by whom.²⁴⁴

The Situation in December 2009

The details of the substantial changes to TF Kandahar's relationships, plans and structure during the shift from Vance to Ménard almost completely eclipsed the fact that there were ongoing operations in the districts. For the most part, Canadian troops engaged in arduous and repetitive framework patrolling, conducted route sweeps with their Afghan army and police counterparts, worked with local communities on development projects, and mentored Afghan leaders. Developers continued to "push the rope" through their implementing partners. There was the odd IED attack that disabled vehicles and wounded personnel, but there were also plenty of IED finds. Occasionally American and Canadian helicopters were engaged by insurgents, usually to no effect. The operations tempo was low as the Afghan army and police forces worked with Regional Command (South) and TF Kandahar to realign, reorganize, and plan.

Zharey district, oddly enough, was comparatively quiet during this time. This was likely due to the effects of Operation DALBOR SHIELD as well as the reduction in the battalion area of operations which now excluded most of Zharey south of Highway 1 and west of Route SUMMIT. Another factor was a successful SOF operation that killed one of the main Taliban commanders in Zharey, who remained behind in the winter to keep local fighters motivated. His successor was also killed within days. The leadership vacuum led to serious discord among the local low-level insurgent commanders, who expressed their dissatisfaction by displaying insubordinate attitudes to higher-level commanders outside Afghanistan. The Zharey networks were assessed as thoroughly disrupted.²⁴⁵

Panjwayi district operations in December involved a series of movements by 1 PPCLI Battle Group and 2nd Kandak (see Figure 6-9). After Operation HYDRA, Canadian and Afghan companies cleared compounds west and northwest of Nakhonay, and continued to

secure Belanday and Haji Baba, where CIMIC operations predominated. A screen between Nakhonay and the Tarnak River remained in place. While the enemy was focused on these activities, 1 PPCLI and 2nd Kandak launched into Chalghowr instead of Nakhonay to define and then clear out a suspected logistics and transit node. Shuras were held and CIMIC was brought in to make contact with the local leadership. Occupation of Chalghowr had a notable effect on interdicting a ratline from Nakhonay to Salehan and then to Senjaray up in Zharey District.²⁴⁶

At the same time, the P-OMLT made some headway with the police, who were less and less impressed with the current chief of police and wanted to work with the Canadians. This resulted in a higher than normal patrol tempo in Bazaar-e Panjwayi itself. The only significant incident in that area was a rocket flung at the Central Asian Development Group implementing partner. Locals told the Canadians it was no big deal: somebody was unhappy with how CADG was conducting business and this was how they were expressing that dissatisfaction. Towards the end of December, LCol Walsh and his 2nd Kandak counterpart, Colonel Baris, mounted a combined operation into the Sperwan Ghar area. Operation AZH DAHAR swept through the area with little contact but great fanfare.²⁴⁷

Nakhonay and environs, however, remained extremely problematic. Lt Andrew Nuttall, leading 12 Platoon from D Company, was killed by an IED on 23 December. ISTAR reportage suggested that the community of Khenjakak contained a possible IED production facility. LCol Walsh decided to launch Operation TOFFAN to deal with the problem. The next day, the tank squadron conducted a feint in the Mohajerin area, while A Company established a presence in the Folad area, ostensibly as part of an operation directed at Chowlghar. With D Company and a company from 2nd Kandak holding in Nakhonay, Recce Squadron established an OP and a screen along the Dowry River. After the pattern of life was established over several days, Canadian CH-47s escorted by CH-146 Griffons air assaulted C Company into landing zones northwest and southwest of Khenjakak. Sweeping through the community they uncovered three separate stashes of IED equipment. There was no contact and C Company was extracted by helicopter.²⁴⁸

The only reported security issue in Dand throughout December related to the Fatay Khan Security Company, not the insurgency. This organization extorted money from contractors while dressed as police and driving police vehicles. When Canadian police mentors investigated the situation, they learned that the security company was owned by district leader Nazek's brother, Fatay Khan. The sensitivities of this issue led to further analysis and forestalled any action for the time being. The CIMIC team working with PRT elements was, significantly, able to convince Nazek to hold a District Development Assembly shura. Though not well attended, it was a start. Connectivity had to be established between the now-identified Community Development Councils and the district government.

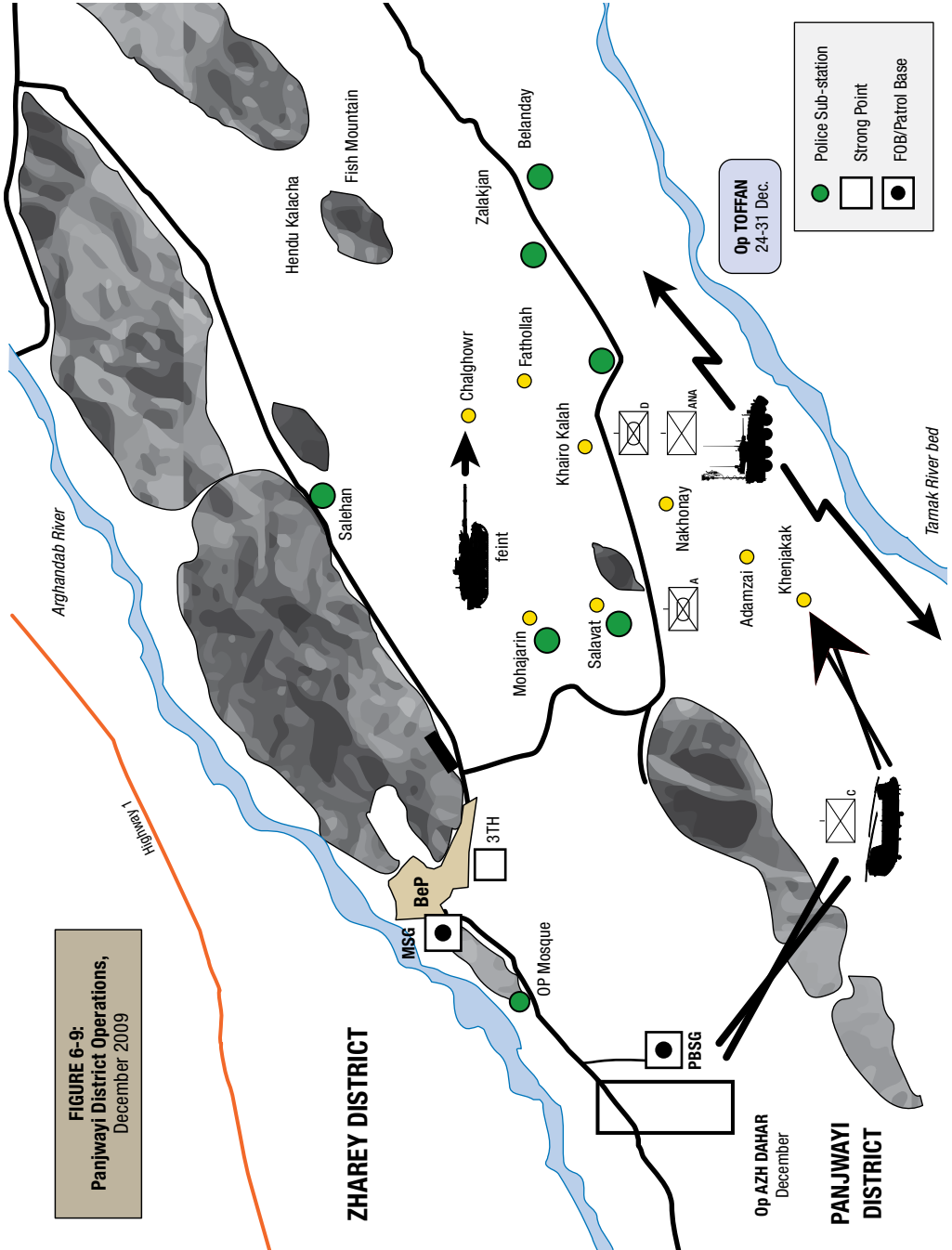


Figure 6-9: Panjwayi District Operations, December 2009

An American implementing partner, Agriteam, expressed interest in projects and programs in the district, while Canadian engineers from the Construction Management Organization reported that they had 920 people employed on local development projects in the communities.²⁴⁹

An important new program was launched in Dand District during December. This was the “Sons of Nakhonay” program, more formally known as the Culturally Structured Youth Employment Program. The idea was to create a ‘youth corps’ like Katimavik in Canada to do socially valuable work in the communities but with a vetted staff issued with a uniform and identification card.²⁵⁰

Capt Whit Tyerman was a driving force behind the Sons of Nakhonay.

Two elements drove me to drafting the Sons of Nakhonay. We were, it seemed, always engaged in planning the next big battle group-level operation. These large operations netted few tangible results as any opposition would fade into the background at the overwhelming presence. Our persistent presence in the villages was a very different game. I had had the opportunity to work with several of our small, key, forward locations in helping set up their sustainment and support. This was where real lasting impact could take place. Secondly, I vividly remember in an O-group, the BG commander describing his latest Shura IVO Nakhonay, as Shuras were always conducted, with the elders of the village. His frustration at the situation was evident. The elders wanted to work with us, they wanted us there. When confronted with the “Well, why do the IEDs keep getting placed?”, a generational divide became apparent. The elders stated that, while they were on side, it was their sons, their sons who the Taliban had influence over. How did they have influence? I assumed money for placement of IEDs, a sense of [fighting for] the community, a sense that their actions had impact. So how could we undercut that? I kept asking myself ... how do we target the sons? I stayed up that whole night, and put together the proposal on my PowerPoint slide deck — half of my effort spent on describing the elements and synergy of the program goals, and half of my effort spent thinking about how I could sell it, gain backing and approval quickly. We wanted effects on the ground, not a lot of talk. Being an Electrical and Mechanical Engineers officer, the only street cred I had with the Patricia’s was that I had completed a previous tour in Iraq, with the Desert Rats, while on exchange with the British Army. So I couched the presentation, drawing parallels with a similarly named program Americans had employed when assigned to control parts of cities in Iraq. They too had given ID cards to the FAMs [fighting-age males] as a part of the employment program — and suddenly the trouble-makers were not only identifiable, but working for them. Time spent together fosters understanding. So the battle group embraced the idea, Maj Darcy Wright pushed and got it funded, and then the magic really happened

with our guys in the villages — who deserve all of the credit for any successes that the program had. Belanday was an early adopter. Nakhonay was considered “not quite ready”, so (as I recall) it was implemented in three towns surrounding Nakhonay. It helped provide a bit more structure and direction to our CIMIC efforts, and increased the level of engagement. Once village priority projects were getting worked on by the youth (and some elders) of each town, the success stories started being reported back. The final stage was really a hand-over of the program to the Americans, as we handed over most of that region, town by town. I believe that they built on our success and had the bucks to really expand. One other outlier part of the story — at one point a reporter got a hold of the name “Sons of Nakhonay” and thought we might have been funding youth militias in the towns. So a new acronym was officially used ... but everyone kept referring to it by the original name.²⁵¹

There was a lot of frenetic activity in Kandahar City throughout December. The new Regional Command (South) led by Maj Gen Nick Carter and the imminent Regional Platform (South) led by Frank Ruggerio asserted themselves in Afghan security force circles in the wake of the new partnering directives. These moves involved the PRT in various ways, though Canada was a diminished partner in this effort.

Canada was able to retain some salience by the reassignment of DFAIT diplomat Neil Clegg, who had been the Political Advisor to the Stryker Brigade before it was re-tasked. The highly-experienced Clegg, a former Canadian Forces officer, became a special advisor to Governor Wesa. Wesa was in turn less than enthralled with the work of the international community development organizations in Kandahar, especially those implementing partners used by the Western national aid agencies:

At a press conference held on 19 December to highlight the accomplishments of the provincial government in the past year, he stated that the International Community was in part responsible for the level of corruption as it gave no role to the [government] in contracting processes. He highlighted three main challenges faced by his Office: 1) implementation of useless workshops by the international community; 2) funding agencies implementing their own plans instead of considering the needs of Afghans; and, 3) lack of coordination among the Government and NGOs.²⁵²

There were also new Canadian-dominated organizations, like the Kandahar City Effects Team and, eventually, the All Source Intelligence Centre (Forward). The OCC-P at the palace was enhanced with increased Afghan security force presence and better connectivity.

On the policing front, the entire coalition police support effort was about to be reorganized by all of the entities engaged in it, something that had been called for years ago.

With the influx of American organizations and thus greater attention paid to the problem by Kabul, these moves could finally take place. American units were re-organized for partnering and called Security Force Advisory Teams (SFATs) which were more like P-OMLT's than their old Police Mentoring Teams.

Not surprisingly, questionable elements in the Kandahar City police were extremely concerned about these changes. The more scrutiny placed on the existing structure, the more rot was uncovered. For example, the commander of Police Sub-Station 11 had his business interests identified and was told to stop. He would be compensated, but his profiteering days were over. He was assessed as likely to "create chaos in order to promote his own interests and personal revenues." As a result, he was removed.²⁵³ Police cross-over with the insurgency was also identified and targeted. At one point, however, the hunters became the hunted and one anti-corruption officer was attacked and killed, as was a checkpoint commander. Bent police were involved in one of the killings, but the motives behind them were opaque to Canadian analysts.²⁵⁴ Indeed, the OCC-P provided targeting data on a Taliban cell leader to the police who subsequently prepared to raid the compound where he was lurking. While the raid was about to go in, the OCC-P received a phone call and were told that the compound belonged to former Chief of Police Mirwais, who was the younger brother of Member of Parliament Mohommad Arif Noorzai, and, incidentally, leader of the Noorzai tribe. The raid was called off.²⁵⁵

The new perspective on corruption also expressed itself at Sarposa Prison. After an inmate hunger strike in November, Canadians working there received information that convinced them that something was amiss in the prison leadership. Four staff members were believed to be taking bribes and assisting inmates of the National Security Wing.²⁵⁶ More scrutiny was applied and enough information was developed that indicated that there was support for the insurgency from within the prison. These revelations allowed the PRT to approach Kabul and insist that the warden be fired.²⁵⁷ The new prison governor, General Ghulam Dastageer Mayar, found all kinds of communications equipment in the National Security Wing, identified 14 inmates who were, in fact, insurgent commanders of various ranks and recommended their immediate removal to Pol-e Charkhi Prison in Kabul.²⁵⁸ In effect, Sarposa Prison had been a command-and-control node of the insurgency in Kandahar Province.

It was unfortunate that December ended, as it had the previous year, with a catastrophic IED strike. On 30 December, road construction on the border between Kandahar City and Dand District forced a PRT patrol to take a detour. Three days earlier, an NSE combat logistics patrol on the same road had triggered an IED in the same place. That one turned out to be a dud; this one was not. The explosion completely destroyed the LAV RWS and killed five people: Sgt Kirk Taylor of the 84th Independent Field Battery, Royal Canadian Artillery;

Sgt George Miok of 41 Combat Engineer Regiment; Cpl Zachery McCormack of the Loyal Edmonton Regiment; Pte Garrett Chidley of the 2nd Battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry; and journalist Michelle Lang of the *Calgary Herald*. Four other soldiers and DFAIT representative Bushra Saeed were severely wounded.

In addition to the dead and wounded, there were other disturbing aspects of the attack. The attack was sophisticated in its IED methodology, something not previously seen in Dand. A vehicle with an individual filming the aftermath was also observed. That vehicle was tracked by UAV, which led to what appeared to be an insurgent cell meeting for a post-attack wash up. Afterwards, the people in the meeting deposited an item with a confederate at a police checkpoint. The meeting location was later determined to be a compound belonging to Gul Agha Sherzai, leader of the Barakzai tribe and former governor of Kandahar.²⁵⁹

On 24 January part of the cell that conducted the December attack was located by ISTAR means and fortuitously spotted in Dand by a pair of CH-146 Griffons and a CH-147 Chinook, which were in the process of transporting a VIP to visit Sarposa prison. One of the Griffons was equipped with an MX-15 camera system and spotted the target from over 10 kilometers away. An MQ-9 Reaper was vectored to confirm the target but as it turned out the UAV had no weapons aboard. A Griffon Weapons Team was scrambled from Kandahar Air Field while the base was under rocket attack (an attack that wounded eight Romanians). The Griffons acquired the target, were cleared to engage, and took out two IED emplacers with their Dillon Gatling guns.²⁶⁰

Back into Arghandab?

When the Stryker Brigade area of operations in Arghandab District was realigned, LTC Frank Jenio and the 2nd Battalion, 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment (2-508 Infantry, or Task Force 2 Fury) moved to an area of operations that stretched from the Arghandab District Centre northwest to Jelawur, southwest to a point near Highway 1, south to the bridge over the Arghandab River and then northeast to the District Centre. 1-12 Infantry remained responsible for Senjaray, while the 97th MP Battalion's area of operations lay to the east along Highway 1. 1-205 Brigade's 3rd Kandak was retained in Arghandab to partner with TF 2 Fury.

The command relationship between the American and Canadian units was, however, convoluted. TF 2 Fury was structured to mentor Afghan security forces under an American command structure but now found themselves operating as a regular light infantry battalion working alongside Afghan troops and their Canadian mentors. Like 2-2 Infantry, TF 2 Fury did not come with all of the brigade-level enablers that were usually provided by a higher headquarters. TF 2 Fury also lacked connectivity with the provincial-level governance and

development structures and programs. As a result, TF 2 Fury was temporarily handed off to Task Force Kandahar in December 2009 until a larger reorganization could take place in August 2010. During that time there were a variety of other command issues relating to its higher American headquarters. In January 2010, just after TF 2 Fury settled into its new job, LTC Jenio was suddenly relieved of command by his American superiors and LTC Guy Jones replaced him. On 19 January, A Company commander, Captain Paul Pena, was killed by an IED.²⁶¹ The combined effects of these factors produced some command turbulence throughout January.

For the most part, TF Kandahar had not tracked events in Arghandab in detail since handing the district off to 1-17 Infantry in August. A lot had changed. A former Mujaheddin turned Taliban, Haji Abdul Jabbar, defected to the Government and was installed as District Leader. Karimullah, Naqib's son, remained the Alikozai tribal leader but was believed by many to be weak. Jabbar had influence in a couple of "ink spots" in the vicinity of the district centre, while Karimullah had influence in the areas along the east bank of the Arghandab. Neither dominated the west bank communities. Canadian analysis was that there was no unity in the district and each village was on its own. The district shura was made up of Alikozais with no representatives from other tribes.²⁶²

Despite its internal troubles and the divided social scene, TF 2 Fury was assessed as having stabilized the situation by early January. Success was based on low-level foot patrols and through re-connecting with local community leaders. A company-level operation conducted by 2nd Kandak with a company from TF 2 Fury demonstrated to the local population that the two entities could effectively operate together. The growing confidence in the area led to the deployment of a Government of Afghanistan agricultural department team and the convening of a development shura in western Arghandab led by the District Support Team, which consisted of USAID and State Department mentors.²⁶³

After the development shura, coalition forces mounted Operation FAZILAT, an operation designed to clear the community of Jeleran which had a reputation as an insurgent bed-down area. This time a Canadian Stabilization Platoon and a P-OMLT working with Afghan Uniformed Police participated alongside 3rd Kandak elements and TF 2 Fury. The P-OMLT and the police handled the compound searches and the community was cleared without incident. The CIMIC team was told by locals that "the government doesn't work any more" and that the population welcomed any form of development it could get.²⁶⁴

With the Canadian CIMIC and P-OMLT back in play in Arghandab, TF Kandahar regained situational awareness. District Leader Jabbar was deemed competent and, interestingly, was sympathetic with CIMIC's desire to provide recarpeting for the district mosques. Jabbar told them that "it was a good idea and that mosques in the villages that

were on the fence should be targeted rather than strictly those who are CF friendly.” For the most part, USAID and its implementing partners handled development aspects in Arghandab. Their State Department mentor worked hard to enhance the role of the new shura leader, Haji Mohommad, but there was friction between him and Jabbar. Jabbar believed that Mohommad was corrupt and wanted him removed.²⁶⁵

On the policing front, the P-OMLT connected quickly and easily with the district chief of police and his detachments. P-OMLT also delivered some basic counter-IED training to the police. The Afghan police were annoyed as, once again, they had not been paid for several months and threatened to depart. P-OMLT mentors worked with the provincial police headquarters to sort this out. At the same time, there were concerns that TF 2 Fury was ‘poaching’ police in Panjwayi by offering them a variety of incentives. When the complaint was investigated, it appeared as though disgruntled cops in Panjwayi were playing the Americans and Canadians off against each other, a phenomenon that infected the power structure in Panjwayi in 2011.²⁶⁶

A particularly positive development was the resumption of cellular telephone service in the district, and the distribution of cards (facilitated by Canadian and American efforts) with the OCC-D emergency service number to encourage people to call in.²⁶⁷

The activities of TF 2 Fury and their attached Canadians attracted higher-level attention to Arghandab District. Brig Gen Basir of 1-205 Brigade held a security shura with the Afghan stakeholders still standing in the district after the fall’s operations, leading to closer operational ties between 3rd Kandak (and their Canadian mentors) and TF 2 Fury. Unfortunately, 1-205 Brigade’s involvement in Operation MOSHTARAK in Helmand Province weakened MESMAR, a Clear and Hold operation by Afghan, Canadian and American forces in Kandahar Province scheduled for February.²⁶⁸

Canadian CIMIC worked with the District Support Team to determine the new power structure’s parameters. Brig Gen Basir warned those involved that “tribal leaders and criminals in Arghandab were using ISAF forces as pawns in their internal conflicts.” And CIMIC uncovered major problems with the shura leader Haji Mohommad. Mohommad was in fact using his influence to pass contracts to a construction company that was on the PRT blacklist. Jabbar was also blamed for corrupt dealings and it looked like the district leadership was once again in disarray. That said the Specialist Engineer Team worked to survey routes so that bridges that suffered damage from IED use could be remediated while an American Civil Affairs team examined culvert removal and irrigation diversion.²⁶⁹

By the end of February, a number of large caches were discovered using locally-provided information and IED finds directed by local people were up. SOF was active in taking out leadership targets during this time and eventually TF 2 Fury reported that captured insurgents in the district were now averaging between 16 and 19 years old.

These inexperienced fighters did not possess the same skill level as their predecessors resulting in numerous failed IED detonation attempts. These neophyte insurgents could “spray and pray” against tactical infrastructure, but until more experienced fighters were re-introduced into Arghandab, the Afghan, Canadian, and American forces were taking back the initiative.²⁷⁰

Panjwayi District Operations, January–February 2010

The situation in Panjwayi district in the first two months of 2010 broke down geographically into four distinct but interconnected areas: Sperwan Ghar, Bazaar-e Panjwayi, central-east Panjwayi (between Mohajerin and Zalakhan), and Nakhonay. C Company 1 PPCLI and an Afghan company from 2nd Kandak handled Sperwan Ghar. Bazaar-e Panjwayi had a company from 2nd Kandak, the Afghan police, Stab B CIMIC, and part of A Company 1 PPCLI. Central-eastern Panjwayi had part of 2nd Kandak and part of A Company 1 PPCLI, while D Company and an Afghan company were responsible for Nakhonay and environs. (see Figure 6-10).

For the most part, C Company kept up the pressure in Sperwan through patrols and shuras. This led to the elders from Pay-e Moluk to approach the Canadians and Afghans for more assistance in their community. This request, combined with an IED attack against C Company on Route Brown, led to Operation OTASH on 6 January. The target communities were Pay-e Moluk and Nal Bazaar, with the aim of cleaning out any IED facilities and generating goodwill in both communities. The idea was to insert recce platoon plus snipers west of the communities, secure Observation Post KYBER and the BROWN-HYENA junction with a troop of Leopards and a LAV III platoon, then sweep the two communities with the Afghan infantry company supported by a platoon from C Company and engineers.²⁷¹

The snipers and Recce Platoon came under fire from the enemy’s screen on the 28 Easting. The Canadians returned fire, killing their antagonists who were uncharacteristically left by their compatriots to rot in the sun. The sweep teams found bags and bags of ammonium nitrate and artillery shells. With Lt Col Baris in the lead, shuras yielded that the locals were disenchanted with the IEDs, their children were getting killed, and the Taliban would not let them farm to the west. They also wanted a school. The enemy continued to probe the recce screen, which resulted in more sniper engagements, and even tried to probe OP KYBER: this resulted in the insurgents getting shredded by 25mm fire. An orbiting UAV later spotted enemy personnel with wheelbarrows evacuating body parts. Maj Rutland understood with some regret that the coalition forces were not positioned to stay in the two communities in order to provide development assistance and that the enemy would

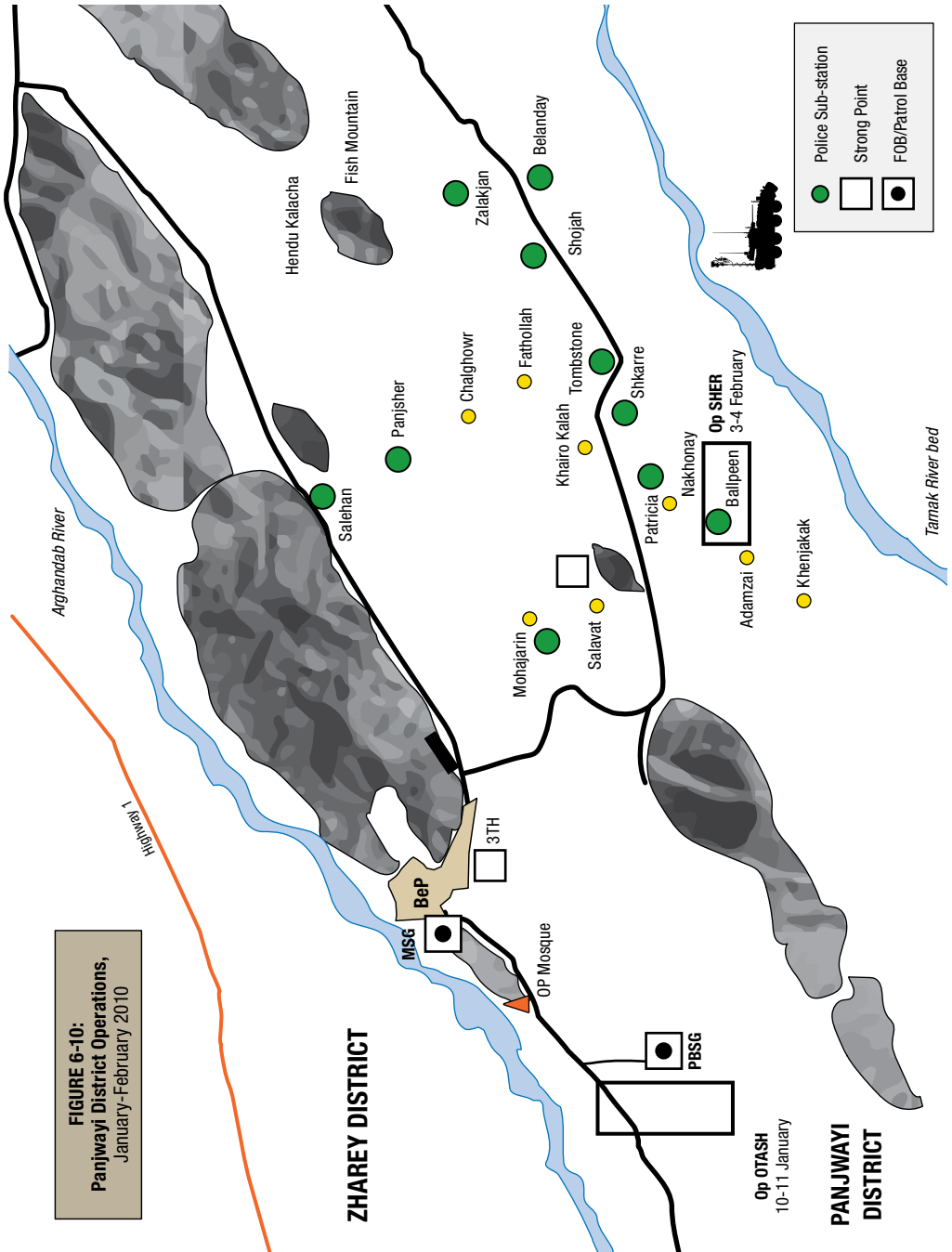


Figure 6-10: Panjwayi District Operations, January-February 2010

continue to get into Nal Bazaar and Pay-e Moluk. The Zangabad-based Taliban were too numerous and agile and could only be kept at bay until an operation was mounted to clean out the Horn of Panjwayi — again.²⁷²

Consequently, the decision was made in higher headquarters to deploy TF Trident west of the 28 Easting to disrupt and shape for a possible thrust into the Horn of Panjwayi later in 2010. TF Trident was a compact and agile organization based around US Navy SEALs that came with its own Chinook helicopters and other integral support. TF Trident put a liaison officer in with the battle group and mounted numerous operations. Maj Lee Mossop, the battle group's Operations Officer, noted:

We worked with TF Trident quite a bit, about a dozen times. Way, way, way more than CANSOFCOM, the CSOR guys. And we never did anything with [JTF-2] because it was complicated, whereas TF Trident was uncomplicated.²⁷³

The SEALs hit leadership targets and conducted influence operations in Zangabad and communities to the west. One of these operations bagged Nabi, the leader of the network operating in Bazaar-e Panjwayi. He was taken out at an insurgent meeting near Zangabad. These actions relieved some of the pressure in that community, while increased patrolling of Haji Haibibollah to the south played a role as well.²⁷⁴

The struggle over development and governance continued in the meeting rooms of the new District Centre in Bazaar-e Panjwayi. The four dominant issues, unchanged over several rotations, were schools, roads, police and governance, and the Canadians' most important problem was how District Governor Haji Baran interacted with all four.²⁷⁵

By early 2010, a Kabul-driven impetus to get moving on education reached the districts. In many villages, but especially in Mohajerin, Pay-e Moluk and Sperwan, residents began asking passing Canadians about schools, so both Canadian and Afghan patrols began testing the interest level with questions about whether people thought schools were good for their communities. At the same time, CIMIC operators started to assess the state of education in the district to gain a baseline.²⁷⁶

District Governor Haji Baran was initially lukewarm and later on he told the CIMIC team that there was not enough security for schools and wanted to focus resources on other matters. The fact that Baran was illiterate was likely in play here, but he was correct in that there needed to be permanent security presence in communities first so that schools and those running them would not be attacked by the insurgents. Distressingly the formerly active school in Bazaar-e Panjwayi itself had been stripped for some reason back in August. Baran was confused. On investigation it turned out that the school was closed because insurgent commander Nabi ordered it so, but Baran insisted to the Canadians that it was open and

operating. Who was really running Bazaar-e Panjwayi? When Major Niven and D Company asked around Nakhonay, they learned that the population also wanted a school, but Baran said one was not needed there.²⁷⁷ The matter came to a head when Governor Wesa intervened and set up an education shura in Kandahar City. The Canadian assessment was that “Although very adept at giving speeches and telling local nationals what to do, Haji Baran clearly does not listen to their needs and does not take action for the benefit of the people of Panjwayi.”²⁷⁸ Worse, Baran actually considered that the schools should teach a curriculum that was acceptable to the Taliban so the insurgents would leave them alone.²⁷⁹ When the Bazaar-e Panjwayi school reopened at the end of February, the headmaster told an ANA patrol that, although the enemy had ordered the school closed, the parents and teachers “decided to keep the school open regardless of threats.” The elders “had told the Taliban leadership that it is acceptable for the Taliban to fight ISAF, Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police, but not [to] threaten their children’s education.”²⁸⁰

Baran continued to interfere with road construction throughout the district. In one case he assaulted workers on Route Hyena and then had his people destroy the project under construction. He was absolutely livid about the UNOPS/SAITA road project on Route Lake Effect and it took everything the Canadian development people had to assuage his anger. There was further push back by Baran against the NISAY construction company who was in the process of fixing culverts near Sperwan.²⁸¹ CIMIC investigation suggested that the issue was pure, outright tribal patronage but that the effects were substantial:

[CIMIC] met with a labourer who said they were frustrated because those persons who are not Alikozai or Noorzai had difficulty acquiring employment in Bazaar-e Panjwayi. [He] echoed comments made during the 11 Jan patrols that suggested both Haji Mahmood (village leader of Bazaar-e Panjwayi) and Haji Baran (district leader Panjwayi) prevented the firing of Kakars and others during the Sperwan road project in 2008/09 and for more recent projects in the area ... in his opinion, the lack of decent employment was doing more to drive people to work for the Taliban than religious views. He said people were desperate for work and frustrated that employment opportunities were denied to them because of their tribe ... within [Kandahar City] he did not feel that there were tribal tensions with his neighbours except when employment or contracts were given by the government.²⁸²

Baran wanted control of every project in the district so he could benefit both financially and from patronage but saw CIMIC and other developers working directly with locals as competition. It was increasingly clear to everyone but Baran that he did not have the intellectual scope to adjust to the new ways that Governor Wesa and his supporters were implementing in the province. Yet Wesa would not remove Baran. Baran was connected to the intricate Kandahar power broker network and there were implications if he were removed.

The Canadian assessment was that Wesa was seen as weak and, now that the Naquib-led Alikozais were neutralized, Ahmad Wali Karzai and the Sherzai-led Barakzais were ascendant. Baran was, from his perspective, besieged by the other power brokers in Panjwayi: Haji Agha Lalai Dastagiri, Haji “Dollars” Agha Lalai, and Haji Mahmood (who constantly tried to stir up trouble between CIMIC, the P-OMLT and Baran). All were connected to Ahmad Wali Karzai, even though they were either Alikozais or Noorzais. Baran, being a Noorzai, was also from a minority tribe which contributed to his political isolation and insecurity.²⁸³ Baran, however, was influenced by Ahmad Wali Karzai. Neither Karzai nor Wesa moved to replace Baran and neither dissuaded the other power brokers who were aligned with them to back off. In this sense, governance in Panjwayi remained Mafia-like in that all of the competing power brokers were from the same mob and were fighting over the same piece of action, with the bosses deriving enjoyment from observing the competition play out in the Panjwayi arena.

Of course, keeping the police weak and at bay was a useful tool in such an environment, and Canadian police mentor restructuring did not help matters. There was no functional district chief of police at this time, and only fifty out of a required 312 personnel reported for duty regularly. The dysfunctional chief of police regularly cancelled P-OMLT classes. Yet at the same time, those fifty police officers performed well in spite of poor leadership and low numbers. The chief of police was relieved of duty at the end of January. There was now better P-OMLT coverage and, as a result, more presence patrols and mentoring took place which in turn improved security in Bazaar-e Panjwayi proper. There were simply not enough police, and not enough equipment for the police that were present and accounted for throughout the district. There were a lot of promises from Kandahar City but no action.²⁸⁴ The inability of TF Kandahar to leverage police resources out of the provincial government for Canadian operating areas produced an extremely problematic situation in Panjwayi.

By the end of January, the lack of a coordinated approach to district level governance and development was finally addressed with the deployment of the District Support Team (DST). The DST had representatives from the US State Department and USAID, plus a Canadian from Foreign Affairs. The DST worked with the Operational Coordination Centre-District (Panjwayi) and the newly-formed Office of the District Governor. The Canadian military components included a stabilization platoon, an engineer construction team, a detachment from the Specialist Engineer Team to handle contracting, intelligence, and PSYOPS.²⁸⁵

The District Support Team’s task was to mentor governance and fund development. It did not belong to the PRT, even though it resembled the “PRT forward” as envisaged by Canadian planners back in 2007-2008. For the most part the DST had a relationship

to Regional Command (South) and those who controlled American funding at the PRT. Ideally, the DST wanted to have eight Afghan members in the district office who could access development money from the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development who in turn could connect to their counterparts at the provincial level, and thus cut out the PRT entirely.²⁸⁶

Ron Melvin, the State Department representative and *de facto* leader of the DST, recognized early on that grievances had to be addressed and the cell phones turned back on. The draft District Stabilization Plan had to be populated. He also moved to beef up the withered organizations like the District Development Assembly in order to procedurally enmesh Haji Baran and move him away from unilateral activity as much as possible.²⁸⁷

The action in the central part of the district consisted mainly of local patrols and shuras conducted by Maj Ryan Jurkowski's A Company and its associated Afghan company from 2nd Kandak in the Mohajerin-Salavat-Fatollah-Chawlgor quadrangle. For the most part enemy activity was limited to intimidation operations consisting of anti-government mullah blathering from one mosque and an insurgent team from Nakhonay that destroyed cell phones and put up night letters. An IED team was sporadically active but information from local children resulted in their discovery before detonation. These communities were, for the most part, primed for development so CIMIC and Construction Management Organization teams worked with local communities to develop project lists and get them under way.²⁸⁸

The main problem for the battle group, and especially for Maj Wayne Niven and D Company, remained Nakhonay. Patrolling demonstrated that the population was split; east Nakhonay was pro-government, while the west side was anti-. The insurgents banned cellphones and issued usage "permits", claiming that their objective was to stop locals from accidentally triggering IEDs on Route Lake Effect.²⁸⁹ Reports flowed in about masked, armed Taliban with loudspeakers who were "active in the villages" east of Nakhonay with support from Nakhonay itself.²⁹⁰

D Company 1 PPCLI and 3rd Company 2nd Kandak continued with their patrol program but made no contact with the enemy until 14 January when a dismounted patrol led by Sgt John Wayne Fraught triggered a direct-fire fragmentation-charge IED hidden in a wall. Sgt Fraught was killed, but the triggerman was captured.²⁹¹ By coincidence, Maj Niven observed the event from a SUAV feed:

I was pissed off more than anything. Because we're doing good things here, we got a presence here, we're starting to have an effect but they're still taking bites out of us and I'm pissed off. We're not having any gunfights at this point ... And we're having marginal success in getting stuff started. We just see a puff of smoke and fuck, John Wayne gets killed.²⁹²

The Fraught killing was catalytic:

I sat down with [LCol] Jerry Walsh and I'm like, "Okay sir, what we're doing, the nice-guy stuff, is not working. We need to change the dynamic. I need to be the asshole for a while. And I need you and the Brigade Commander to give me the assets to be an asshole." And he said, "What do you want?" "I want more permanent presence in the town, I want air overhead all the time, aviation or fast. I want illumination missions at night over the village. I want rock'n'roll 24/7 and omni-presence. 'Cause I want their attention. I'm sick and tired of doing this. Because I got three dead soldiers now, and other than small results in here, I don't have enough to put in my mind to justify the risks we're taking." They gave me everything.²⁹³

D Company got its own counter-IED team and put together a quick-reaction force so it would not be dependent on the tank QRF from distant Ma'Sum Ghar, something that would amount to "a deliberate operation down [Route] Lake Effect." The counter-IED teams found three devices per day: pressure plates, fragmentation charges, homemade explosives, and caches of components. OH-58D Kiowa Warrior helicopters were "overhead, every day, all day long. I remember going on patrol one day and there's a B-1 bomber overhead, buzzing the town. My JTAC, Bill Hunt, said 'Sir, I never thought I'd see the day when we would do this.' And I said, 'Yeah. Bill, when I was a young guy, that was a strategic nuclear bomber. And now it's working in support of the company.'"²⁹⁴ C Battery kept up the illumination and "it got the attention of the local elders." "What's going on? What's going on?" I said, 'Hey guys: you start telling me what's going on in this village and who's doing what to whom.' I put 12 Platoon in there." Recce Squadron kept an eye on the southeastern approaches.

The "stick" was followed with a "carrot" from Stab B. What did Nakhonay's leadership want? Malim wanted roads. He was told no security, no roads. Attempts to get more police in were unsuccessful. When the battle group asked Haji Baran to engage the elders, he reported that the local people suggested establishing a position southwest of town to stop bad people coming in from Khenjakak.²⁹⁵ Baran was brought in again to engage the Nakhonay elders, but this time he ran up against Haji Malim:

[Baran] stated that, if the people of Nakhonay do not help ISAF and ANSF, then ISAF and ANSF will build a checkpoint in the centre of Nakhonay. [Haji Malim] said that ISAF has been working in Dand for some time, yet has done very little. Specifically, Malim pointed out that there are 30 villages in Dand without schools, and that ISAF has been paying 400 Afghans per day for two years to build a road but nothing had been built [referring to the Fosters-Hyena paving project]. Baran later stated that Malim was Taliban and has a son who is an insurgent

commander. Throughout the shura, Malim spoke first and all the other elders generally looked to him before speaking ... Baran later said that, if [Malim] did not cooperate by the end of the next shura, then he would have them all arrested and detained by the police.²⁹⁶

ISTAR resources and local patrolling produced the theory that Malim's son was a Taliban leader connected with the other insurgent networks in Kandahar Province, but it remained unclear whether Malim was Taliban or not. Some thought Malim was an insurgent supporter using his son as his conduit, or it may have been the other way around. Further information determined that Malim had two sons, and all three were communicating with Taliban commanders in Dand and in Panjwayi.²⁹⁷

Meanwhile, LCol Walsh and Lt Col Bahris prepared the battle group and Kandak 2 for Operation SHER PAKA-WAL. The usual recce and UAV screens went in around the town on 1 February and Haji Baran arrived for a shura with Malim and his colleagues the next day. This shura produced abject denials that they were insurgents and assertions that the insurgents were all out-of-area fighters. Malim gave in incrementally. He agreed to a presence in the town and pledged increased cooperation.²⁹⁸ Twenty four hours later, D Company with 3rd Company in the lead, cleared through Nahkonay to a point on the southern limit of the community, Objective BALLPEEN, and engineers arrived to build a patrol base. D Company and 3rd Company re-aligned so that there were three combat outposts arrayed right through the heart of the community: Shkarre in Haji Baba, and Patricia and BALLPEEN in Nahkonay. Six IED caches were discovered during the course of Operation SHER PAKA-WAL. As it turned out, however, a number of Taliban commanders who were in Nahkonay received advance warning of the operation through Malim, who had agents in the government feeding him information. These commanders escaped to Kenjakak where they joined another commander and 20 of his men.²⁹⁹

Malim was not fazed by the action and had excuses prepared when Stab B CIMIC patrols asked him for answers. The caches were old. The caches belonged to someone else. Nobody could talk or they would be subject to Taliban reprisals.³⁰⁰ As it turned out, Malim influenced events in neighbouring Haji Baba. According to ISTAR reportage, he completely intimidated the Haji Baba leadership and 'allowed' development to take place there if there were corresponding benefits to Nahkonay. This behaviour undermined development efforts by Construction Management Organization in the surrounding area. Malim also sent his sub-elders to Haji Baran to convince him that local Nakhonians gave up IED caches to D Company and turned in Taliban so that projects could get started in the community.³⁰¹ That information could not be correlated with the facts as D Company understood them.

Problems with Malim continued throughout February, and it was clear to Major Niven that he was playing games. The Haji Baba leaders were subjected to various forms of intimidation because of their acceptance of CIMIC projects. D Company and CIMIC determined that these and other measures “were probably put out to discredit and provide confusion amongst local nationals. This would fit the situation in Haji Baba/Nakhonay as the malik of Nakhonay has consistently been disruptive against projects... Haji Malim will back a project then withdraw his support at the last minute....[Malim is trying] to discredit CIMIC and cause potential labourers to refuse to work on projects.”³⁰²

As Malim stalled for time, the Quetta Shura reorganized the insurgent effort in eastern Panjwayi. The experienced and respected commander, Haji Amir, was brought in to organize the Nakhonay-Salavat-Chalghowr cells into a unified entity to fight the Canadians and the Afghans. He had personal connections to the area and was instructed to exploit them.³⁰³

The situation was not much better at the district level. The District Support Team was instrumental at getting the defunct District Development Assembly to meet for the first time in two years. However, the membership “felt that the government was not responsive” and they collectively expressed a lack of confidence in Haji Baran. The assembly members conveyed to the support team that they were, in fact, afraid of Baran, but liked the fact that the DST was taking an interest and agreed to work with the new members.³⁰⁴

Kandahar City Operations, January–February 2010

By early 2010 the enemy command structure in Kandahar City was believed to consist of the infamous Jabar Agha, who was the central Taliban commander for Kandahar province; Hafiz Majid, who was the senior commander in Kandahar City; and two subordinate commanders, Mullah Qasim and Spin Talib. The forces controlled by Haji Amir, the enemy commander in Dand, and Mullah Zergay, his counterpart in Arghandab, played a supporting role. The confluence of insurgents and elements in the government were better defined by this point after intense ISTAR operations. Arif Khan Noorzai, influential in the Malajat area and rural areas in northern Dand, and whose brother Mirwais was a player in Kandahar police politics, had connections to Hafiz Majid. One could infer that those connections were not entirely benign given the high level of violence directed against the police in the western city districts.³⁰⁵

A major Canadian ally was Mayor Gulam Haidar Hamed, who was the closest thing to an honest power broker by Western standards in Kandahar by this point. The outspoken Hamed constantly took on shady elements in the business community, and went so far as to demolish a market controlled by questionable personalities. As far as Canadians could tell, Hamed could not be bribed, which raised eyebrows among the provincial power brokers. Crippled by a lack of staff and suspicious of UN attempts to provide him

with assistants, Hamedi was involved in everything from power to water to economics. At this point Hamedi was involved in trying to sort out land clearance issues relating to the Kandahar City Bypass highway scheduled to go in south of the city. Hamedi knew that this multi-million dollar project was attracting all of the wrong elements and had the potential to destabilize the situation. Similarly, Hamedi was exceptionally concerned about the ongoing lack of clean water in Kandahar City. For some reason he preferred to deal with Canadian CIMIC, even after other elements tried to work with him. He did not trust the police and even threatened to release to the media a list of corrupt officials with details of their criminal activities, a move that made for volatile political dynamics.³⁰⁶

Hamedi was related to Governor Wesa which proved to be a key factor in achieving some level of coordination on city development projects. The PRT through CIMIC worked with both men, and assisted in coordinating the deployment of the District Development Program into the city districts in the same way District Development Assemblies worked in the rural areas. The issue, as always, was finding qualified and courageous Afghan personnel to take the lead.³⁰⁷

There was also a major prison riot at Sarposha prison, an event that was handled exceptionally well by the Corrections Canada-mentored prison security forces. Under pressure by the Deputy Governor to take violent action to end the situation, the staff was able to negotiate and segregate uprising leaders. There were no casualties.³⁰⁸ As for violence in the city during this period, four serious IED attacks against police targets occurred in January, with IEDs found in various places nearly daily by police patrols. After a suicide car bomb prematurely detonated, the Afghan police, supported by the 97th MP Battalion, collected information and mounted Operation JANGYALAY in District 6. Though little was discovered, this was an Afghan National Police planned and led operation.³⁰⁹

On 18 January, there was a major coordinated Taliban attack against the Presidential Palace and other key government facilities in Kabul. The attacking forces used suicide bombers followed up by ground forces. Concerned about the possibility of a similar attack, all of the Afghan security force commanders in Kandahar City planned and executed Operation MAYWAND. Canadian observers were astounded. The scale of MAYWAND was dramatic, involving nearly 500 Afghan security personnel. MAYWAND received assistance from the OCC-P, Camp Nathan Smith provided coverage with its aerostat cameras, and 97th MP Battalion mentored some of the operations, but for the most part it was an Afghan show lasting nearly a week. Notably, the Afghan security forces were beguiled with the aerostat's capabilities. MAYWAND was assessed as having completely disrupted enemy activity in Kandahar City, and even encouraged some enemy leaders to depart the urban areas for some time.³¹⁰ The 97th MP Battalion analysed the situation and expressed concerns to TF Kandahar that

due to increased security ops by Afghan National Police and 97 MP Bn, insurgents will likely change their tactics due to continuous failings with VBIED and IED attacks. They will likely revert to conducting assassinations, kidnappings, and roadside IEDs in an attempt to maintain influence over the local population.³¹¹

During the course of Operation MAYWAND, security operations thwarted four assassination attempts against prominent targets. The Afghan forces were so enraged that they initiated planning for MAYWAND II while MAYWAND was still in play. During this time 97th MP Battalion took over from the PRT as the battlespace commander for Kandahar City.

The enemy, frustrated by repeated failures, started to kill people who had low-level connections with the government. On 1 February, Khudi Dad Saha Agha, a construction worker from Dand, was found dead. Hours later, in separate incidents, a Shi'a religious leader was shot and killed, and three security contractors were gunned down in their vehicle in District 3 on their way home: two were related to Ahmad Wali Karzai. This last attack was clearly not a coincidence.³¹² US Military Police were targeted the following day with an IED and immediately after that an IED strike killed four Afghan police.

MAYWAND II was followed by MAYWAND III and then MAYWAND IV, with Canadian support continuing as before at the OCC-P and from Camp Nathan Smith. The pressure on the enemy was so great that a religious personage approached coalition forces and offered to broker the reconciliation of four Taliban cell commanders in the city.³¹³ Canadian PSYOPS were tasked to monitor population attitudes during the MAYWAND series. The main question was this: what did the government need to provide to get people in the city to stop supporting the insurgents?

The majority of local nationals responded to employment opportunities. Employment and electricity are the two components local nationals feel their government can do to make their life better, other than security. When asked what they want their government to do to develop Kandahar City, the majority responded with security. For local nationals, peace and security is defined as *sulha* (politeness and goodness), unity, and stability. Local national support the idea of peace with the Taliban, but feel that “peace with insurgents will never work because of foreign influence. They put too many conditions on peace.”³¹⁴

But there was not going to be any peace. Intimidated by the enhanced security, the Taliban initiated their assassination campaign on 24 February with the murder of Abdul Majid Babai, the former Director of Information and Culture for Afghanistan and a quiet advisor to Governor Wesa. Construction truck drivers living in District 10

found IEDs attached to their doors.³¹⁵ The systematic assassination of ‘soft targets’ by the insurgents was now on. The issue now for the coalition forces was the drain on the Afghan units in Kandahar Province demanded by Operation MOSHTARAK. It was possible that the pressure on the insurgents in Kandahar generated by the MAYWAND series would have to slacken because of the increased demand for resources in Helmand.³¹⁶ The only Canadian casualty in Kandahar City during this period was the accidental death of Cpl Joshua Baker of the Loyal Edmonton Regiment during what investigators later categorized as a poorly-led training event.

Provincial Development and Governance in Early 2010

As the Ménard headquarters sought to untangle itself from the web of development and governance issues and focus on the districts, the staff discovered that this process was easier said than done. Regional Command (South) supplanted the TF Kandahar-provincial government relationship more and more and, by late December, communicated that its development priorities would henceforth be education, health, and governance.³¹⁷ The mechanisms for the practical expression of these priorities remained to be built, but there was great hope in RC (South) circles that a new organization, the Regional Platform (South), might act as a ‘super PRT’. Until that platform was established, however, the muddled relationships between TF Kandahar and the various governance and development entities continued into early 2010.

By early 2010 there was virtually no TF Kandahar involvement in the Dahla Dam project.³¹⁸ Manipulation of contracting by senior Afghan officials related to that project was reported on but seen as less and less relevant by TF Kandahar.³¹⁹

As TF Kandahar’s influence waned, it proved more and more difficult to leverage provincial matters to support Canadian operations. The policing linkages through the PRT, if not completely severed, were attenuated to the point where TF Kandahar increasingly used the OCC-P at the Palace as an influence mechanism on policing matters.³²⁰ That said, however, the Canadian Head of Police played a major role later in assisting Dand policing efforts. As Dand was not officially a district, it did not have an approved police manning level (*Tashkil*). Until this governance anomaly was sorted out, there was no funding for police, which in turn had negative consequences for counterinsurgency operations in Dand. A variety of influence mechanisms were employed to establish an ‘interim *Tashkil*’ for Dand.³²¹

A new focus on education in Kandahar Province cut across the Canadian province-district divide. Apparently driven by district-level leaders representing the views of their communities, school construction and staffing emerged in January 2010 as a “stabilization theme” in Regional Command (South) and PRT circles.³²² As school construction was



The Taliban and their allies looked at loading empty polio vaccine vials like this one with a chemical or biological agent in order to undermine the Canadian-supported vaccination programme.

also linked to the Canadian priorities, education in the districts was a possible line of rapprochement between TF Kandahar headquarters and the PRT. That eventually became reality later on.

Polio eradication receded significantly as a theme in the Canadian Army Kandahar narrative by early 2010, save for the fact that NGO operations in insurgent-controlled areas undermined the government's attempts to assert its authority. And, later in 2010, a raid on a compound in Daman district uncovered, in addition to a weapons cache, vials of live Polio culture, a microscope, and a centrifuge. Canadian analysis was that

it is possible that insurgents were attempting to weaponize the bio agent by placing live culture in the empty vaccine vials and then redistributing the vials in an attempt to infect the local population ... a Pakistan-based insurgent was aware that testing a possible chemical was conducted at an undisclosed location. The chemical had been administered to test subjects and subsequent reliable reporting indicated that these tests had failed.³²³

Once again, apologists for the insurgency who portrayed it as a series of disconnected attacks by aggrieved, unsophisticated locals were proved wrong.

On the governance front, the ongoing problem of government legitimacy remained. Reporting on the political situation suggested that

There is growing consensus among Kandahar's local media, political commentators and the public that President Karzai's appointment of a new Cabinet will include a new Provincial Governor. The challenges Wesa's successor will face are daunting – intense international and local pressure to do more to rein in corruption and mitigate competing self-interests of power brokers ([in] particular Ahmad Wali Karzai). Despite President Karzai's promise to do more to end the perceived culture of impunity, Kandaharis remain skeptical that a stronger, more competent Governor will be appointed ... TFK is most concerned that any new Governor carry enough *gravitas* from Kabul to effectively reach out to Kandaharis.³²⁴

No new replacement arrived, however, but the possibility that Gul Agha Sherzai might be brought back to Kandahar from Nangarhar to be the new governor excited the Kandahari power structure. Sherzai did come down to Kandahar and met with Ahmad Wali Karzai, who warily wanted to gauge Sherzai's intentions. Governor Wesa was, uncoincidentally, called up to Kabul for business during this time.³²⁵ It is difficult to overstate the importance of this possible power shift to the Canadian effort. The Barakzais had probably (though not provably) been tacit supporters of the insurgency since 2005, when they had lost power to the Popalzais. Indeed, the decapitation of the Alikozai and Alizai tribes in Arghandab District and the Senjaray-Asheque area left only the Barakzais, the Popalzais, and the down-trodden Noorzais on their feet, and the Noorzais — the backbone of many local insurgencies — were badly battered. The return of a Barakzai governor (especially the powerful Gul Agha Sherzai) who could extend a hand to the Noorzais might have weakened the local insurgencies, while the externally based and supported component continued as before. Commercial violence between the factions might be reduced by an American-brokered rapprochement, or at least influenced by the vast financial capacity of the American troop influx and the related need for infrastructure. That was one possible future and, as they say, the jury remained out well into 2010.

Dand District Operations, January–February 2010

By all accounts, Dand District remained a success story in early 2010, with TF Kandahar engaging communities and their leadership through Stab B, the Construction Management Organization, the P-OMLT, and the battle group. Of course, enemy activity did not stop, but operations in Dand demonstrated what was possible with significant combined

Canadian-Afghan interest and involvement. Local work projects in all of the KALAY communities remained in play, with occasional contracting issues that were sorted out through negotiation assisted by the Construction Management Organization. In most cases it was a question of who was aligned with whom in a community and how that related to who got employment, that is, something not very different from municipal contracting issues in Canada. CIMIC noted repeatedly that maliks from villages on the edges of the KALAY area wanted similar irrigation and road projects for their communities.³²⁶

The Canadian *modus operandi* in Dand was to have CIMIC facilitate the CIDA district stability officer's ability to connect with larger provincial-level programs, while CIMIC and the Construction Management Organization maintained the momentum at the district and community levels with the Afghan authorities. For example, CIMIC and CIDA facilitated the work of the District Health Officer on his village rounds in Dand, and then ensured that he was supported at the provincial level. CIMIC and CIDA also cooperated in getting the UN organizations to provide aid to a camp for internally displaced persons on the boundary of Dand and District 5. This camp somehow escaped the notice of higher authorities.³²⁷

Dand became the scene of a new program called the Culturally Structured Youth Employment Program, better known as the Sons of Kandahar (formerly the Sons of Nakhonay). In essence, the Sons of Kandahar was either an Afghan Katimavik or related to Village Stability Operations programs, or both. The village maliks were approached by a Culturally Structured Youth Employment Program project leader and asked to provide 10 young men and one supervisor. They were given work uniforms and equipment. Their job included assisting in maintaining local roads and refurbishing mosques. Another task for the Sons was to identify needy families and then distribute locally purchased goods to sustain them through the winter. The reactions of the people in Belanday, New Mashor and Zor Mashor were noted by Construction Management Organization: they were "excited" at the possibility of undertaking this work in their communities.³²⁸

On the policing front, there was considerable qualitative progress in the face of bureaucratic intransigence. The Independent Directorate of Land Governance still refused to recognize Dand as a district and as a result there remained no formal *Tashkil* (approved manning level) for the police.³²⁹ That state of affairs did not stop the district and provincial chiefs of police from providing effective community security. The district police chief and the National Directorate of Security worked together to stop an assassination plot against District Governor Nazek, and the provincial chief visited village militias to coax them into police training. The Dand police were now capable of independently deploying their quick reaction force to IED strikes and did so effectively when their patrols were attacked.³³⁰

There were only three IED attacks against Canadian forces over the course of two months, with no killed in action. The insurgency, however, continued to intimidate

the community of Gorgan, so much so that local people requested arms to resist them. Gorgan would have to wait, however. Task Force 72, tasked with setting up Village Stability Operations in Dand, were conducting a pilot project in Angurian but it was only in its preliminary stages.³³¹ Belanday also attracted Taliban attention: night letters were posted, and the malik, Sayed Gul Agha, was kidnapped.³³²

The main issue that emerged in Dand in early 2010 was governance. District Governor Nazek, who had maintained a superb relationship with the Canadians since 2008, suddenly distanced himself and started to interfere with security coordination in Dand, particularly when the provincial police chief boosted police capacity in the district. Nazek's obstructionism took several forms; for example, he wanted the OCC-D(D) separated from the District Centre. He ran hot and cold on the role of the District Development Assembly, depending on who was present. He was believed to have even staged a demonstration against the OCC-(D) on one occasion.³³³

Careful analysis pointed towards Nazek's brother, Fatay Khan, who was in charge of a private security company and a construction company. How Fatay Khan linked to Barakzai interests, or the Popalzai construction-security complex in Kandahar was unclear, but Khan's private security was driving around in Dand police Rangers and increasingly behaving, to Canadian observers, as a private militia for Nazek. Khan's interpreters manipulated CMO and CIMIC relationships with locals at the OCC-D(D) and the District Centre by providing false or misleading translations of complaints from local people. Khan security personnel were, apparently, accused of taking money from sub-contracted truckers working on CMO-supported projects. Locals went to Fatay Khan on security issues rather than going to the police.³³⁴

Nazek then threatened to resign and go to the media. Initial analysis was that

... [Nazek attempted] to demonstrate this authority in front of local nationals ... the fact that the OCC-D(D) [Operations Officer] handled the matter in a calm, inviting manner likely enraged [Nazek] further as he was not having his desired results and local nationals agreed with [the coalition forces]. Good communication between [OC Recce Squadron] and KPRT resolved what could have been the district leader trying to play two different units against one another to get his own way.³³⁵

TF Kandahar analysis suggested that:

[Nazek's] actions signal his unhappiness with recent challenges to his authority, including increased Afghan Uniformed Police autonomy, District Shura assertiveness and the possible loss of his family's Private Security Company contracts, which are all positive indications of growing rule of law and governance in the area.³³⁶

Nazek may have been supportive and he may have been helpful, but he and his brother were now on a collision course with TF Kandahar objectives in Dand.

All in all, however, Canadian success in Dand up to this point was noted by Stab B when they visited Teymurian in late January:

While speaking to the local nationals, they asked why we were no longer flying the Afghanistan flag. We told them that the old flag has been taken down and put up in the OCC-D(D) and the new flag has not yet arrived. The local nationals were quite interested as they “felt pride” having our flags fly side by side.³³⁷

On 19 February small teams of Taliban operatives entered the villages of Nakudak and Molla Kuchi and assassinated the mullahs in both communities. Like Kandahar City, the districts were about to experience an insidious assassination campaign directed against what TF Kandahar called ‘soft targets.’³³⁸

Zharey District Operations, January–February 2010

Zharey was initially assessed as “stable” in early January. Even though local fighters remained behind and laid IEDs numerous enemy commanders had been killed or left for safe haven in Pakistan. The main problem for 1-12 Infantry was that 1st Kandak was about to be pulled out and sent to Helmand, leaving a significant security gap. As we will recall, 6th Kandak was an unmentored road protection kandak that was having issues acclimatizing to Zharey district. OMLT commander Col Shane Brennan worked with Brig Gen Basir to fill the security gap. Ultimately the decision was made by Kabul to man a fourth company in each of the three infantry kandaks in 1-205 Brigade. However, these companies were barely trained and were unmentored. Three were assigned to Zharey district by the end of January and the Canadian OMLT scrambled to deploy two mentor teams to work with them.³³⁹

Operation DALBOR SHIELD remained in effect, albeit without the resources it enjoyed in 2009. Despite the limitations, a CU-170 Heron was able to spot one emplacement team which was killed by an armed UAV. On another occasion a ScanEagle spotted for a B-1B bomber which engaged and eliminated another ‘dig team.’³⁴⁰

The main problem area in Zharey remained the Asheque–Senjaray corridor. Three IED attacks, one of them a suicide bomber, killed a total of eight American soldiers throughout January and February 2010. There were six other IED incidents during this time that resulted in numerous Afghan military and civilian casualties. Bag-e Pol was “dirty,” especially the police, and the local shop owners acted as spotters for the insurgents. Attempts were made to provide development projects in the area, including a school, but it was an uphill battle for the Canadian CIMIC team and the American District Support Team. The injection of

CERP money by 1-12 Infantry helped move the projects incrementally forward, but there was just no buy-in from the local power brokers, including the police.³⁴¹

A Canadian police mentoring team came back to Zharey but found that corruption remained rampant under Bismullah Jan, who had, amazingly, remained in place all of this time. Jan was not usually available, so the Canadian mentors deployed to the police checkpoints to conduct counter-IED, rule of law, and first aid training on site with each police platoon. The police in Bag-e Pol remained extremely problematic and were believed to have been thoroughly infiltrated by the insurgents.³⁴²

Governance in Zharey remained a hollow shell. An estimated 200 insurgents from Helmand bedded down in the district interior for the winter combined with the fact that community leaders on the various shuras and assemblies did not actually dwell in Zharey reduced District Leader Sahardi's influence to those communities along Highway 1. The façade of development assembly work continued, with Canadian CIMIC and the American District Support Team working to do what it could with what it had. USAID did some cash for work projects but the only significant project the developers could get off the ground was a school in Bag-e Pol. Even then it was blocked by local power brokers. The surreal nature of district politics continued when Essa Khan from the insurgent-controlled Sangsar community showed up to the District Development Assembly. The ostensible reason provided was that Khan was a friend of the district governor. In time, an audit team from somewhere, perhaps Kandahar, maybe Kabul, arrived in late January. Sahardi was "on edge" and it looked like he might be fired. TF Kandahar attempted to get the district chief of police fired. It was unclear to Canadian observers whether Sahardi or Jan was the problem, but one had to go if any further movement was to be made in Zharey district.³⁴³

The best that TF Kandahar could hope for, given the limitations imposed on the district by Operation MOSHTARAK and by the nearly impossible governance and policing situation, was to keep Highway 1 open and the enemy disrupted as far away to the south as possible.

Air Wing Operations

The Joint Task Force Afghanistan Air Wing, still called Task Force Silver Dart, continued to stabilize throughout 2009. At BGen Ménard's insistence, the new Wing Commander, Col Christian Drouin, was instructed to provide a task force designator for each of the Wing's elements. TF Freedom was the new name for the Canadian Helicopter Force (Afghanistan) which remained equipped with eight CH-146 Griffons and six CH-147 Chinooks. The former Canadian Heron UAV Detachment, populated with former Aurora patrol aircraft crews, became TF Erebus, while the Theatre Support Element with its varying numbers of CC-130's and CC-17's and the Mission Support Squadron was now called TF Canuck.

There were at this point 450 Air Wing personnel. On the organizational chart, the CCAT leased helicopters were on a dotted line to TF Silver Dart: their maverick ex-Soviet pilots flew two KA-32 HELIX and four Mi-8 HIP transport machines. The shadowy Special Operations Air Detachment was also in town, with its non-standard machinery as well. Drouin and the other TACHEL crews kept referring to the Wing as the “Aviation Battalion,” to some of the more deeply blue-hued air force leadership’s chagrin.³⁴⁴ Medical evacuation remained in the hands of the U.S. Army and U.S. Air Force with their UH-160 Black Hawk and HH-60 PAVE Hawk helicopters and paramedics based at Kandahar Air Field.³⁴⁵

TF Freedom’s primary mission was to ensure that sustainment operations for the forces fighting in the western districts were not dependent on the roads with the objective of reducing the number of IED attacks and thus casualties. Sustainment in this case included the delivery of supplies as well as rotation of personnel for reinforcement, replacement, or HLTA.³⁴⁶

The most important development during this time was the deployment of the MX-15 sensor package for the CH-146 Griffons. This ball camera system gave the helicopters a surveillance capability similar to the UAV’s. Steps were taken to push real-time imagery to appropriate end users in TF Kandahar, but this proved problematic for the time being. Four of these systems were available in November 2009, and by March 2010 all eight Griffons were equipped with the MX-15.³⁴⁷

The concept of the Griffon Weapons Team emerged alongside the deployment of the MX-15. 408 Squadron, led by LCol Jeff “Smytty” Smyth, twinned an MX-15 equipped Griffon with a M-134D Dillon Gatling Gun equipped Griffon. One aircraft spotted, while the other shot. The Griffon Weapons Team proved invaluable when dealing with fleeting targets like illegal insurgent checkpoints and their early warning spotters. With the appropriate rules of engagement, these two troublesome types of enemy activity could be rapidly suppressed. The primary mission of the Griffon, however, was to escort the CH-147 Chinooks as they went about the business of aerial resupply and air assault. The secondary mission was to support the ground forces during TICs. These were ‘spur of the moment’ events whereby a Griffon Weapons Team was cut away from escort during a ground forces engagement: the Chinook was escorted to the FOB it was heading for, then the Griffons went hunting. As the crews built up experience and the drain from HLTA diminished later in the tour, Colonel Drouin initiated a ground standby alert posture for a Griffon Weapons Team so they could respond within minutes to TICs involving Canadian forces. This capability was not declared to Regional Command (South) and remained a Canadian ‘hip pocket’ capability.³⁴⁸

Other tactics that integrated UAVs with Griffon Weapons Teams and air assault operations were developed during this rotation. For example, a CU-170 Heron UAV would be sent forward to spot a landing zone. The Griffon Weapons Team would come in to confirm and suppress anything spotted by the UAV, and the Chinooks would deposit the troops or conduct a MEDEVAC.³⁴⁹ Col Drouin and his staff assessed that “When we show up, everybody hides. Is this an effect we want? Yes. It calms things down, it suppresses.” Enemy fighters exfiltrating an area because of the presence of helicopters were then spotted by CU-170s, tracked, and targeted by whatever aviation or air asset was available at the time.³⁵⁰

The issue of pooling Canadian air assault capabilities with Regional Command (South) emerged in 2009–2010. One of the problems that emerged from the investigation into the Griffon crash at Qalat in the summer of 2009 was that the Canadian helicopters were not equipped with long-range communications capability and thus it was difficult to maintain command and control once they departed the Kandahar area. Indeed, the Canadian helicopter force was deployed outside of Kandahar province almost as much as it was employed within it, which reduced coverage of the Canadian area of operations by Canadian aircraft. When Regional Command (South) split into two commands and the RC (South) area was reduced, the decision was made to limit Canadian helicopter operations to Kandahar province as much as possible. Col Drouin believed that his crews were being pressured to go and operate from places that were not capable of supporting Griffon operations. The machine was not compatible with other allied aircraft and their supporting facilities.³⁵¹

The fact that the CU-170 Herons were rented systems could at times be problematic. TF Kandahar wanted more UAV coverage now that more American systems were being cut away for American national purposes commensurate with the influx. Instead of merely increasing the UAV sortie rate and applying additional sustainment resources to the machines, a laborious process was initiated to get the Canadian government to agree to pay the contractor more money so they could increase the sortie rate. This took three months and had to go all the way to Cabinet. In the meantime, BGen Ménard, who had been briefed on Operation APPLANIX, requested the deployment of CP-140 Auroras with their MX-20 cameras. This was denied and he was told that the aircraft lacked the defensive capabilities to operate in this role. Instead, the Air Wing pushed the limits of man, machine, and contract verbiage and squeezed 630 hours of coverage out of one CU-170 which amounted to 21 hours of coverage out of 24 for several weeks.³⁵²

In 2009 and 2010 there was more creative use of the Air Wing’s CC-130 Hercules transport aircraft. The dramatically expanded night fighting capabilities exhibited throughout the war in Afghanistan led to significant innovations, one of which was called

Black Illumination. Night vision systems were mostly directional, that is, night vision goggles or sensors on Coyotes were pointed like a search light on a given target. Black Illumination involved the dropping of infrared flares to 'light up' large areas, except that only those using night vision equipment could see what was being illuminated.³⁵³

The U.S. Marine Corps forces operating in Helmand were already using Black Illumination and, with the influx of American units into Kandahar, it was possible that the capability would prove useful to both Canadian and American forces. Col Drouin sent personnel from the CC-130 crews for training with the U.S. Marine unit and on 19 March 2010 the first Canadian Black Illumination mission was flown. This involved the use of a Griffon-escorted Chinook carrying U.S. Army sniper teams that were inserted into the hills north of Asheque in Zharey district. A CU-170 Heron established the pattern of life first, then the insertion took place. All of this activity was conducted underneath a Canadian CC-130 dropping IR flares. Other allied organizations operating in Kandahar province found this Canadian capability interesting and useful. These other organizations, incidentally, were also able to eat and drink in some cases because the Canadian CC-130 Hercules transports were also capable of conducting Container Delivery System drops using a computer-guided steerable parachute system.³⁵⁴

Supporting TF Kandahar

The 450-person National Support Element commanded by LCol Jim Jensen was initially not structurally different from its predecessor organizations: the NSE had a maintenance company, a supply and transport company (with a force protection platoon), a camp services company, and a logistic operations centre, as well as 300 or so CANCAP and CFPSA civilian augmentees. As the concept of operations for TF Kandahar changed, so did the concept for support. The initial NSE laydown outside of Kandahar Air Field had NSE detachments at FOB Wilson, FOB Ma'Sum Ghar, Patrol Base Sperwan Ghar, and the Dand District Centre. With the American influx, however, there were significant changes during this rotation.³⁵⁵

The first change involved FOB Wilson, which initially supported 300 Canadian troops but by December 2009 there were 700 American troops from TF 1-12 Infantry in location. Second was Camp Nathan Smith, home of the PRT. When the decision to reduce the Canadian Army footprint there occurred in February and the influx of Americans from 97th MP Battalion took place, command of the remaining Canadian units at Camp Nathan Smith was transferred to the NSE. Similarly, the NSE detachment supporting Maj Mark Popov's Recce Squadron in Dand district was reduced as TF 1-71 Cavalry took over in March. Over in Panjwayi, however, the dispersion of 1 PPCLI Battle Group into its new configuration in the eastern part of that district necessitated changes to how they were resupplied.³⁵⁶

The NSE continued to use ground Combat Logistics Patrols and contracted helicopter support to handle the new dispositions. Helicopter support changed to some extent during this rotation as the dedicated overwatch of each combat logistics patrol was ended. The significant increase in American and Canadian helicopters in the air over Kandahar province meant that it was relatively easy to get support quickly in any event. The Canadian CH-147 Chinooks tended to be used for air assault and logistic support for units that were temporarily outside of the NSE support envelope, while the CCAT contract Mi-17's and Ka-25's handled resupply to the Canadian units in their operating locations, assuming that the threat level was low.³⁵⁷

The risk level became an issue during this time as the contractor helicopters refused to fly into a forward operating base if it had been given Red status, that is, there was a small arms threat to aircraft. Who, exactly, determined what locations were Red was debatable, so the NSE became involved in dealing with the contractors and Regional Command (South) in order to clarify what constituted Red criteria. A satisfactory solution was arrived at and resupply operations continued.³⁵⁸

In addition to supporting the deployed Canadian forces, the NSE played a significant role in the American influx. None of the incoming American units, TF 1-12 Infantry, TF 1-71 Cavalry, TF 2 Fury, or 97th MP Battalion came from the same brigade. American units tended to not operate independently at the battalion level, so the support structure at Kandahar Air Field for these four units was relatively ad hoc and at the same time did not have the contracting capacity necessary for 'life support' in forward operating locations. In many cases, the Canadian NSE picked up the significant amount of slack. For example, the 700 Americans arriving at FOB Wilson did so without a field kitchen or the ability to produce fresh rations, a state of affairs that frustrated the TF 1-12 Infantry command staff to no end. They would not have this capability for nearly three months due to contracting issues. As a result the NSE's three cooks at FOB Wilson fed 700 American and 150 Canadian troops. Hard rations for a full three months would have posed significant morale problems for this incoming unit, which TF Kandahar needed to be fully operational to handle Zharey district.³⁵⁹

A second example was the deployment of TF 1-71 Cavalry to Dand district. They had construction capacity in the form of a U.S. Navy Construction Battalion but the American logistics unit at Kandahar Air Field did not have the distributed logistics capacity to deploy the basic materials necessary for TF 1-71 Cavalry's infrastructure to Dand. The Canadian NSE ensured that those materials were deposited in the right place in Dand and that local contracts were established to assist in the construction. This, incidentally, led to jobs in Dand which kept fighting-age males off the streets.³⁶⁰

A third area involved the NSE's Mobile Recovery Teams. The increased frequency of vehicular traffic in, through, and around Kandahar City meant that there were inevitable breakdowns and casualties due to enemy action. As TF 1-12 Infantry and TF 2 Fury deployed into Zharey and Arghandab, Canadian recovery teams worked interchangeably with American MRT equivalents since Canadian teams had substantial local ground knowledge and contacts to draw on.³⁶¹

NSE maintainers had to repair new equipment during this rotation. These included LAV RWS vehicles with their sensor packages, and the PSS aerostats and RAID towers with their computer-driven camera systems. The balloon camera systems had no trained maintenance people accompanying them, as the systems were off the shelf. Cpl J.T. Salois, a fire control systems technician and self-taught computer specialist, determined while he was assembling the systems that he could increase their capabilities in terms of range and information processing. As a result the PSS surveillance capability for Panjwayi district dramatically improved with positive security effects.³⁶²

An additional task undertaken by the NSE was a mentoring relationship with 1-205 Brigade's Combat Service Support 5th Kandak. Mandated by BGen Ménard, the NSE provided a variety of low-level assistance packages. These were very basic due to the lack of educational capacity and technical expertise in the Afghan kandak. The fundamentals of material handling equipment, how to run a warehouse, and the safe handling of equipment were the priority tasks, along with driver training. The Afghans, however, had no spares, no tools and contracted out almost everything they could. Attempts to conduct combined combat logistics patrols ran into issues relating to dissimilar rules of engagement and differing tactical procedures because of the non-compatible vehicles and communications systems.³⁶³

Operation MOSHTARAK, February 2010

There were several aspects of Operation MOSHTARAK ('Together') in Helmand Province that are important to the Canadian Army's narrative in Afghanistan. First, there was the participation of Canadian units in the operation itself and the issues surrounding their deployment. Second, the larger implications of the operation highlighted in bold face for the coalition the fundamental problems that Canada and the coalition were running into in Kandahar province. These could no longer be deferred.

Operation MOSHTARAK had multiple objectives. At the operational level, the district of Nad Ali west of Lashkar Gah was riddled with insurgents who operated from the network of canals and villages and sortied out to harass the capital. One such festering boil was the town of Marjah. A phased operation to clear this place out was a useful exercise in any event even if it was just 'mowing the lawn.' There were, however, larger concerns.

ISAF commander Gen McChrystal was looking for an operation that could act as a proof of concept for Clear-Hold-Build on a larger scale, one that would bring in President Karzai, the governor, and senior Afghan leadership to emphasize the Build, and one that would have strategic information operations effects outside of Afghanistan.³⁶⁴ Regional Command (South) was tasked to find a location to achieve these objectives.

Not surprisingly, the British-led Regional Command (South) looked to Helmand as an appropriate arena and made the argument that MOSHTARAK would be 'proof of concept' for a similar operation in Kandahar Province in the future. To conduct the operation would, of course, mean stripping forces from Kandahar Province and redeploying them to Helmand, once again. British personnel and their publicists breathlessly lauded the fact that Regional Command (South) was acting as a command again and 'gripping' its wayward subordinate national task forces.³⁶⁵ That attitude, naturally, annoyed the Canadians in Task Force Kandahar.

TF Kandahar looked at the planning and saw that it would lose access to a number of enablers when the operation was mounted. First, the UAV strike capability would be sucked away to the west (the limitations of the decision to rent the unarmed Heron and not buy Predator or Reaper were now exposed). So would part of TF Thor, the American route clearance packages working Highway 1. Close air support, which Canada did not deploy to Afghanistan, would also be significantly reduced.³⁶⁶

There was worse to come. The powers that be at Regional Command (South) and in Kabul convinced the Afghan Ministry of Defence that one of the kandaks in 1-205 Brigade had to go too, along with its OMLT mentors. Why higher level Canadian diplomatic pressure was not brought to bear to prevent this remains unclear. The effects of stripping out 1st Kandak from its positions where it was patrolling and making contact with the local population on a daily basis, and sending it to a completely foreign province was clearly problematic, especially along Highway 1, so three untrained Afghan infantry companies not indigenous to 1-205 Brigade were brought in from elsewhere to backfill. At the same time, experienced soldiers from 1st Kandak were being poached by special forces to join the Commando Kandak again, thus reducing 1st Kandak capacity further.³⁶⁷

Then there was the inexplicable desire on the part of Regional Command (South) to conduct the largest airmobile operation of the war. That meant that the Canadian helicopter force would also be stripped away as well, including three Chinooks and four Griffons. As a result, TF Kandahar had to reduce its operational tempo for most of February. This had spill-over effects well into the tenure of the next battle group.³⁶⁸



Photo Credit: Author

The bulk of the Canadian helicopter force deployed to Helmand Province for Operation MOSHTARAK, billed as the largest airmobile operation of the war.

The NATO press releases virtually ignored Canada's contribution and pumped up the British and American forces' involvement,³⁶⁹ so TF Kandahar loaded Canadian journalists onto the helicopters to cover the "largest airmobile operation ever conducted by ISAF in Afghanistan." 1st Kandak and its Canadian mentors deployed to Helmand on 21 January into a holding area while the other forces assembled. Then the whole operation was put on hold because President Karzai would not make up his mind if MOSHTARAK should be launched or not: his staff told General McChrystal that the President had a cold.³⁷⁰

LCol Jeff Smyth and TF Freedom learned about Operation MOSHTARAK towards the end of December 2009. TF Freedom and TF Jaguar, the UK helicopter force, were put on notice for a large airmobile operation (the Afghan army air corps was supposed to be involved, but General Rezziq Sherzai, who controlled the handful of Mi-17s at Kandahar Air Field, had those machines allocated for other purposes). The area that the Canadian helicopters would be operating was dubbed the CAT: Chahar-e Anjin Triangle.³⁷¹ (see Figure 6-11)

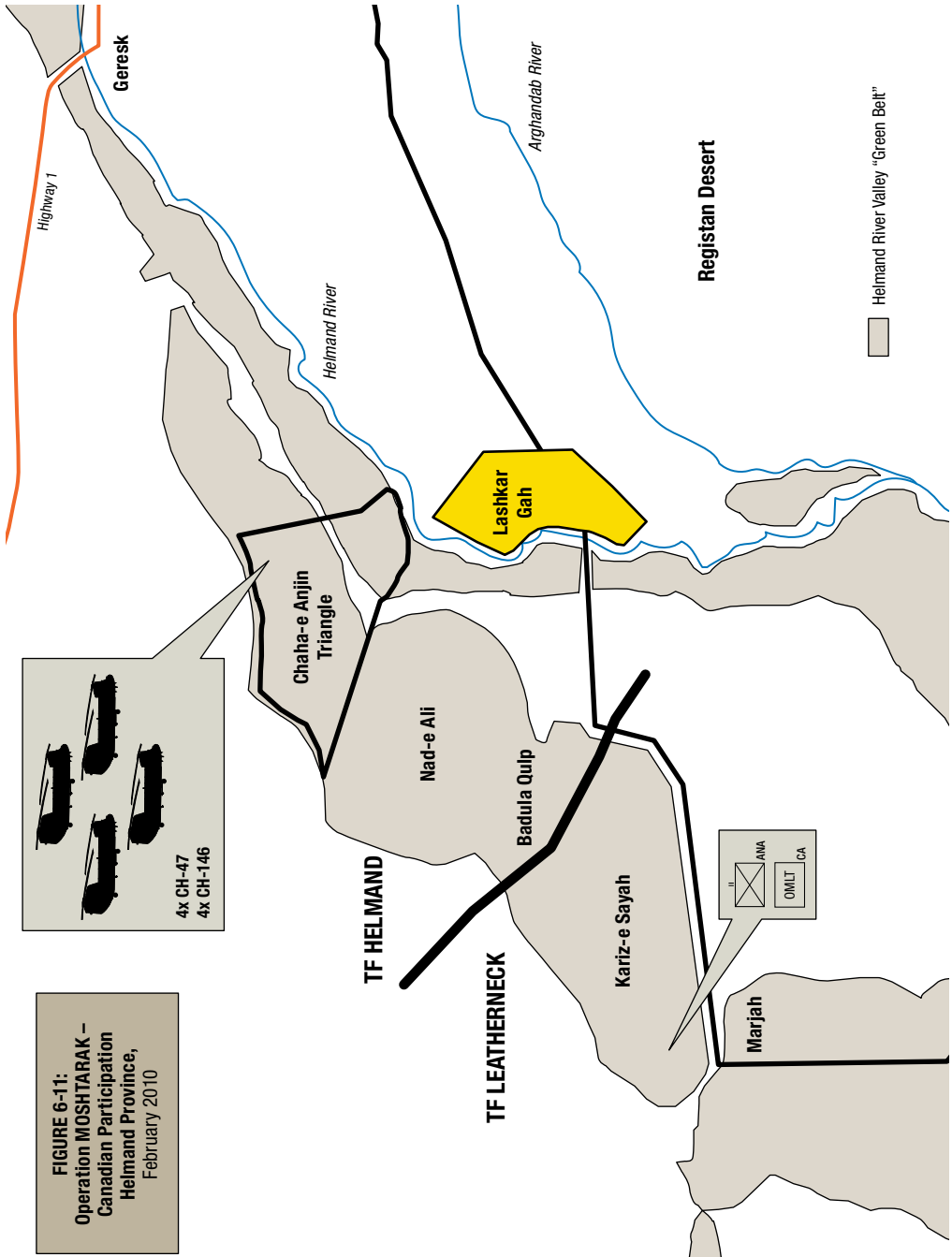


Figure 6-11: Operation MOSHTARAK – Canadian Participation, Helmand Province, February 2010

Four CH-147D Chinooks and four CH-146 Griffons deployed to Camp Bastion in Helmand Province on 8 February. There they linked up with their British, U.S. Marine, and U.S. Army counterparts and conducted loading and unloading drills with the Afghan, British, Dutch and Estonian troops they would insert. Operational security was tight: one Afghan soldier was caught calling home on his cell phone during one loading exercise because he thought the operation was being launched. There was no real hope of strategic surprise, however, given the nature of the operation. Only tactical surprise was possible.³⁷²

When the decision to finally launch Operation MOSHTARAK was made, a carefully coordinated 'black illum' mission was conducted by U.S. Marine Corps C-130 Hercules over the target areas. TF Freedom launched at 0330 in the morning on 13 February. LCol Smyth led in a CH-146 Griffon, manning the MX-15 sensor system to observe the helicopter landing zones. A British MQ-9 Reaper orbited above them. Both systems gave overhead and slant observation of the target area. They were accompanied by a British Sea King carrying a large sensor system for observing ground movement.

The first mission was to insert a special operations task force at 0334 hours. The initial target area for the conventional forces was, by an interesting coincidence, the Spin Masjed area that 2nd (Strike) Kandak and their Canadian mentors defended in years past. After all of the surveillance systems determined there was no observable enemy present, the Canadian Chinooks went in and deposited the British troops to secure the area at 0413 hours.³⁷³ A second lift took the Estonians into a blocking position to the east at 0428 and the final lift of British troops went in at 0453 hours. There was no contact and there were no incidents. Thereafter the helicopters remained available for quick reaction force tasks.³⁷⁴

Col Shane Brennan at the OMLT was skeptical about the new focus on Helmand. "All of a sudden the number one priority in RC South was Helmand, not Kandahar.... Why was that more important than the Kandahar region? It just rang hollow, quite frankly. I mean, there was nothing more important than the Kandahar area! And that remains to this day. What happens in Helmand may not shape the whole of Afghanistan, what happens in Kandahar could....".³⁷⁵ The decision was made by the Afghans to deploy a kandak. Would Canadian OMLT mentors go too? Brennan and Ménard had to sort that out. Ménard ultimately made the decision to deploy them because according to Brennan "If your boss is telling you hard to do certain things, you're going to probably try to do those things pretty hard. You're going to try and work with the ISAF direction that you're given and use all the resources and advice from your own people to try and shape that."³⁷⁶

The Canadian OMLT, however, was going to be difficult to sustain all the way over in Helmand. As a result, the National Support Element ensured there was adequate helicopter capacity through British sources and deployed one of its two heavy Mobile Recovery Team AHSVS wreckers there with the OMLT.³⁷⁷

1st Kandak and their Canadian mentors operated north of Marjah and encountered enemy forces in several short, sharp actions. On 18 February, an Afghan army patrol was hit and took several casualties. Medical Technician Cpl Bradley Casey, while under fire, administered to Afghan wounded and, while still under fire, got them aboard a MEDEVAC helicopter. Cpt Casey was awarded the Medal of Military Valour for his actions.

Despite a quick and successful Clear, the so-called ‘government in a box’ stabilization package brought in behind it proved difficult to implement. MOSHTARAK became yet another example of ‘mowing the lawn’ or ‘taking out the garbage’ except it was attempted on a larger scale. Operation MOSHTARAK was ultimately derided by journalists and declared a failure by analysts once the insurgents re-infiltrated the MOSHTARAK operating area. The violence started up again a month afterwards.³⁷⁸

What everyone overlooked at the time was that MOSHTARAK was undermined even before the first troops crossed the start line. Part of the Hold and Build phases were, as before, dependent upon police. A decision was made to remove Helmand police from the operation because of their connections to “malign actors” and substitute Afghan Civil Order Police (ANCOP) for the cleared areas. Those ANCOP units were Tajik-dominated and viewed as occupation forces by the local Pashtun population.³⁷⁹ In addition, the ANCOP were supposed to be employed for a six-month period but Karzai’s Ministry of the Interior would only commit them for four, and possibly a few as three months. That, as one report noted, “will not provide sufficient time for Task Force Helmand and Task Force Leatherneck to properly train the ANP force that is scheduled to relieve the ANCOP force. This situation is made worse by the failure of the Ministry of the Interior to appoint a Nad Ali Chief of Police....”.³⁸⁰ But the failure was not limited to the Ministry of the Interior. The problem went deeper and higher:

The former Helmand Governor and current Senator Sher Mohammad [Akhundzada] arrived with Minister Atmar and the rest of the Kabul delegation [to the Nad Ali tribal shura], and he was joined at the shura by former Helmand police chief Abdul Rahman Jan; both men were driven from their previous positions in Helmand as a result of their corrupt activities. Throughout the day, these two former leaders of Helmand worked the room and actively lobbied against the former Marjah deputy district governor Haji Zahir. These former officials retain great influence over the people of Nad Ali and much of the province, and seemed determined to play a role in the future governance of Nad Ali. (Comment: SMA and ARJ have the potential of re-establishing the old corrupt system that previously ruled Marjah, and this would be a serious setback to the advancement of better governance in Helmand. SMA still enjoys direct access to Karzai, and he could use his business relationship with ARJ to block better governance in Nad Ali.³⁸¹

When MOSHTARAK was underway, these two malign actors from the dark days of 2006 moved to get ‘their’ police into Nad Ali and were instrumental in interfering with local shuras to the point that “ARJ’s leadership of the shura has locals terrified that he will be part of the final political solution.” Maj Gen Carter was forced to appeal to entities in Kabul to apply pressure on Karzai “to prevent a scenario that places the powerbrokers in control of the ANP and other positions of leadership.” This had to be stopped “because they are in part the reason we are in the fight we are today and would undermine rather than advance any long-term political solution...”³⁸² It was back to business as usual for Sher Mohammad Akhundzada and Abdul Rahman Jan, courtesy of President Karzai, Operation MOSHTARAK, and the ‘government in a box’. It is not surprising that many locals welcomed the insurgents back into their communities, and the violence continued.

Operation MOSHTARAK demonstrated that ISAF and the Afghan army could work together and do everything right: they could gain tactical success on the ground, they could interact effectively with the population, they could facilitate local development initiatives. Operation MOSHTARAK also demonstrated how national and provincial power brokers could seriously undermine governance and stability efforts and, ultimately, exposed to ISAF’s leadership how President Hamid Karzai was tacitly supporting this activity. Something like Operation MOSHTARAK was scheduled to be mounted in Kandahar province next. What was the nature of the political terrain that its successor operation had to operate in?

The Neutralization of Mullah Baradar

Towards mid-February Task Force Kandahar became aware that Mullah Baradar, the primary military leader in the Mullah Omar-led Quetta Shura, had been placed in some form of custody inside Pakistan by Pakistani authorities.³⁸³ The exact circumstances remain unclear in the public domain. As he was the primary leader coordinating Taliban and associated activity in southern Afghanistan, the neutralization of Mullah Baradar should have had some measurable effect on the course of the Canadian campaign in Kandahar province. Coming at the end of the winter fighting season, Baradar’s apprehension highlighted those facets of the insurgent campaign that the Quetta Shura could directly control as opposed to ones it could not.

There were other important implications that derived from Baradar’s apparent removal from the field. There were two basic theories about his status: he was either an outright prisoner of the Pakistanis or that he was in some form of protective custody to protect him from another entity.³⁸⁴ There were also several theories as to why he was in this state. The first was that there was some form of internal power struggle in the Quetta Shura over strategy and how to implement it in Afghanistan, and that Baradar was ‘shopped’ to the Pakistanis out of jealousy by a rival or someone who wanted him out of the way.

A variant of this was that Baradar tried to take over the Quetta Shura and was thwarted in the same way. It was possible that Baradar had had enough, walked away, and was picked up because he knew too much. It was equally possible that he quarreled with the ISI, Al Qaeda, or HiG representatives over some matter and was apprehended.³⁸⁵

Another possibility, one that took hold in some circles, was that Baradar was Mullah Omar's representative to highly discreet peace talks with the Karzai government in 2009.³⁸⁶ One report suggests that he met with Karzai representatives during the Hajj in Saudi Arabia. As previously seen (in the Prologue to Volume I), certain Pakistani elements did not want Afghan insurgents making independent peace overtures to the Afghan government.³⁸⁷ Clearly, Baradar knew far too much about ISI support to the insurgency to be left in circulation.³⁸⁸

As to who Baradar might have been meeting in the Afghan government, that remains speculative. One report suggests it was none other than Ahmad Wali Karzai who was the intermediary, or possibly Qayyum Karzai.³⁸⁹ This may account for the decision by ISAF leaders to back off on Ahmad Wali Karzai's removal in late 2009 and may also account for his arrogant 'red line' crossing behavior in early 2010. If he was the anointed intermediary, he had nothing to lose. Indeed, BGen Ménard noticed on arrival in late 2009 that Ahmad Wali Karzai was attempting to maintain a low profile and ensured that the path between his illicit activities and himself was increasingly littered with numerous cut outs.³⁹⁰

Baradar's removal from circulation generated significant turbulence in the southern Afghan insurgency. It remains equally possible that Ahmad Wali Karzai was used as a tool to locate and get to Baradar by anti-Taliban forces or other elements and cause him to be apprehended. Or it may be a combination of factors. It may even have been sheer luck. Though some accounts credit the CIA with taking Baradar, his seizure took the intelligence staff at Regional Command (South) by surprise and it took three days for the White House to confirm that it was, in fact, Baradar who had been seized.³⁹¹ That said, Baradar's neutralization was a particularly important event and the effects on the Kandahar insurgency were felt throughout the rest of 2010.

Ahmad Wali Karzai and Government Legitimacy in Kandahar Province

The situation as it stood in 2009-2010 led to a re-examination of the role of Ahmad Wali Karzai in Kandahar politics and a debate over just how central his malignant activities were in fueling of the insurgency in the province. Discussions on this extremely sensitive topic had for the most part been deferred for months, if not years. The American influx and McChrystal's own perspective proved to be key enablers in getting the discussion started, particularly after the fiasco of the 2009 elections and everybody's renewed interest in the connection between governance and legitimacy.

The existing schools of thought on Karzai were these. The first was that he was a 'lovable rogue' entrepreneur who only wanted what was best for his tribe, the Popalzais. He was an elected official, therefore the coalition had to work with him, not against him. The second was that Karzai was a ruthless and malevolent narco-khan behind the façade, eliminating tribal and commercial rivals as well as the insurgents, who essentially were the same people to him. The third view was that Karzai was allegedly a CIA asset, therefore whatever he did was sanctioned by the American government and therefore he could not be touched and had to be accommodated. The fourth view was that since he was the President's half-brother, whatever he did was sanctioned by the Afghan government and therefore he could not be touched and had to be accommodated.³⁹²

This was not just a matter for the 'echelons above reality'. As we have seen thus far in this volume Canadian soldiers in the field had to contend with the effects of Ahmad Wali Karzai's choices and his behavior in various dimensions. Canadian commanders had to work alongside his allies and subordinates in the field. It is likely that Canadians died and were wounded as a result of these behaviors. At the very least, the average Canadian soldier in the field had to deal with friction generated by Karzai's machinations and that affected operations. It took serious scrutiny in 2009-2010 to sketch out the dimensions of the problem. Could these matters now be addressed?

What was known by Canadian commanders in Kandahar was that Ahmad Wali Karzai was involved in several illicit and licit activities, all of which undermined the legitimacy of the provincial government, and especially with the non-Popalzai population. Attempts to pin down Karzai on the narcotics front were elusive and this is where the bulk of coalition investigative energy was deployed, perhaps on purpose. Karzai was, however, suspected of involvement in human trafficking, specifically, profiting from the transport of cheap labour to the United Arab Emirates. This was connected to his involvement in running a housing scam that put people into debt slavery that in turn fueled the former activity. He was involved in the appropriation and re-sale of land in areas that he knew would be useful to ISAF: the Kandahar City Southern Bypass, specifically, was one of these. Karzai was also behind the drive to centralize all private security forces in Kandahar province under the Watan Security Company, which he effectively controlled, though he denied this publicly. At the same time he pushed for the Afghan Public Protection Force, a militia that would be sanctioned by the Afghan government to act as an umbrella for the security companies. Through the security companies, he was involved in providing trucking services to ISAF at Kandahar Air Field. He was known to run a private prison in Daman district and use his security forces to apprehend people to this site in order to coerce them for financial and political reasons.³⁹³

Although Ahmad Wali Karzai was not directly and provably linked to all these activities, he acted, as one knowledgeable Canadian officer put it, to “create the conditions where these activities could be facilitated” by others allied to him. In any event, regardless of the presence or absence of detailed legal proofs, the non-Popalzai population of the province and those on the receiving end believed that these activities were taking place, and were not inclined to support a Karzai-run Popalzai government. In 2010, Col Simon Hetherington, Deputy Commander of TF Kandahar, spoke of Ahmad Wali Karzai as a “grievance generator” who “fuelled the insurgency”.³⁹⁴

It was ISAF Commander Gen Stanley McChrystal who took the lead in dealing with the situation. The possibility of having Ahmad Wali Karzai removed was discussed at a high level in November 2009 but the decision was made to collect negative data on him to prove the case. That decision was viewed by some as a stalling tactic by those who simply did not want to confront this issue. In March 2010 there was another high-level meeting involving American, British, and Canadian representatives. The options were: to press to have Ahmad Wali Karzai appointed ambassador of, say, Paraguay; or the ‘block and check’ option, that is, draw ‘red lines in the sand’ and declare that he would be removed if he crossed them. Apparently McChrystal favored removal, as did the Canadian representative, but the other American and British representatives present stayed on the fence.³⁹⁵

The three red lines were established: There would be no attempt by Karzai to influence the upcoming peace jirga in Kandahar; he was not to influence or interfere with the make-up of the provincial council; and he was to avoid any form of electoral interference. Those leaning to the ‘red lines’ solution were influenced by the belief that if Ahmad Wali Karzai and his supporters and allies were interfered with, there would be a massive resupply problem for ISAF in southern Afghanistan because of Karzai’s control over trucking and the security forces associated with it. There were concerns that ISAF casualties would rise as a result of that behavior.³⁹⁶

Ahmad Wali Karzai ultimately crossed all three of the red lines and became even more belligerent towards ISAF in Kandahar in 2010. At the Peace Jirga, an elder told the assembled people, including Hamid Karzai, that he was afraid to speak out because he would be killed. When Karzai told him it was safe and he would be protected, the elder told the president that his brother-in-law was the problem. In a matter of days, this elder was killed. Word spread throughout the province what happened. The message was: Speak out against the Popalizais and die. It was unclear what emboldened Ahmad Wali Karzai. Speculation was rampant that a Washington D.C. meeting between President Karzai and President Obama resulted in a ‘leave his brother alone’ policy. Whether this was connected to activities the Karzais had conducted on behalf of the United States in other areas,

or not, became part of the debate even though substantial distance between the American administration and Hamid Karzai had been generated in those areas in the past two years.³⁹⁷ As one observer noted:

Our success will ultimately depend on President Karzai's having a similar vision, and he will be under considerable pressure to support malign actors like Sher Mohammad Akhundzada, Abdul Rahman Jan, and Ahmad Wali Karzai and others in Helmand and Kandahar whose interests lie in maintaining parallel governance structures and biased tribal ties in lieu of a more representative [Government of Afghanistan] presence.³⁹⁸

But before anything could be done about Ahmad Wali Karzai, and just as MOSHTARAK's successor operation for Kandahar was building up steam, Gen McChrystal was himself caught in the gears of American politics. His resignation, one of several forced on ISAF leaders during the summer of 2010, threw uncertainty into the coalition effort. Among the other affected ISAF leaders were TF Kandahar commander BGen Daniel Ménard, and the commanding officer of one of TF Kandahar's American battalions. By mid-2010, the combined effects of domestic politics, personal affairs, and heavy media scrutiny had nearly derailed Canadian efforts in Kandahar Province.

ENDNOTES

1. JTF-A HQ DSR (4 September 2009).
2. As depicted in Kai Eide, *Power Struggle Over Afghanistan* (New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 2012), pages 99–102.
3. See National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, "The 2009 Presidential and Provincial Council Elections in Afghanistan," at http://www.ndi.org/files/Elections_in_Afghanistan_2009.pdf.
4. Sherard Cowper-Coles, *Cables From Kabul* (New York: Harper Collins, 2012), pages 202–203.
5. "Afghanistan Elections 2009: Canada's Programming," www.afghanistan.gc.ca/canada-afghanistan/progress-progres/elections.aspx?lang=eng&view=d.
6. International Crisis Group, "Asia Briefing No 96: Afghanistan: Elections and the Crisis of Governance" (25 November 2009).
7. WikiLeaks message, U.S. Embassy Kabul to State, "Karzai on Elections and the Future" (3 September 2009).
8. Eide, *Power Struggle Over Afghanistan*, chapter 20.
9. Cowper-Coles, *Cables from Kabul*, page 235.
10. International Crisis Group "Asia Briefing No 117: Afghanistan's Election Stalemate" (23 February 2011).
11. International Crisis Group, "Asia Briefing No 96: Afghanistan: Elections and the Crisis of Governance" (25 November 2009).
12. www.afghanistanelection.org/elections/2009/data, directly based on IEC, ECC, and UNDP-ELECT data.
13. *Ibid.*

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14. National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, "The 2009 Presidential and Provincial Council Elections in Afghanistan" (2010).
15. *Ibid.* There were other, more sophisticated, forms of fraud. See Peter W. Galbraith, "How the Afghan Election Was Rigged," *Time* (19 October 2009).
16. WikiLeaks message, U.S. Embassy Kabul to State, "Engaging Karzai's Inner Circle on Elections and a Second Term" (26 October 2009).
17. WikiLeaks message, U.S. Embassy Kabul to State, "First Reactions to Abdullah's Announcement: Relief" (2 November 2009).
18. HQ ISAF, "Commander's Initial Assessment" (30 August 2009).
19. Wikileaks message US Embassy Kabul to State, "Afghan Minister of Defense: I Support McChrystal's Way Ahead" (8 October 2009).
20. These varying opinions, from Eikenberry, Clinton, Biden and others in the Obama Administration, are summed up in David E. Sanger's *Confront and Conceal* (New York: Crown/Archetype, 2012), pages 30–35. These views are echoed in Bob Woodward, *Obama's Wars* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 2010), pages 257–263.
21. Woodward, *Obama's Wars*, page 290.
22. *Ibid.*, chapters 27 to 29.
23. JTF-A HQ DSR (6 September 2009); JTF-A HQ DSR (11 September 2009).
24. JTF-A HQ WSR (25 September–1 October 2009).
25. JTF-A HQ DSRs (11–14 September 2009).
26. JTF-A HQ WSR (25 September–1 October 2009).
27. JTF-A HQ DSR (6 October 2009).
28. JTF-A HQ WSR (2–8 October 2009); JTF-A HQ WSR (9–15 October 2009).
29. J2 briefing to the author (KAF, 11 July 2010).
30. JTF-A HQ DSR (12 October 2009).
31. JTF-A HQ DSR (10 October 2009).
32. JTF-A HQ DSR (18 October 2009).
33. This was the sense of the CHOPs, LCol Mike Patrick and others, in the fall of 2009. See Patrick interview.
34. Email LCol Jean-Francois Cauden to Sean Maloney (22 April 2013).
35. *Ibid.*
36. Telephone interview LCol Jean-Francois Cauden (19 March 2012). See also follow-up email Cauden to Maloney.
37. Cauden interview.
38. Email Cauden to Maloney.
39. Distilled from OCC-P and PRT DSRs (August and September 2009).
40. JTF-A HQ DSR (26 August 2009); JTF-A HQ DSR (27 August 2009).
41. Hameed Zaimal, "Bomb kills 36 in Afghanistan's Kandahar: Officials" (Agence France-Presse, 26 August 2009). See <http://news.smh.com.au/>.

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42. JTF-A HQ DSR (2 September 2009).
43. Confidential discussions with Canadian personnel.
44. JTF-A HQ WSR (4–10 September 2009).
45. JTF-A HQ DSR (8 September 2009).
46. PRT DSRs (6 and 7 October 2009).
47. OCC-P DSR (16 August 2009).
48. JTF-A HQ WSR (18–24 September 2009); JTF-A HQ WSR (25 September–1 October 2009). For comparison, the Americans deployed an MP battalion of five companies (500 all ranks) to handle security in the city of Baghdad in 2003–2004. See Mark R. Depue, *Patrolling Baghdad: A Military Police Company and the War in Iraq* (University Press of Kansas, 2007).
49. PRT DSR (27 September 2009).
50. PRT DSR (11 October 2009).
51. PRT DSR (20 October 2009).
52. JTF-A HQ DSR (29 September 2009).
53. JTF-A HQ DSR (25 September 2009).
54. PRT DSR (29 September 2009).
55. OCC-P DSR (30 September 2009).
56. PRT DSR (10 October 2009).
57. PRT DSR (14 October 2009).
58. Of course, certain Canadians had established informal links with the Kandahar Ulema Shura as early as 2006, but this did not constitute systematic religious engagement.
59. JTF-A HQ DSR (9 October 2009).
60. PRT DSR (12 October 2009).
61. Derived from JTF-A HQ DSRs (August, September, and October 2009).
62. Battle group DSR (26 August 2009).
63. JTF-A HQ WSR (25 September–1 October 2009).
64. Telephone interview with LCol Mike Gilmore (15 October 2012).
65. OMLT DSR (17 August 2009).
66. JTF-A HQ DSRs (13–20 September 2009).
67. JTF-A HQ DSRs (23, 24, 25, 30 September 2009).
68. JTF-A HQ DSR (11 October 2009).
69. PRT DSR (8 September 2009).
70. PRT DSR (14 September 2009).
71. JTF-A HQ DSR (12 October 2009).
72. JTF-A HQ DSR (18 October 2009); PRT DSR (22 October 2009).

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73. JTF-A HQ DSR (16 October 2009); JTF-A HQ DSR (18 October 2009); JTF-A HQ DSR (20 October 2009).
74. Gilmore interview.
75. JTF-A HQ DSR (23 October 2009).
76. JTF-A HQ DSR (28 October 2009).
77. JTF-A HQ DSR (3 November 2009).
78. JTF-A HQ DSR (4 November 2009); JTF-A HQ DSR (10 November 2009); JTF-A HQ DSR (12 November 2009); JTF-A HQ WSR (23–29 October 2009).
79. JTF-A HQ WSR (21–27 August 2009); JTF-A HQ WSR (28 August–3 September 2009).
80. *Ibid.* JTF-A HQ WSR (25 September–1 October 2009).
81. JTF-A HQ WSR (25 September–1 October 2009).
82. JTF-A HQ DSR (4 October 2009).
83. PRT DSR (1 October 2009).
84. PRT DSR (6 October 2009).
85. JTF-A HQ WSR (2–8 October 2009).
86. Briefing, “OMLT 1-09 Roto 7.”
87. JTF-A HQ WSR (9–15 October 2009).
88. JTF-A HQ DSR (2 October 2009); JTF-A HQ DSR (10 October 2009).
89. JTF-A HQ WSR (16–22 October 2009); JTF-A HQ WSR (23–29 October 2009).
90. JTF-A HQ DSR (3 October 2009); JTF-A HQ DSR (7 October 2009); JTF-A HQ DSR (8 October 2009); JTF-A HQ DSRs (10–12 October 2009).
91. Discussions between District Leader Nazek and the author (27 January 2008).
92. PRT DSR (27 October 2009).
93. PRT DSR (1 November 2009).
94. Cauden interview.
95. *Ibid.*
96. Derived from JTF-A HQ WSRs for the September-November 2009 period.
97. JTF-A HQ WSR (30 October–5 November 2009).
98. JTF-A HQ DSR (7 August 2009); JTF-A HQ DSR (10 August 2009).
99. Dan McCue, “Cold-Blooded Scam Alleged in Afghanistan” (1 June 2011); Courthouse News Service, www.courthousenews.com/2011/06/01/36993.htm; CENTCOM Press Release, “CENTCOM Suspends U.S. Contractor Amid Non-Payment Allegation” (5 January 2011).
100. JTF-A HQ DSR (13 August 2009).
101. JTF-A HQ DSR (6 September 2009).
102. Battle group DSR (13 September 2009).
103. JTF-A HQ DSR (11 September 2009).

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104. SIGACT Report, "BG CS 31 Struck an IED" (16 September 2009).
105. JTF-A HQ DSR (14 September 2009).
106. Battle group DSR (6 September 2009).
107. JTF-A HQ DSR (21 September 2009); JTF-A HQ DSR (28 September 2009).
108. PRT DSR (30 September 2009).
109. PRT DSR (1 October 2009).
110. PRT DSR (13 October 2009).
111. JTF-A HQ WSR (11–18 September 2009).
112. Interview with Col Jocelyn Paul (Kingston, 20 July 2012).
113. Battle group DSR (6 September 2009).
114. SIGACT report, "BG 9TAC Struck an IED" (7 September 2009).
115. JTF-A HQ DSR (3 September 2009); JTF-A HQ DSR (8 September 2009); JTF-A HQ DSR (26 September 2009).
116. SIGACT report, "BGCS 12 Struck an IED" (13 September 2009).
117. JTF-A HQ DSR (26 September 2009); JTF-A HQ DSR (4 October 2009); JTF-A HQ DSR (6 October 2009).
118. Paul interview.
119. *Ibid.*
120. *Ibid.*
121. 1 PPCLI War Diary (15–31 October 2009).
122. Interview with Maj Lee Mossop (Edmonton, 9 July 2012).
123. JTF-A HQ WSR (9–15 October 2009).
124. Interview with LCol Ryan Jurkowski (Kingston, 19 June 2014).
125. *Ibid.*
126. *Ibid.*
127. *Ibid.*
128. Distilled from JTF-A HQ DSRs (15–25 October 2009).
129. *Ibid.*
130. JTF-A HQ DSR (5 November 2009).
131. Jurkowski interview.
132. Distilled from JTF-A HQ DSRs (25–30 October 2009).
133. JTF-A HQ DSR (5 November 2009).
134. Jurkowski interview.
135. JTF-A HQ DSR (1 November 2009); JTF-A HQ DSR (3 November 2009); JTF-A HQ DSR (6 November 2009).
Interview with Maj Wayne Niven (Edmonton, 11 July 2012).
136. Niven interview. See also 1 PPCLI "Operation HYDRA POR." See Jurkowski interview.

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137. JTF-A HQ WSR (27 November-3 December 2009).
138. JTF-A HQ DSR (7 December 2009).
139. 1 PPCLI BG briefing, "Nakhonay Back Brief" (15 January 2010).
140. *Ibid.*
141. Niven interview.
142. *Ibid.*
143. IDLG briefing, "District Delivery Program" (10 March 2010). See also Robert Kemp, "The District Delivery Program in Afghanistan: A Case Study in Organizational Challenges," <http://smallwarsjournal.com> (26 June 2012).
144. Robert Kemp, "The District Delivery Program in Afghanistan: A Case Study in Organizational Challenges," <http://smallwarsjournal.com> (26 June 2012). See also The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, "District Councils: The Missing Middle of Local Governance" (27 June 2011).
145. United Nations Development Programme, "National Area Based Development Programme: First Quarter Progress Reports 2012" (11 January 2011), pages 3 and 7. UK in Afghanistan, "Governance and Rule of Law," <http://ukinafghanistan.fco.gov.uk>; Colin Cookman and Caroline Wadhams, "Governance in Afghanistan: Looking Ahead to What We Leave Behind," Center for American Progress, <https://www.americanprogress.org/> (May 2010).
146. HQ ISAF Force Reintegration Cell, "A Guide to the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Process (APRP)" (March 10). See also USAID Fact Sheet, "Afghan Social Outreach Programme" (June 2011).
147. Robert Hulstander and Jake Spivey, "Village Stability Operations and Afghan Local Police," *Prism* 3 No. 3, pages 125–138. For an overview of the development of the Afghan Local Police programs, see Human Rights Watch report, "Just Don't Call It a Militia: Impunity, Militias, and the Afghan Local Police" (2011).
148. The author travelled to Wardak Province to assess the Afghan Public Protection Program (AP3) in 2009 for JTF-A HQ and was involved in discussions over these programs. AP3 was essentially a test of what would become the ALP.
149. Briefing, "OMLT 1-09 Roto 7."
150. OMLT DSR (17 September 2009).
151. OMLT DSR (7 October 2009).
152. OMLT DSR (20 September 2009).
153. OMLT DSR (28 September 2009).
154. JTF-A HQ WSR (28 August-3 September 2009).
155. JTF-A HQ WSR (4–10 September 2009).
156. *Ibid.*
157. OMLT Briefing to HQ (5–10, and 30 April 2010).
158. Interview with BGen Shane Brennan (Ottawa, 23 October 2012).
159. Brennan interview.
160. *Ibid.*
161. Discussions with OMLT personnel.
162. Brennan interview.
163. Interview with LCol Joe Pospolita (KAF, 12 July 2010).

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164. Pospolita interview.
165. JTF-A HQ DSR (16 May 2009).
166. *Ibid.*; JTF-A HQ DSR (16 May 2009).
167. Interview with LCol Carl Turenne (Kingston, 15 April 2010).
168. Interview with Capt Darcy Heddon (Ottawa, 25 October 2012).
169. *Ibid.*
170. Telephone interview with LCol Lee Hammond (10 July 2012).
171. JTF-A HQ WSR (11–18 September 2009).
172. Turenne interview; PRT briefing, “Arghandab Valley Integrated Development Vision July 2009”; JTF-A HQ WSR (4–10 September 2009).
173. DSR (4 September 2009); JTF-A HQ DSR (6 September 2009); JTF-A HQ DSR (7 September 2009).
174. JTF-A HQ WSR (18–24 September 2009).
175. One example of the juvenile nature of these personality problems involved a Canadian officer being told by a CIDA employee that she did not feel comfortable coming to a PRT conference “because there would be a whole bunch of army guys there.” When asked why, the CIDA employee said she was uncomfortable because they “killed people.” Confidential interview.
176. Sean D. Naylor, “Stryker Soldiers Say Commanders Failed Them,” *Army Times* (21 December 2009); Adam Ashton, “Stryker Brigade Commander Nearly Lost His Job,” *Seattle Times* (16 October 2011).
177. IJC was a necessary operational-level headquarters between HQ ISAF and the regional commands, as identified in 2008–2009 during the rethinking of the U.S. and NATO efforts in Afghanistan. This mirrored a similar construct in Iraq. IJC is responsible for the campaign in Afghanistan, essentially leaving the international relations and ministerial level relations to HQ ISAF. IJC is roughly the equivalent of a corps command, its commander being a three-star general, and its structure derived from a standing NATO or U.S. corps command. But its responsibilities do not conform to the traditional corps role.
178. COMISAF Partnering Directive (29 August 2009).
179. JTF-A HQ WSR (6–12 November 2009).
180. Gen Stanley McChrystal, *My Share of the Task* (New York: Penguin Books, 2013), pages 363–369.
181. Interview with MGen Jon Vance (Ottawa, 11 December 2012).
182. Telephone interview with Col (Ret) Dan Ménard (6 November 2012).
183. JTF-A HQ WSRs (6–12, and 13–19 November 2009).
184. Interview with Col Simon Hetherington aboard a CC-130 in transit from Minhad to KAF (9 July 2010).
185. JTF-A HQ J3 Briefing to the author (KAF, 15 July 2010).
186. Letter Ménard to distribution list, “Concept of Operations for TF Kandahar December 2009–December 2010” (12 December 2009).
187. *Ibid.*
188. Interview with LCol Craig Dalton and Col Simon Hetherington (KAF, 10 July 2010).
189. JTF-A HQ J3 Briefing to the author (KAF, 15 July 2010).

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190. JTF-A HQ J5 Briefing to the author (KAF, 15 July 2010).
191. JTF-A HQ J3 Briefing to the author (KAF, 15 July 2010).
192. Ménard interview; Dalton and Hetherington interview.
193. The Green Zone was the heavily protected American and coalition command district in Baghdad that became a comfortable Western community infused with group-think and disconnected from the Iraqi population over which it ostensibly ruled.
194. Dalton and Hetherington interview.
195. Confidential interview.
196. Dalton and Hetherington interview.
197. Ménard interview.
198. Interview with Maj Josh Major (KAF, 15 July 2010).
199. Ménard interview.
200. Interview with Maj Josh Major (KAF, 15 July 2010).
201. Interview with LCol J.S.S.D. Fortier (KAF, 15 July 2010).
202. Interview with LCol Jennie Carignan (KAF, 12 July 2010).
203. Interview with Maj Michael Wright (KAF, 15 July 2010). See also JTF-A HQ J5 briefing to the author (KAF, 15 July 2010).
204. Turenne interviews.
205. Ménard interview.
206. Hetherington interview. Note also that the author was brought in to assist the Ménard HQ while it was working up for its deployment in 2009 and noted the atmosphere at the time.
207. Turenne interview.
208. Confidential interview.
209. Ménard interview.
210. Fortin interview.
211. Hetherington interview.
212. WikiLeaks message, Embassy Kabul to State, "Operation MOSHTARAK: Moving to Governance Phase" (25 February 2010).
213. Turenne interview.
214. Ménard interview.
215. Pospolita interview.
216. *Ibid.*
217. Discussions with Maj Lisa Elliott (15 October 2012).
218. Pospolita interview.
219. Interview with Col Ian Creighton (Ottawa, 21 November 2012).

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220. HQ ISAF to distribution list, "Partnering Directive." Located at www.publicintelligence.net (29 August 2009).
221. *Ibid.*
222. Sanger, *Confront and Conceal*, page 35; Woodward, *Obama's Wars*, pages 229, 291, 353.
223. NATO Parliamentary Assembly 2010 Annual Session, Warsaw: "Preparing the Afghan National Security Forces for Transition."
224. NATO ISAF Backgrounder, "Transition and ISAF Partnering" (December 2009).
225. Ménard interview.
226. Interview with BGen Shane Brenan (Ottawa, 23 October 2012).
227. Mossop interview.
228. Briefing deck, "Road to War 2008–2010 — Recce Squadron Current Ops Lessons Learned" (n/d).
229. Telephone interview with Maj Mark Popov (14 March 2013).
230. *Ibid.*
231. *Ibid.*
232. *Ibid.*
233. *Ibid.*
234. *Ibid.*
235. *Ibid.*
236. *Ibid.*
237. "OC Recce Sqn Handover Notes-TF 3-09 to TF 1-10" (6 May 2010).
238. Popov interview; Briefing deck, "Road to War 2008–2010 — Recce Squadron Current Ops Lessons Learned" (n/d).
239. Recce Squadron Briefing slide, "Four Key Messages" (n/d).
240. Email Popov to the author (17 March 2013).
241. *Ibid.*
242. Recce Squadron "Operation SALADIN" (28 February 2010).
243. Popov interview.
244. JTF-A HQ WSR (27 November–3 December 2009); JTF-A HQ WSR (11–17 December 2009); JTF-A HQ WSR (18–24 December 2009).
245. Jurkowski interview.
246. JTF-A HQ WSR (4–10 December 2009); JTF-A HQ WSR (11–17 December 2009); JTF-A HQ WSR (18–24 December 2009).
247. 1 PPCLI, "Operation TOFAN 24–31 December 2009 POR."
248. JTF-A HQ WSR (4–10 December 2009); JTF-A HQ WSR (11–17 December 2009); JTF-A HQ WSR (18–24 December 2009).
249. JTF-A HQ DSR (5 December 2009); JTF-A HQ DSR (7 December 2010).
250. Email by Capt Whit Tyerman to the author via Maj Darcy Wright (May 2013).
251. JTF-A HQ WSR (18–24 December 2009).

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252. JTF-A HQ DSR (16 December 2009).
253. JTF-A HQ WSR (11–17 December 2009).
254. JTF-A HQ DSR (21 December 2009).
255. JTF-A HQ WSR (13–19 November 2009).
256. JTF-A HQ WSR (11–17 December 2009).
257. JTF-A HQ WSR (18–24 December 2009).
258. DSR (31 December 2009); TFK INTSUM (31 December 2010).
259. Air Wing briefing to the author (KAF, 28 July 2010).
260. "What the Hell is Going on in the Arghandab River Valley?" Ink Spots, <http://tachesdhuile.blogspot.ca> (27 January 2010).
261. TFK Command O Group (14 March 2010).
262. Distilled from JTF-A HQ DSRs (January 2010).
263. JTF-A HQ DSR (11 January 2010).
264. JTF-A HQ DSRs (12, 13 and 15 January 2010).
265. JTF-A HQ DSRs (20 and 21 January 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (16 February 2010).
266. JTF-A HQ DSR (28 January 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (4 February 2010).
267. JTF-A HQ DSRs (10 and 11 February 2010); JTF-A HQ WSR (20–26 January 2010).
268. Distilled from JTF-A HQ DSRs (February 2010).
269. JTF-A HQ WSR (3–9 February 2010).
270. 1 PPCLI, "Op OTASH POR 10–14 January 2010."
271. *Ibid.*
272. Mossop interview.
273. JTF-A HQ DSR (19 January 2010).
274. In 2009, the title of District Leader was changed to District Governor.
275. Distilled from JTF-A HQ DSRs and WSRs (January–February 2010).
276. JTF-A HQ DSR (3 January 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (10 January 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (20 January 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (21 January 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (7 February 2010).
277. JTF-A HQ DSR (8 February 2010).
278. JTF-A HQ DSR (7 January 2010).
279. JTF-A HQ DSR (23 February 2010).
280. JTF-A HQ DSR (7 January 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (10 January 2010); (JTF-A HQ DSR 11 January 2010);
281. JTF-A HQ DSR (17 January 2010).
282. 1 PPCLI, "Roto 8 End Tour Briefing" (3 May 2010). See also JTF- A HQ DSR (2 January 2010).
283. JTF-A HQ DSR (18 January 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (31 January 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (2 February 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (12 February 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (17 February 2010).

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284. DST and OCC-D (P) briefings to the author, New District Centre, Panjwayi OCC-D(P) (7 August 2010).
285. *Ibid.*
286. *Ibid.*
287. JTF-A HQ DSR (5 January 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (10 January 2010).
288. TFK INTSUM (9 January 2010); TFK INTSUM (10 January 2010).
289. JTF-A HQ DSR (11 January 2010).
290. JTF-A HQ DSR (17 January 2010).
291. Niven interview.
292. *Ibid.*
293. *Ibid.*
294. JTF-A HQ DSR (18 January 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (25 January 2010).
295. JTF-A HQ DSR (27 January 2010).
296. TFK INTSUM (18 January 2010); TFK INTSUM (31 January 2010).
297. JTF-A HQ DSR (3 February 2010).
298. 1 PPCLI "Operation SHER POR" (3–4 February 2010); TFK INTSUM (8 February 2010); TFK INTSUM (15 February 2010).
299. JTF-A HQ DSR (10 February 2010).
300. JTF-A HQ DSR (11 February 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (16 February 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (18 February 2010).
301. JTF-A HQ DSR (28 February 2010).
302. TFK INTSUM (28 February 2010).
303. JTF-A HQ DSR (21 February 2010).
304. Briefing to the author (Camp Nathan Smith, 17 July 2010).
305. Distilled from JTF-A HQ DSRs (January and February 2010); Briefing to the author (Camp Nathan Smith, 17 July 2010).
306. JTF-A HQ WSR (6–12 January 2010).
307. JTF-A HQ DSRs (8–9 January 2010).
308. JTF-A HQ DSR (17 January 2010).
309. Distilled from JTF-A HQ DSRs (22–28 January 2010).
310. JTF-A HQ DSR (26 January 2010).
311. JTF-A HQ DSR (2 February 2010). Subsequent discussion suggested that it may have been commercially motivated in that one of the dead men, Haji Mohammad, a bodyguard and "close associate", was involved in land issues related to the removal of Governor Raufi in 2008. See JTF-A HQ WSR (3–9 February 2010).
312. JTF-A HQ DSR (15 February 2010).
313. JTF-A HQ DSR (20 February 2010).
314. JTF-A HQ DSRs (27 and 28 February 2010).

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315. JTF-A HQ WSR (17–23 February 2010).
316. JTF-A HQ WSR (27 November–3 December 2009).
317. Distilled from JTF-A HQ weekly reporting (December 2009 to February 2010).
318. JTF-A HQ DSRs (10–16 February 2010).
319. JTF-A HQ DSR (6 January 2010).
320. JTF-A HQ DSRs (25 December 2009–5 January 2010).
321. JTF-A HQ WSR (6–12 January 2010).
322. TFK INTSUM (21 May 2010).
323. JTF-A HQ WSR (4–10 December 2009).
324. Distilled from JTF-A WSRs (January and February 2010).
325. JTF-A HQ DSR (17 January 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (18 January 2010).
326. JTF-A HQ DSR (10 January 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (12 January 2010).
327. JTF-HQ DSR (17 January 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (23 January 2010). See also Tony Foster, “New Program Employs Afghan Youth”, <http://www.forces.gc.ca/site/commun/ml-fe/article-eng.asp?id=5991>
328. JTF-A HQ DSRs and WSRs (25 December 2009–14 January 2010).
329. JTF-A HQ DSR (4 February 2010); JTF-A HQ WSR (27 January–2 February 2010); JTF-A HQ WSR (10–16 February 2010).
330. JTF-A HQ DSR (23 January 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (27 January 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (8 January 2010).
331. JTF-A HQ DSR (25 January 2010).
332. JTF-A HQ DSR (11 January 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (12 January 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (15 January 2010).
333. JTF-A HQ DSR (3 January 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (4 January 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (5 January 2010), JTF-A HQ DSR (26 January 2010).
334. JTF-A HQ DSR (18 February 2010).
335. JTF-A HQ WSR (17–23 February 2010).
336. JTF-A HQ DSR (18 January 2010).
337. JTF-A HQ DSR (19 February 2010).
338. JTF-A HQ WSR (25 December–5 January 2010); JTF-A HQ WSR (6–12 January 2010); JTF-A HQ WSR (20–26 January 2010).
339. JTF-A HQ DSR (2 January 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (14 February 2010).
340. JTF-A HQ WSR (20–26 January 2010).
341. Distilled from WSRs (January and February 2010). See also JTF-A HQ DSR (31 January 2010).
342. Distilled from JTF-A HQ DSRs and WSRs (January and February 2010).
343. Interview with Col Christian Drouin (KAF, 28 July 2010).
344. Why Canada could not or would not deploy SAR techs and their CH-149 Cormorant helicopters to handle MEDEVAC remains open for speculation.

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345. Air Wing briefing to the author (KAF, 28 July 2010).
346. Telephone interview with Col Christian Drouin (1 March 2013); Air Wing briefing to the author (KAF, 28 July 2010).
347. Drouin telephone interview.
348. *Ibid.*
349. Air Wing briefing to the author.
350. Drouin telephone interview.
351. Air Wing briefing to the author.
352. This was not necessarily new in the sense that IR strobes had been used by special operations forces since at least the early 1990s. This is depicted in the film “Blackhawk Down.”
353. Air Wing briefing to the author.
354. Interview with LCol Jim Jensen (Kingston, 28 February 2013).
355. Jensen interview.
356. *Ibid.*
357. *Ibid.*
358. *Ibid.*
359. *Ibid.*
360. *Ibid.*
361. *Ibid.*
362. *Ibid.*
363. Michael Hastings, *The Operators: The Wild and Terrifying Inside Story of America’s War in Afghanistan* (Plume, 2012), chapter 32. See also McChrystal *My Share of the Task*, pages 322–326.
364. See Theo Farrell, “Appraising MOSHTARAK: The Campaign in Nad-e Ali District, Helmand,” Royal United Services Institute Briefing Note, www.rusi.org.
365. TFK O group briefing (2 February 2010).
366. JTF-A HQ DSR (19 January 2010); JTF-A HQ POSM (7 January 2010); JTF-A HQ WSR (6–12 January 2010).
367. Mossop interview.
368. ISAF Joint Command Afghanistan News Release, “Operation MOSHTARAK” (13 February 2010).
369. Hastings, *The Operators*, chapter 32. McChrystal depicts the indecision resulting from Karzai’s unfamiliarity with authorising operations. McChrystal, *My Share of the Task*, chapter 20.
370. Interview with LCol Jeff Smyth (Kingston, 21 March 2013).
371. Smyth interview.
372. *Ibid.*
373. *Ibid.*
374. Brennan interview.
375. *Ibid.*

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376. Jensen interview.
377. See Astri Suhrke, *When More is Less: The International Project in Afghanistan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), pages 63–66; Frank Lewidge, *Losing Small Wars: British Military Failure in Iraq and Afghanistan* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), pages 215–217.
378. Suhrke, *When More is Less*, pages 63–66.
379. WikiLeaks message, American Embassy Kabul to State, “Nad Ali/Marjah Operation: Stabilization Planning” (7 February 2010).
380. WikiLeaks message, American Embassy Kabul to State, “Full Support by Local Shura for Operation MOSHTARAK” (13 February 2010).
381. WikiLeaks message, American Embassy Kabul to State, “Operation MOSHTARAK Moving to Governance Phase” (25 February 2010).
382. Confidential interview.
383. Ali K. Chishti, “Mullah Baradar Released?” *Daily Times* (16 October 2010), <http://www.dailytimes.com.pk>.
384. See Waliullah Rahmani, “Mullah Baradar’s Capture and the Future of the Afghan Insurgency,” Kabul Center for Strategic Studies, <http://kابلcenter.org/>. See also Abubakar Siddique, “Mystery of Taliban Leader’s Capture Deepens,” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* (17 February 2010), http://www.rferl.org/content/Mystery_Of_Taliban_Military_Leaders_Capture_Deepens/1961093.html#hash=relatedInfoContainer.
385. Joshua Partlow and Karen De Young, “Afghan Officials say Pakistan’s Arrest of Taliban Leader Threatens Peace Talks,” *The Washington Post* (10 April 2010), <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/04/09/AR2010040904807.html>.
386. Kamran Yousaf, “Afghan Reconciliation: Pakistan May Release Former Head of Quetta Shura,” *The Express Tribune* (8 August 2012), <http://tribune.com.pk/story/419044/afghan-reconciliation-pakistan-may-release-former-chief-of-quetta-shura/>; Reuters, “Afghanistan’s Peace Hopes May Rest with Mullah Baradar,” <http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/national/23-Aug-2012/afghanistan-s-peace-hopes-rest-on-mullah-baradar>. See also Ashley J. Tellis, “Baradar, Pakistan, and the Afghan Taliban: What Gives?” Carnegie Endowment for Peace, *Policy Outlook* (March 2010).
387. Message, American Embassy Islamabad, “GOP denies Agreement to Transfer Baradar to Afghanistan, Lahore High Court Intervenes” (26 February 2010).
388. Dean Nelson and Ben Farmer, “Hamid Karzai Held Secret Talks with Mullah Baradar in Afghanistan,” *The Telegraph* (16 March 2010).
389. Ménard telephone interview (6 November 2012).
390. Patricia Zengerle, “White House Hails Capture of Taliban Leader,” Reuters, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/02/17/us-afghanistan-obama-idUSTRE61G5DE20100217>; confidential interview.
391. These characterizations were compiled by the author based on numerous conversations with Afghans and Canadians involved in Afghan politics between 2005 and 2011.
392. Confidential interviews. See also WikiLeaks message, American Embassy Kabul to State, “Kandahar Politics Complicate U.S. Objectives in Afghanistan” (6 December 2009); American Embassy Kabul to State, “Ahmed Wali Karzai and Governor Wesa on Governance in Kandahar” (3 November 2009); American Embassy Kabul to State, “Ahmed Wali Karzai: Seeking to Define Himself as U.S. Partner?” (25 February 2010).

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393. Interview with Col Simon Hetherington (KAF, 9 July 2010).
394. Confidential interviews.
395. *Ibid.*
396. *Ibid.*
397. WikiLeaks message, American Embassy Islamabad, "GOP Demoes Agreement to Transfer Baradar to Afghanistan, Lahore High Court Intervenes" (26 February 2010).

LES AFFAIRES KANDAHAR:

MARCH-AUGUST 2010

The remainder of the Menard headquarters tour in 2010 was rocked by a series of public scandals that threatened to overshadow not only the work that the Canadian Army accomplished thus far in Afghanistan, but also the credibility of Canadian relations with the United States, and ultimately, ISAF itself. The scandals, not all of which were necessarily related or connected, opened up a gap that the enemy and others exploited to the fullest and threw coalition efforts into disarray well into the summer of 2010. The sequel to Operation MOSHTARAK in Kandahar province was delayed indefinitely and along with it promises to challenge power broker domination of the governance structures in that province. The insurgents and others clearly benefitted from this delay which gave space for the Taliban to adapt yet again to ISAF methodology. The centre piece of this shift in approach was the Kandahar assassination campaign of 2010.

Once the media got their teeth into the scandals, there was no letting go. Disciplinary issues and issues related to personal morality were permitted to trump news of cumulative progress on the ground. Throughout this time, the Karzai government and its representatives in Kandahar retained questionable legitimacy which in turn threatened the legitimacy of the upcoming provincial elections. There was less incentive for the population to side with the Afghan government and, as the scandals involving ISAF commanders progressed through the belly of the media snake, the population became less inclined to support ISAF generally. The personal behavior of certain commanders may have been acceptable in their home countries, but in Afghanistan moral outrage was easily generated in cultures that possessed different views on the sanctity of marital relations. In time the Canadian Army was forced to remove BGen Daniel Ménard from command and bring BGen Jon Vance back into the ring to stabilize the situation. All the while, of course, Canadian soldiers went about doing their hazardous jobs in the districts and in Kandahar City hoping for a better day, while the Taliban fighters licked the wounds inflicted on them in 2009.

Declining Confidence in Canada?

As we saw in Volume I, Combined Task Force AEGIS under BGen David Fraser laboured in the shadow of strained Canadian–American relations in the wake of the 2003 Iraq invasion decision. Canada had not fought a war since Korea in the 1950s and as such had little credibility with the larger American forces that provided critical enablers. After the events of 2006, and despite the highly professional efforts of Canadian soldiers in Kandahar and Helmand provinces, the level of credibility was nominal but not as high as some Canadians might like or think it to be. At the same time, the credibility of the U.S. Air Force was low with Canadians as a result of the 2002 Tarnak Farms and 2006 MEDUSA strikes, but had improved somewhat with the informal relations that afforded Canadian access to armed UAVs. As Canada assumed control of the Kandahar province area of operations into 2007 and the troop density relative to the Americans in the province was high, Canada could afford to be not overly concerned with what the Americans thought. And, after 2008, the United States placed an American battalion under Canadian command, which indicated that credibility levels were in fact higher than anticipated. Despite this, the U.S. Army, its leaders and troops were loathe to serve under any non-American command. That did not mean that they did not. That did not mean that they could not. On the whole, however, the superpower’s legions did not like serving under non-citizens. Certain hyper-patriotic commentators in the American mediasphere did not like this state of affairs either.

Under normal circumstances, frictions between American subordinate units and Canadian formation commanders were dealt with at the command level. Usually, as we have seen with 2-2 Infantry, this was not an issue. The removal of a senior U.S. police mentor was another example. However, when the Ménard headquarters took over in November 2009, elements in 1-12 Infantry were apparently rubbed the wrong way after initial contact. The Ménard headquarters was new, did not have the same level of experience in the area of operations, and some 1-12 Infantry personalities took offence at being treated with what they perceived to be arrogant disregard. At the same time, the Vance headquarters had had to deal with a difference of opinion on rules of engagement and fire control with 1-12 Infantry before the Ménard headquarters arrived. Though that was ironed out at the time with McChrystal’s assistance, this may have contributed to the follow-on breakdown in the relationship by establishing a level of distrust between the two organizations.¹

Ménard’s view was that 1-12 Infantry had problems similar to those the PRT were experiencing. Things had changed, 1-12 Infantry had been in place a long time, and was not interested in changing its *modus operandi* to conform to the new ways. Ménard recognized that Zharey was a problematic district from governance to policing, and he believed that 1-12 Infantry was structured more for centralized warfighting, that is, sortieing out from

FOB Wilson, rather than decentralized operations in the communities. The 1-12 Infantry commanding officer tried but was unable to really connect with district leader Sahardi, who likely was not interested in doing so anyway.²

The proliferation of media personnel accompanying the American influx in Kandahar produced conditions whereby discontent on the part of American personnel would be transmitted in some form into the public domain. At the very least, grumbling would be collected by media representatives over time until it built up and was released in a burst. Stryker Brigade commander Col Harry Tunnell, for example, reportedly complained that Canada lost control of Arghandab, misled him over the strength of enemy forces, and that he lost personnel killed and wounded as a result.³ As we have seen in previous chapters, the situation was far more complicated than this but that was irrelevant in the mediaverse.

Adding to the series of confidence issues at this time was the problem of Task Force 2 Fury. Severe personality-based issues back in the United States related to its commanding officer LTC Frank Jenio and his parent brigade commander, Col Brian Drinkwine, undermined the public perception of functionality in that unit. TF 2 Fury was under the tactical command of TF Kandahar and was covering the vital Zharey-Arghandab 'seam'. Drinkwine's division commander fired Jenio in January 2010 for allegedly losing control of his troops, but by early February it was clear that there was much more to the story and the affair was a severe institutional embarrassment to the U.S. Army. Almost none of this was reported by elements of the American media in Kandahar: instead, they turned their sights on the Ménard headquarters.⁴

TF 2 Fury writhed from the combined pressures of an internal investigation, enemy action, and adverse media scrutiny. 1-12 Infantry had ongoing problems with the Ménard headquarters while Col Harry Tunnell's Stryker brigade units were taking significant casualties in Arghandab. It was at this point that the Tarnak Bridge incident occurred.

The situation in Daman District had been deteriorating throughout January and February. There were more and more rockets flung at Kandahar Air Field in early 2010 than throughout most of 2009. On 14 January a suicide bomber attacked the Daman District Centre. As a result of these attacks, the soldiers of the 97th MP Battalion increased their contacts with the Daman police and worked with them to improve their capabilities so they could respond to increased enemy activity. This included mounting joint patrols and establishing vehicle checkpoints, especially along the vital Highway 4 route to Kandahar City. Daman, however, was not experiencing anything remotely like the levels of violence in the districts west of the city and there were no additional resources available to deploy there in any event.⁵

On 1 March 2010 a suicide bomber detonated while he was stopped on the Tarnak Bridge awaiting inspection by Afghan police. The blast took out an American MRAP vehicle and killed Spc Ian T.D. Gelig of the 82nd Airborne, killed two Afghans, and wounded five other Afghan and American personnel. The RAF Regiment deployed a quick reaction force to evacuate the casualties and TF Kandahar pushed a UAV to monitor the situation. This was followed by a TF Kandahar engineer recce to assess the status of the bridge. It remained standing with one lane open. The industrious Afghans had already created their own bypass in the riverbed and traffic was moving again while ISAF assessment and remediation operations started immediately, led by TF Kandahar engineers. Hours later, a suicide bomber attacked Police Headquarters in Kandahar City, killing two and wounding sixteen. It was likely that the insurgent bomber at Tarnak Bridge panicked during the search process and prematurely detonated before he could reach his target inside Kandahar City.⁶



Photo Credit: Author

This is Tarnak Bridge on Highway 4, scene of a suicide IED attack that destroyed an American MRAP vehicle and put the bridge out of action. American media unfairly blamed TF Kandahar for not responding to the incident. In reality, the unit that was supposed to be covering this area of operations was an American one.

Although the details of the attack were first reported by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, American media leapt all over TF Kandahar and blamed Canada for the incident:

Our combat soldiers should not be commanded from a country that is quitting the fight. The bridge fiasco on Monday underlines that fact. With our next big offensive set for Kandahar, command should be with British and American forces. Canada needs to step out of the way.⁷

And:

We lost a soldier to a suicide bomb on a bridge just a short drive [from KAF] ... Meanwhile on this bustling base, under-employed soldiers from various nations crowd around hockey games, live bands, and coffee shops. The damaged bridge is just a bicycle ride away from soldiers who are too busy celebrating Olympic medals to safeguard this bridge ... The General in charge of this bridge should be fired.⁸

Mainstream American media, now focused on the Tarnak Bridge incident, assumed that TF Kandahar was the commanding formation for the area and connected the dots. In this negative climate BGen Ménard was blamed by American media for the ‘loss of American troops’ (it was a single soldier) because Canadians somehow couldn’t ‘control’ Tarnak Bridge. The reality was that Tarnak Bridge lay on a ‘seam’ between 97th MP Battalion in Kandahar City, an area labeled “TFK/GDA” or TF Kandahar/Ground Defence Area, and more importantly, it was on the clearly-marked “TFS FOM” or the Task Force Stryker Freedom of Movement corridor along Highway 4 from Spin Boldak to Kandahar City. Commentators overlooked the fact that Afghan security forces had some responsibility for the Tarnak Bridge, having maintained security on it continuously since at least 2003.⁹ The delineation of the TF Kandahar area of operations and the RAF Regiment-controlled Ground Defence Area around Kandahar Air Field had been ambiguous since 2007 and remained so in 2010.¹⁰ The responsibility for freedom of movement on Highway 4 in the Ground Defence Area was formally transferred from TF Stryker to TF Kandahar on 1 April 2010.¹¹

Truth and context did not matter, particularly the uncomfortable fact that this was enemy action and not necessarily negligence.¹² Likewise, no one cared that, by setting a firm date for withdrawing from Afghanistan, the Canadian government had opened itself up to criticism for leaving the fight by those who had just realized a fight was on. Canada’s reputation was now severely damaged, and the Tarnak Bridge incident served to confirm rumours of serious problems in the Canada-United States command relationship in Kandahar. And so the stage was set for the Ménard affair later in the spring.

The Situation in Kandahar Province, March 2010

The Carter-led Regional Command (South) headquarters continued with the consolidation of its operational-level planning in the run-up to the summer while MOSHTARAK Phase I and II were underway in Helmand. Operation MOSHTARAK Phase III was, the TF Kandahar J5 believed, going to be a large operation mounted in June or July in Zharey, Panjwayi, and Arghandab districts. Regional Command (South) also took over the Kandahar City Security Plan and replaced the senior coalition representation on the Kandahar City Security Committee.¹³ Planning for MOSHTARAK Phase III and its coordination with TF Kandahar continued throughout March and April.¹⁴

Meanwhile, TF Kandahar worked out a means to clarify what it thought the situation was in its area of influence. Using the ‘Define-Shape-Clear-Hold-Build-Enable’ construct as a measurement of progress or status, the staff broke down the districts into areas where they thought these criteria applied.¹⁵

Working west to east, the ‘Horn of Panjwayi’ was considered to be in a Define-Shape mode. Western Zharey was essentially abandoned and not even assessed. Maywand district, which had transitioned to Stryker Brigade long ago, was not tracked by TF Kandahar. The area between the 28 and 32 eastings in Zharey, was also considered to be Define-Shape. Sperwan Ghar in Panjwayi was in Shape mode. Bazaar-e Panjwayi was in Hold, and the area south of Bazaar-e Panjwayi was rated as Hold-Build. Senjaray in Zharey district was undergoing Clear, with southern Arghandab in Shape-Clear. Central Arghandab and the area east of the river was in Hold. Northern Arghandab was in Clear-Hold. To the south, western Panjwayi was in Build, while Dand was in Build-Enable. Nakhonay and points south were still Define-Shape. Kandahar City was rated as Build, while Daman was Build-Enable. There was some Define space northwest of Kandahar Air Field.¹⁶ (see Figure 7-1)

There was, of course, the insurgents and what they wanted. TF Kandahar analysis was subjected to conflicting data on a series of upheavals in the Quetta Shura, some of which related to the capture of Mullah Barader. At some point in January the infamous Jabbar Agha expressed concern to the senior insurgency leadership that the loss of men and materials from August to January was high and might delay or even postpone summer offensive operations. He apparently recommended that, in order to retain the initiative, widespread use of IEDs and assassinations should be employed against all coalition and Afghan targets on a sustained basis.¹⁷

While this was under debate, the Taliban leadership had to deal with Operation MOSHTARAK in February. Again, there was conflicting and contradictory information. Some insurgent groups were redeployed from Kandahar province to confront MOSHTARAK in Helmand, while other groups were apparently withdrawn from the target areas and sent to Zharey and Panjwayi districts in Kandahar or they retreated there for refit.¹⁸

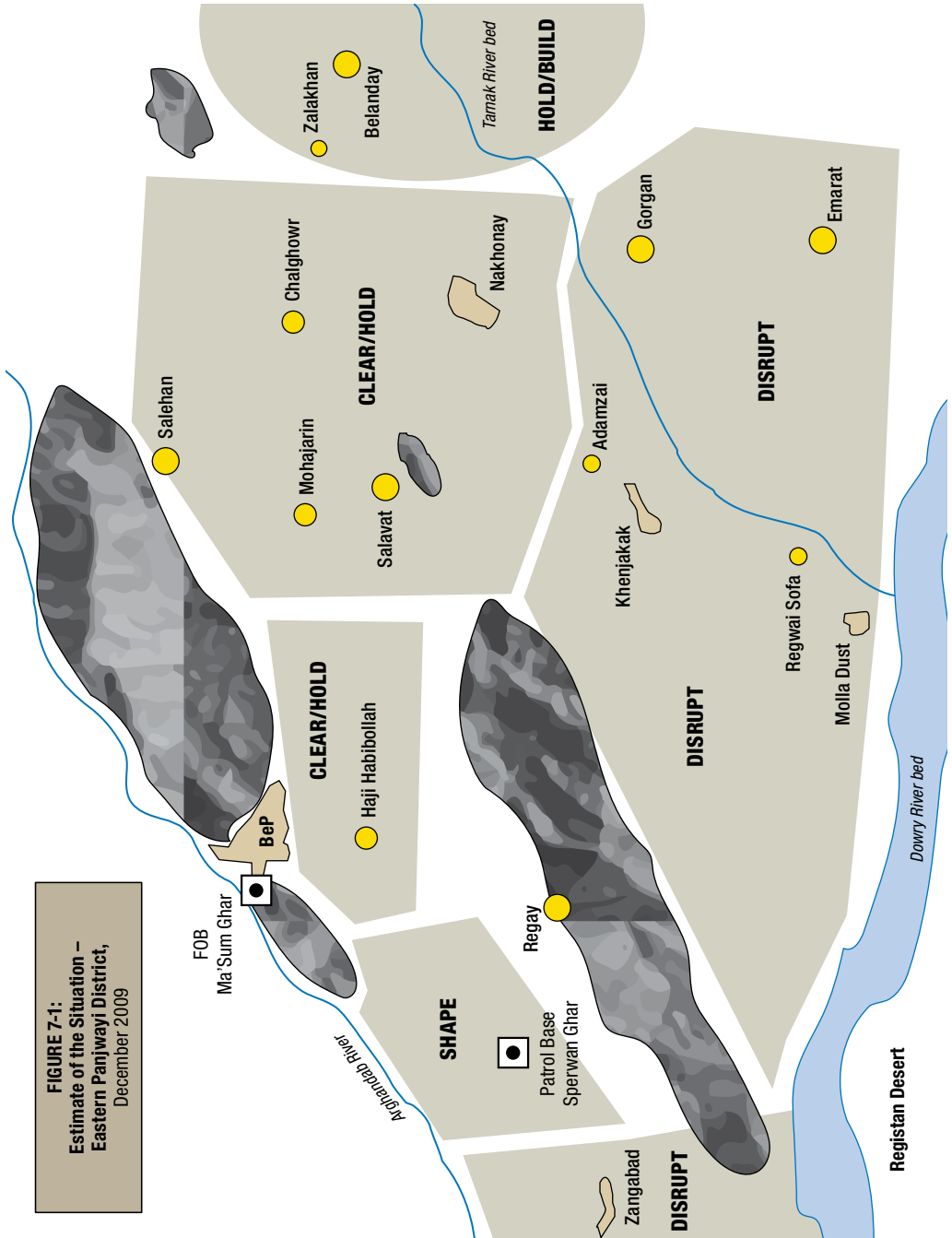


FIGURE 7-1:
Estimate of the Situation –
Eastern Panjway District,
December 2009

Figure 7-1: Estimate of the Situation – Eastern Panjway District, December 2009

At some point after Mullah Barader was taken, a large number of Taliban leaders from Kandahar met a large number of elders who supported the insurgency. Apparently, they believed that Mullah Omar was under some form of house arrest in Pakistan. Allegedly, Omar sent word to these leaders that operations should continue but schools, immunization, and reconstruction projects should be left alone. Debate ensued as to the future viability of the insurgency itself. Allegedly, the majority of the hard core Taliban fighters left alive after fighting Canadian forces since 2006, and this included the infamous Jabbar Agha, Mullah Zergay, Sadiq Agha, and 'Uncle' Kaka, considered the possibility that they might have to make peace. There were two hard core survivors that dissented and wanted to continue the fight: Mullah Sartar Akhund and Mullah Izzatullah. Others pointed out that Barader was the 'money man' and with his removal the summer offensive could not start. The proponents of continuing operations noted that the ISI would fund IEDs and assassinations, even if the traditional sources of funding were unavailable. There was a belief that the ISI would issue orders in the name of the Taliban leaders anyway if they did not initiate operations.¹⁹

A decision was made to continue operations in Kandahar Province, with the focus on Kandahar City. The Horn of Panjwayi would remain a defended area and serve as a base for training and infiltration of the city. (see Figure 7-2) City-based cells, which were independent of the Arghandab and Panjwayi-based groups, would increase their operational tempo. A new organization to handle systematic assassinations was to be created. And, behind the backs of loyal and effective leaders, men like Agha and Zergay, others quietly looked at replacing them with younger, more aggressive leaders. The mere questioning of the mission was assessed as tantamount to surrender.²⁰

With a better eye into the topsy-turvy shadow world of insurgent politics in Pakistan, JTF Afghanistan even reported to Ottawa that it was the ISI pressuring the Taliban to cease operations because Operation MOSHTARAK was hampering the drug trade in Helmand.²¹ Ultimately, however, it looked like the Taliban leadership in Pakistan was on the ropes and that they were now being pushed into actions that they were not necessarily comfortable with. Their centrality in the conflict in southern Afghanistan appeared to be diminishing as other entities threatened to bypass them to continue the violence for other purposes.

By early summer, even local fighters were questioning the Quetta Shura about its aims and leadership. That situation was significantly aggravated by the coalition's deliberate targeting of the mid-level command structures across Regional Command (South) but particularly in Kandahar. Another aggravating factor as time went on was the increased use of Waziris and other out-of-area fighters. That generated increased problems for local cells: these outsiders strained Pashtunwali hospitality to the limit and even indulged in acts of abuse. In other words, there were fissures in the enemy apparatus in Kandahar to exploit.²²

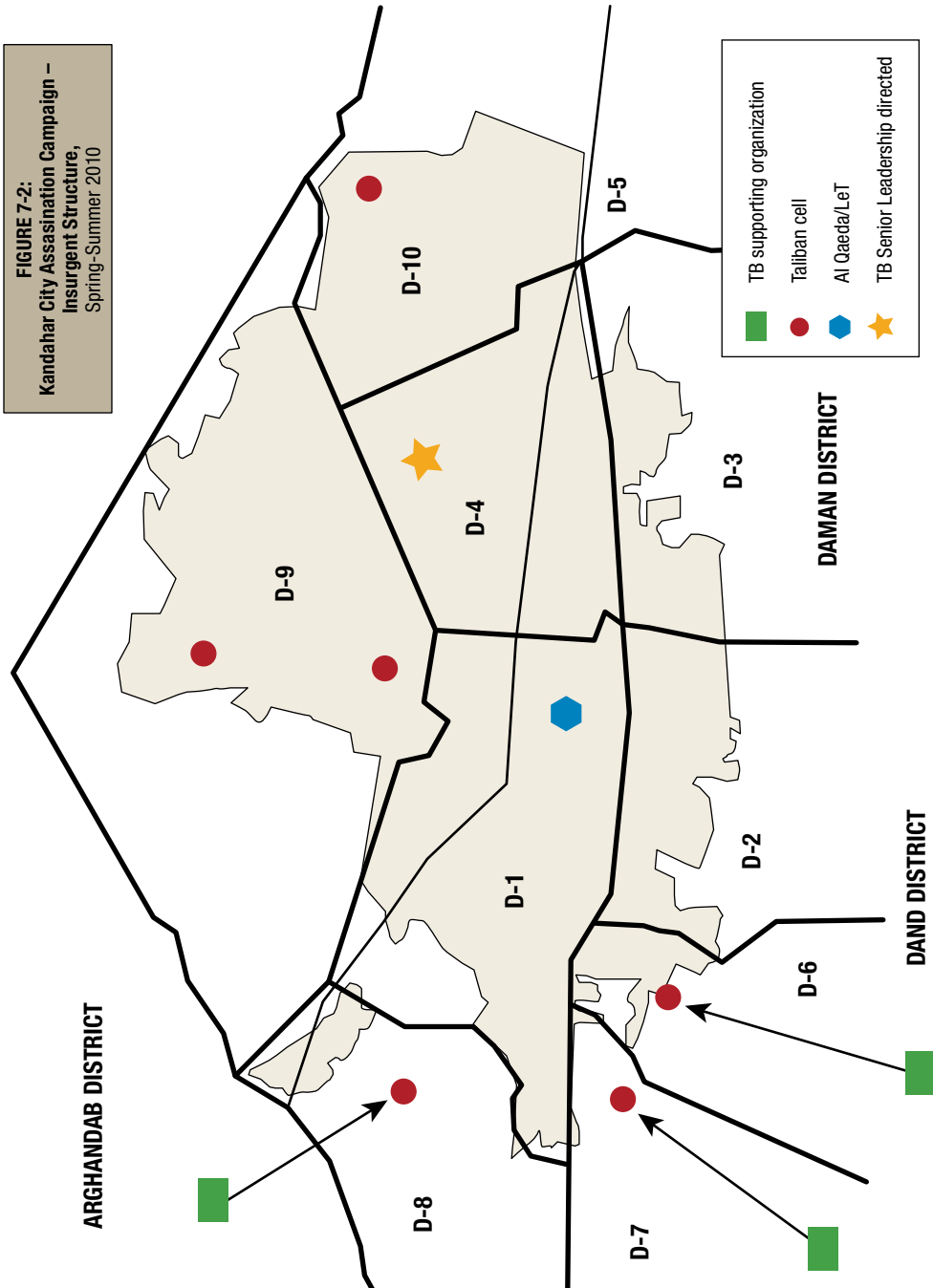


Figure 7-2: Kandahar City Assassination Campaign – Insurgent Structure, Spring-Summer 2010

The Kandahar City Assassination Campaign, March–April 2010

Urban terrorist operations picked up dramatically after the Babi assassination in late February. From January to February, there were four prominent assassinations and one attempt. In March, however, there was a spate of IED attacks followed by a wave of assassinations. Governor Wesa was informed that Mullah Omar and the Quetta Shura issued a fatwa against government employees. Almost everybody working for the provincial government received a ‘night letter’ or some other form of explicit intimidation. These came through relatives’ cell phone calls and even cell phone text. Wesa believed that this was a response against plans to register all madrassas and mosques. In his view “the insurgents are not happy with this initiative as it impedes on their ability to freely use Madrassas as a forum to preach their message.”²³

The ASIC intelligence analysts were, however, not drawn into assuming that all violence in Kandahar City was insurgent violence, and to their credit parsed out those incidents that were suspicious. For example, on 2 March a bomb attack on Afghan police headquarters in Kandahar killed two and wounded sixteen. Canadian assessments concluded that this was an attempt by Popalzai officers in the police force to discredit or even kill Gen Sardar Zazai, the provincial security chief. Ahmad Wali Karzai wanted Zazai out of the way because he recently initiated an investigation into land confiscations by Karzai associates. Ahmad Wali Karzai asked the President to remove Zazai, who then prevaricated on this undertaking. As it turned out the Afghan National Police Guard Force commander at the headquarters during the attack had previously been jailed in Sarposa prison, pardoned by Ahmad Wali Karzai, and reinstated as a police officer.²⁴

Similarly, the deaths of six more Pakistani SAITA construction company personnel at the hands of a gunman on 5 March was also suspicious. And, as with other matters involving SAITA the analytical waters on this one were seriously muddied. This was the second time SAITA had been targeted in Kandahar City. Clearly some entity did not want the UNOPS road contractor conducting its work in Kandahar province. It was impossible to sort out whether this was commercial violence by another contractor, Taliban violence to get the road program in Dand to stop, whether it was a signal to the ISI by some entity to stop using SAITA for cover, or whether Lashkar-e Taiba was in town looking for another ‘spectacular.’²⁵ The Canadian assessment was that “there is some evidence to suggest that the networks of Ahmad Wali Karzai and Gul Agha Sherzai may also be waging a gang-style war for control of Kandahar’s political, land ownership, and financial future.”²⁶

The Afghan response was to continue with PAMIR surge operations, supported by Canadian and American units. There were three significant raids in early March which netted several IED caches and even one IED facilitator. Four other large IEDs were found using information gathered during PAMIR before they could be used.²⁷

On 13 March, however, it became very clear that there was substantial coordinated Taliban urban terrorist activity. There was a warning that a facilitation cell connected to ISI was bringing in vehicles for SVBIED use, and there were reports of enemy commanders meeting somewhere in Malajat, but there was little specific actionable intelligence.²⁸ Later in the day, in the space of forty minutes, there were five IED detonations: a bicycle-borne IED blew up in the Al-Jidad Market; a vehicle-borne IED hit the Sarposa prison gate; another detonated at Afghan police headquarters; another bomb blew up with no specific target, and a motorcycle-borne IED blew up at the Red Mosque. The butcher's bill for 13 March was estimated to be 30 dead and 60 wounded.²⁹

The Afghan security forces were still able to respond effectively despite the loss of the police communications system in the attack. Information came in regarding an IED cache, which was raided immediately. The prison was rapidly secured and there were no escapees. A follow-on attack by a gunman at the Red Mosque was thwarted.³⁰ The Canadian assessment was that this coordinated attack was conducted by Taliban cells but that they had been issued orders by the ISI posing as Taliban senior leadership. The possibility existed that this was done to force the start of the summer fighting season and possibly to undermine the nascent peace process.³¹ Indeed, Canadian analysts learned that the Taliban commanders on the ground actually ceased further operations on 13 March because of the mounting civilian death toll and the possible negative effects on gaining popular support.³²

From 17 March to 5 April, Afghan, Canadian, and American security forces working together in the city mounted three more iterations of Operation PAMIR. These netted a large cache east of the city but little else turned up.³³ The insurgents went to ground, and observed. Evidently, their backers in Pakistan liked what they saw and by early April no less than ten new cell commanders, one for each city district, were preparing to infiltrate and restart operations. More resources were pushed their way: none of the new leaders appeared to have any connection to the existing cells or commanders in districts peripheral to the city.³⁴

In the new commanders' first operation, on 12 April, two suicide bombers attacked a National Directorate of Security safe house, wounding four agents and five children. The next day, an 18-year-old girl employed by a non-governmental agency was assassinated, and a suicide car bomber killed three and wounded 25 at a compound occupied by the aid organization Chemonics, a USAID implementing partner.³⁵

The week of 20 April was particularly bad. A donkey-borne IED detonated killing three children: the target, who survived, was Haji Fazluddin Agha, President Karzai's campaign manager in Kandahar. The Deputy Mayor, Haji Azizullah Yaramal, was assassinated with two shots to the back of the head while praying in a mosque. Mohammad Hussain of the

Agriculture Cooperatives NGO was shot dead, as was Haji Abdul Haim, the brother of the provincial Human Rights Director. The day after the Haim assassination, another vehicle-borne IED struck the Afghan police headquarters.³⁶

Operation PAMIR upshifted into Operation ATAL. Afghan troops flooded into the city, while other coalition forces were brought in to assist. PAMIR resulted in several large IED cache finds, but there was much more to follow. The pressure was now on and would not relent going into May. Unfortunately, the UN decided that the situation was too hot and put security dampers on its operations in Kandahar Province. The PRT was dismayed, as this “will impact the work of UN HABITAT in Kandahar City and other partners such as UNICEF.”³⁷

The pattern of enemy activity was interesting. One path was to target the security forces and the government by attacking symbols like Sarposa and the police headquarters. The other path was the insidious and deliberate intimidation of the vulnerable aid and development organizations. Both paths used assassination and IEDs but were conducted by seemingly different organizations. This was all in addition to the commercial violence that the Kandahar power structure was already engaged in.

It is fair to suggest that these circles of overlapping violence could not be effectively addressed by TF Kandahar while it was at the same time dealing with controlling three battalions or battle groups, each operating in its own complex environment west of the city. Indeed, there is every indication that the security belts envisioned by Operation WADANA WAL had limited influence on the enemy’s ability to mount the kind of urban operations seen in March and April 2010, let alone influence the Kandahari power structure in its pursuits. The solution really lay in improving the Afghan security force’s ability to take on urban terrorism and at the same time protect itself from the predations of the Kandahari power structure. TF Kandahar, as we will see, could assist in the first of these endeavors but not the second. The decision to relinquish vital influence tools at the provincial level by the task force commander, unfortunately, contributed to this state of affairs.

Dand District Operations, March–April 2010

The level of identifiable insurgent activity in Dand district was low in March and April which in turn permitted significant movement on the Hold and Build lines of operations. All of the necessary mechanisms were in play including the OCC-D, the District Development Assembly, and several Community Development Councils. District Governor Nazek had, for the most part, reached accommodation on the issues bothering him earlier in the year while CIMIC and the CMO continued to support the Afghan organizations.³⁸

On the security side, there were the practical issues surrounding the incorporation of the Barakzai militia into the Dand police force. Here the P-OMLT played a key role, working with the district Chief of Police. The decision was made to hold until a future Focused Police District Development scheme with the Afghan National Civil Order Police could be worked out where the militia could be formally retrained as police. Police coordination with coalition forces in Dand was considered exceptional and in many cases the Afghan police in the district were conducting independent as well as partnered operations by March-April.³⁹ Another major change was the attitude of the Fatay Khan Security Company. Khan re-named it Kandahar Security, actively pursued registration of his men and weapons, and in effect 'went legit' without protest. He was rewarded with a contract to provide security for part of the UNOPS road project.⁴⁰

On the development front, the CIMIC team assigned to Dand continued to monitor the development bodies and act as connective tissue to CIDA when possible. CIMIC still had to keep a close eye on the Community Development Councils but was wary about being dragged in as a broker if there were corruption allegations. By this time a Stabilization Officer from the PRT was back on site at the Dand District Centre working with Nazek, who for the most part was able get development back on track.⁴¹ The Agriteam NGO and the Central Asian Development Group were now both active in the district with Nazek's concurrence. These programs involved livestock distribution, vocational training, and grain storage. AVIPA was active distributing seed, while the Culturally Structured Youth Employment Program continued to pay dividends. Again, this spoke to the relative stability of the situation in Dand.⁴²

The big project rolling through Dand at this time was the UNOPS road. SAITA remained engaged as the primary contractor despite the casualties inflicted on it over the past eight months. The paving crews, however, were shunned by local stores who received night letters threatening them if they supported the workers. And then there was a cluster of sophisticated radio-controlled IED finds along the route as it progressed into Panjwayi. These were discovered before they could be used.⁴³

Was the campaign against the road project conducted by insurgents in Nakhonay, who knew that IEDs are more difficult to plant on a paved road, and that the road would bring more ISAF and Afghan troops to the Nakhonay area? Or was it sabotage by construction or security contractors who had been shut out of the project? Was it both? The road project continued.

The only significant violence in during this period was the ambush of a police patrol near the Kandahar City limits, which claimed the life of a policeman, and the attempted assassination of the Malik of Angurian, Fazil Karam. Karam, on his way to pray, was shot twice by a motorcycle-borne assassination team. He survived to become a local hero of resistance.⁴⁴ There was, however, a lot of ISTAR reportage that indicated that the Malik of Teymurian was under observation by the insurgents and would be assassinated next. Additional security precautions were implemented to protect him.⁴⁵

Fortunately during this time the insurgency in Dand was discombobulated on its own due to internal disciplinary issues. ISTAR reportage suggested that the Taliban shadow governor for Kandahar intervened between two commanders. Mullah Qasim, who was in charge of operations in Dand, was removed for failure to meet objectives as well as for killing a relative of the dynamic Taliban commander, Hafiz Majid. Qasim protested this but was disarmed and removed along with his fighters to Pakistan. A new commander to Dand, Haji Amir, replaced him. Amir now set out to re-build the Dand network.⁴⁶

Throughout April, an American task force based on the 1st Squadron, 71st Cavalry Regiment, known as 1-71 Cavalry or Ghost Squadron, was preparing to take over Dand from the Canadians. Led by LTC John Paganini, 1-71 Cavalry was a 450-strong reconnaissance, surveillance and target-acquisition squadron of the 1st Brigade, 10th Mountain Division that had been trained to function as a Security Forces Advisory Team before deploying to Afghanistan.⁴⁷ Paganini's cavalry squadron flowed into the district and authority was transferred to them by the end of April.

Panjwayi District Operations March-April 2010

As before, Canadian and Afghan operations in Panjwayi district broke down into four areas: Sperwan Ghar, Bazaar-e Panjwayi, the central-eastern communities, and Nakhonay (see Figure 7-3). Main actions during this time included a complex engagement against an IED dig team that involved a strafing run from an F-16, followed by the tracking and killing of the insurgents by a Heron, a Predator, and a B-1B bomber. The following night a LAV III engaged another dig team with 25mm fire while a Heron tracked the injured insurgents. A patrol captured them the next morning in a compound.⁴⁸ C Company's interest in local leadership paid off as they learned that Pay-e Moluk's population was fence-sitting because it had no serious leadership and thus could not resist Taliban intimidation. They also were told that "most of the lower level insurgent fighters and IED emplacers are motivated simply by poverty." The intimidation extended into Sperwan, where the four schools in that community were closed and the local mullah and his wife were forced to teach children at their home.⁴⁹ When fighters showed up to 'shoot and scoot' against Afghan positions, 1 PPCLI snipers were brought in. On one occasion they vectored in a MQ-9 Reaper and killed an ambush party. The wounded were captured.

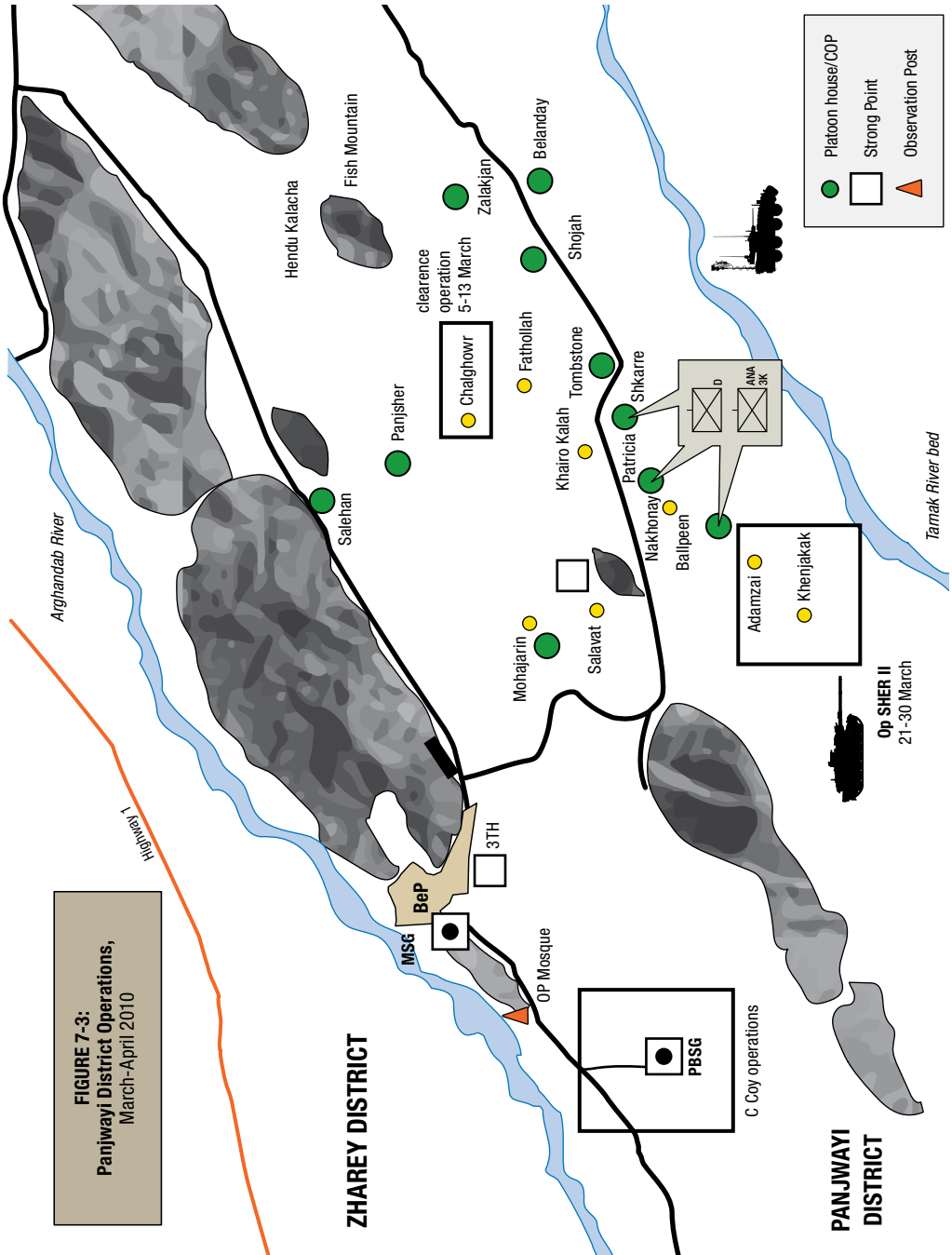


Figure 7-3: Panjwayi District Operations, March-April 2010

The situation remained relatively stable in the Sperwan area throughout March. That state of affairs encouraged productive shuras and the re-emergence of power broker Haji “Dollars” Agha Lalai of Sperwan, who had been lying low for the past year. Road projects associated with Route BROWN started up in April, and district governor Haji Baran started to take an interest in improving Route HYENA again. As project monies started to flow, information on IEDs started to come in. That in turn was followed by night-time intimidation by masked Taliban who brought with them lists of workers associated with road construction. The road crew leadership went to the CIMIC team and requested Canadian troops for protection “as they were the hardest working of the foreign soldiers.”⁵⁰

Sperwan was a good place for Canadians to pick up information about conditions in the Horn of Panjwayi and enemy-dominated areas of Zharey to the north, where residents were kept under stern control. People were allowed to use cellular telephones only inside their homes and in daytime, between 0530 and 1830 hours. A curfew was in place after 1600 hours, and violators were subject to immediate beating and two days of detention. An insurgent court handled all disputes, and offenders were beaten with canes. A two-percent tax was placed on raw opium, to be paid in product.⁵¹ The existing Taliban control structure in the Horn was augmented in early April when the infamous Jabbar Agha arrived with 75 non-local fighters and set up a special court to handle internal Taliban discipline. Apparently Agha came into the picture because he was “upset at the insurgents for not doing enough for the jihad.” Two other groups of 20 fighters each arrived soon afterwards.⁵²

Jabbar Agha arrived around the time a series of SOF and police operations in Nakhonay and Bazaar-e Panjwayi directed against Panjwayi district Taliban leadership succeeded in temporarily disrupting the course of events. One of these targets was Mullah Izzatullah, the long-term and experienced commander who had fought against coalition forces for the past three years in Zharey and Panjwayi.⁵³

Central-eastern Panjwayi started to heat up during this time. A Company and a company from 2nd Kandak cleared Chalghowr starting on 5 March. They were preceded by a series of SOF operations that netted three local commanders, moves which effectively shut down the Chalghowr insurgent support network and disrupted the ratline into Malajat that supported the Kandahar City assassination campaign. Jabbar Agha became convinced that a mid-level insurgent IED specialist connected to this cell was an informant and had him taken to Zangabad, tried by the Taliban court, and hanged.⁵⁴

The Chalghowr clearance operation had a positive effect on neighbouring Salavat, where A Company reported improved atmospherics. The Chalghowr school opened up again and residents started identifying insurgents to the security forces. Mohajerin then asked for a school as well, once they saw the progress in Chalghowr. Elders then requested a permanent

security presence in Chalgowhr. CIMIC and CMO started to look at projects there once it was clear that the community seriously considering their future.⁵⁵ The insurgency, now based out of Nakhonay, responded by shooting up the Panjsher outpost on 23 March and infiltrated an IED team into the Mohajerin area, where a Recce Squadron Coyote was struck in early April. The insurgency in that community was already seriously disrupted, with at least two suspected leaders on the run, but the enemy kept putting their people in to demonstrate they retained influence.⁵⁶

It was increasingly evident that Nakhonay had become a crucial forward operating area for security forces and insurgents alike. West of Nakhonay was open ground all the way to the Khabari Ghar. The ratlines to Kandahar City and central eastern Panjwayi depended on the villages that extended southwest from Nakhonay and Khenjakak along the hills of the Adamzai Chain. Open terrain lay to the east into Dand so, if the insurgency was to continue operating in eastern Panjwayi, it had to maintain influence, if not control, in Nakhonay. This was increasingly clear to insurgent leaders in Zangabad, as D Company and 3rd Company from 2nd Kandak worked with their enablers to deepen the Hold in the community.



Photo Credit: Author

Known as the 'Festering Boil', the town of Nakhonay in eastern Panjwayi District was a node on the terrorist ratline into Kandahar City. In 2010, increased attention by Canadian and Afghan forces resulted in insurgent pushback, prompting an increased coalition presence.

A Company's OC, Maj Wayne Niven, wanted assistance on the governance front, a clinic and, possibly, a school, but the District Support Team kept its focus on mentoring District Governor Haji Baran, and its Canadian member "couldn't get clearance from Ottawa to come out." It took the kidnapping of the Haji Baba malik, who was taken to Zangabad and beaten into submission, to bring Baran to shuras in Nakhonay and Haji Baba. As for requests for a clinic, that was deferred to Kandahar City at the provincial level and nobody heard back from the Ministry of Health.

Major Niven decided to use Afghan army medics supported by Canadian Health Support Services in a village medical outreach-like operation but he "got more pushback from the Canadian medical dudes in KAF who were mentoring the local health care authorities, saying—and CIDA was pushing back hard too, saying 'You are trying to stand up something that is unsustainable'. And I'm like, 'Whoa, whoa, whoa. The only thing I want to do is get this thing so it doesn't have a hole in the roof and has windows.' My concept was getting the Kandak 2 doctor down there twice a month. Well, it wasn't a high enough priority."⁵⁷



Photo Credit: Courtesy Maj Wayne Niven

Nakhonay was a nest of insurgent activity and a crucial waypoint on the ratline to Kandahar City. D Company troops sortie into the centre of town in an attempt to undermine enemy activities.

Niven was furious because he “couldn’t get support from the PRT.” The leader of the District Support Team told him to ignore the PRT and “Come to me, as the district stabilization guy in Panjwayi and I can pull on US funds to sort this out.” Maj Niven “wasn’t getting the support I needed from the people with Canadian flags on...we were cut off from everybody.”⁵⁸

Lt Col Baris thought health support was a good idea and sent his Afghan army medical people to Nakhonay, despite what the Canadian Health Support Services thought its priorities were, and the clinic was established. The question was this: was the Canadian Army’s medical system in Kandahar supposed to respond to what it thought the civilian health department wanted, or was it supposed to support the Canadian Army while it was involved in partnered operations with Afghan troops? At what point were low-level medical operations an Other Government Department responsibility or an army responsibility? That was never completely resolved and illustrated yet another ambiguous area where positive low-level effects could be trumped by bureaucratic concerns. After all, if the Afghans wanted to do something in their own country, why did the Canadian military medical system believe it had a right to veto it on behalf of a nascent government department in Kandahar City?

The Afghan’s pseudo-VMO contributed to positive changes in Nakhonay. Niven soon received a series of tips from locals regarding RPG and IED caches and these were recovered by Canadian and Afghan joint patrols. The new district chief of police took an active interest in what was going on and agreed to deploy fifteen policemen to Nakhonay. He expressed an interest in establishing a permanent police sub-station if he could get more trained police. A large shura with district and provincial authorities led to discussions over school construction and manning. The elders told the CIMIC team that security had improved and things were looking up for Nakhonay by mid-March.⁵⁹

The spoiler was Haji Malim, malik of Nakhonay, who had been biding his time to see which way the wind was blowing. Chastised by an Afghan sergeant for cowardice because he was not helping his community, Malim sulked as projects continued. Canadian reports noted that “the local nationals no longer fear Malim and are willing to report insurgent activities.” Villagers with access to Taliban leader Mullah Qasim “intend to convey to [him] that they no longer want insurgents in the area and will cease all support.”⁶⁰

The insurgent response was to kidnap a malik from Haji Baba, whisk him away to Zangabad through Kenjakak, beat him up, and return him to the community as an influence action to reduce local cooperation with CIMIC and CMO. A second elder who went to the Taliban to petition for his release was given the same treatment. A Canadian officer who dealt with the Haji Baba elder noted that “he was never really the same after that.”⁶¹

1 PPCLI Battle Group and 2nd Kandak launched Operation SHER 2 on 25 March to clear the whole Adamzai Chain. The Strathcona tank squadron under Maj Rob Hume moved to cover Molla Dust at the bottom of the chain, with recce elements supporting the intermediary communities. D Company and 3rd Company roamed up and down the chain of communities for several days with the tanks and recce squadrons blocking and guarding as required. Canadian CH-47's and CH-146s conducted a surprise airmobile insertion with part of C Company near Kenjakak where they established vehicle checkpoints. In all cases, the population in these areas was categorized as neutral and insisted there were no insurgents present. There was no contact. No caches were discovered.⁶²

D Company and 3rd Company returned to their framework patrols and projects continued as before. Security forces bagged an insurgent carrying radios, Icoms and antennas. Then the IEDs started again. A Canadian patrol hit a device, which seriously wounded one member. A large secondary device made from a 105mm round and a pair of mortar rounds was also unearthed. This was a novel development.⁶³ More IEDs continued to show up in the battlespace; on 11 April, Cpl Tyler Todd of D Company 1 PPCLI was killed by a fragmentation charge while on a foot patrol.

Two weeks later a large cache was uncovered based on a local tip. Other information followed and on 20 April D Company reported that three IED caches and three large weapons caches were seized in the Nakhonay-Haji Baba area. Haji Amir, the insurgent commander responsible for the area, was furious since this constituted the bulk of his weapons for the upcoming summer fighting season. Amir met with other insurgent leaders and fighters in an attempt to determine who was leaking information. They suspected the leak was within their own ranks and the hunt for the leak had disruptive effects on their operations.⁶⁴

By the end of April, the Canadians and Afghans patrolling Nakhonay were augmented with fifteen policemen and information continued to flow in on caches and IEDs. Projects and medical assistance continued and the dialogue between the population and the security forces improved. This led to a better understanding of social dynamics in Nakhonay:

[Local nationals] want CMO projects to proceed ... [and] have expressed the view that if Haji Malim was removed from the situation it would allow for cooperation with [Canadian and Afghan] forces. There is support for the insurgents within Nakhonay however as in Haji Baba most fear there is no choice due to fear of reprisals ... Malim pays lip service to the [security forces] while allowing the insurgents to operate behind the scenes. Additionally local nationals stated that Haji Malim had close ties with Panjwayi district leader Haji Baran ... and that Baran requires insurgent ties to conduct business ...⁶⁵

The fact that Malim and Baran were both Noorzais was considered interesting by those studying the district political dynamics. Indeed, Baran was now increasingly besieged by the new realities of the District Support Team regime. Unable to handle the stress, he developed a medical issue and left the district for treatment. The sharks were circling, led by Haji Agha Lalai Dastagiri, his front man Fazil Mohommad, and all of the members of the Panjwayi shura who signed a petition for Baran's removal.

From Operation MOSHTARAK Phase III to HAMKARI, April–May 2010

As we have seen, the original plan was to have Operation MOSHTARAK Phase III transition to Kandahar province. As the situation developed, the Regional Command (South) planners and the TF Kandahar planners entered into a confusing dance on how all of this would play out. As of early March, the idea was that MOSHTARAK Phase III would have two stages: Stage I was a re-evaluation of the Kandahar City Security Plan and to apply pressure in Kabul to get Dand formally recognized as a district. Stage II was to “assert governmental authority” in Zharey and Arghandab districts coincident with the arrival of an American brigade in the summer.⁶⁶ By the end of March, this thinking shifted. Stage I remained the Kandahar City Security Plan and the insertion of an incoming American cavalry battalion into Dand, while Stage II was significantly altered to include “governance-led operations” in Zharey, Arghandab, and Panjwayi districts coincident with the arrival of the American brigade in Zharey and Arghandab. The PRT was instructed to have district stabilization plans prepared for those districts.⁶⁷

The acceleration of the assassination campaign in Kandahar City was extremely serious: “The spoiling actions by the insurgents in Kandahar Province against government personnel and NGOs are a serious threat to ISAF objectives since they further separate the people from [the government].”⁶⁸ By mid-April, MOSHTARAK Phase III transitioned, in the broadest sense into something called HAMKARI (“Co-operation”).⁶⁹

The exact status of HAMKARI in TF Kandahar was in dispute. Planners referred to it as a “non-operation”. HAMKARI was repeatedly called a “series of briefings” or a “series of events” but it was not an ‘operation.’⁷⁰ This situation once again reflected the sensitivities of the Other Government Departments over the Operation GRIZZLY-KANTOLO issues back in 2009. Non-Plan HAMKARI’s process was driven by Regional Command (South) and that ship’s bow-wave pushed aside the rubber raft that was the Canadian government departments as it continued in the pursuit of security for the (by now) terrified Afghan government leaders and bureaucrats.

It took some time for TF Kandahar planners to confirm that MOSHTARAK Phase III was indeed HAMKARI as Regional Command (South) dealt directly with Afghan authorities. J5 planners had to develop “orders and intent by osmosis”.⁷¹

There appeared to be little or no coordination with TF Kandahar's baseline operations plan, Operation WADANA WAL. Regional Command (South) essentially combined several items under the rubric of the non-plan. The existing Kandahar City Security Plan had to be examined and revised. Government officials needed to be protected at home, on their way to and from work, and at their places of work. A new series of peripheral checkpoints around the city needed to be built and manned: this was called the Security Belt Protection Force (SBPF). All weapons, cars, and most importantly madrassas, needed to be registered with the government. Intelligence fusion was crucial: that process required a complete overhaul.⁷²

To be fair, implementing such a plan was beyond TF Kandahar's capacity at this point. TF Kandahar was already stretched thin handling a Canadian battle group, two American battle groups, working with the Afghan 1-205 Brigade, and anticipating complex reliefs in place by an American cavalry squadron in Dand and an American brigade in Zharey and Arghandab.

In its drive to get the job done, Regional Command (South) did not liaise effectively with the Afghan leadership. It appeared to many in TF Kandahar that Carter's headquarters was, in fact, imposing itself on the Afghan security forces and not working alongside them. The Security Belt Protection Force, for example, was not accepted by the Afghan leadership, who ensured that TF Kandahar staff knew about their concerns. They also did not think that the Kandahar City Security Plan, which they created with Canadian mentoring, needed to be radically changed. The Afghan army commanders were leery of the SBPF: they knew their troops would rather conduct military operations in the districts, not policing operations in the city. Ultimately, Regional Command (South) leveraged its influence activities in Kabul and slowly gained Afghan compliance with their approach, but it took time.⁷³

The implications of 'non-plan' HAMKARI for TF Kandahar were significant and Canadian contributions still potentially valuable. The need for substantial infrastructure improvement meant requirements for engineering and contract capacity. For example, all of the existing Police Sub-Stations in the city needed refurbishment, and an additional nine needed to be surveyed and constructed. The Municipal Support Offices, which were the equivalent of joint district coordination centres for the Kandahar City districts, needed hardening too. That also demanded a robust contracting capacity. The Task Force Engineer Regiment led by LCol Jennie Carignan was already well-situated to handle this and other tasks with Maj Bryan Mialkowsky's Engineer Construction Squadron with the former Specialist Engineer Team now incorporated into it.⁷⁴

The decision to create the regiment paid dividends here. Though TF Kandahar lacked the engineering construction capacity to handle HAMKARI, it could command units that had the capacity. At the time, the 22nd Naval Construction Regiment from the US Navy

(historically known as the Seabees), was establishing the ‘bed down’ facilities for incoming American units. 22 NCR was tasked to provide one of its units to TF Kandahar so the Kandahar City security infrastructure could be built as rapidly as possible.⁷⁵

Command and control aspects were crucial, given the large number of activities occurring simultaneously. That led to the creation of an Operations Coordination Center-Kandahar City, similar to the OCC-P that existed at the provincial level. That development actually added to the confusion so the two organizations were for all intents and purposes merged to form OCC-K in May.⁷⁶ Eventually the Combined Team Kandahar City was established in July and took control of most HAMKARI activities as the spring and summer progressed.



Photo Credit: Author

The Joint Provincial Coordination Centre and its later incarnations were crucial to the fight for Kandahar, particularly in developing contacts in and exchanging information with the Afghan police forces. In its final form, the organization was manned almost completely by Afghan personnel.

Another important organization involved in HAMKARI was ASIC (Forward). Situated at Camp Nathan Smith, this was a compact multi-disciplinary, multi-national, multi-agency team that had the ability to fuse a variety of information inputs related to White Situational Awareness as well as enemy activity within Kandahar City and its immediate environs, and move that material expeditiously to those who needed it most. ASIC (Forward) was initially established to provide intelligence support to the Representative of Canada in Kandahar but

Ben Rowswell proved less than interested in its capabilities or products. At the same time, however, Major Bill Watkins at the ASIC realized that more horsepower was needed in the city and sprung Major Gordon Ohlke from the J2/J35 at Regional Command (South) to lead the new organization.

ASIC (Forward) was linked with the various Afghan security forces through the OCC-K at the Palace, the Afghan Ministry of the Interior at the PRT, and the Canadian ASIC at Kandahar Air Field. It connected to the estimated ten allied agencies working out of Camp Nathan Smith as well as the American-led Combined Team Kandahar City, who even tried to take control of ASIC (Forward). There were also informal connections to some of the Kandahari power broker's security forces. Crucially, ASIC (Forward) was able to run operations inside Sarposa Prison with the assistance of other Canadian organizations, which reduced the enemy's ability to use the facility for their purposes.⁷⁷ ASIC (Forward) also played a role in improving Canadian-American relations after various debacles: Bill Harris, the American PRT deputy, had an exceptional relationship with the Ohlke organization. ASIC (Forward) also contributed to cuing a variety of successful responses to urban terrorist activity.⁷⁸

The enemy became aware of HAMKARI's existence in early May. There was an initial order to stay in place and not move about too much given the nature of HAMKARI's web of checkpoints and patrols. The insurgent leadership in Dand instructed their people to steer clear of the city, while other commanders were told they had to have permission from Taliban leaders in Quetta to even travel in or through Kandahar City.⁷⁹ By then, the 'hardening' plan was well underway and continued into the summer.

The OMLT: From Mentoring to Partnering?

Col Shane Brennan handed over command of the OMLT to Colonel Ian Creighton and his team in early May. On arrival, Creighton learned to his surprise that the TF Kandahar commander planned to dismantle the OMLT. This fact had not been conveyed to Creighton and his men while they were working up for deployment in the winter, and they were somewhat dismayed. The pressure, as it turned out, was not coming from Ménard but from Regional Command (South). Regional Command (South) looked at the directives coming down from McChrystal on partnering and interpreted them to mean that there was no need for OMLT's any longer and that the personnel in them could be re-roled. The new idea coming out of Regional Command (South) was that Canada should take over mentoring part of a new organization, 404 Maywand Corps, which was an Afghan police equivalent of 205 Corps and RC (South). Apparently, the Americans were going to relinquish police mentoring and there were going to be some gaps in manning the mentoring organization for this new formation.⁸⁰

TF Kandahar was resistant and those involved in OMLT operations saw the removal of the company-level mentoring teams as a huge step backwards. The Afghan kandaks still needed mentoring at the company level and still needed access to ‘enablers’: MEDEVAC, fires, liaison, and communications with ISAF forces. It seemed to some that there was a push within ISAF circles to make the Afghan army appear more capable than it actually was for higher-level political purposes in Kabul and elsewhere. Some also believed that there was British ‘poaching’ going on: Lt Col Sherin Shah, the extremely capable commander of 2nd Kandak, was ordered to Helmand to be the deputy commander of a brigade there rather than to 1-205 Brigade. 2nd Kandak, the now former Strike Kandak, was turned into what the mentors called a ‘blood bank’ for the other kandaks in 1-205 Brigade.⁸¹

Ménard, for whatever reason, would not stand up to Regional Command (South), understanding that the OMLT technically ‘belonged’ to Regional Command (South). Once again there was a clash of prerogatives between Canadians at TF Kandahar and the British-run Regional Command (South), with Canadian staff officers at Regional Command (South) caught in the middle. The Australians, when confronted with the same situation up in Oruzgan, “told RC (South) to fuck off,” while it appears as though the British OMLTs in Helmand were not dismantled either. Ménard caved in but worked with Creighton to develop a middle way whereby some of the company mentor teams remained in play during the transition with the Americans, and enough mentor teams were dismantled to satisfy the 404 Maywand requirement coming out of Regional Command (South).⁸² And, once again, Canada’s inability to leverage influence in Kabul prevented the legitimate issues with partnering to be raised in any meaningful way.

The issues with partnering versus mentoring in the Canadian TF Kandahar context were legitimate ones. In theory, every Afghan kandak now had to be partnered with an ISAF battalion or battle group. But what happened if there were more kandaks than battle groups or battalions? Like, for instance, in Panjwayi district, which was scheduled to get two kandaks? The OMLT company mentor teams did not just mentor: they enabled those companies so that ISAF fires, ISAF ISTAR, and so on could be employed in areas that ISAF did not have manoeuvre forces. Those support mechanisms would also be on call in the partnering context through the partnered ISAF battle group, but would not be in an un-partnered, un-mentored kandak. Canadian OMLT personnel referred to partnering as “Tastes Great, Less Filling”.⁸³ Bizarre distortions emerged: if all operations had to be partnered, how did TF Kandahar ‘partner’ its Expedient Route Opening Capability teams or the Route Clearance Packages with the Afghans, who had no comparable capability?⁸⁴

The new 404 Maywand headquarters mentoring role cut both ways. The Royal Canadian Dragoons who arrived expecting to do company mentoring with the Afghan army, for the most part, wound up doing administrative mentoring to Afghan police. Others saw the

possibilities of Canadian mentorship with 404 Maywand Corps as an opportunity to exert influence on the Afghan police but these ambitions were tempered by the realization that connectivity with CIVPOL at the PRT and TF Kandahar's relinquishing of control over Kandahar City made any such attempts incoherent.⁸⁵ In any event, the Canadian mentors that moved in to the partially-constructed facility reported that they were plagued with ongoing delays in construction, communications, and 'life support'. It would take some time to fully reach operating capacity at 404 Maywand HQ.⁸⁶

Creighton was able to keep a couple of mentoring teams in play over in Zharey and Arghandab where the Americans did not have enough battalions to partner with the three kandaks in those districts. When Regional Command (South) representatives poked around and fulminated over their 'misuse,' they tried to get the leaders of the American battalions to issue a complaint. They refused to do so. For the most part, the American units in Kandahar did not like or want to partner with Afghan army units (though some did and did so effectively) and actually preferred to have Canadians doing what they saw as 'dirty work.' The Canadian mentors thrived in the task so to them it was professionally rewarding. Why fix what was not broken?⁸⁷

A source of particular pride for the OMLT were the improvements in the Combat Support and Combat Service Support kandaks. Again, it was easy to focus on the fighting end, but the OMLT was about capacity building and that meant improving the administrative, medical, logistics, and support side of the house as well. By August 2010 the OMLT reported that 5th Kandak, the Combat Service Support Kandak, was "miles ahead" of its counterparts in other brigades, who tended to rob their combat service support kandak for 'warm bodies' to supply rifle kandaks with personnel to man checkpoints. The Combat Support kandak was apparently ahead of their counterparts elsewhere. Recon Company was active in the province as a quick reaction force. The combat engineers conducted heavy equipment operator courses and now had dump trucks, bulldozers, and associated paraphernalia. The artillery company was still slow to develop, however, but could fire illumination.⁸⁸

Col Creighton continued to work with Brig Gen Basir but it was increasingly evident that Basir suffered from health problems. He was less and less inclined to deploy outside of Camp Hero and busied himself with administrative details. After nearly three years of war with little respite, this was not surprising for a man who was Soviet-trained and fought in the 1980s, led the pieces of his command as a post-Apocalyptic army against the Taliban, and then helped professionalize the remnants of it into the basis of the Afghan National Army in southern Afghanistan. There were substantial changes to the Afghan army in Kandahar and these nearly overwhelmed Basir.

The first of these changes was its remarkable growth, especially with the American influx and the Partnering Directive as it was understood at Regional Command (South) Headquarters.

The brigade laydown during the first six months of 2010 had 2nd Kandak and 6th Kandak in Panjwayi District with the Canadian battle group; 1st Kandak in northern Arghandab working with an American battalion; and 3rd Kandak in Kandahar City and lower Arghandab District. A seventh kandak eventually deployed into Dand, while 5th Kandak was based at Camp Hero with 1-205 Brigade Headquarters.⁸⁹

Although Arghandab District was now outside the TF Kandahar area of responsibility, Canadian mentors continued to work there throughout the summer of 2010, often unnoticed as Canadian resources and attention were focused on Panjwayi and Dand. In late July, during a four-day Clear operation by Afghan troops in Arghandab, one of those mentors, MBdr Adam Holmes, called in artillery and close air support several times while his team was under fire. Insurgents approaching his position were only 50 metres away when MBdr Holmes single-handedly drove them back. Eventually wounded in a mortar strike, he received the Medal of Military Valour for his actions.

There was now going to be an entire American brigade for Zharey and Arghandab districts. That meant that a corresponding Afghan brigade had to be deployed and partnered with it. The resulting formation, called 3-205 Brigade, was formed in the summer of 2010. Several kandaks, or parts of kandaks, were cobbled together or otherwise cannibalized into the manoeuvre kandaks for this new brigade. 1-205 Brigade was robbed to form 3-205 Brigade which caused turmoil for months. There were not enough engineers for both Afghan formations, obviously a critical factor in an IED-heavy environment. The standup of 3-205 Brigade headquarters failed in July. The situation was so bad that Regional Command (South) eventually called the Canadian OMLT and asked if they could deploy mentors to work with 3-205 Brigade. The irony was not lost on LCol Creighton and his staff who were able to respond with a mentoring capability because they had kept it in their back pocket rather than throwing everything into the 404 Maywand Corps scheme.⁹⁰

Some OMLT personnel were dismayed to learn from their Afghan contacts, however, that experienced kandaks were ostensibly being held in reserve by the Ministry of Defence in Kabul, and that this was being done to deter potentially hostile elements in and around that city other than just the insurgents. Or perhaps for other unspecified purposes that could not be ascertained ‘down south’.⁹¹

Strategic Issues, May–June 2010

By April 2010 national security staffers in the Obama White House believed that, in the wake of Operation MOSHTARAK in Helmand, “the counterinsurgency mission [in Kandahar] would fail.” As a result, ISAF commander Gen Stanley McChrystal and CENTCOM commander Gen David Petraeus briefed the American president on 6 May. McChrystal focused on the detrimental effects that Kandahari power brokers were having

on the efforts almost as much as the Taliban insurgency. After exposure to too many link analysis charts, President Obama opined, “This reminds me of Chicago politics....You’re asking me to understand the interrelationships and interconnections between war bosses and district chiefs and the tribes of Chicago like the tribes of Kandahar. And I’ve got to tell you, I’ve lived in Chicago for a long time and I don’t understand that.” McChrystal and Petraeus confirmed that “We’re not going to make Kandahar a shining city on the hill.”⁹²

What emerged from the briefing was a new sense of pessimism in the highest levels of American leadership. McChrystal was equally skeptical but told senior American leaders that Kandahar, referring to Op MOSTARAK Phase III, “could be a turning point.” McChrystal was now, however, under pressure to show measurable results and that measurement of effectiveness was the ability to transfer cleared and held parts of Helmand to the Afghans, now. That was not happening six months after the President confirmed that transfer was part of the new strategy, and the lack of transfer did not please senior American officials.⁹³

No matter what positive operational effects it had on the situation in southern Afghanistan, Operation MOSHTARAK was perceived to be a strategic failure in higher American political quarters and, not incidentally, by media outlets, because the transfer to Afghan control did not take place as effectively as anticipated. As we have seen in the last chapter, that evolution was fatally undermined by the presence of Karzai allies in Helmand and the precipitous drop in legitimacy they generated. Those reasons, those details, did not matter the further up the chain of command in Washington one went. Combined with the 2009 elections failure, and the intransigence of the Pakistan problem, this spirit of pessimism gave birth to yet another new American strategic approach, dubbed “Afghanistan Good Enough”. That approach was influenced by a similar idea that emerged in Iraq around 2005–2006.⁹⁴

“Afghanistan Good Enough” was a school of thought asserting that a minimum effort should be applied in Afghanistan to pursue larger American strategic objectives, specifically, hunting down and eliminating Al Qaeda in Pakistan. In the “Afghanistan Good Enough” view the Karzai government should be propped up but not massively supported, while unmanned aerial vehicles and SOF went after insurgent sanctuaries inside Pakistan from bases in Afghanistan. In this view, the complexities of development, legitimacy and counterinsurgency were of secondary importance. There was an opposing school of thought in American policy circles that emphasized a track designed to “maintain all of the development progress forged over the past ten years and to achieve a credible, negotiated settlement with the Taliban.” Those who subscribed to this approach knew that this objective “would be much harder to achieve with fewer troops on the ground.” The Taliban had to be forced to the negotiating table by facts on the ground, and that meant attrition of their leadership, holding the areas ISAF held, and continuing to build Afghan capacity.

The tension between the “Afghanistan Good Enough” crew and this latter school played out through 2010, with McChrystal, Petraeus, and U.S. Secretary of State Hilary Clinton throwing their weight against “Afghanistan Good Enough”.⁹⁵

What did this mean in relationship to the Canadian effort? Canada had by this point already decided to withdraw by 2011. And, as we have seen, Canada was split on what approach to take. The ‘developers’ wanted to continue their version of development, regardless of the security situation, while JTF-A wanted to hold, build, and transfer the districts TF Kandahar controlled over to Afghan and American forces as part of the effort to keep pressure on the Taliban. SOF, of course, was part of attriting enemy leadership, an effort that also applied pressure on the Quetta Shura and its backers. What was disconcerting was the lack of confidence that those in Washington felt towards the Canadian-led or, perhaps, Canadian- coordinated effort in Kandahar. A lot was on the line for everybody involved and Canada could not afford to slip up. Operation MOSHTARAK Phase III was going to be a game-changer on many levels: in Washington, with ISAF in Kabul, and in Kandahar. It was not clear that the Ménard -led TF Kandahar understood just how crucial the upcoming operation was.

Relief in Place and Realignment, April–July 2010

The Herculean task of coordinating handovers to the American influx into Kandahar Province should not be underestimated. The reinforcing organizations came from several different formations, and in addition to being American each had their own organizational culture. Just as Canadian regiments were not alike, no two American formations were either. This placed a premium on patience at all levels. And, as before, the express intent at TF Kandahar was to ensure that there was not a repetition of the PRT handover problems encountered in 2005. The ASIC and ASIC (Forward) played a significant role in ensuring that there was as seamless a flow of intelligence as possible, as did the geodetics crews in the TF Kandahar Engineer Regiment.

Coincident to ‘non-operation’ HAMKARI, a brigade-sized multinational headquarters called Combined Team Kandahar City (CTKC) stood up in June, and eventually was taken over by the headquarters of 4th Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division later in the summer and transitioned into an American organization. Initially the 97th MP Battalion, which was tactically controlled by TF Kandahar, shifted to report to CTKC until its relief in place by the 504th MP Battalion in June. Once these changes were completed in the summer of 2010, TF Kandahar was no longer involved in command functions in Kandahar City. The Stab A company and ASIC (Forward) continued their operations at Camp Nathan Smith in what amounted to a command vacuum for some time. The exceptionally important OCC-P, now called OCC-K, also continued under Canadian direction.⁹⁶

The largest ‘muscle movement’ was the handover of Zharey and Arghandab districts to the Americans. TF 1-12 and TF 2 Fury, as we will recall, came from different brigades but were tactically controlled by TF Kandahar in the first half of 2010. Dubbed “The RIP that would not die” by the TF Kandahar staff, it took four months to coordinate the withdrawal of the two American battalions and their replacement with a five-battalion brigade combat team commanded by 2nd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile). This brigade was aligned to cover from Maywand in the west all the way to lower Shah Wali Kot in the east, and from Khakrez to the Arghandab River, north to south. Once Combined Task Force Strike was in place in late June 2010, TF Kandahar operations ceased north of the Arghandab River for the first time since 2005.⁹⁷ (see Figure 7-4)

It is difficult to convey today what a seismic change this all was for the coalition in Kandahar and particularly for Canada. In 2006 a single Canadian battle group, a 250-man Provincial Reconstruction Team, a company of Afghan National Army infantry and a company of police militia were responsible for the entire province under a brigade-sized coalition task force headquarters, which itself was responsible for operations in the five southern provinces of Afghanistan. In the summer of 2010, there were now nine American battalion-sized units and two brigade headquarters, plus a Canadian battle group and brigade headquarters working for what amounted to a multi-national divisional headquarters in one province. The Afghans now had two full brigades in Kandahar province under a corps headquarters and the police were organized into a divisional-sized organization with its own headquarters.

This shift had psychological effects on the Canadian military and civilian leaders who now had to adjust to the fact that they were no longer leading the coalition effort in Kandahar after nearly five years of war. TF Kandahar now was responsible for Panjwayi and Dand districts, and to support Canadian PRT operations, or what was left of them. TF 1-71 Cavalry remained under Canadian tactical control in the now reduced area of operations.

Expectations had to change, along with the style of operations. There would no longer be operations like ZAHAR or MEDUSA. And, in fact, there really hadn’t been since 2006 in any case. As we have seen in this volume, the Canadian Army had already taken the lead on more decentralized operations and in partnering with Afghan security forces. Now, at least, Canadian and Afghan resources would no longer be pulled away for tasks in Helmand: a new ISAF regional command, Regional Command (South West), was established there and the see-saw games with the British over resource allocation finally abated.

These changes permitted TF Kandahar to focus on the intricacies of two districts and not be involved with more operational-level matters. That in turn further reduced Canada’s salience in the coalition at the strategic level, though there were still Canadian officers populating the various ISAF headquarters to protect Canadian interests as much

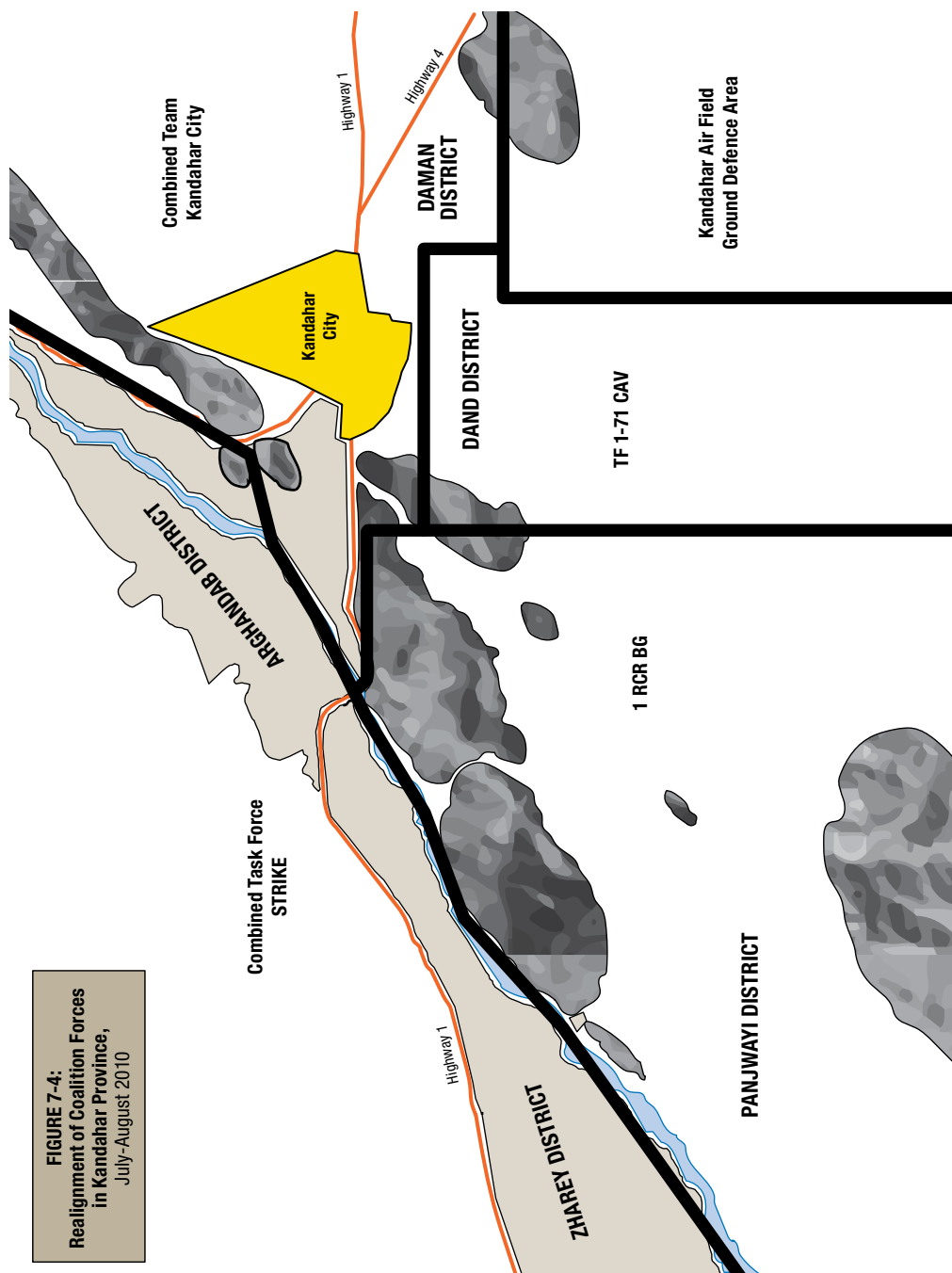


FIGURE 7-4:
Realignment of Coalition Forces
in Kandahar Province,
July-August 2010

Figure 7-4: Realignment of Coalition Forces in Kandahar Province, July-August 2010

as possible. The dismantlement of SAT-A in 2009 and “The Divorce” in 2010 meant that there was no longer any national coherence in the Canadian mission in Afghanistan. Canada’s war now shifted to a tactical counterinsurgency mission in two districts and a lingering but fading operational presence in Kandahar City. And, in that form, there was a lot of framework patrolling, CIMIC liaison, and construction, but few battle group-sized manoeuvre operations.

1 RCR Battle Group led by LCol Conrad Mialkowski gradually flew in to relieve the 1 PPCLI Battle Group in early May. Partnered with Lt Col Baris’s 2nd Kandak, the battle group was fortunate to learn that the deputy CO, Maj James Price, had worked with 2nd Kandak when he was with the OMLT in 2007. 1 RCR Battle Group fell in on 1 PPCLI’s dispositions, so Maj Steve Brown’s O Company worked the central-eastern part of the district from combat outposts in Foad and Chalghowr, while the Afghans took over Mohajerin and Salavat. B Company, led by Maj Austin Douglas, replaced D Company in the positions in and around Nakhonay: Ballpeen, Patricia, Shkarre and Shojah. Charles Company, led by Maj Eleanor Taylor, was responsible for the Sperwan Ghar area and was augmented with Capt Mike Mendyka’s Recce Platoon. The Afghan company handled positions along Route HYENA back to Ma’Sum Ghar. In effect, each Canadian company had an Afghan company from 2nd Kandak partnered with it.⁹⁸

Recce Squadron under Maj Chris Lillington was re-deployed from Dand district into a series of observation posts to ensure that all major routes between the various positions were kept under observation, especially while they were being paved. These included OP Cliff, OP Onya, and OP Salavat Ghar. Recce Squadron headquarters went into the New District Centre where Lillington also acted as battle group liaison with the OCC-D Panjwayi. At this point, Recce Squadron had suffered attrition and was down to less than two seven-vehicle troops. The Coyote vehicles were breaking down and many had been destroyed over the past three years. Some of the vehicles were deadheaded. In one case a Coyote that was immobilized due to lack of spare parts was emplaced on Sperwan Ghar: its turret, gun, and surveillance systems still worked most of the time and it was used to engage IED emplacers on Route Brown.⁹⁹

The tanks — now A Squadron, The Lord Strathcona’s Horse, under Maj Rob McKenzie— continued to operate from Ma’Sum Ghar until they deployed to patrol and disrupt out of night laagers in the desert west of Nakhonay. The guns from D Battery 2 RCHA, led by Maj Stephen Haire, had only two pairs of M-777s to work with, based respectively at PB Sperwan Ghar and COP Shoja. The battle group’s combat engineers were 23 Field Squadron under Maj Jim Smith.

1 RCR Battle Group also became responsible for a number of aerostats and thus had to form ‘balloon platoon’. These were handled by a combination of contractors and Canadian soldiers. There was a large aerostat at FOB Ma’Sum Ghar, and two smaller ones at Sperwan Ghar and Shojah.

While the battle group relief in place was in progress, a debate emerged in TF Kandahar over where Panjwayi district operations fit into the larger emergent schema. Ménard was, according to his staff, looking for action and set his sights on the Horn of Panjwayi. On one hand, the case to clear out the Zangabad–Mushan axis was compelling. The enemy was running parallel governance in there and the networks were fueling the cells operating south of and in Bazaar-e Panjwayi and in Nakhonay. On the other, the Horn of Panjwayi could not be handled in isolation from western Zharey, and, as we have seen in previous chapters, the two operating zones were connected. That meant a larger operation to deal with both areas at once. And that meant higher-level coordination, that is, Regional Command (South) had to be involved.

BGen Ménard applied substantial staff horsepower to build a convincing case to re-take the Horn. To conduct this operation, however, meant releasing the tenuous hold on Nakhonay and shifting forces west. Something had to fill that space, and the American cavalry unit in Dand was not enough. Maj Gen Carter flew to the New District Centre on a visit and asked several Canadian officers, without Ménard present, whether they thought this operation was feasible. In an extremely awkward meeting, he was told it was not, that the battle group did not support it, and that it was essentially a ‘bridge too far’ at this time. Indeed, the events of May 2010 ensured that such an operation was not yet feasible. Carter, who was interested in ‘mucking out’ the Horn, put the concept on the back burner for the time being but seriously considered the idea.¹⁰⁰

The Insurgency in Mid-2010

At this point in the war, there was significant debate over the nature of the insurgency in Afghanistan as well as in Kandahar province. Within the Ménard headquarters, there were two contrasting views. The first was that the insurgency was predominantly a rural, indigenous phenomenon. The other view accepted that there was a rural, indigenous component but that the insurgency had other components that were urban, and others that were external. ISAF commander Gen McChrystal’s views tended towards the first: he believed that there were multiple, concurrent insurgencies throughout the country at the micro-level. Those who had been engaged in Afghanistan for some time, however, knew that the second was a more realistic assessment, especially when it came to Kandahar. Indeed, those who wanted measurable progress tended towards the indigenous view because it screened off troublesome issues relating to Pakistan and its complications.¹⁰¹

To complicate matters further, the disruption in Quetta vis-à-vis the Quetta Shura, Mullah Barader, the ISI and so on contributed to the argument that the insurgency was, in fact, tending towards the indigenous. The counter-argument was that the decline in the Taliban's relative power in the Quetta Shura meant that others, like HiG and Al Qaeda, might back-fill the apparent leadership vacuum. This was borne out by the Kandahar City assassination campaign and the increased involvement of outside forces.

What made the insurgency more dangerous in Panjwayi throughout 2010 than in previous years was the build-up of parallel governance in districts that were shifting away from negative governance to competing governance. The continued existence of a parallel legal system in Panjwayi district that included 'courts' in Zangabad, 'police' who 'apprehended' (kidnapped) 'criminals' (citizens who transgressed the Taliban) and took them to be tried, sentenced, and then beaten or hanged with near impunity was the major threat to government control in the district. Adjudication of grievances by Taliban 'officials' was a close second. Control over basic communications, in this case, the cell phone system and thus access to security, seriously contributed to the problem. That was followed by the anti-schools campaign in late 2009 and early 2010 which effectively shut down education in Panjwayi except for madrassas. Canadian patrols also learned that in some areas of the district Pakistani currency was used instead of Afghani.¹⁰²

There were increased rocket attacks at Kandahar Air Field throughout 2010. By the summer, attacks occurred every third day, including some in the daytime. These were Chinese- and Iranian-made 107mm rockets and thus were not of indigenous manufacture.¹⁰³

By the summer of 2010 20 percent of enemy personnel in the Canadian area of operations were believed to be out-of-area fighters. Canadian analysts assessed that the local insurgency was "spiritually broken" and that it was increasingly run by out-of-area fighters from Waziristan. Canadian assessments detected a higher level of fear among the population. People were scared of the Pakistan-based fighters and this contributed to the increase in information on insurgent activity flowing from the Afghans to the Canadians.¹⁰⁴

The Panjwayi district population remained caught in the middle. It generally did not trust the Afghan government, and with good reason. It would accept projects and money from Canadians. It would cater to the insurgency as required. But slowly it was succumbing to the tools of control that were still wielded by men in Pakistan. And the Canadians and Afghans were unable to compete with those tools in parts of Panjwayi district.

There were fewer grievances, stronger governance, connections to higher-order power brokers who had a vested interest in Dand. There had been a Clear that worked. There was a security force laydown. More importantly, there was psychological momentum that was lacking in Panjwayi. Dand gave the impression that it was a district that was going places. Panjwayi exemplified stagnation.

Kandahar City was essentially Chicago in the 1930s. The high levels of violence were an effective challenge to the authority of the Afghan government. That violence was internal and externally based. It was tribal and commercial, as much as it was religious or ideological. How could there be any hope in a place like Panjwayi while the spiritual, political, and commercial centre of the province was in such turmoil? And particularly if one's district leadership was continuously caught up in that turmoil?

Development and Governance Issues, Summer 2010

Development in Kandahar City was curtailed in the spring and summer of 2010 because of the assassination campaign. In March, the UN mission increased its threat level for the personnel operating in Kandahar. The immediate concern at TF Kandahar were the possible effects of a UN shut down of UN HABITAT and UNOPS programs in the districts.¹⁰⁵ In April, DAFA de-miners working in Daman District were targeted, with four killed and 18 wounded. DAFA pulled out of Kandahar. Ten days later, UNAMA announced the pull out of UN personnel. This was a bad portent for Operation MOSHTARAK III:

Should this trend continue, the government workers and implementing partners critical for the roll-out of a range of governance and development initiatives in support of HAMKARI will be likely unwilling or unable to work. In conjunction with Regional Command (South), [TF Kandahar] and the [Kandahar Provincial Reconstruction Team] are working on initiatives to address these issues in the short term ...¹⁰⁶

On 26 April 2010, every CIDA reconstruction and development project carried out in Kandahar Province by UN-associated implementing partners ground to a halt, revealing once again a major defect of the partnership system in the hostile environment of Kandahar.

Reconstruction and development did not, however, completely stop in the districts. Canadian CIMIC could still move about and work with local communities. Stab A could transport Canadian stabilization officers to work at the district-level. The District Support Teams remained in place and were not completely dependent on UN implementing partners. And, importantly, the TF Kandahar Engineer Regiment did not have to attenuate its operations as dramatically or abruptly. The Engineer Construction Squadron retained between 500 and 800 locally employed people on various infrastructure projects during the height of the assassination campaign.¹⁰⁷

The road construction and improvement strategy established in 2009 continued to progress in the TF Kandahar area of operations during this time. Route BROWN was paved from Sperwan Ghar to Route HYENA by July 2010. That dramatically reduced IED attacks on it. Over 55 percent of Route LAKE EFFECT was paved by SAITA

working in conjunction with the Engineer Construction Squadron by summer 2010. There were four smaller connector roads that linked Chineh, Haji Baba, Masur Ghar, and a number of other small communities to the primary roads in Dand and western Panjwayi. This allowed security forces to get into those communities and permitted goods for trade to get out. All of these were funded with Commanders Contingency Fund monies, as opposed to development funds ‘laundered’ through various UN agencies and NGOs. And, importantly, all had ‘buy in’ from the local communities who assisted with siting and land claims. Equally important was the fact that Governor Wesa continued to strongly support these and other road construction projects and supported paving in as many areas as possible to increase security.¹⁰⁸

While collecting information to support the Representative of Canada in Kandahar, ASIC (Forward) learned from the Provincial Reconstruction Team engineering project management team in July that, due to the double stresses of refugee inflow and unregulated development, the city had outgrown its water supply infrastructure. There were fifteen publicly operated wells, six of which did not work. This situation left over two-thirds of the city’s population without clean water sources. UN-HABITAT had already been given \$7 million as part of a \$24-million water project package by Canada back in 2008. There was still no statement of work. The US Army Corps of Engineers undertook a comprehensive hydrogeological survey of Kandahar City which identified future wells and the means to service them. This information was available, but UN-HABITAT refused to use the data as it was generated by a combatant. UN-HABITAT still had not undertaken its own survey of the situation. Obviously this was a hugely embarrassing situation for CIDA and caused a clash between CIDA and ASIC (Forward). The information was passed to an incoming US Army Civil Affairs Battalion so they could sort this problem out. CIDA, like many NGOs, rejected outright the military’s involvement in development. Canadian methods in delivering aid were revealed to be weak and ineffective. The provision of clean water to Kandahar City would have been a major political victory for the Government of Afghanistan and a worthy goal for Canada. Unfortunately the issue produced a major credibility loss for Canada amongst Afghan officials at the municipal and provincial levels, and much dissatisfaction among Kandaharis.¹⁰⁹

On the policing front, the mobilization of resources to deal with the threat to Kandahar City led to re-invigorated planning for MOSHTARAK III in Panjwayi, Zharey, and Arghandab. Regional Command (South) and TF Kandahar, working with the Ministry of the Interior and provincial police authorities, were able to gain commitments for a Focused Police District Development deployment for these three districts. Of importance to TF Kandahar was the planned deployment of the Afghan National Civil Order Police forces to Panjwayi so that the whole police force could be overhauled.¹¹⁰

Provincial governance, however, remained in traction. And, as usual, the problem was Ahmad Wali Karzai. Attempts to get the various tribally-based power brokers together in March was “hijacked by AWK at the last minute and turned into a two-hour press conference featuring eight speeches by Kandahar VIPs and a visiting minister” which led the delegates to abruptly depart.¹¹¹ This was one of the ‘red lines’ established by ISAF leaders back at the end of 2009. TF Kandahar and Regional Command (South) continued to support the planned Peace Jirga but learned too late that “some 60 well-known tribal elders with vastly different reputations reflecting powerbrokers interests and not necessarily broadly representative of the Kandahari community, have been chosen for the [peace jirga]... Due to the interference of the Provincial Council, the legitimacy of the selection process is questionable.”¹¹² That was red line number two.

Canadian elements continued to press forward with polite engagement but by the end of April concluded that

The soft diplomacy approach has thus far failed to yield tangible results. [The] intent may be to reduce [Ahmad Wali Karzai]’s involvement and influence in Kandahari matters. However, the friendliness of the meetings and the seniority of the officials engaging him seem to be giving him the impression that his influence is growing and that his input on the stabilization approach is greatly valued.¹¹³

Karzai continued to try to leverage his contacts to get forces deployed to northern Khakrez, yet again. Canadian analysts, apparently unaware of the long history of Karzai manipulations relating to Ghorak and Khakrez, assessed this to be a legitimate interest in security on the part of Ahmad Wali Karzai.¹¹⁴

The whole situation nearly lurched out of control in May. Afghan army Maj Gen Sher Mohammad Zazai openly accused Ahmad Wali Karzai of illegal land expropriation. This resulted in the suspension of the Provincial Council by its membership and its chairman, Ahmad Wali Karzai. Zazai’s allegation was deployed right after information was leaked to an American journalist that Karzai was allegedly involved in importing ammonium nitrate fertilizer that the enemy used to make IEDs. The pressure was suddenly on from multiple external sources as the international media took interest.¹¹⁵

As ever, there were wheels within wheels. And, as before, this complexity had an impact on Canadian operations in Kandahar. Maj Gen Zazai was in the middle of an extremely complex bureaucratic manoeuvre involving the creation of a second brigade for Kandahar and the deployment of more kandaks to the province. This evolution was crucial to the

stabilization plan for Panjwayi, Zharey, Arghandab, and Dand districts. When Karzai and his allies counterattacked to discredit Zazai, the planning was undermined and the situation became unstable. Word was passed that Zazai was about to be re-assigned far away from Kandahar.

Then word came down that a new provincial police general would be arriving: Khan Mohammed. Khan Mohammed was the last surviving Alikozai leader from the Mullah Naqib days, the rest having been assassinated back in 2008. Khan Mohammed, not incidentally, was less than enthused with the Popalzai and Barakzai power structures in Kandahar.¹¹⁶

The pressure on Ahmad Wali Karzai amped up yet again in May. A complaint came in from two persons who claimed to have been prisoners in an illegal Karzai-run jail in Daman District. In addition to all of the other usual allegations of corruption, one even claimed that there was a criminal link between Ahmad Wali Karzai and Taliban commander Mullah Shakur, and that Shakur had been killed as a result of Karzai manipulations of coalition forces to “ensure his involvement would never become public.”¹¹⁷ The matter now took on a life of its own and the saga continued right until Ahmad Wali Karzai was shot by his bodyguard on 12 July 2011.

What is important here is that governance in Kandahar was completely compromised in the summer of 2010, which in turn had negative spin-off effects on the Afghan security forces’ command and control. Coming on the heels of the failed 2009 national elections, and in the midst of an assassination campaign, there was no way that the population was going to support any incumbent provincial leadership. All TF Kandahar could do was prop up those Afghan elements that were still in play, counterattack judiciously against the insurgency when and where it was possible, and facilitate the American influx.

The Kandahar City Assassination Campaign, May 2010

The killings in late April produced (the by now scripted) Operation ATAL response. In early May, several caches and a propaganda production facility were uncovered during these large cordon and search operations. ATAL’s real success, however, was that these operations flushed the insurgent ‘game’ for the specialist hunters. A series of raids on 3–4 May that were superimposed on ATAL netted five cell leaders and killed one. Another cell leader was bagged trying to exfiltrate the city.¹¹⁸

Information gleaned from this operation provided insight into insurgent methodology in the city. Broadly, there were two types of ‘action’ cells. The first were the existing cells in the city linked to networks in the adjacent districts. These were probably older organizations. There were also several autonomous cells that conducted their own operations inside the city and had no connection to existing networks and cells. These were newer organizations. It appeared as though the Taliban leadership and/or the ISI could direct the

autonomous cells for a specific operation, as required. It also appeared as though specialists from Al Qaeda and Lashkar-e Taiba could be deployed to work on their own or to work with any of the cells in the city, as required.

The important aspect of this structural shift was that urban terrorist operations were less and less dependent on the insurgent forces and networks in the western districts and thus arguably less vulnerable to coalition operations generally. Not coincidentally, they were also more responsive to orders from Pakistan. Indeed, there was more and more information on ISI involvement in operations. One Taliban commander claimed that ISI wrote the campaign plan for the season.¹¹⁹

The lull after the raids lasted about a week. Lt Col Nabi Gul, the Sarposa prison office manager, was then gunned down. Gul had exceptionally close relationships with Corrections Service Canada personnel at Sarposa and was considered one of the ‘uncorruptables.’ This killing was particularly disturbing as it had the potential to undermine the substantial progress taking place at Sarposa. For example, ISAF commander Gen McChrystal established a special joint task force, JTF 435, “to oversee detainee operations after realizing that Afghanistan’s prison system had become an out-of-control breeding ground for the insurgency.”¹²⁰ JTF 435 was impressed with Canadian operations after its first visit to Sarposa and subsequently established close links to monitor insurgent personnel.¹²¹ It was later determined that a captured Taliban commander incarcerated at Sarposa, who was about to be moved to Pul-e-Charkhi Prison near Kabul as part of a program to undermine the insurgent prison networks, had arranged for Nabi to be assassinated.¹²² Further operations in the wake of the killing determined that this Taliban commander had links to the Kandahari power structure as well, which in turn illuminated those linkages for those interested in such aspects of the conflict.

The Afghan Border Police headquarters in Kandahar endured three suicide attacks on 16 May. By 20 May the number of people killed grew dramatically, so much so that the ASIC and ASIC (Forward) had trouble reporting it all. There were twelve murders in seven days, of which four were deemed non-insurgent related, five were insurgent related, and three were possibly both. Another killing included a USPI contractor on 26 May. A suicide car bomb attack against Camp Nathan Smith was then thwarted on 27 May: the weapon detonated with no casualties.¹²³

A series of security operations in Arghandab led to the progressive neutralization of enemy leaders in that district around this time. Information collected during those operations led the hunters to cells inside Kandahar City. A raid late in May took out one of the city-based cell leaders that relied on a logistics ratline to Arghandab. And, in an independent action, the NDS bagged another Taliban commander who was responsible for the attack on the Afghan Border Police regional headquarters. Another independent

operation took out an enemy leader from the city who was either transiting or recuperating in Zangabad, Panjwayi district. The number of IED attacks in Kandahar City dropped off but the assassinations of mid-level personnel continued.

Dand District Operations, May 2010

Lt Col John Paganini's cavalry squadron launched Operation MA SHAM in the first 48 hours of May. This operation was designed to clear Gorgan and establish a TF 1-71 strong point. MA SHAM occurred without incident. The larger issue of Afghan police and the Hold and Build aspects of operations in Dand became problematic, not because of the Dand district police but this time by the Afghan National Civil Order Police. The ANCOP had been brought in under the Focused Police District Development program when the Barakzai militia indicated they would assimilate into the police. Only 50 percent of the planned ANCOP force arrived, however, which was not enough to backfill the Dand police. As a result, Provincial Reserve police were brought in to augment. The Canadian P-OMLT in Dand reported that there were problems with this ANCOP unit. For the most part, and for reasons understandable only to themselves, the ANCOP were extremely reticent to cooperate with TF 1-71, the Police OMLT, or the OCC-D. This was unusual as ANCOP units generally had a good reputation.¹²⁴

It was evident to Paganini that Nazek had a grip on the governance helm in Dand. He sortied out regularly to broker community governance disputes and ensured that he was in touch with the population. One example was his implementation of the new government policy emphasis on schools. He told the small number of communities that were reluctant to have schools that they would be cut out of the District Development Assembly, and that if they wanted local projects, they had to have schools. As the CIMIC team reported

The point was hammered over and over again that the security as well as the education issues in each village was first and foremost the responsibility of the local citizens under the directive of their Maliks ... It was widely accepted and agreed that the children of Dand are the future of the nation and as such should be educated, but the feeling was evident that the village leaders seem content only to complain about the issues and agree upon solutions without any action to see them through to fruition. The ANA commander made it perfectly clear that the dependence on ISAF had to stop and that the people of Dand need to stand tall and be proud to fight for the freedom they now possess instead of arguing and fighting over tribal issues and discrepancies of the past.¹²⁵

At the same time Nazek worked with CIMIC, CIDA, DFAIT, P-OMLT, TF 1-71 and the OCC-D to implement a district stabilization plan that involved improving relations between the 134 Community Development Councils and the district-level governing bodies.¹²⁶ In some areas Canadian CIMIC was already turning over certain functions to the Culturally Structured Youth Employment Program in the communities.¹²⁷

On the security front, Dand was relatively quiet. There were three IED strikes, all conducted using methods to get around the countermeasures systems on the vehicles. In two cases, Unmanned Aerial Vehicle coverage over the district and other ISTAR resources tracked the 'button men' from their hides. Two teams were apprehended, and in another case a team was tracked back to their production facility, which was raided and shut down. The civil order police got into a skirmish towards the end of the month and bagged one member of a small insurgent IED team.¹²⁸

Overall, the insurgency in Dand stalled out. There were small numbers of individual insurgents making their way through the northern part of the district into Malajat but these bypass routes were hard to detect. There was intimidation in a pair of communities in western Dand. Central Dand was already consolidating under government control. The area south of the Tarnak River, however, was problematic, particularly the communities of Khadan and Nakudak, who did not send representation to the Dand government. Nakudak was assessed as a staging area for the insurgency in Nakhonay. Late in the day word came in that a certain Mullah Monib would arrive shortly to re-invigorate the flagging insurgency in the district.¹²⁹

Panjwayi District Operations, May 2010

1 RCR Battle Group took formal control of its area of operations on 5 May. The infantry companies and CIMIC continued with established tasks: liaising with the UNOPS road project, discussions over school construction in Chalgowr, and new mosque speakers for Loi Kala. In less than a week, LCol Mialkowksi and his men had "fights everywhere we were. We were getting into TICs. There were TICs in Panjsher. There were TICs in Ballpeen, there were TICs at Patricia. Anytime we rolled, anytime we moved, we'd get into trouble. Sperwan was just a hornet's nest. Like, it started going mental."¹³⁰ (See Figure 7-5)

The Canadian assessment was that insurgent commander Hafiz Majid was back, with orders directly from the Quetta Shura to pressurize Panjwayi district. Mullah Qasim and Haji Amir, two experienced survivors, met up with him in Zangabad for further instructions. An eight-man team from Al Jazeera arrived in Mushan shortly afterwards with accreditation letters from the Quetta Shura. They met with Majid and others who then communicated with senior Kandahar insurgent leaders and told them to assist the media team in any way. The reporters apparently left behind several digital cameras for the insurgents to use during their summer campaign against the Canadians so they could pass images back to Al Jazeera for future broadcast.¹³¹

The summer fighting season started with a bang, with the first IED directed against TF Thor's route clearance package while it was clearing the road near Salavat, an area that had been relatively benign for several months. The next day, a Charles Company patrol found a large IED on Route BROWN. EOD Squadron rolled out to conduct an exploitation on the device. On their way out of the area, the team hit an IED, killing PO2 Craig Blake of the Fleet Diving Unit (Atlantic) and wounding two others. The assessment was that the leadership in Zangabad anticipated a Canadian-Afghan offensive down Route HYENA towards Mushan, and laced the entire area with IEDs.¹³²

Maj Steve Brown and O Company were confronted with something new in their area. Aggressive patrolling in central-eastern Panjwayi generated reports from the locals that the enemy was mounting an intimidation campaign against the populations in Salavat, Mohajerin, and Chalghowr. Village leaders were ordered by insurgents to meet with Taliban leaders and warned they would be 'summoned' to appear in a Taliban court. One elder was told to meet a Taliban representative in Sperwan, of all places, where he was told he would be 'charged' with cooperating with ISAF. This elder apparently stood up to the insurgent representative and told him "he cooperates with ISAF because they wish to make his village a better place by helping the people, fixing the wells, and fixing their school."¹³³ Locals continued to turn in unexploded ordnance and point out IEDs to the security forces. Intimidation was also directed against a CMO-run project in Belanday, and an IED was laid to catch the Canadian team.

Maj Austin Douglas's B Company over in Nakhonay was on the receiving end of IED after IED. In one week there were four separate strikes that killed Pte Kevin McKay of 1 PPCLI and grievously wounded six other Canadians and a contractor dog handler. Aggressive patrolling and local input resulted in uncovering a large cache of direct fragmentation charge IED's before they could be used.¹³⁴



Photo Credit: Author

Several Shuras were held with the Nakhonay elders to convince them that it was in the community's best interests to expel the insurgents. Unfortunately some of these elders, including individuals in this picture, were, in fact, insurgent leaders.

The enemy engaged B Company with small arms fire in direct engagements towards the end of May. Consequently, the new district chief of police deployed twenty police into Nakhonay. Maj Rob Mackenzie's tank squadron then deployed into a laager west of the Adamzai Chain in order to disrupt enemy movement. From time to time, the Leopards would manoeuvre to support B Company as its platoons conducted operations out of Ballpeen. Insurgents engaged the tanks with RPGs in different areas, even in broad daylight. There was no damage to the tanks: they fired back and took out the teams.¹³⁵

Atmospherics in Bazaar-e Panjwayi were initially good. Framework patrols by the Afghan security forces, both partnered and unpartnered, led to the belief that "the lack of insurgent activity came to be credited to the solid performance of the ANA (2/1/205). According to locals the insurgents avoid Bazaar-e Panjwayi and the surrounding area because the ANA would discover them...a recent change of command of the ANP commander in Bazaar-e Panjwayi has improved the performance of the local police."¹³⁶



Photo Credit: Author

Unlike Nakhonay, Bazaar-e Panjwayi flourished throughout 2010. Here a Canadian patrol navigates its way through the bustling market.

The dynamics of the policing situation in the district intrigued Canadian observers. From May to September 2010 the district chief of police was removed and replaced four times. The chief who lasted the longest immediately cracked down on Issa Khan, the corrupt police survivor who commanded the Salahan checkpoint on Route HYENA EAST who was the Malik of Salehan's brother. Reports came in that the Taliban were being invited into Salehan, and concern was expressed in Canadian circles that an IED cell was on its way to work out of the community. The new chief had no issue with deploying police to Nakhonay and made that happen, to the chagrin of the police officers who actually had to go and live there. The medical absence of Haji Baran positively contributed to the improved policing in the district.¹³⁷

Eventually, thanks to police information, the remnants of the Nabi Network were identified to be still operating from Haji Habibollah, south of Bazaar-e Panjwayi. 2nd Kandak planned Operation OBEH SURKH and, with a platoon from Charles Company alongside, an Afghan infantry company cleared Haji Habibollah on 21 May and established

an Afghan army position to maintain security in the area. There was a brief firefight and the Afghans captured the gunmen.¹³⁸ Haji Habibollah now became the ‘front line’ and the insurgents engaged the position with small arms fire on occasion. Casualties were exchanged on both sides, and again gunmen were arrested by the Afghans. OBEH SURKH likely contributed to improved security in Bazaar-e Panjwayi by keeping the insurgents out of their traditional staging area into the town.

Maj Eleanor Taylor and Charles Company were confronted with a number of problems. The 28 Easting remained a physical as well as psychological front line, while Taylor had to maintain the security of Route BROWN and the HYENA junction. There were three communities that needed patrolling and security: Na’al Bazaar and Pay-e Moluk to the west of BROWN; the collection of communities east of BROWN to the Sperwan communities east of the forward operating base; and the communities to the east and south-east of the base, collectively known as Sketcha (This was the approximate area of the old Stability Box Sperwan described in Chapters 3 and 4).¹³⁹

To accomplish these tasks, there was Charles Company; an Afghan infantry company from 2nd Kandak; three platoons from Weapons Company, 2nd Kandak in the three positions along HYENA; and the Canadian and Afghan artillery troops. Capt Mike Mendyka’s Recce Platoon augmented Charles Company.

Charles Company, during their patrols, learned that the same intimidation tactics employed in central-eastern Panjwayi were also directed against road workers on Route BROWN. One elder was contacted by cell phone by an individual claiming to represent an insurgent commander. The elder asked for the reasons for the threats and for permission to work so that he and his men could feed their families. He then challenged the caller and demanded to know who his commander was. The insurgent demurred and hung up. The elder contacted CIMIC and said they would continue the work if they had security.¹⁴⁰

But there were no police. The Afghan company, now with no mentors, would not conduct multi-day operations on its own or with Charles Company. Canadian platoons were cut away for higher priority tasks elsewhere, and then there was HLTA, which reduced the number of effectives. There were simply not enough forces to attain the primary objective of protecting the population. The constant ‘shoot n’ scoot’ tactics employed by the enemy produced disproportionate heightened awareness among the coalition forces.¹⁴¹ Several 25mm engagements against insurgents emplacing IEDs on the culverts took place, however, and in all cases the insurgents were killed.¹⁴² EOD was called out on another device, which detonated and wounded one of the team. The enemy continued to emplace IEDs along BROWN and Charles Company was amazed at how it could be done while the road was under observation. An IED find by locals in one of the culverts resulted in

the deployment of a patrol to assess the device and wait for EOD. The enemy engaged the patrol with small arms fire. A Canadian soldier triggered another IED during this action, wounding him.¹⁴³ A more brazen incident on 13 May involved a simultaneous attack against the Afghan troops at OP Kyber and an RPG team that engaged a gravel truck convoy which subsequently accelerated out of the kill zone. The ambush force consisted of disciplined, out of area fighters.¹⁴⁴

As a result Maj Taylor could not saturate the communities around Sperwar Ghar and could not generate the protective effects required for any CIMIC or development activities by assigning platoons to specific communities. Consequently, she shifted the company's mission to disrupt the enemy in the area in order to protect the population. Random patrols and other measures were employed but it was evident to the population that they did not feel secure with government and coalition forces and they essentially shut down contact with Charles Company and closed Na'al bazaar.¹⁴⁵

The Recce Squadron continued its tedious but crucial task of keeping 'eyes on' the routes between Bazaar-e Panjwayi and the communities in central-eastern Panjwayi. OP Cliff, a desolate position full of moon dust and large, hot rocks, was instrumental in keeping the 'five fingers' road junction under surveillance. However, on 24 May a resupply run to OP Cliff was targeted with an IED that killed Tpr Larry Rudd of the RCD and wounded five others.¹⁴⁶

A Company continued to patrol the central-eastern communities with their Afghan partners from 2nd Kandak. They received multiple reports of insurgent intimidation from people in and around Chalghowr. The enemy now openly engaged an A Company patrol in daylight. In a running gunfight, the Canadians bagged an insurgent. This particular corpse was equipped with a tactical vest and wore Merrell hiking boots, not the sort of equipment local Taliban used.¹⁴⁷ The following day, the enemy engaged COP Panjsher with small arms fire. Discussions with locals revealed that the enemy had, by now, established a curfew in Chalghowr, that anybody seen on the streets would be shot, and all antennas had to be taken down. Cell phone users would be fined.¹⁴⁸ A Company increased the number of patrols to provide security.

By the end of May, there were continuous engagements on Route BROWN, in Nakhonay, south of Haji Habibollah, and now Chalghowr. IEDs now appeared regularly on Route LAKE EFFECT and one targeted the TAC HQ convoy carrying the 1 RCR Battle Group deputy commanding officer. Shuras were cancelled, and no headway was made at the District Development Assembly. District Governor Haji Baran was away for medical reasons, so there was little or no leadership. Panjwayi was, once again, in trouble. The only apparent relief was the removal of insurgent commander Haji Amir by coalition

forces on 30 May in Panjwayi district. This action generated a significant amount of useful paranoia in the Taliban leadership ranks as they wondered who sold Haji Amir out and they ruthlessly scoured their ranks looking for a traitor that might not have even existed, producing even more disruption.¹⁴⁹

Capt Mike Mendyka's Recce Platoon conducted close target reconnaissance and close covert observation tasks, usually in support of Clear operations 24 to 48 hours before they were launched. This included acquisition of 'local pattern of life' information. Over on Route HYENA, Recce Platoon emplaced a camouflaged remote infrared camera and collected movements data for several weeks. Abandoned compound roofs and high ground were also employed as observation posts. Mendyka's recce patrolmen sought signs of IED emplacement, tracked persons of interest, acted as 'human terrain' collectors, and provided LCol Mialkowski with 'brown SA' terrain data. Recce Platoon operated all over Panjwayi District accompanying patrols or occupying covert 'hides' on Salavat Ghar and other locations.¹⁵⁰ These capabilities contributed to the granular definition of key areas that were not under regular observation and enhanced battle group operations significantly.

Counter-IED Operations in 2010

There were significant changes to counter-IED operations by 2010. The focus of this effort was now EOD Squadron. Philosophically, EOD Squadron moved away from "attack the network" as its predecessors had, to "defeat the device". The "attack the network" approach now became a higher-order fight involving Regional Command (South) and the specialized integrated American units that were flowing into Kandahar. The ASIC assumed more responsibility for C-IED intelligence while the EOD Squadron fed technical intelligence to it as it was collected. The lab was also taken over by the ASIC and physical component and biological analysis responsibilities were handled elsewhere. EOD Squadron remained in charge of "prepare the force" training. It also deployed four C-IED teams that could conduct technical exploitation and also took over responsibility for the 'B-OMLT', a team training the Afghan army in counter-IED techniques.¹⁵¹

The deployment of more Cougar C-IED team vehicles facilitated EOD operations. Each team could conduct operations against the device as well as technically exploit it all at once. The main 'bot' used by the teams remained the Telerob EOD, though a lightweight 'bot' called the Dragon Runner was also introduced at this time. The aging Vanguard was no longer used.¹⁵² The American Task Force THOR and the Canadian EROC teams, which were part of the C-IED effort but were not part of EOD Squadron, continued with route clearance operations on a routine basis in the area of operations. If they found a device, an EOD team would roll out and deal with it.

Enemy IED makers continued to innovate. By now they understood electronic counter-measures and its limitations. This was not just from trial-and-error use against Canadian troops. The bomb makers had access to continuation training provided by specialist personnel infiltrated into their operational areas, and they could rely on a virtual encyclopedia of data built up and traded by a variety of insurgent groups inside and outside of Afghanistan.

There were more and more victim-operated devices, many of them initiated by anti-personnel mines. AP mines were not improvised devices, that is, they were brought in from Iran and Pakistan. Iranian anti-tank mines were increasingly prevalent throughout 2010. Thus far, explosively-formed penetrators manufactured in Iran and used against American forces in Iraq had not been used in Kandahar. Though the use of radio-controlled devices decreased, they were still in use and there was evidence that their placement exploited the insurgents' knowledge of electronic countermeasures.¹⁵³

The most important change from a Canadian perspective was the Directional Fragmentation Charge, formerly called the Direct Fire Fragmentation Charge. The DFC was an improvised weapon using a shell casing, home-made explosive, and rocks, nuts, bolts, or whatever was available, as shrapnel. These weapons were buried in mud walls at head and shoulder-level or in trees and designed to decapitate personnel. Some were triggered by command pull, others by command wire.¹⁵⁴

The Canadian assessment was that IEDs were essentially tactical platoon-level weapons laid by sappers, as opposed to 'operational/strategic' devices designed for mass casualties and national information operations effects. Suicide IED terrorism remained a highly-specialized game played by professional cells that were involved in the religious-ideological nature of the larger conflict. The tracks for those operations led back to madrassas in Pakistan and increasingly outside of Canada's diminishing area of operations in Kandahar Province.¹⁵⁵

The Ménard Affair and Vance's Return

On 25 March BGen Ménard experienced a negligent discharge of his weapon at Kandahar Air Field in which 3 to 5 rounds from his weapon were discharged as he was getting into a helicopter with the Chief of Defence Staff. An investigation into the event started the next day. On 16 April, nearly three weeks later, the Montreal Gazette exposed the fact that there had been a negligent discharge. Hyper-patriotic elements in the American media, still upset about the Tarnak Bridge event and Ménard's perceived role in it, took fresh aim at the TF Kandahar commander and dug for more detrimental information to use against him. In due course it was revealed that BGen Ménard had an inappropriate relationship with a subordinate while in-theatre and had, in fact, interfered with an investigation into that relationship. This information proliferated rapidly throughout the mediasphere, though it was already common knowledge in Canadian Army circles.¹⁵⁶



Photo Credit: Author

Once Canadian troops shifted away from mounted operations and focused on local patrol tasks, the insurgents also altered their tactics and employed anti-personnel IEDs in the form of the Directional Fragmentation Charge or DFC. This DFC uses a Russian 152mm shell casing filled with home-made explosives, rocks, and nails.

This affair brought Canadian Army-U.S. Army relations in Kandahar to a new low. American military culture looked on extra-marital affairs with a jaundiced eye and such affairs were grounds for dismissal in their system. Canadian military culture tolerated

extra-marital affairs, but drew the line at fraternization in-theatre. That only added to the existing problems and perceptions of problems between the various allied commanders. The fact that there was some form of sex scandal, no matter how benign by North American standards, was potentially problematic in southern Afghan culture. The Taliban, of course, could now portray ISAF leaders as adulterers (who can be executed under stricter forms of Islamic law) and morally unfit rulers.¹⁵⁷

Ménard was, by this time, exhibiting behaviour that greatly concerned his staff. Opposition to his extra-marital affair led his aide to request re-assignment to the Camp Nathan Smith. Deputy Commander Col Simon Hetherington finally had enough of the deteriorating situation and informed LGen Marc Lessard, CEFCOM commander, that the leadership situation was untenable.¹⁵⁸ BGen Dan Ménard was relieved of command on 29 May 2010 and sent back to Canada to face court-martial. Claims of ‘victory’ by American media continued to poison the well with the Americans and made it all the more difficult for Ménard’s successor, BGen Jon Vance, to recover the Canadian position in Kandahar province.

At the same time, the Canadian-American relationship, badly damaged over the past six months, required special handling from both sides. Col Hetherington took the lead by gripping his staff and issuing blanket instructions to stop bad-mouthing the Americans. This was no longer 2006, Canada was no longer running the show, and a handover to the incoming American units was the plan, not the need to artificially maintain independent Canadian operations.¹⁵⁹

BGen Jon Vance was driving from Ottawa to Kingston and had just turned onto Highway 416 when his Blackberry rang. “It was General Leslie. He asked me if I was driving. I said yes. He said, ‘Pull over.’ So I did. And then he explained that General Ménard was being removed from command and that they want me to go back and reassume command of the task force. I said yes.”¹⁶⁰

On his arrival at TF Kandahar, Vance learned just how far things had gone astray. To him, the existing plan was essentially “KALAY on steroids”. What Canada had done in Kandahar in the past was, for the most part, being done by Carter’s Regional Command (South). The PRT was no longer focused on supporting the counterinsurgency effort, which in Vance’s view undermined everything he and his headquarters had hoped to accomplish back in 2009. The civil-military relationship in Afghanistan was “totally fucked” whether it was between the PRT and TF Kandahar or TF Kandahar and Regional Command (South). TF Kandahar did not appear to Vance to be part of the RC (South) battle plan, and to the Canadian staff RC (South) was merely another command to bypass in order to get things done. It even appeared as though RC (South) staff was directly supervising TF Kandahar staff in some areas. All of this had, over time, produced an extremely toxic

working relationship between the two headquarters, with little or no respect. Even the padre was affected by the low morale in TF Kandahar headquarters. Operation HAMKARI, Vance learned, was being run by RC (South) staff who bypassed Ménard and tasked Canadian staff in TF Kandahar. They claimed that Ménard could not get “energized” on the Kandahar City security plan and thus had to reach down. It took Vance a whole week to sort out this incursion by the higher headquarters.¹⁶¹

As for the relationship with the Americans, Vance built on Hetherington’s foundations and on his already considerable personal relationships with American officers who remained in Afghanistan from the time he commanded TF Kandahar. He found he had substantial ‘street cred’ and worked hard to reverse the damage.¹⁶²

One of the first issues Vance had to address was the handover of Zharey district and Arghandab district to the 2nd Brigade, 101st Airmobile Division. That complex hand off, from two American battalions from two different brigades but under the tactical control of Task Force Kandahar, to an American brigade, had to be handled carefully and deliberately. Similarly, 4th Brigade from the 82nd Airborne Division was coming in to command Kandahar City, so that there were two complex transitions going on nearly simultaneously. Canadian units from those other districts had to be consolidated in Panjwayi and Dand. Vance was particularly concerned about the decision to relinquish command and control of Kandahar City and believed that the civilians at the PRT “felt abandoned” in the process.¹⁶³

Vance even hoped to transfer Dand district to Afghan forces and move 1-71 Cavalry west into Panjwayi district. He also wanted to complete the Canadian Army’s pull out from the PRT and “re-invest” those resources in the fight in Panjwayi and Dand. But everything had to be deliberate and it had to be a proper handover, not a repeat performance of 2005 where the American PRT did not conduct a proper handover with the incoming Canadian PRT. Ultimately, Vance wanted to present BGen Dean Milner and his headquarters, arriving to replace him in September, with a functional operational design for the remainder of Canada’s tenure in Kandahar.¹⁶⁴

Panjwayi District Operations, June 2010

For the first half of June, the battle group and 2nd Kandak confronted the insurgents in three areas: Sperwan Ghar and vicinity; Nakhonay, and now Chalgwor. Maj Eleanor Taylor’s Charles Company continued to conduct disruption operations in the Sperwan Ghar area communities, though there was little that could be accomplished on the development front there. There was frequent enemy contact, usually of the ‘shoot n’ scoot’ variety, but there were also significantly high levels of intimidation. One patrol produced a TIC which escalated into 81mm mortar use and a four-man enemy team was apprehended after a firefight.¹⁶⁵ (see Figure 7-6)

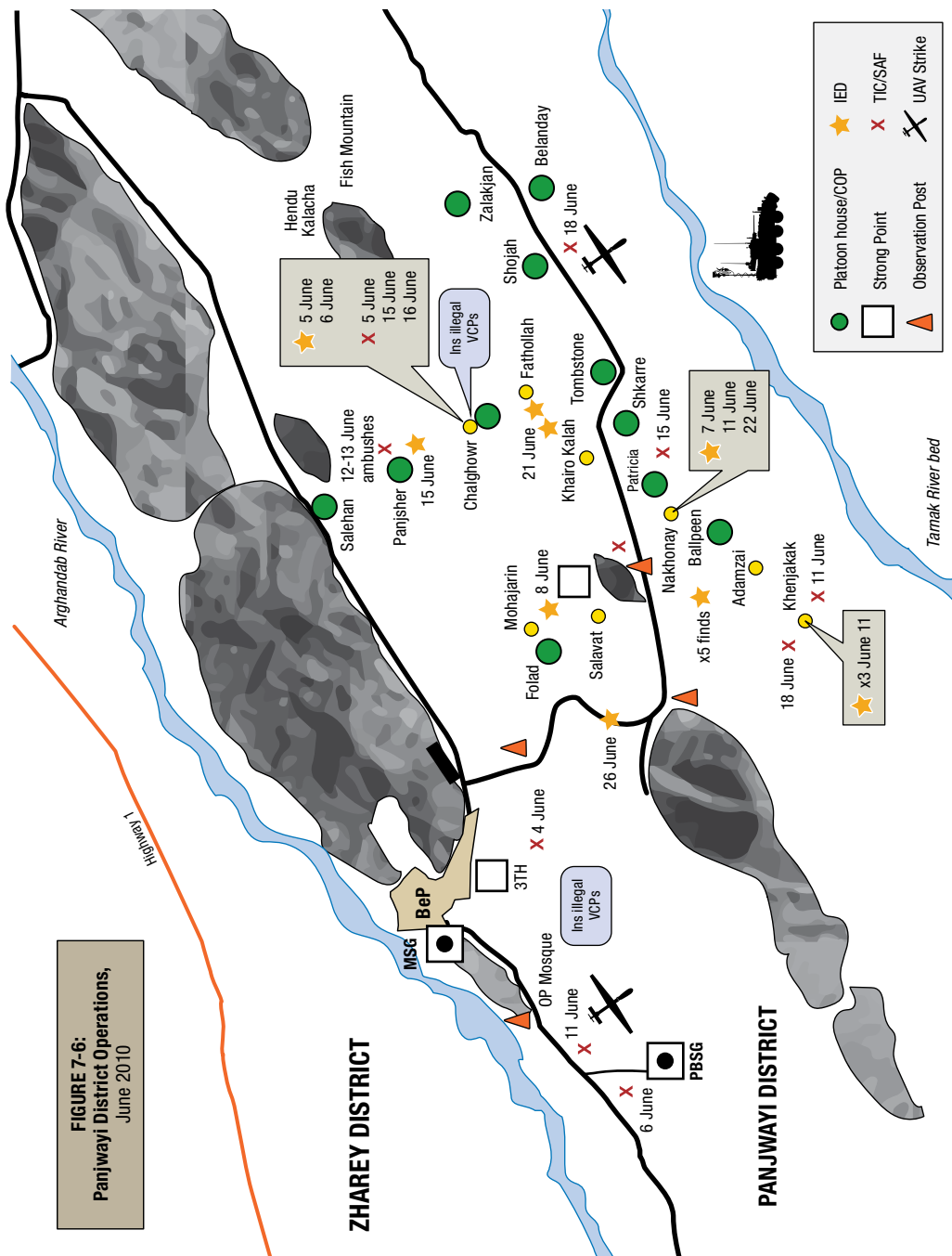


Figure 7-6: Panjwayi District Operations, June 2010

The ground cover, pushed back earlier in the year, grew with a vengeance and obscured observation down Route BROWN. An aerostat was now operational, however, which significantly improved surveillance capabilities. Patrols continued to meet with local elders, who passed on bad news: the bazaar was nearly closed because of the Taliban presence, and the insurgents were warning the elders not to have anything to do with the district government. There were simply not enough personnel to keep a grip on the two communities near Route BROWN. The Sperwan shura now went unattended.¹⁶⁶

The situation south of Bazaar-e Panjwayi was sporadically active. The aerostat at Sperwan Ghar picked up a six-man enemy IED emplacement team south of Route HYENA on 11 June. A Predator was in the area and vectored onto the team and engaged it with a Hellfire. Two were killed and the wounded retreated to a pair of compounds south and east of the strike site. Charles Company deployed a platoon and raided the compounds. In one they discovered two large map models made of rocks of Canadian and Afghan positions. A number of IEDs were also exploited.¹⁶⁷

Around this time Charles Company became aware that the insurgents were conducting vehicle checkpoints south and west of Haji Habibollah. Once again, the aerostat proved its value and the observers spotted four motorcycle-equipped insurgents stopping and searching vehicles. The police refused to react and claimed the road was probably IED'd, so a Canadian platoon moved to engage the enemy group. An MQ-1 Predator came on line and a pair of F-16s were also made available. As the Canadian platoon moved up an enemy RPG team took up positions: one F-16 attempted to engage the target and missed. The enemy escaped.¹⁶⁸

The appearance of illegal vehicle checkpoints was of some concern. This was yet another weapon the insurgency used to establish power over the population and challenge the legitimacy of the government. Once the spotters knew what to look for, more illegal VCP's were identified. There was, however, no immediate solution.

Nakhonay remained an arena for confrontation in June. The primary indicator that the situation had deteriorated was the return of Haji Malim and his successful interference with the Nakhonay shura. In this he was supported with the covert inclusion of a Taliban commander on the shura who intimidated the rest of the leaders. This particular commander was known to be highly connected to the insurgent leadership and had the effect of suppressing any zeal for projects or programs. Emboldened by this support, Malim increased his intransigence. All community development projects now shut down due to lack of Afghan participation. Indeed, it turned out the Taliban were paying Nakhonians NOT to work and this was a source of power for Malim, who was the mediator.¹⁶⁹

This situation led directly to a spate of attacks against coalition forces. Unfortunately Sgt Martin Goudreault, a combat engineer from 23 Fd Sqn, was killed on 6 June by an IED. On 11 June, there were four IED strikes on the roads between Nakhonay and Kenjakak, with no casualties. B Company surged out and acting on local information found an IED cache just west of Nakhonay. There were a pair of attacks on 15 and 18 June directed against Canadian patrols. The piece de resistance was a coordinated assault on COP Ballpeen from four different positions accompanied by 82mm recoilless rifle fire.¹⁷⁰



Photo Credit: Author

Route LAKE EFFECT, the main service route from Bazaar-e Panjwayi to Dand and then into Kandahar City, ran past the problematic community of Nakhonay. The route was eventually paved to deter IED emplacement. Here a Canadian patrol moves east along LAKE EFFECT with Khabari Ghar in the distance and Observation Post CLIFF to the left.

The new enemy ‘front’ in Panjwayi was Chalgowr. ISTAR reportage suggested that there were four Taliban sub-commanders and about 25 insurgents equipped with new Russian weapons ensconced in the community, but it was not clear what their intentions were.¹⁷¹ Were they part of the ratline into the city, or were they there to take pressure off Nakhonay? This community had not been a problem for months but on 5 June a Canadian and Afghan patrol led by O Company was shot at with small arms fire and sustained a

casualty in the area. The next day, while looking into a local tip about IEDs, a dismounted Canadian patrol triggered a device, wounding five. While exploiting the site, another device detonated, wounding a sixth soldier. EOD determined that the IED consisted of five mortar rounds attached to a PMN anti-personnel mine employing Iranian det cord. The day after, another patrol hit an IED. ISTAR reportage indicated that the insurgents were trying to generate casualties so they could target and shoot down a MEDEVAC helicopter. LCol Mialkowski closed all the patrol routes around the community.¹⁷²

Pattern-of-life analysis determined that there was practically no local movement on the streets and civilians were even seen leaving the area. The battle group and its Afghan partners probed again and, while returning to Combat Outpost Panjsher, IEDs were found on two occasions on exfiltration routes used by the patrols. On 12 June a patrol was hit with a complex ambush. The patrol fought through the ambush but the enemy did not disengage and appeared to be operating with another insurgent sub-unit throughout the fight.¹⁷³

Canadian aerial resources were applied to define the problem. A Heron UAV spotted insurgent vehicle checkpoints in Chalghowr which analysts interpreted to be signs of a deepening enemy grip on the community. A CH-146 Griffon equipped with an MX-15 pod also spotted possible IED emplacement. Another patrol probed the perimeter but was hit with another complex ambush. The Heron feed was instrumental in moving the patrol away from possible IED sites and enemy ambush positions. The emboldened insurgents pushed out IEDs to routes closer to Combat Outpost Panjsher: a route clearance team was hit while clearing the roads, disabling a Husky and its trailer.¹⁷⁴

As more ISTAR resources were focused on Chalghowr, the nature of the enemy dispositions became clearer. IED emplacers laid a belt of devices and then deactivated them at particular times so the locals could work in the fields. There was a core of ten Pakistani insurgents working with fifteen local fighters. They understood Canadian and ISAF rules of engagement, in that they moved about while concealing their weapons. In some cases they did not carry weapons. Motorcycles were the preferred means to react to Canadian and Afghan patrols: the insurgents also had a spotting network with communications established to support it. They also had plans to assassinate or kidnap any government official they could in the surrounding area.¹⁷⁵

The Chalghowr insurgency, however, was internally problematic. On 14 June five insurgent trainees detonated their own IED, killing four of their number and seriously wounding another. The blast also killed five children who were also present. As if demonstrating that they were still in the fight, the insurgents initiated a contact with a Canadian patrol. One Canadian was wounded in the volley of RPG and small arms fire. Pte John Nelson ran through enemy fire to recover the injured soldier and administer first aid. A CH-146 Griffon came on station and the insurgents fled to get away from

the helicopter. At this time, the TF Kandahar operations centre picked up enemy movement near COP Shojah from a MQ-1 Predator feed. An illumination round was fired to flush this team out of the trees, but they merely recovered the carrier round for later use as an IED. The MQ-1 dropped a Hellfire, but it missed. Tracking the fleeing enemy personnel, another Hellfire was dropped, finally taking them out. Four insurgents were killed, and two wounded in the strike. Pte John Nelson was awarded the Medal of Military Valour for his actions.¹⁷⁶

At the EROC and TF Thor clearance teams continued to hit IED after IED on the main routes in the eastern Panjwayi area, battle procedure for Operation AZADI was in progress. The idea was to clear Chalgowr, but there was an issue with establishing an enduring presence. The problem was that the Afghan army company deployed in Mohajerin and Salavat would not deploy on the operation because there was no well in their combat outpost. While that problem was being resolved Nakhonay heated up again. On 21 June combat engineer Sgt James MacNeil tripped a secondary device while another IED was being exploited, killing him. This delayed AZADI temporarily, but on 23 June the battle group and the Afghan army and police established a cordon and started the Clear. Numerous in situ IEDs were found and destroyed, and an IED cache was discovered. Ten individuals tested positive for explosive residue and were detained. During the operation, a roving MQ-9 Reaper spotted an IED emplacing team and engaged and killed them. On the second day of Op AZADI, more and more IED making equipment was uncovered and on 25 June, the battle group withdrew. The enemy came right back in and started operating in Chalgowr the next day. They ordered that all of the food and items supplied to local people by the ISAF and Afghan forces be burned.¹⁷⁷

IEDs continued to generate casualties across the district as the clearance teams repeatedly struck them on main routes. Four Afghan soldiers were killed in one attack. A PMN mine was set up to kill an elder in the normally quiet town of Salavat. On their way to clear it, the reaction force convoy was attacked with an IED near OP Onya. The explosion catastrophically destroyed a clearly marked Bison ambulance, killing Pte Andrew Miller of 2 Field Ambulance and MCpl Kristal Giesebrecht of 1 Canadian Field Hospital, both medical personnel.¹⁷⁸

This event was not effectively exploited by TF Kandahar or the Government of Canada for its information operations potential. There were no public protests made by Canada or the Red Cross to the Taliban and its backers for the Miller/Giesebrecht killings, nor was there any Canadian or other media outcry over their deaths, certainly nothing proportional to the excessive public criticism of Canada for its detainee policies by both Canadian and non-Canadian groups. Human Rights Watch, for example, did not produce a detailed study castigating the Taliban for murdering ISAF medical personnel, yet that organization

CHAPTER SEVEN



Photo Credit: Author



Photo Credit: Author

The insurgents sometimes used nomadic encampments as cover for their activities. After a particularly vicious IED attack against a Canadian ambulance that killed two medics, Afghan police with Canadian infantry as the outer cordon deploy to search one such camp for the perpetrators.

and others like it continuously criticized ISAF and the Afghans for their alleged failings during the course of the conflict. At the same time, personnel from the Health Support Services unit at Kandahar Air Field agonized over the legal implications of Canadian patrols confiscating medical supplies cached by the Taliban.¹⁷⁹

Changes in Tack: Operation GADA HATSA and the Fighting Season

Within 36 hours of arriving in Kandahar, BGen Vance met with LCol Conrad Mialkowski:

He hauled us all in and said, “You guys, stop what you’re doing right now. You guys are acting like this is November, or January. You’re in a fighting season. We’re changing the rules right now. You are not conducting COIN. You have no ability to conduct COIN right now. Stop all the development you’re doing.” He said “We need to start doing very, very deliberate ops that are going to disrupt [enemy] activity.”¹⁸⁰

A week later, BGen Vance reported back to Ottawa that “With the fighting season well underway, characterized by an influx of foreign fighters to augment local insurgents, TF Kandahar has culminated in its ability to deliver COIN effects throughout much of the TFK Area of Operations.”¹⁸¹ Furthermore, the situation “necessitates the development of a new TFK operational design.”¹⁸² This was the basis of Operation GADA HATSA, the TF Kandahar Summer Campaign plan. Vance was determined to enhance force protection and, more importantly, regain the initiative.¹⁸³

GAD HATSA was the overarching concept for July and August. The battle group’s series of disrupt operations were dubbed AZADI 1 through 3 and focused on Sperwan-Bazaar-e Panjwayi area. Part II included any provision of support the Afghans and TF 1-71 Cav needed for operations into Malajat and surrounding areas; operations against any insurgent vehicle checkpoints; and any assistance required to support HAMKARI police strong points in the south west of Kandahar City. Part III was ill-defined. If operations in District 6 or Malajat needed support, or a sweep into Zhalakan area was required, TF Kandahar was prepared to provide it. These moves were provisional and subject to change on a moment’s notice. For example, AZADI 3 was later shifted to target Kenjakak. An offshoot contingency plan, NOLAI, was a combined battle group–2nd Kandak –special operations TF 58 sweep into Nakhonay, possible for a Hold. TF 1-71 Cav had ideas about operations along the Dowry River. The idea behind the planning was to be unpredictable and disruptive in Panjwayi but still accomplish all of the tasks demanded by HAMKARI.¹⁸⁴

A critical aspect of the summer campaign was the acceptance by all parties that development was winding down for the time being. Road construction, on the other hand, had to continue in part because of force protection issues vis-à-vis IEDs.

TF Kandahar focused those efforts on the connector roads in and out of the eastern Panjwayi communities, as opposed to the large projects which were supposedly being handled by Saita. The break with the PRT meant that paving could be handled immediately using Commanders Contingency Fund monies instead of waiting for the glacier-like process at the provincial level to produce results. The focused areas became Route BROWN near Sperwan Ghar; Walakan to Chineh; and Haji Baba-Route LAKE EFFECT. The preferred mechanisms to handle these tasks were the Engineer Construction Squadron and the Specialist Engineer Team using their contacts with local contractors.¹⁸⁵

Another critical aspect of the plan involved recovering access to Canadian helicopter airlift from coalition pools and redirecting it for Canadian purposes. A series of internal air routes were re-jigged so that there was reduced reliance on ground transport, especially during the summer when IEDs were more prevalent.¹⁸⁶

The psychological impact of having BGen Vance in the lead at this time was considerable. His experience was recognized by allies, particularly by the Afghans and Americans, and this generated confidence in the continuously demoralized atmosphere surrounding ISAF during the summer of 2010. GAD HATSA was the expression of this recovered confidence.

Dand District Operations, June 2010

Dand remained a development and security success story well into the summer. Reports from the various Canadian entities engaged in Dand confirmed that District Governor Nazek was integrating all of the governance and development components. The community development councils were up and operating and were connecting to the District Development Assembly. The OCC-D (Dand) was “optimistic” on the development front. The P-OMLT, however, reported that the Dand police were seriously underequipped. They had five operational vehicles and had to hitch rides with American patrols from TF 1-71 Cavalry. Their effectiveness was demonstrated, however, when they tracked and captured a suicide vehicle-borne IED before it could be employed.¹⁸⁷

The main security problem in Dand, as identified by Lt Col Paganini’s recon troops, was Gorgan. They had ISTAR reportage of possible IED emplacement and they heard there was a Taliban district shadow governor in that area. Rumours flowed that Gorgan also had an illegal insurgent vehicle checkpoint.¹⁸⁸

On 24 June TF 1-71 Cav reported that there was an IED detonation in Gorgan but it was the emplacers who triggered it themselves. TF 1-71 Cav had further information that the Gorgan malik was communicating with the Taliban shadow governor and it looked like a replay of the Nakhonay-Malim problem all over again. The malik told the Gorgan elders that the IED explosion was in fact caused by an ISAF helicopter and the men were innocent. TF 1-71 Cav also picked up indicators that the enemy was probing the edges

of Dand, trying to find a lodgment. Gorgan was one area of interest, but they were trying to make inroads in Chineh as well with propaganda operations. Resources were applied to counter this development. TF 1-71 Cav's assessment was that the enemy was inexperienced and nascent- for the time being.¹⁸⁹

More Command Turbulence: McChrystal Resigns, June 2010

The primary proponent of a counterinsurgency strategy in Afghanistan, General Stanley McChrystal, was fired on 22 June 2010 by President Obama because of intemperate remarks made to a reporter by his staff regarding senior American political figures and allies. McChrystal's removal had several effects. First, McChrystal's removal enhanced the "Afghanistan Good Enough" school of thought in American strategic circles whose proponents wanted to de-emphasize counterinsurgency operations. Second, the removal cut the legs out from under MOSHTARAK Phase III as a mechanism to maintain the operational momentum established under MOSHTARAK Phase I and II. And, by the end of June 2010, a reporter noted that "very quietly, the much ballyhooed Kandahar offensive slips from public view."¹⁹⁰

Within the space of six months, the military direction of operations in Kandahar province suffered from the unprecedented cumulative effects of the removals of one battalion commander, one task force brigade commander, a brigadier at Regional Command (South) and ultimately the ISAF force commander. The effectiveness of two more brigade commanders was seriously in question during this time.

Ironically, the most stable pillar of continuity during this time became Maj Gen Nick Carter and his staff at Regional Command (South). And, now that Regional Command (South) had already shot its bolt in Helmand, it could now focus on Kandahar. With the return of BGen Jon Vance in June, Carter could rely on an experienced Afghan hand and rebuild relationships between the two commands, despite an uncertain strategic future.

McChrystal was replaced with Gen David Petraeus, who was publicly credited with turning around the situation in Iraq. Arriving in July, Petraeus immediately focused his attention on what was happening in Kandahar. He was directed by Obama to, in the words of his biographer, "create the conditions for an end state that was tolerable: an Afghanistan that could secure and govern itself sufficiently to avoid once again becoming a safe haven for Al-Qaeda."¹⁹¹ And he was given one year to do that.

Petraeus's first visit was to Kandahar:

His battlefield circulation to visit the Canadians in the Taliban stronghold of Kandahar was designed to send a message: The alliance will not be deterred ... Petraeus had worked hard while at Central Command to continue to engage the Canadians, who had announced

earlier that year the end of their mission in Afghanistan to be the summer of 2011 ... Petraeus considered the coalition to be hugely important and wanted support from all the coalition contributing countries as long as he could keep it.¹⁹²

The ongoing effort to repair Canadian–American relations was now bolstered by COMISAF himself and, with Vance on the other side of the divide, the chasm seemed just that much narrower than it had earlier in 2010.

Kandahar City Assassination Campaign, June–July 2010

Enemy operations in Kandahar City shifted yet again by June as more and more IED cells were suppressed by coalition and Afghan operations. A series of operations outside the city picked off more and more enemy leaders, while Operation ATAL maintained the pressure within the city which in turn limited the enemy's freedom of movement. The situation was a significant turnaround in that senior enemy leadership now wanted commanders in Kandahar City to relocate their resources and refit elsewhere to prevent them from being neutralized by the security forces.¹⁹³

The Afghan death toll continued to climb, however, as more and more enemy personnel turned in their AK-47s and were issued pistols and motorcycles. One rural insurgent network from the districts was completely re-roled and fed back into the maw.¹⁹⁴ Two other autonomous cells were activated and started operations. Their targets included a variety of people: A representative of the phone company. A police commander in District 9. A retired NDS officer. A police driver. An office worker in the prosecutor's office. An Afghan police weapons technician.¹⁹⁵

Another addition to enemy TTPs was noted at the end of June when two alleged informers were found hanged in District 8. That was new in the city and indicated that a Taliban court was now active trying, sentencing, and executing people right in the city. This was a direct challenge to the legitimacy of the state.¹⁹⁶ The situation was just too terrifying for the Afghan police head of intelligence. He packed up and left Kandahar.

The death toll from the assassination campaign continued to rise. Abdul Jabbar, the increasingly effective district leader in Arghandab, was killed along with his son and bodyguard by a carefully-planned vehicle borne IED on 4 July. There were three deaths the next day, all in District 2. All three were people who worked with the security forces and all three were killed by two-man teams equipped with pistols and mounted on motorcycles. One team was captured by the police. Another police officer was assassinated as he left a mosque, and there was an attempt against a provincial council member. In a strange twist, a donkey was converted into an IED and used against a police target in the city, killing a child.¹⁹⁷

In another strange development, the Taliban opened a tip line so local people could inform on government employees. The insurgents also added a help line so people could complain about lack of development in their neighbourhoods. Police analysis concluded that mullahs in some mosques were identifying government workers so that these people could be targeted by the hit teams thus confirming yet again that religious engagement was a crucial element of the coalition's fight.¹⁹⁸

The assassination campaign motivated President Hamid Karzai to visit Kandahar City and hold a shura with district leaders and elders:

A significant number of the Kandahar City district leaders do not believe that HAMKARI will have a significant effect, even though they support the operation. They are concerned that there are not enough resources committed to the operation and they will lack authority to hold off the insurgents once they return to their villages without adequate support from ANSF and CF. They are pleased with the concept of negotiating with the moderate Taliban, but would like the ability to negotiate at the local level. Considering that many low-level fighters are from the same tribes as they are, low-level insurgents are more likely to trust the village elder.¹⁹⁹

Meanwhile, SOF operations were underway. One important raid was conducted against a Taliban IED specialist. Eight enemy were killed and the facility exploited. Further information led to a cache of ten command wire IEDs, all ready to go. Additional information came in that a major operation was being planned, possibly against Sarposa Prison or FOB Ghecko.²⁰⁰

The Afghan authorities decided to go hard into Malajat and District 7 which was adjacent to Sarposa Prison, and the location of a cluster of assassinations. Five hundred army and police surged into the troublesome district on 8-9 July but Operation KHAYBER accomplished nothing in terms of detainees, caches, or information and was likely compromised before it could be launched.²⁰¹

It is possible, however, that Operation KHAYBER threw off the planned Sarposa Prison attack. The enemy shifted to the new Afghan National Civil Order Police headquarters in the west end of the city. At 2120 hours on 13 July a suicide vehicle-borne IED was used to breach into the base, and a pair of suicide bombers on foot exploited the breach carrying RPGs, which they fired at the security forces before blowing themselves up. Responding Afghan and American units were hit by IEDs as they moved into the area. Initial estimates were three American dead, fifteen Americans wounded, one ANCOP dead, eight ANCOP wounded, and five local nationals killed. The fact that the enemy was repelled at the wall of the base and could not penetrate further into the complex and kill more of the critically-needed ANCOP who were scheduled to be part of future operations in Panjwayi was considered significant by TF Kandahar.²⁰²

TF Kandahar handed over Combined Team Kandahar City to the incoming American units on 15 July and stepped back from operations in the city. There was one last assassination that affected Canadians. Fida Mohammad worked at Camp Nathan Smith as the gardener at least since the Canadians under Col Steve Bowes took over the Provincial Reconstruction Team in 2005 and possibly before that. Known as Popeye, Fida handled groundskeeping while his son played videogames with the Canadian troops. The usually silent but smiling Popeye would wave as he drove around in his Gator, watering the trees. On his way out of the gate on the night of 17 July, he waved to Maj Steve Knowell, I Company OC, and Dr. Sean Maloney, the Army historian, who were standing next to the Berry Room. Minutes after he exited the gate, a motorcycle pulled up and Popeye was thrust against a wall by two men. A pistol was placed under his chin and the trigger pulled repeatedly. Fida Mohammad, a gentle, inoffensive father and gardener, was believed to have been murdered by the Taliban in order to terrorize the staff at the PRT (though a family dispute may have also played a role in the killing). At his memorial service two days later, he was declared a *shahid*.



Photo Credit: Courtesy Maj Tammy Tremblay

The Camp Nathan Smith gardener, Fida Mohammad, was known as Popeye to the Canadians. Assassinated by the Taliban to terrorize the civilian staff, he was declared a *shahid*, or martyr, by the religious authorities.

The assassination shocked the PRT civilian staff into near-inaction for several days, while Maj Gordon Ohlke from ASIC (Forward), and Bill Harris, the State Department representative, stabilized and emotionally propped up the Canadian PRT leadership during that time. Colonel Tor Jan's men passed on that Fida Mohammad's killers had been identified, but they would be dealt with using Afghan methodology more closely associated with the Taliban period. Fida Mohammad's death was emblematic of the viciousness of the Taliban's campaign in southern Afghanistan.

Dand District Operations, July–August 2010

The development situation in Dand continued to improve in the summer of 2010 even though its security situation deteriorated. There was a lot of road work and retaining wall construction as agricultural engagement from the District Support Team took off throughout the district. Water testing was also introduced, and it uncovered unhealthy levels of E Coli and Arsenic in the well systems, leading to requests for better water treatment capabilities. On 5 July Dand was formally recognized as a district by the national government: this was a significant victory.²⁰³

However, the security forces were confronted with IED attack after IED attack daily for the first week in July. Eleven American soldiers and Afghan police were wounded, while SSgt Francis Cabacoy and PFC Edwin Wood were killed when their M-ATV was blown up while on patrol. Cold consolation came from the apprehension of a minor malik from a town near Gorgan who was involved in one of the attacks.

TF 1-71, the Afghan police, and the P-OMLT mounted up for a raid into the 'Fish Mountain' area. Operation CHANGAK focused on the community of Walakan, where the M-ATV had been blown up, as well as Hendu Kalacheh, both of which housed IED production facilities. This seam was generally not frequently patrolled. It was south of Route HYENA EAST, northeast Chalgowr, and west of the insurgent hotbed of Malajat just over the mountains, but north of most coalition activity in Dand. Sweeping in on 10-11 July, eighty-seven people of interest were identified and handled by Canadian-mentored Afghan police for processing. During the course of the operation, however, there were two more IED strikes, wounding three and killing Sgt Jesse Ainsworth and Sgt Donald Edgerton of 1-71 Cavalry.

IEDs continued to be an issue and consequently RAID towers were installed at American forward operating bases. Their unblinking eyes spotted emplacement teams on two occasions: A-10 aircraft and MQ-9 Reapers were pushed to Dand and both teams were killed with bombs or Hellfires. The Afghan police followed up on information collected from the sites and raided an IED factory loaded with homemade explosives and 155mm illumination rounds.

District Governor Nazek moved down to Gorgan to speak with community leaders, who expressed interest in a school—and in letting the current malik go. They heard about Belanday school and were interested in having one as well. Nazek’s local diplomacy was considered a problem by the insurgents, who brought in a suicide bomber in an attempt to kill him. This attack did not succeed, but it killed five local people and generated significant outrage among the Dand population against the insurgents.

The major security issue, however, was identified by the Dand police. They understood the need for religious engagement, as did Nazek:

... [the district leader Nazek] issued a letter indicating that every mosque shall ensure their respective mullah is present with two elders. The district leader made claims that he would close the mosques if the mullahs did not participate. The P-OMLT and the district chief of police discussed the value of the shura and the significance of including and not alienating the mullahs. The importance of their involvement is significant. The mullahs have the capacity to include or incite the local population for good or ill depending on how they are approached and treated. [The district chief of police] intends to extend every courtesy in order to ensure they are at a minimal not antagonistic towards ANSF or ISAF.²⁰⁴

However, the Kandahar authorities’ neglect of the Dand police was wearing on him and his men. The Canadian P-OMLT worked with the battle group to release captured AK-47 weapons to the Dand police as an interim measure but that was not enough. The police went on strike and threatened to leave Dand by the end of August. They wanted Focused Police District Development training, weapons, vehicle, fuel and rations. The Canadian mentors reported that “This problem now stands to have operational impacts in undercutting significant gains made in governmental realms.”²⁰⁵

Panjwayi District Operations, July 2010

Throughout July and into August, 1 RCR Battle Group and 2nd Kandak felt the effects of the arrival in eastern Panjwayi of the Taliban commander Janan Agha, who was deployed in late June by the notorious Hafiz Majid to motivate the insurgency there.²⁰⁶ While the insurgents were reorganizing, LCol Mialkowski launched Operation AZADI 2 in the Sperwan area on 1 July: this was the next disrupt operation (see Figure 7-7). During the course of two days, Charles Company, augmented from the rest of the battle group, uncovered a small number of IEDs and had no contact. When the Canadians held a shura with the local leadership with Haji Baran in the lead, there was almost no attendance. That was chalked up to the “continued deterioration of District Governor Haji Baran’s influence in the area.”²⁰⁷

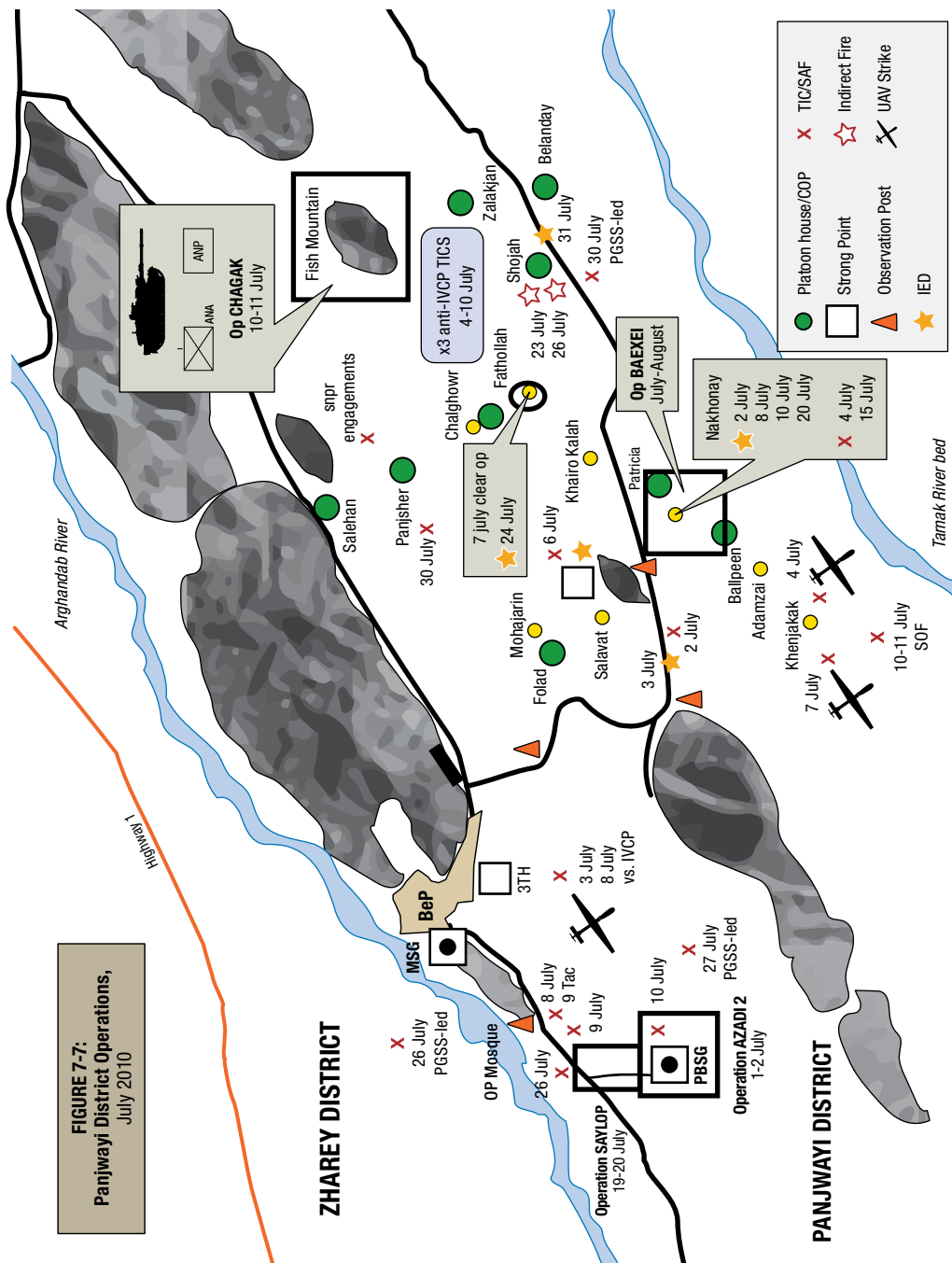


Figure 7-7: Panjwayi District Operations, July 2010

The insurgents, however, boldly attacked LCol Mialkowski's tactical headquarters as the convoy moved from Sperwan to Ma'Sum Ghar along Route HYENA. RSM Stu Hartwell's LAV III was engaged with a PKM machine gun and then hit with an RPG as the vehicle returned 25mm fire. The RPG round hit the ammunition storage bin and exploded. With smoke pouring out of the vehicle, RSM Hartwell was able to get his crew and a medic out of the vehicle as the ammunition cooked off.²⁰⁸ Snap vehicle checkpoints caught four individuals as they were exfiltrating the area on motorcycles and in a van, but this was not thought to be the ambush team. The next day a similar ambush was laid on in exactly the same area, with similar weapons, against a Charles Company platoon conducting a battle damage assessment. In a forty-minute TIC, two Canadians were wounded. 25mm fire drove the ambush party back to a grape hut which was then hit with 81mm mortar fire and a GBU-38 from an A-10 aircraft. While on its way back to Sperwan Ghar, the Canadian platoon was engaged again by RPG and small arms fire.²⁰⁹ The presence of an enemy team of 12 to 20 personnel that employed fire discipline, wore combat boots, and maintained a volume of fire that lasted over half an hour in the face of LAV III-equipped forces was a significant development.²¹⁰ Once more ISTAR scrutiny was applied to the area between Sperwan Ghar, Haji Habibollah, Bazaar-e Panjwayi, and observers noticed that there was a collection of insurgent vehicle checkpoints operating. Fly-bys by Griffon helicopters dispersed them but they quickly re-constituted. An MQ-9 Reaper came on station and observed weapons and an IED being loaded onto a motorcycle. The target was engaged with a pair of GBU-12 bombs. These were elements of the Hydari Group, brought in by the insurgent leaders to replace the now dead Nabi Group. The unblinking eye was now focused on this area throughout July.²¹¹

The two main problem areas in eastern Panjwayi district remained Chalthowr and Nakhonay. From these two locations insurgents pushed out to infect the communities that lay in between. O Company handled the area north of Route LAKE EFFECT, while B Company remained responsible for Nakhonay and environs.

Maj Steve Brown and O Company confronted two problems. There was insurgent infiltration of Salavat and Fatollah. This manifested itself with raft of IEDs, one of which killed an Afghan soldier, and 'shoot and scoot' small arms fire throughout July, but once a sweep through Salavat was conducted on 7 July, the area quieted down. Once CH-146 Griffon Weapons Teams were made available the emplacers and ambushers were shot up from the air on a regular basis as they retreated from their strikes.²¹²

The second problem was the area between COP Panjsher and Chalthowr. Here the insurgents initiated an attack against the outpost with a "high volume of fire" on 5 July and then established vehicle checkpoints to delineate or otherwise define a line to screen the town from the outpost. They backed this up with a sniper, who engaged COP Panjsher

CHAPTER SEVEN



Photo Credit: Author



Photo Credit: Author

Nakhonay was eventually surrounded by development projects and placed in the middle of a web of surveillance systems in order to isolate and sift out insurgent elements. Measures included paving projects, CIMIC activities, and patrols by Coyote vehicles from Recce Squadron.

on a regular basis. A sniper team from 1 RCR infiltrated the area and targeted the enemy spotter system that was monitoring the outpost. A cat and mouse game developed around COP Panjsher over the course of weeks as the platoon and the sniper team tried to take out the insurgent sniper. An uneasy standoff developed in this area as patrols sortied out irregularly but were unable to affect the situation in Chalgowr.²¹³

One Canadian-Afghan patrol tripped an IED, killing one Afghan. As the patrol established its cordon, they found two more IEDs before they could detonate. An orbiting CH-146 Griffon Weapons Team spotted women and children leaving the Foad community and then spotted a man with a phone and binoculars observing the events. As the helicopters prepared to engage, the spotter ran into a grape drying hut with another man. One Griffon fired into the hut, while the other shot the two insurgents when they ran out the other side.²¹⁴

The insurgents now focused on COP Shojah, which was engaged by enemy mortar teams regularly starting on 23 July. Griffon helicopters tracked a mortar team to a white van which departed the area before it could be engaged, while the platoon in Shojah determined that there was a network of enemy spotters equipped with communications operating around Shojah who could call down fire when the mortar team was deployed and in range of the outpost. The sophistication of the enemy system was such that the spotters could adjust the mortar fire but were still inexperienced and could not actually hit the outpost.²¹⁵ IEDs were placed around Fatollah at the same time: five of them resulted in strikes against Canadian and Afghan patrols, wounding several personnel. Another IED detonated and killed a child.

On 30 July, O Company was confronted with another complex tactical problem: an insurgent group attacked COP Panjsher from three different directions. The platoon opened up with 25mm cannon fire and 81mm mortar fire, pinning the enemy force down until an A-10 could come on station. The enemy withdrew and dispersed before they could be engaged. Then a Heron UAV spotted a dig team north of COP Shojah. The battle group vectored in an MQ-9 Reaper and dropped a GBU-12 bomb on the team, taking it out. The fight north of Route LAKE EFFECT continued into August, but for the most part the lines were defined to the east, leaving Mohajerin, Salavat and the surrounding communities relatively unscathed. During the course of one patrol on 31 July, however, the enemy ambushed the lead element. Sgt Graham Verrier immediately launched a frontal assault against the ambushing force and repeatedly engaged the enemy until they withdrew. Sgt Verrier was awarded the Medal of Military Valour for his actions.

The indirect fire situation against Shojah concerned BGen Vance, who asked what was being done about it and was told that rules of engagement and procedures were slowing response times down so that some engagements could not take place. Vance altered this state of affairs: when told there were complications getting authorization through the battle

space commander, Vance reminded everyone, “Im the battle space commander and I’m going to start to get [pissed off] if we lose anybody to indirect fire.”²¹⁶ Part of this change included authorization for the increased use of aerostat observation by Canadian forces in Panjwayi coupled with fires. This change significantly altered the freedom of movement calculus by the end of July, at least when the aerostats weren’t having their mooring lines accidentally cut by American and contractor helicopters as they flew by.²¹⁷

That said, the PSS aerostats at Sperwan Ghar and Shojah, and the PGSS at Ma’Sum Ghar were responsible for a number of successful engagements in late July. On 25 July, the enemy engaged the Ma’Sum Ghar aerostat throughout the course of the day. A pair of Griffons equipped with Dillon Gatling guns came on station to locate the shooters but then they were engaged. One of Maj Rob Mackenzie’s A Squadron Leopard A26M tank stationed in a run-up position communicated with the tactical operations centre, where the aerostat data was displayed on a TV screen. The shooters were engaged with 120mm fire. Charles Company deployed a platoon to try and block the enemy who then withdrew. The Canadian patrol was then engaged by the enemy and a firefight developed. A pair of insurgents were killed while the others dispersed.²¹⁸

Similar engagements took place at Sperwan Ghar on 27 July. The monitoring team spotted a four-man insurgent group moving to a known ambush site. They were engaged with 60 81mm mortar rounds, taking out the whole team. Immediately afterwards, an enemy mortar team flung a single round at Sperwan Ghar. The aerostat spotters were able to vector an MQ-9 Reaper to the site but the enemy departed before fire could be brought to bear.²¹⁹ Over at COP Shojah the following day, the aerostat team spotted an IED emplacement group but the enemy moved off before they could be engaged. An MQ-9 Reaper that was on station was then vectored in and the team was killed with a GBU-12 bomb.²²⁰

Operation BAEXEI: The Nakhonay Crisis, July–August 2010

Nakhonay likely constituted the enemy’s main effort in eastern Panjwayi in July. Haji Malim apparently made a deal with insurgent leaders: he would not accept CIMIC and CMO projects if the insurgents did not lay IEDs in Nakhonay.²²¹ However, this ‘deal’ proved to be chimerically one-sided when an IED detonated, wounding two Canadians on 2 July. Recce Squadron, however, bagged a dig team with 25mm fire from their observation post at Salavat Ghar. The ‘deal’, naturally, was over IEDs: there was nothing said about limiting direct fire attacks with 82mm recoilless rifles against the combat outpost in the middle of town. Three Afghan soldiers were seriously wounded while the Canadian platoon responded with 60mm mortar fire and called in an MQ-9 Reaper. Unable to positively identify a target, it departed. A CU-170 Heron, however, picked up a man carrying an 82mm recoilless rifle near Adamzai where he climbed aboard a motorcycle with another man.

The Reaper was called back, dropped a GBU-12 and took them out as they were burying the weapon.²²² Maj Austin Douglas took stock and initiated Operation NOLAI, which increased the number of patrols in and around Nakhonay. The enemy backed off but continued to piquet south of COP Ballpeen with spotters. These were engaged with 25mm fire to keep them at bay, killing at least one of them. MQ-1 Predators continued to observe the area in and around the outposts in Nakhonay and engage with Hellfire missiles. On 6 July, “three bodies were found at the engagement site and one severed arm that did not belong to one of those corpses. 1 RCR BG believes that the fourth insurgent was either vaporized by the explosion or escaped on foot and died.”²²³

NOLAI moved into the community of Imam Sahib, where another IED strike wounded two more Canadians on 7 July. This happened again on 9 July, this time wounding an interpreter. A night-time raid by what was euphemistically called a ‘flanking unit’, that is, SOF, neutralized an IED production facility in Kenjakak and seized 500 pounds of homemade explosives.²²⁴

Attacks against COP Ballpeen continued but this time a Griffon Weapons Team was orbiting. Once on station, the attack ceased and the enemy dispersed. Local people were divided on what was going on in Nakhonay: some provided information to patrols, but the lack of an effective police presence reduced the probability of gaining good information through connecting with the people. CIMIC was told that the inhabitants saw other communities with electricity and lights and that this was desired, but that Haji Malim told them they didn’t need these services.²²⁵ There were fissures and cracks to be exploited, but Haji Baran’s loss of credibility hampered those efforts. Local people believed that Baran “is making too much money from projects while [we] see little money ... Big projects use a machine to do all the work and only one person gets paid ... if ISAF hired many people instead of using machines, more people would be working and thus occupied instead of joining the insurgents.”²²⁶

As for the Afghan company working with B Company in Nakhonay, Canadians were told that its leadership was corrupt and the locals would not provide information to them, only to Canadians. A substantial amount of information then flowed in on an insurgent logistician in the area.²²⁷

What tipped the balance was an IED attack on a Canadian patrol on 20 July. A remote controlled direct fragmentation charge took the life of Spr Brian Collier from 1 Combat Engineer Regiment. The proverbial straw that broke the camel’s back, Collier’s death galvanized BGen Vance and led directly to Operation BAEXEI, the operation to secure the routes between the three combat outposts in Nakhonay and bring stability to the community.²²⁸

The main problem was that B Company was reduced to two platoons because of casualties and the HLTA leave plan; there were no police, and the Afghan company, also down to two platoons, was less and less enthusiastic about patrolling. Among them they had to defend three combat outposts, conduct patrols, connect with the population, and engage the insurgents when they could be found. There were simply not enough personnel. The enemy was achieving psychological ascendancy in Nakhonay and that was generating two things: first, it was cowing the population not only in the community but also symbiotically with the people in Chalgowr, who could see that Nakhonay was a model to be followed. There was a tenuous Hold in Mohajerin, Salavat, and Fatollah, and Salehan to the north, which could break down. Second, Nakhonay was like an infectious disease when it came to Dand district and any reassertion of insurgent control in Nakhonay would have an impact to the east, while it was getting deeper into the Build. Something had to be done immediately.²²⁹

The problem for Vance was what to put into Nakhonay. Charles Company was deeply engaged in its fight in the Sperwan area. O Company was on a confrontation line with the enemy in Chalgwor. Both required partnered Afghan companies to operate, so that limited options: there were two manoeuvre organizations, not four. 2nd Kandak had nothing to send. TF 1-71 Cav was busy protecting the Build in Dand.

What about units from 1-205 Brigade? Or 205 Corps? They were tied up in a never-ending operation called AMKA in Arghandab District. 1-205 Brigade itself was having leadership issues. The need for other ISAF forces to have ‘partners’ for their operations meant that there were even fewer forces available than before. Canada no longer had the ability to leverage Afghan resources now that the government accepted a smaller role in proceedings. In essence, the loss of Canadian influence at all levels from Kabul to Kandahar played a role in preventing a timely and effective deployment of Afghan forces to Nakhonay.

The only viable solutions came from two sources. One was special operations TF 58, which could be used to destabilize the enemy until a stronger reinforcement force could be brought in. They launched a series of operations immediately after Spr Collier was killed.²³⁰

The second was I Company at Camp Nathan Smith, the current Stab A company. Led by Maj Steve Knowell, I Company’s three platoons consisted of 55 regular and 40 reserve infantrymen mounted in LAV III, LAV RWS and Cougar MRAP vehicles. I Company was working in Kandahar City, patrolling with the Afghan police, protecting the explosive ordnance disposal team when it deployed, and delivering the Provincial Reconstruction Team’s Other Government Department personnel to meetings. I Company also acted as the quick reaction force for the increasing number of SOF operations in the city, in this case TF 42, the British SBS, and on occasion TF 310, the American leadership hunters.²³¹



I Company 2 RCR, originally deployed with the PRT, was equipped with the remote-weapons system variant of the LAV III, which served them in good stead in when the company deployed to the dangerous town of Nakhonay in the summer of 2010.

Using I Company to reinforce TF Kandahar's position in Nakhonay, however, became problematic. The Representative of Canada in Kandahar, Ben Rowswell, opposed the removal of I Company, arguing that I Company's job was to provide transport for his civilians at the PRT. The crisis escalated to the highest level in Ottawa. The result was that Vance was permitted to take two of the three platoons from I Company and deploy them to Nakhonay. This prioritization of abstract provincial-level development projects over the safety and security of Canadian troops in Nakhonay was yet another example of the philosophical disconnect that existed within the Canadian effort in Afghanistan.²³²

Operation BAEXEI was now on. Maj Nowell and his two platoons drove their LAVs to Nakhonay and moved into COP Ballpeen, and on 22 July they started patrolling Route Chimo, the line of communication connecting Ballpeen with Patricia and Shkarre. The community bristled with new checkpoints that brought complaints from the locals until Afghan soldiers told them they could either provide information on the insurgents or shut up and go home.²³³

The atmospherics changed dramatically. Information flowed again and for the rest of July there were no incidents. This bought Vance time to work on the Afghans and the allies to get a permanent Afghan presence in the community. The police in Nakhonay were compromised, however, and the Afghan company was not motivated. New personnel were required.



Photo Credit: Author

The deteriorating situation in Nakhonay led TF Kandahar to redeploy I Company from the PRT to eastern Panjwayi District. This surge, coupled with increased SOF activity in the area, temporarily stabilized the situation.

Panjwayi District Operations, July–August 2010

The issue with acquiring and deploying police to Nakhonay now fell into the hot box that was Panjwayi politics. There were increasing calls from elders in the district for the removal of Haji Baran, while others refused to show up at shuras where he was going to be present. His inability to connect with Haji Malim in Nakhonay was a further indicator that his star was waning.²³⁴

Baran's relationship to the Panjwayi Chief of Police, Sayed Gulub Shah Agha, deteriorated further over contracting issues related to the new police station. The chief refused to allow the contractor to continue construction because he did not have a say in how he was selected and thus did not get a piece of the action. The impasse led to the construction site being abandoned and caused a security problem at the New District Centre.²³⁵

Despite his extant low-level corruption, Shah Agha was instrumental in mediating a dispute between two of his subordinate commanders that itself threatened to escalate into violence between the men loyal to each personality. Baran wanted his bodyguard to continue wearing Afghan police uniforms but Shah Agha told him this was not acceptable any longer. The dispute escalated to the point where Shah Agha beat Baran up using a metal teapot. The 'Panjwayi Tea Party' then escalated to the point where Baran's forces and the Panjwayi police fired rounds at each other from their respective sentry towers. A Mexican Standoff developed, prompting intervention by the battle group and police headquarters in Kandahar City.²³⁶

The aftereffects of the ‘Panjwayi Tea Party’ included Shah Agha’s removal, his replacement with a meek and mild subordinate, and the successive rotations of three other police commanders over a four month period. The men loyal to Shah Agha threatened to go on strike or leave with him if he was redeployed. The P-OMLT reported that there was only one trained police officer for the whole district. That level of turbulence ensured that effective policing was impossible for Panjwayi, let alone within Nakhonay itself.²³⁷ Certainly there was little or no help from provincial-level police authorities, as there was little or no Canadian influence left in the these circles.²³⁸ That left the Afghan army. However, the issues related to partnering, operations in Arghandab, and leadership changes meant that bringing in 1-205 Brigade troops was not an option at this point.

Meanwhile, over in Sperwan Ghar, Maj Taylor and Charles Company, supported by Recce Platoon, repeatedly uncovered IEDs on Route BROWN. A platoon pushed out to clear a compound of interest came under fire. MCpl Paul Mitchell provided covering fire with a machine gun, driving the enemy back, and after a series of gun runs from a Griffon Weapons Team, the insurgents broke contact. IED making material discovered in the compound was exploited and removed. MCpl Paul Mitchell was awarded the Medal of Military Valour for his actions.²³⁹ One of the jointly planned Afghan-Canadian disrupt operations, Op SAYLOP, was scheduled to go into the Na’al Bazaar area. However, a local tipster informed the appropriate authorities that SAYLOP was compromised, so the sweep was shifted to the communities east of Route BROWN instead. The sweeping force took some sporadic fire from both sides of the road, but no casualties. During SAYLOP, Charles Company troops were told by locals that the level of insurgent intimidation was so high that they could not be seen with Canadian troops, and there were not enough elders left to hold a shura. One of the elders explained that the Taliban left night letters but also came and showed them pictures of the elders from their files back in Pakistan. Baran could not protect them and there was still no police presence in the Sperwan area.²⁴⁰ Word also filtered through that the Taliban in Zangabad were so confident of their hold on the population that they conducted their own polio eradication project, yet another clear challenge to government authority.²⁴¹ (See Figure 7-8)

The addition of the aerostat at Sperwan Ghar permitted better situational awareness, information that Charles Company acted on when possible. Its systems were used to vector in MQ-9 Reaper and MQ-1 Predators against insurgents operating against the Afghan army observation posts in the area. The improved coverage also permitted 81mm mortar support when UAV’s were not available. The 25mm cannon on the Coyote emplaced on the top of the hill was also employed when targets presented themselves.

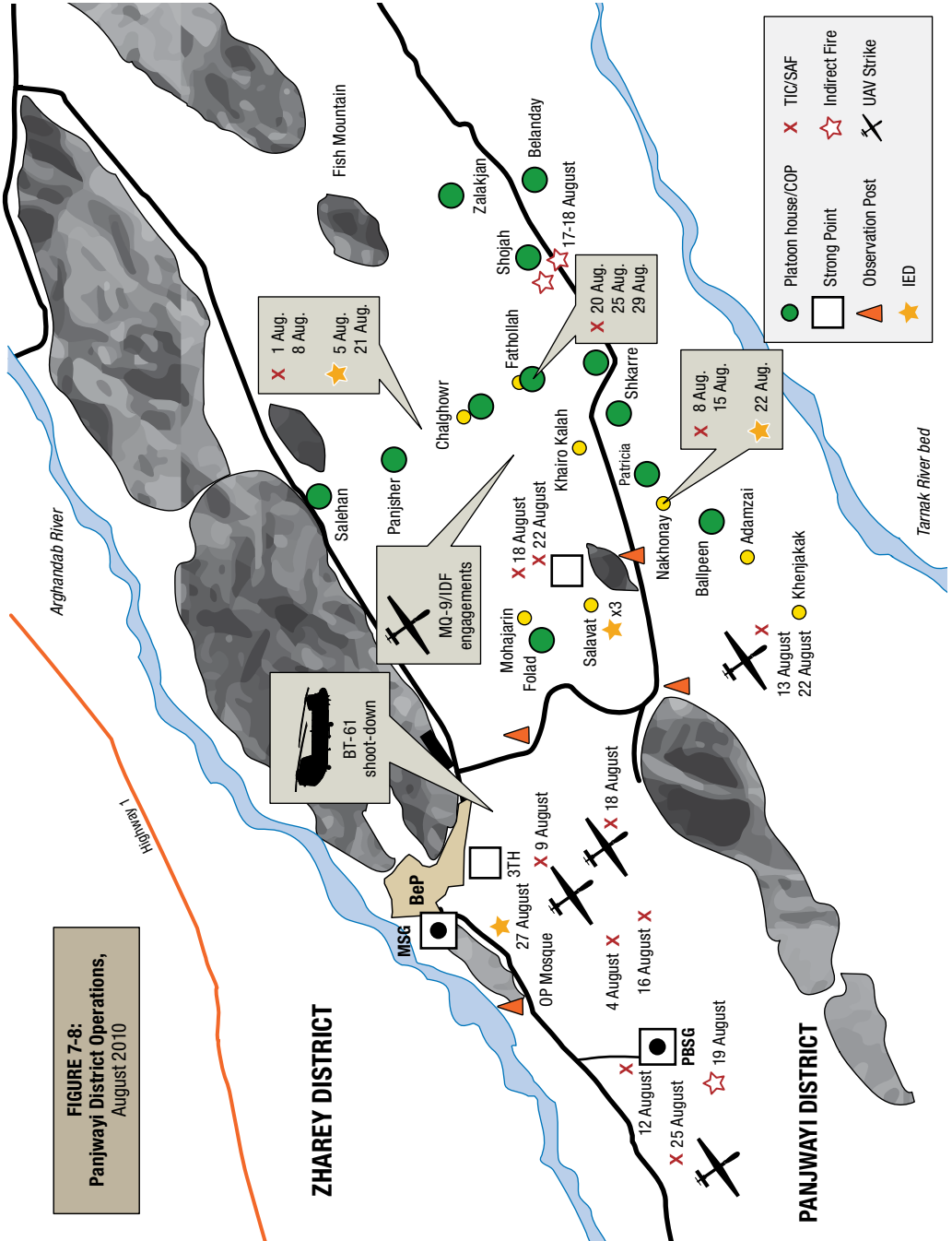


Figure 7-8: Panjwayi District Operations, August 2010

By August the situation in Panjwayi district noticeably changed both in the level and types of enemy activity. In Sperwan, there was almost no reported enemy activity until 12 August, when an Afghan-led patrol was engaged. While protecting themselves, the patrol discovered they were sitting on top of an IED. After winning the firefight, the EOD team sortied out, but were then ambushed. Returning fire with 25mm cannon, a call went out for assistance and an AH-64 Apache arrived and engaged the enemy position with Hellfire missiles and 2.75 in rockets. As the Canadians moved to clear the position they discovered trenches and tunnels that turned an otherwise regular grape drying hut into part of a deliberate fortification. Air support was called in to destroy the position. Other than a number of mortar rounds flung at the base and another armed UAV engagement near Route BROWN, the area around Sperwan remained comparatively quiet.²⁴²

Bazaar-e Panjwayi, however, saw increased enemy activity. The Hydari Group remained active probing the area south of Bazaar-e Panjwayi and in and around Haji Habibollah, and they established several illegal vehicle checkpoints. A bold ambush near FOB Ma'Sum Ghar directed against the Afghan army, followed by an IED attack right next to the base were demonstrative actions by the insurgents. What really forced TF Kandahar to take notice was the shoot down of a CH-147 Chinook on 5 August.

Callsign BLOWTORCH 61 was delivering the incoming battle group company commanders and their counterparts who were conducting reces for the relief in place in the fall. Civilians from the District Support Team were also aboard. After dropping off Maj Rob Mackenzie, Maj Eric Landry (the incoming tank squadron commander), and the Army historian, the Chinook lifted off from FOB Ma'Sum Ghar and was engaged by an insurgent heavy machine gun team between Ma'Sum Ghar and the district centre. The escort CH-146 Griffon, flown by the Air Wing commander Col Christian Drouin, saw the transport helicopter get hit and start to burn. He radioed the pilot, Capt Bill Fielding, and warned him his aircraft was on fire. The enemy gun team disappeared into the foliage-choked compound complexes near Haji Habibollah. Fielding was able to conduct a hard landing in a grape field. As the helicopter burned and melted, all 24 passengers and crew got out alive, only to be engaged with small arms fire. The orbiting Griffons engaged what enemy they could observe until ground troops led by Maj Taylor, who had also been dropped off earlier in Sperwan Ghar by the same helicopter, arrived on the scene backed up with a Leopard tank troop from Ma'Sum Ghar. The wreck site was engaged by the insurgents until these forces arrived.²⁴³ Capt Fielding was later awarded the Medal of Military Valour for his actions.



Photo Credit: Author

Canada regained a medium-lift capability in the form of CH-47 Chinook helicopters, significantly reducing road movement in the IED heavy environment. This picture of Blowtorch 61 was taken by the author minutes before it was shot down by insurgent forces.

When ISTAR resources were deployed to find out who was behind the destruction of the helicopter, the reports included an interesting nugget: Taliban leaders in Quetta had paid a bounty to the Hydari Group. On 8 August, the persistent ground-surveillance system on the Ma'Sum Ghar aerostat picked up an insurgent machine-gun team shooting at a police checkpoint from a position south of Bazaar-e Panjwayi. The machine-gunners disengaged when the police went to ground, and the staff of the Tactical Operations Centre at Ma'Sum Ghar tracked them to a rendezvous with two insurgents manning a vehicle checkpoint, and then to a bed-down area occupied by six more insurgents. An A-10 Warthog dropped a guided bomb unit on the rest area, killing all the insurgents. This machine-gun team is believed to have been the group that shot down BLOWTORCH 61.²⁴⁴

For the rest of August, armed UAVs were used to engage enemy vehicle checkpoints in the vicinity of Haji Habibollah. One strike involving the PGSS aerostat, a Heron UAV, and a pair of A-10s producing several enemy dead whose bits and pieces were subsequently removed by other insurgents using a wheelbarrow and a taxi. TF 58 was also employed to take out these small groups. This tit-for-tat game against the illegal vehicle checkpoints continued until later on in the month when the Afghan army moved into the area in greater numbers.²⁴⁵ The importance of the losses inflicted on the Hydari Group was measured by the deployment of a senior Taliban commander to take over operations in the Haji Habibollah-Bazaar-e Panjwayi area in mid-August.²⁴⁶



Photo Credit: Author

The Tactical Operations Centre at FOB Ma'Sum Ghar. By 2010 aerostat-mounted cameras fed images to the TOC which could contact the Leopard tanks in their run-up positions and engage insurgents in Zharey district across the river with 120mm fire. Here the TOC crew has just observed the destruction of an enemy heavy weapons team. The insurgents were observed by an MQ-9 Reaper, vectored on to their position by the Ma'Sum Ghar TOC working with the task force TOC at Kandahar Air Field, and then engaged by an A-10 Warthog.

Maj Steve Brown and O Company were confronted on three fronts. The first was Salavat. As with the Sperwan area, Salavat was quiet until mid-August. Then an EROC sweep triggered an IED and damaged the Husky vehicle. At the same time ISTAR resources had been tracking an IED activator over the course of days in the area between Salavat and Folad. An orbiting CU-170 Heron, with its unblinking eye, gained positive identification as the insurgent plugged in a device situated on the road. A Griffon Weapons Team opened up with a Dillon Gatling gun as the insurgent sped away on a motorcycle. He wasn't fast enough and could not outrun the rounds. Towards the end of the month, another IED emplacer moved in and targeted Afghan patrols. One strike took out an Afghan army Humvee vehicle, and another wounded two Canadians. The new emplacer was augmented with a spotter and there were concerns that he would call in mortar fire. 1 RCR snipers took them out of the equation before this could take place.²⁴⁷ Local people in Salavat told CIMIC that "local nationals [in Salavat] trust ISAF and ANSF, stating that the ANA and ANP are better now than they were six months ago."²⁴⁸



Photo Credit: Author

Observation Post Cliff covered the New District Centre-Khabari Ghar-Route LAKE EFFECT-Nakhonay leg of the surveillance web. This soldier is monitoring the area to the north, with the New District Centre at the base of the distant hills.

Then there was Chalthowr. The uneasy standoff between the occupants of Combat Outpost Panjsher and the insurgent forces screening and holding Chalthowr produced a series of IED strikes and contacts throughout August. On a particularly hot day a Canadian platoon noticed they were under observation from a spotter, so they engaged him. While manoeuvring, the patrol hit an IED, wounding one member. Then insurgents opened up on the patrol, who fired back and called in MEDEVAC. An AH-64 Apache and a UH-60 helicopter arrived, but two enemy signalers who waved flags to communicate to their associates that the helicopters should be engaged. These signalers were dispatched. The ambush force dispersed in the presence of the attack helicopter. On their way back to COP Panjsher, the patrol was engaged yet again. MEDEVAC was called in once they returned after having taken two more wounded.²⁴⁹

That night, a Canadian sniper took out an IED emplacer between Panjsher and Foad. A ScanEagle UAV also observed four insurgents in the vicinity and an MQ-9 Reaper was vectored in: they were dispatched with a GBU-12 bomb. Twenty 81mm mortar rounds were dropped on the area just to make sure.²⁵⁰

On 5 August, a patrol skirting Chalgowr hit an IED, wounding a dog team. While extricating with the casualties, the patrol identified enemy spotters observing the patrol's movement. These were successfully engaged. The enemy, however, re-established their checkpoint and continued to control movement in the area.²⁵¹ The insurgent's limit of exploitation was Folad, where Canadian snipers kept them at bay. Any time spotters were observed, they were engaged.²⁵² The enemy was also challenged from the air: there were a number of aerostat-cued armed UAV and aerostat-cued Griffon Weapons Teams missions in the gap between COP Panjsher and Chalgowr. The artillery joined in, again with aerostat observation. An illegal checkpoint and an IED emplacement team, also operating in the gap, were killed by 155mm fire and Hellfires from MQ-9 Reaper UAVs.²⁵³

COP Shojah remained a training ground for enemy mortar men throughout August but their learning curve was steep. The aerostat spotted one team, who were subsequently captured on 12 August, thus ending mortaring. The snipers operating out of Folad had several successful kills throughout the month, deterring enemy activity in the immediate vicinity.²⁵⁴ All the while Maj Lillington's Recce Squadron kept the line of communications open from Route HYENA to Route LAKE EFFECT with its series of observation posts. There were no incidents involving those positions throughout August and with good reason: the Coyotes and LAV RWS vehicles had superb optics and the terrain was conducive to flat-trajectory fire in all directions.²⁵⁵

Maj Austin Douglas's B Company and Maj Steve Noel's I Company saturated Nakhonay. Despite the ineffective police, who were engaging in "persistent drug use, a lack of professionalism and leadership, seldom wearing of uniforms and a number of other issues," checkpoints and searches uncovered cache after cache. The Canadians were told, by the interim police chief, that the police commander in Nakhonay was "closely associated with the district leader and that this was a sensitive issue."²⁵⁶ The Canadian assessment was that "Haji Malim's power-base rested upon his ability to provide security though his insurgent connections. Now that this influence is being marginalized by coalition forces' presence, local nationals are beginning to speak out against him more openly." Malim was now caught between a rock and hard place: he was under pressure to make things happen for the insurgents, but it was evident that the people were not behind him.²⁵⁷

There was almost no enemy activity until 7 August, when a CU-170 Heron picked up a PKM machine gun team moving south of Nakhonay. This team rendezvoused with six other fighters. No aircraft were available, so 81mm mortars and 155mm artillery pounded them. A Canadian-Afghan patrol nearby was inadvertently hit by stray 155mm rounds and these men were evacuated. The Heron, still orbiting, picked up another enemy group and this time French Mirage fighter-bombers were available. Unfortunately, their national

authorities did not permit them to engage. A Griffon Weapons Team arrived instead and gunned down the insurgents. 81mm mortar fire was used in an attempt to flush out the survivors from the trees. None emerged.²⁵⁸

The first IED to go off in Nakhonay in weeks was a radio controlled device that wounded two Canadians. Unfortunately, Cpl Brian Pinksen of the 2nd Battalion, Royal Newfoundland Regiment later died of his wounds in Germany after medical evacuation. Enemy spotters and propagandists were captured infiltrating Nakhonay during this time, while combined CU-170 Heron/MQ-9 Reaper operations continuously targeted enemy fighters moving into the Adamzai Chain. The insurgents tried again on 14 August and mounted an attack on COP SHASHEN, wounding three Canadians and two local children. The newly-arrived Afghan army troops sortied and took out four identified enemy spotters who were screening 600m south of the outpost.²⁵⁹

The importance of the Taliban bases in the Horn as insurgency generators was not ignored. A major SOF raid into Zangabad on 21-22 August resulted in a significant firefight and produced the deaths of fifteen insurgents, including one commander. A large mortar cache was also discovered and destroyed.²⁶⁰

The idea that development could take place in an environment like Panjwayi at this time was difficult to accept by elements at the PRT, but the Engineer Construction Squadron employed about 350 people, or half of what they had employed in the past, on a variety of projects.²⁶¹ The District Support Team worked on any project that was feasible in Bazaar-e Panjwayi and did not waste their efforts in places like Nakhonay and Chalghowr. The DST, however, was hampered by District Governor Haji Baran, who was unwell. Stephanie Duhaime, the Canadian DFAIT representative on the DST, was able to convince Baran to use the OCC-D(P) treadmill so he could try to avoid further medical problems. At the end of August however, word filtered down that Baran would be replaced with Haji Fazluddin Agha but when this change would actually occur remained vague.²⁶²

The PSYOPS teams reported that some of the population believed that

The country is being destroyed by Pakistan and the insurgents that come from Pakistan. They are not killing ISAF. They are killing our Muslim brothers in the ANA and the ANP ... the Americans are involved in dealing with the Taliban and the Pakistan government ... Pakistan harbours the insurgents and the Americans do nothing about this ... Pakistan is letting all of the American equipment travel through Pakistan without attacks occurring as they will have their equipment to kill innocent people ... Pakistan is working with the kafirs (non-believers) to destroy Islam ... the people do not support [Karzai] and if you want to win against the kafirs you must have the support of the people.²⁶³

It was entirely possible that the situation in the district had deteriorated to the point where rational dialogue with the population in parts of Panjwayi was just not possible given the cross-cutting currents of Taliban propaganda, the deluge of instant access to global media, the backwards messaging of illiterate mullahs, and the lack of education. People continued to get their information from the mullahs and at the mosques. In many cases mosques were used by the insurgents for their purposes and there was still no coherent religious engagement plan either at TF Kandahar, Regional Command (South), in ISAF, or with the Government of Afghanistan.

Attack on Kandahar Air Field, 3 August 2010

The frequency of rocket attacks against Kandahar Air Field significantly increased by the summer of 2010. There were nightly attacks and in some cases two or three separate attacks at a time. That was generally the extent of enemy activity against this vital facility.²⁶⁴ For reasons which remain vague, however, the enemy chose to launch a daytime ground assault against Kandahar Air Field on 3 August. At 1120 hours a pair of rockets came in and struck the base. Then the Joint Defence Operations Centre warning system was activated, indicating that a ground assault was in progress. All personnel had to remain in their facilities and arm themselves. Then the alert state was raised to “load weapons”. The Close Protection Party and 99 TAC personnel closed the entrances to TF Kandahar’s compound and prepared defences. Another rocket attack came in at 1140 hours. Word came to the Tactical Operations Centre that Canadian troops on the perimeter were engaging enemy ground forces. An F-18 that was orbiting but could not land was able to get its imaging systems on the action and fed it to the Tactical Operation Centre. A helicopter-borne quick reaction force was in the air heading for the point of origin of the rocket launches. There were several casualties from the rocket attacks: medical teams collected and transported them to the Role 3 Hospital. Camp Hero, the Afghan army base, reported RPG and small arms fire directed at their perimeter. An AH-64 Apache and an OH-58D Kiowa Warrior were vectored in to assist them.²⁶⁵

The enemy ground attack took place next to a training area used by engineers to practice IED situations. By coincidence, the combat engineer field squadron’s command vehicle, a LAV III (callsign ZE9) and crew was present participating in an IED demonstration for the media. An American Humvee was also in the area passing by. A farm tractor modified into a suicide vehicle-borne IED blew up and breached the fence line. A second suicide bomber breached the fence further east, while a third engaged one of the sentry towers with an RPG, wounding three Americans. The American Humvee crew opened up but as it turned out there were more enemy moving to exploit the two breaches. MCpl Marc-André Rousseau and his crew dashed under fire to their LAV III and started pumping 25mm rounds at the

insurgents. Secondary detonations were seen as follow-on suicide bombers blew up when shot up with the 25mm cannon. All the insurgents, likely between ten and twelve total, were killed. MCpl Rousseau was awarded the Medal of Military Valour for his actions.²⁶⁶

The media attempted to turn this assault into an information operations victory for the enemy by claiming that a daylight attack was some exponential change in tactics with significant implications. That line was countered by Maj Josh Major, the Tactical Operations Centre commander, who explained to them that ten insurgents essentially sacrificed themselves for 25 meters of chain link fence.²⁶⁷

By mid-August, rocket attacks against KAF dropped off significantly. The RAF Regiment successfully rolled up an 8-man rocket cell north of the base. From this operation, TF Kandahar learned that the cell used up the last of its rockets in the spasm attack of 3 August and were awaiting re-supply.²⁶⁸

Realigning for Future Operations

By the end of August, the situation in Nakhonay stabilized and the community was not experiencing the same levels of violence that it had in July. The problem was, where were the Afghan forces to conduct the Hold? The answer to that question related to larger issues involving Regional Command (South), the Afghan army, and the OMLT led by Col Ian Creighton.

Maj Gen Nick Carter knew that at some point the incoming American forces would be robust enough to occupy Zharey district. As we have seen, an entire brigade, CTF STRIKE, was scheduled to handle the entire Arghandab river valley north of the Arghandab River. With TF Kandahar occupying central and eastern Panjwayi, there was a gap and that gap was the Horn of Panjwayi, which was by this time a virtual Taliban statelet. Ménard's conceptualization of a push into the Horn could not be resourced earlier in 2010 but now it looked like some form of action could be undertaken.²⁶⁹ The main issue now was the efficient sequencing of future operations. That involved moving in more Afghan forces to hold what had already been taken. BGen Vance had been working on the problem from TF Kandahar's perspective but the confusion over the future of Brig Gen Basir and 1-205 Brigade, the demand for partnered operations, and the priority effort in Arghandab were obstacles to a solution in July and early August.²⁷⁰

Prior to a meeting with defence minister Wardak in late July, Vance and Carter met to discuss what was now going to be called HAMKARI Phase III. All indications suggested that five kandaks would be made available for the TF Kandahar area of operations: one partnered with TF 1-71 Cav in Dand; two partnered with the Canadian battle group; and another two partnered with American special forces.²⁷¹

The concept was to have TF Kandahar take these new forces, secure what was already a tenuous Hold phase in Panjwayi, then clear from Ma'Sum Ghar to Sperwan Ghar. That would establish the conditions for using Route BROWN as a line of departure for the clearance of the Horn. Two kandaks and their associated US special forces teams would conduct the Horn clearance. They would be supported with Canadian combat engineers and project support from Engineer Construction Squadron so that immediate effects could be provided to the local people as the force worked its way west. These forces would also prepare Route HYENA for paving. Checkpoints were to be established along the way and Village Stability Operations would work with police so they would not be 'trapped in the TI' as they had in 2007–2008.²⁷²

This schema allowed for the infusion of Afghan army forces into eastern Panjwayi prior to the start of HAMKARI Phase III. That meant that if Vance could sort out the arrangements, an Afghan company could be cut away, with Wardak's concurrence, as soon as possible for service in Nakhonay. It would take weeks to set the conditions for HAMKARI Phase III in any case and it would be better to have a tighter Hold in place in eastern Panjwayi and Dand districts. That would mean a complete re-alignment of forces in TF Kandahar's area, which also meant a lot of engineering work and contracts for bed down infrastructure, which produced jobs for locals, which in turn used money to reduce the number of local insurgent fighters. At the same time CTF STRIKE's operations had to be synchronized so that they could push to the river while the Afghan forces were flowing into Panjwayi. The entire effort would be called MOSHTARAK II.²⁷³

Vance understood that his headquarters would be rotating out in September and that his successor, BGen Dean Milner and his staff would execute the clearance of the Horn. To further complicate matters, the Carter Regional Command (South) headquarters was rotating out to be replaced by an American-led Regional Command (South). Consequently, the moves discussed between Vance, Carter, and Wardak had to be implemented promptly and every effort made to ensure continuity with successor headquarters.²⁷⁴

Vance and Carter agreed that this would not be a repeat of Operation MOSHTARAK in Helmand. There would be no 'government in a box.' This operation was not designed for strategic information operations effect, as MOSHTARAK I had been. There would be no 'Clear-Photo Op-Withdraw.' There would be military security, and the police would be ANCOP from elsewhere, not local police. There would be no opportunity for local power brokers to interfere. There would be, as Vance put it, a "creeping barrage of love" from CIMIC and Engineer Construction Squadron following behind the infantry and armour. Baran's malign influence would be replaced with the more benevolent influence embodied by Brig Gen Basir, if necessary, if a military governor was installed.²⁷⁵

The implications for TF Kandahar were immense but the key problem involved the incongruity of having two Afghan kandaks partnered with a single Canadian battle group. The solution? To Col Ian Creighton's delight, he was instructed to re-organize the OMLT and bring back company mentor teams.

One of the first moves was to get an Afghan infantry company into Nakhonay. The convoluted nature of the system meant that TF Kandahar had to send a platoon to Oruzgan, link up with a company from 3rd Kandak, 4th Brigade, 205 Corps, and escort them down to Nakhonay. By 20 August this new crew was in place and patrolling. The OMLT re-constituted and produced a company mentoring team from its resources and they joined the Afghans roughly at the same time.²⁷⁶

The next move was to identify another kandak for deployment to eastern Panjwayi and another for Dand. Now that Regional Command (South) was engaged, they handled the interface with the Afghan ministry of defence through Wardak. 6th Kandak of 1-205 Brigade was designated for Panjwayi, and 7th Kandak, 1-205 Brigade was earmarked for Dand. A second Canadian mentor team was then established to work with 7th Kandak.²⁷⁷

The new name for the Panjwayi operation was Operation GAD PASOON, thus eliminating the confusion that existed over HAMKARI and MOSHTARAK (though the old terminology remained in play for some time). There was, however, a new opponent to the process and that was Governor Wesa. Wesa's "constant calls for ANSF leadership to meet on a moment's notice is disrupting operational planning." Wesa "demanded" that 1-205 Brigade relocate to the city and kept insisting that more kandaks be deployed to patrol the city for insurgent vehicle checkpoints. Brig Gen Habibi himself deployed into the city but could not confirm that any such enemy positions existed. Habibi spent a lot of time convincing Wesa that there were other priorities.²⁷⁸

By mid-August, Vance and Carter were "continuing to encourage Governor Wesa to follow through with the replacement of District Governor Baran before the commencement of Operation MOSHTARAK Phase III Stage 3A." Wesa was reluctant, just as he was reluctant to have another Kandak in Panjwayi district. Yet word was already being spread by Haji Agha Lalai Dastagiri that Haji Faizal Mohommad was the next district governor. The new PRT director, Tim Martin, was increasingly enmeshed in Panjwayi governance dynamics. Wesa told everybody in a meeting that Baran had not been replaced. Wesa insisted that it was a tribal issue between the Alikozais and the Noorzais, and that the local population had to benefit from contracting opportunities in the district. Wesa continued to prevaricate for reasons unknown but likely related to the provincial power brokers and how the change in Panjwayi might affect their positions. Baran remained in play and the impasse continued.²⁷⁹ Baran obliquely warned that "the security situation would likely deteriorate under Faizal Mohammad's leadership."²⁸⁰ ISTAR reportage suggested that

a pair of HiG operative approached Baran in August seeking to insinuate themselves into his confidence now that he was on the way out and willing to communicate with them.²⁸¹

The relationship between TF Kandahar and 1-205 Brigade also changed in the summer of 2010. The long-suffering Brig Gen Basir was told by the Corps commander in the middle of the ATAL operations in Kandahar City that he was being replaced. Insulted, Basir walked away from the operation when it was in progress. An interim deputy commander was thrown in but he did not work out, so Col Habibi, a former 1-205 Brigade deputy commander who had a mentoring relationship with LCol Dan Drew back in 2008 was brought in to command 1-205 Brigade. This, according to observers, was a breath of fresh air. Habibi immediately asserted his authority and rapidly grasped that under partnering, he was the supported commander. There was a complete shift in energy for 1-205 Brigade. Habibi got 'out and about', visiting every element in the brigade and providing much-needed inspiration. OMLT personnel noticed a distinct sea-change. Indeed, Habibi was not afraid to openly disagree with BGen Jon Vance on occasion.²⁸²

Supporting Task Force Kandahar

LCol Tim Marcella took command of the National Support Element in April 2010. This particular rotation was notable in that it served three TF Kandahar commanders: Brigadier Generals Menard, Vance, and Milner. Slightly larger than previous NSEs, the Marcella-led organization had 554 military personnel, 80 PSP personnel, and 300 CANCAP augmentees. Structurally it was similar to previous organizations and was responsible for deploying NSE Detachments to Ma'Sum Ghar, Sperwan Ghar, FOB Wilson, Camp Nathan Smith, and Kabul. Once Canada realigned forces in Kandahar Province, the NSE opened detachments at COP Shojah, and the New District Centre in Panjwayi. As the Canadian PRT drew down, the NSE also assisted with the handover of Camp Nathan Smith to the Americans. Logistics support to the OMLT was also reorganized to reduce perceptions that the mentors were second-class citizens in relationship to other units in TF Kandahar.²⁸³ A significant shift in structure and processes from earlier NSE rotations involved the battle group which was altered to include an echelon and an administration company. That change related more to the situation on the ground, that is, the shift towards distributed patrolling in two districts instead of ranging all over Kandahar Helmand provinces, rather than adherence to logistics doctrine.²⁸⁴

The concept of support during this period involved maintaining FOB detachments as far forward as possible, particularly their maintenance teams. Moving heavy equipment back and forth to forward operating bases was anathema to Marcella, who emphasized the use of mobile repair teams. Second, Marcella and his staff were attuned to the vehicle shortage issue

and focused on minimizing truck movement while maximizing helicopter resupply. Jingle Truck support was now pooled with helicopter resupply and Combat Logistics Patrols by the staff, and artificial barriers between these resources were removed as much as possible.

This was nice in theory. By June 2010, however, contracted helicopter support was, according to LCol Marcella, “completely useless to us.” The Blowtorch 61 shootdown frightened the contract Mi-17 crews, who now refused to fly west of Camp Nathan Smith. Marcella’s NSE now had to move goods by ground transportation, which dramatically increased dependency on Jingle Truck contracting and, unfortunately, 2007-style Combat Logistics Patrols. Marcella, however, had a good relationship with LCol Chris Drouin at the Air Wing. The two staffs worked to maximize loads, ensuring that all aircraft were filled to capacity each flight. Ultimately, however, the NSE found itself using Combat Logistics Patrols four times as much as the previous two rotations. This, of course, significantly increased the risk to Canadian troops to IED attack.²⁸⁵

The increased use of Jingle Truck contracting had an unexpected benefit. Sometimes it took days for Jungle Trucks to enter Kandahar Air Field because of stringent security measures. A member of the NSE was tasked with getting priority treatment for ‘Canadian’ JT’s. This involved deploying Tim Horton’s coffee to the Slovakian Entry Control Point. This Canadian officer also learned Pashto so he could speak with the Afghan drivers. This led to valuable route and other intelligence data which was fed to the NSE intelligence cell and the ASIC.²⁸⁶

The largest task assigned to the NSE was to support the American influx. Any laydown of troops had to be preceded by significant infrastructure preparation: accommodations had to be built, roads constructed, tactical infrastructure surveyed. In essence, the American contracting system, which was considered “inflexible and incapable” by the NSE, completely failed because it was far too slow for the Afghan environment. The existing Canadian contracting system, in place for several years and with substantial personal connections already in existence, was placed at the disposal of the incoming Americans by BGen Vance.²⁸⁷

A case in point involved ‘life support’ issues at Camp Nathan Smith. The PRT rapidly grew to over 1000 personnel, overwhelming the cooking facilities. As a result, friction between US military personnel, Canadian civilian personnel, and Canadian military personnel reached absurd proportions. In one case undisciplined American troops broke the locks off of the food freezers and helped themselves but were not held accountable by their officers. The NSE expanded dining facilities and feeding capabilities and eventually two solitudes emerged: an American DFAC and a Canadian mess. NSE contract support to the U.S. Army constituted 50% of the NSE effort from April until October 2010 when the American system finally came on line.²⁸⁸

Related to this was the provision of forward feeding detachments to areas that American forces flowed into. Seventeen additional cooks were required, ten of which were needed at FOB Frontenac for the estimated 300 Americans stationed there. NSE contracting support played a role in alleviating this very basic need. Canadian fresh feeding also increased so that less than 200 personnel were dependent on individual meal pack rations.²⁸⁹

The NSE was also involved in mentoring tasks with the Afghan National Army, particularly in the realm of material repair. Members of Maintenance Company spent one day a week with their Afghan counterparts at Camp Hero and, by their account, increased the Afghan repair capacity four fold. The concept of joint convoys was raised but was opposed by the NSE leadership because there were too many differences in rules of engagement, communications, and security.²⁹⁰

The NSE was also involved in complex recovery tasks like Operation QUICK SAND. An RAF Regiment patrol of three vehicle became bogged in what amounted to a mud soup near one of the 'rocket boxes' outside of Kandahar Air Field. ISTAR reportage noted that the enemy understood the British predicament and prepared to attack them. The RAF contemplated abandoning the vehicles and called for a JDAM strike on them, but this was denied by Regional Command (South). A TLAV sent to assist with the effort became bogged, as was a Taurus Armoured Recovery Vehicle sent to recover the TLAV. The same thing happened to an AHSVS wrecker. Finally an Afghan army excavator went in and also became bogged. The Afghan excavator, however, was able to self-recover, and dig out the Canadian AHSVS wrecker. The Taurus was freed by the AHSVS wrecker, and then both recovered the TLAV. The British vehicles eventually dug themselves out. This process took two days. Due to the coalition presence in the area, there were no rocket attacks on the airfield for nearly a week.²⁹¹

The NSE had to fend off attempts by Regional Command (South) to restrict supply convoy movement to night. This issue was magnified by the American influx. Arguments against this policy were that it gave too much advance warning to the insurgents, there were no pattern of life indicators because the population was off the streets, and the Canadian vehicles lacked the integral explosive clearance equipment. American vehicles were equipped with small roller sets and even detectors while Canadian AHSVS vehicles did not and there were not enough EROC packages to go around. The use of night vision equipment also increased the risk of accidents.²⁹²

On the medical front, the Canadian-led Role 3 Multinational Medical Unit hospital now transferred to American control, and moved from the collection of faded and beaten Weatherhavens and eight-year-old plywood shacks into a modern hospital building that could have serviced any medium-sized community in Canada. The Canadian Role 2 facility in the Canadian lines near the battle group headquarters now became the repository

of non-surgical medical operations, though TF Kandahar contributed staff to the new coalition facility.²⁹³ Finally, the Giesebrecht/Miller killings led to a re-examination of the viability of the Bison ambulance in the Afghan theatre. The Bison ambulance was deemed too vulnerable and was withdrawn from service. They were replaced with an experimental TLAV ambulance conversion in August.²⁹⁴

Conclusion

The insurgency was in serious trouble in early 2010. Unfortunately, this state of affairs could not be exploited by ISAF because of a variety of internal command issues, even though substantial numbers of American forces were pouring into Kandahar. The old problem of whether Helmand or Kandahar should be the priority effort continued. And, at every turn, the coalition effort was undermined by poor Afghan governance aggravated by poor international support to Afghan governance. Indeed, the loss of coalition credibility with the Afghans was substantial. The complete inability of the major national players to find answers to the Pakistan problem compounded the situation.

Reduced by circumstance into adopting a smaller role in events, TF Kandahar struggled to reduce its vista. At the same time, this state of affairs permitted greater synergies in Panjwayi district. Those synergies were not realized yet but held promise for the future. The extreme turbulence generated within the coalition effort and by the insurgency throughout 2010 started to stabilize by the mid-summer, in many ways through a combination of the positive impact of BGen Jon Vance and by the resilience of the Canadian soldiers under his command. TF Kandahar had one more chance to make a positive contribution before it was instructed by the Canadian Government to withdraw in 2011. BGen Dean Milner and his command team would lead that effort.

ENDNOTES

1. Confidential in-theatre discussions by the author with Canadian and American personnel (July 2010).
2. Telephone interview with Col (Ret) Daniel Ménard, (6 November 2012).
3. See Rajiv Chandrasekaran, *Little America: The War within the War for Afghanistan* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2012), Chapter 8.
4. Details only started to emerge later. See "Environment in 4th BCT During Deployment was Chaotic", *Army Times* (18 April 2012); "Wife of O-6 Told to Stay Away from BCT Families", *Army Times* (11 June 2010).
5. JTF-A HQ DSR (14 January 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (22 February 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (28 February 2010).
6. TFK BUB (1 March 2010), TFK CUB (1 March 2010).
7. Adrian McNair, "Michael Yon Lays Off Canada and Bashes Spain", (8 March 2010).
8. "The First Scalp of Tarnak?" <http://waronterrornews.typepad.com/ps/2011/02/tarnak-bridge-aftermath.html> (2 July 2011).

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9. See JTF-A HQ BUB slide (1 February–1 March 2010).
10. RAF Regiment and JDOC briefings to the author (2007, 2008 and 2009).
11. TFK POSM (1 April 2010).
12. For a fair and detailed analysis of the Tarnak Bridge incident, see <http://waronterrornews.typepad.com/ps/2011/02/tarnak-bridge-aftermath.html>.
13. TFK POSM (11 March 2010).
14. TFK POSM (1 April 2010).
15. This methodology appeared in the TF Kandahar synchronization meetings by April 2010 but it is likely it was being used by ISAF as a measurement of progress earlier than this. Certainly by 2011 'DSCHBE' was the standard method of measuring progress in RC (South) in its briefings.
16. TFK POSM (15 April 2010).
17. TFK INTSUM (19 January 2010).
18. TFK INTSUM (15 February 2010); TFK INTSUM (16 February 2010); TFK INTSUM (24 February 2010).
19. TFK INTSUM (14 March 2010).
20. TFK INTSUM (27 April 2010); TFK INTSUM (30 April 2010). See also TFK INTSUM (11 February 2010).
21. JTF-A HQ WSR (3–9 March 2010).
22. J2 briefing to the author (KAF, 11 July 2010).
23. JTF-A HQ DSR (29 March 2010).
24. TFK INTSUM (7 March 2010).
25. TFK INTSUM (5 March 2010).
26. TFK INTSUM (8 March 2010).
27. JTF-A HQ WSR (3–9 March 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (9 March 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (10 March 2010).
28. TFK INTSUM (13 March 2010).
29. JTF-A HQ WSR (10–16 March 2010); TFK INTSUM (14 March 2010).
30. JTF-A HQ WSR (10–16 March 2010).
31. TFK INTSUM (14 March 2010).
32. TFK INTSUM (16 March 2010).
33. JTF-A HQ DSR (17 March 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (24 March 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (5 April 2010).
34. TFK INTSUM (11 April 2010).
35. JTF-A HQ WSR (14–20 April 2010); TFK INTSUM (12 April 2010).
36. TFK INTSUM (20 April 2010); TFK INTSUM (21 April 2010); TFK INTSUM (22 April 2010); TFK INTSUM (26 April 2010).
37. JTF-A HQ WSR (10–16 March 2010); JTF-A HQ WSR (7–13 April 2010).
38. JTF-A HQ WSR (24 February–2 March 2010).
39. JTF-A HQ WSR (7–24 March 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (2 March 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (4 March 2010).

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40. JTF-A HQ WSR (7–13 April 2010).
41. JTF-A HQ DSR (5 March 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (17 March 2010).
42. JTF-A HQ WSR (24–30 March 2010).
43. JTF-A HQ WSR (24–30 March 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (9 April 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (10 April 2010).
44. JTF-A HQ DSR (21 March 2010).
45. JTF-A HQ DSR (11 April 2010).
46. TFK INTSUM (29 March 2010).
47. See Adam Medina, "Ghost Scouts role play with help from Blackhorse Troopers", <http://www.aerotechnews.com>.
48. JTF-A HQ DSR (2 March 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (3 March 2010).
49. JTF-A HQ DSR (15 March 2010).
50. JTF-A HQ DSR (18 March 2010); TFK INTSUM (18 March 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (12 April 2010).
51. TFK INTSUM (28 March 2010).
52. TFK INTSUM (5 April 2010).
53. TFK INTSUM (8 April 2010); TFK INTSUM (14 April 2010).
54. TFK INTSUM (10 March 2010); TFK INTSUM (16 March 2010).
55. JTF-A HQ DSRs (12, 13, 15 and 20 March 2010). See also Interview with LCol Ryan Jurkowski (Kingston, 19 June 2014).
56. TFK INTSUM (22 March 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (8 April 2010).
57. Interview with Maj Wayne Niven (Edmonton, 11 July 2012).
58. *Ibid.*
59. JTF-A HQ DSR (8 March 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (10 March 2010); 1 PPCLI D Company SITREP (8 March 2010).
60. TFK INTSUM (14 March 2010).
61. TFK INTSUM (17 March 2010); Niven interview.
62. 1 PPCLI "Operation SHER 2 POR 21–30 March 2010".
63. JTF-A HQ DSR (4 April 2010).
64. TFK INTSUM (20 April 2010).
65. TFK INTSUM (24 April 2010).
66. JTF-A HQ WSR (10–16 March 2010); TFK POSM (11 March 2010).
67. JTF-A HQ WSR (17–24 March 2010).
68. JTF-A HQ WSR (26 May–1 June 2010).
69. Operation MOSHTARAK Phase III, as we will see, was later resurrected, but at this time the Canadian planners believed that HAMKARI was the successor plan.
70. TFK O&I briefing to the author (KAF, 10 July 2010); TFK J5 briefing to the author (KAF, 15 July 2010).
71. TFK O&I briefing to the author (KAF, 10 July 2010). TFK POSM (22 April 2010).

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72. JTF-A HQ WSR (14–20 April 2010).
73. JTF-A HQ WSR (19–25 May 2010); TFK O&I briefing to the author (KAF, 10 July 2010).
74. Interview with LCol Jennie Carignan (KAF, 12 July 2010).
75. *Ibid.* Note that 22 NCR was an engineering brigade headquarters that had three battalions under its command: one each from the US Army, US Air Force, and US Navy. The US Navy battalion was a Naval Construction Battalion or a SeaBee battalion.
76. TFK POSM (20 May 2010).
77. The sub-organization dealing with Sarposa prison operations was dubbed Task Force Cynthia.
78. Author's observations (Camp Nathan Smith, 17–24 July 2010).
79. TFK INTSUM (8 May 2010).
80. Interview with Col Ian Creighton (Ottawa, 21 November 2012).
81. Confidential interviews with OMLT personnel (KAF and Ma'Sum Ghar, Summer 2010).
82. Creighton interview.
83. OMLT briefing to the author (KAF, 10 August 2010).
84. JTF-A HQ WSR (14–20 April 2010).
85. OMLT briefing to the author (KAF, 10 August 2010).
86. Distilled from JTF-A HQ DSRs (May, June and July 2010).
87. OMLT briefing to the author (KAF, 10 August 2010); Creighton interview. Creighton notes that a re-roled American artillery battalion operating in northern Arghandab took well to partnering and developed a strong relationship with the Afghans. Other American units tended to use Afghan troops as the "Afghan face" to their operations and engage in the letter of the law not the spirit. To be fair, there were Canadian units that operated on both ends of the same spectrum.
88. OMLT briefing to the author (KAF, 10 August 2010).
89. *Ibid.* See also Creighton interview.
90. Creighton interview. See also JTF-A HQ WSR (12–18 May 2010); JTF-A HQ WSR (6–12 June 2010).
91. Confidential interviews with OMLT personnel (KAF and Ma'Sum Ghar, Summer 2010).
92. Bob Woodward, *Obama's Wars* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 2010), pages 350–351.
93. *Ibid.*, pages 350–355. David E. Sanger, *Confront and Conceal: Obama's Secret Wars and Surprising Use of American Power* (New York: Random House, 2012), pages 33–36. See Stanley McChrystal, *My Share of the Task: A Memoir* (New York: Penguin Books, 2013), chapters 16 and 17.
94. Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame* (New York: Vintage, 2013), page 163.
95. Sanger, *Confront and Conceal*, pages 54–55.
96. Distilled from TFK POSMs (May–July 2010).
97. *Ibid.*
98. Interview with Col Conrad Mialkowski (Ottawa, 25 October 2012).
99. Mialkowski interview.

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100. Interview with Col Simon Hetherington (KAF, 9 July 2010); Niven interview; Mialkowski interview; Maloney discussions with MGen Nick Carter (Camp Nathan Smith, 22 July 2010).
101. The TFK J5 staff leaned toward the indigenous model that McChrystal appears to endorse in his memoir (*My Share of the Task*, pages 308–309), but the J2 staff and BGen Vance believed that the insurgency in Kandahar Province had mutually supporting rural, urban and external components.
102. JTF-A HQ DSR (2 February 2010).
103. TFK J2 briefing to the author (11 July 2010).
104. *Ibid.*
105. JTF-A HQ WSR (24 February–2 March 2010).
106. JTF-A HQ WSR (21–27 April 2010).
107. These figures are distilled from JTF-A HQ WSRs (March–July 2010).
108. Carignan interview; TFK POSM (15 July 2010); JTF-A DSR (1 April 2010).
109. Interview with Maj Gord Ohlke (Kingston, 22 March 2013). See also OC All Source Intelligence Centre (Forward) Diary notes (24–31 July 2010).
110. JTF-A HQ WSR (3–9 March 2010).
111. JTF-A HQ WSR (24–30 March 2010).
112. JTF-A HQ WSR (24–30 March 2010).
113. TFK INTSUM (28 April 2010).
114. TFK INTSUM (8 May 2010).
115. TFK INTSUM (17 May 2010). Notably the Engineer Construction Squadron uncovered a scheme in Kandahar City where landowners in District 7 were threatened in order to get them to sell their land. Ahmad Wali Karzai would acquire the land and then sell it to the government to build a market in which he in turn was part of the approval process. Interview with Maj Bryan Mialkowski (KAF, 11 August 2010).
116. TFK INTSUM (21 May 2010).
117. TFK INTSUM (28 May 2010).
118. JTF-A HQ DSR (2 May 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (4 May 2010).
119. TFK INTSUM (9 May 2010); TFK INTSUM (11 May 2010).
120. Paula Broadwell, *All In: The Education of General David Petraeus* (New York: Penguin Press, 2012), page 45.
121. JTF-A HQ WSR (20–26 January 2010); JTF-A HQ WSR (27 January–2 February 2010).
122. TFK INTSUM (15 May 2010).
123. TFK INTSUM (16 May 2010); TFK INTSUM (20 May 2010); TFK INTSUM (26 May 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (27 May 2010).
124. JTF-A HQ DSR (3 May 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (4 May 2010).
125. JTF-A HQ DSR (13 May 2010).
126. JTF-A HQ DSR (16 May 2010).
127. JTF-A HQ DSR (9 May 2010).

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128. JTF-A HQ DSR (6 May 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (15 May 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (21 May 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (26 May 2010).
129. JTF-A HQ WSR (19–25 May 2010); TFK INTSUM (27 May 2010).
130. Mialkowski interview.
131. TFK INTSUM (15 May 2010); TFK INTSUM (19 May 2010).
132. JTF-A HQ DSR (4 May 2010).
133. JTF-A HQ DSR (8 May 2010).
134. Distilled from JTF-A HQ DSRs (11, 14 and 18 May 2010).
135. JTF-A HQ DSR (19 May 2010).
136. JTF-A HQ DSR (13 May 2010).
137. Mialkowski interview; TFK INTSUM (21 May 2010).
138. JTF-A HQ WSR (19–24 May 2010).
139. Telephone interview with Maj Eleanor Taylor (24 February 2013).
140. JTF-A HQ DSR (14 May 2010).
141. Taylor interview.
142. JTF-A HQ DSR (13 May 2010).
143. JTF-A HQ DSR (16 May 2010).
144. TFK INTSUM (13 May 2010).
145. Taylor interview.
146. JTF-A HQ DSR (25 May 2010).
147. JTF-A HQ DSR (26 May 2010). See also Mialkowski interview.
148. JTF-A HQ DSR (28 May 2010).
149. TFK INTSUM (1 June 2010); TFK INTSUM (2 June 2010).
150. “1 RCR BG Recce Platoon, TF 1-10 Op ATHENA Roto 9 Close Observation Capability — Tactical Employment”, (21 April 2011).
151. EOD Squadron briefing to the author (KAF, 1 August 2010).
152. *Ibid.*
153. *Ibid.*
154. *Ibid.*
155. *Ibid.*
156. Hetherington interview.
157. Hetherington interview.
158. *Ibid.*
159. *Ibid.*

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160. Interview with MGen Jonathan Vance (Ottawa, 11 December 2012).
161. *Ibid.* See also interview with BGen Jonathan Vance (KAF, 12 July 2010).
162. *Ibid.*
163. *Ibid.*
164. *Ibid.*
165. Taylor interview.
166. JTF-A HQ DSRs (6, 8 and 14 June 2010); TFK INTSUM (14 June 2010).
167. JTF-A HQ DSR (11 June 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (12 June 2010).
168. JTF-A HQ DSR (4 June 2010).
169. TFK INTSUM (5 June 2010); TFK INTSUM (7 June 2010).
170. Distilled from JTF-A HQ DSRs (June 2010).
171. TFK INTSUM (5 June 2010).
172. JTF-A HQ DSR (5 June 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (6 June 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (7 June 2010); JTF-A HQ WSR (2–8 June 2010).
173. JTF-A HQ DSR (7 June 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (12 June 2010).
174. JTF-A HQ DSR (13 June 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (14 June 2010); TFK INTSUM; Mialkowski interview (15 June 2010).
175. TFK INTSUM (20 June 2010).
176. Distilled from JTF-A HQ DSRs (16–20 June 2010).
177. Distilled from JTF-A HQ DSRs (20–26 June 2010). See also JTF-A HQ DSR (1 July 2010).
178. JTF-A HQ DSR (27 June 2010). The author arrived in Panjwayi district soon after this event and during discussions there was a strong belief among Canadian personnel that the Bison was deliberately targeted because it was an ambulance.
179. Author's observation of a discussion during a Commander's Update Briefing, Kandahar Air Field, 2 August 2010. One of the most disconcerting aspects of this incident were some personnel who essentially gave the Taliban the benefit of the doubt and claimed that the Taliban did not know they were targeting an ambulance. This type of denial was reminiscent of the tone of those who argued that the Taliban "accidentally" killed Glyn Berry in 2006.
180. Mialkowski interview.
181. JTF-A HQ WSR (8–14 June 2010).
182. *Ibid.*
183. Vance interview.
184. TFK POSM (1 July 2010).
185. TFK POSM (15 July 2010).
186. TFK POSM (22 July 2010).
187. Distilled from JTF-A HQ DSRs and WSRs (June 2010).
188. *Ibid.*
189. *Ibid.*

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190. Michael Hastings, *The Operators: The Wild and Terrifying Inside Story of America's War in Afghanistan* (New York: Random House, 2012), page 321.
191. Broadwell, *All In*, page 27.
192. *Ibid.*, pages 49–50.
193. JTF-A HQ WSR (2–8 June 2010); JTF-A HQ WSR (8–14 June 2010).
194. TFK INTSUM (17 June 2010).
195. Compiled from TFK DSRs and INTSUMs (June 2010).
196. TFK INTSUM (20 June 2010).
197. Distilled from JTF-A HQ DSRs and INSTUMS (July 2010).
198. JTF-A HQ DSR (26 June 2010), JTF-A HQ DSR (29 June 2010), TFK INSTUM (6 July 2010).
199. JTF-A HQ DSR (16 June 2010).
200. TFK INTSUM (7 July 2010).
201. JTF-A HQ DSR (9 July 2010).
202. The author was at Task Force Kandahar Headquarters when this event took place.
203. Distilled from JTF-A HQ WSRs and DSRs (July–August 2010).
204. JTF-A HQ DSR (10 August 2010).
205. JTF-A HQ WSR (10–16 August 2010).
206. TFK INTSUM (1 July 2010).
207. JTF-A HQ DSR (3 July 2010). See also JTF-A HQ WSR (29 June–5 July 2010).
208. As told to the author by MWO Stu Hartwell (FOB Ma'Sum Ghar, 2 August 2010).
209. JTF-A HQ DSR (10 July 2010).
210. Taylor interview.
211. JTF-A HQ DSR (7 July 2010), TFK INTSUM (16 July 2010).
212. JTF- HQ DSR (6 July 2010).
213. Distilled from JTF-A HQ DSRs (July 2010).
214. Smyth interview.
215. JTF-A HQ DSR (26 July 2010).
216. Author's observations at a Commander's Update Briefing (KAF, 26 July 2010).
217. JTF-A HQ DSR (30 August 2010).
218. The soldiers involved in this engagement and others like it described them in detail to the author at FOB Ma'Sum Ghar (6 August 2010).
219. JTF-A HQ DSR (27 July 2010).
220. JTF-A HQ DSR (30 July 2010).
221. TFK INTSUM (4 July 2010).

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222. JTF-A HQ DSR (4 July 2010), JTF-A HQ DSR (5 July 2010).
223. JTF-A HQ DSR (7 July 2010).
224. JTF-A HQ DSR (11 July 2010).
225. JTF-A HQ WSR (13–19 July 2010), JTF-A HQ DSR (17 July 2010).
226. TFK INTSUM (18 July 2010).
227. TFK INTSUM (21 July 2010).
228. Vance interview.
229. The author was present for several meetings related to Operation BAEXEI (July 2010).
230. Vance interview.
231. I Company briefing to the author (Camp Nathan Smith, 19 July 2010).
232. Author's observations (KAF and Camp Nathan Smith, July–August 2010).
233. Mialkowski interview; JTF-A HQ DSR (22 July 2010); Commander's Update Briefing (KAF, 24 July 2010).
234. JTF-A HQ DSR (18 June 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (5 July 2010).
235. JTF-A HQ DSR (5 July 2010).
236. The author was in-theatre when this event took place and was present during the commander's update briefing when the details were briefed. This included a picture of Baran post-tea pot beating.
237. Mialkowski interview. See also TFK INTSUM (15 July 2010); TFK INTSUM (26 July 2010).
238. JTF-A HQ WSR (27 July–2 August 2010).
239. JTF-A HQ DSR (18 July 2010).
240. JTF-A HQ DSR (19 July 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (20 July 2010).
241. TFK INTSUM (1 August 2010).
242. Distilled from JTF-A HQ DSRs (August 2010).
243. The author was on BLOWTORCH 61, disembarked right before it was shot down and observed the proceedings from the PGSS aerostat feed in the command post at FOB Ma'Sum Ghar.
244. The author observed this engagement from the Ma'Sum Ghar command post.
245. Author's observations from FOB Ma'Sum Ghar (August 2010).
246. TFK INTSUM (11 August 2010).
247. Distilled from JTF-A HQ DSRs and SIGACTS (August 2010).
248. JTF-A HQ DSR (11 August 2010).
249. JTF-A HQ DSR (1 August 2010).
250. JTF-A HQ DSR (2 August 2010).
251. JTF-A HQ DSR (5 August 2010).
252. JTF-A HQ DSR (20 August 2010).
253. Distilled from JTF-A HQ DSRs and SIGACTs (August 2010).

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254. *Ibid.*
255. Author's observations on receiving a tour of Recce Squadron positions in Panjwayi District (August 2010).
256. JTF-A HQ DSR (9 August 2010).
257. JTF-A HQ WSR (3–9 August 2010).
258. JTF-A HQ DSR (8 August 2010).
259. Distilled from JTF-A HQ DSRs and SIGACTs (August 2010).
260. TFK INTSUM (22 August 2010).
261. JTF-A HQ WSR (27 July–2 August 2010).
262. Author's discussions with District Support Team personnel (Panjwayi District, August 2010).
263. POST SITREP (1 August 2010).
264. Briefing to the author (KAF, 12 August 2010).
265. The author was near the impact of the first rocket and then proceeded to the TFK TOC and observed proceedings from there.
266. *Ibid.*
267. *Ibid.*
268. Briefing to the author (KAF, 12 August 2010).
269. It was not well thought out *vis-à-vis* effects on Hold operations in eastern Panjwayi District, either. See Vance interview.
270. Author's notes on a discussion between BGen Vance and MGen Carter (26 July 2010).
271. *Ibid.*
272. *Ibid.*
273. *Ibid.*
274. *Ibid.*
275. *Ibid.*
276. Creighton interview; Mialkowski interview; JTF-A HQ DSR (20 August 2010).
277. JTF-A HQ DSR (18 August 2010).
278. JTF-A HQ DSR (25 August 2010).
279. JTF-A HQ WSR (10–16 August 2010); JTF-A HQ WSR (17–23 August 2010).
280. TFK INTSUM (13 August 2010).
281. TFK INTSUM (19 August 2010).
282. Creighton interview.
283. Interview with LCol Tim Marcella (12 April 2013).
284. NSE briefing to the author (KAF, 15 July 2010).
285. Marcella interview.

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286. *Ibid.*

287. *Ibid.*

288. *Ibid.* See also author's observations at Camp Nathan Smith (July 2010).

289. "JTF-AFG Support Review" (26 March 2008); "TF 1-10 NSE (R9) End of Tour Brief" (19 January 2011).

290. Marcella interview.

291. NSE briefing to the author.

292. Marcella interview.

293. Author's observations (KAF, July 2010).

294. TFK POSM (29 July 2010).

END-GAME FOR TASK FORCE KANDAHAR:

SEPTEMBER 2010–JUNE 2011

Introduction

The final TF Kandahar rotations in the last eight months of the Canadian Army's tenure in Kandahar took place during a period of dramatic change. The tense drama of the summer of 2010 gave way to a climactic series of operations in the fall, followed by an almost anti-climactic period of relative stability lasting well into 2011. At first glance, it appeared as though the drop off in enemy activity in the fall was cyclical. The Pakistan-based fighters returned to their bases, re-armament activities took place, rockets were sporadically flung at Kandahar Air Field and so on. Some argued that the enemy was waiting for Canada to depart and had merely backed off before coming back in force during the Spring. As the weeks and months wore on, however, it was evident that there was in fact a substantial alteration in the scale of enemy activity taking place. The insurgency was forced to re-evaluate its activities based on what had occurred across southern Afghanistan in 2010. There were additional but hard to define pressures on the other side of the Durand Line related to the insurgent leadership's will to continue the fight. The insurgency in the Canadian area of operations was even less capable of the types of operations it had employed over the past four years and its local leaders struggled to adapt yet again to coalition methods and activities.

By the early summer of 2011, Canadian troops and Afghan civilians could drive on a paved road from Forward Operating Base Ma'sum Ghar to a forward operating base in Zangabad in eight minutes, whereas before Zangabad was could only be accessed by a deliberate operation down an isolated winding dirt road riddled with IEDs. The new road was ultimately extended all the way to Mushan, where commerce flourished in the bazaar once again. Canadian troops could operate in coordinated partnership with the Afghan army, the Afghan national civil order police, and special operations forces. They would be accompanied by engaged and comparatively effective district leadership. And they would bring a host of locally-tailored security and development programs designed to address grievances and assist local religious authorities. An Afghan brigade, with Canadian mentorship, was able to conduct comparatively independent operations. None of this was possible the previous summer, let alone in the earlier years of Canadian Army operations in Afghanistan.

That state of affairs, however, did not look possible in early September 2010. 1 RCR Battle Group was challenged in its dealings with the twin canker sores of Nakhonay and Chalgowr. Operations were not seen to be feasible west of the 28 Easting in the Horn of Panjwayi, which remained an insurgent base area pumping supplies and expertise to forward IED construction facilities in Kenjakak and elsewhere. There were IED's everywhere, or so it seemed. At the very least, operations in central and eastern Panjwayi district continued to keep the enemy from focusing efforts on Dand district, though the enemy continued in their efforts to make opportunistic low-level inroads. There they were frustrated by a combination of TF 1-71 Cav and the great strides in governance and development efforts that made Dand a model district.

Handing Off from Vance to Milner: The New Task Force Afghanistan, September 2010

It was now time for BGen Jon Vance and the former Ménard-led headquarters staff to depart. In mid-September 2010 BGen Dean Milner and his headquarters conducted a relief in place and set about completing the final months of the mission. TF Kandahar headquarters under Milner experienced a number of structural changes in keeping with the reduced and more concentrated nature of the mission. The incoming battle group and OMLT were now based solely in Panjwayi and Dand. In Kandahar City there was still a protection platoon and a Military Advisor at Camp Nathan Smith (LCol Louis Cyr) but for all intents and purposes the PRT ceased to have a significant relationship to TF Kandahar. ASIC (Forward) was eventually withdrawn. The Stabilization Companies were dissolved.

CIMIC and PSYOPS were re-focused away from operational-level activities and towards supporting battle group operations in Panjwayi district. 'Operational-level' PSYOPS was folded into Influence Activities which was now part of an expanded J9 in the headquarters led by LCol Marcel McNicholl. McNicholl was also Commanding Officer of Brigade Troops which now consisted of the ScanEagle SUAV detachment; the non-infantry remains of Stab A; the JTACs, the Fire Support Coordination Centre, and the Air Space Coordination Centre at the TF Kandahar operations centre. The two OCC-D's, also reported to the J9.¹

The J5 section under LCol Roger Cotton handled Afghan national security force issues and operations analysis. The need for better measurements of effectiveness on the progress of the Afghan police and army, something that lapsed under the previous headquarters, and the shift to partnering and the decline of the OMLT, now had to be reinvigorated with a vengeance. The reporting demands by higher ISAF headquarters on these matters justified the significant increase in J5 capacity. Within weeks, the daily and weekly reporting improved and ANSF development was much easier to track for the non-cognoscenti.



Photo Credit: DND AF2010-0306-120

With the reduction of Canadian battle-space in Kandahar Province, BGen Dean Milner focussed on building relationships with district-level Afghan leaders, particularly District Governor Haji Baran of Panjwayi District.

This new schema consisted of the ‘Plan, Train, Capacity, Sustain’ functional progression, and was now applied to everything TF Kandahar’s units did with Afghan security forces.²

The J5 also provided valuable operations analysis. The jettisoning of Effects Based Operations by the Thompson headquarters back in 2009 did not mean that statistical feedback was completely useless. The J5 noted that Regional Command (South) moved company-sized icons around on maps and assumed that certain activities were taking place: this was referred to as “Sprinkling KLE dust” and “Stability dust” on the map, but it was not clear exactly what effect this actually had below the sub-unit level. “Money is a weapons system” became the mantra in various headquarters but when the idea was challenged, it was difficult to prove how effective it was. The J5 examined such aspects of the campaign and provided feedback into the J9 world.³ In time the J5 shifted to mission transition, that is, closing down TF Kandahar and handing off to BGen Chuck Lamarre’s Mission Transition Task Force.

The significant change in philosophy during this rotation was that CIMIC and the other ‘non-kinetic’ organizations in TF Kandahar were now completely focused on influence activity, not development activity. As CIMIC leader Major Dan Lamoureaux delineated it, there was Feel Good CIMIC at the PRT and Combat CIMIC in TF Kandahar.⁴ There was still a TF Kandahar Development Advisor, in this case Anne Lavender. Lavender had experience in Kandahar working for CIDA at the PRT trying to rationalize various reporting schema back in 2010. However, she was hampered by the unresponsive nature of communications with the other government departments at the PRT. As a result, the District Support Teams in Panjwayi and Dand reported to TF Kandahar, not the PRT, and were still at this point working out what their relationship to the new super PRT, the US-led Regional Platform (South), was supposed to be. They also had good working relationships with the J9. Political Advisor Colin Lake had a decreasing role to play as things wound down but found a niche in sorting out relationships with Regional Platform (South). The Representative of Canada in Kandahar, the vaunted RoCK, was now seen as “fading away” as “Canadian influence vanished.”⁵

The attitude that developed for the last Canadian rotation can be summed up thus: “We are past development, the future ends on 1 June 2011.” The focus was on tactical effects in order to reduce the effectiveness of the enemy in the upcoming summer 2011 fighting season so that an effective relief in place could take place with the incoming American brigade. Projects were not necessarily designed for lasting effect: “[We were] going to do everything the enemy doesn’t want us to do.” And that meant, among other things, constructing and manning schools, building roads, and implementing irrigation improvements.⁶

The general concept was to place CIMIC and development pressure in areas to get the enemy to respond to them with their limited resources: and then increase the Canadian-Afghan response 200% to counter them. Then move to another area and repeat the process. This ideally would force the enemy to spread his limited information operations (positive and negative) and fledgling development capacity very thinly. TF Kandahar would then rotate its priorities to keep the insurgency off balance.⁷

Religious engagement was part of this schema. Radio was one methodology, providing every form of support to the mosques was another. The Kandahar Ulema Shura was examined as a venue but, as it turned out, the KUS never really recovered from the 2005–2007 period where its moderate members were selectively assassinated. That said there was now a KUS magazine, and radio talk shows examining the religious aspects of the life, the universe, and the insurgency. Wheelchair repair and basic agricultural training at the district centres were other projects that had effects where the Taliban could not respond to match them. TF Kandahar under Milner retained an entity dubbed “The Frat House” where influence activities were brainstormed with both Canadian and Afghan advisors. In the Milner-led

TF Kandahar headquarters, there was a dramatic improvement in how influence activities were understood and integrated into operations compared to the tentative and minimalistic efforts of the Ménard-led headquarters.⁸

The push for a new reintegration framework for so-called Tier II Taliban fighters at the national level in Afghanistan had by the fall of 2010 produced a slew of partially-digested programs. This was considered a major weakness in the overall ISAF effort and it would not bear significant fruit during the remainder of Canada's tenure. TF Kandahar kept an eye on it in any event. In general, cash-for-work programs in the districts handled by the Canadian engineers kept more potential Tier II Taliban off the streets than the baroque concepts coming out of American think tanks seeking an audience in Kabul did.⁹

On the final rotation of TF Kandahar, the Task Force Engineer Regiment played the lead role. Commanded by LCol Mark Misener, it comprised the Engineer Support Squadron (formerly the Engineer Support Unit) led by Maj Pascal Blanchette; the Engineer Construction Squadron, itself made up of the Construction Management Organization and the Specialist Engineer Team, under 2007 alumna Maj Barbara Honig; the Explosive Ordnance Disposal Squadron (formerly the Counter-IED Squadron) led by Maj Benjamin Aho; and the Engineer Regiment Reconnaissance Troop, a new sub-unit formed to conduct project survey and verification operations. The EROC people and the combat engineers of the Field Squadron remained part of the battle group.¹⁰ Maj Honig and the Engineer Construction Squadron worked in close cooperation with Maj Lamoureux and his CIMIC teams in the communities of Panjwayi District, which "CIDA and DFAIT did not like at all."¹¹

The anomaly was that the Specialist Engineer Team remained at Camp Nathan Smith for some time despite the fact that it belonged to the ECS. The existence, location of and control over the SET became a significant issue between TF Kandahar and the other Canadian government departments and ultimately the matter went all the way up to Cabinet for adjudication. CIDA still wanted to play in the larger provincial development game with its projects, many of which remained of dubious value. The SET's higher-level American equivalent was part of 22 Naval Construction Regiment. CIDA could not access 22 NCR's money, resources, and contracting capacity, so they wanted to use TF Kandahar's money and capabilities. By this time, there was no Canadian Army area of operations outside of Dand and Panjwayi. The TF Kandahar priorities were operations in those districts. Elements in TF Kandahar viewed CIDA influence over the SET as a situation where "CIDA and DFAIT get the credit if it works, and the Canadian Forces gets the blame if it doesn't." An extreme example of the pettiness that developed was when CIDA threatened to sue Department of National Defence over the removal of fire extinguishers from Camp Nathan Smith as it was turned over to the Americans, which apparently put CIDA personnel at risk according to Canadian workplace safety guidelines.¹²

Coordination

As we have seen with previous rotations, the danger that planning could become discombobulated during multiple offset reliefs in place was high. The September–November 2010 changeover was one such period in that it had numerous and even conflicting moving parts. 1 RCR Battle Group under LCol Conrad Mialkowski was, by the fall of 2010, implementing a plan formulated in conjunction with the Vance-led TF Kandahar headquarters which itself had been commanded by BGen Ménard, who had a very different concept of operations. At the same time, Vance worked with Maj Gen Nick Carter at Regional Command (South) to stabilize the situation in Kandahar province after several unexpected command changes and after the significant inflow of American troops into the province in the summer. The issue was this: Vance and the former Ménard-led TF Kandahar headquarters were scheduled to rotate out in mid-September and be replaced with a TF Kandahar headquarters commanded by BGen Dean Milner. Mialkowski and 1 RCR Battle Group was scheduled to be relieved by LCol Michel-Henri St-Louis and the 1 R22eR Battle Group in late November. The OMLT, as we have seen, was in the process of shifting away from partnering and going back to mentoring, while at the same time the unit rotated between Col Ian Creighton's organization and one commanded by Colonel Hercule Gosselin in November. There were going to be more Afghan security forces to coordinate with, and there was now a new 1-205 Brigade commander, Brig Gen Habibi. Then Carter's Regional Command (South) headquarters was going to be replaced by an American-dominated Regional Command (South) headquarters in November. That headquarters was going to be commanded by Maj Gen James Terry, who had been the operations officer for 10th Mountain Division back in 2006 when CTF AEGIS was under its command.

To complicate matters further, there were the fall 2010 Afghan provincial elections. Operations still had to be designed to support voter registration, polling station location, and security on the day of the election. Then units had to create their own plans. There were significant implications. First, the incoming OMLT and P-OMLT had to substantially adjust their organizations and concepts of operation to handle the new Afghan organizations that were moving into the Canadian area of operations. Second, 1 R22eR Battle Group was going to be implementing a plan conceptualized by Carter, agreed to by Vance and Carter, and then commanded by Milner, but then coordinated with an American-led headquarters that had its own campaign plan. Third, the battle space in Panjwayi and Dand districts was going to be flooded with almost two brigades' worth of troops: the Canadian battle group; the Canadian OMLT and P-OMLT; TF 1-71 in Dand; three Afghan army kandaks; an Afghan National Civil Order Police kandak; and American SOF mentors for the ANCOP kandak. Those troops all required infrastructure before they could even deploy.

The immense effort required to make all of these moving parts mesh fell on the shoulders of the staffs as well as the commanders, but in TF Kandahar it was LCol Maurice 'Moe' Poitras, LCol Doug Claggett, and LCol Tod Strickland who confronted these challenging issues. It is only through exceptional interpersonal relationships and trust that all of these parts meshed and that this complex mechanism was put in motion towards a successful conclusion.

TF Kandahar's plan to stabilize the situation in Panjwayi was called Operation MATIN AZIM. 1 RCR Battle Group was to set the conditions so that the Afghan troops could flow in during the fall. MATIN AZIM was worked out jointly with Habibi's 1-205 Brigade. The Carter-led Regional Command (South) headquarters worked with TF Kandahar to develop another plan called BAAWAR, which was aimed at re-taking and occupying the Horn of Panjwayi. Operation BAAWAR involved TF Kandahar and 1-205 Brigade in Panjwayi, and the American CTF Strike in Zharey district. The Canadian part of BAAWAR was dubbed Operation PASS RAFTAN. Operation PASS RAFTAN was developed in coordination with 1-205 Brigade, with Canadian OMLT mentors playing a significant role in that coordination effort. BAAWAR and PASS RAFTAN were planned while 1 RCR Battle Group was still in-theatre but would be implemented by 1 R22eR Battle Group once they conducted the relief-in-place.¹³

The new incoming Regional Command (South) headquarters under Maj Gen Terry kept a close eye on these evolutions starting in July 2010. This headquarters had a significant Canadian component, specifically because Terry requested it. His deputy commanding general was Canadian BGen André Corbould, who selected a variety of TF ORION alumni like LCol Mason Stalker as well as highly-experienced staff officers like LCol Acton Kilby and LCol Mike Hewitt to fill positions in the stabilization and engineering branches of the headquarters. This headquarters was working on the Unified Implementation Plan, a five-year plan for Regional Command (South). There was no conflict between this work and what was happening in Panjwayi district in late 2010, as interpersonal connections ensured that any issue was rapidly deconflicted. Terry's Regional Command (South) headquarters to its credit was not interested in micromanaging events in Panjwayi at this time.¹⁴

On the battle group front, LCol St-Louis and his staff had exceptionally good relations with Miakowski's 1 RCR Battle Group and were up to date on the myriad of changes taking place. Though their tactical recce was temporarily marred by the Chinook helicopter shoot down in August, the incoming sub-unit commanders clearly understood the current operating environment.¹⁵

The Afghan-Canadian component of the plans was crucial. On the police side, there remained serious deficiencies in leveraging Canadian influence with the Afghans at the provincial level. The district-level police issues were profound and governance-related.

In these matters TF Kandahar had virtually no measurably effective assistance from the other Canadian entities in Kandahar and none from those in Kabul.

The Canadian Army–Afghan National Army relationship was in significantly different shape, particularly after mid–September. In this realm Canada was fortunate to have BGen Dean Milner in command. Milner’s tenure as TF Kandahar commander was significantly different from his predecessors. His responsibilities were the same but directed at a much narrower geographical area and with less autonomy compared with previous TF Kandahar rotations. His span of manoeuvre in provincial power circles was much more restricted now that the Army was out of that game, a situation that was particularly affected after Ménard’s changes at the PRT. Vance had stabilized the situation to give Milner firmer footing when he got on the ground. Rather than trying to operate as if it were 2006 or 2009, Milner saw that his key role was not to launch independent brigade-sized operations but to leverage his personality and command position with the Afghans to ensure that all of the other moving parts already in play meshed as effectively as they could under the circumstances. He did not try to reinvent the wheel. In doing so he developed a close relationship with Brigadier General Habibi, cultivated Haji Baran when possible in Panjwayi, and supported Nazek in building Dand on every front, knowing that the psychological momentum established there had to be maintained.¹⁶

The first stage, however, was to continue to stabilize Panjwayi district with 1 RCR Battle Group and assist in establishing the laydown for the incoming Afghan forces. Until Milner and his team were fully deployed, this was Vance’s brief.

Stabilizing Panjwayi was easier said than done but the situation improved on a weekly basis. The hotspots in the district remained the Sperwan Ghar area, Nakhonay, and Chalghowr. The 28 Easting approximated a traditional forward line of own troops, but there was increased insurgent infiltration across Route Brown. Nakhonay was gripped by the Canadian and Afghan troops there but were hampered by the lack of effective police which in turn limited the flow of local information. Chalghowr remained an insurgent irritant because of its geographically central position between Malajat, Dand, and eastern Panjwayi. One important aspect of the situation was a major raid down in Spin Boldak that captured almost all of the crucial IED components destined for insurgent groups operating in Panjwayi district. The number of IED attacks dropped off in September.¹⁷

Vance and Mialkowski focused on screening off Nakhonay first. As LCol Mialkowski recalled:

We’re going to lock that place down. We’re going to put four gates on it. We’re going to have rolling patrols. Me and, like, 3.5 tons of barbed wire. The new attitude for Nakhonay’s inhabitants was “Sayonara, suckers.” We have all this money, and we’re now going to invest

it in Salavat. We're going to throw money at Mohajerin, Panjsher. We're going to do it in Fathollah. And we're going to do it close enough so they can see.¹⁸

The recalcitrant and reluctant Pakistani contractor handling the UNOPS road (that is, Lake Effect) paving project told the battle group he would return now that summer fighting season was ending and complete Lake Effect. "And we said, 'Yaah, and you're gonna pave roads in here, here and here.' 'No problem. What about Nakhonay?' And we said, 'Screw Nakhonay.'...We lost ten Canadian lives in Nakhonay to no benefit. To nothing. To nothing but sheer frustration."¹⁹

Major Taylor's Charles Company over in Sperwan Ghar was by this time flooded with enemy activity. Word was out that there would be a coalition offensive against the Horn of Panjwayi and, by the pattern of enemy activity in the area, it appeared as though they were trying to pre-empt or otherwise disrupt any moves on the part of the coalition. Indeed, the majority of reported enemy activity in Panjwayi district in September revolved around the communities surrounding the forward operating base, and as usual, the Route Brown-Route Hyena connection. (see Figure 8-1 and 8-1a).

There was a large number of significant events east of Route Brown, which was unusual, and indicated substantial insurgent infiltration of that area. On 30 August, for example, an Afghan army patrol hit a radio-controlled IED and when the Afghans responded with a quick reaction force, it was hit with an ambush. The Canadian platoon on duty took fire on the base as well. A variety of surveillance systems on the hill picked up enemy movement and these targets were engaged with a pair of F-18s using gun runs and GBU-12 bombs. The Canadian artillery battery opened up with 20 rounds of 81mm mortar on those trying to get away.²⁰

Charles Company pushed out patrols into the communities and they uncovered cache after cache. During the exfiltration of one patrol, an OH-58D Kiowa Warrior that was observing the operation came under anti-aircraft fire from a heavy machine gun. Afghan army resupply and contractor convoys started getting hit on Route Brown. On all occasions Charles Company was able to call in fast air support against the ambush parties. In one instance LAV III and Coyote 25mm fire was used from the base against small groups of insurgents skirting compounds along Route Brown. Snipers were brought in to take out IED emplacers and engaged them when they could.²¹

As an adjunct to the upcoming Operation MATIN AZIM, Charles Company surged into the Sperwan area on 15-16 September. This move appeared to have displaced the small enemy groups in that area to the zone west of Route Brown. Insurgent small arms fire was now directed against Sperwan Ghar from the southwest and the west instead of from the north. TF Kandahar did not yet have the ability to project force west of the

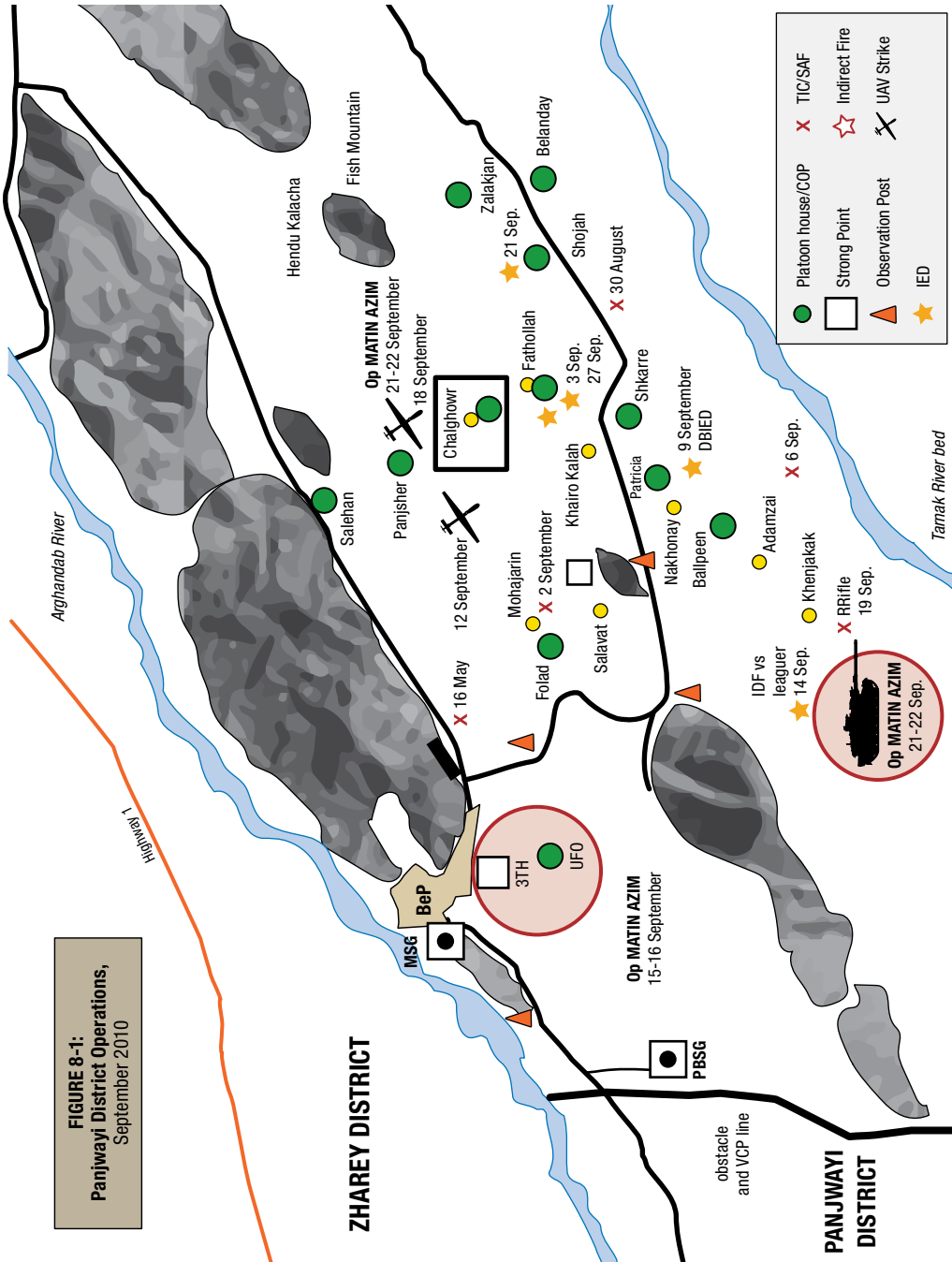


Figure 8-1: Panjiwayi District Operations, September 2010

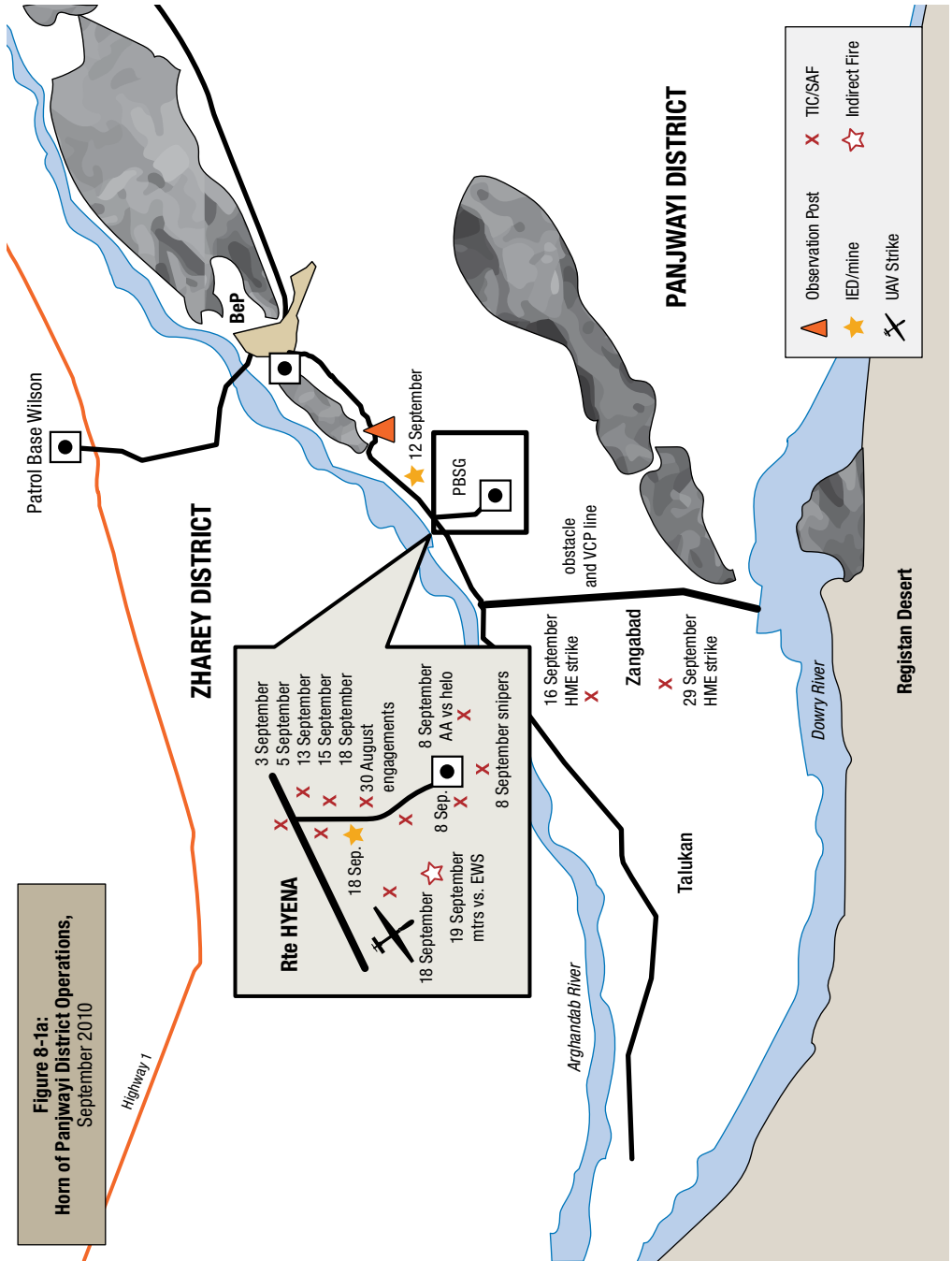


Figure 8-1a:
Horn of Panjwayi District Operations,
September 2010

Figure 8-1a: Horn of Panjwayi Operations, September 2010

28 Easting, but to give the enemy something to think about, TF Kandahar authorized two strikes into the Zangabad area based on ISTAR reportage. A compound known to have been a homemade explosive production facility was hit with an airstrike on 15 September. Two weeks later, ISTAR resources spotted homemade explosive production in a field and Canadian M-777 guns were brought to bear, destroying the drying facility and killing those involved in the activity.²²

The next series of operations was dubbed MATIN AZIM. There were several objectives. The first was to clear three areas: Haji Habibollah; Kenjakak; and Chalghowr. The second was to establish and occupy tactical infrastructure so that incoming Afghan and Canadian units could adjust for the Horn of Panjwayi operations. The third was to establish an obstacle belt consisting of ditches and barbed wire along with access control points in selective locations to frustrate enemy movement and generate 'breathing room' for the Hold in the three cleared areas.²³

TF Kandahar wanted to generate several effects with MATIN AZIM. As LCol Mialkowski put it, "We're going to force you to use these checkpoints, or we're going to force you into the Reg Desert." With the Recon Company for the 1-205 Brigade situated at the bottom point of Khebari Ghar and with the tank squadron roving about between there and Nakhonay, and Recce Squadron screening on Route Lake Effect, this was now possible. "Now, you can get a motorcycle through, but we didn't care. He's not carrying, like, 200 pounds of HME. It's the cars, the little vans, the little trucks. So we closed every crossing. We'd wire it. We forced people to use legit roads."²⁴

The engineering effort for this portion of MATIN AZIM took about a month. The first move was to put a ditch in west of Route Brown and establish better access control on Routes Brown and Hyena. Combined with Charles Company operations, this reduced enemy activity east of BROWN.²⁵

There was concern within CIMIC circles and in Charles Company that an obstacle belt along Route Brown would alienate the population because it would split the communities like Cyprus or Berlin. However, after the anti-tank ditches, wire and motorcycle blocks went in, the population approached Charles Company and thanked them for providing security. Some even wanted the obstacle belt and checkpoints moved west beyond the 28 Easting and many wondered why the works had not been done before. In other words, the psychological impact of physical obstacles contributed to increasing the sense of security. The enemy still probed and still tried to lay IEDs, but he was attenuated just enough to give Charles Company and the population breathing room. IED finds went up. As they did, the enemy mounted more ineffective 'shoot n' scoot' small arms attacks against the checkpoints.²⁶

The next phase of MATIN AZIM was to surge Major Steve Noel and I Company into the Haji Habibollah area south of Bazaar-e Panjwayi on 15 September where they manned an observation post at UFO Hill and temporarily occupied the deserted school complex next to it in Nejat. There was a burst of small arms fire at the start against Three Tank Hill and OP School near the new district centre, but once I Company started patrolling, there was little or no activity. Indeed, the illegal checkpoint problem in the area that so concerned TF Kandahar earlier that summer dropped away.²⁷

O Company was next. Major Steve Brown's company was at this point occupying its outposts in Panjsher, Salavat, and Fatollah and patrolling between them. A pair of IED attacks around Fatollah triggered off increased UAV activity between there and Chalghowr which in turn led to MQ-1 Reaper engagements against small IED emplacement teams. The troops occupying COP Shojah brought in a sniper detachment to deal with another observed emplacement team. The snipers made short work of it. On 21-22 September, O Company working with Afghan army forces, moved on Chalghowr and swept through it. They also conducted an air assault on the Fatollah crossroads as part of the operation. Engineers arrived to start construction on a combat outpost for an incoming Afghan army company. There was no apparent opposition.²⁸

Indeed, there were reports that local people in Panjwayi were going up against the Taliban on their own. The police commander in Salehan supplied weapons to a civilian group in a community south of his position, probably to use that community as a screen against insurgents in Chalghowr. An IED attack near Fatollah that wounded several local people resulted in the physical beating of known Taliban insurgents by the community. Within a week the word was out that enemy commanders in the greater Nakhonay area were departing. The insurgents even achieved an own goal when an IED took out a commander from the Nakhonay: He and his men drove over a device emplaced by another group.²⁹

Major Austin Douglas and B Company continued to occupy Nakhonay. Aside from a pair of ineffective small arms attacks and the employment of an 82mm recoilless rifle against COP Ballpeen, the only major event was the bizarre employment by the enemy of a donkey-borne IED against a Canadian patrol that resulted in four Canadian soldiers and two local children wounded.³⁰

The next iteration of MATIN AZIM occurred on 28-29 September in the Kenjakak area. There was no opposition and some small caches were discovered. The only other significant enemy activity was against the Leopard tank squadron. Maj Rob Mackenzie and his tankers were occupying a leaguer west of Nakhonay when they came under mortar fire wounding one. 20 rounds of 81mm mortar from D Battery, directed using the counter-mortar radar that was operating with the squadron, successfully landed on target, destroying the enemy mortar teams. After that, the insurgents steered clear of the tank leaguer.³¹

There were several spin-off effects of Operation MATIN AZIM. The disruptive movements in the three communities led to SOF targeting a significant enemy commander who was forced to move abruptly and was then captured.³² The enemy groups from east of Sperwan all the way to Adamzai now complained to their leadership about the lack of IED supplies. As a result, there were increased attempts to breach the razor wire fence established west of Route Brown, leading to an increased number of engagements along that line. The strikes near Zangabad interfered with enemy homemade explosive production as well.³³ LCol Mialkowski recognized that the effects were temporary, that the enemy would adapt. But Operation MATIN AZIM bought a precious commodity and that was time. Time to get the Afghan forces into Panjwayi District.

OMLT Operations, Fall 2010

The OMLT's brief of working on long-term aspects of Afghan National Army professionalization was tempered by several realities. First, the new Canadian rotation was only going to last from September until the end of the mission in late May 2011. Col Ian Creighton and his staff were still working to reverse the effects of the removal of the company mentoring teams. Second, there were immediate operational problems in Panjwayi that needed solving. Finally, the incoming OMLT commanded by Colonel Hercule Gosselin was in-bound but out of phase with the other deploying organizations and only had five months to accomplish anything when it hit the ground in December.³⁴

The process of gaining cooperation between the Afghan army and TF Kandahar on Panjwayi district operations was, as we have seen, a slow one. The priority for Afghan army forces in the province during the summer of 2010 were the Arghandab operations. BGen Vance and Col Creighton were able to make headway in getting an Afghan company stationed in Nakhonay, and in re-organizing the OMLT to re-create a company mentor team to handle that relationship. With a new but experienced 1-205 Brigade commander, Brig Gen Habibi, and with the outline planning done by Maj Gen Nick Carter's RC (South) headquarters to retake the Horn of Panjwayi, it appeared that more was possible in the realm of OMLT operations.³⁵

The initial Afghan army laydown by September 2010 as it affected Canadian operations had 1st Kandak in Arghandab district, with 3rd Kandak in Kandahar City. 2nd Kandak was in Panjwayi, while the combat support and combat service support kandaks had units distributed in these three areas. There was a company from an Oruzgan-based kandak in Nakhonay, working with an ad hoc Canadian mentor team. With the Afghan army's priority task of securing Kandahar City, Canadian operations in Panjwayi and Dand were of a secondary nature. On a positive note, however, Habibi was enthusiastic about company-level operations, something his predecessor loathed, and had less of a problem with decentralization when it came to working with Canadian units.³⁶

At this point in the war, Lt Col Baris' 2nd Kandak was categorized as tired and burned out from the pace of enforced partnered operations with coalition forces in the spring and summer. It resisted a move to Sperwan Ghar and was not ready to be the lead Afghan army organization to go into the Horn.³⁷ There were two incoming kandaks, however, from other brigades and corps but these were cut to 1-205 Brigade. To avoid confusion they were re-numbered 6th Kandak and 7th Kandak. They were assigned to Panjwayi and Dand districts respectively.³⁸

There were teething problems, however. The new Kandaks came from other brigades, so they had to develop a relationship with 1-205 Brigade first. This strained an already over-taxed brigade logistics system. This took time to sort out and required the assistance of the OMLT and the National Support Element. The winding down of operations in Arghandab also meant that Habibi's brigade headquarters was moving to Panjwayi. That required infrastructure, which in turn meant assigning scarce construction engineering and contracting capabilities.³⁹ The 6th Kandak and 7th Kandak commanding officers were anxious to get moving but had to be constantly reminded by the OMLT that tactical infrastructure "must first be defensible, and then livable."⁴⁰

When all was said and done, the OMLT was caught in a dilemma. The organization had to address immediate operational problems while at the same time it had to operate within the partnering construct. As Creighton saw it, the summer operations under Vance were a tactical fight where the OMLT worked with the Afghans from 2nd Kandak and the 1 RCR Battle Group to stabilize the situation. The longer-term issues of institutional mentoring and the 404 Maywand police organization came a distant second on the priority list. At the same time, restructuring the OMLT to deal with lower-level company-level operations had to take place to ensure success. With Habibi replacing Basir and Milner replacing Vance, the opportunity existed to rationalize OMLT operations for the remainder of the Canadian Army's time in southern Afghanistan. OMLT mentors, now called Kandak Mentor Teams, deployed with both 2nd Kandak and 6th Kandak at the company-level. TF 1-71 Cav remained partnered with 7th Kandak in Dand for the time being but eventually a Kandak Mentor Team arrived in the fall.⁴¹ As BGen Milner saw it, the battle group's partnerships with the kandaks would be augmented with mentoring at the company and kandak-level. At the top of the chain of command, Milner himself would partner with Habibi, and the new OMLT commander, Col Gosselin, would be Habibi's mentor.⁴²

When Col Gosselin took over the 281-strong OMLT in November 2010, he immediately saw issues with partnering. There were now two kandaks in Panjwayi and one Canadian battle group, therefore the stipulated company-to-company ratio just was not possible. The reality that all involved had to accept was that there was no more Canadian leverage at the Ministry of Defence level, none at the 205 Corps level, and that the Canadian

CHAPTER EIGHT

Photo Credit: Author



The Afghan security forces played a much greater role in Panjwayi District in 2010-2011, eventually peaking at five kandaks, two of which were partnered with Canadian forces. This was a dramatic improvement from the 2006–2007 period and a testament to the cumulative efforts of the Canadian Operational Mentor and Liaison Team.

operational agenda in Kandahar was now more important than Afghan National Army development. The hard reality was that measurements of effectiveness vis-à-vis Canadian progress in Panjwayi district operations were going to be the driver from here on to the end of the mission. That said, Gosselin determined that the best enduring item he and the OMLT could achieve was to build up Afghan army confidence in conducting operations at all levels, but particularly at the command level within 1-205 Brigade and its kandaks. Discarding the strict partnering directives as a strait jacket, the hybrid partnering-mentoring structure was now going to be used in every possible way to make this happen.⁴³

Ultimately the new structure retained the Brigade Mentor Team with 1-205 Brigade but continued with the trend of breaking up the 404 Maywand training teams and reassigning them back to the Kandaks. In addition, the P-OMLT was once again given back to the OMLT. A fifth team was added which put two P-OMLT teams in Dand, and three in Panjwayi. The Kandak Mentoring Teams were completely reorganized and ‘task tailored’ so that both Afghan police and army units in Panjwayi could work with Canadian companies. For example, Kandak Mentoring Team 7 had two company mentoring teams to work with two companies from 6th Kandak that were working with B and C Companies from the battle group, and also had two P-OMLT teams to work with the Afghan police assigned to the areas of operations covered by B and C Companies. In this sense the final OMLT configuration was different from its predecessors and suited to lower-level operations in the communities.⁴⁴ By October the Afghan army units that the battle group were associated with in Panjwayi district were 2nd Kandak and 6th Kandak from 1/205 Brigade. (see Figure 8-2)

Governance Issues

TF Kandahar’s involvement in provincial-level matters was, as we have seen, significantly reduced by 2010. The fall 2010 provincial elections, for example, hardly registered as an issue in the headquarters. The usual security operations conducted during elections were mounted in Panjwayi and Dand, with almost no significant enemy interference, despite exaggerated claims to the contrary by the Quetta Shura.⁴⁵ The assassination campaign in Kandahar City did overlap with the election but it was part of a larger insurgent intimidation strategy as opposed to the specific targeting of the election process. That said, the Director of the Haj Mohammad Timori, was assassinated with a car bomb near the Governor’s Palace. This killing was seen as deliberate targeting of religious authorities.⁴⁶

A potentially divisive issue that temporarily affected relations between the provincial government and TF Kandahar was the threat by an obscure American religious figure to publicly burn the Koran:

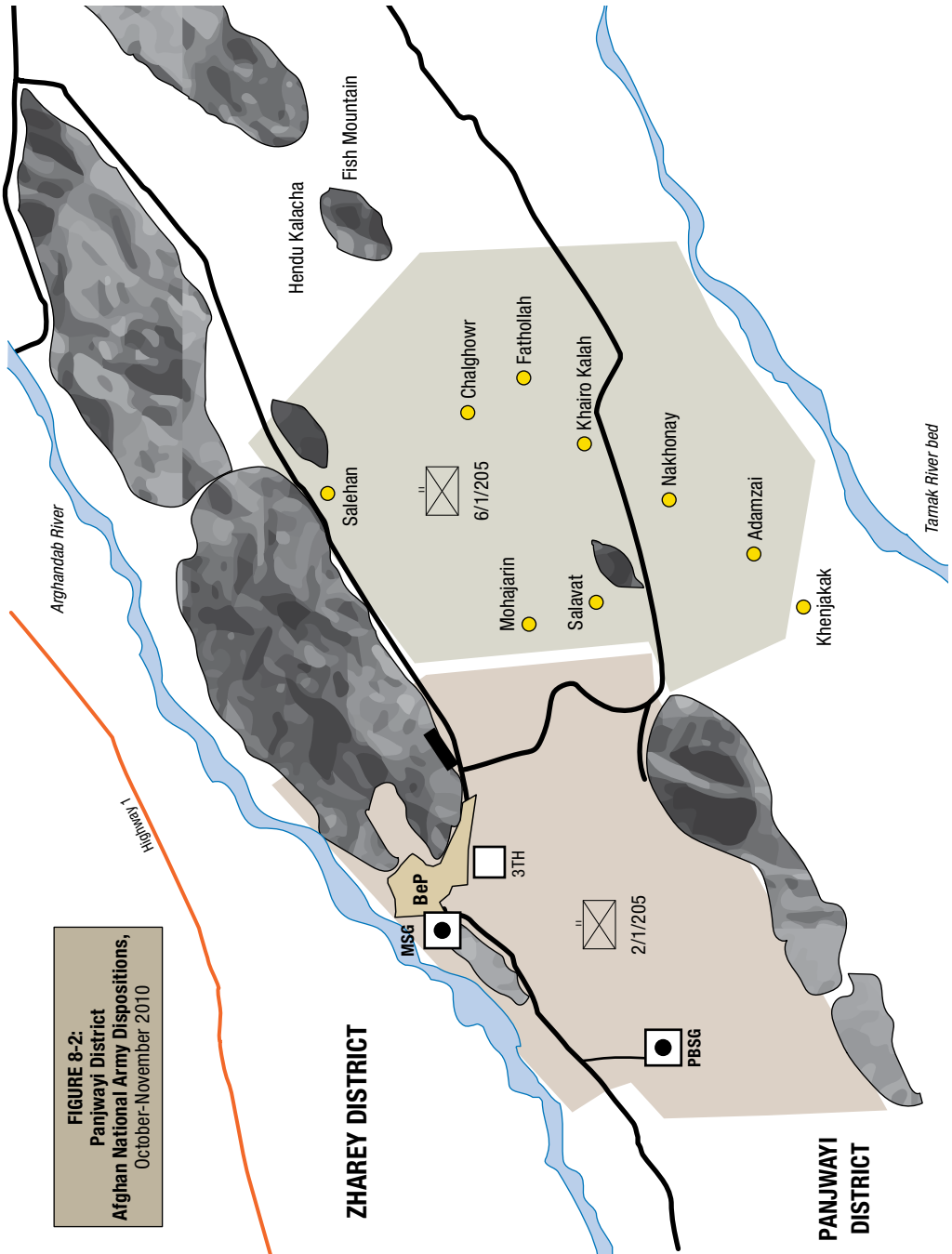


FIGURE 8-2:
Panjwayi District
Afghan National Army Dispositions,
October-November 2010

Figure 8-2: Panjwayi District: Afghan National Army Dispositions, October-November 2010

The [deputy governor] essentially stated that he would support a jihad against the coalition forces if the planned events were not stopped. The Mayor of Kandahar City (a U.S. citizen from Virginia) said we should get the CIA and FBI to stop the burning of Korans. The Governor of Kandahar listened to these comments and stated to the [provincial coordination centre staff] “now you’ve heard our position, please pass it along to your side” ... Of particular concern is the public pressure that [Government of Afghanistan] officials will face to distance themselves from ISAF ...⁴⁷

Though the Taliban’s information operations experts likely rubbed their hands together in glee, nothing immediate came of this event.

ISTAR reportage, however, picked up on a problematic development on the other side of the Durand Line. Afghans, and it was not clear exactly who or who backed them, were having phony voter registration cards printed in printing facilities in Peshawar. These were then sold to parliamentary candidates in Kandahar for a small sum per vote. Reports of this issue constituted yet another blow to electoral credibility.⁴⁸

When the election did occur in mid-September, TF Kandahar’s District Support Teams monitored the situation in Panjwayi and Dand. Despite the significantly improved security arrangements, voter turnout in the province was estimated to be 20%, or less than half that of the national elections in 2009.⁴⁹

Though the ASIC had steadily moved away from detailed analysis of the Kandahar political scene and more towards tactical intelligence in Panjwayi and Dand, it kept a passing eye on higher-level events. Corruption of the political process did not surprise the analysts. Reportage continued on the role of Ahmad Wali Karzai in “nefarious activity” and concluded “If AWK is truly connected to individuals that are doing these activities, whether by his direction or not, it is likely that corruption in Kandahar City will never be completely brought under control.”⁵⁰

Dand District Operations, Fall 2010

Lt Col John Paganini’s TF 1-71 Cav and the Canadian organizations aligned with it worked steadily to assist District Governor Nazek in moving deeper into the Build stage in Dand district. The fundamental security problems in the district continued throughout the fall in the same areas that were problematic in the summer. The first was the Walakan-Hendu Kalache area, and the second consisted of the communities south of Tarnak River. It should be stressed, however, that the insurgency in these areas was operating at a very low level of intensity compared to Panjwayi. In both Dand areas there was a mix of intimidation and IED emplacement. There was an assassination team trying to step up operations in the south. As the supply chain was squeezed, however, there were fewer and fewer IED attacks.

The ISTAR web in Dand, which consisted of RAID sensor towers in American tactical infrastructure and various types of UAVs orbiting the area, was able to take out emplacement teams regularly.⁵¹

One event that affected the situation in Dand was Operation MAYWAND, a large-scale clear of Malajat by Afghan security forces and American CTF RAIDER early in September. The provincial police chief, who had just sent equipment and vehicles to the Dand police, now wanted both men and the equipment redeployed as part of MAYWAND. This significantly reduced the operational tempo of the Dand police, to the Canadian P-OMLT's chagrin. And, as the Afghan forces engaged in MAYWAND took casualties, Dand police were involved in evacuating wounded police to Dand from Malajat, which in turn overloaded the Dand policing facilities.⁵²

The enemy assassination team working in the southern part of Dand proved to be elusive. In one case a pro-government Mullah was murdered. TF 1-71 Cav mounted Operation TORNADO and deployed in Canadian Chinooks for a trio of airmobile insertions into the communities south of the Tarnak River (see Figure 8-3). The enemy team disappeared and popped up a week later to commit another killing. This sort of activity could only be countered with more police presence but they were mostly deployed supporting of MAYWAND.⁵³

The Dand police were improving. Un-partnered patrols found IED after IED, cordoned them off, and called for the U.S. Air Force EOD team working with TF 1-71 Cav. The Canadian P-OMLT was hampered by its practically non-existent mobility, a legacy of the Ménard re-organization. The MP Company simply did not have the sustainment resources to keep the P-OMLTs on the road, and they were forbidden to ride in Afghan police Rangers because of the IED threat. The Canadian mentors did what they could, when they could, but their potential was not fully realized at this time. That said, they played a valuable role in security coordination in the district.⁵⁴

The Walakan-Hendu Kalache 'seam' required attention, if only to keep the enemy in the area disrupted and to perhaps deter insurgents from using the community as a way station. A combined TF 1-71 Cav and Dand police patrol came under fire in Walakan on 21 September. They returned fire and advanced on a compound that served as the enemy's firing position. The building proved to be booby-trapped and the device exploded, killing one American, wounding two other Americans and one Afghan. Concerned that this compound was bait, it was destroyed with an air strike.⁵⁵

TF 1-71 Cav and the Afghan forces worked together to prepare for the inbound 7th Kandak. This involved Clear operations in Zalakan (Operation MADAREE) and in Hendu Kalache, as well as conversations with local leaders as to where they thought the new combat outposts should be positioned. 7th Kandak troops flowed in by the end of the month

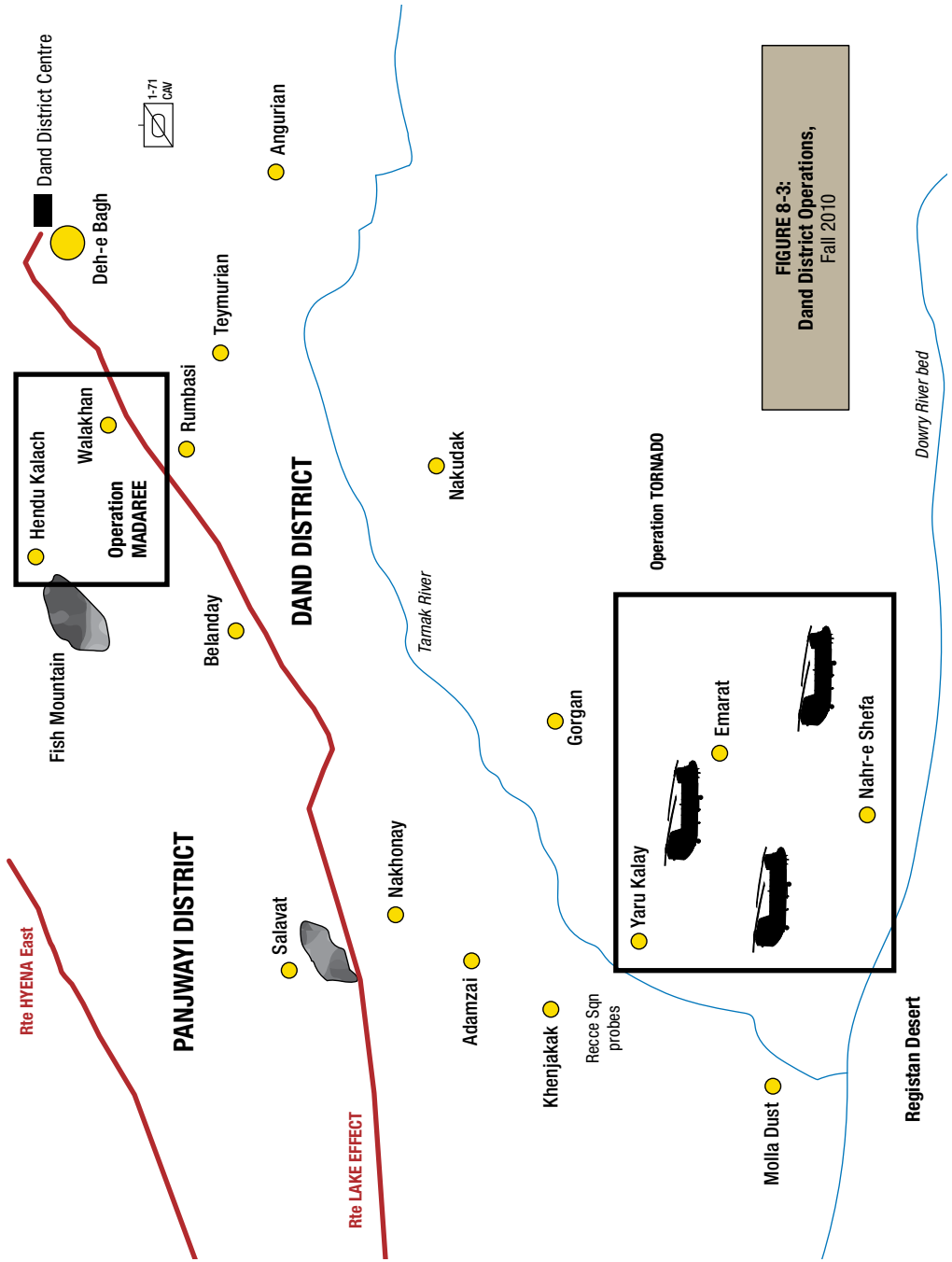


Figure 8-3: Dand District Operations, Fall 2010

but the OMLT reported that “despite assurances that [7th Kandak] would have infrastructure developed for them upon deployment into Dand District, the soldiers would continue to live in austere conditions in Zalakan, Walakhan, and Tarnak. While CO [7th Kandak] is very eager to conduct operations, he is very reluctant to commit further forces into that district until the companies that are currently deployed have adequate living accommodations.”⁵⁶

Concurrently the enemy worked on building a network across southern Dand all the way over to Chineh and points east, then north into Malajat. They were, however, increasingly hampered by the improved security posture over in Nakhonay and Kenjakak. The combination of operations in eastern Panjwayi and in Dand contributed to the application of serious pressure on the insurgent groups trying to operate between Zangabad and Kandahar City.⁵⁷

On the development front, most of the reportage coming out of the District Support Team was generally good throughout September and October. The long-awaited Kandahar City Bypass route was now underway in Dand and the District Development Assembly met regularly. The Afghan government line ministries now had representation in Dand and Nazek also had an expanded administrative staff. Several health facilities were operating. On the policing side, the claw back of resources by the provincial chief had a significant impact on morale but within a month the Dand police bounced back and assumed responsibility for one-third of the district. The district leadership was less and less concerned with the day-to-day security situation and more and more focused on establishing markets, paving roads, and getting commerce going. Nazek and his family, however, needed close scrutiny to deter them from falling back on their nepotistic tendencies. Dand was firmly in the Build category by November 2010.⁵⁸

Operation BAAWAR: Panjwayi District, October–November 2010

The July discussions between Vance and Carter led to a layered series of operations in Panjwayi throughout October–November that were designed to retake and occupy the western part of the district and then deepen the Hold on the eastern portion. There were a lot of moving parts in what became one of the most complex operations of the war involving Canadian troops in Kandahar province.

Both MGen Carter and MGen Terry at Regional Command (South) were convinced that the Horn of Panjwayi needed a thorough Clear, but the big questions of resources and phasing had to be settled first. Also, any effort to retake the Horn would be futile if it did not extend into Zharey District, especially the Heart of Darkness around Nahlgam and Sia Choy. That meant a Clear of Zharey District, and CTF Strike, the American brigade responsible for Zharey and Arghandab districts, was earmarked for a push south to the Arghandab River in October.

This was a maximum force operation involving nightly air strikes for several weeks. Every movement by American forces down a route was preceded by Mine Clearance Line Charges ('micklicks') so much so that observers referred to 'belt-fed MCLC use' (Apparently CENTCOM's operational stocks of MCLC's ran low during the operation). The number and frequency of explosions in Zharey overwhelmed the HALO system and affected even the counter-mortar radar systems in Panjwayi. The tank squadron at Ma'sum Ghar got in a few shots and Canadian ISTAR resources played a role, but for the most part it was an American show. In time CTF Strike reached the Arghandab River using old Route Langley and constructed a prefabricated concrete wall designed to separate Zharey from Panjwayi, leaving the crossing point near Bazaar-e Panjwayi open.⁵⁹

While CTF STRIKE pushed south, Regional Command (South) implemented another plan to move into the Horn of Panjwayi using part of a U.S. battalion, 1-187 Infantry, to occupy positions in the Horn. This was portrayed variously as an extension of the CTF STRIKE operations into the Horn, or as some form of supporting effort to STRIKE's operations in Zharey on the southern bank of the Arghandab. Some of the staff at the Milner-led TF Kandahar believed that Maj Gen Carter lacked confidence in Canada's ability to undertake this task but as we have seen he had been dissuaded by Canadian officers during the Ménard period from using the battle group in this role. Others believed that the competitive CTF STRIKE wanted the job and lobbied hard to get it. In any case, the forces going into the Horn on 15 October were not under TF Kandahar's command. The command chain involved the special operations world, CTF STRIKE, and Regional Command (South). When the American companies set up shop in Zangabad and expressed a desire to extend operations to Talukan and Mushan, however, TF Kandahar staff with previous experience saw that this was *déjà vu* all over again: the American infantry companies were occupying three small security bubbles, just as 2 PPCLI Battle Group did in 2008. Without a secure means of resupply and freedom of movement, there could be no long-term progress in the Horn.⁶⁰

That issue was understood by Carter at Regional Command (South) however, and steps were taken to develop a supplementary plan between TF Kandahar, 1-205 Brigade, and Regional Command (South). This was Operation BAAWAR ('Trust' or 'Assurance'). BAAWAR had two main phases (see Figure 8-4). First, secure eastern Panjwayi and get the Afghan security forces in place and operating. This would free up resources for the second phase, the re-occupation of the Horn and the eventual relief in place of the American and Afghan units operating there with Canadians and Afghans. When the time came for Canada to depart, a hand over to a new American unit would take place sometime in 2011. A sub-operation of BAAWAR was Operation PASS RAFTAN ('The Return').⁶¹ PASS RAFTAN involved the construction of the Ground Line of Communication or GLOC, that is, the extension of the old Fosters Paving Project all the way from Ma'Sum Ghar to Mushan.⁶²

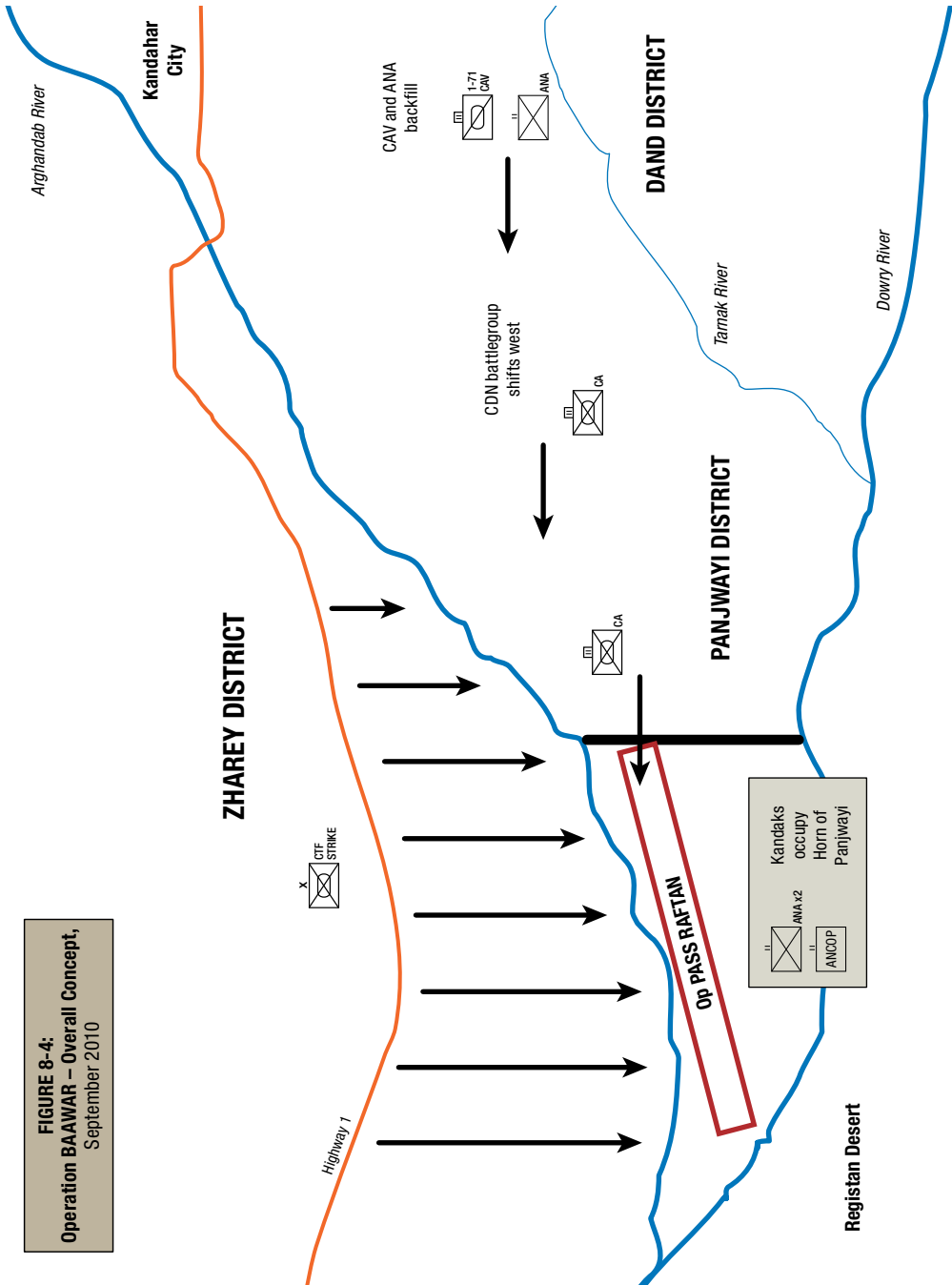


FIGURE 8-4:
Operation BAAWAR – Overall Concept,
 September 2010

Figure 8-4: Operation BAAWAR – Overall Concept, September 2010

Operation BAAWAR ultimately employed every facet of TF Kandahar's organization throughout October and November. The first involved a combination of Maj Barbara Honig's Engineer Construction Squadron, CIMIC teams, and the OMLT. The existing tactical infrastructure in Panjwayi had to be improved and expanded to accommodate 1 RCR Battle Group, 2nd Kandak, 6th Kandak, 1-205 Brigade headquarters, and any and all military and civilian construction engineering assets, plus their protection forces. These activities included land clearances, construction contracting, and key leadership engagements in all of the communities that the forces would be operating in. Then roads between all of the nodes had to be built and existing ones improved to reduce the threat of IED's. This phase of the operation took the entire month of October with the resulting laydown of forces depicted in Figure 8-5. These projects employed several hundred local men. The Commander's Contingency Fund was used to pay for most of it, as American CERP monies were caught up in increasingly Gordian Knot-like red tape generated by recent and negative audits of that program.⁶³

While all of this was in play, TF Kandahar conducted a series of disrupt operations which took several forms. First, BGen Milner accepted the fact that 1 RCR Battle Group was by this point in their tour seriously fatigued. Casualties, HLTA, plus regular wear and tear reduced the sortie rate from the patrol bases they inhabited. There was an increasing tendency to use the aerostats to spot for artillery strikes and direct fire from 25mm guns in run-up positions against identified IED emplacers. Orbiting UAVs controlled by either TF Kandahar operations centre or the battle group operations centre took care of the places in between. There were engagements every other day of all types throughout October which in many cases killed insurgents singly or in pairs. The cumulative effect was to maintain coalition freedom of movement. There was only one major IED strike during this period which killed Senior Airman Daniel Johnson of the U.S. Air Force EOD unit and wounded several others.⁶⁴

The second was the use of SOF to target identified mid-level enemy commanders in Panjwayi and Dand. BGen Milner was adamant that SOF play a role in this and was convinced the effects on enemy activity would be significant. Related to this was the use of SOF and airstrikes to destroy any homemade explosive production facility identified using ISTAR resources in a calculated effort to attrit the insurgent's dwindling IED capacity. A collateral effect included several major IED turn ins: in one case sixty directional fragmentation charges were turned in by local people, as well as a suicide vest production facility.⁶⁵

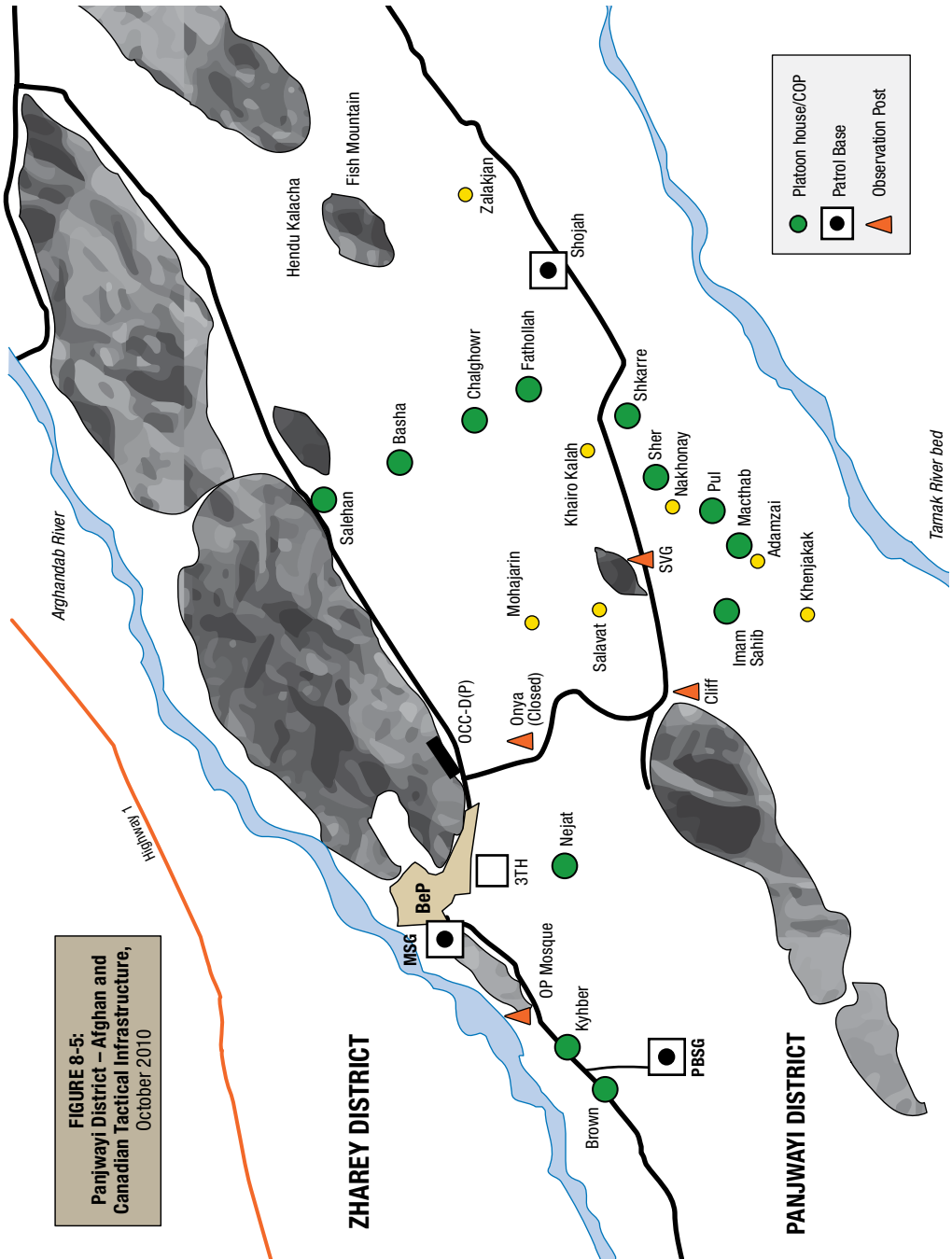


Figure 8-5: Panjwayi District – Afghan and Canadian Tactical Infrastructure, October 2010

A key area of concern was eastern Panjwayi in the area handled by Maj Steve Brown's O Company. Additional CIMIC resources were applied in an effort to win Chalgowhr and environs over and O Company aggressively patrolled the area while Afghan army tactical infrastructure was under construction. Ultimately Maj Austin Douglas's B Company mounted similar operations in the greater Nakhonay area and the eastern Panjwayi operations. These were dubbed Operation ETEBAR ('Trust').

The importance of gaining ascendancy in eastern Panjwayi cannot be overstated as it was the prerequisite for success in the overall plan. The long-term reasons related to the Dand-Kandahar City 'ratlines' remaining in play, but the medium-term issues related to the Horn clearance operations and the ultimate handover of the district by Canada to Afghan and American forces in 2011, which loomed over the whole effort.⁶⁶

The chronic problem of policing in Panjwayi district now had to be addressed. The philosophical problem of using the army to police the people was in the forefront, but the practical morale-based problem of 2nd Kandak's boredom with what Afghan troops derisively called 'traffic control duty' on the Route Hyena checkpoints had to be addressed. The kandaks did not want to be 'beat cops' and that included members of 6th Kandak. The convoluted rotation of four different chiefs of police for the district in 2010 and the turbulence it generated in the governance sector indicated a loss of Canadian influence in higher police circles, despite the OMLT's involvement in 404 Maywand Corps police training. ANCOP was a special forces bailiwick and could not easily be leveraged for Focused District Development operations. Indeed, ANCOP refused outright to do any policing that was not related to their planned Hold operations in the Horn. As a result, a concerted effort led by BGen Milner and Col Gosselin was made to improve policing in Panjwayi as part and parcel of Operation BAAWAR.⁶⁷

Milner reported that "I continue to assess the lack of a functional [Afghan police] capacity as the most pressing security issue in the Area of Operations. In Panjwayi the situation is critical."⁶⁸ There were two levels to this problem: provincial and district. At the provincial level, access was needed with Governor Wesa, the provincial police chief, and 404 Maywand Corps. In the district, TF Kandahar had to work on District Governor Haji Baran and whoever the new district chief of police was going to be.

The key players in leveraging more police support at the provincial level were LCol Louis Cyr, the Military Advisor at Camp Nathan Smith, and Tim Martin, the RoCK. Milner viewed the other provincial-level players as not useful in the effort, particularly DFAIT. In effect Milner, Cyr, and Martin constituted "a virtual PRT" when it came to policing matters.⁶⁹ Marshalling support from Haji Baran and other district-level powerbrokers on one hand, and Maj Gen Carter at Regional Command (South) and Lt Gen Khan Mohammed at the regional level, Milner was able to get a new chief for

Panjwayi, Mohammad Azim, a Noorzai originally from Talukan. He arrived in mid-October and in the words of LCol Conrad Mialkowski, “Scared the bejeezus out of everybody.” For some reason Governor Wesa and his political allies were alarmed at this appointment.⁷⁰

At the district level, the key organizations supporting Chief Azim were the MP Company, the P-OMLT (which Milner put back under Colonel Hercule Gosselin’s OMLT), OCC-D(P), and the District Support Team. And in time CIVPOL was prepared to send a mentor down to Panjwayi. Everything was done to assist the policing effort. By the end of October Chief Azim was showing dramatic results. TF Kandahar reported that there were 236 registered cops in the district, most of them recruited by Azim, of which 66 had almost completed their FDD training. Azim went out and personally recruited 200 more and fed them into the training system where they were prioritized, a process that was the result of Canadian influence efforts. The main issue now was sustainment and that was where the P-OMLT played a significant role in improving that state of affairs. Azim immediately pushed the new officers out into the district communities.⁷¹



Photo Credit: Author

In the absence of meaningful development programs in contested areas, CIMIC operations were pushed down to community level and coordinated with the District Support Team.

The final piece was the Citizen Engagement Strategy. In essence the District Support Team worked to get Haji Baran out and about to every key leadership engagement imaginable. This was particularly important in the road construction shuras held with communities so they could advise on route location and what could and could not be taken down. Baran may have lost influence in some quarters but his presence brought out other Panjwayi power brokers who saw that things were changing in the district and who wanted to be involved.⁷²

Such a concentrated and coordinated effort was simply not possible during previous Canadian rotations. TF Kandahar in the past was spread thin over several districts and never had anywhere near the concentration of Afghan security forces that were in Panjwayi at this time. There were two army kandaks and one ANCOOP kandak in Panjwayi, plus the Canadian battle group and the myriad of Canadian enablers from TF Kandahar, whereas 2 RCR Battle Group deployed an infantry company, an artillery detachment and some Coyote recce vehicles and almost no enablers to Panjwayi in 2007. The provincial-level development distractions were no longer impinging on events and resources, thus freeing up valuable Canadian staff and planning effort.

One significant issue was the upcoming relief in place scheduled for the end of November. The Milner-led TF Kandahar headquarters would remain but all of its constituent units would rotate. So would Carter's Regional Command (South). To stave off any enemy interference, a series of disrupt operations were planned throughout November. In essence they were similar to the measures employed in October, and they produced similar results. Each battle group company surged into their respective communities in succession, taking along their partnered Afghan companies and OMLT mentors. O Company went into Chalghowr, I Company swept Haji Habbibollah, Charles Company went through Sperwan, and B Company surged into Nakhonay. These disrupt operations were conducted in the middle two weeks in November as 1 R22^eR Battle Group was RIPing in.⁷³ A new ASIC followed in November, led by Maj Marco Roy.

It was time to pass the torch.

Relief in Place and a New Regional Command (South): November, 2010

On 27 November, LCol Conrad Mialkowski and 1 RCR Battle Group handed over to LCol Michel-Henri St-Louis and the 1 R22^eR Battle Group, with the remaining incoming units achieving full strength by 8 December.⁷⁴ Structurally, 1 R22^eR Battle Group had four infantry companies instead of three: the Stabilization Company was now gone. For this rotation, there was A Company, led by Maj Pierre Leroux; B Company led by Maj André Girard; C Company led by Maj Christian Marquis; and Para Company led by Maj Frédéric Pruneau. The American company in the Horn, Dog Company commanded by Cpt Adam Scher, was also under tactical control, which effectively gave LCol St-Louis

an additional sub-unit. The battle group had a Recce Platoon, as well as an enhanced sniper platoon consisting of 18 snipers. All infantry companies were equipped with the LAV III LORIT variant and all companies also had designated sharpshooters equipped with C-3 weapons to augment the sniper capability.⁷⁵

The tank squadron, now designated C Squadron, was led by Maj Éric Landry of 12 RBC, who was one of the original planners for Horn of Panjwayi operations in the Laroche headquarters back in 2007. C Squadron at this time consisted of ten Leopard 2A6Ms, five Leopard 2A4's, and four Leopard 1C2's. Recce Squadron was based on A Squadron 12 RBC and led by Maj Christian Caron. With the high number of vehicle casualties over the years, A Squadron was down to two troops of eight vehicles consisting of a mixture of Coyotes, LAV III LORITs, LAV RWS variants, and TLAVs. The artillery battery, batterie X from 5 RALC had two troops of two M-777 guns each: it was led by Major Vincent Giroux. The combat engineer organization was 52^e Escadron 5 RGC and was led by Major Francois Sauvé. A PSYOPS platoon and a CIMIC platoon were also integrated into the battle group. Administration Company was distributed to the forward operating bases to handle transport and maintenance.⁷⁶ By the first week in December 2010, the 1 R22eR Battle Group had fallen in on its predecessor's footprint, intending (as in any in rotation) to adjust for future operations (see Figure 8-6).

Canadian involvement with Regional Command (South) also changed in November. Unlike the Carter-led headquarters, Canadians were integrated from the start with the American 10th Mountain Division commanded by Maj Gen James Terry, who decided, based on his experiences in 2006, that he wanted a Canadian deputy division commander and staff officers. BGen André Corbould was selected to fill this position and other Canadian officers occupied key positions in the headquarters: planning, stability operations, and the Joint Operations Centre. Terry even sidelined some of his own division headquarters personnel so that Canadians could fill these slots.⁷⁷

Possibly the most important aspect of Canadian involvement with the new Regional Command (South) headquarters was the formulation of the campaign plan. There were several important aspects of this issue. First, the McChrystal ISAF headquarters told 10th Mountain Division when it was earmarked for Afghanistan back in 2010 that there would be only one campaign plan, and that it would be McChrystal's. When Petraeus replaced McChrystal, this changed and Petraeus permitted lower-level campaign planning in the regional commands. In this case, the document was the Unified Implementation Plan or UIP. The UIP was a five-year plan and was a deliberate move away from the short-term planning that previous iterations of Regional Command (South) engaged in. Multiple Canadian Afghan alumni, including LCol's Mason Stalker, Mike Wright,

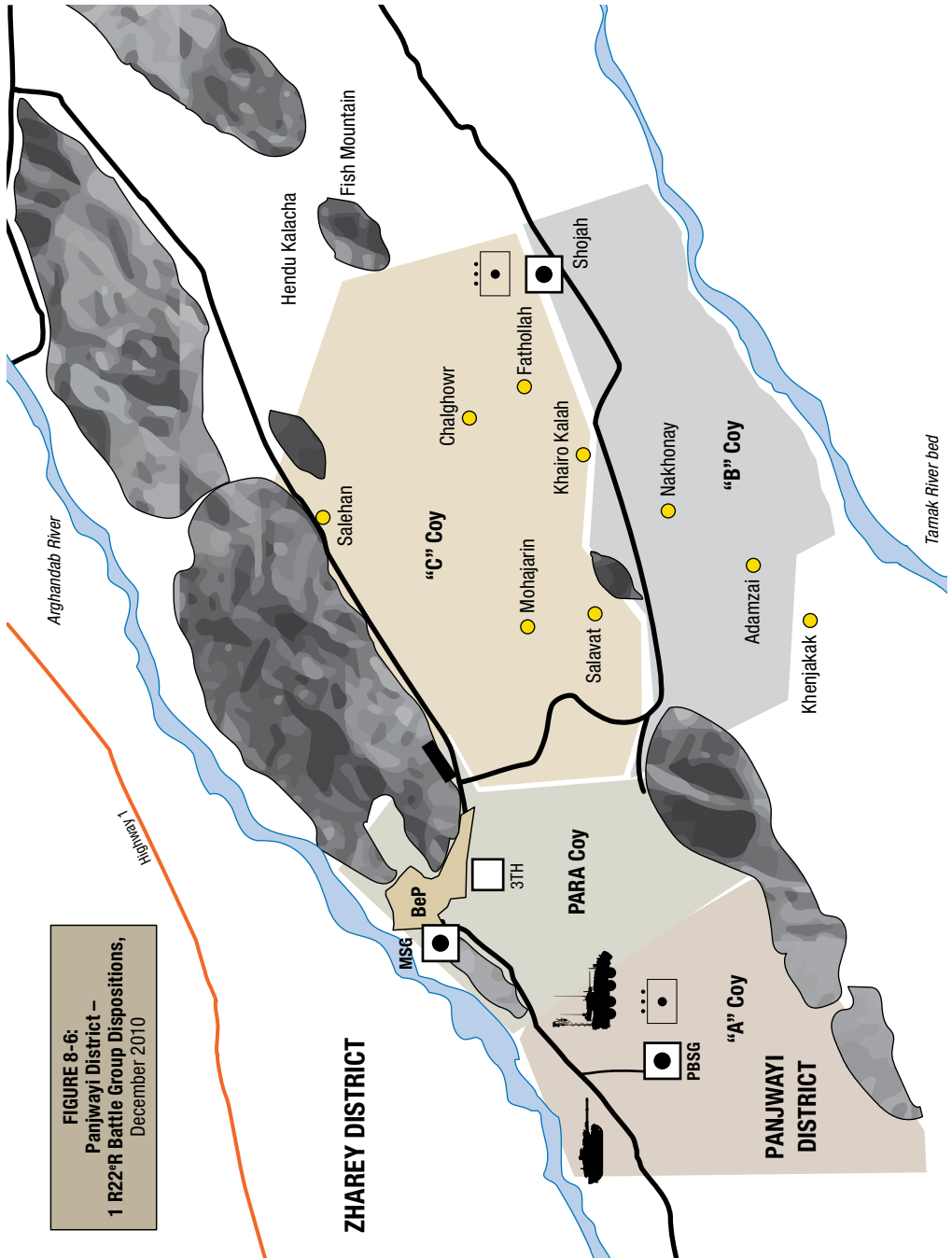


FIGURE 8-6:
Panjwayi District –
1 R22eR Battle Group Dispositions,
December 2010

Figure 8-6: Panjwayi District – 1 R22eR Battle Group Dispositions, December 2010

and Darren Hart, were involved in the mission analysis which “ruffled a few feathers in 10th Mountain Division.” The UIP’s lines of operations, as it turned out, were an evolution of the CTF AEGIS campaign plan. In this case, they were to protect the people; aid and development; and stability and governance. Unlike previous plans, Regional Command (South) was only responsible for Kandahar, Oruzgan, Zabul and Daikundi. Helmand and Nimroz belonged to Regional Command (South West). The UIP drilled down to the district level and synchronized the security, development, and governance lines of operations over five years. Progress was measured every eight weeks. This permitted Regional Command (South) to move resources around and justify their use. Most importantly, this process “allowed us to decide what we were not going to do. It provided focus.” The process also revealed gaps, that is, what was not being done.⁷⁸

For example, two seemingly unconnected items like conducting a job fair for unemployed young men and the discovery of how the insurgency was stockpiling homemade explosive material along the border could now be synchronized with the security operations conducted by, say, TF Kandahar and CTF Strike in Panjwayi and Zahrey districts. By employing several hundred or thousand people immediately after poppy season, and by raiding the large caches of explosives established on the border at the same time, the ability of the insurgents to hire and deploy manpower and increase IED production could be attenuated. This was very different from having the divisional headquarters assign and re-assign helicopters, UAVs, and artillery resources to particular operations.⁷⁹

Regional Command (South)’s assessed the enemy situation thus:

We were looking at an insurgency that was under immense pressure to regain momentum. I think they’ve been stalled for years. Our sense was that they were under huge pressure internally because they had people within the insurgency who were, like, “Shit, man, we’re not having the success we wanted to have.” I think they were getting pressure from the ISI in Pakistan that expressed itself in terms like, “If you don’t do well this year, we’re not going to help you out, your support is dwindling and we are having problems supporting you.” I think they were getting a lot of pressure from the population.⁸⁰

In general, the Regional Command (South) approach involved:

What we had going for us was the three pressure points that were focused on the enemy. We enhanced those pressure points as best we could. We tried to create gaps and seams within the enemy structure. We tried to deliberately isolate high-level Taliban from mid-level Taliban from low-level Taliban. And we did it in all sorts of ways. We did it with messaging, we tried to push them over the fence. We spread out during the fighting season. We had a lot of guys employed.⁸¹

The previous frictions between Regional Command (South) and TF Kandahar were reduced through personal contacts. BGen Corbould worked closely with Col Richard Giguère, the TF Kandahar deputy commander, to ensure that previous problems did not repeat themselves. It was clear to all that the Canadian position in Kandahar province was significantly reduced and that there were no aspirations to alter that trajectory.⁸²

Supporting Task Force Kandahar Operations

The National Support Element commanded by LCol Sébastien Bouchard from November 2010 to July 2011 was structurally similar to the previous rotations and was manned at the same levels: 400 military, 330 CANCAP, 75 PSP. With the Provincial Reconstruction Team gone, the support positions were re-assigned within the NSE. The initial laydown was also similar to the previous rotation: FOB Ma'Sum Ghar, FOB Shojah, Patrol Base Sperwan Ghar were the primary NSE detachments forward, while the detachment in Kabul remains in place. Cooks were also distributed to the battle group platoon houses, while the NSE senior non-commissioned officers took over the FOBs to free up infantry. When Operation BAWAR was underway and the Zangabad facilities constructed, another NSE detachment was formed and deployed there.⁸³

The most complex task for the NSE was the logistic support for Operation BAWAR. Until the road was completed, it all had to be conducted using aerial resupply. Recipients included not only the Canadian battle group, but also the American elements from Zharey district and American special forces that were working the Horn. The NSE coordinated frequent GPS-steered container drops from C-130 transports as well as helicopter resupply. When the system became overloaded, a 2008-style 'river run' with tanks and a Combat Logistics Patrol was launched from FOB Ma'Sum Ghar. The NSE worked closely with the Air Wing and the American 43 Sustainment Brigade to coordinate all of the BAWAR logistics activity. Over 1 million pounds of material was moved using Chinook helicopters, contract Jingle Trucks and, eventually, the CCAT Mi-17 helicopters once the threat situation shifted from red to green.⁸⁴ The NSE's main focus was operations in the Horn of Panjwayi and eastern Panjwayi District, but it also partnered with 1-205 Brigade's 5th Kandak to assist with technical training.⁸⁵

The Bouchard-led NSE's final operation was the withdrawal of all Canadian equipment from the forward areas in June-July 2011. This massive operation also had to be conducted while maintaining logistic support to the incoming American forces in Panjwayi District: kitchens, fuel, and contracting support. The American procedures remained mired in a 90-day turnaround period, while Canadian contracting could be done in as little as 12 to 24 hours. Similarly American logistics convoys took two days to mount, whereas a Canadian Combat Logistics Patrol could leave the airfield in hours. Eventually, the NSE was also engaged in moving American equipment forward and bringing Canadian equipment back.

When the 43rd Sustainment Brigade deployed an extensive exchange of information took place on force protection, routes and fuel matters. A Forward Logistics Element or 'flee' was cut to the NSE from the American formation but it turned out to be too complex for the NSE to task it effectively.⁸⁶

Unlike previous NSE's, the Bouchard-led NSE was responsible for handling the transition from TF Kandahar to the Mission Closure Unit on the logistic side (the Mission Closure Unit was later expanded and called the Mission Transition Task Force). This entailed closing or transferring all of the TF Kandahar tactical infrastructure to allied forces and removing Canadian equipment, cleaning, packing, and returning it to Canada. The delineation of tasks had the NSE closing tactical infrastructure and Mission Transition Task Force handling everything else. Similarly, the NSE had to expand its detachment in Kabul, which was responsible for supporting the Kabul 100, so that it could support 350 more personnel belonging to Operation ATTENTION, the planned Canadian military training mission. This made 2011 a busy time for the NSE and in some ways replicated the situation in 2005 when Operation ATHENA transitioned to Operation ARCHER, only in reverse.⁸⁷

By 2011 signals support reached a stable state and the unit providing it was now designated the TK Kandahar Headquarters and Signals Squadron. Built around 2 Canadian Mechanized Brigade Headquarters and Signals Squadron, elements from the Joint Signal Regiment, and CANCAP contracted support services, the blurring between tactical and strategic communications finally ceased. The MEWTs still worked for the ASIC, a Very High Frequency radio troop was cut to the battle group, and the Strategic Rear Link was delineated as sub-unit. The proliferation of systems involved in the counter-IED fight led to the creation of an Electronic Countermeasures Section: it was responsible for keeping the vehicle jammers updated and frequencies deconflicted. The section also had a close relationship with the U.S. Marine Corps units in Helmand, who exchanged threat information with the Canadian 'jimmies.'⁸⁸

In essence, the Squadron maintained a web of four communications systems in Kandahar Province to support operations. These included line-of-sight radio; satellite; a strategic satellite system and a civilian-contracted satellite system. The AN/PRC 117F was the primary company-platoon-level system in the field, while platoons also had crypto TACSAT radios. Again, this change was necessary because of the shift to distributed operations.⁸⁹

The deployment of several types of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles and other surveillance systems in the battle space posed challenges for spectrum management which affected the structure of the signals unit and the conduct of operations. There were now several PSS and PSTD aerostats operating over the Canadian area of operations (see Figure 8-7).

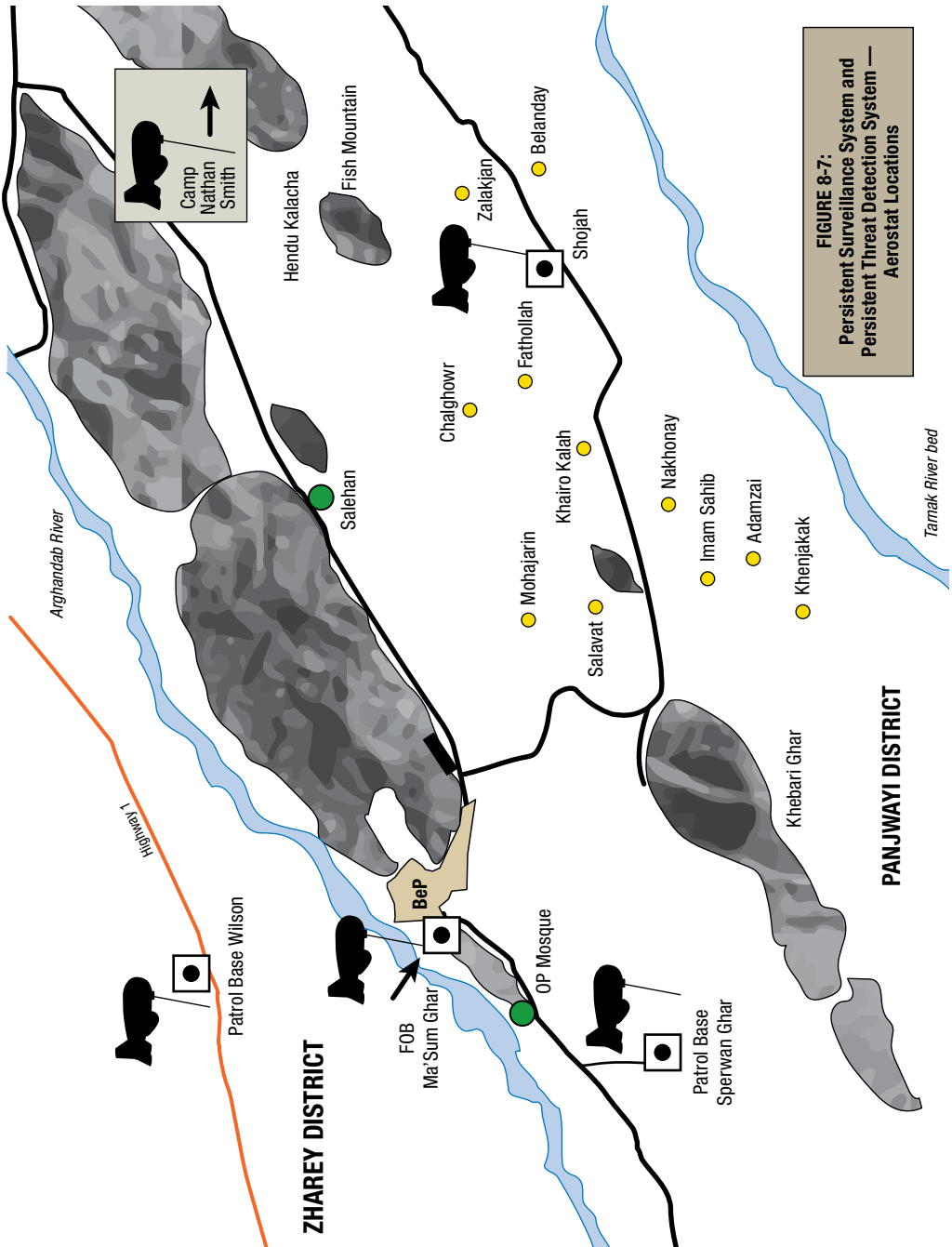


FIGURE 8-7:
Persistent Surveillance System and
Persistent Threat Detection System —
Aerostat Locations

Figure 8-7: Persistent Surveillance Systems and Persistent Threat-Detection Systems — Aerostat Locations

This web of ISR sensors was useless without the proper signals architecture to support it. Getting this architecture right was critical, now more than ever. First, the task force commander's situational awareness and his decision making were increasingly influenced by the ISR web. Second, the presence of ISR deterred enemy activity and forced the enemy to operate in small teams, not groups. They could not mass. Third, the ISR web and the communications systems facilitated Type II engagements with the Predators, Reapers, and indirect fire. Constraining the signals architecture theoretically constrained all of these crucial capabilities. As a result there was no more scrimping on signals capabilities by 2011 and the 2006-era confusion over signals and ISR was a distant memory.

The MP Company led by Major Steeve Grégoire continued with its existing P-OMLT, Kandahar Air Field security, and detainee operations. The change in Canadian methodology in Panjwayi District had a direct impact on the Detainee Transfer Facility during this time: there were more detainees taken by Canadian units than ever before and the DTF was at capacity. DFAIT, expressing concern about some aspect of NDS operations, stopped the transfers for some time, which significantly contributed to this build up. That situation led to the Canadian DTF operating as a "front" in the war, in the same way Sarposa Prison had been back in 2008.⁹⁰

Certain detainees exhibited behaviour leading the DTF staff to believe they had undergone conduct after capture training. Furthermore it was evident that these insurgents had been briefed on what exactly to do if captured and specifically by Canadian forces. These particular individuals knew beforehand how to exploit the Canadian and Red Cross complaints processes so that they could remain at the DTF rather than being transferred to the Afghan NDS. Investigation of these complaints took a great deal of time which permitted the detainees to recruit and proselytize among the DTF population. The delays also gave them a form of rest and relaxation from the rigors of life under fire in Panjwayi district or on the ratlines: the food was better and they had access to medical care. In all of the cases investigated, nothing was found to permit a longer stay in Canadian custody and they eventually were transferred to Afghan custody.⁹¹

The Canadian handover of the Role 3 Multinational Medical Unit led to the stand up of the TK Kandahar Health Service Unit (HSU). The HSU consisted of 187 personnel, of which 50% were deployed forward in Panjwayi District, while the rest worked at the Role 1 in the Canadian lines and at the now U.S. Navy-led Role 3 MMU where the second in command was a Canadian lieutenant colonel. By 2011 all Canadian military medical connections with non-government organizations, Afghan government organizations, or the hospitals in the city were severed: Canadian medical personnel could not visit Mirwais Hospital unless they were in civilian clothing. Village Medical Outreach was a thing of the past. The decision was subsequently made to focus all efforts on Panjwayi District and

at Kandahar Airfield. Even Afghan army mentoring tasks fell away as the Canadians prepared to leave. That said, the medics in their TLAV ambulances continued with their lifesaving work right up to the end in June 2011.⁹²

Operation PASS RAFTAN: Panjwayi District, November-December 2010

If Operation BAAWAR was to succeed in eliminating the enemy salient in the Horn of Panjwayi, it was crucial that the local population, district government, and commercial entities had freedom of movement. As we have seen in 2008, establishing a small number of undermanned strong points along a dirt road paralleling these communities was not enough. As we have also seen, efforts to pave Route Hyena West ebbed and flowed depending on TF Kandahar priorities. Now, with Operation BAAWAR, both conditions were going to change. There would be adequate security coverage of the zone. This time the road would go all the way from Bazaar-e Panjwayi and it would be expanded and paved as a deliberate operation. Once both objectives were achieved, the threat to eastern Panjwayi district and the spillover effects on Dand district would theoretically diminish. With the Reg Desert to the south, CTF Strike to the north, and a sliver of land to the west, the enemy had nowhere to hide. He would no longer be able to operate his parallel government and would not be able to mass produce homemade explosives for distribution.⁹³

Of BAAWAR's many components, clearing, building, and then protecting the road network itself was complicated enough, so much so that a sub-operation, PASS RAFTAN, was formulated (see Figure 8-8). And there were other complications. Parts of the Horn occupation force were not going to be under TF Kandahar's command. Some of the movements had to be made in partnered form with different Afghan units and even formations. And there was inevitable political friction which required high-level involvement. Governance in Panjwayi was sub-optimal. Furthermore, the relief in place by 1 R22eR Battle Group took place just as Operation PASS RAFTAN started.⁹⁴

The situation on 20 November was thus: The PASS RAFTAN plan was being briefed in several venues. An American infantry company from CTF Strike was in Zangabad awaiting a relief in place. The supporting infrastructure for the build up of forces to go into the Horn was complete out to Sperwan Ghar. A recce troop from Recce Squadron moved to OP Khyber, while an Afghan infantry company quietly moved into Sperwan Ghar. Then coordination planning with the Afghan army ground to a halt as they paused for the Eid holiday.⁹⁵

Major Eric Landry's C Squadron, now augmented with enough forces to become C Squadron Combat Team, stepped off from Ma'Sum Ghar and headed west along HYENA on 28 November: clearance commenced at OP Khyber while an airstrike killed an IED emplacement team from the Zarqawi Network just down the road. In addition to the three

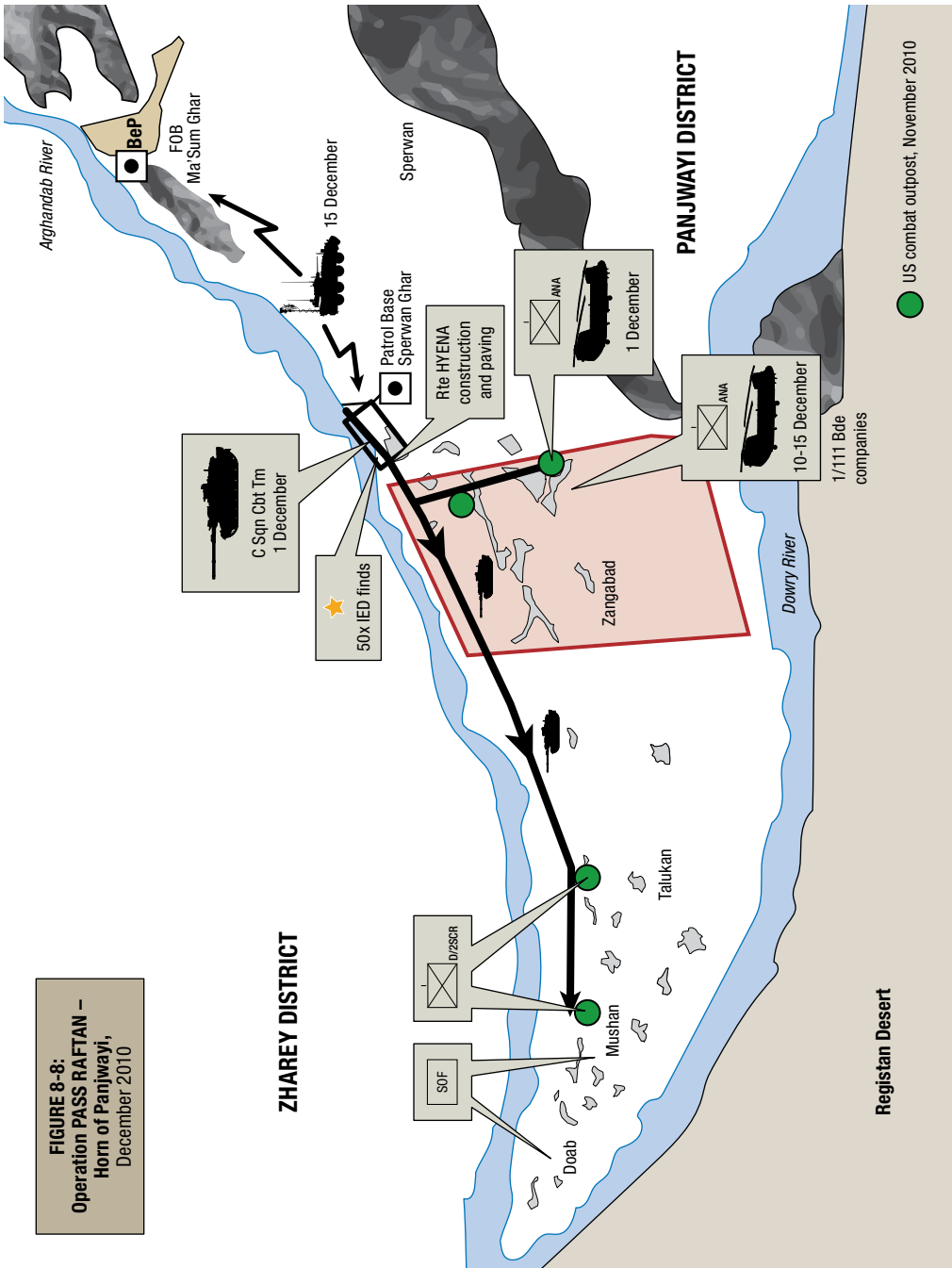


Figure 8-8: Operation PASS RAFTAN – Horn of Panjwayi, December 2010

varieties of Leopard tanks there were three Badger Armoured Engineer Vehicles and a troop of combat engineers from 52^e Escadron, an infantry platoon in LAV III, and a company of Afghan army from 2nd Kandak, plus mentors. A Leopard 1C2 equipped with rollers led, with a Badger AEV scraping behind with its blade. A dismounted infantry platoon backed up with combat engineers cleared the two flanks; they were each followed by a Badger. The rest of the combat team followed. Behind them was an EROC suite of vehicles, and then behind that were the construction engineers from the TF Engineer Regiment and 22 Naval Construction Regiment. The Canadian EROC was joined by an American Route Clearance Package and the two teams swept Route Hyena West behind the construction effort twice daily.⁹⁶

On the night of 29–30 November, D (Dog) Company, 2–2 Stryker Cavalry Regiment, deployed with two special forces ODAs and two ANCOP companies into Mushan and Talukan to replace the CTF Strike units holding down those villages. On 30 November, Maj Pierre Leroux and A Company 1 R22^eR boarded CH-47 Chinooks escorted by Griffon weapons teams, and were inserted at Zangabad to relieve the Strike company there. There was no opposition. At the same time, CIMIC teams and Haji Baran were holding shuras in the communities along the eastern end of Route Hyena West to acclimatize the population with the road construction plan.

By 1 December, the force cleared 500 meters and constructed 300 meters of road. There were five pressure-plate IED strikes on the Leopard roller tanks resulting in two mobility kills: the fifth strike had the main charge offset from the detonator to go off under the tank. There were fifty IED finds in this first cleared zone. Most were new pressure plates, with a scattering of anti-personnel mines in the adjacent fields.⁹⁷

Moving west, C Squadron and CIMIC held a shura at Na'al Bazaar to see if any able-bodied men wanted employment on the road project. The reply was enthusiastically affirmative and 45 local men signed on. At the same time word came in that the Afghan army released 1st Kandak from 1-111 Brigade for operations in Panjwayi. 450 men from 1-111 Brigade arrived at Camp Hero near Kandahar Air Field where they prepared to deploy to the Horn for three to four months.⁹⁸

On 5 December, Chinook helicopters arrived to withdraw the American company at Zangabad while Haji Baran, CIMIC, and PSYOPS arrived for a shura with the Zangabad community leadership. After years of Taliban indoctrination and intimidation, the local leaders were completely terrified that they would be tortured or killed. The shura was used to message the elders: Afghan forces were coming and they were there to stay. The local leaders were, not surprisingly, skeptical. That said, C Squadron was 1400 meters into the Clear and the builders were 750 meters into the Build on Route HYENA. At the same time, Dog Company worked on its tactical infrastructure in Mushan and Talukan.

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Photo Credit: Author



Photo Credit: Author

The tank squadron led by Maj Éric Landry was the spear point of Operation PASS RAFTAN. Working alongside the combat engineers, with their rear lines of communications covered by Maj Christian Caron's Recce Squadron, the force eventually reached Mushan.

Dog Company, which consisted of two mechanized infantry platoons in Stryker combat vehicles and a Mobile Gun System platoon, patrolled with the ANCOP police in the immediate communities and maintained surveillance on their stretch of unimproved Route Hyena West. There was still no contact with the enemy.⁹⁹

The deliberate operations by C Squadron Combat Team panicked the insurgent leadership in the Horn so much so that their behavior made them more vulnerable to SOF operations. On the night of 2 December the insurgent commander in the Horn was captured and two of his main subcommanders in the Mushan area were killed. The Canadian assessment was that these actions seriously degraded any possible response to Operation PASS RAFTAN by local enemy forces, and it would take a long time for them to regroup, perhaps months. Follow-up strikes within 72 hours took out three more leaders in the Talukan-Zangabad area as they attempted to organize resistance to C Squadron Combat Team.¹⁰⁰

Unfortunately one of the SOF raids went into District Chief of Police Azim's grandmother's house in Talukan. This action produced a crisis of credibility between Azim and the population of Talukan, and between Azim and the coalition forces in Panjwayi. Who was using his grandmother's compound for nefarious activities? How did that connect to the insurgency? And how did all of this connect to Azim? These questions were left unanswered for the time being, but the overlap in economic and political interests in the Horn re-emerged as the coalition forces delved more deeply into such matters using tools like the Human Terrain Team and other forms of White Situational Awareness. The old Ishaqzai-Noorzai blood feud from 2007 was in danger of being re-animated with potentially negative consequences for the coalition effort.¹⁰¹

The planned airmobile move of the 1-111 Brigade kandak was now put on hold. Commander 205 Corps no longer supported the plan, which prompted intervention by BGen Milner, Col Gosselin, and Maj Gen Terry, the incoming Regional Command (South) commander. As a result, the insert was put off for several days. This posed a significant problem. The 1-111 Brigade kandak was supposed to relieve parts of 2nd Kandak as well as to occupy Mushan, Talukan, and Zangabad. This annoyed Brig Gen Habibi, who applied pressure on 205 Corps to get sorted out. Habibi was forced to order the exhausted 2nd Kandak to deploy one of its companies to backfill along Route Hyena West. The delay was just as well: gravel trucking capacity dried up so no construction was possible until the contractors were sorted out. And that meant getting the Engineer Regiment's Engineer Construction Squadron involved.¹⁰²

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Photo Credit: Author

The scene of many actions dating back to the fierce battles of 2006, the now derelict northern part of the village of Pay-e Moluk was eventually bypassed when Route Hyena was reoriented.



Photo Credit: Author

This grape drying hut between Zangabad and Talukan was converted into a strongpoint by Taliban fighters. The position was taken out by several 120mm rounds from a Leopard 2 as C Squadron Combat Team advanced down Route Hyena.

By 8 December, the wait was still on for the 1-111 Brigade kandak. All of the Canadian and American sub-units patrolled and conducted shuras in their respective areas of responsibility. The following day, with the gravel turned back on, a cumulative total of 1800 meters of Hyena West was cleared and 1300 of it constructed. The non-deployment of 1-111 Brigade forces meant that LCol St-Louis had to detach part of Maj Frédéric Pruneau's Para Company, who were holding down Bazaar-e Panjwayi, and send them to backfill on Route Hyena West. By this time, the tactical infrastructure built by Engineer Support Squadron was in place. Four new combat outposts were added: Bennedson in Mushan; Robinson in Talukan; Old School in Zangabad; and Palace just north of Zangabad. Combat Outposts Bennedson and Robinson housed Dog Company, a pair of special forces ODAs, and two Afghan National Civil Order Police companies. Both proceeded to implement the first stages of the Afghan Local Police initiative. Combat Outpost Palace held a platoon from A Company and an Afghan infantry company. Combat Outpost Old School, which previously housed the Taliban court and parallel governance structure, now had two platoons from A Company, an Afghan infantry company; snipers; CIMIC; OMLT; and a pair of American ODAs.¹⁰³

Eventually, after substantial pressure on the Afghan army, Canadian Chinooks were permitted to transport the first companies from the 1-111 Brigade kandak in Zangabad on 10 December. The other companies were not permitted to deploy to Talukan or Mushan. It was thus left up to the ANCO and their special forces mentors to redeem Afghan honour: they quickly bagged a Taliban commander near Mushan.¹⁰⁴

LCol St-Louis took note of the social atmosphere in Zangabad.

The population was, like, this is 2008 all over again. This is not going to last. Oh, the Americans came in in November, now they're leaving, the Canadians are taking over. We've seen the Canadians here before, they're going to leave again, just wait. It's the "just wait" attitude, that [the insurgents] are going to hurt them and they're going to leave. Around the Taliban court in Zangabad, everyone around us is, like, "It is a matter of time before you will leave, you will not stay here." And the people around get intimidated and are being told, "Wait in two months, wait in two months ...you will be back under our control." So we spent most of our time in Shuras and in meetings and every engagement is that we are here to stay. We are building a road, we are building FOBs, we are building infrastructure because that is what the government and you have said you wanted to be linked to Kandahar City and we're coming here with enough combat force to do it. That was the one thing Conrad Mialkowski, Jerry Walsh and Jo Paul did not have. We had three kandaks, they had one.¹⁰⁵

It took the insurgents over a week to respond to Operation PASS RAFTAN. During this time C Squadron encountered more and more IEDs. A CU-170 Heron spotted an enemy emplacement team, but they dispersed before M-777 guns from batterie X could engage. The enemy crew escaped north into Zahrey but were not acquired by CTF Strike. Another enemy dig team tried to IED the road near OP Khyber but were driven off with 25mm fire.¹⁰⁶ Throughout the period Maj Barb Honig's Engineer Construction Squadron and the TF Engineer Recce Troop moved back and forth along Route Hyena West, monitoring progress and exerting quality control on the construction process. By 11 December 2500 meters of road had been cleared and 1650 meters constructed.¹⁰⁷



Photo Credit: Author

Once Mushan was retaken during Operation PASS RAFTAN, Afghan National Civil Order Police moved in followed by Canadian CIMIC officer Capt Ali Raju (right), who added this vital community to his beat.

The road effort went beyond just plowing the ground flat and then crushing gravel onto it. Existing structures had to be taken into account and if they were in the way, their owners had to be compensated if removed. These efforts involved the Engineer Construction Squadron, CIMIC, PSYOPS, as well as district-level governance. At the same time, Maj Landry and his headquarters assimilated ISTAR reportage on compounds of interest along the route. Where were the historic IED factories? The strong points? Madrassas?

If a compound had history, it was given extra scrutiny or even raided by C Squadron Combat Team's infantry, with the Leopards in support.¹⁰⁸

As PASS RAFTAN progressed down Route Hyena, Maj Christian Caron's Recce Squadron pulled out from their observation posts in eastern Panjwayi and took over patrolling Route Hyena West between 15 and 18 December. Based out of Sperwan Ghar, the armoured soldiers in their mixed bag of Coyotes, LAVs and TLAVs were responsible for maintaining a 24/7 presence and asserting freedom of movement from Bazaar-e Panjwayi to the point where C Squadron Combat Team was operating. At night Recce Squadron set up Coyote observation posts, supported by the LAV Remote Weapons System vehicles and their advanced sensors. During the day, they escorted convoys of gravel trucks and maintained a mobile presence. Engineers constructed Access Control Points along the road that were variously manned by Afghan troops, police or civil order police. Dog Company with its Mobile Gun System platoon, worked west of C Squadron Combat Team conducting over watch.¹⁰⁹

Backing all of this up was the "Road repair mitigation project." Maj Dan Lemeroux deployed Captain Ali Raju and a CIMIC team to work with C Squadron Combat Team to conduct quick impact projects up and down the road to connect with the population to keep it on side. The CIMIC team also worked to build the CIMIC capacity of the Afghan units along the road. That project significantly contributed to the reduction of insurgent activity in the rear as the road progressed westward.¹¹⁰

By 15 December the 1-111 Brigade kandak, now working with A Company and Canadian CIMIC, mounted a major cordon and search operation in the Zangabad area, which took the locals by surprise. The day after this operation a senior Noorzai elder from a respected family in the Zangabad area stepped up and "offered to create a map for the [staff of the District Coordination Centre] with names and boundaries of specific landowners in order for ISAF not to be double-charged or deceived by claimants."¹¹¹

Developments were marred by a series of IED explosions on 18 December. While clearing a compound on Hyena West, Cpl Steve Martin from Para Company tripped an IED and was severely wounded. As his mates moved to extricate him, a secondary device detonated, wounding another soldier. As the platoon cleared a helicopter landing zone, they triggered a third IED, producing another casualty. Cpl Martin died of his wounds.¹¹²

Haji Baran and CIMIC were brought up to interact with the local elders. There was considerable open debate at this shura and all parties agreed that the buildings around the mosque would be destroyed but the mosque itself would remain in place and the road routed around it. C Squadron Combat Team and the engineers isolated the compound and destroyed it, leaving the adjacent mosque untouched. The local population approached the force and told them they were pleased the compound that the insurgents used was finally gone.¹¹³

The Canadian, Afghan, and American companies and platoons aggressively patrolled their local communities and conducted shuras at every turn. Mushan's community was split: there was simmering hostility but a lot of people welcomed the return of coalition forces. The Zangabad communities were, surprisingly, open to interaction. Talukan was not and their community leaders remained intimidated. C Squadron Combat Team was now four kilometers away from Talukan when they ran into another spate of IEDs which held up movement for 24 hours as the engineers cleared them. The insurgents probed Dog Company in Mushan with a couple of 'shoot n' scoot' events that produced no damage.¹¹⁴

By Christmas Eve, the force had cumulatively pushed four kilometers west from OP Khyber, of which 3300 meters of that was now a gravel road. The plethora of IEDs, however, slowed down clearance so construction assets were diverted to improve an access road from Hyena West to Combat Outpost Old School in Zangabad. By 28 December 500 meters of that route was cleared and 300 meters graveled.¹¹⁵ Recce Squadron and CIMIC handed out winterization materials to the local population in the Sperwan-Pay-e Moluk area. The 1-111 Brigade kandak finally relieved an exhausted 2nd Kandak, which pulled back and regrouped to work with Maj Pruneau's Para Company in the Bazaar-e Panjwayi-Haji Habibollah area. The only other contacts consisted of some discouraging fire directed against enemy spotters in the Zangabad area.¹¹⁶

Operation PASS RAFTAN's effects were measurable. By the end of the month IED finds, as opposed to detonations, were up significantly.^{117,118} Haji Baran, the District Support Team, CIMIC and PSYOPS conducted shura after shura along the route to gauge local buy-in to the program. The pattern that emerged for the assessment staff was that the initial shura in a given area was tentative but when a second one was held, the actual local power brokers emerged:

Today the [District Support Team] was summoned by the district governor and 14 elders from the Zangabad area. According to the elders, the construction of the new road is negatively affecting 50 families and does not follow the agreed-upon plan. They claim they want the old road to be paved and that is all. When asked why they were not present yesterday at the shura hosted by the DG, they claimed not to have been aware of the event. It is unclear why none of the locals in attendance at yesterday's shura raised any complaints about the road. The elders that came today are without a doubt the landowners or powerbrokers of the area but do not live there since they were clearly not farmers. Later the [district governor] came to see the DST and it was agreed that a future shura with mass representation of locals, local elders, ISAF, and [the Government of Afghanistan] would be necessary to solve the Hyena road conflict.¹¹⁹

As the road progressed westwards, its construction was increasingly related to money, prestige, and influence and less and less about the insurgency. That in itself was a measure of progress. By the end of December the insurgency was pushed back into the community of Do Ab, at the westernmost tip of the Horn. The surviving enemy leadership reconstituted and connected with their associates to the north in Zharey district. A SOF operation into Do Ab captured another emergent enemy leader which further degraded the enemy's position.¹²⁰

Events in the Horn produced higher order effects on the overall insurgency, however. The Quetta Shura convened and ordered its commanders to return to Kandahar in January instead of March or April. Hafiz Majid, the de facto Taliban military leader for Kandahar by this point, was a key figure in these deliberations. He was furious about the coalition forces' progress and wanted an all-out effort to retake lost areas. There was, in his view, "no current safe base of operations in Kandahar Province from which significant insurgent operations can be staged." Apparently, Majid

specifically referenced targeting Canadian forces for two reasons: a) to try and entice them to give up the fight and leave earlier than the planned withdrawal in July 2011 and b) tarnish the reputation of Canada and the Canadian forces for their inability to succeed in Afghanistan and increase security.¹²¹

The implications were dramatic. At no other time since 2006 had the enemy's intent towards Canada been this clear, nor had it ever been so explicitly connected to a geographical location and the operations being conducted in it. The enemy was going to do everything it could over the next six months to disrupt what the Canadian Army and its allies accomplished in Panjwayi and Dand districts. It was as if a gauntlet was thrown down in front of TF Kandahar by Hafiz Majid and the Quetta Shura. The Canadian Army was being called out, as it were. Cabinet benchmarks, signature projects, and any form of long-term development became irrelevant in this arena.

Achieving Steady State: Dand District, Spring 2011

The success of all three lines of operations in Dand district was increasingly apparent as each week passed. Dand was no utopia: there were a handful of kidnappings and IED events over the course of three months including an IED attack directed against District Governor Nazek. However, the improvements in the district were such that Dand faded away from the Canadian narrative by February 2011 as the Afghans in the district progressively asserted more and more control over their destiny. The governance mechanisms were overhauled using Afghan Social Outreach Program funding to establish a new District Development Council and replace the development assembly. BGen Milner could report that "the level

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Photo Credit: Author



Photo Credit: Author

The Engineer Construction Squadron led by Maj Barbara Honig was responsible for working with Afghan communities to repair and augment the crucial irrigation system and expedite road paving. Both efforts played a significant role in improving the day-to-day lives of the residents of Dand and Panjwayi districts during the course of 2011.

of more direct involvement of international actors in district governance has decreased and now meetings are led by Afghans ... Governance in Dand District represents the high-water mark in my area of operations.”¹²² Similarly, “the ability of the [Government of Afghanistan] to extend the delivery of basic services continues to improve. Development is increasingly seen as a natural follow-on from the successful security operations over the past several months.”¹²³

TF 1-71 Cav and 7th Kandak 7, it seemed, were everywhere. The troublesome Hendu Kalache community was now under direct supervision and was no longer a seam the insurgents could escape into. Enemy activity completely dropped off.¹²⁴ This was in part due to effective operations in Malajat led by the new provincial Chief of Police, Col Abdul Rezziq of Spin Boldak. The Malajat operations took some of the pressure off of northern Dand, which TF 1-71 Cav and 7th Kandak exploited.¹²⁵ By January village representation grew across the board, except in the community of Nakudak which remained psychologically intimidated by the insurgents. And, just as Lt Col John Paganini and the Cavalrymen from TF 1-71 Cav handed over to 1-2 Stryker Cavalry Regiment in February, they could report that: “Demonstrating a significant improvement in the security situation, there are many aid agencies (international and non-governmental organizations) operating in Dand [so much so] that the villages have become swamped with aid packages. While there may be some cross-over between projects, we see the increased presence of NGOs as a very positive sign.”¹²⁶

By spring 2011, any observer driving through Dand saw the following after moving through the arid wasteland of Daman district north of Kandahar Air Field: The graveled and graded but not yet paved Kandahar City Bypass was now in use. On arriving in Dand, the roads were all paved and the abrupt transition was obvious. Electrical infrastructure in the form of transformers and lines was immediately evident, as were the green fields being tilled. The mosques on the route were all freshly-painted and had elaborate minarets and new loudspeaker systems. The brick kilns, of which there are over a hundred, all belched smoke and there were meters and meters of new bricks being taken away by contractors driving relatively new vehicles. There was vehicle traffic of all types on Dand’s roads, from bicycles to tuk-tuks, to truck traffic. Small roadside businesses abounded: bicycle repair shops, motorcycle repair shops, corner stores with foodstuffs. There were a few but discreet police checkpoints. The schools on the route had by this point children playing at recess. There was a feeling of security as there was no overt evidence of war in the form of IED damage or destroyed vehicles, nor was there an ‘in your face’ security presence. In other words, all manner of visible life and economic activity was underway in Dand. If success existed in southern Afghanistan, Dand District came the closest to resembling it in the spring of 2011.¹²⁷ Panjwayi, on the other hand, was another story altogether.

Achieving Steady State: Panjwayi District, January 2011

It is unsurprising that governance problems continued in Panjwayi district given Haji Baran's connections to influential elements in the Kandahari political structure and the insurgency. ISTAR reportage focusing on Baran and these connections proved troublesome. For example, the new Chief of Police Mohammad Azim, it turned out, was a life-long friend of Baran and that connection went back to their fathers being friends. Both men, apparently, had some long-term personal relationship to the infamous Taliban commander, Hafiz Majid. Majid apparently contacted both men on occasion to try and get some of his captured commanders released.¹²⁸ Baran's involvement in detainee releases eventually became common knowledge in Panjwayi district. A Canadian assessment noted with some concern that, connected to this "Locals believe that coalition forces do not want the war to end and are purposely not detaining or killing insurgents in order to prolong the war."¹²⁹

The implications stemming from the fact that Haji Baran had been in communication with Majid and perhaps other insurgent leaders for some years were just too massive for all involved to ignore. Baran's removal was considered by BGen Milner as a pre-requisite for success in the district and efforts along these lines started immediately in September 2010. Crippled by the loss of Canadian influence mechanisms at the provincial and national level, Milner worked quickly with his 'virtual PRT' (Cyr and Martin) to examine alternatives. Maj Gen Nick Carter at Regional Command (South) was also interested in the situation and pledged his support. After substantial consultation with the District Support Team and other interested entities, Milner and his staff focused on recruiting Haji Fazluddin Agha as a possible replacement. 'HFA', as he was known, had his own money; he was from Fatollah; he was connected to the Karzais and had been a campaign manager for the family; and, crucially, he had local support. Milner worked with Carter to gain Governor Wesa's and Ahmad Wali Karzai's assistance. Milner's connections with Col Serge Labbé in Kabul provided a venue to access President Karzai, who eventually supported Baran's replacement with Haji Fazluddin Agha.¹³⁰

Initially it looked like HFA would take over in October and he even started attending various shuras at that time. Agha also developed a good relationship with Nazek over in Dand. Baran, however, held on as long as possible. October became November, and then December. Baran remained in charge, despite all assurances to the contrary. The possibility of his replacement actually galvanized Baran, who was suddenly proactive and cooperative in the Route Hyena improvement shuras. Wesa now changed his mind, for whatever reason, and the handover stalled out. Finally, in early January, President Karzai signed off on the change and Baran was out.¹³¹

The accession of Haji Fazluddin Agha to the governorship of Panjwayi District was a major sea-change and proved to be a major enabler for the remainder of Canada's involvement there. Engineer Construction Squadron commander Maj Barbara Honig, experienced at dealing with development issues in Kandahar going back to 2007, noted that once Haji Fazluddin Agha took over, "things changed in *days!*".¹³² Even a hardened man like Panjwayi power broker Haji Mahmood, according to CIMIC leader Maj Dan Lemeroux, "almost started to cry" when the change was announced and Haji Fazluddin Agha insisted that stunted and atrophied mechanisms like the District Development Assembly and Community Development Councils be re-animated.¹³³

These changes coincided with the evolution of the joint district coordination centre, the OCC-D(P). The OCC-D(P) became the "central hub for security, governance, reconstruction and development." It now included the District Support Team (DST); the policing efforts; and mentorship of the line ministries operating in Panjwayi. Maj Montreuil, the Task Force Kandahar Stability Team Leader, now worked closely with Tom Schakow from the US Department of State; Andy Golda from USAID (and a survivor of the BLOWTORCH 61 shutdown in 2010); and Joffre Leblanc from DFAIT. The DST was to "empower the District Governor's Office." The overall mission: conduct a Hold of the district "while building host nation capacity" with the ultimate objective of handing over the functions to "Host Nation Officials."¹³⁴

By January the coalition forces in Panjwayi were deployed in the areas of operations they would occupy for the next several months. There was Dog Company, two ANCOF companies, and four special forces ODAs operating in Mushan and Talukan. A Company, batterie X, and the 1-111 Brigade Kandak handled Zangabad and Sperwan Ghar. C Squadron Combat Team, Recce Squadron, part of 2nd Kandak, and all of the engineering units lived in temporary bases along Route Hyena as construction made its way west. Para Company and the remainder of 2nd Kandak occupied and patrolled the area around and south of Bazaar-e Panjwayi. Maj André Girard's B Company was responsible for the greater Nakhonay area, while Maj Christian Marquis and C Company covered the Chalghowr-Salavat-Mohajerin zone, also known as the "Triangle of Love". Both companies in the east worked with 6th Kandak (see Figure 8-9).

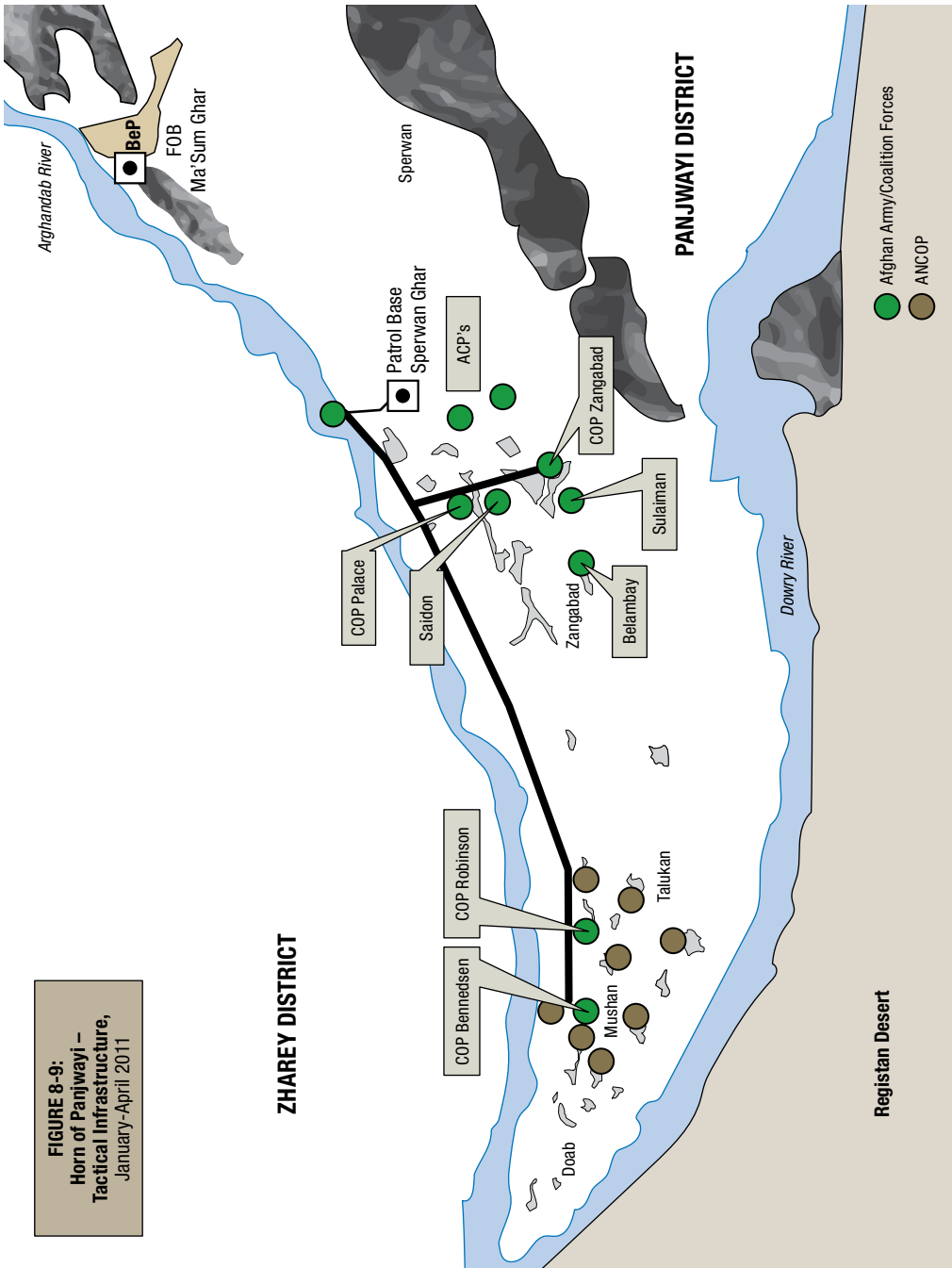


FIGURE 8-9:
Horn of Panjwayi –
Tactical Infrastructure,
January-April 2011

Figure 8-9: Horn of Panjwayi – Tactical Infrastructure, January-April 2011

These dispositions permitted LCol St-Louis to implement the 1 R22eR Battle Group concept of operations. Having observed the past three rotations and now possessing a significantly different ratio of forces, St-Louis's objective was to deepen the new Hold as quickly as possible using the guidelines "Combat-Convince-Construct". Credibility with the population, especially in the newly-occupied Horn, was crucial. BGen Milner was prepared to add governance 'connective tissue' and CIMIC programming once contact was established with the communities surrounding each population centre. The partnering aspects of the operations came to the fore here.¹³⁵

At the same time

I had so much infrastructure, so much real estate, that I needed to secure, [and this] convinced me that there's no room for battle group operations. There's no room for one company fixing, one company striking, pincer movements. I cannot let go of a place to regroup to strike something. First of all, there is no enemy group of 30 folks that I need to strike ... So everything has to be done at the company level. And furthermore, I am convinced that it even has to be delegated to the platoon level ... So, from the start, CIMIC is part of the battle group, the same for PSYOPS ... If I have CIMIC, it's down to the company battle-space owners. If I have snipers, and they are required, they are given to the battle-space owner.¹³⁶

A whole new structure emerged whereby the joint district coordination centre, the OCC-D(P), became the link between the company commanders and the District Support Team. This also applied to Maj Honig's Engineer Construction Squadron and the plethora of other capabilities that were being brought to bear: the squadron now had four Engineer Construction Teams, one of which was assigned to each company. The idea was to push all forms of capabilities and capacities as far down the chain of command as possible and, not by coincidence, this paralleled efforts at the Community Development Council level in the communities.¹³⁷

For example, Combat Outpost Nejat had a Canadian infantry platoon from Para Company; an Afghan infantry company from 2nd Kandak; and a CIMIC and PSYOPS detachment. Frequent patrolling in the Nejat area led to contacts at the community level which a team from Engineer Construction Squadron could connect to and apply infrastructure improvement resources. If larger projects in other areas were of interest to the local population, the company commander communicated with the OCC-D(P) linked to the stability team, which in turn was linked to the development deconfliction process surrounding the District Governor. On higher-level matters involving provincial line ministries, like education and medical care, TF Kandahar J9 got involved if required. Or if the force of personality was required, BGen Milner got involved.¹³⁸ LCol St-Louis noted that:

We were there for eight months, and my challenge was not to fix the [governance] framework. My challenge is to make a family that's living in Salavat feel more secure, that's it ... if something is not working in a district for whatever reason, then you move to something else. If I cannot deliver a road between Sperwan Ghar and Bazaar-e Panjwayi because we can't agree to the trace, okay, I'll turn around and deliver a school in Salavat. If I cannot deliver a new irrigation cleaning system because we're not paying the right people, I don't waste time trying to find the right people. I turn around and focus on Route Hyena. But you add all these efforts together; you add these to more presence. I wasn't there for a year and half as a consultant from Korea to make the governor work properly. I have eight months to win a political narrative that is positive.¹³⁹

LCol St-Louis was not beguiled with the more idealistic aspects of nation building. Having spent two tours with UNPROFOR in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s, he had dealt with dangerous, ungrateful populations and political complexity from an early point in his career. The failures at Srebrenica and the humiliation of the Canadian Army being ordered to surrender to Croatian forces in 1995 without a fight motivated him to prevent a repeat performance in Afghanistan.¹⁴⁰

Enemy activity and coalition operations broke down into the same four general areas of Panjwayi as before: the Horn; Bazaar-e Panjwayi and points south; the Triangle of Love, and the greater Nakhonay area. In the Horn, operations were split between Dog Company; the armoured squadrons and engineers on Route Hyena; A Company in Zangabad; and American SOF working on village stability operations, ANCOP, and leadership targeting that overlapped all of Horn in the areas of operations. All four groupings were partnered with the Afghan army and police. The level of enemy activity in January was relatively low. The outpost at Talukan was shot up and a day later there was an attempted engagement involving an insurgent checkpoint south of Talukan. Spotted by a CU-170 Heron, the enemy dispersed before air support could arrive. The bulk of activity was around Zangabad, with a pair of IEDs in the zone between Zangabad and Route Hyena, and some small arms fire directed against road crews. Maj Leroux's A Company and an Afghan company from 1-111 Brigade conducted several cordon and searches in the area based on local information, which uncovered a surprising number of IED components. A pair of engagements involving UAV's spotting small numbers of insurgents were unresolved because positive identification was lost in the dense terrain¹⁴¹ (see Figure 10 and Figure 10a).

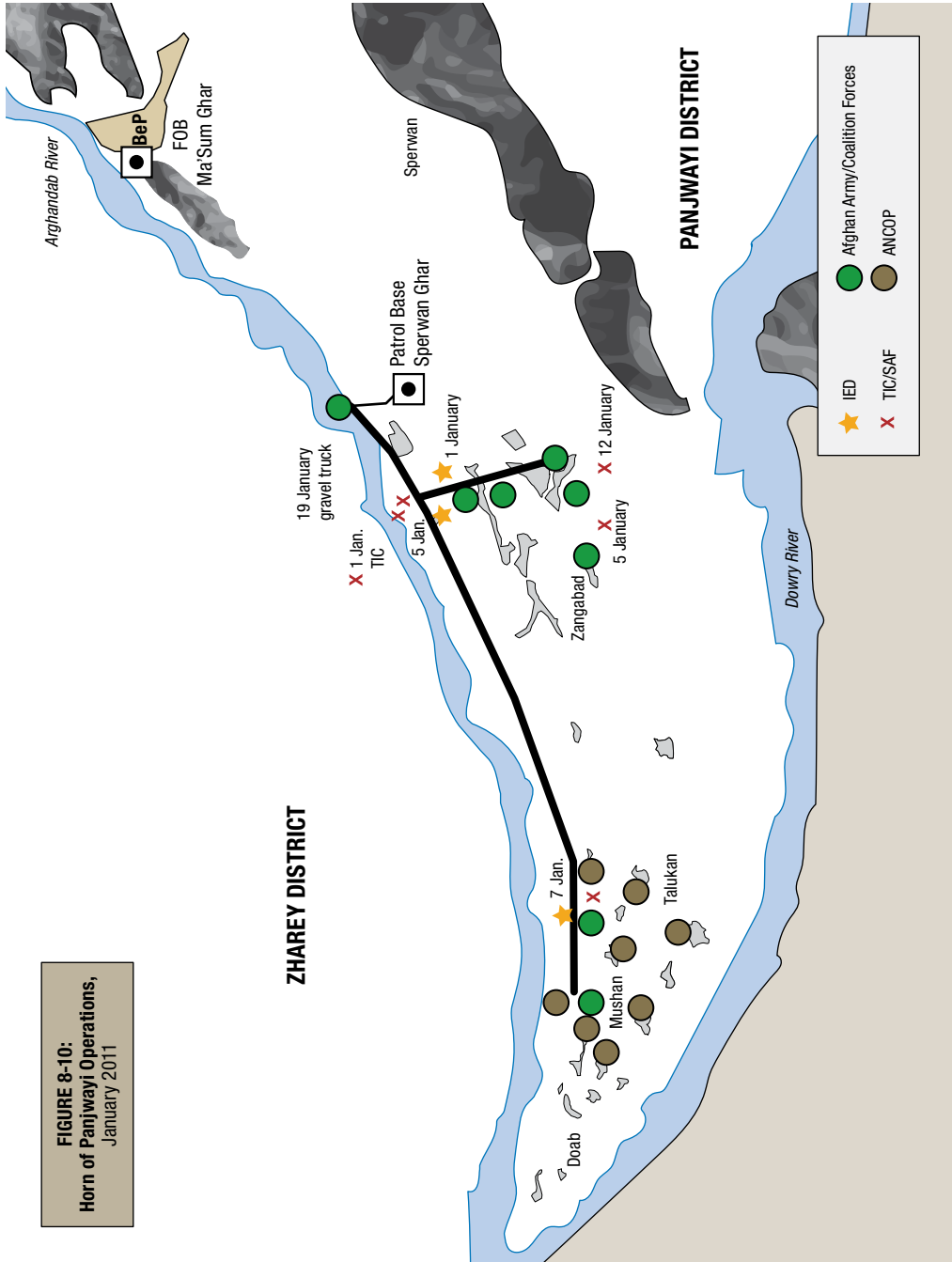


FIGURE 8-10:
Horn of Panjwayi Operations,
January 2011

Figure 8-10: Horn of Panjwayi Operations, January 2011

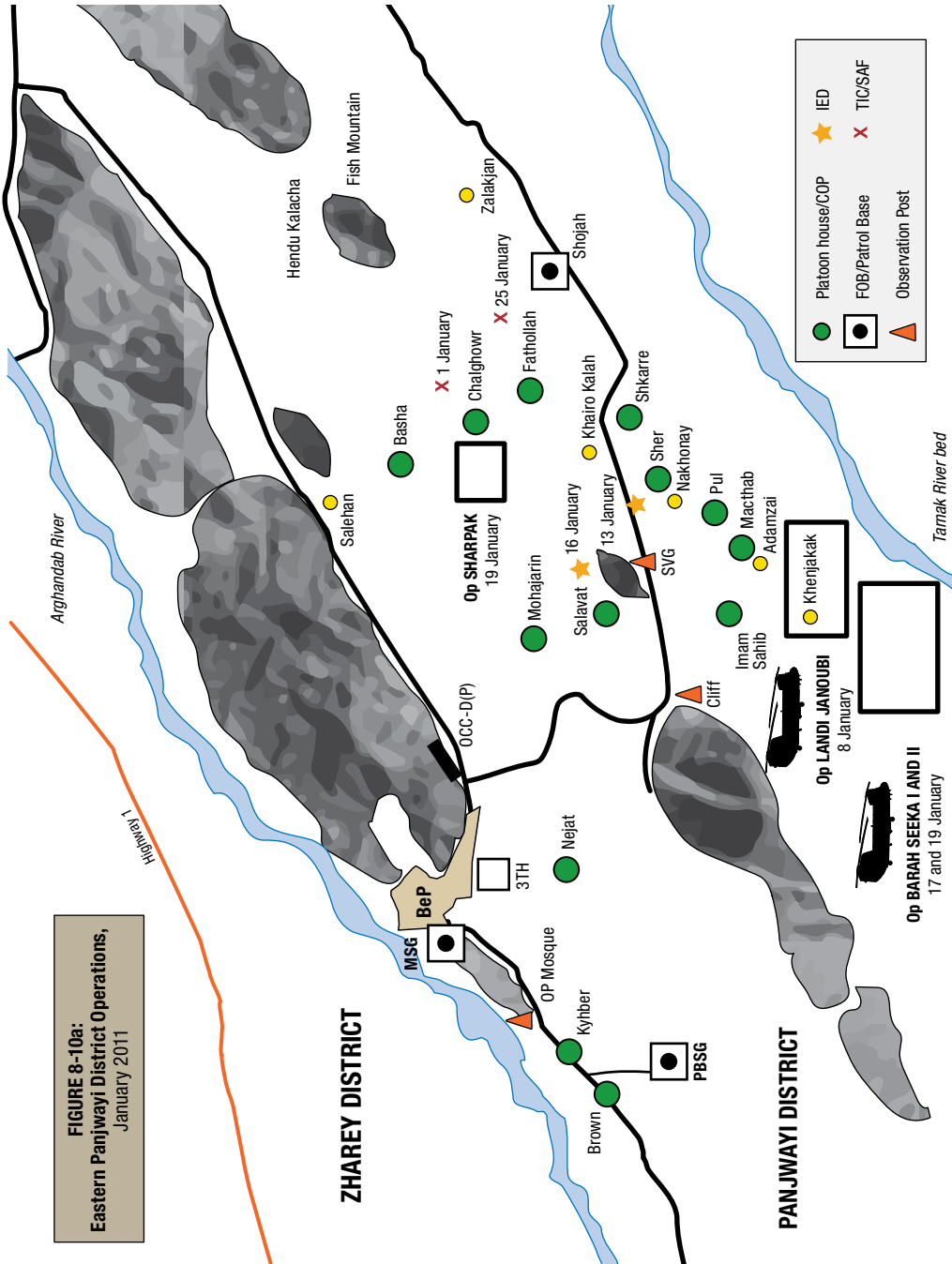


FIGURE 8-10a:
Eastern Panjwayi District Operations,
January 2011

Figure 8-10a: Eastern Panjwayi District Operations, January 2011

Intimidation of civilian gravel truck drivers supporting Route Hyena construction then emerged as the next challenge after trucks were shot up on several occasions. Two drivers were also discovered murdered in their cabs. The enemy also probed Zangabad facilities from the south, resulting in a small TIC on 12 January. These probes from the south indicated that the insurgents had been pushed south out of Zangabad and Talukan but were caught between the populated areas and the Reg Desert and in the process of defining new operating zones.¹⁴²

Para Company experienced no reported enemy activity in January, even though contact was expected during a clearance operation south of Nejat. C Company in the Triangle of Love experienced an IED strike on 16 January and a pair of TICs outside Chalghowr and Fatollah. The TIC near Fatollah lasted twenty minutes with the immediate reaction force unsuccessfully attempting to cut off the ambush party. C Company and 6th Kandak launched Operation SHAR PAK west of Chalghowr, producing a small cache and little else.¹⁴³

B Company and 6th Kandak applied significant disruptive pressure on the greater Nakhonay area, so much so that the enemy was only able to detonate a single IED in mid-January. Working together, the Canadians and Afghans mounted the MARD KALA series of operations in Kenjakak and operations LUNDI JANOUBI and BARAH SEEKA in Rigway. Some of these operations involved airmobile insertions of Canadian and Afghan troops using the Canadian helicopter force. In all cases compounds were swept for caches and an enemy medical station was uncovered. Five company-level surges throughout Nakhonay in one month produced no contact and no retaliatory action.¹⁴⁴

The Canadian development focus in Panjwayi outside of the Horn was Salavat. This community became an influence arena in which the coalition and the insurgency fought it out with almost no kinetic activity. When the Salavat school was nearly completed, problems emerged:

Despite recent security gains, efforts to expand [Government of Afghanistan] provided educational services in Panjwayi have been stymied by a lack of community buy-in (particularly in areas where local residents are affected by lingering insurgent influence and intimidation). For example, the newly refurbished school in Salavat is ready to be opened but has been delayed owing to concerns that the elders of the community would become a target. A shortage of teachers and the lackluster engagement by the district Ministry of Education representative are the other factors influencing the slow provision of [services].¹⁴⁵

This lingering insurgent influence, in combination with the Afghan government's lack of credibility, kept the people of Salavat on the fence. The Salavat elders said their town should have a school when a school could open in Chalghowr, indicating that they wanted

proof that the insurgents would not return even in small numbers, let alone as an occupation force. The Canadian assessment was that Salavat, Nakhonay and Haji Habibollah were all high-risk areas in the struggle for influence. The enemy did not need a strong force or presence to keep these communities on the fence and off balance.¹⁴⁶

Indeed, the provision of government services that Dand enjoyed with operations like KALAY did not seem to work in parts of Panjwayi. TF Kandahar noted, however, that there was no NGO buy-in to Panjwayi, and the NGOs were influencing the provincial government: “NGOs permit the [Government of Afghanistan] to extend services that they cannot, largely due to insufficient capacity. There has been...very little in Panjwayi district owing to security concerns.”¹⁴⁷ The new District Governor, Fazluddin Agha, did, however, bring his expertise to bear. His priority was to implement a rehabilitation project for the canals that linked Zalakhan, Salavat, Nakhonay, and Chalgowr. This project would connect the communities and the district-level government on a number of levels, and hopefully lead to movement in other areas. The Engineer Construction Squadron looked into activating such a project with TF Kandahar funding. From TF Kandahar’s perspective there were over 1500 local men already working under cash-for-work projects elsewhere in the district and there was no reason why that number could not be increased as the summer fighting season approached.¹⁴⁸

Reorganizing Special Operations Forces Support and Village Stability Operations

Though most SOF activity lay outside of TF Kandahar’s scope of operations, there were several new developments with a variety of partners that affected Canadian operations in Panjwayi district. ISAF commander McChrystal had by this point re-organized, or at least rationalized, SOF command and control in Afghanistan so it could interact and coordinate with conventional operations more effectively. TF 373, the Tier I SOF unit that hunted enemy leadership targets, became TF 310 and significantly ramped up operations in and around Kandahar province. The Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force Afghanistan, the non-NATO multinational SOF organization, shifted its role from disruptive operations conducted in the outlying districts into Village Stability Operations in specific villages. ISAF SOF continued with lower-level leadership targeting. TF 310 and ISAF SOF went after the “head” while CJSOTF went after “the body”.¹⁴⁹

TF 310 mounted operation after operation in western Panjwayi during this time and, unlike its predecessor organization, had significantly better coordination with units on the ground, in this case the Canadian battle group. The Village Stability Operations, however, became the bailiwick of Special Operations Task Force 58 (SOTF 58), based around

a company from the Canadian Special Operations Regiment. SOTF 58 assessed Dand and Panjwayi districts for future operations in March 2010. There was almost no coordination with the battle group initially.¹⁵⁰

As we have seen earlier, the introduction of Village Stability Operations or VSO by American special operations forces was already underway in other parts of Afghanistan. VSO, as we will recall, was a program designed to introduce self-perpetuating community-level Afghan security at the lowest possible level of governance, and then connect those communities to district, provincial, and national levels of government. At some point in mid-2010 the decision was made to include a Canadian contribution to VSO operations in Kandahar province. The Canadian Special Operations Regiment, CSOR, was given this task.¹⁵¹

As has been demonstrated throughout Volume II, one of the primary problems confronting outlying Afghan communities was their susceptibility to insurgent intimidation, be it night letters, kidnappings, sporadic presence, or constant presence. Even if the Taliban could not maintain a presence, it could still induce fear with other methods. The UN-supported DIAG processes had effectively eliminated any possibility of maintaining a local militia back in 2005, while the German police training system failed to produce enough functional police to maintain law and order. The Afghan Development Zone strategy and the population-centric strategies associated with protecting Kandahar City essentially abandoned outlying communities, which in turn forced the uncommitted populations onto the fence or into embracing insurgent parallel governance. As the Afghan security forces and ISAF moved to increase their influence in, or re-take those areas, something had to be done to address this particular problem.

It was understood in coalition circles that implementing VSO everywhere was impossible. It was also understood that there were coordination issues related to the long-term problems between NATO ISAF and the American special operations organizations that were part of a separate command structure. VSOs were supposed to be used in areas that Afghan or ISAF forces could not operate or were not operating in.¹⁵² Experiments in Zharey district were not going well, and the VSO mounted by American special forces ODAs there was unable to generate significant local interest. However, the situation was different in Arghandab district, where VSOs were conducted alongside conventional forces. Significant numbers of Alikozais joined the Afghan Local Police initiative that was part of the VSO operating construct. By the fall the results were considered successful enough to attempt similar operations in Panjwayi district.¹⁵³

Of note, the command relationship also changed, making the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force Afghanistan subordinate to Combined Forces Special Operations Component Command Afghanistan, and then both American-led commands developed



Photo Credit: Author

Special Operations Task Force 58 handled the Canadian component of Village Stability Operations (VSO) associated with asserting government control in the Horn of Panjwayi.

an operational control relationship to ISAF.¹⁵⁴ Though this did not alleviate all of the command and control problems, it allowed for informal relationships to develop between both conventional and unconventional formation headquarters. TF Kandahar under BGen Milner thought that VSO could play a positive role in Panjwayi district and facilitated the relationships between the various conventional and unconventional entities involved.¹⁵⁵

Village Stability Operations in Afghanistan were essentially historically-based processes that had been used during the Cold War. A company-level advance operating base was first established by the special operations forces to support the teams that would operate in the designated area. Over time, the teams, usually based on a section-sized detachment sortied out and made contact with the communities surrounding the base. It was understood that not all communities would welcome contact with a team. Those that did so were the recipient of aid. Over time rapport developed between the team and the community until they were invited to live in the community. From that point incremental steps were made to convince the local authorities to connect to the district-level government and access its programs,

while at the same time local training in self-defence using locally-vetted people ramped up. The ideal state was to have a village militia that was able to protect village authorities from intimidation, and these authorities maintained their stature in the community by bringing in development programs to build on the aid projects. The ultimate goal was to have the village militia to contribute to a district-level or provincial-level offensive counterinsurgency force.¹⁵⁶

A similar process was followed by CSOR in Panjwayi district. A great deal of effort was invested in the Shape phase of the operation by the team. A key difference was that CSOR and its American counterparts worked alongside a partnered force, in this case the ANCOP companies that were allocated to the Hold part of the Horn of Panjwayi plan. Operating adjacent to American ODA teams and by now deconflicting with the battle group, CSOR focused on one particular cluster of villages overlapping with A Company's area of operations.¹⁵⁷

Overall the idea was to deepen the Hold and move the communities towards Build. There was no CIMIC detachment in the CSOR team but there was one member who had CIMIC training. He plugged into the CIMIC team working with A Company.¹⁵⁸ SOTF 58 also accessed the Commanders Contingency Fund for small low-level projects. In time the team was able to connect with an NGO that specialized in agricultural support. In many ways, the CSOR team and its Afghan associates was an armed Community Development Council.

One of the most important discoveries uncovered by the CSOR team was that there were really two groups of people who governed in the villages: there were the absentee elders who lived in Kandahar City, and what the team called 'proxies', that is, the local 'face'.¹⁵⁹ The mullahs and the mirabs were not absentee leaders but without the elders, things simply did not get done as effectively. The Canadian team made a significant effort to identify who and where the absentee elders were, and then through the OCC-D(P) connect with district governor Haji Fazluddin Agha to bring them back for shuras that affected the community and its development.¹⁶⁰

Raising an Afghan Local Police contingent in the community was more problematic and took time. Ultimately a selected, vetted militia received AK-47 weapons from the district chief of police. The ALP handled point security, roving patrols, and local checkpoints. Because of its local knowledge, the ALP detachment essentially became a sensor that fed ISTAR processes, both Afghan and coalition. When operational and connected to the chief of police, information flowed to the OCC-D(P) and the District Centre. The presence of the CSOR team and its efforts working with the local population contributed to targeting data against the insurgent leadership array in the Horn. This information was acted upon in a positive and effective fashion by other forces.¹⁶¹

The CSOR team's partnered element, however, changed three times during its deployment in the Horn which led to some discontinuity. ANCOB units rotated and an Afghan army Commando Platoon came in. This platoon (and its two successor platoons that rotated in and out) was not fully trained, so the CSOR team acted almost as an Embedded Training Team or as an OMLT for a time. Operations became increasingly kinetic as the summer drew near. As the transition from 1 R22eR Battle Group to the incoming American battalion took place in June, the Canadian team was shocked to learn that A Company was being replaced by an American platoon, and that platoon was not 'enabled' in the same way in terms of CIMIC, PSYOPS, engineers, and ISTAR resources. The Canadian team leader, in retrospect, noted that the operation stayed in the Hold phase, with some forays into Build, but as the situation became increasingly kinetic, it shifted firmly back to Hold. Transition was never really a possibility once the larger protective forces were reduced and the local police had to stave off increased enemy activities. In the end, the CSOR team was the last Canadian combat unit to redeploy from Panjwayi district in July 2011.¹⁶²

CSOR operations as part of the Village Support Operations program in Panjwayi district can best be categorized as experimental. The operations were relatively small in size and in scope, the effects were not measurable during the period in which the Canadian team deployed, and the whole engagement was time-limited by the Canadian pull out in July 2011. One can only speculate what the effects of VSO-like operations would have been had more resources been allocated to them earlier in the conflict and in critical areas west of Kandahar City.

Panjwayi District Operations, February 2011

The momentum of operations generated in December and January accelerated in February. Though the level of violence steadily increased and the types of violence changed, there was substantial, measurable progress in the coalition effort across the district as a whole (see Figure 8-11 and Figure 8-11a).

The level of enemy activity in Panjwayi was extremely low in eastern Panjwayi, with a single TIC recorded at the end of the month near Foad. In the greater Nakhonay area, there was an IED strike near Combat Outpost Pul at the start of February which wounded an interpreter, and then two TICs at the end of the month: one a 'shoot n' scoot' against COP Pul and the other a situation where a pair of insurgents pinned down an Afghan patrol from 6th Kandak resulting in close air support and smoke missions to extricate the patrol. A similar state of affairs existed for Para Company in Bazaar-e Panjwayi and points south. The Horn was another matter altogether. There was a spate of TICs and IEDs in the first week of February but by the end of the month these were augmented with a significant kidnapping and intimidation campaign. The Horn hotspots included the area between

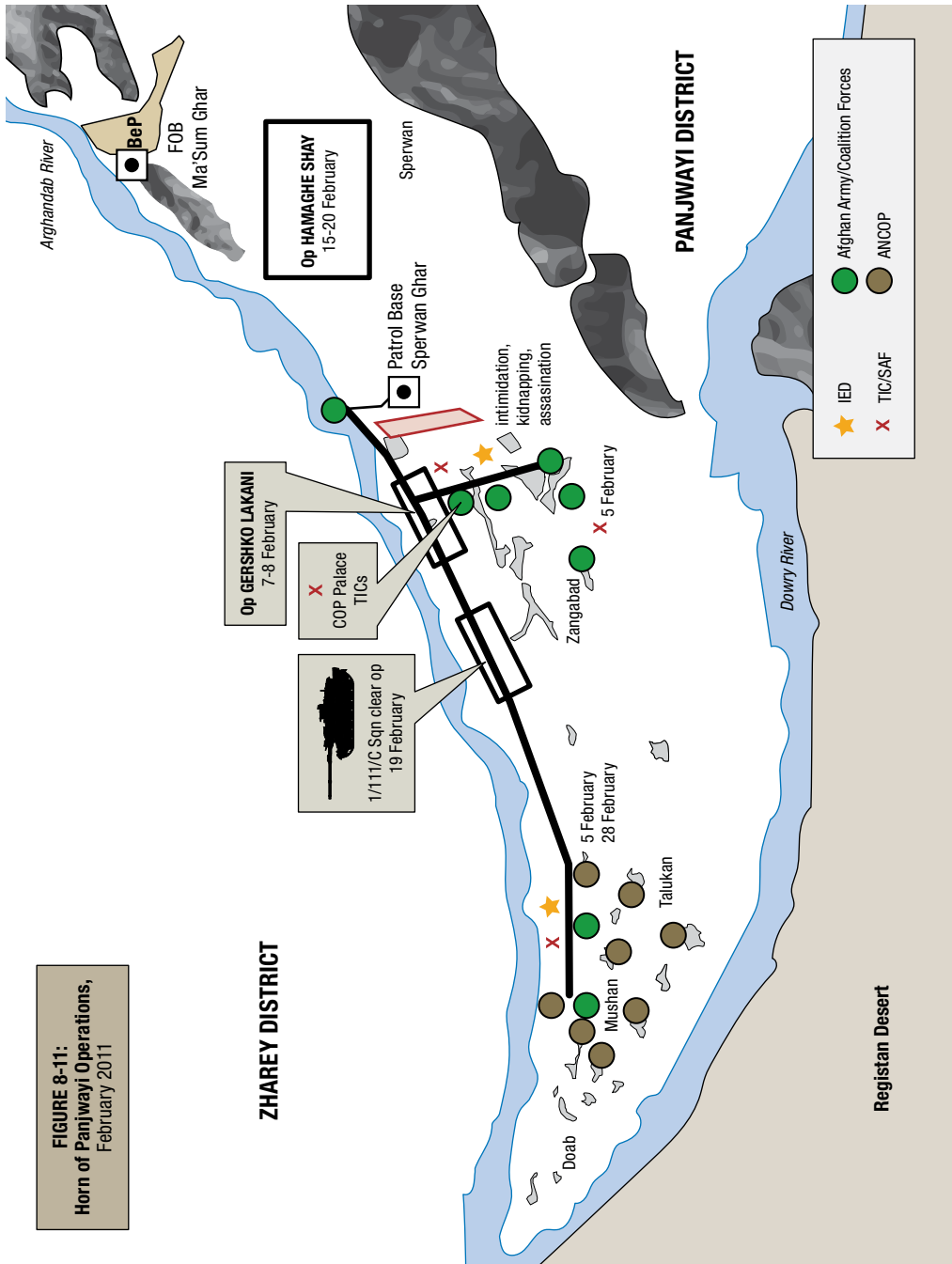


FIGURE 8-11:
Horn of Panjwayi Operations,
February 2011

Figure 8-11: Horn of Panjwayi Operations, February 2011

Talukan and Zangabad; the combat outpost at Zangabad; and intimidation operations around Pay-e Moluk near Sperwan Ghar. Very little was happening in and around Mushan (See Figure 8-12).¹⁶³ According to Canadian analysis, there were three insurgent groups in the Horn: one west of Do Ab, and two out of Lakani and Grandari in the centre. There was also a small cell operating south of Nejat and another in Kenjakak.¹⁶⁴

During the course of the month, and in keeping with 1 R22eR Battle Group's distributed posture, the infantry companies partnered with their associated Afghan infantry companies and mounted multiple concurrent cordon, search and sweep operations in their respective areas of operations. For example, C Company bounced between Salehan and Chalghowr. B Company moved up and down the Adamzai Chain. Para Company mounted a series of dismounted operations in Haji Habibollah-Nejat and Bazaar-e Panjwayi. All of these operations involved local police. Dubbed Operation TAYRA TAYGH (the battle group iteration was HAMAGHE SHAY), the overall intent of TF Kandahar and 1-205 Brigade as expressed through 1 R22eR Battle Group and 6th Kandak was to manoeuvre to collect, and then act on local information at the lowest level possible. The results were nothing short of startling.¹⁶⁵

Operation TAYRA TAYGH produced an average of eight cache finds per day throughout the Panjwayi district area of. These were not the large insurgent arms dumps of the past consisting of 80 RPG rocks buried in sealed 55 gallon drums, or racks of AK-47 assault rifles. These were all local caches consisting of, for example, enough IED components for five weapons, or a handful of mortar rounds, or several boxes of PKM ammunition. The enemy's distributed logistics system had been identified and stripped away - at the local level. These small caches were found almost exclusively through local people reporting them out to the security forces. And the discoveries did not stop for weeks.¹⁶⁶ Even over in Salavat, the local population had enough of whoever was intimidating them and revealed enemy caches to C Company.¹⁶⁷

As a sidebar, changes in how the combat engineers handled IED response played a role in reducing the number of IED attacks at the patrol-level. There were simply not enough engineers to accompany each patrol and, in the past, combat engineers inexperienced in counter-IED methods had incurred casualties. One response during this rotation was to deploy LCMD hand-held detectors on each foot patrol: infantry could be trained to use it and did not require a qualified engineer. If a device was detected, it was marked and specialists were brought in to deal with it. Similarly the contract K-9 teams were also distributed instead of being held at the squadron level. The dispersal of hand-held detectors and dog teams also assisted in uncovering caches by the foot patrols.¹⁶⁸

FIGURE 8-12:
Enemy Dispositions and Activity,
2011

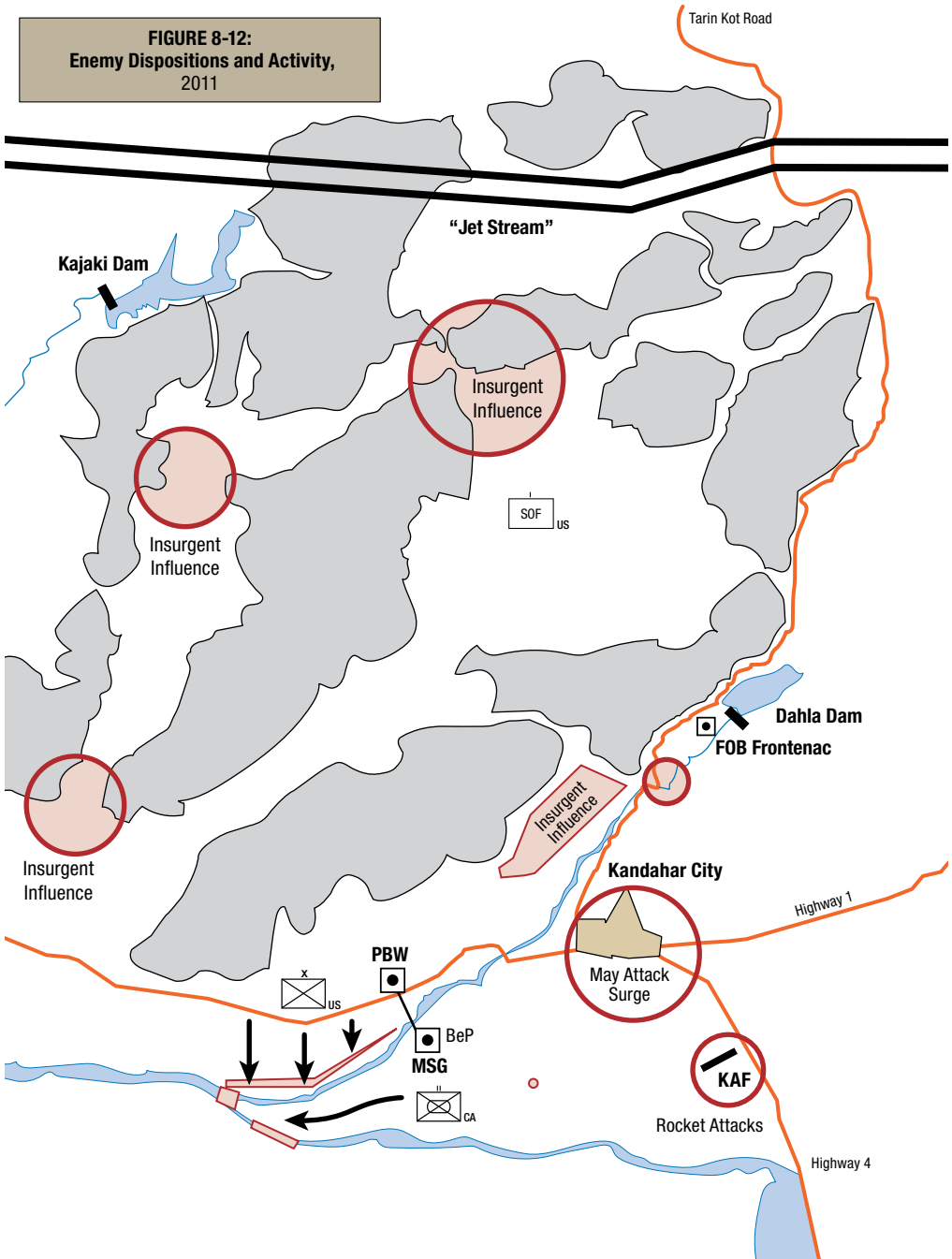


Figure 8-12: Enemy Dispositions and Activity, January-April 2011

The insurgents were extremely frustrated with their supply problems. The infamous Jabbar Agha pushed his sub-commanders in the Horn to sort things out. They were further alarmed that Haji Fazluddin Agha was now District Governor. Agha's son had been killed by one of the insurgent leaders years ago and this was one of the factors motivating him.¹⁶⁹

Haji Fazluddin Agha was everywhere, "a force across the district. He continued to enunciate a clear vision and has been aggressive in pursuit of this vision, both in messaging and in action."¹⁷⁰ There was substantially more organization at the district-level, as noted by the District Support Team, and the effects of this were palpable in eastern Panjwayi. The connection between canal clearance, irrigation, wheat production, and security was evident and thus more resources were applied to the waterways. The local population responded and indicated it preferred TF Kandahar, USAID, and CIDA development in this area to other entities, which by implication meant the provincial government, line ministries, or NGOs. A school in Chalgowr was now a real possibility and with that, the Salavat school issue might be resolved.¹⁷¹ However, word was out that some of the Salavat elders had connections with the insurgency and might interfere with development there. Further information led to the belief that one elder had a direct connection to Taliban leader Mullah Omar, but nobody seemed to know how or why.¹⁷²

Over in the Horn, the District Governor worked with CIMIC, the District Support Team and the other organizations dealing with Route Hyena as it moved west. The problem areas here involved poor irrigation planning as the road progressed, which annoyed local landowners and farmers. CIMIC, and the TF Engineer Regiment connected with the local Mirabs, the irrigation mediator-experts. This was in part facilitated through the District Governor. The importance of solving that issue was paramount, with growing season on the way, and TF Kandahar wanted to stave off any possibility that the insurgents would exploit fresh grievances.¹⁷³

As the road progressed, however, the sticking point became the community of Talukan. Dog Company and C Squadron Combat Team ran into one Gullum Mohammad Khan, an elder from Talukan who very publicly whipped up the population into opposing the direction of Route Hyena. Khan claimed the road was only for ISAF and that there was no local benefit to it. He told the people that the Afghan government was being forced to build the road by ISAF. Haji Fazluddin Agha, BGen Milner, and LCol St-Louis held a shura to meet with the locals but to little effect. "Other elders disagree but are either unwilling or simply too afraid to disagree with him publicly. Unfortunately, no single elder can speak for the entire Talukan village and no single power broker has emerged as a leader..."¹⁷⁴ The District Governor stepped up and told TF Kandahar to keep building the road and by-pass the Talukan bazaar. Canadian CIMIC, PSYOPS, and the American special forces ODA worked to win over the Talukan population and mitigate the effects of



Photo Credit: Author

The contentious Salavat school. For reasons known only to themselves, Taliban leaders allocated disproportionate efforts to interfere with its activities.

Agha's decision through mosque refurbishment, working with the bazaar shopkeepers to pressurize Khan with a petition, and other measures. The reality of the situation was that Khan owned the land the bazaar was on and did not want Hyena to bypass it: he wanted a land claims settlement for the destruction of the bazaar. The District Governor enforced the bypass and suggested the construction of a new bazaar. Khan was sidelined, the community got a new bazaar, and Route Hyena continued on its way.¹⁷⁵

It is not surprising, then, when there were a pair of TICs in February in and around Talukan. Was Khan Talukan's equivalent of Haji Malim? That was unclear. There was an enemy group operating between Talukan and Zangabad: There had been TICs and an IED attack against A Company and its associated Afghans in and around Combat Outpost Palace, so it was unclear that there was any connection between these events. C Squadron Combat Team went in and cleared a suspected enemy bed down area and destroyed all of the compounds except for the mosque.¹⁷⁶

For the rest of the month, it was IED find after IED find, cache find after cache find, shura after shura, and, as the battle group staff put it, "rinse and repeat". COP Palace tended to attract enemy attention to some extent but the enemy main effort was intimidation. Word spread that an ISAF gravel truck driver killed a local child: PSYOPS countered that this was not true. Two kidnappings, and assassination attempt against an elder, and the use of hijacked mosque loudspeakers to spew forth anti-government propaganda indicated that

the enemy was not or could not achieve his objectives with brute force and had to resort to this form of targeting to stay in the game. These activities were, in fact, counterproductive for the insurgents. Elders of at least three major communities in the Horn came forward with information on the insurgents. And, more importantly, the District Support Team excitedly noted that there were three new bazaars operating: Zangabad, Talukan, and Mushan. That doubled the number of active bazaars in western Panjwayi. Somebody was doing business. And that business was flourishing because of the improved security and ground access.¹⁷⁷



Photo Credit: Author

The increased emphasis on joint foot patrols in Panjwayi District led the insurgents to place more and more anti-personnel mines on trails. The distribution of handheld detector systems to the section level permitted patrols to deal with these devices on a case-by-case basis.

By the end of February, the insurgency leadership's outlook was gloomy. The Quetta Shura was keeping a close eye on events in Panjwayi and of course throughout Kandahar province. An estimated half of the Quetta Shura voiced dissent with the future course of actions. That sentiment expressed itself thus: "The Taliban have been fighting against coalition forces and the Afghan government for too long and have lost many good men in battle....they would not succeed in defeating the enemy this year."¹⁷⁸ Apparently, however, the Taliban was being mentored by another entity who clamped down on this dissent and presented a plan for 2011 dubbed BLACK STORM. This plan focused on retaking lost ground in Kandahar City, Dand, Arghandab, Zharey, and Panjwayi districts.¹⁷⁹

Meanwhile, the people of Pay-e Moluk, a village near Sperwan Ghar, were either succumbing to insurgent intimidation or sending a message of their own to the security forces:

The pattern of life in the village was drastically different from all previous patrols with the villagers staring with disgust, turning their backs away from the patrol, and children threw rocks. This may be an indication of upcoming insurgent operations in the area. Another patrol was dispatched to Pay-e Moluk where an irrigation project is ongoing. The villagers chose to work without any security to appear unconnected to ISAF and the patrol was told to leave.¹⁸⁰

The Sperwan area communities were suffering from a loss of credibility related to a Canadian bureaucratic slow down in funding approval that originated in Ottawa and that took most of March to sort out.¹⁸¹ Until that issue could be addressed, the situation would remain static, at best.

Panjwayi District Operations, March 2011

B and C Companies, 6th Kandak and OMLT personnel working in eastern Panjwayi district conducted day-to-day, low-level patrolling followed by regular company-level surge operations in their constituent communities. This activity was supported by increased police activity stimulated by the district chief of police and the P-OMLT. These operations became so frequent for the rest of 2011 that describing them all in detail becomes repetitive. Suffice it to say, they all had similar effects: there were constant small cache and IED finds, the local population provided more information as time progressed, and the level of enemy activity in the eastern communities was dramatically lower than at any time in 2010. For example, in March 2011 there were four IED incidents and three TICs reported for the entire month. Most of the IEDs were detonated by EROC vehicles so it was not clear if these were merely legacy devices or if there were new 'players' in town. There was a single engagement using ScanEagle and MQ-1 Predator, but the missile missed and the enemy dispersed. However, one of the three fatal casualties suffered by 1 R22eR

Battle Group during their tour occurred at this time when Cpl Yannick Sherrer was killed by an IED on 27 March in Nakhonay. One other IED incident in Nakhonay wounded two other Canadians and an interpreter (see Figure 8-13 and 8-13a).¹⁸²

During this time, the Engineer Construction Squadron led by Maj Honig worked on numerous projects in eastern Panjwayi. The ECS assessment was that the lack of movement on many projects was due to the lingering after-effects of the Haji Baran days. Village leaders believed that ISAF was an agent of Haji Baran and would not cooperate. Now, with Haji Fazluddin Agha in charge, and with better information dissemination by the district government, things changed significantly. The Community Development Councils in the Triangle of Love area were inert during Baran's tenure either due to his presence as district leader or because of local fractures or both.¹⁸³

To get the population engaged, Engineer Construction Squadron worked with the District Governor on irrigation systems. ECS pushed down mapping teams to work locally in order to determine how the communities moved water from point to point. That information was passed to CIMIC, who also engaged at the community development council level, and then showed the community leaders how to connect to the district-level development personnel. The parallel structure of Engineer Construction Squadron-CIMIC-District Support Team, and the OCCD-(P) facilitated this process until they could back away and the Afghans communicated their own requests for Cash for Work or other programming that could be used to clean up the canals. Road construction and paving paralleled the irrigation activities, using the same mechanisms but with Commander's Contingency Fund money as other program monies from other entities was not made available. The communities received better water and ground access, better agricultural opportunities through the USAID program at the district level, local men were employed, and violent activity dropped off.¹⁸⁴

Chalghowr initially remained a problematic area for development and, like Salavat, the local leadership was backsliding on the school issue, claiming the level of security wasn't where it needed to be. Countering with the Afghan Local Police initiative, the District Governor was able to entice them with added security, but it was a slow process of building confidence after so many years of problems.¹⁸⁵ C Company, the Engineer Construction Squadron, and CIMIC worked together to identify who the Malik was. As it turned out, the Chalghowr Malik lived in Kandahar City and had not visited the community in three years. When this individual heard things were changing, he came back and worked with the development council and the Canadians. In time, this led to improved relations and then movement on the school problem, though there remained low-level insurgent intimidation in the community.¹⁸⁶

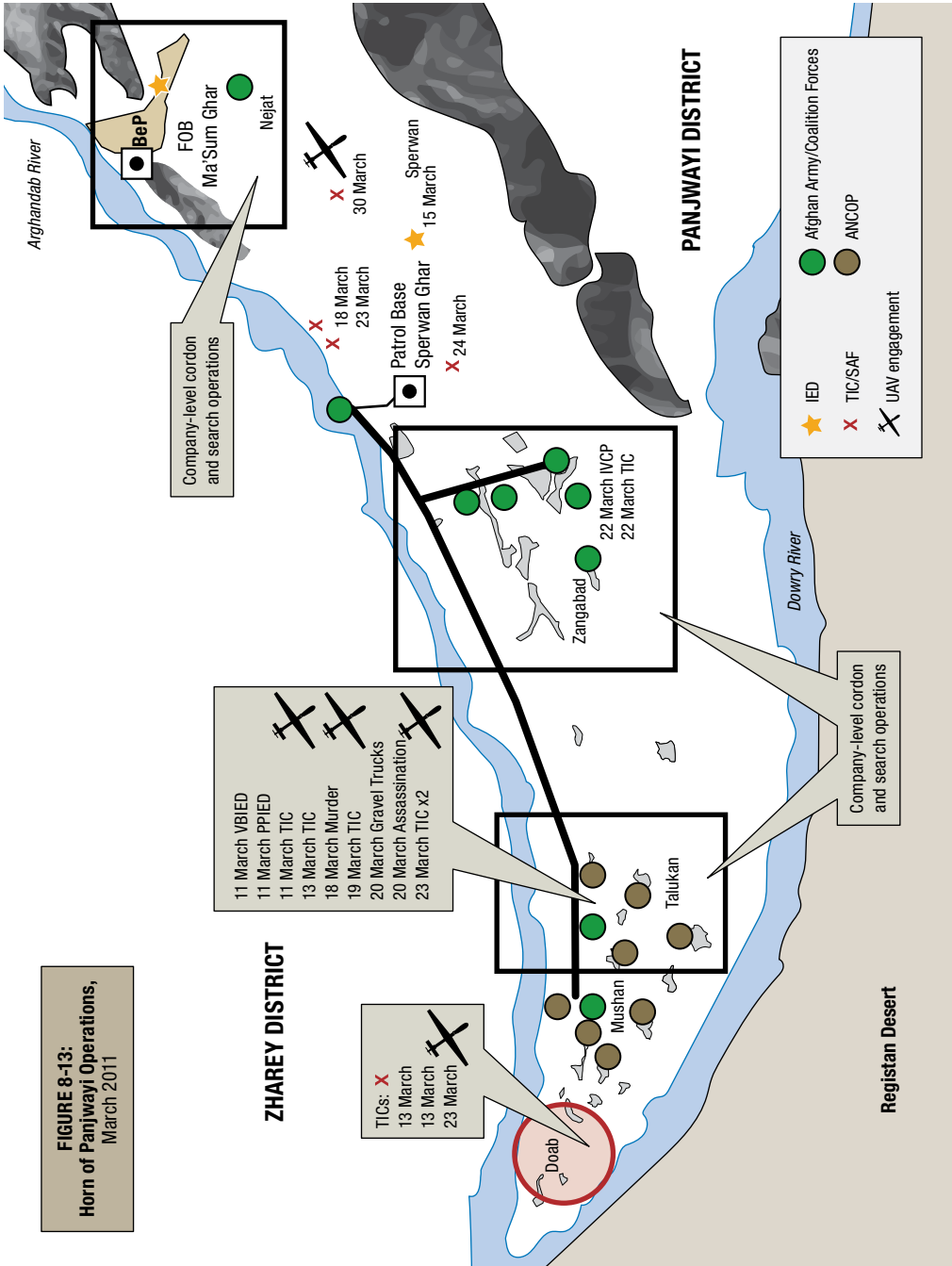


Figure 8-13: Horn of Panjwayi Operations, March 2011

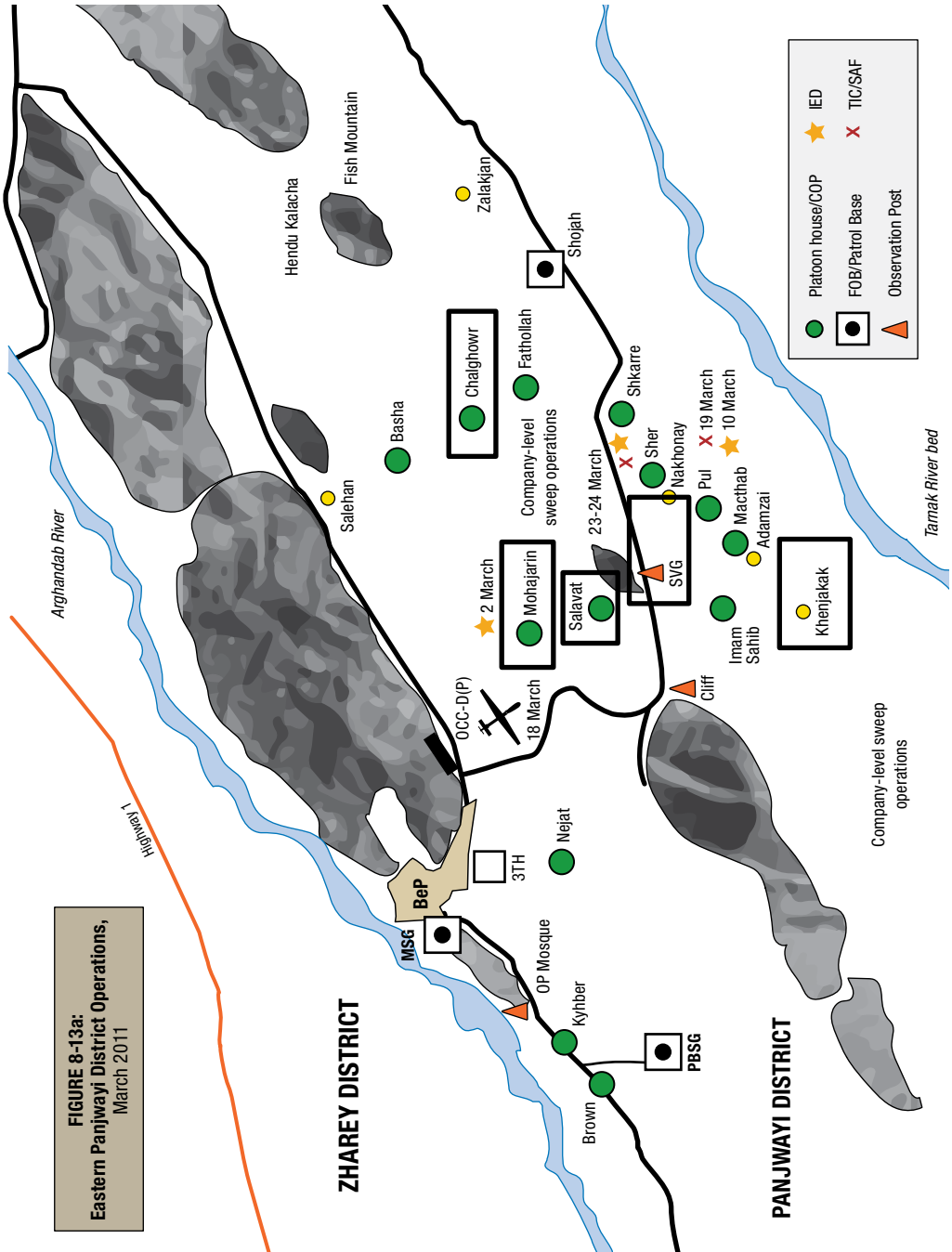


FIGURE 8-13a:
Eastern Panjwayi District Operations,
March 2011

Figure 8-13a: Eastern Panjwayi District Operations, March 2011



Photo Credit: Author

A patrol base belonging to Maj Andre Girard's B Company located between Salavat and Chalghowr. The distribution of Canadian and Afghan security forces into this challenged area generated markedly higher levels of stability which permitted development and influence operations to flourish.

Para Company in the Bazaar-e Panjwayi-Nejat-Haji Habibollah area had similar experiences to B and C Companies. There was a single IED attack in the bazaar itself but a flood of police patrolling backed up by Para Company's Operation SHOPPING PEGASUS suppressed any further enemy activity. The insurgent remnants in the Para Company area of operations shifted to intimidation operations, as they could do little else. Local information was that two different teams were active: one from the Sperwan area, and another from Zharey district. Their impact was negligible and Bazaar-e Panjwayi continued to flourish. Intimidation operations were having an effect, however, on the fringes of Para Company's area of operations in the direction of Sperwan. A team of masked insurgents on motorcycles threatened to cut the ears off of anybody found working for ISAF. Enemy intimidation in that area started to intersect with similar operations in the Horn, and it was not surprising that the enemy was using the seam between the Canadian and Afghan units working out of Sperwan Ghar and those in Nejat.¹⁸⁷

Sperwan Ghar was shot up on three occasions from insurgents operating in this area and there was an airstrike against an enemy team trying to IED Route Summerside. Road construction between Sperwan, OP Cliff and the New District Centre had been contemplated but the lack of resources and focus slowed the project down. Now there was increased

interest by the coalition forces and thus increased enemy attention in what coalition forces were doing in the area as EROC vehicles swept through with greater frequency. An IED took out an engineer vehicle, signaling the fact that Route Summerside was not necessarily open for business yet.¹⁸⁸

The intimidation campaign was, as we have seen, extending into Pay-e Moluk and having a negative effect. The Malik of that community was kidnapped by a team of masked men, taken to a compound somewhere near Zangabad, and threatened. At that time, the Malik “managed to convince the insurgents that the work was being accomplished on a voluntary basis without pay or cooperation from ISAF.”¹⁸⁹ On return, he met with Canadian CIMIC and asked that “all projects be halted, explaining that the security situation was unstable and that he fears for his life. The Malik was open to the idea of employing outsiders to work in Pay-e Moluk as long as it does not start immediately. He is supportive of ISAF projects and thankful for all that has been done and will continue to provide information on the situation in the village.”¹⁹⁰

After a few days, however, the Malik changed his views and was “ready to continue ... he now realizes the benefits that these projects will have on the villagers.”¹⁹¹ In less than a week, the district chief of police mounted a police operation in the Sperwan Ghar area, using 20 officers to search a variety of compounds. He refused ISAF assistance, which was interpreted as a major step forward in the conduct of independent Afghan police operations.¹⁹²

The usual ‘shoot n’ scoot’ attacks continued against OP Khyber, to no effect whatsoever. There was slightly increased enemy activity around Mushan when a patrol from Dog Company was shot at and the Afghan police subjected to a drive-by shooting. The accompanying Canadian JTAC was able to get close air support which resulted in a pair of GBU-12 bombs dropped onto the insurgent position. C Squadron Combat Team deployed a quick reaction force but there appeared to be no enemy remains. Coalition forces activities in Mushan were now extended and focused on mosque refurbishment.¹⁹³

The real hotspot in the Horn throughout March, however, was Talukan. As patrols from A Company, Dog Company, and the 1-111 Brigade kandak pushed out, they encountered sporadic insurgent checkpoint activity south of Talukan and Zangabad. Though it was difficult to define, it appeared as though there was some form of lodgment in between the coalition areas of operations and the Reg Desert. The types of enemy activity consisted of harassment and intimidation directed against civilian construction contractors working on Route Hyena. It appeared as though an enemy team from Zharey was involved, so C Squadron Combat Team and A Company mounted Operation DA PACARAY from 5 to 8 March along Route Hyena to clear the adjacent fields and sweep the compounds. The usual small cache finds occurred but there was no contact.¹⁹⁴



Photo Credit: Author

The dispersal of 1 R22®R into platoon houses and section-level over-watch positions alongside Afghan security forces disrupted insurgent cells operating south of Bazaar-e Panjwayi. This is the view from UFO Hill to Three Tank Hill with FOB Ma'Sum Ghar to the left.

By this point the 1-111 Brigade kandak re-deployed and in turn 2nd Kandak moved out to fill the gaps. Then on 11 March there was a spate of IED activity in Talukan. A Dog Company patrol tripped a pressure plate IED producing one wounded and, on examination, EOD found a 40-pound homemade explosive charge that did not detonate. Later in the day a motorcycle rigged with an IED was used to attack another American patrol, wounding another soldier. A 'shoot n' scoot' against the Afghan police also took place, to no effect. A similar event occurred over at the coalition base in Zangabad. And, while CU-170 Heron UAV coverage was brought to bear, the observers spotted an enemy IED dig team near Combat Outpost Talukan: they were engaged by batterie X with 155mm artillery. The survivors were tracked by UAV into Zharey district. Another dig team was spotted and was engaged with machine gun fire but they dispersed.¹⁹⁵

There were indicators that the insurgent teams had support from a series of compounds in the community near COP Saidon between Talukan and Route HYENA. A Company swept in to clear the area and wound up in a gunfight, during which a Canadian was wounded. The enemy group broke up and fled the area.¹⁹⁶

Unable to gain traction in Talukan, the insurgents turned to murdering unarmed civilian gravel truck drivers who were working on Route Hyena. They also laid IEDs to catch first responders to these attacks.¹⁹⁷ The insurgents then overstepped themselves on 20 March when Haji Aya Mohammed, the Talukan Mirab and supporter of efforts to remediate Route HYENA irrigation efforts, was assassinated. Initially, the Talukan population was split: half were angry with the insurgents, and the other half angry with ISAF for failing to protect him. When the perpetrator, who was connected to an insurgent leader, claimed responsibility for the killing, it resulted in a backlash against the insurgents and the population tilted towards the coalition forces. As it turned out, Haji Aya Mohammed led the signing of a petition to get a school built in Talukan in addition to his Mirab responsibilities. Of note, the district chief of police announced that there would be a criminal investigation into Mohammed's death. This was deemed to be a significant change in attitudes towards law and order in Panjwayi.¹⁹⁸

Over in Zangabad, the enemy had even less traction with the local population. The community leadership now swung to support the coalition forces and "expressed satisfaction with the improvements made to the local mosque and showed interest in a potential solar light project in the area." UAV coverage continued to spot and track small enemy teams and assist patrolling forces in bagging small caches.

By the end of March, almost all of the major Horn communities engaged with coalition forces in a variety of local development projects and the population's willingness to tolerate insurgent-generated insecurity was noticeably decreasing. And, as it had during the days of the Construction Management Organization and the Fosters Paving Project, Operation PASS RAFTAN created a microeconomy along the route that had a variety of spin-off benefits. Truck drivers needed lunch and water. An entrepreneurially-motivated individual noticed that people needed more gas now that they had a road to travel on and wanted to build a gas station there. These changes were noted by the CIMIC teams and arrangements made to assist such efforts, particularly in Talukan and Zangabad.¹⁹⁹

Panjwayi District Operations, April 2011

Thus far, the enemy response to Operations BAAWAR and PASS RAFTAN was severely muted. Hafiz Majid's brief to humiliate the Canadian Army's effort was not coming to fruition by any stretch of the imagination and Majid felt the heat from the Quetta Shura. The infamous Jabbar Agha, scourge of Kandahar, was unable to get anything up and going in Panjwayi district. This inertia had to change, so more insurgent resources were thrown at the problem in April, that is, four months after Operation PASS RAFTAN started. The insurgency's failure to achieve any serious inroads in the Triangle of Love and even in the vicious pit that was Nakhonay was likely a testament to what was happening in the Horn. Again, that situation was not new.

Back in 2008 the level of violence in eastern Panjwayi was significantly less when coalition forces were operating in the Horn. In 2011 the enemy was unable to get around those forces to move east. As a result, Jabbar Agha and his subordinates were forced to confront the coalition where they could get at them: Mushan, Talukan, Zangabad, and Sperwan Ghar (See Figure 18-14 and 8-14a).

There were hints throughout March that the enemy was deploying four 15-man teams, a unit of 18 out-of-area fighters, three suicide bombers, and new leadership into the district. Working out of the Do Ab community in the west, these groups infiltrated the Mushan and Talukan areas. They also started to move into Regay and use it as a staging location, possibly so they could reinforce their efforts in Haji Habibollah and points east.²⁰⁰

As before, the battle group companies, their Afghan army partners, and the OMLT mentors mounted several company-level operations in their areas of operation, in addition to daily patrolling that took place at the platoon-level. During April, LCol St-Louis shifted B Company from Nakhonay to Sperwan Ghar. The American cavalry unit in Dand shifted its boundaries to include Nakhonay and was ensconced there by mid-month. This permitted greater saturation of the Sperwan communities, given that the 1-111 Brigade kandak had re-deployed. There were four 'shoot n' scoot' attacks on tactical infrastructure in Nakhonay throughout April, but they produced no significant casualties and did not deter the American and Afghan platoons from exerting a presence in the area.²⁰¹

C Company and 6th Kandak continued to patrol the Triangle of Love between Mohajerin, Fatollah, and Chalghowr. There was residual intimidation in Chalghowr and reports of enemy leadership hiding there: on one occasion a Canadian platoon got into a shoot-out and captured one insurgent. There were ongoing CIMIC and construction activities as well. For the most part the triangle remained quiet. The exception was Salavat.

The Salavat School opening became an information operations issue that went beyond education and became a focal point of involvement by BGen Milner. Back in March insurgent intimidation resulted in a cell phone ban in the community, which alerted C Company that something was up. Chief of Police Azim Khan launched an independent operation into Salavat and arrested a number of individuals. His motives were suspect by some Canadian observers who thought Khan was engaging in arrests for monetary gain. That said, there were Salavat Afghan police links to the Taliban and Azim Khan may have been cleaning them up.²⁰²

Maintaining the coalition presence and positive projects in Salavat were important in that the Triangle of Love needed to be maintained to demonstrate to Nakhonay and its population that progress was possible. The other factor driving the schools issue was the belief held by both Milner and Haji Fazluddin Agha that there had to be a shift from unmonitored madrassas that were influenced by questionable mullahs to an education system that was not radicalized. And as we will see, there were larger issues in play.²⁰³

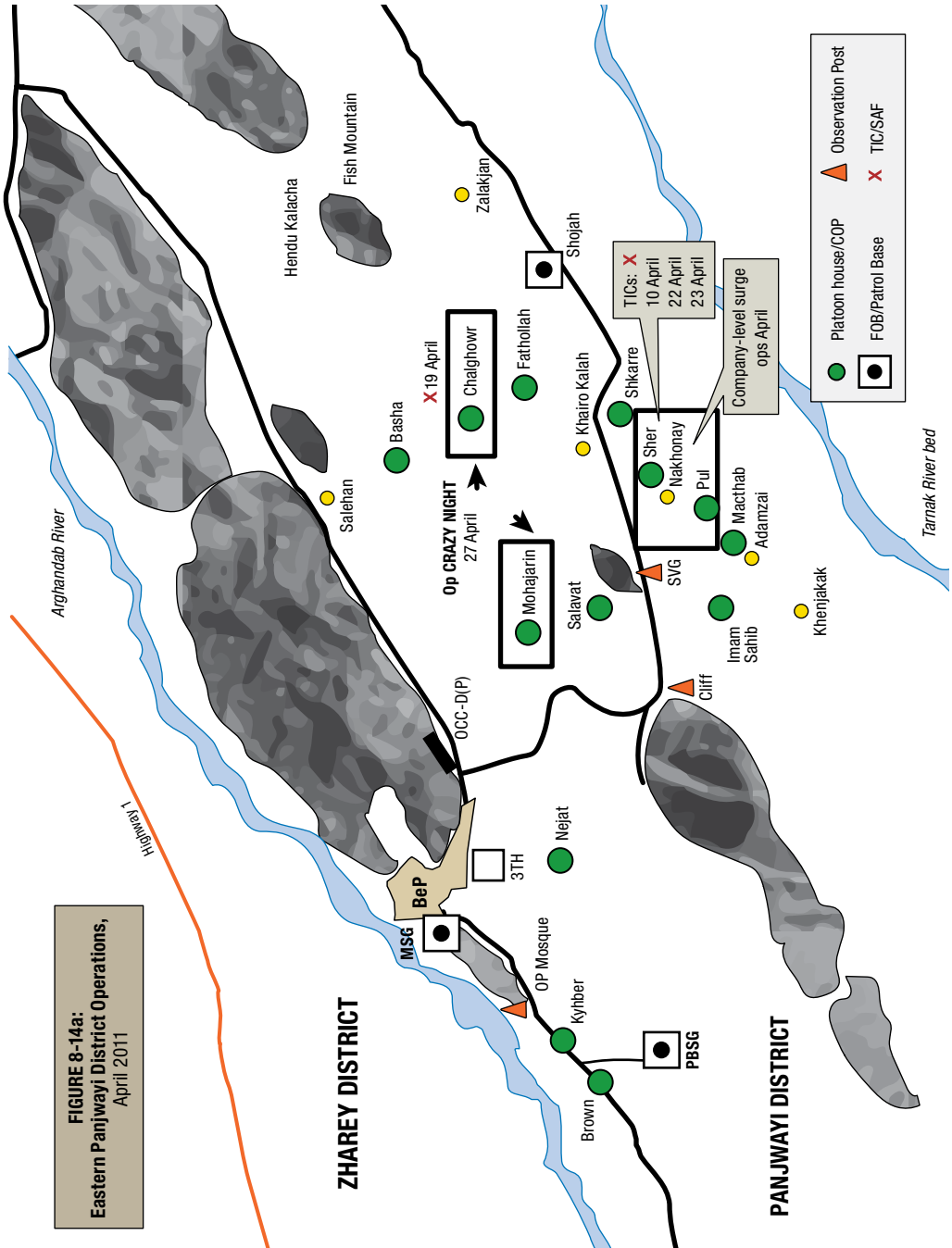


FIGURE 8-14a:
Eastern Panjwayi District Operations,
April 2011

Figure 8-14a: Eastern Panjwayi District Operations, April 2011

Attempts to open Salavat School in April initially fizzled. On opening day, no children arrived “despite a majority of the community expressing an interest...difficulties in obtaining the community assurance of security as well as a nominated teacher from the divided elders.”²⁰⁴ People in Salavat who wanted to work at the school received threatening phone calls from Pakistan. Children who were on their way to the opening were waylaid by an insurgent group, had their backpacks confiscated, were threatened with mutilation, and told to go home. Canadian observers learned that there was an edict from Mullah Omar, of all people, to the Salavat population. This ultimate ‘night letter’ demanded that no-one from Salavat would work for ISAF or the government, and no child shall attend a non-Islamic school. Further analysis uncovered the fact that two of the Salavat elders had personal connections to Mullah Omar and had something to do with this edict being issued.²⁰⁵

The Afghan authorities in the district rushed to Salavat. Haji Fazluddin Agha, Chief Azim Khan and Brigadier General Habibi told the Salavat parents that they would send troops and police in and forcibly take the children to school, if necessary. C Company hit the streets along with a company from 6th Kandak. Within 24 hours, 32 children were attending the Salavat School. By the end of April it was handling 350 students without incident.²⁰⁶

As it turned out, Mullah Omar ‘blinked’ the day the school opened, and realizing that this would be an information operations fiasco for the Taliban, removed school attendance from his edict.²⁰⁷ The fact that all that the Taliban could do in eastern Panjwayi district was rough up some school children was not exactly the image the Quetta Shura wanted to project and was yet another nail in the coffin for their plan to humiliate the Canadian Army.

Enemy infiltration into Regay and Skecha remained limited, as was their ability to have any significant effect in the Haji Habbibolla-Nejat area. B Company’s redeployment and the increased measures around the Sperwan communities likely had some impact on the insurgents. One enemy team was able to get a radio-controlled IED onto the road near Ma’Sum Ghar, however, and attack a convoy from Para Company, but the weapon was not aligned properly to do the job, which indicated that the emplacements were inexperienced. Towards the end of the month Combat Outpost Nejat was shot at, again to little effect. Para Company and its Afghan partners mounted several surge operations into Bazaar-e Panjwayi in support of police cordon and search operations. Operation SHOPPING PEGASUS was assessed to have suppressed most insurgent activity in that vital economic and political centre. For the most part the Nejat area became an enemy forward operating zone but their activity was limited to destroying the abandoned school at Dastageri and intimidation activities against the small communities south of Nejat. Aggressive and constant patrolling by Cpt Jean-Francoise Legault and 2 Platoon coupled with CIMIC activities kept the opposition at bay until the school could be rebuilt. Nejat and its associated facility at

UFO Hill, backed up with the occupants of Three Tank Hill were enough to keep the insurgents' activities limited and away from Bazaar-e Panjwayi, but without permanent police presence it remained a coalition disrupt operation in this area.²⁰⁸

The vast majority of activity in April was in the Horn of Panjwayi. C Squadron Combat Team by this time was operating from the Mushan base, Combat Outpost Bennedson, where a Special Forces ODA and the Afghan Civil Order Police were situated. ANCOP worked the town itself, with support from a Canadian CIMIC team led by Capt Ali Raju. The ODA ranged between Mushan and Do Ab, disrupted enemy movements, raided homemade explosive caches, and targeted leadership. Maj Landry and his armour supported these operations as required, especially when the American SOF needed extraction after IED strikes or when the ANCOP checkpoint west of Mushan came under fire. Many 120mm rounds were expended during these operations against an enemy force that was assessed as consisting of local Taliban and a Pakistani insurgent component.²⁰⁹

The Route Hyena road project had not quite yet reached Mushan. Gravel trucks escorted by MAXXpro armoured vehicles with mine rollers constantly moved back and forth along the route, while Canadian and American heavy equipment worked the front end. Afghan paving crews followed up, protected by private security companies. Afghan police and army patrols ranged along the whole highway, and CIMIC teams working with Engineer Construction Teams dealt with local water flow issues as they emerged. The information operations message that moved west like a juggernaut was that "Change is coming. You can't stop it. Be part of it." The enemy responded by manipulating a prominent American journalist who wrote an article that a local man lay down in front of a bulldozer to stop road construction, thus implying local resistance to the project. TF Kandahar investigated and the story was untrue.²¹⁰

Dog Company, which finally came under control of the battle group around this time, expanded its operating base in Talukan, which at this point had a bustling bazaar that was more prosperous than Mushan's. Dog Company's neighbors included an ODA and Afghan police, who were attempting to implement the local police initiative in the surrounding communities. Dog Company ranged south pushing patrols towards the Reg Desert.²¹¹

A Company, its Afghan partners from 2nd Kandak, special operations forces, and a plethora of engineers from 22 Naval Construction Regiment and all three countries now occupied Combat Outpost Suleiman, formerly COP Zangabad. From here patrols and CIMIC teams roamed the surrounding communities of Dimari, Gandari, and Lakani. There were coalition forces in all of these communities: a platoon at COP Palace, an Afghan company in COP Sidon, and a platoon in COP Belamby. Route Quebec, which was now paved, connected the area with Route Hyena. IED activity on the routes dropped off

completely. Priority projects in the area included mosque refurbishment, clinic construction, and now playgrounds and soccer fields. The original school house, misused by the Taliban as a court, was completely refurbished as a school. This was a deliberate information operations message. Occupation of the Zangabad area was exceptionally disruptive to the enemy given its geographical importance as a staging area for the rest of their operations in the district and points east.²¹²

B Company, Recce Squadron and batterie X operated out of Sperwan Ghar. B Company and its Afghan partners from 2nd Kandak pushed into Pay-e Moluk, Sperwan, and Na'al Bazaar. Recce Squadron shifted to route security along Hyena, while patrols were now handled by Afghan security forces. The declining capabilities of the Coyotes meant that new organization was required: each observation post consisted of a Coyote with a mast; a LAV III RWS, and a LAV III LORIT. Every time a recce observation post was set up in any given area, enemy activity dropped off. The combination of aerostats at Sperwan Ghar and Zangabad, Coyotes and LAV RWS vehicles, and orbiting UAV's produced a web of observation that cued artillery and fast air as required. Route clearance by the EROC engineering vehicles continued several times a day.²¹³

When the Panjwayi insurgent commanders complained to the Taliban leadership that they lacked the resources to resist the coalition in the Horn, they were told in no uncertain terms to go back and get on with it.²¹⁴ Consequently, they spent the month of April rebuilding their forces in the Horn. Pleas for help from confrères in Zharey District yielded only limited assistance; those insurgent groups were fighting the Stryker Brigade, and had little to spare.

In a general sense, the insurgency in the Horn consisted of a group or groups assigned to harass each community: Mushan, Talukan, Zangabad, and the Sperwan Ghar area. Intimidation operations, however, dramatically decreased. The murder of Haji Aya Mohammed, the Talukan Mirab, resulted in a delegation of local elders travelling to Pakistan to confront Taliban leaders there, who pledged to discipline the personnel who conducted the killing. Justice came in the form of a Hellfire missile instead once the killers were identified by coalition forces.²¹⁵

It was during this time the loss of so many small caches and the destruction of homemade explosive production facilities in the spring had a dramatic effect on the Horn insurgency. They could not equip all of the personnel they had, especially the incoming out-of-area fighters. They could not mount the same level of IED activity that they had over the past year. Indeed, there were two small clusters of IED attacks, one west of Mushan designed to deter SOF operations, and another on Route Hyena near Talukan. Their top IED team from the Zarqawi group was also taken out at some point which further reduced their capabilities.²¹⁶

The only activity that the insurgents could really undertake at this time was to mount direct fire attacks on coalition patrols and infrastructure. In an attempt to send a message that they were not confined to the Do Ab area, there was a concerted insurgent harassment effort directed against OP Khyber in the first half of April. In six engagements between 1 and 10 April, there were only two Afghan civilians wounded. The Canadian platoon and Afghan platoon continued their aggressive patrolling of the area and maintained freedom of movement. OP Kyber and Route Hyena remained open for business in that sector.²¹⁷

B Company and 2nd Kandak also maintained a heavy patrolling posture and pushed into Pay-e Moluk and Na'al Bazaar on two company-level operations on 14 and 20 April. The only enemy activity was a TIC on 20 April when a pair of insurgents, possible spotters, engaged a Canadian patrol to no effect.²¹⁸

In the Zangabad area, A Company patrols to the south of COP Suleiman on four occasions ran into what was assessed to be an enemy early warning system. The local population in that area told the contractor fixing the mosque that the area was increasingly hostile and not to come back. A Company and an Afghan company from 2nd Kandak mounted up in Chinooks and launched Operation FAR REACH into the area on 28 April. There was no significant contact with enemy forces but further analysis suggested that there was homemade explosive production taking place and that the four contacts were small forces protecting it. More ISTAR resources were applied to define the issue further.²¹⁹

Over in COP Palace, the Canadian and Afghan platoons were confronted with a series of five attacks against gravel trucking on Route Hyena. Working with the recce troops, enough presence was established to ensure the route remained open. An Afghan soldier triggered an IED on one occasion, but that was the extent of enemy activity.²²⁰ It was not exactly clear who exactly was shooting up the truckers and there was a belief that commercial violence played a role. The trucks came from the Dastageri construction company and the gravel pit was owned by the Sherzais. It was possible that there was some form of Noorzai or even Popalzai pushback against Alikozai and Barakzai interests that was being played out and superimposed on the insurgency in the Horn.²²¹

The real hot spot in the Zangabad area was Combat Outpost Saidon, situated between Talukan and Zangabad. Six pipeline contractors were attacked on the adjacent Route Quebec with an IED on 4 April: to his credit and as a vote of confidence in security, the lead contractor told A Company that he was committed to completing the project. For the rest of the month there was small arms fire sporadically directed at the outpost and its patrols every other day. On each of the fifteen occasions, the Afghan and Canadian patrols fired back, the enemy fled, and freedom of movement reasserted. Orbiting UAVs were usually unable to gain positive identification in time and could not bring other fires

to bear. The exception was an engagement with a suspected sniper on 21 April who shot at a Canadian patrol. Batterie X fired 81mm smoke to screen the patrol, which sustained a casualty from traversing the terrain. An MQ-9 reaper that was on station engaged and killed the insurgent with a Hellfire missile. The attacks were very likely conducted by small teams or even individuals.²²²

Dog Company in Talukan was confronted with an enemy IED cell operating along Route Hyena and, on one occasion, it worked with an ambush team targeting gravel trucking. The situation amped up on 12 April, however, when a suicide bomber blew himself up in Talukan bazaar, wounding two Canadian and five American personnel conducting CIMIC and PSYOPs activities, as well as two children. This attack did not endear the insurgents with the local population, especially now that the bazaar was flourishing economically. Afghan army patrols in Talukan were engaged with ‘shoot n’ scoot’ on a handful of occasions to no effect. Patrolling continued. Orbiting UAVs were, unfortunately, unable to gain positive identification so they could not engage. Again, it was assessed that it was small teams or individuals doing the shooting. Dog Company and 2nd Kandak launched Operation WRATH OF DOG on 22 April into the Talukan area to generate confidence among the local people.²²³

The situation in Mushan in April was somewhat different from the other sectors. The enemy saw this area as a front line of sorts and tried to portray the ending of Route Hyena in Mushan as a victory for them, claiming they stopped the coalition in its tracks. The reality was, of course, different and technically related to land clearance issues, and the paving back log. However, when the special forces and police attempted to get a local police initiative off the ground, the insurgency targeted the families of the six men who volunteered. The enemy operating areas included the so-called “Taliban bazaar” and Do Ab. These areas were laced with IEDs in an attempt to limit the freedom of movement by the leadership-hunting SOF organizations. The ANCOP had an outpost between Mushan and Do Ab/Taliban Bazaar and it attracted enemy small arms fire from time to time. C Squadron Combat Team rolled out a Leopard troop on occasion to support the outpost with 120mm fire. The miniscule number of IED attacks that did take place were made by devices that “were poorly constructed and low-ordered.” UAVs orbiting the area saw suspected enemy personnel on several occasions but were generally unable to gain positive identification in time to launch weapons. When they did, they killed several IED emplacement teams.²²⁴

By the end of April, there appeared to be a lot of enemy activity in the Horn but it proved to be of a transitory nature. The coalition forces had enough troops on the ground so they were not pinned into their tactical infrastructure, as 2 PPCLI Battle Group had been in 2008, or 1 RCR Battle Group had in 2010. The enemy had most of

its equipment and capabilities taken away earlier because of the lower-level engagement with the communities. CIMIC and construction activities continued, and local manpower was employed. Commerce followed the road and the Panjwayi district government made tentative steps to connect with an extremely wary population. Indeed, the senior and most respected mullah in Talukan emerged to support the coalition efforts in the area: he held influence in Mushan as well as Talukan.²²⁵

Overshadowing Events, April–May 2011

Coalition accomplishments in Panjwayi district were overshadowed by three events in April. The first was extensive media attention directed at an American religious figure who threatened to burn Korans in Florida. The result was a series of riots across the province protesting this behavior. In Panjwayi rioting broke out in Bazaar-e Panjwayi. This was contained and dealt with by Azim Khan's police with no coalition involvement. Whether this was a special case or whether it highlighted a new independence by the Panjwayi police was open to discussion. In any event, there were no apparent repercussions in the operating areas and there was no real effect on operations.²²⁶

The second event was what some dubbed "Sarposa II: The Great Escape." On 25 April, over 400 insurgents from the national security wing of the prison escaped through a tunnel that led to a nearby building. They were assisted by relatives who had been previously contacted and told to drive to the prison for the pickup. It was clear that the prison staff facilitated the escape. Around 60 escapees were apprehended, but that left 300 or so on the loose. The Taliban leadership had been fretting about reduced numbers of experienced personnel, just as they had in 2008, and a Sarposa breakout was seen to be the solution. In addition to the breakout causing damage to the reputations of the other government departments at Camp Nathan Smith, there was concern that some of the escapees would head to Nakhonay as they did in 2008 and that that area would be rekindled. For whatever reason, history did not repeat itself.²²⁷

The third was the assassination on 15 April of the Provincial Chief of Police, LGen Khan Mohammad Mujahid, by a suicide bomber dressed as a police captain. That action deprived Kandahar of a strong, competent leader at a bad time, and upset the balance of tribal power in the province. Khan Mohammad had been the last of the Alikozai power-brokers from Arghandab District who were associated with Mullah Naqib, and his death left the Alikozais in complete disarray with significant long-term implications for peace in Kandahar Province. Of course, the insurgency was not the only faction that would benefit from Khan Mohammad's demise.²²⁸

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Photo Credit: Author



Photo Credit: Author

In the final days of Canadian operations in the Horn of Panjwayi, the tank squadron was forced to extricate an American special forces team that encountered multiple IEDs during a raid near Do Ab west of Mushan. A Leopard tank 'rolls the road' while a TLAV crew observes the fighting.

Mitigation of the effects of the Sarposa break on Canada-US relations fell on the Canadian staff at Regional Command (South), in particular BGen Corbould:

There were all sorts of balls dropped. A week after the handover [at the PRT] from the Canadian [civilian] lead to American civilian lead, we had the Sarposa prison break and people started pointing fingers at each other. It was absolutely pathetic. The American civilians were saying, “We didn’t get the hand-over” and the Canadians were saying, “We did hand it over.” Col Richard Giguère and I cleaned that up. The military stepped in to fix it again, in the end, because of the complete, utter inability of the American civilians to properly lead that PRT. Six months later, we put in an American military commander again ... I think having a civilian in charge of a thing like a PRT is absolutely the wrong way to go in the future.²²⁹

Finally on 7 May the Taliban launched a major operation in Kandahar City. Small groups of fighters and suicide bombers attacked four major locations, including the Governor’s Palace. In all four locations the enemy was decisively wiped out with almost no coalition casualties. Indeed, it was Afghan security forces, particularly the Canadian-mentored Provincial Response Company that handled the response to these attacks. The attack was a complete failure as none of the targets were penetrated by enemy forces.²³⁰

These events which took place in April and May were exhaustively reported on by media. When viewed collectively and out of context, they portrayed southern Afghanistan and Kandahar province as completely out of control. They were designed by the enemy to be spectacular events. The unspectacular reduction of enemy influence in Panjwayi province after several years of fighting received no international press coverage whatsoever.

Indeed, on 2 May 2011 coalition forces throughout Afghanistan learned that an American special operations mission assaulted a fortified compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan, and killed Al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden. There was an immediate effect on all levels of the insurgency. The *raison d’être* for Operation ENDURING FREEDOM in Afghanistan in 2001-2002 was finally achieved, though the linkages between the current insurgency and the larger jihadist goals of Al Qaeda had by this point become seriously diluted. That said, however, the Taliban was shocked, especially the members of the Quetta Shura who assumed they were next, and went to ground. As for the impact in the Canadian area of operations, it took the insurgency nearly two weeks to re-initiate operations in Panjwayi district. Canada’s war was not quite yet over.

End-Game in Panjwayi District, May–June 2011

In the final weeks of Canadian operations in Panjwayi district, the headquarters staff from 3–21 Infantry led by LTC Stephen Miller deployed in preparation for the relief in place scheduled for early June. Apache Company from 3–21 Infantry also arrived to relieve Dog Company. During that time every effort was made by LCol Mike St-Louis and the battle group to acclimatize the ‘Gimlets’ to Panjwayi district.

Overall, C Company and 6th Kandak achieved steady state in eastern Panjwayi in May, with a pair of minor events in their area of operations and a sweep into Chalgowhr. They progressively handed over to incoming American and Afghan units from late May to early June. Para Company had a pair of contacts but after mounting Operation PEGASUS RETURN and PEGASUS CLEAN south of Nejat, enemy activity dropped off. Bazaar-e Panjwayi remained quiet until the relief was in place (see Figure 8-15 and Figure 8-15a).²³¹

B Company and 2nd Kandak launched several company-level sweeps in Na'al Bazaar, Pay-e Moluk, and Sperwan and the area remained quiet until mid-May when a devastatingly large IED attack killed eleven contractors and wounded another 20 on Route Brown. OP Kyber was shot up on three occasions, to no effect. A cluster of TICs in the final days took place southeast of Sperwan Ghar, followed by an aerial engagement with a UAV against a fleeting insurgent target. That said, construction continued, Brown and Hyena remained open, and CIMIC maintained its operations in the B Company area.²³²

The Zangabad area was a magnet for enemy activity in May. After Operation PUSH BACK was mounted on 12 May, the combat outpost and various Canadian and Afghan patrols were engaged on eight occasions towards the end of the month. Again, most of them amounted to ‘shoot n’ scoot’ but it was evident that the insurgents to the south wanted to keep their hand in. COP Palace was shot up a few times, but patrolling continued. C Squadron Combat Team rolled up Route Hyena to the Zangabad Ghar area for Operation WE'RE BACK on 7 May, with little contact. Route Hyena itself remained open with all of the IED activity located in and around Mushan. COP Saidon suffered a drive-by shooting but other than that it was quiet compared to April.²³³

A planned air assault into the communities south of Mushan and Talukan had to be cancelled. On 16 May a Canadian Chinook helicopter crashed while inserting forces during a preliminary operation. The site was secured by C Squadron Combat Team and the five Canadian wounded were evacuated. Mi-26 Halo heavy lift helicopters stationed at Kandahar Air Field were hired to extract the wreckage.²³⁴ The Canadian, American, and Afghan forces in Mushan kept up steady pressure on the Do Ab insurgency with a combination of sweep operations, SOF raids, and police capacity building in Mushan until the relief in place could occur.

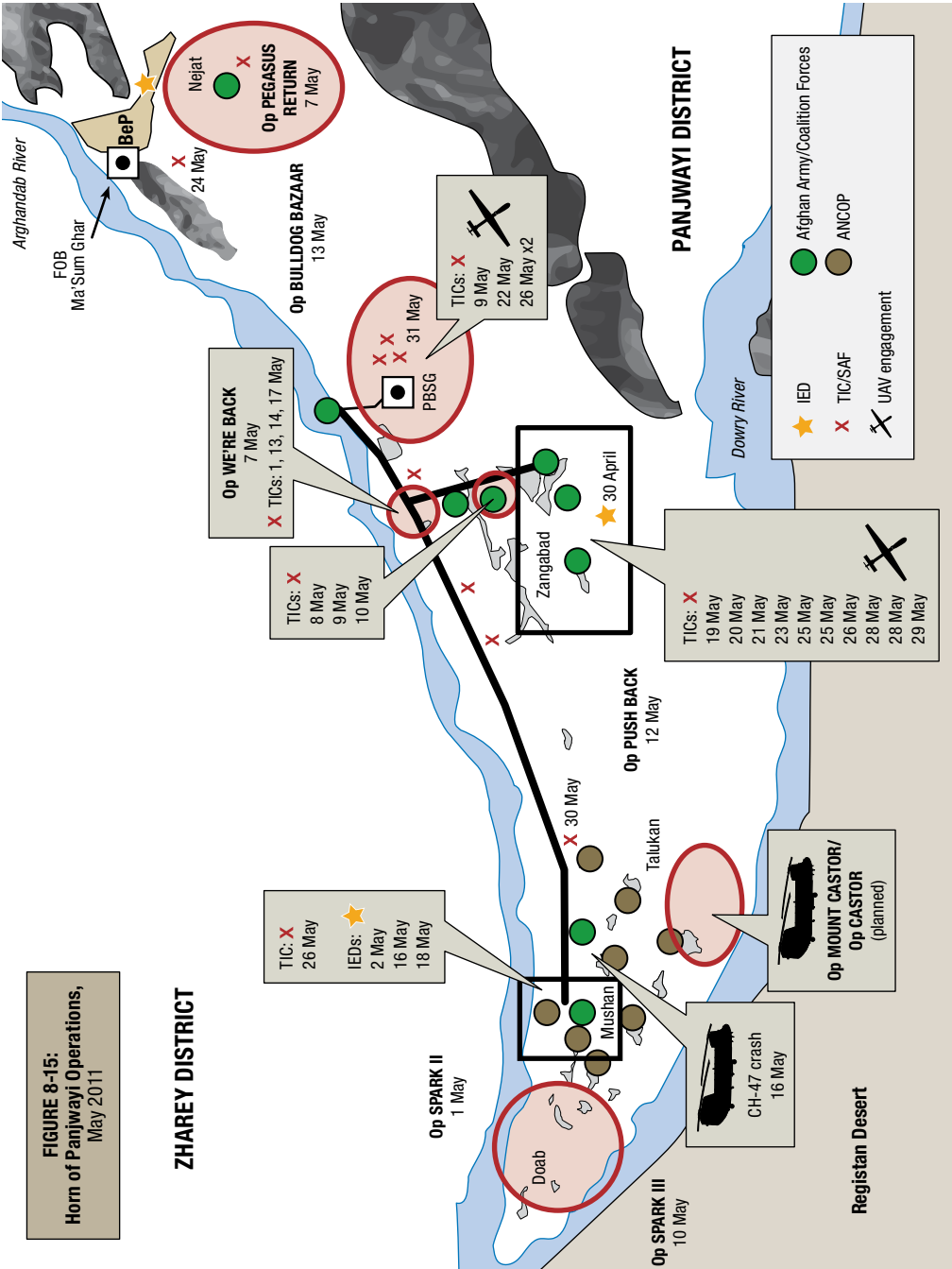


Figure 8-15: Horn of Panjwayi Operations, May 2011

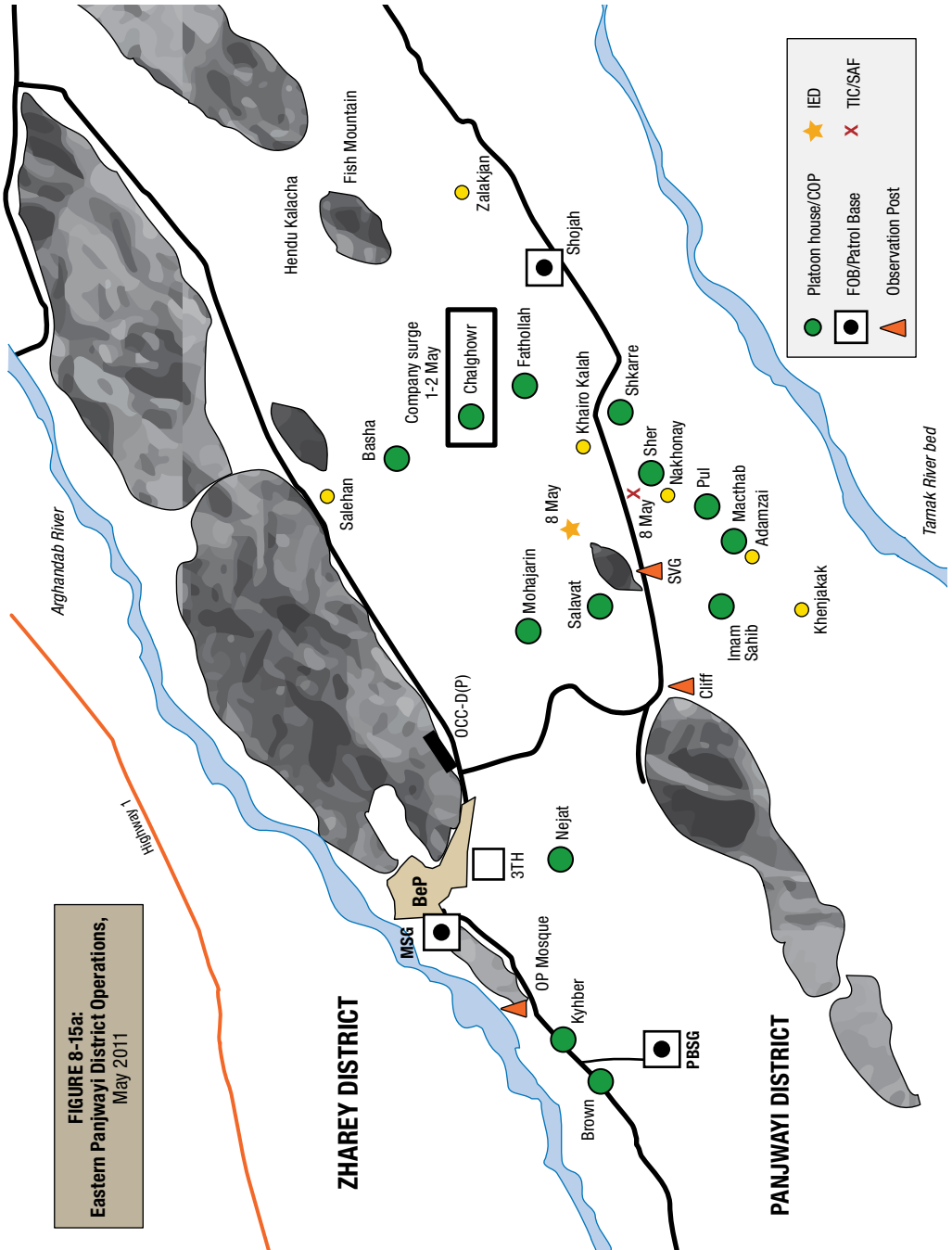


Figure 8-15a: Eastern Panjwayi District Operations, May 2011

By that point Route Hyena was completely paved from Bazaar-e Panjwayi to Mushan. On 27 May, all of the provincial and ISAF dignitaries flew in for a ribbon-cutting ceremony. The long road to Mushan, started in 2008, was now complete.²³⁵ Three weeks ahead of schedule, BGen Habibi told BGen Milner, "I'll take over now."²³⁶

Overall, the situation in Panjwayi in May was of a lesser intensity than April. There were fewer IEDs, and fewer small arms attacks. Enemy activity was down in Mushan, Talukan, Sperwan Ghar, and even OP Kyber. The only place it significantly increased was south of Zangabad as the enemy, with his back to the Reg Desert, desperately scrambled to keep a hold of his east-west rat line. There were no substantial acts of intimidation reported in any of the patrolled communities. And road construction was not interdicted at any point. Bdr Karl Manning of batterie X, unfortunately, died of a non-battle related incident on 27 May.²³⁷

ISTAR reportage portrayed a completely demoralized enemy in Panjwayi district. Insurgents complained that they could not fight face-to-face and could only use IEDs. Operations were exceptionally difficult because of all of the patrolling. The Zarqawi group IED experts were all dead: it was evident that the insurgents were suffering from skill fade. Night raids hurt the morale of the commanders. There were supply issues. In effect the enemy was completely discombobulated.²³⁸

The insurgency's intent to humiliate Canada and her army completely failed in the spring and summer of 2011. The Canadian Army's end game in Panjwayi district was orderly and professional. The transition to 3-21 Infantry went smoothly as 1 R22eR Battle Group sub-units handed over to their American counterparts in late May and early June. A new District Support Team came in, and USAID arrived with a host of new aid packages. All new forces arrived on paved roads protected by Afghan security forces. Panjwayi district was lush from the improved and cleared irrigation systems. The Canadian Army left Panjwayi district and its inhabitants a better place than when they arrived. It had never been greener since the dangerous days of 2006.

ENDNOTES

1. Interview with LCol Marcel McNicholl (KAF, 14 April 2011).
2. Interview with LCol Roger Cotton (KAF, 14 April 2011). Note that a survey of DSRs and WSRs from this period shows that they are much clearer on development benchmarks for the Afghan national security forces than DSRs and WSRs from previous rotations.
3. Cotton interview.
4. CIMIC briefing to the author (KAF, 28 April 2011).
5. Author's discussions with TF Kandahar HQ personnel (April-May 2011).
6. *Ibid.*

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7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*
10. TF Kandahar Engineer Regiment briefing to the author (KAF, 13 May 2011).
11. CIMIC briefing to the author (KAF, 28 April 2011).
12. TF Kandahar Engineer Regiment briefing to the author (KAF, 13 May 2011).
13. By the fall of 2010, a substantial clean-up of terminology was needed as “non-operation HAMKARI” and “Operation MOSHTARAK” were used interchangeably by the various staffs. Finally, “Operation MOSHTARAK Phase III Stage 3A” became Operation GAD PASOON, and “non-operation HAMKARI 3.3B” evolved into Operation BAAWAR and Operation PASS RAFTAN. See JTF-A HQ WSR (24–30 August 2010) and JTF-A HQ WSR (14–20 September 2010).
14. Interview with BGen André Corbould (Edmonton, 11 July 2012).
15. Interview with LCol Mike St-Louis (Winnipeg, 31 January 2012).
16. Interview with BGen Dean Milner (Ottawa, 20 November 2012).
17. TFK INTSUM (3 September 2010).
18. Interview with LCol Conrad Mialkowski (Ottawa, 25 October 2012).
19. *Ibid.*
20. JTF-A HQ DSR (1 September 2010).
21. Distilled from JTF-A HQ DSRs (September 2010).
22. JTF-A HQ DSR (16 September 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (30 September 2010).
23. Mialkowski interview.
24. *Ibid.*
25. *Ibid.*
26. Telephone interview with Maj Eleanor Taylor (24 February 2013).
27. JTF-A HQ DSR (15 September 2010); Mialkowski interview.
28. Distilled from JTF-A HQ DSRs (September 2010); JTF-A HQ WSR (14–21 September 2010).
29. TFK INTSUM (9 September 2010); TFK INTSUM (12 September 2010).
30. JTF-A HQ DSR (10 September 2010).
31. JTF-A HQ DSR (15 September 2010); TFK INTSUM (16 September 2010).
32. TFK INTSUM (17 September 2010).
33. TFK INTSUM (19 September 2010); TFK INTSUM (30 September 2010).
34. OMLT briefing to the author (KAF, 30 April 2011).
35. Interview with Colonel Ian Creighton (Ottawa, 21 November 2012).
36. *Ibid.*

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37. OMLT briefing to the author (KAF, 30 April 2011). The briefing staff blamed BGen Ménard for exhausting 2nd Kandak and took a dim view of the enforced ISAF partnering directives from 2009–2010, which they also implicated in the 2nd Kandak problem.
38. Creighton interview.
39. JTF-A HQ WSR (24–30 August 2010); JTF-A HQ WSR (31 August–6 September 2010).
40. JTF-A HQ DSR (21 September 2010).
41. Creighton interview.
42. Milner interview; Telephone interview with LCol Doug Claggett (19 February 2013).
43. OMLT briefing to the author (KAF, 30 April 2011).
44. OMLT briefing to the author, (KAF, 30 April 2011).
45. Claggett interview.
46. TFK INTSUM (2 September 2010).
47. TFK INTSUM (10 September 2010).
48. TFK INTSUM (14 September 2010); TFK INTSUM (17 September 2010).
49. TFK INTSUM (20 September 2010).
50. TFK INTSUM (18 September 2010).
51. Derived from JTF-A HQ DSRs (September–November 2010). See also JTF-A WSRs for the same period.
52. JTF-A HQ WSR (24–30 August 2010).
53. *Ibid.*
54. JTF-A HQ DSR (17 September 2010); Creighton interview; MP Company briefing to the author (KAF, 15 July 2010).
55. JTF-A HQ DSR (22 September 2010).
56. JTF-A HQ DSR (28 September 2010).
57. JTF-A HQ DSR (24 September 2010); TFK INTSUM (24 September 2010); TFK INTSUM (30 September 2010).
58. Distilled from JTF-A HQ WSRs (September to November 2010).
59. Mialkowski interview; Milner interview.
60. TF Kandahar briefings to the author (KAF, 13–15 April 2011); discussion with TF Kandahar staff (30 April 2011); Claggett interview; Mialkowski interview; Milner interview.
61. Apparently, PASS RAFTAN also means “the retreat”, and TF Kandahar inadvertently used it in both contexts.
62. Claggett interview; JTF-A HQ, “Operation BAAWAR (Assurance)” (20 November 2010); TF Kandahar briefings to the author (KAF, 13–15 April 2011).
63. Claggett interview; TF Engineer Regiment briefing to the author (KAF, 13 May 2011); ECS briefing to the author (KAF, 26 April 2011).
64. Distilled from daily TFK SITREPS for (October 2010); Milner interview.
65. *Ibid.*; Claggett interview.
66. Claggett interview.

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67. *Ibid.* Milner interview; JTF-A HQ WSR (28 September–4 October 2010).
68. JTF-A HQ WSR (28 September–4 October 2010).
69. Milner interview.
70. *Ibid.*; JTF-A HQ WSR (12–18 October 2010); Mialkowski interview.
71. JTF-A HQ WSR (19–25 October 2010); Milner interview.
72. Distilled from JTF-A WSRs (October–November 2010).
73. Distilled from daily TFK SITREPS (November 2010).
74. JTF-A HQ POSM (8 December 2010).
75. Snipers and sharpshooters have different levels of training and equipment. The requirement for longer-ranged fire in eastern Panjwayi due to the terrain influenced the decision to designate sharpshooters in each company and provide them with older sniper rifles. The sniper platoon operated as a battle group resource.
76. 1 R22eR Battle Group briefing to the author (KAF, 12 April 2011).
77. Corbould interview.
78. Regional Command (South), briefing to the author, (KAF, 26 April 2011 and 11 May 2011). See also Corbould interview.
79. Regional Command (South) briefing to the author (KAF, 26 April 2011 and 11 May 2011). See also Corbould interview.
80. Corbould interview.
81. *Ibid.*
82. *Ibid.*
83. Briefing, “National Support Element Task Force 3-10 Logistical Challenges (6 December 2012).
84. Interview with Col Sébastien Bouchard (12 April 2013).
85. *Ibid.*
86. *Ibid.*
87. NSE briefing to the author (KAF, 5 May 2011).
88. TFK HQ & Sigs Squadron briefing to the author (KAF, 26 April 2011).
89. *Ibid.*
90. Detainee Transfer Facility briefing to the author, (KAF, 11 May 2011).
91. *Ibid.*
92. Health Services Unit briefing to the author (KAF, 12 May 2011).
93. Milner and Claggett interviews.
94. St-Louis interview.
95. JTF-A HQ WSR (16-22 November 2010); TFK Commander’s Update Brief (16 November 2010); Interview with Maj Christian Caron (KAF, 18 April 2011).
96. Interview with Maj Éric Landry (Mushan: Panjwayi District, 22 April, 2011).
97. Interview with Maj Éric Landry (Mushan: Panjwayi District, 22 April, 2011).
98. JTF-A HQ DSR (3 December 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (4 December 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (5 December 2010).

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99. JTF-A HQ DSRs (5–7 December 2010).
100. TFK INTSUM (4 December 2010); TFK INTSUM (5 December 2010).
101. TFK INTSUM (9 December 2010).
102. JTF-A HQ DSR (5 December 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (8 December 2010).
103. TFK Commander's Update Brief (10 December 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (9 December 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (10 December 2010).
104. JTF-A HQ DSR (11 December 2010).
105. St-Louis interview.
106. JTF-A HQ DSR (11 December 2010).
107. JTF-A HQ DSR (12 December 2010).
108. Landry interview.
109. Caron interview.
110. CIMIC briefing to the author (KAF, 28 April 2011).
111. JTF-A HQ DSR (19 December 2010).
112. *Ibid.*
113. Landry interview.
114. JTF-A HQ DSRs (20–21 December 2010).
115. JTF-A HQ DSR (28 December 2010).
116. JTF-A HQ DSR (27 December 2010).
117. JTF-A HQ DSRs (30–31 December 2010).
118. JTF-A HQ DSR (30 December 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (31 December 2010).
119. JTF-A HQ DSR (31 December 2010).
120. TFK INTSUM (28 December 2010).
121. TFK INTSUM (31 December 2010).
122. JTF-A HQ WSR (3 November–6 December 2010).
123. *Ibid.*
124. JTF-A HQ WSR (14–20 December 2010).
125. Milner interview.
126. JTF-A HQ WSR (29 January–4 February 2011).
127. Author's experience driving through Dand district (April 2011).
128. TFK INTSUM (17 December 2010).
129. TFK INTSUM (15 January 2011).
130. Milner interview.
131. *Ibid.* JTF-A HQ WSRs (November–December 2010).

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132. Interview with Maj Barbara Honig (KAF, 16 April 2011).
133. CIMIC briefing to the author (KAF, 28 April 2011).
134. "OCC-D(P)/District Support Team Operational Brief" (21 April 2011).
135. St-Louis interview.
136. *Ibid.*
137. *Ibid.*; Honig interview.
138. Author's observations in the Nejat area (April–May 2011); briefings to the author at new district centre by the OCC-D(P) and DST staff (21–22 April 2011).
139. St-Louis interview.
140. Discussions with LCol Mike St-Louis (FOB Ma'Sum Ghar, 4 April 2011).
141. Distilled from JTF-A HQ DSRs (January 2011).
142. *Ibid.*
143. *Ibid.*
144. *Ibid.*
145. JTF-A HQ WSR (1–7 January 2011).
146. JTF-A HQ WSR (8–14 January 2011).
147. JTF-A HQ WSR (15–21 January 2011).
148. JTF-A HQ WSR (15–21 January 2011).
149. Donald C. Bolduc, "Forecasting the Future of Afghanistan," *Special Warfare* (October–December 2011) <http://www.soc.mil/SWCS/SWmag/archive/SW2404/SW2404ForecastingTheFutureOfAfghanistan.html>
150. Mossop interview. Notes from TF Kandahar COS coordination meeting (12 July 2010).
151. Interview with CSOR personnel (Harrowsmith, 5 April 2013).
152. Col Donald C. Bolduc, "Forecasting the Future in Afghanistan," *Special Warfare* (October–December 2011).
153. CSOR interview.
154. Bolduc, "Forecasting the Future in Afghanistan."
155. Milner interview.
156. See Robin Moore, *The Green Berets* (New York: Avon Books, 1965); Shelby L. Stanton, *Green Berets at War: U.S. Army Special Forces in Southeast Asia 1956–1975* (Novato: Presidio Books, 1985); Charles M. Simpson III, *Inside the Green Berets: The Story of the U.S. Army Special Forces* (New York: Berkley Books, 1984); Alastair Horn, *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria 1954–1962* (New York: Viking Press, 1974).
157. CSOR interview.
158. *Ibid.*
159. This was not a new discovery. While the author accompanied TF Orion in the summer of 2006, a proxy system was noted in the remote northern districts of Kandahar Province. Likewise, in 2007, Recce Squadron (Maj Peter Huet) discovered a proxy system in Spin Boldak, and CIMIC teams operating in Zharey in 2008–2009 believed that almost all community leaders in that district were proxies but never managed to identify and locate the actual elders as CSOR did in Panjwayi.

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160. CSOR interview.
161. *Ibid.*
162. *Ibid.* The author witnessed the transition in June 2011 and was similarly concerned about the low troop density and lack of enablers. Leaders of the incoming American battalion expressed the same concerns to the author.
163. Distilled from JTF-A DSRs (February 2011).
164. TFK INTSUM (6 February 2011).
165. Distilled from JTF-A DSRs (February 2011).
166. *Ibid.*
167. JTF-A HQ DSR (24 February 2010).
168. Interview with Maj François Sauvé (FOB Ma'Sum Ghar, 5 May 2011). The LCMDs were tried by previous rotations, but the lack of LCMDs in Canada for training, and the mobile nature of the operations conducted by those rotations, meant that the system did not come into its own until regular, small, foot patrols in specific geographic areas became the norm.
169. TFK INTSUM (6 February 2011); TFK INTSUM (7 February 2011).
170. JTF-A HQ WSR (5–11 February 2011).
171. JTF-A HQ WSR (22–28 January 2011).
172. TFK INTSUM (9 February 2011); TFK INTSUM (11 February 2011).
173. JTF-A HQ WSR (29 January–4 February 2011); JTF-A HQ WSR (5–11 February 2011).
174. JTF-A HQ DSR (2 February 2011).
175. JTF-A HQ DSR (6 February 2011). Honig interview.
176. Distilled from JTF-A DSRs (February 2011).
177. JTF-A HQ DSR (20 February 2011); JTF-A HQ WSR (29 January–4 February 2011).
178. TFK INTSUM (14 February 2011).
179. TFK INTSUM (17 February 2011).
180. JTF-A HQ DSR (25 February 2011).
181. Honig interview.
182. Distilled from JTF-A DSRs (March 2011).
183. Honig interview.
184. *Ibid.*
185. JTF-A HQ DSR (18 March 2011).
186. Honig interview; TFK INTSUM (27 March 2011).
187. Distilled from JTF-A DSRs (March 2011).
188. *Ibid.*
189. JTF-A HQ DSR (1 March 2011).
190. JTF-A HQ DSR (2 March 2011).

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191. JTF-A HQ DSR (7 March 2011).
192. JTF-A HQ DSR (14 March 2011).
193. *Ibid.*
194. Distilled from JTF-A DSRs (March 2011).
195. *Ibid.*
196. *Ibid.*
197. TFK INTSUM (19 March 2011).
198. Distilled from JTF-A DSRs (March 2011). See also JTF-A HQ WSR (19–25 March 2011).
199. CIMIC briefing to the author (KAF, 28 April 2011).
200. TFK INTSUM (16 March 2011); TFK INTSUM (19 March 2011); TFK INTSUM (28 March 2011); TFK INTSUM (10 April 2011).
201. Distilled from JTF-A DSRs (April 2011).
202. TFK INTSUM (4 March 2011); TFK INTSUM (28 March 2011). Milner interview.
203. Milner interview.
204. JTF-A HQ WSR (9-15 April 2011).
205. TFK INTSUM (22 April 2011); TFK INTSUM (23 April 2011); TFK INTSUM (26 April 2011).
206. JTF-A HQ DSR (27 April 2011).
207. TFK INTSUM (14 April 2011).
208. Para Company briefing to the author (FOB Ma'Sum Ghar, 19 April 2011); Author's visit and patrol with Para Company (Nejat, 20–21 April 2011).
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211. Author's observations (COP Robinson, 24 April 2011).
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213. A Squadron briefing to the author (FOB Sperwan Ghar, 3 May 2011).
214. TFK INTSUM (15 April 2011).
215. Derived from back-and-forth reportage and commentary in TFK INTSUMs (April–May 2011).
216. Distilled from TFK INTSUMs (April 2011).
217. Distilled from JTF-A HQ DSRs (April 2011).
218. *Ibid.*
219. *Ibid.*; Distilled from TFK INTSUMs (April 2011).
220. Distilled from JTF-A HQ DSRs (April 2011).
221. Discussions with OMLT staff.
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223. *Ibid.*

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224. *Ibid.*
225. JTF-A HQ WSR (2-8 April 2011).
226. *Ibid.*
227. Distilled from TFK INTSUMs (April and May 2011).
228. Author's discussions with OMLT staff (May 2011).
229. Corbould interview.
230. The author observed these events from the Regional Command (South) Operations Centre.
231. Distilled from JTF-A HQ DSRs (May 2011).
232. *Ibid.*
233. *Ibid.*
234. JTF-A HQ DSR (17 May 2011).
235. Distilled from JTF-A HQ DSRs (May 2011).
236. Milner interview.
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238. TFK INTSUM (24 May 2011).

EPILOGUE

The unenviable and unglamorous task of closing out Operation ATHENA and managing the transition to Operation ATTENTION, the training mission in Kabul, fell to BGen Charles “Chuck” Lamarre and his Mission Transition Task Force (MTTF). Drawn from 375 units across Canada, the 1,600 personnel of the MTTF came from logistics, signals, electrical and mechanical engineering, and health services support units.¹ They were broken down into several functional mission closure units that dealt with ammunition, vehicles, packaging and airlift.

The accomplishments of the MTTF are perhaps best told in numbers, such as the 1,035 vehicles that the MTTF processed, selling civilian-type SUVs in Afghanistan, and returning all the military vehicles to Canada after cleaning them thoroughly to pass inspection by Agriculture Canada. Some of the numbers are staggeringly large; for example, the MTTF redistributed more than seven square kilometers of remediated soil, handed over 260 buildings, 60 tonnes of paper and 7,000 kilometers of signal cable to allies, and returned some 150 terabytes of data to Canada.

Anything that could be donated to the Afghan National Army was passed on through Brig Gen Habibi at 1-205 Brigade. Other materiel was donated to American units for use in influence operations. Special care had to be taken for the destruction of electrical components so they could not be reused in IEDs. All contracts of ten thousand dollars or less were shut down. Task Force Kandahar’s compound was handed over to Commander KAF, and the Canadian accommodation areas went to the Americans.

By October 2011 the decision was made to use a combination of ground and air transport to avoid issues related to instability in Pakistan. Cryptological equipment, vehicles, ammunition, weapons, and high-value assets were sent back to Canada by air. It was fortunate that Canada had acquired the CC-117 Globemaster III transports and could therefore reduce dependency on contracted airlift. That said, 184 Antonov 225 sorties were used in addition to the 245 CC-117 loads.

During the close out, MTTF personnel came under fire on 87 occasions from rockets fired at Kandahar Air Field, resulting in two wounded. Canadian medical staff at the Role 3 Multinational Medical Unit continued to assist with allied wounded until November. By 12 December 2011 the last members of the MTTF departed Kandahar Air Field.

In 2011 the Canadian government decided to deploy Canadian Army personnel as part of the NATO Training Mission in Afghanistan (NTM-A). Operation ATTENTION was in many ways a combination of the ETT, OMLT, KMTC/ANTC and SAT-A functions and missions but with better synergy both from a national and a NATO perspective. Operation ATTENTION, which lasted from 2011 to 2014, will be covered in a later volume of this work.

For the Afghans, the war continued.

Abdul Latif Ashna, the Deputy Governor of Kandahar, was killed by a suicide bomber on 29 January 2011.

Ahmad Wali Karzai was assassinated by Sardar Mohammed, his chief of security, on 12 July 2011. Mohammed was gunned down immediately. On his way to the AWK funeral, Helmand governor Gulub Mangal narrowly avoided assassination. A suicide bomber targeted Karzai's funeral and killed the pro-coalition head of the Kandahar Ulema Shura, Hikmatulla Hikmat.

A suicide bomber killed Mayor Ghulam Haider Hamedi of Kandahar on 27 July 2011.

District Governor for Panjwayi District Haji Fazluddin Agha was assassinated by a suicide bomber on 16 January 2012, a year after he replaced Haji Baran. Baran was brought in to take over the district once again.

Former Kandahar Governor Assadullah Khalid was promoted to run the National Directorate of Security but was seriously wounded in an attack on his headquarters in Kabul on 6 December 2012 and never fully recovered from the experience. He was eventually appointed acting Minister of Defence.

After surviving several mass casualty-producing suicide bombings over the years, Abdul Rezziq was promoted General and played a significant role in maintaining order in the province. He was eventually assassinated in an insurgent-inspired insider attack at the Governor's Palace in Kandahar on 18 October 2018.

Though the motives underlying Canada's overseas involvement in Afghanistan were similar to those of our past wars in the 20th Century, there are marked differences in the end game in this conflict. The victorious coalitions were able to remake the world order after both world wars, and to defang and reform the societies that initiated those conflicts. The methodology employed back then involved defeating the enemy's armed forces, demoralizing the enemy population, and occupying their country. The Canadian Army was not an occupation force in Afghanistan and was in support of a government that asked for its assistance. The insurgency Canada encountered in Afghanistan was part of a global politico-religious phenomenon whose leaders wished the destruction of our society and culture, and intended to replace it with a totalitarian one based on a highly distorted version of Islam.

The initial manifestations of that phenomenon included Al Qaeda, the Taliban, and a number of regional allied groups based in Pakistan and Afghanistan. The destruction of their occupation regime in Afghanistan by coalition and Afghan forces, and its replacement with a legitimate and internationally recognized government, was assaulted by an insurgency that swore no national allegiance but was supported by entities in Pakistan and elsewhere for their strategic interests. Concurrent with this, Al Qaeda expanded into Iraq, Africa, Somalia, and other locations with varying degrees of success. Al Qaeda was, however, unable to achieve its strategic objectives. It never forced its so-called 'far enemy' to decisively surrender its positions in the Middle East or in Southwest Asia, and it was unable to generate more disruptive and lethal 9-11-style attacks. It arguably had little or nothing to do with the crucially important Arab Spring, though it attempted to exploit that zeitgeist to varying degrees.² That period ended in 2011 with the death of Osama bin Laden, something coincidental to the Canadian withdrawal from combat operations in southern Afghanistan and its assumption of the training role that eventually ended in early 2014. What happened in Afghanistan since the Canadian Army departed in 2014?

As this history goes to press, it is now twenty years after Canadian forces were first committed to Afghanistan and seven years since they departed. The Taliban and its allies, enabled by external interests, convinced the Ashraf Ghani-led government to flee and seized not only Kandahar City but Kabul as well. The Canadian Armed Forces was forced into a poorly coordinated, badly organized non-combatant evacuation operation as Taliban forces closed in on Kabul, leaving over 2000 Canadian-affiliated Afghans behind.

How did this happen? The insurgency entered a period of disarray between 2011 and 2014. The new Al Qaeda leader, Ayman al-Zawahiri, was unable to stop centrifugal forces from fragmenting Al Qaeda, both outside the Afghanistan-Pakistan region and elsewhere.³ As for the Taliban, Mullah Omar died of natural causes on 23 April 2013, generating similar problems within that movement.⁴

A reorganization of insurgent groups in Iraq in 2013, partly in response to repressive actions taken by the Syrian government in the wake of the Arab Spring and partly due to the collapsed command and control links to Al Qaeda leadership in Pakistan, produced what was initially called the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and later the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). After mounting a successful Blitzkrieg that seized large swathes of Iraqi territory, including the vital city of Mosul, the ISIS/ISIL organization extended a hand to Al Qaeda but was rebuffed by them in a public statement issued in February 2014.⁵

ISIS/ISIL's international success left Al Qaeda in the proverbial dust. Consequently some Al Qaeda elements in Pakistan affiliated themselves with ISIS/ISIL in 2014. Rogue elements from the Taliban and Terik-i-Taliban (TTP, the Pakistan Taliban), also joined them. This organization was called the Islamic State in Khorasan Province (ISKP) but was also known as ISIS-K (Islamic State of Iraq-Syria Khorasan Province). It officially came into public existence in 2015.⁶ Scrambling to compete, Al Qaeda announced the creation of Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) and moved to embed as many of its fighters with Taliban units as possible in order to maintain influence. Clashes then occurred throughout the spring of 2015 between AQIS and ISKP/ISIS-K in Nangarhar Province in Afghanistan.⁷

Mullah Omar's death in 2013 had been kept a secret. In 2015 Ayman al-Zawahiri pledged *bayat* (fealty) to Mullah Omar as part of Al Qaeda's maneuverings against ISKP, not realizing he was dead. This led to significant loss of prestige when a great deal of ridicule was directed at Al Qaeda within the global jihadist community. Omar's death, when it was finally revealed in 2015, generated a 'civil war' for control of the Taliban organization in which hundreds of fighters killed each other. ISKP even capitalized on the disorder and beheaded Taliban personnel in the Afghanistan areas it operated in. The Taliban and its Al Qaeda allies retaliated in kind.⁸ Al Qaeda continued to suffer dramatic losses. In July 2015, a large AQIS training facility was uncovered in Shorabak District in Kandahar Province by the Afghans and the coalition. After observing and analysing AQIS movements, the facility was hit on October with 63 airstrikes and a 200-man ground assault. Over 160 AQIS personnel were killed, with significant effects on both Al Qaeda and Taliban operations.⁹

And there was even more fragmentation within the insurgency. Splits within the Taliban produced yet another organization after the violence of 2015: The Islamic Emirate High Council in Afghanistan (IEHCA). The Taliban shadow governor of Nimroz Province, Mullah Mohammad Rasoul, organized Noorzai Pashtuns in Herat, Nimroz, and parts of Helmand. He did not get along with Mullah Omar's successor, Mullah Mansour, an Ishaquazi who was deeply involved in the narcotics trade and allied with the powerful Akhund clans in Helmand. This fight resulted in hundreds killed on both sides throughout 2016. Mansour was killed by a coalition airstrike, generating further discord and division within

Taliban ranks, particularly in Helmand Province where the IEHCA made gains at the expense of the Akhunds.¹⁰ To what extent this was motivated by narcotics competition as opposed to ideology is open to question.

Reports emerged in 2016 that the Haqqani Tribal Network lost large numbers of personnel to ISKP after ISKP overran Al Qaeda in the Tora Bora mountains (the HTN later reached an accommodation with ISKP in 2020).¹¹ By 2017 the Taliban faced a three-front campaign: it was up against ISKP, the IEHCA, and the Afghan government and its supporting coalition.¹² A bewildered and possibly bemused coalition intelligence staff sat back and watched the insurgency eat itself. The assertion that “the Taliban” somehow battled the coalition to a stalemate on its own and that this produced calls for a ceasefire in 2018 is clearly challengeable. Perhaps the previous decade of coalition operations played some role in frustrating the insurgency in achieving its aims.

With the Taliban and Al Qaeda in disarray, the Afghan government and the coalition forces focused on ISKP in 2019. A successful campaign severely damaged ISKP in the N2P provinces in eastern Afghanistan, and in November 2019 President Ashraf Ghani declared victory over ISKP. In early 2020 the ISKP leader for Afghanistan, Abdullah Orakzai, was captured by Afghan security forces in Kandahar. A subsequent operation in Kabul netted the ISKP regional commander, Abu Omar Khorasani.¹³

Despite a half decade of jihadist occupation and two decades of protracted insurgent violence, a 2019 survey noted that 85.1% of Afghans surveyed have no sympathy for the insurgency. 13.4% say they support the insurgency but cannot express why. Zabol and Oruzgan Provinces have the highest levels of support for the insurgency, not key provinces like Kandahar, Helmand, or those surrounding Kabul.¹⁴

In Kandahar Province, the situation in early 2020 resembled the situation extant in 2005. The insurgents attempted to maintain a shadow government and operated to one extent or another in the districts outside of Kandahar City, but had no apparent central leadership in the province. They were not able to regain the strength nor the influence mustered there between 2006 and 2009. Indeed, criminal and tribal elements pretended to be Taliban in the rural areas to accomplish their objectives, so it is difficult to accurately measure the insurgency’s actual strength at this time, which may have been lower than alleged.¹⁵

In early 2020, the Trump administration began withdrawing troops from Afghanistan and by June that number stood at 8600. The TTP, which was not part of the Doha negotiations between the Government of Afghanistan and the Taliban, was encouraged by this and reunified a number of anti-government Taliban affiliates inside Afghanistan with Al Qaeda’s assistance throughout July and August.¹⁶ On 8 October, the Taliban information organization acknowledged and welcomed a Tweet by President Trump that

American troops would be home by Christmas. Three days later insurgent groups mounted an assault on Lashkar Gah in Helmand Province via the Nad Ali and Nawa districts and cut Highway 1 to Kandahar. Two days after that, Afghan security forces launched a major operation with American air support and threw back the insurgents by 19 October. The insurgents resorted to district-level terrorism after this failure until they tried again in January 2021, launching another failed attack from Nawa.¹⁷

At the same time, insurgent operations slowly ramped up in Kandahar Province with small clashes against security forces in Arghandab in late October and early November. Further announcements of American troop withdrawals in late November 2020 appear to have emboldened the insurgency in Kandahar Province. Initial indicators that something larger was afoot included the arrest of Pakistani infiltrators in Spin Boldak; reports that Pakistan was secretly meeting Afghan tribal leaders in early January; and the assassination of moderate religious clerics in Kandahar City. In mid-January, insurgents reinforced their efforts in Arghandab and Dand districts, which in turn prompted an Afghan security forces operation that went into Zharey, Panjwayi, Dand and Arghandab districts. The difference this time was that this successful Afghan operation was conducted without significant American support. In effect, the situation in southern Afghanistan at that time was similar to the situation encountered by the coalition in 2006. It is equally clear that entities external to Afghanistan once again played a role in revitalizing the insurgency and generating ongoing instability in the country.¹⁸

By July 2021, however, Taliban forces fought their way into western Kandahar City and eventually defeated the police, NDS, Barakzai tribal militias, and an ANA commando unit that valiantly fought to protect the city. By early August, Taliban forces penetrated key districts in Kabul and mounted urban terrorist operations until they could be reinforced from the south and west. The Ghani government fled, leaving a power vacuum that a triumphant Mullah Baradar, delivered to Kandahar Air Field on board an American-made C-17 of the Qatari Air Force, filled at the end of August.

The immediate public analysis of this state of affairs acrimoniously focused on the performance, or non-performance of the Afghan National Army and, by implication, how effective the Canadian training role was in building that army. The reality of the situation is that Afghanistan and its army changed significantly since the Canadian Army departed in 2014. It is those factors that led to what appears on the surface to have been a rapid collapse of that force, but in fact this was the result of a sophisticated and externally enabled campaign plan executed in a superior fashion against a government that was incapable of opposing it effectively. What Canadian training staffs did or did not do from 2011 to 2014 nearly a decade ago could not have affected this outcome one way or another in 2021.

One view is that the Ghani government was continuously bombarded with Western demands to get a grip on corruption, with the threat that aid would be withheld if this insoluble problem were not solved. As a result, the Ghani government overreacted and increased centralization in the government. This centralization and the means by which it was undertaken not only damaged hard-won government bureaucratic mechanisms but also antagonized the fragile relationships that existed between the Kabul-based president and the power brokers in the provinces, particularly those among the tribes in southern Afghanistan.¹⁹

At the same time, the anti-corruption drive forced the retirement of over a thousand Afghan National Army officers, most of whom were the experienced commanders who had cut their teeth in the 1990s in the Northern Alliance, and later in the ANA against the Taliban and its allies in the seventeen years of the ANA's existence. Also of note is the fact that the ANA fought this war for nearly two decades with continuous attrition of experienced leaders and key personnel.²⁰ There is irony that Soviet governance methods, including over-centralization of power and a purge of the armed forces, played a role in the collapse of Afghanistan, not just the withdrawal of American air power and ISTAR support.

Preliminary analysis in 2021 suggests that the following occurred. At some point in late 2020, the various Taliban groups were slowly brought together and alliances re-established both in northern and southern Afghanistan. In early 2021, emissaries were sent to Pashtun tribal leaders in southern Afghanistan to sound them out as to their feelings towards the Ghani government. For several months negotiations were carried out with them as plans were made to enable the new Taliban alliance with technology and to recruit and train reinforcements from inside Pakistan. At the same time, it appears as though emissaries also approached elements within the ANA to sound them out as to their intentions if there were Taliban moves on Kandahar City. The message was that the coming wave was motivated by anti-Ghani Pashtun nationalism, not "Talibanism" per se, and that the tribes should get on board and provide momentum to it, not oppose it.

The Taliban's externally-enabled campaign plan in Kandahar was essentially the same plan that was launched against Canadian forces in 2006, except this time it succeeded. After fighting their way into Zharey and Panjwayi districts, supported from the Horn of Panjwayi, the Taliban assault overran the ANA forces that were dispersed for counterinsurgency operations. Some units ran out of ammunition, likely the result of the ANA's problematic logistic system, and surrendered. In some cases these personnel were disarmed and sent home. They were later killed singly by Taliban teams at night. Others, especially ANA SOF and Commando units, were executed outright. Abdul Rezziq-associated personnel, an estimated 300 people, were murdered wholesale in Spin Boldak. Subsequently, Arghandab District, home of Alikozais, changed sides. Several tribal leaders in Kandahar

suddenly declared themselves to be neutral with predictable negative effects on motivation, morale, and cohesion within the security forces. Reinforced with Urdu-speaking personnel equipped with looted ANSF small arms stocks, the Taliban groups cut off and then surrounded Kandahar City. With the ANA and most of the tribal militias neutralized, it was left up to the police, NDS personnel, ANA special forces, and the police (read: Barakzai militia) from Daman District to resist. This resistance ended on 15 August with the fighting withdrawal to Kandahar Air Field and the pickup by C-130 aircraft of an ANA special forces unit. This operation was facilitated by Ahmad Faizai, who served as an interpreter with the Canadian Army during the course of the war and rose to be Kandahar airport manager in 2010 and later head of the aviation authority's security division. Hundreds of Canadian-affiliated personnel were unable to escape Kandahar City.²¹

The chaotic and bungled Canadian non-combatant evacuation operation conducted in Kabul in August 2021 is beyond the scope of this history. These traumatic events plus the end-game of the Ghani government and the Taliban occupation of large parts of Afghanistan inevitably led to questioning Canada's involvement in Afghanistan. The debate will and should continue. That said, any intellectually honest assessment of that involvement must take into account what Canada set out to do in Afghanistan and measure it against what was accomplished, and what could reasonably be accomplished in that environment. That is the purpose of this history.

ENDNOTES

1. This section on the MTTF is drawn from an interview with BGen Chuck Lamarre, Ottawa, 10 December 2012 and an undated final Mission Transition Task Force briefing.
2. See Nelly LaHoud et al., *Letters from Abbottabad: Bin Laden Sideline?* (West Point: Combating Terrorism Center, 2012) at <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/letters-from-abbottabad-bin-laden-sideline/> Indeed, according to Lin Noueihed and Alex Warren's *The Battle for the Arab Spring: Revolution, Counter-Revolution and the Making of a New Era*, Al Qaeda appears to have played little, if any, role at all.
3. Ali Soufan, "Hamza bin Laden: From Steadfast Son to al-Qa'ida's Leader in Waiting," *CTC Sentinel* September 2017 Vol. 10 Issue 8, pp. 1-7.
4. Amira Jadoon, et al., "Challenging the ISK Brand in Afghanistan-Pakistan: Rivalries and Divided Loyalties," *CTC Sentinel* April 2018 Vol. 11 Issue 4, pp. 23-29; Anne Stenersen, "Al Qa'ida's Comeback in Afghanistan and its Implications," *CTC Sentinel* September 2016 Vol. 9, Issue 9, pp. 21-27.
5. Of the early analyses of the ISIS/ISIL phenomena, the best is Jessica Stern and J.M. Berger, *ISIS: The State of Terror* and Michael Weiss and Hassan Hassan, *ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror*. See particularly Clint Watts, "Deciphering Competition Between Al-Qa'ida and the Islamic State," *CTC Sentinel* July 2016 Vol. 9 Issue 7, pp. 1-6.
6. See Watts, "Deciphering Competition Between Al-Qa'ida and the Islamic State,,"; Matthew DuP  e, "Red on Red: Analyzing Afghanistan's Intra-Insurgency Violence," *CTC Sentinel* January 2018 Vol. 11 Issue 1, pp. 26-32.

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7. See DuPée, "Red on Red: Analyzing Afghanistan's Intra-Insurgency Violence,"; Stenersen, "Al Qaeda's Comeback in Afghanistan and its Implications," and *Al Qaeda and Islamic State Affiliates in Afghanistan* Congressional Research Service, 24 June 2020 at <http://crsreports.congress.gov>
8. See Jadoon, et al., "Challenging the ISK Brand in Afghanistan-Pakistan: Rivalries and Divided Loyalties"; DuPée, "Red on Red: Analyzing Afghanistan's Intra-Insurgency Violence," and Soufan, "Hamza bin Laden: From Steadfast Son to al-Qa'ida's Leader in Waiting." Afghan (and presumably coalition) intelligence organizations played a role in releasing information in 2015 that Mullah Omar died in 2013. To what extent this was calculated to generate disruption among the jihadist groups would make for an interesting study.
9. See DuPée, "Red on Red: Analyzing Afghanistan's Intra-Insurgency Violence" and Stenersen, "Al Qaeda's Comeback in Afghanistan and its Implications."
10. DuPée, "Red on Red: Analyzing Afghanistan's Intra-Insurgency Violence."
11. Jadoon, et al., "Challenging the ISK Brand in Afghanistan-Pakistan: Rivalries and Divided Loyalties."
12. DuPée, "Red on Red: Analyzing Afghanistan's Intra-Insurgency Violence."
13. See Amira Jadoon and Andrew Mines, *Broken but Not Defeated: An Examination of State-led Operations Against Islamic State Khorasan in Afghanistan and Pakistan (2015-2018)* (West Point: Combating Terrorism Center, 2020); Frud Bezhan, "The Taliban, The Government, And Islamic State: Who Controls What in Afghanistan?" Radio free Europe/Radio Liberty, 31 May 2020, <https://www.rferl.org/a/taliban-government-islamic-state-who-controls-what-in-afghanistan-/30644646.html>
14. The Asia Foundation, *A Survey of the Afghan People: Afghanistan in 2019* at <https://asiafoundation.org/publication/afghanistan-in-2019-a-survey-of-the-afghan-people/>
15. Telephone interview with Ahmad Faizai, 7 September 2020.
16. "Moderated by al-Qaeda, TTP oversaw reunification of splinter groups in Afghanistan: UN", *The Economic Times (India)*, 6 February 2021.
17. "Taliban welcome Trump Tweet promising early troop withdrawal," *The Economic Times (India)* 8 October 2020; "As violence flares in south Afghanistan, key questions answered," *Al Jazeera* 19 October 2020; "Police: 160 Taliban killed in Helmand's Nawa operation," *Pajhwok Afghan News* 19 January 2021.
18. Basher Ahmad Naadim, "Kandahar police arrest suspected Pakistan spies," *Pajhwok Afghan News* 15 January 2021; Yousaf Zarifi, "Ahmad Ali: Pakistan secretly invites Afghan tribal leaders," *Pajhwok Afghan News* 24 January 2021; Basher Ahmad Naadim "Army chief in Kandahar asks Taliban not to target civilians," *Pajhwok Afghan News* 27 January 2021; "Scores of fighters killed in Kandahar operation: MoD" *Pajhwok Afghan News* 30 January 2021; Basher Ahmad Naadim "Arghandab district to be purge of Taliban soon: Gen. Tadin," *Pajhwok Afghan News* 31 January 2021; "Religious scholar killed inside Kandahar home," *Pajhwok Afghan News* 31 January 2021; "Prayer leader gunned down in Kandahar," *Pajhwok Afghan News* 3 February 2021;
19. Discussion between Nader Yama (former deputy minister of IDLG in the Ghani government), Quentin Innes, and Sean Maloney, 18 August 21.
20. *Ibid.*
21. This preliminary narrative is based on the author's communications with Canadian affiliated personnel who texted details of the collapse of Kandahar City to him while it was in progress throughout July 2021.

CONCLUSION

“This is a society that almost died!”

- Ambassador Omar Samad
to the author

The dominant theme of the 2007–2011 period of Canada’s war in Afghanistan was discontinuity in the effort to stabilize Afghanistan and help its government and people protect themselves from internal and external threats. Issues related to continuity permeated the whole Afghanistan enterprise whether it was the efforts of the international community, the NATO ISAF effort, the American effort, or, ultimately, the Canadian effort. Problems with continuity in all four areas severely attenuated the Canadian Army’s capacity in the counterinsurgency fight for Kandahar province and forced the army’s deployed formations and units to expend as much time fighting the effects of discontinuity as they did combating the insurgency. Let us deal with each area point by point.

The Allies and Continuity

As we have seen in Volume I, the inability of several European nations to comprehensively and aggressively address the Security Sector Reform problem areas under the Bonn Agreement in late 2001 had significant long-term effects on southern Afghanistan. There were no German-trained police in Kandahar province by 2006. There was no functioning Italian-mentored legal system in Kandahar province by 2007. British counter-narcotics efforts alienated the population of Helmand province in 2006, while selective application of these efforts contributed to a reduction in political legitimacy in Kandahar province in 2006–2007. The bulk of the American-trained Afghan army was stationed around Kabul and in American-commanded Regional Command (East). Equally important was the 2004 decision by the French-led ISAF to not participate in the formulation of a comprehensive national reconstruction strategy. It was only through Canadian Army-assisted efforts in Kabul, in this case the Strategic Advisory Team-Afghanistan, that such a strategy emerged three years later, a strategy that could be coupled to the existing bottom-up reconstruction approach favoured by the Afghans. To succeed in a counterinsurgency environment,

a nation must possess respected police, a functioning judiciary, and maintain government legitimacy. All three were in desperately short supply in southern Afghanistan more than half a decade after the Bonn Agreement.

One can argue that without security, it is difficult to establish and build these institutions. What were the sources of that insecurity in southern Afghanistan? At the time many debated the nature of that problem. Was it a Pakistan-based insurgency, where the resurgent Taliban were instruments of Pakistani colonialism or pawns of Al Qaeda's global agenda? Or was it an indigenous insurgency propelled by a downward spiral of government legitimacy fueled by corruption? It was, ultimately, a combination of all of these things. In this we can find fault with the American effort. Criticizing the rapid refocusing of American attention away from Afghanistan towards Iraq in 2002–2003 is an easy and perhaps simplistic answer to a complex problem. The reality is that neither the Bush administration nor the Obama administration were able to conceptualize a solution to and then effectively address the conundrum of an unstable, nuclear-armed Pakistan that was giving sanctuary to the entities degrading the reconstruction effort in Afghanistan. They were assisted in this by deceptive Pakistani administrations and other parallel powers that fostered and accommodated insurgent and terrorist groups as a hedge against American withdrawal from Afghanistan.¹ We must not ignore the fact that there were a multitude of Pakistani corporate interests that profited from the international community's continued involvement in the Afghanistan enterprise, and those corporate interests were, and remain, intertwined with the Pakistani national security state.²

The small numbers of American and indigenous Afghan forces in Kandahar province were able to provide an acceptable level of security from 2002 up to 2005. When the floodgates burst in 2006 and Pakistan-based fighters poured into the south, however, those days were over. The fact that this wave ran up against the Canadian retaining wall west of Kandahar City signaled that a new phase of the war was in play. It is difficult to conceive of a situation between 2002 and 2005 that would have warranted an increased number of American troops in Kandahar province, though there were rumblings in mid- to late 2005. One cannot read history backwards for political convenience.

The fact that the German police and the Italian judicial experts were not ensconced in Kandahar assessing the situation and conducting capacity building during that relatively secure period counts as a major failure, as does the application of an overly aggressive British-led counter-narcotics program right after it was demonstrated that there were similar problems with that approach in Wardak province in 2004. Where the Americans come up short in Kandahar province was the discontinuity between the capacity building efforts of the American PRT and the Canadian PRT in 2005. What was the American PRT doing prior to July 2005? If it did anything, that information was not communicated effectively to the

Canadian PRT. It was almost as if capacity building in the province started in mid-2005, and even then the first Canadian PRT could only try and identify what was going on in the province and with its population. The PRT was not in a position to implement comprehensive programs because it lacked the necessary basic information to do so.

The battles west and north of Kandahar City in the summer and fall of 2006 threw the Pakistan-based, jihadist-augmented insurgency back onto its heels. These combined Canadian-American-Afghan efforts produced not only an enemy pause, but they forced the insurgent leadership to start a reactive-adaptive cycle to match the counterinsurgency effort in Kandahar province. It is here that discontinuity crept into the NATO ISAF program. This manifested itself mostly at the Regional Command (South) level. The inherent instability of a multinational headquarters rotating every nine months between Canada, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands was imported from Bosnia and inappropriately applied to southern Afghanistan. Bluntly put, this state of affairs permitted national agendas to play out depending on who was in command of Regional Command (South) at a given time. There were several agendas but the most important issue here was the debate over the primacy of Helmand or Kandahar in the ISAF effort in the south.

The situation as it stood was that the problem in Helmand province was largely created by British policy and activities, and to a lesser extent, American ones. The British spent a lot of effort ensuring that their operational deficiencies in Helmand were addressed, and this conflicted with the reality that the enemy was focused on cutting off and infiltrating Kandahar City. British apologists will no doubt take issue with this conclusion. However, it was evident to numerous Canadian officers in Kabul, at Regional Command (South) and at Joint Task Force Afghanistan that the British used substantial influence to ensure resources were shifted west to deal with Helmand at the expense of the Canadian effort in Kandahar. These influence games were more obvious during periods when the British commanded Regional Command (South) but continued throughout the period in question. Canada's position was not helped by relinquishing various influence tools (Canada's jettisoning of her medium-lift helicopter capability in the 1990s and the slow re-acquisition of that capability after 2001, was one of these) nor was it helped by fear in some Canadian Army quarters of being tarred by the allies with the same "CAN'T BAT" brush that Canadians had been in the 1991 Gulf War and in Bosnia back in 1995. One must have the tools as well as the attitude to wield influence when dealing with allies that deploy more capability.

A question that must be answered someday is why Canada was unable to muster a coordinated diplomatic influence campaign in Kabul to get resources diverted to Kandahar province when they were needed earlier on. Canadian Army leaders were able, on occasion, to identify and influence similar activity when it came to increasing the number of Afghan National Army battalions in Kandahar province and DFAIT had some success in the police

realm. In that they competed with American and British commanders, both conventional and special forces, who wanted Afghan forces diverted to Helmand, Regional Command (East) and elsewhere.

The Canadian Army and Continuity

In keeping with the discontinuity theme, we now come to the Canadian Army and its role in the Kandahar drama. Was there discontinuity in the Canadian Army effort because, as some assert, there were six strong-willed TF Kandahar commanders and eight strong-willed battle group commanders trying to independently implement their own ideas over the course of five years? Or was it merely a situation where each commander was forced to adapt as the situation evolved?

At the time, it appeared to some that each TF Kandahar commander and staff had a new approach that conflicted with approach taken by the previous rotation, and it appeared that some battle group commanders sought to compete with their predecessors so that they could get in on ‘kinetic’ action. At first glance, this is not surprising given that the Canadian Army selected aggressive “Type A” personalities for command, and with command comes a certain level of ego. It would be disingenuous to suggest that ego played no role whenever plans changed. However, the impact of these factors may be less than initially anticipated in some of the cases. Let us address this issue.

As we have seen in this history, there were six TF Kandahar commanders and staffs. We can divide them into two groups: those who commanded Canadian forces throughout Kandahar province, and those who had a more limited span of control once the American influx took place. In the first group, the Grant headquarters built its baseline on the foundation that the Fraser-led CTF AEGIS established in 2006: Canadian and coalition forces generally fought west of the city in selected districts to keep the enemy away from the city and prevent them from interdicting Highway 1, while capacity building with the Afghan National Army and conducting CIMIC activities to enable other government departments. The Laroche, Thompson, and Vance-led TF Kandahar headquarters conducted variations on this theme, adjusting as required as the circumstances changed in the districts and in the city. The subsequent Menard/Vance, and Milner TF Kandahar headquarters applied their resources to a pair of districts but with the same overall idea: fight the insurgency in the districts, keep it out of Kandahar City, and capacity-build where possible. At that level and in terms of intent, there was continuity.

How exactly these commanders and their headquarters implemented ideas to meet that intent differed mostly by geographical location and available forces. Grant focused Canadian efforts on Zharey and Panjwayi districts, with an eye towards Arghandab after Naqib’s death. Laroche developed a plan to transfer control of Zharey and Panjwayi to Afghan forces and

focus on Arghandab and Shah Wali Kot. Thompson wanted to identify Stability Boxes in Zharey and Panjwayi and hopefully in Arghandab, while Vance worked out the Key Village Approach conceptualization to address the increased primacy of Kandahar City security. All of them employed some variation of the Clear-Hold-Build operational approach. Similarly, when the Menard/Vance, and Milner headquarters were able to concentrate Canadian resources on Panjwayi and Dand districts, they also applied a variation of Clear-Hold-Build. In terms of operating methodology, there may have been more continuity in the Canadian Army effort than previously believed or understood, but there remains room for debate. Fundamentally, it was all about keeping the insurgency as far away from the city as possible and interdicting support for the urban terrorism campaign inside the city from those districts, to varying degrees.

What stands out, however, is the constant shifting back and forth of Canadian Army resources between Zharey, Panjwayi east and west, Shah Wali Kot–Arghandab, and Dand. This led to discontinuity in the Canadian effort in some districts, particularly in Arghandab and in Panjwayi. The Canadian government simply did not deploy enough forces and resources to meet all of its objectives as the situation evolved throughout 2008. This in turn forced the in-country commanders to maintain an active defence west of the city instead of deepening the Hold, as it were. The key district ultimately was Arghandab. The methodology that steadily and incrementally attrited the power structure in that district was a different fight from the one encountered in Zharey and Panjwayi and was not addressed systematically by either Canadian or Afghan leaders. The selection of strategic goals in districts like Shah Wali Kot and Arghandab that could not be adequately defended without relinquishing the tenuous hold on critical districts like Zharey, Panjwayi and Dand, and then not providing the resources necessary to do both, counts as a major Canadian failure in the campaign.

Similarly, the constant shifting of resources to Helmand province at the expense of the campaign in Kandahar province played a part in this problem. Canada's guileless attempts to acquire allied resources like Afghan kandaks, helicopters, and ISR platforms, and maintain them in support of the Canadian effort in Kandahar foundered on the hard realism of British domestic politics related to counter-narcotics policy and its relationship to their campaign in Helmand. With an increasingly disjointed diplomatic effort in Kabul, particularly after the loss of Strategic Advisory Team–Afghanistan, Canada reduced her chances of leveraging relative power in support of Canadian objectives in Kandahar.

If we are going to criticize others for their levels of commitment, and we justifiably can, we should also look at ourselves and our policies. The question is this: why did a nation of 35 million people have trouble sustaining a small brigade's work of troops in Afghanistan for six years the 2000s when a nation of 11 million could field five divisions to fight in Europe for six years the 1940s?³

Insurmountable Challenges?

That said, the Canadian Army ran up against serious challenges that continuity in intent and operational methodology could not completely address. The first of these was the insurgent production line in Pakistan. There was no means of stopping the infiltration of weapons and fighters from Pakistan, and little or no effective Canadian diplomatic pressure was applied to Iran, Pakistan, and others to cease supplying insurgents with weapons and ammunition. Chinese 107mm rockets, Iranian RPGs and IED components, and Pakistani mines flowed in throughout the course of the war. At the same time other Canadian government departments and their associates pursued a variety of high-profile projects in Africa to limit the spread of small arms and the use of child soldiers. Why a similar concerted Canadian effort was not undertaken in the Afghanistan-Pakistan arena is an important question.⁴

Similarly, pressure was not applied to close madrassas that were indoctrinating suicide bombers on the other side of the Durand Line. Without a serious Pakistani campaign to suppress the Taliban in Quetta, Chaman, Barab Cha and their environs, Canadian soldiers were forced to confront waves and waves of jihadis making their annual pilgrimage to die in the face of Canadian guns. Indeed, this was a Pakistani proxy war in Afghanistan to keep Afghanistan under its heel, something those in the halls of power refused to publicly admit or internally acknowledge out of fear of instability in Pakistan and its relationship to its nuclear capability.⁵ This was a situation that the Canadian Army's effort in Afghanistan had absolutely no control over. The only means that the Canadian Army had of influencing the enemy in Pakistan was to thwart them from achieving their objectives in Afghanistan, in this case, preventing them from interdicting and seizing control of Kandahar City, and by building up the Afghan security forces as much as possible. The Canadian Army succeeded in those areas.

The second serious challenge was the steadily decreasing legitimacy of the Afghan government. The Canadian Army's intent at securing the Kandahar City approaches to disrupt the enemy, and its Clear-Hold-Build approach, could not necessarily address questions of legitimacy. Simply put, the Popalzai power structure in Kandahar was not accepted by elements in the population as the legitimate provincial leadership. Indeed, the Popalzai power structure was antagonistic to anti-Taliban tribal groups, even with the prospect of a resurgent Taliban at the gates. Some Canadian leaders bear a modicum of responsibility in maintaining the "better the devil you know" relationship with elements in the Popalzai power structure, rather than recognizing earlier that it was undermining the counterinsurgency effort and addressing this issue systematically in Kandahar, Kabul, Washington, and Ottawa. In addition, the failure to recognize the primacy of religion in Kandahari society and politics early on in the campaign, and act accordingly with appropriate programming, is another Canadian Army responsibility.

That responsibility must be offset, however, with those of other Canadian government departments whose portfolios included the governance aspects of the mission but who proved incapable of identifying and seriously addressing these problems in any systematic fashion. In the end, however, the Afghans themselves bear the ultimate responsibility for not maintaining a legitimate posture in Kandahar. They made choices and bad ones at that. To what extent the Canadian Army, as opposed to other government departments, could have influenced those choices remains debatable.

The third serious challenge was the international community's failure to apply resources in critical areas which produced conditions forced on the Canadian Army in Kandahar. These included dysfunctional or no police; the lack of a judicial system; overly-aggressive counter-narcotics operations; minimal Afghan army capacity and so on. Prior to Afghanistan, the Canadian Army was structured to apply violence as required, when required and was not structured to handle capacity-building in any of these areas. These conditions were overcome by Canada's soldiers through significant and in some cases dramatic adaptation during the course of the war. When the dysfunctional police needed mentoring and the Canadian Government limited CIVPOL operations 'outside the wire', Military Police and combat arms soldiers were formed into Police Operational Mentoring and Liaison Teams to handle these tasks. When the fatigued and undermanned Afghan army forces needed mentoring and access to Canadian enablers, the number of Canadian Operational Mentoring and Liaison Teams was increased. When there was overwhelming infrastructure decay and damage and Afghans needed employment, the Construction Management Organization and Specialist Engineer Team were stood up to address those needs. Where there was a lack of information on Kandahari politics and society, CIMIC and White Situational Awareness teams collected it. When the Canadian Army lacked the means of communicating with Afghans, PSYOPS teams were deployed.

Yes, there were problems with all of these new organizations. Yes, there was no such thing as 100-percent success. By 2011, however, all of these organizations were in heavy play and more importantly, their efforts were coordinated. These stop-gap measures, shielded by the battle group, the OMLT, its Afghan partners, and American air support became the main effort over time and played a valuable role in stabilizing the districts. It is unfortunate that other entities were unable to capitalize and build on their efforts earlier on in the conflict.

Finally, the Canadian effort in Afghanistan was severely impeded by the imposition of a Canadian civilian leadership team dominated by individuals with expertise in international trade, diplomacy, and Canadian government infighting, instead of strategy and coalition operations in a conflict zone. The relative inexperience of these individuals rendered the possibility of Canada generating a coherent strategy or generating the requisite influence

to support the effort in Kandahar, less and less likely as time went on. Choices were made that strongly suggest that the context of the Ottawa power game was more important than issues like the expenditure of the Canadian people's blood and treasure in a violent test of wills against a malevolent foe overseas.

The cognitive dissonance exhibited by those brought up within the confines of the Ottawa power game, perhaps, prevented them from realizing that public support for the mission was more likely if the Canadian people were directly presented with the truth of why Canada was in Afghanistan and not the contrived manipulation of 'metrics' expressed to them through a media equally inexperienced with presenting the complexities of conflict zones. These were obstacles that the Canadian Army simply could not overcome in the short time granted to it to accomplish its tasks in Kandahar.

Taking the Medium View

In a positive vein, there were notable Canadian Army achievements in the Kandahar campaign. Canada held the line in Kandahar province with limited forces over a protracted period until Regional Command (South) could be massively reinforced by the American influx starting in 2009. During that time the insurgency did not take control of Kandahar City, nor was it able to interdict the city. It is recognized that the insurgency did operate in Kandahar City but it was never able to fully achieve his objectives there. Similarly, Kandahar Air Field was never seriously interdicted during the course of the campaign, nor was the regional trade route, Highway 4.

The insurgency never achieved total control of the districts adjacent to Kandahar City and was challenged at every turn by the Canadian Army and its allies. The plethora of operations conducted from 2006 to 2011 and described herein bear this out in some detail. The population did not shift its allegiance to the Taliban, as it had in the 1990s. Though the population in those districts may have remained on the fence, they did not whole-heartedly support the insurgency and when they did so it was out of fear, or activated grievances, not conviction. The enemy was never able to fully transfer from negative governance to competitive governance except in certain insignificant localities.

Another significant achievement was the safe deployment of the Dutch task force to Oruzgan and the British task force to Helmand without incident in 2006. Those achievements were made possible by the efforts of CTF AEGIS and TF ORION in their battles during 2006. NATO ISAF Stage III expansion was accomplished and allowed the coalition to challenge insurgent efforts in areas other beyond Kandahar Province. The enemy was also thwarted in Helmand with the assistance of the Canadian Army on multiple occasions between 2006 and 2008, but most particularly in 2006.

The Canadian Army's most significant long-term achievement in Kandahar was capacity-building in the Afghan National Army, conducted largely by the OMLT with support from the Canadian team in Kabul. In 2006, the single kandak deployed in Kandahar Province was barely capable of platoon- or company-level operations while embedded in a Canadian battle group. By 2010, a full Afghan brigade was mounting battalion-level operations alongside the brigade-sized Canadian-led ISAF task force, and by 2011, it was conducting its own counterinsurgency fight in Panjwayi District.

Canadian special operations forces also made an important contribution. By targeting enemy leaders and removing a significant number of them from the fight, they repeatedly decapitated the insurgency and broke down its effectiveness as the war continued.

Ultimately, the Canadian Army effort in Kandahar province after 2005 bought that precious commodity, time. Time for capacity-building efforts to take root; time for others to reconsider strategy; time for allied forces to redeploy; and time for Afghans to reassess their place in the world.

Taking the Long View

Speaking to larger issues, there is some symmetry between the Canadian Army's involvement in Afghanistan from 2007 to 2011, and in 2002. In 2002, the 3 PPCLI Battle Group protected Kandahar Air Field as American special operations forces and intelligence specialists ranged from it seeking information on Al Qaeda's global operations so those operations could be attenuated. Some of those planned operations were of the same magnitude as the 9-11 attacks. We also know that subsequent measures taken against Al Qaeda prevented the loss of two Air Canada airliners in 2006, attacks that would have likely killed 600 passengers, most of whom would have been Canadian.⁶ By 2008-2009, American forces were re-focused against Al Qaeda sanctuary areas in Pakistan. The MQ-1 Predators and MQ-9 Reapers and the targeting staffs involved in those missions operated from facilities based in Afghanistan.⁷ By 2010 a large-scale aerial campaign against Al Qaeda leadership targets using these forces was in full swing. Kandahar Air Field played a significant role in this campaign and was protected, in a broad sense, by Canadian forces operating in Kandahar province. In one analysis, the suppression campaign against Al Qaeda in Pakistan forced

Al Qaeda to switch from being an organization where its leaders exerted control at strategic, operational, and to a lesser degree tactical levels to an increasingly decentralized organization, whose leaders seek to influence strategy through public communiques but have very little operational capacity and practically none at the tactical level....due to a debilitated central core [Al Qaeda affiliates] received increasingly less support from the parent organization.⁸

These operations killed

three successive incumbents of the position of chief executive of the organization...three members of the advisory council...one member of the military committee leadership...one of the religious committee...two of the finance committee...one of the Al Shabab (propaganda wing)...17 of the external operations unit including two unit heads...25 members of the unit with responsibility for operations in Afghanistan and Pakistan, four members of the training unit, and one of the unit tasked with WMD development...⁹

As the first generation leaders were progressively killed, the organization became susceptible to infiltration as it needed new members to backfill those positions. Those members subsequently had the opportunity to move into the higher levels of the organization and provide intelligence which in turn disrupted terrorist operations before they could occur.¹⁰

Finally, on 2 May 2011, American special operations forces, launched from and supported by bases in Afghanistan, killed Osama Bin Laden in Abbottabad, Pakistan.¹¹ Such operations against Al Qaeda would have been impossible if the Taliban had retaken control of southern Afghanistan earlier in the decade or if the entire country had been enmeshed in another civil war similar to the one endured in 1992-93. By challenging the Taliban in the south and thwarting them from attaining their objectives, the Canadian Army, in the broadest sense, played a supporting role in this endeavour.

Bin Laden himself was forced to watch the Arab Spring spectacle from a small television in his cell-like Abbottabad fortress house and was impotent in influencing those actions until the day he died. Exploitation of the material recovered during Operation NEPTUNE SPEAR depicts an organization boxed into a corner, with untrustworthy, unwieldy and uncontrolled regional affiliates losing leaders on a daily basis while its base forces were attrited in Waziristan. Bin Laden tried to 're-brand' Al Qaeda and jump start his revolution from somewhere other than Pakistan.¹² Al Qaeda can by no means take credit for the Arab Spring.

Al Qaeda would not be in this position if Operation ENDURING FREEDOM had not been mounted in 2001. And, if both OEF and the International Security Assistance Force did not achieve some semblance of stability afterwards in Afghanistan, Bin Laden and Al Qaeda would surely have come right back into Afghanistan, re-established their facilities and continued with their global programme. A new generation of jihadis motivated by such a withdrawal would have posed an even greater threat to world order a decade earlier than the emergence of the Islamic State 'caliphate'.

And, if we take the long view, the disruption and progressive attrition of the Al Qaeda leadership caste in Pakistan by Afghanistan-based American efforts will likely to be seen as beneficial elsewhere in the world. As a 2013 intelligence assessment put it, “Senior personnel losses in 2012, amplifying losses and setbacks since 2008, have degraded core al-Qa’ida to a point that the group is probably unable to carry out complex, large-scale attacks in the West.”¹³

There is another crucial aspect of Canada’s confrontation with Al Qaeda and the Taliban that is easily overlooked in the race to criticize the incremental pace of developmental progress in southern Afghanistan and the difficulties of grappling with Pakistan-supported proxy forces. There were two events that spurred Osama Bin Laden and his supporters to embark on the path of unlimited violence that led to our involvement in Afghanistan. The first of these was the attack by Shi’a fundamentalists against the American-led multinational peacekeeping force in Lebanon in 1983 and the subsequent withdrawal of that force after the deaths of 241 Americans, and 58 French troops. The second was the decision by the United States to withdraw from the multinational armed humanitarian mission in Somalia in 1993 after suffering eighteen killed and then withdraw supporting forces from Yemen because of a terrorist threat warning. In Osama Bin Laden’s own words:

After a little resistance, the American troops left after achieving nothing. They left after claiming that they were the largest power on earth. They left after some resistance from powerless, poor, unarmed people whose only weapon is the belief in God Almighty, and who did not fear the fabricated American media lies. We learned from those who fought there, that they were surprised to see the low spiritual morale of the American fighters in comparison with the experience they had with the Russian fighters [in Afghanistan]. The Americans ran away from those fighters who fought and killed them...If the US still thinks and brags that it still has this kind of power, even after all those successive defeats in Vietnam, Beirut, Aden, and Somalia, then let its troops go back to those who are awaiting its return.¹⁴

Similarly, the withdrawal of UN forces from Somalia stimulated the calculated targeting of Belgian UN forces in Rwanda in 1994 which in turn precipitated the Rwandan massacre when the international forces were seen to be weakened. When Canadian peacekeeping forces arrived in Haiti the same year during Operation CAULDRON, there was a warning that Haitian elements had learned from Somalia and Rwanda and publicly threatened to turn Port au Prince into “Mogadishu.”

The lesson here is that Canada and her army did not withdraw from Afghanistan precipitously and thus sent a message that Canada would not repeat the failures of Somalia and Rwanda (or for that matter, UNPROFOR). Though this was not apparently codified in any formal Canadian strategic thinking, Canada demonstrated to those shadowy jihadist leaders and their backers in Pakistan and elsewhere that we would not cave in to economy of effort terrorism. Canada stayed in the fight when others wavered or were distracted elsewhere. Canadian soldiers held the ground in Kandahar while others made up their minds to get back in, take the baton, and run the final leg of the race.

After Afghanistan, the Canadian people should not be seen to be a weak, easy target for the next shadowy figure who, like Hitler, Stalin, and Bin Laden, thinks that they have a better way to run the world. Canadian cultural rhetoric to the contrary, it is important to have resolve and be seen to be strong. As Clausewitz noted, the moral is to the physical as three is to one. And the soldiers of the Canadian Army in Afghanistan put Canada back into the black after the disasters of the 1990s.

As we have seen in these volumes, the Canadian Army played a key role stabilizing Afghanistan and disrupting Al Qaeda. The Canadian people should understand that the valiant actions of its soldiers in Afghanistan fit into the broader and larger vista of world history, not the limited one populated with carping criticism over relatively minor issues, or by personalities who have agendas related to relative power in the comparatively narrow corridors of Ottawa.

In the Final Measure

We Canadians went to Afghanistan as part of a larger UN-mandated international effort to smash a global terrorist movement that threatened and attacked North America and planned further attacks against Canadian interests and allies. We also believed we were obligated, after that task was well underway, to assist the Afghan people in re-establishing themselves after 20 years of unabated war. Canadian motives for deploying soldiers to Afghanistan were legitimate and acceptable ones. However, there were, and remain, entities in Pakistan that do not desire peace in Afghanistan for strategic and economic reasons. There were, and remain, groups in Afghanistan that do not desire peace for tribal and economic reasons. Canada did not sign on to fight against the proxies of a nuclear-armed power that were funded by a global network of Wahhabists who were themselves engaged in their own regional fight against the Sufis, Shi'a, or other Islamic sects and the ethnicities who are their reservoirs. Canada also did not sign on to enrich Afghan power brokers at the expense of the Afghan people. By the time that Canada recognized that those conditions would not change through military force or by economic or political suasion, the correct decision was made by the Canadian government to end combat operations in southern Afghanistan and shift to influencing, where possible, the central government's evolving security forces.

CONCLUSION

That shift does not and should never overshadow what the Canadian Army accomplished in Afghanistan. The collapse of the coalition effort in Kandahar province would have been a disaster for the Afghan people and it would have destroyed all of the painstaking reconstruction and development work that had been done between 2002 and 2006. It would likely have unleashed an orgy of violence similar to what our soldiers encountered in the Balkans and in Africa in the 1990s. Canada was part of an effort that provided Afghans a means to get off of their knees and walk again. Where the Afghans go on their journey is up to them. The Canadian Army can stand proud that its efforts in Kandahar Province saved Kandahar City and bought the Afghans time.

Mishelle Brown's husband, WO Dennis Brown, was killed in action on 4 March 2009. When she was asked whether she thought the war could be won, she said, "We may not beat the Taliban, but there are lots of things in our lives that we cannot beat ... You can't beat crime, but do you give up? Do you stop? Absolutely not."¹⁵

ENDNOTES

1. See Peter Tomsen *The Wars of Afghanistan: Messianic Terrorism, Tribal Conflicts, and the Failures of Great Powers* (New York: Public Affairs Press, 2011).
2. As described in Ayesha Siddiqi in *Military Inc.: Inside Pakistan's Military Economy* (London: Pluto Press, 2007). We await, someday, for a more detailed study of the intersection between the Pashtun trucking mafias, the Pakistani Army logistics system, the insurgencies in Pakistan, and the ISAF and OEF ground resupply effort.
3. With due recognition of the fact that the Government did authorize an increase in the number of Canadian Forces personnel by 3000 people after 2008.
4. For example, former DND deputy minister and Ambassador to Italy Bob Fowler did not support Canadian efforts in the Afghanistan/Pakistan region. Former UNAMIR commander Senator Romeo Dallaire's views were not actively against the Afghanistan mission but more actively in support of increased Canadian involvement in Africa. See "Fowler Questions Afghanistan Mission" (9 September 2009) <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/story/2009/09/09/fowler-diplomat-afghanistan-mission381.html>; Sarah Hampson, "Romeo Dallaire Rages Against Canada," *Globe and Mail* (3 November 2010) <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/life/relationships/romo-dallaire-rages-against-canada/article4107485/>; Chris Lambie, "Dallaire Defends Afghan Mission," *Halifax Chronicle Herald* (5 December 2006) http://cnews.canoe.ca/CNEWS/War_Terror/2006/12/05/2637710.html.
5. Peter Tomsen's damning voluminous work *The Wars of Afghanistan*, and David C. Isby's piercing *Afghanistan: Graveyard of Empires* (New York: Pegasus Books, 2012) set the standard in this area.
6. Aki Peritz and Eric Rosenbach, *Find, Fix and Finish: Inside the Counterterrorism Campaigns that Killed Bin Laden and Devasted Al Qaeda* (New York: Public Affairs, 2012) p. 249.
7. See Matt J. Martin and Charles W. Sasser, *Predator: The Remote Control Air War Over Iraq and Afghanistan: A Pilot's Story* (Minneapolis: Zenith Press, 2010); Aki Peritz and Eric Rosenbach, *Find, Fix and Finish: Inside the Counterterrorism Campaigns that Killed Bin Laden and Devasted Al Qaeda* (New York: Public Affairs, 2012); Matthew M. Aid, *Intel Wars: The Secret History of the Fight Against Terror* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2012).

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8. Javier Jordan, "The Effectiveness of the Drone Campaign against Al Qaeda Central: A Case Study," *Journal of Strategic Studies* Vol. 37 No. 1 pp. 4-29.
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Ibid.* See also Farhat Taj, "The Year of Drone Misinformation," *Small Wars and Insurgencies* Vol. 21 No. 3 September 2010 pp 529-535.
11. As described in Peter Bergen's *Manhunt: The Ten-Year Search for Bin Laden from 9/11 to Abbottabad* (Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 2012).
12. Nelly Lahoud et al *Letters from Abbottabad: Bin Ladin Sideline?* West Point: Combatting Terrorism Center, 3 May 2012. pp. 14-16.
13. "Statement for the Record: Worldwide Threat Assessment of the US Intelligence Community Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, 12 March 2013" at <http://odni.gov/files/documents/Intelligence%20Reports/2013%20ATA%20SFR%20for%20SSCI%2012%20Mar%202013.pdf>
14. Bruce Lawrence (ed) *Messages to the World: The Statements of Osama Bin Laden* (London: Verso Press, 2005) pp. 54-55.
15. "Soldier's widow says she was prepared," CTV News 4 March 2009 at <https://www.ctvnews.ca/soldier-s-widow-says-she-was-prepared-for-his-death-1.375889>

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APPENDIX A:

TASK FORCE NOMENCLATURE

The confusing terminology used for organizations leading the Canadian effort in Afghanistan requires detailed explanation. The main headquarters for the Canadian effort in Afghanistan after 2006 was Joint Task Force Afghanistan or JTF-A HQ. This organization encompassed all of the Canadian activities in the country as well as the logistical hub at Minhad air base in United Arab Emirates known as Camp Mirage. The ‘joint’ in JTF-A refers to the fact that both the army and air force had components that were part of the command. For our purposes in this history, the repeated use of JTF-A HQ or Joint Task Force Afghanistan becomes stylistically cumbersome. As a result, JTF-A HQ and its activities will use the designation TF Kandahar in the text. However, that designation is nuanced and requires explanation.

The predecessor command structure to Joint Task Force Afghanistan was Task Force Afghanistan, which stood up in August 2005. Task Force Afghanistan consisted of:

- Task Force Kabul forces
- the Theatre Support Element in Minhad, and
- the Kandahar Provincial Reconstruction Team.

The Strategic Advisory Team–Afghanistan was a special bilateral arrangement that was supported by Task Force Afghanistan.

At that time, TF Kabul included:

- Canadian units assigned to the Kabul Multinational Brigade,
- the National Support Element, and
- the National Command Element
- the Canadians assigned to ISAF Headquarters.

Task Force Kandahar in its non-NATO form stood up in early 2006 under Task Force Afghanistan, and then essentially replaced Task Force Kabul after the move south. Task Force Afghanistan then transitioned to form Joint Task Force Afghanistan in late 2006.

The bulk of the command activity in the south after November 2006 was handled by what became known as Task Force Kandahar (TF Kandahar, better known as TFK). TF Kandahar became the NATO ISAF designation for the collection of Canadian units and Canadian-commanded allied units operating in Kandahar Province allocated to NATO under the command of NATO ISAF command, Regional Command (South), usually shortened to RC (South). The Canadian JTF-A commander and the NATO TF Kandahar commander were the same person. Some Canadian units were not NATO assets and were commanded by JTF-A, specifically, the National Support Element, certain intelligence organizations, and the Air Wing. The Canadian OMLT was a NATO resource, but for practical purposes reported to TF Kandahar.

Rotations of JTF Afghanistan Headquarters

Unlike the other units of JTF Afghanistan, which rotated every six months, the headquarters team deployed for nine months; therefore, headquarters rotation numbers do not align with those of other units of the task force that were deployed at the same time. Further confusion arose from Canada's decision to maintain Operation ATHENA as the code name for ISAF operations, despite the Kabul-to-Kandahar transition conducted under Operation ARCHER. After a revision to include TF Afghanistan HQ (best seen as an attempt to rationalize the past), the rotations of JTF Afghanistan HQ were numbered as follows:

- Rotation 3 (BGen Timothy Grant): deployed November 2006–September 2007
- Rotation 4 (BGen Guy Laroche): deployed September 2007–May 2008
- Rotation 5 (BGen Denis Thompson): deployed May 2008–February 2009
- Rotation 6 (BGen Jonathan Vance): deployed February–November 2009
- Rotation 7 (BGen Daniel Ménard, BGen Vance): deployed November 2009–September 2010
- Rotation 8 (BGen Dean Milner): deployed September 2010–June 2011

Task Forces Formed and Deployed by the Canadian Army

The task forces assembled, trained and deployed by the Canadian Army included the battle group, the PRT, the OMLT, and the NSE. They were given numerical designations that reflected a long-term Army rotation planning cycle; for example, TF 1-07 was used to designate personnel who would arrive during the first four months (or third of the year) of 2007; likewise, the troops of TF 3-07 deployed during that year's third four-month stretch. Each unit of the task force carried its number (e.g., the TF 1-07 Battle Group, and the TF 1-07 OMLT). Unfortunately, the system was not fully consistent; the addition of a signals squadron during Roto 6 of JTF Afghanistan HQ meant that the signals squadrons were offset from the other units of their task forces.

- TF 1-06, also called TF Orion, consisted of the 1 PPCLI Battle Group, the PRT and the NSE; deployed February–August 2006.
- TF 3-06: the 1 RCR Battle Group, the first OMLT, the PRT and the NSE; deployed August 2006–February 2007.
- TF 1-07: the 2 RCR Battle Group, the PRT, the expanded OMLT and the NSE; deployed February–August 2007
- TF 3-07: the 1 R22^R Battle Group, the PRT, the OMLT and the NSE; deployed August 2007–February 2008
- TF 1-08: the 2 PPCLI Battle Group, the PRT, the OMLT and the NSE; deployed February–September 2008
- TF 3-08: the 3 RCR Battle Group, the PRT, the OMLT and the NSE; deployed August 2008–February 2009
- TF 1-09: the 2 R22^{eR} Battle Group, the PRT, the OMLT and the NSE; deployed February–August 2009
- TF 3-09: the 1 PPCLI Battle Group, the PRT, the OMLT and the NSE; deployed August 2009–February 2010

- TF 1-10: the 1 RCR Battle Group, the military components of the PRT, the OMLT and the NSE; deployed February–October 2010
- TF 3-10: the 1 R22^eR Battle Group, the OMLT and the NSE; deployed October 2010–July 2011

Most battle groups were built around the first or second battalions of the three infantry regiments and in some cases companies from other regiments were included in battle groups as a third company. The OMLT and the PRT company came from the third battalions of the infantry regiments, that is, the light infantry battalions, and were heavily augmented from artillery and armoured regiments and units of the Primary Reserve.

APPENDIX B:

PAKISTAN AND THE INSURGENCY IN AFGHANISTAN 2007-2011

By November 2006, the North Waziristan peace deal signed the previous September was in tatters, with increased attacks into Regional Command (East) in Afghanistan and the Pakistani Taliban extending their influence into adjacent agencies in Pakistan. By January 2007, the Pakistani Taliban in South Waziristan, spurred on by what was happening to their north, broke their earlier peace deal with their government, which caused the government to intervene and the insurgents to retaliate with a campaign of suicide IED attacks that continued all spring.¹ Now both Waziristans were in flames.

The role of the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence organization and its alumni in regional affairs was under some coalition scrutiny by this time. Elements inside ISI, including some former ISI leaders, championed any peace deal that kept the Pakistani Army out of the Waziristans and some even castigated the government for intervening. Indeed, former ISI boss Hamid Gul was detained by the government for being somewhat outspoken in his support for the insurgents.² This is not surprising as ISI relationships with various entities in the region went back decades. Some of those entities were collaterally engaged in the narcotics trade. It is likely that some former personnel of the ISI were perhaps also so engaged. Or, as one study put it,

The most problematic elements within the Pakistani state, however, are probably the ISID officers in the field who were tasked with managing the liaison relationship with the Taliban over the years. Some simply felt loyalty to old clients. Others are content to exploit their leadership's own ambivalence about the Taliban for either nationalist, ideological, or personal reasons ...³

In any event, the ISI appeared to be less than committed to the success of operations against the Taliban in Waziristan, let alone in Quetta, where the Afghan Taliban went about unfettered.

By the spring of 2007, several insurgent groups were operating in the Federally Administered Tribal Agencies and Baluchistan: the Afghan Taliban; the Pakistani Taliban from both parts of Waziristan; Al Qaeda; the Haqqani Tribal Network; Lashkar-e Taiba; and Hekmatyar's HiG. Baluchi nationalists were also active, but they generally kept themselves

separate from more radically fundamentalist groups. At some point there was a meeting of minds between all of them. One perception from those analyzing the situation was that Al Qaeda was orchestrating policy behind the scenes. To get the Pakistan government to reduce the pressure they were applying in the Federally Administered Tribal Agencies, a deal was struck with a Saudi-backed, Islamabad-based radical party called Lal Masjid (Red Mosque). Lal Masjid launched a campaign of street agitation in the Pakistani capital, and the security forces responded with a brutal crackdown. Those events, aggravated by extremist information operations, led the Pakistanis to question Pakistani government legitimacy in key sectors and particularly the legal system.⁴

Effects included the extension of the radical conservative Islamic agenda far beyond the insurgent base areas in FATA. The crackdown also activated political grievances in other sectors that had remained dormant in Pakistan long before the 9-11 attacks. By the summer and fall of 2007, the Musharraf government in Pakistan was beset by insurgencies in FATA, specifically North and South Waziristan; three other smaller agencies in FATA that abutted Afghanistan; a suicide terrorism campaign directed against the government and military leaders; and massive political agitation in the capital. The main beneficiary of this activity was Al Qaeda:

There is little doubt today that the survival of the Taliban sanctuary in the FATA (to include the Talibanization of the wider area more generally) has been singularly responsible for the continuing regeneration of Al-Qaeda as an organization because it has permitted the leadership and the operatives of this terrorist group who are relatively small in number to safely “dissolve” into a larger geosocial environment that is either hospitable to them directly or protects them by disguising their presence amid a larger pool of Taliban adherents.⁵

The Musharraf government was also increasingly concerned about insurgent violence that was growing in the Swat Valley, northwest of the capital. Consequently, Pakistani security forces launched Operation JUST PATH to destabilize what looked like a Pakistani Taliban thrust towards Islamabad. It was a success and the insurgents were forced back into the hills by December.⁶

The 2007 political crisis in Pakistan led to calls for an election to establish legitimacy. During that campaign, Benazir Bhutto, the lead candidate for president, was assassinated on 27 December 2007. The culprit was believed to be Baitullah Mehsud, the leader of the Pakistani Taliban in South Waziristan. The Pakistani Taliban groups then publicly united to form the Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and Pakistan descended into unmitigated violence.⁷ These events led Western media to speculate about the security of Pakistan’s nuclear arsenal in the event of a fundamentalist takeover.⁸

Meanwhile, the Afghan Taliban operated unmolested out of Quetta. It appeared as though that the only similarities between the Afghan Taliban and the Pakistani Taliban were that they were both predominantly Pashtun and they both employed the same Khmer Rouge-like methodologies to accomplish their objectives.⁹ The major difference was that the Afghan Taliban were much more intertwined with the ISI than the Pakistani Taliban were, and thus in theory easier to control. And, by pointing them in the direction of southern Afghanistan, the Afghan Taliban were less likely to become drawn into anti-government activities alongside the TTP. Indeed, according to one study, the ISI had personnel that were Quetta Shura members, and they had significant influence over certain primary members of the shura.¹⁰

The other reason for maintaining this relationship with the insurgency was the long-standing Pakistani policy of retaining a means to influence Afghanistan to prevent it from being used as an Indian proxy in a two-front war. Several disparate commentators' analyses converged to this conclusion:

The Pakistanis left the Afghan Taliban alone, not only because they saw a possible future role for them in Afghanistan, but also because they did not want to risk the consequences of their defeat. If the Afghan Taliban were to suddenly pass from the scene, the United States would almost certainly withdraw from Afghanistan, leaving India as the dominant outside power ...¹¹

Another observer agreed:

Musharraf policy was largely aimed at maintaining Pakistan's capabilities for implementing its pre-2001 policies – including the proxy war in Afghanistan – while waiting out the U.S. and coalition military departure from the region.... Pakistan aimed to maintain ISI leverage over the Afghan Taliban and other radical Afghan and Pakistani factions now rebuilding ... to the Pakistan military the U.S. 2005 decision to turn the security of southern Afghanistan over to NATO was seen in Pakistan as leading to imminent U.S. disengagement, leaving a vacuum in Afghanistan that if Pakistan did not fill, its rivals – India, Iran – certainly would.¹²

And:

The Taliban/ISI relationship is founded on mutual benefit. The Taliban need external sanctuary, as well as military and logistical support to sustain their insurgency; the ISI believes that it needs a significant allied force in Afghanistan to maintain regional strength and strategic depth in their rivalry with India ...¹³

Friction between India and Pakistan arose largely from competition over Kashmir, a problem dating back to Partition in 1947 when the new state of Pakistan began using Islamic terrorism as a strategic tool. The Mumbai attack of 26 November 2008, for example, was conducted while the international community was working to improve relations between India and Pakistan.

The role of Al Qaeda remains important, but tends to be obscured by the *sturm und drang* of Pakistani internecine violence. It was not as simple as Osama bin Laden issuing orders to subordinate allies in the TTP or HiG. Some form of consensus mechanism like an insurgent shura was probably used to convince other groups to conduct operations that mutually supported Al Qaeda and their allies' objectives. Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri probably had Pakistan and its nuclear arsenal as their ultimate objectives. Indeed, they both believed that the Pakistani weapons "belonged" to the *ummah*.¹⁴

Meanwhile, the insurgent "syndicate", as ISAF intelligence personnel and commanders called it, continued planning the removal of the ISAF "shield" protecting Afghanistan. Throughout 2008, one aspect of that campaign was an increase of pressure on coalition supply lines passing through Pakistan. In January of that year, a variety of insurgent groups began intimidating civilian truckers and warehouse workers, and striking targets in Peshawar and Karachi.¹⁵

What may have started out as an insurgent strategy to interdict ISAF in Afghanistan generated unintended consequences for all parties to the conflict. Recall that the Taliban, as a group, was created by the ISI and supported by Quetta-based Pashtun trucking mafias to keep Highway 4 open for regional trade, and was therefore a tool of Pakistani state policy. This led to antagonism between the trucking mafias, which sought to profit from supporting ISAF from Karachi to Kandahar, and the other insurgent entities, who wanted to squeeze ISAF.

As with most things in this region, a deal, or variety of deals, was struck between interested parties. As one observer noted:

Karachi is the Sea Port of Debarkation for Operation ENDURING FREEDOM. The place where they unload the boat ... 472 miles of bad road, shake-down, extortion, break-down and delay. The drivers get jacked around at Karachi by Pakistani customs, the Pakistani version of the Teamsters, the trucking company they contracted with, and all the various trolls setting up road blocks for the collection of protection money, and then they get to sit in the parking lot at Chaman waiting to cross over to Spin Boldak. Things go boom in the night in that parking lot.¹⁶

Insurgents based in Pakistan quickly realized that this state of affairs could also benefit them. By 2009, private security companies paid Taliban groups not to attack the supply convoys they escorted; incidentally, one of these companies, Watan Risk Management, was controlled by Ahmad Wali Karzai. As one study noted, “Many firefights are really just negotiations over the fee.” One estimate concluded that such payoffs put at least one million and up to two million dollars per week into insurgent coffers. One observer noted that “the Taliban and the local warlords typically take between 10–20% of the value of any project as the price to provide protection. The United States and international community are unintentionally fueling a vast political economy of security corruption in Afghanistan”.¹⁷

The mind-bending situation whereby ISAF was in part funding the insurgency that it was fighting, while its ally’s intelligence service influenced that insurgency for its purposes, surely must be one of the most bizarre and convoluted aspects of the war in Afghanistan.

During the political chaos of early 2008, TTP suicide attacks resulted in the deaths of more than 600 people. By February of that year, intelligence analysts concluded that “[t]he militants continue to control the agenda” and that the Pakistani Army’s “currently limited strategy is one of containment instead of pro-active engagement ... they are renewing negotiations [with Mehsud] ... we are seeing signs that militants are moving back into Afghanistan ahead of the annual spring offensive”.¹⁸ There was also the Pakistan Government’s decision to postpone Madrassa reform until after the next election.¹⁹ That meant that there were more indoctrinated young men available for exploitation by the insurgents. Both items had a direct impact on Canadian operations in Kandahar.

The continuing negotiation over the status of Waziristan was another problem. Pakistani politicians, grasping for a solution, wanted assurances that South Waziristan would not become a base of operations against Afghanistan. The ISI leadership directly interfered and confronted one of the politicians on the issue. He concluded that “ISI is trying to make peace for Pakistan at the expense of events in Afghanistan”.²⁰

The political instability in Pakistan brought on by the uncertain elections and high levels of violence generated concern in American circles over the security and safety of Pakistani nuclear weapons. The Pakistani military leadership continuously asserted that this was not an issue, though American observers reported that senior Pakistani leaders told them that the personnel reliability program, which was only two years old, was being resisted by personnel “who felt their patriotism was being questioned”.²¹

American concerns were heightened when the TTP stepped up operations into the Swat Valley, a resort district northwest of Islamabad. Operation LION HEART, the Pakistani response to the Swat incursion, was launched in August 2008 but encountered significant opposition. While LION HEART ground on, a cross-border raid by American special

operations forces into South Waziristan against insurgent leadership targets in September 2008 did not go as expected and was compromised. The result was substantial backlash against the Pakistani government from all quarters within Pakistan. The fallout severely damaged already fragile US–Pakistan relations and had an impact on the ISAF resupply problem.²²

By November, violence in the FATA and NWFP agencies was at an all-time high and these areas now experienced “Talibanization”: the violent imposition of sharia law, the targeting and destruction of secular institutions, and massive human rights violations. The Pakistani military leadership’s message to the United States was, “[PAKMIL] could not go ahead with military operations against militants ahead of support from the new civilian leadership because they needed civilian ownership of the battle against extremism”.²³ At the same time, the Pakistani military leaders made cosmetic modifications to the ISI but took no real steps to influence the Afghan Taliban in their operations in southern Afghanistan. It was as if the Pakistani military establishment had decided to respond to the September cross-border action by backing off and settling into a holding pattern.²⁴

Meanwhile, substantial diplomatic efforts were under way to improve the peace agreement between India and Pakistan over Kashmir. No one had any illusions that this 60-year-old problem could be solved overnight, but the movement to reduce tension between the two countries was deemed by some to permit the application of more Pakistani troops to western Pakistan, rather than having them wait and deter the Indian attack that was not coming.

The terrorist attack of 26 November 2008 in Mumbai, which killed more than 160 people and wounded more than 300, was a game-changer of seismic proportions. The attacking organization, Lashkar-e-Taiba, was an ISI-supported proxy terrorist force used in Kashmir against Indian security forces. President Zardari of Pakistan

... is convinced the Mumbai attacks were designed to both undermine his proposals to extent (sic) rapprochement with India and convince Pakistan to weaken its commitment to fighting militants in FATA by reinforcing the Pakistan military’s focus on the Indian threat. While the transfer of 5,000–7,000 Pakistani Army troops to the Indian border was largely token, it demonstrated the Army’s need to respond to its existential enemy.²⁵

Recall in Volume I that terrorist attacks against the Indian Parliament in the summer of 2002 by Pakistan-supported groups that were linked to a variety of radical Islamist entities led to an escalation of tension deemed by some to be a path to nuclear war. That incident led to the withdrawal of Pakistani troops from Western Pakistan, which

decreased border coverage and permitted Al Qaeda, Taliban and associated allied forces to escape Afghanistan. The events of 2008 were almost a replay of events seven years later. Tension between India and Pakistan led to a slackening of Pakistani pressure on the insurgents in the FATA agencies. The actions also led to preparations for the evacuation of nuclear material in Pakistan by the United States.²⁶

In early 2009, the Pakistani government admitted that insurgent groups controlled both Waziristan and the Swat Valley.²⁷ The Frontier Corps kept the Khyber Agency open and the supply trucks rolled into Afghanistan, but at a price; that money went to support insurgents in the Federally Administered Tribal Agencies. The Afghan Taliban could only observe the situation with some amusement and continue their operations against ISAF in southern Afghanistan with renewed support from within Pakistan.

The Pakistani security forces focused on the Swat Valley in early 2009. Swat's geographical proximity to the capital in Islamabad made this an obvious choice, but apparently there were indications that Baitullah Mehsud and Mullah Omar made an agreement to shift the resources of both organizations against ISAF forces in Afghanistan once they consolidated their position in FATA.²⁸ In May Pakistani security forces, including three divisions and five special forces battalions, went in to re-take the province in a high-profile operation. This operation went on for two months before Swat was declared secure. Collateral effects included the successful targeting of Pakistani Taliban leader Batiullah Mehsud by a UAV strike on 4 August. The follow-on operation after Swat was Operation PATH OF SALVATION in South Waziristan in October in which three Pakistani Army divisions and several special forces battalions were deployed.²⁹

On the surface it appears as though the dual offensives had a substantial effect on reducing insurgent operations in FATA. North Waziristan and adjacent agencies, however, remained "uncracked." A dissenting opinion suggests that the situation was far more complex than reported in diplomatic circles and may have had an impact on Afghan Taliban operations in southern Afghanistan in 2009.

According to this view there were essentially four players in the drama: Al Qaeda, the TTP (Pakistani Taliban), the Afghan Taliban led by Mullah Omar, and formal and informal elements of the ISI. Al Qaeda's objective was to maintain the momentum of the TTP and its allies inside Pakistan with an eye to destabilizing the Zardari government and generating open revolt in Pakistan's largest cities (the Karachi mayor alerted American agencies to this problem in April 2009).³⁰ The Mehsud-less TTP was now susceptible to suggestion, and the Al Qaeda leadership now suggested that it work more closely with Mullah Omar's Afghan Taliban against ISAF in Afghanistan. Those in the Pakistani security

forces that viewed the Afghan Taliban as their proxy force looked at this situation with some alarm and believed that Al Qaeda and the TTP would take over the Afghan Taliban and then use it against Pakistan.³¹ This extremely convoluted state of affairs likely led to uncertainty within the Quetta Shura and the detainment of certain leaders, including Mullah Baradar, in early 2010.

American observers produced a cogent assessment of the situation in Pakistan in late 2009.

[The embassy] believes that it is not/not possible to counter Al Qaeda in Pakistan absent a comprehensive strategy that 1) addresses the interlinked Taliban threat in Afghanistan and Pakistan, 2) brings about stable civilian government in Afghanistan, and 3) re-examines the broader role of India and the region ... [T]he ending of Pakistani establishment support to terrorist and extremist groups, some Afghan-focused and some India-focused, is the key element for success.³²

Al Qaeda was only able to operate in FATA because the Taliban operated there, so targeting leaders was useful but not a full solution. The only way to get at Al Qaeda was to strip away its Pakistani Taliban shield, and the only way to do that was to “extend the writ of the Pakistani state into the FATA ... We should be under no illusion, however, that this effort will require a multi-year, multi-agency effort.” Most importantly,

Taliban groups in Pakistan and the regional threat posed by Al-Qaeda, however, cannot be effectively dealt with absent a broader regional strategy that leads to stability in Afghanistan. Fear that the ISAF mission in Afghanistan will end without the establishment of a non-Taliban, [Pashtun]-led government friendly to Pakistan adds to the Pakistani establishment’s determination not to cut its ties irrevocably to the Afghan Taliban. They fear that withdrawals of NATO countries on a certain date in Afghanistan is only the thin edge of the wedge that will be followed by other coalition partners, including the United States ... General Kayani has been utterly frank about Pakistan’s position on this. In such a scenario, the Pakistani establishment will dramatically increase support for Taliban groups in Pakistan and Afghanistan, which they see either as ultimately likely to take over the Afghan government or at least an important counter-weight to an Indian-controlled Northern Alliance.³³

This threat by the head of the Pakistani Army, made to American diplomats in 2009, is nothing short of astounding. If NATO forces tried to withdraw from Afghanistan, the Pakistani military establishment threatened to increase support to the insurgency against them to get them to stay in Afghanistan in order to prevent a security vacuum that Pakistan pathologically feared would be filled either by their long-standing antagonist India or, possibly, Shi'a Iran. At the time, the only ISAF country that was both publicly committed to withdrawal from Afghanistan, and seriously engaged with Afghan Taliban forces, was Canada.

The degree of ISI complicity in Afghan Taliban operations was more and more obvious from 2009 on. Field interviews with current and former Afghan Taliban mid-level leaders conducted in 2009 and 2010 by a human rights think-tank revealed the following pertinent points:³⁴

1. the ISI was represented in the Quetta Shura;
2. mid-level leaders were “afraid that if they say anything against the Taliban or ISI it would be reported to higher ranks — and they may be removed or assassinated”;
3. attempts to negotiate a peace deal between Afghanistan and the Afghan Taliban “could only take place if the ISI had a major role in, if not control over, the negotiating process”;
4. many fighters were conducting operations while “under duress” by the ISI; and
5. the destruction of schools and the assassination campaign against religious institutions and moderate religious figures in southern Afghanistan were elements of an ISI strategy to eliminate competition from moderate variants of Islam.

A Taliban commander interviewed for the study pointedly stated, “If anyone rejects that the ISI backs or controls the Taliban, he has a mental problem ... all our plans and strategy are made in Pakistan and step by step it is brought to us ...”³⁵ The most shocking allegation was that President Zardari himself condoned employment of the Afghan Taliban as a Pakistani strategic tool, and allegedly told detained senior Afghan Taliban leaders that the detentions were cosmetic in order to get the Americans off Pakistan’s back on the Taliban issue.³⁶

Long-time regional observer David C. Isby starkly noted:

Both military and civilian governments in Pakistan, at the end of the day, have relied on the ISI. While the degree and extent of ISI operations in support of Afghan insurgents remains uncertain, it is not a “rogue” operation’ or a “state within a state”, two clichés frequently encountered in Western reporting. The ISI has operational freedom and independence to implement policies within broad guidance, but it remains under military control ... The ISI will not act against the interest of Pakistan’s military.³⁷

At the same time, paradoxically, the Pakistani Taliban unleashed a massive wave of urban terrorism that included bombing ISI Headquarters and, in October 2009, a daring attack on Pakistan Army Headquarters by insurgents dressed as soldiers. Observers noted the emergence of a completely new breed of insurgent: the Punjabi Taliban. By 2010, some wondered if Pakistan was becoming a new Algeria.³⁸

American diplomat John R. Schmidt concluded:

The fact that the Pakistanis felt compelled to act in such a duplicitous manner reflected the importance they attached to the future makeup of Afghanistan. They did not want to abandon their relationship with the United States, but were unwilling to accept the consequences of an Afghan Taliban defeat ... “To hunt with the hounds and run with the hare” is one of the most popular Pakistani aphorisms.³⁹

Canadian observation of the scene in Pakistan took several forms. First, there was a Defence Attaché deployed in Islamabad. In 2008, as MGen Marc Lessard’s headquarters team at Regional Command (South) became concerned about border operations and the growing threat to the logistics line of communications, attaché LCol Brian Douglas assumed the second hat of Regional Command (South) Liaison Officer to the armed forces of Pakistan (PAKMIL).⁴⁰

The nature of the Spin Boldak border problem in 2008 resulted in the formal appointment of LCol Ted Middleton to provide liaison between Regional Command (South) and PAKMIL from KAF and Spin Boldak. He developed a system of joint border conferences designed to get the local and regional leaders of the Afghan security forces to meet regularly with their Pakistani counterparts.⁴¹

As the situation in Pakistan deteriorated, ISAF attempted to develop closer links with both the Afghans and the Pakistanis through a Tripartite Commission that brought the military leaders of the three entities together. In time, the Regional Commands established connections to two Pakistani Army corps based in provinces of Pakistan bordering on Afghanistan. Task Force Kandahar under BGen Jonathan Vance also established a relationship with the 3rd Pishin Scouts, the Frontier Corps battalion operating across the border from Spin Boldak in Chaman. In late 2009, a Border Coordination Centre opened in Spin Boldak.⁴²

Finally, the Canadian Army contributed to the American-run Office of the Defense Representative Pakistan, founded during the Cold War to provide material assistance to Pakistan and heavily augmented after 9/11.⁴³ LCol Middleton's successor, LCol Kevin Ng, observed that the NATO ISAF liaison with PAKMIL was only intermittently effective, as it was conducted at a low level and did not connect with other mechanisms, while the Pakistani system had full continuity. LCol Ng sought to place a NATO ISAF liaison officer in the ODRP to exploit the bilateral relationship already established there between the United States and Pakistan. In 2010, LCol Ng was replaced by LCol Craig Braddon.⁴⁴

Led by an American three-star general-level officer, ODRP had many functions. There was the Defense Attaché Office, a Security Assistance Office, and a Special Operations Command (Forward) Pakistan organization, plus force protection for the various officers and staff. Most of these activities were related to training and equipping Pakistani forces in various ways. ODRP also retained liaison with 11 Corps and 12 Corps of the Pakistan Army. Each of these corps was located opposite RC (East) and RC (South) respectively. Over time an ISAF Coordination Element Pakistan was set up that included liaison officers to those organizations but embedded inside ODRP. The multinational team consisted of American, British, and Canadian officers, with the Canadians ensconced in the LNO Cell.⁴⁵

The ICEPAK, as it was called, was formally designated to coordinate ISAF activities with those of the Frontier Corps (NWFP) and Frontier Corps (Baluchistan); the PAKMIL General Headquarters; and by default 11 and 12 Corps through the Americans at ODRP. These activities consisted of representing ISAF interests at more than six different coordination meetings with PAKMIL, handling the Border Flag Meetings between the Afghan and Pakistan security forces in the border regions; and providing situational awareness on events in Pakistan to ISAF and CENTCOM.⁴⁶

Coordination and cooperation were uneven. Regional Command (East) had the most activity with its counterparts in the NWFP than RC (South) did with Baluchistan. In the south, the Pakistani security forces wanted ISAF to suppress what it said were Baluch separatists operating against Pakistan from Afghanistan. ISAF could not detect significant Baluch insurgent activity so the Pakistani authorities used this as an excuse to engage in non-cooperation vis-à-vis the Afghan Taliban operating in Quetta.⁴⁷

The reality of the situation was not concealed within ODRP. Indeed, Canadian officers were repeatedly told that “We [ODRP] are here to make it harder for the enemy to kill us in Afghanistan, not to be friends with Pakistan.” Unfortunately, a steady series of incidents undermined almost all attempts at coordination and liaison from 2009 to 2010. The killing of Frontier Corps personnel in an airstrike on the border was one. Wikileaks and its frank State Department cable traffic on Pakistan was another. President Obama’s India visit was a third, while an American involved in covert activity in Pakistan was apprehended and jailed after shooting men attempting to kidnap him. Ultimately, in May 2011 Operation NEPTUNE SPEAR effectively attenuated almost all liaison activity until Canada withdrew from the south.⁴⁸

LCol Craig Braddon noted that he and his American and British colleagues regularly debated whether Pakistan was “a misunderstood, misguided and incompetent ally, but an ally nonetheless” or “a wily and dangerous foe”. They concluded that “they are both ... and they can be both in the same sentence without breaking a sweat.”⁴⁹

The effectiveness of the Canadian Army’s engagement with the Pakistani security forces was debatable. There was no criteria for success, no measurements of effectiveness established, and the engagement was not formerly linked to any other Canadian activity that was ongoing in Pakistan: DFAIT and CIDA were spending money on various projects but there appeared to be no coordinated Canadian approach. There was an argument to be made that connectivity at the strategic and operational levels themselves made the engagement a success. It was better to talk and gain information than not talk, even if very little was accomplished on the ground. There was no real success at the tactical level.⁵⁰

In stark, fundamental terms, Canadian troops were killed and maimed by Afghan Taliban supported by the Pakistani establishment. In order to achieve their strategic aims, the Pakistani establishment were fighting at least three groups allied to the Afghan Taliban, including Al Qaeda, on its soil. This state of affairs existed while the Pakistani establishment lost ground to threats posed by new fundamentalist organizations, like the Punjabi Taliban. The very real possibility that Pakistan might succumb to multiple internal threats did not diminish their support for the Afghan Taliban insurgency, while the fearful delusion of an Indian-controlled Afghanistan continued to hold sway. That state of affairs, especially one backed up with nuclear weapons, placed absolute limits on even superpower influence.

ENDNOTES

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APPENDIX C:

THE KABUL 100 AND THEIR SUCCESSORS

In 2005, when Task Force Afghanistan packed up and moved from Kabul to Kandahar (covered in Volume I), about 100 Canadians remained in Kabul to serve in headquarters and advisory appointments.

An important aspect of Canadian operations in Afghanistan was the maintenance of staff officers at the various coalition headquarters to protect Canada's interests and prevent misuse of Canadian resources by larger allies. This practice dates from the Canadian Army's first NATO deployments during the 1950s, when generals who remembered Hong Kong and Dieppe took steps to ensure that Canadians would be in position at least to provide insight into coalition decision-making processes and to influence decisions.

Like the members of the Strategic Advisory Team–Afghanistan (SAT-A), the Canadian officers at ISAF HQ and the various American headquarters under Combined Forces Command–Afghanistan (later U.S. Forces Afghanistan) observed and influenced events where possible. The effects of their actions, decisions and activities, while not necessarily quantifiable, were important to the overall conduct of the war in Kabul, with attendant effects on the war in Kandahar from a Canadian perspective.

As in any higher headquarters, Kabul's version of reality tended to vary from the tactical-level understanding to be had in Kandahar Province. Indeed, the outlook of some Kabul-based Canadian officers differed substantially from that of the staff at TF Kandahar headquarters, just as it differed in its perspective on events from Regional Command (South). Canadian officers in those positions could see Canada's involvement in Afghanistan from a national (i.e., Afghan) and in some cases a regional (coalition or global) context. Some were overwhelmed by the magnitude of the effort put into the war by other countries compared to the Canadian effort and could not see how Canada could possibly wield influence. Others had no issue with this and could see how the tactical level in Kandahar, the operational level in Regional Command (South) and the strategic level (Kabul) were all linked, and that their role was to try to be as holistic with the other organizations as possible in support of Canadian objectives.

Almost all members routinely endured internecine and national headquarters drama in one form or another. Was a Canadian serving at ISAF HQ a NATO person, or a representative of Canada? Should coalition requirements trump Canadian objectives and aims? What happened if Canadian policy clashed with, say, American policy in the halls of Combined Security Transition Command–Afghanistan? How did a staff officer cope with such ambiguity, in addition to isolation from the Canadian task force and distance from home?

The pressures of this kind of existence were substantial. In effect, Canadian headquarters staff in Kabul were in small, comfortable prisons from which they sortied periodically for leave or staff meetings at other headquarters. Not all were equipped to deal with the pressures of headquarters compound life in a hostile city in a country at war. Maj Ray Ruckpaul committed suicide at ISAF HQ on 29 August 2007, and Maj Michelle Mendes killed herself at Kandahar Air Field on 23 April 2009. They were casualties of war.

As well as in the headquarters organizations, Canadians were deployed with several smaller initiatives in Kabul. A small team served at the Afghan National Army's NCO Academy; the training cadre of the Junior Officers' Staff Course included a single Canadian; a handful worked at the Second Language Training Centre Afghanistan; and one Canadian senior officer served with UNAMA.¹

Structurally, there were the 'Kabul 100' staff officers and the National Command Element Kabul which was under the command of JTF-A HQ at Kandahar Air Field. NCE Kabul was logistically supported through a National Support Element detachment and signals detachment. In some cases these personnel rotated with others from units in Kandahar, and in some cases they were kept permanently in Kabul depending on the rotation. The drawdown of British operations in Kabul made space available at Camp Souter near the Kandahar International Airport, so arrangements were made to base the supporting Canadian elements there in a collection of Weatherhavens.²

NCE Kabul Force Protection consisted of several close protection parties equipped with armoured SUVs. These soldiers carried out the hazardous task of transporting Canadian personnel through the urban jungle of the Kabul highway system. They were exceptionally adept at this job and were exceedingly knowledgeable about the layout of the city and how to get around safely and expediently. The NCE close protection team were also plugged in to the British forces at Camp Souter, particularly their counterparts in close protection and the intelligence systems, and maintained a quick reaction capability for local incidents involving Canadian personnel.³

All Canadian soldiers moving around Kabul during these years, be they the staff officers in the headquarters, signallers, logisticians, or close protection, were subject to potential IED attack on a daily basis. The threat level was usually designated as “high” and there were numerous occasions where the insurgency used Kabul as a stage for terrorist theatre with the international media as the audience. CSTC-A headquarters was attacked in early 2009 with a fuel truck bomb, for example. In many ways Kabul had the potential to be as dangerous as Kandahar City and it is only a combination of professionalism and fate that kept Canadian casualties low in the Afghan capital. The unfortunate exception to this was the death of Col Geoff Parker on 18 May 2010. Col Parker, part of an incoming American-Canadian regional command headquarters conducting a strategic recce, was killed by a large IED in an attack on his convoy.

ENDNOTES

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2. Briefing to the author (Kabul, 6 March 2009).
3. The author was the recipient of their services on more than one occasion.

APPENDIX D:

KANDAHAR AIR FIELD

As we have seen in Volume I, Kandahar Air Field or ‘KAF’ was vital ground. And, as we also saw in Volume I, the deployment of forces from Task Force Kabul to KAF and the subsequent stand-up of Task Force Afghanistan in 2005 led to Canadian occupation of space in KAF. The Canadian headquarters compound initially consisted of a collection of Weatherhavens across from the remaining battered hanger, and kitty-corner to a structure dubbed “The Taliban’s Last Stand” or TLS. The rabbit warrens of the TLS eventually became the headquarters for the airfield, while the 1960s-era terminal two kilometers down the road was refurbished for civilian use. TF Kandahar Headquarters was also across the road from Regional Command (South) Headquarters. Canadian accommodation initially was in the west end of the base and consisted of more Weatherhavens clustered around Canada House, the morale and welfare facility.

KAF was a home-away-from-home for more than 1,300 Canadians, including at least 1,000 military personnel and some 300 civilians. By 2007, the accommodation area shifted to a collection of stacked modular ISO structures in the east end of the base near the battle group headquarters compound. New Canada House and the Canadian Gym, constructed in 2008, led to the progressive abandonment of the Old Canada House accommodation area. The Canadian Personnel Support Agency had its facilities in the new area as well.

The TF Kandahar Headquarters Compound expanded over the years with ISO buildings replacing the Weatherhavens and trailers. The Provincial Operations Centre (POC) was established in early 2007 in the TF Kandahar HQ compound. The National Support Element and the Sperwer TUAV unit were located in large compounds in the southwest corner of KAF.

Initially KAF was an American-controlled facility but by August 2007 it transitioned to a NATO command called Commander Kandahar Air Field or COMKAF. The importance of Kandahar Air Field as the NATO logistics and command node in southern Afghanistan requires no elaboration here. Kandahar Air Field expanded geometrically over the years and went from a burnt out forward operating base in 2003 to a small city of nearly 20,000 inhabitants by 2011. In many ways KAF was similar to a western Canadian frontier town from the 1800s: everything was temporary, including all of the life support systems: water, fuel, sewage, and power. Its inhabitants were, for the most part, transitory. Kandahar Air Field, however, became much more than a place to land and offload aircraft.

Kandahar Air Field was a sort of land chess game between the NATO countries based there. Space was at a premium and there was a significant amount of jockeying for ramp space, accommodation, and access to amenities. This jockeying played itself out in NATO political circles when it could not be resolved locally, which had an impact in operations. There was only so much ramp space and possession, as it was on the frontier, was nine-tenths of the law. Similarly there was accommodation space. And, as in any real estate market, it was a matter of “Location, location, location.” Canadian personnel were adroit at getting what they wanted.

Afghan law did not appear to apply to Kandahar Air Field except that elements of the Barakzai power structure gobbled up adjacent land from its owners to rent to NATO and/or the Afghan government. To what extent the grievances generated by these processes led to attacks against Kandahar Air Field remains speculative but for old hands it was a likely proposition.

Indeed, KAF developed its own “sheriff” in the form of a multi-national military police unit led by the Danes. Canada and her allies did not count on, nor did they initially assign forces for policing a multi-national city that grew from 10,000 to 20,000 people. As KAF grew, so did the crime rate. This included criminal activities that would have infected any frontier town: illicit stimulants, prostitution, and black market activity. KAF was no exception. There were stills for making vodka from potatoes in one contingent’s area, while another contingent possessed a jerry-built hot tub that had to be closed by preventative medical technicians. One could also add illegal immigration. By 2010 there were several hundred workers from Asian countries who were abandoned at Kandahar Air Field when their contracted employers went belly up and walked away. The black market trade in meal cards for the dining facilities was particularly brisk.¹

Kandahar Air Field’s expansion had a significant impact on the local economy as hundreds, and later thousands, of Afghans were employed in some aspect of its operations. It is unclear how intentional this was in later days, but employment at Kandahar Air Field could be seen as a “cash for work” project on a grand scale. Kandahar Air Field was the ultimate development project. This applied particularly to those Afghan companies who supplied concrete blast barriers to mitigate the effects of rocket attacks against the sprawling facility.

The importance of Kandahar Air Field to civil aviation was understood by the Barakzai power structure as early as 2002–2003. The Sherzai clan took the field in 2002 with American SOF and retained control of it with a variety of militia forces loyal to them for years afterwards. Governor Gul Agha Sherzai and his brother Rezik were the first to push development agencies to refurbish the civilian terminal area and by 2008 this area was segregated from the military side of Kandahar Air Field to facilitate civilian air travel.

This had significant religious implications because of the ongoing demand for Hajj flights by the population. It was also necessary for the narcotics producers, who needed to move their product out by air to avoid additional costs incurred by ground routing through Pakistan or the northern ‘Stans’.

The evolution of Kandahar Air Field defence measures was significant and proportional to the geometric expansion of the base. As we will recall, a Romanian battalion replaced the Canadian battle group in the Kandahar Air Field protection role in 2002 and they continued with this role until 2006. There were three primary mechanisms for Kandahar Air Field protection. The first of these was the Joint Defence Operations Centre or JDOC. This was the central headquarters for ground defence located at the TLS. The JDOC also controlled the alert sirens and the nearly-incomprehensible Big Voice loudspeaker alert system (in time the system was automated so that radar acquisition of a launched rocket produced a pre-recorded British-accented female voice calmly announcing, “Rocket Attack. Rocket Attack.” Usually this occurred after the rocket had already impacted.

The second were the Entry Control Points or ECPs that were manned by a variety of nations whose troops searched all civilian vehicles and personnel entering KAF. These ECPs were vital to prevent the introduction of suicide bombers and other engines of nastiness into the camp. Initially Canada manned one of the ECPs, which took a platoon off-line from fighting west of the city or from protecting convoys. As more European nations were cajoled into sending forces to southern Afghanistan, Hungary and Bulgaria deployed small contingents to assist with KAF security starting in 2006–2007. The Bulgarians replaced the Romanian battalion who departed for Zabol Province in 2007 to get into the fight there. Canadian National Support Element commanders kept up the pressure to release their force protection platoon from ECP duty but it took years to accomplish this.

Outside of the Entry Control Points lay the Ground Defence Area or GDA, which extended several kilometers and included parts of Daman district to eventually include a total of 450 square kilometers of ground. Starting in 2006, the GDA was the responsibility of an RAF Regiment field squadron, which rotated every six months. A field squadron consisted of an infantry company of three flights mounted in semi-armoured Land Rovers plus mortars and sniper teams. Elements of a RAF Force Protection Wing also deployed, which included Military Police, a Tower Company, and a radar unit. Canadian units supported British efforts in this area in numerous ways from sharing intelligence to providing counter-IED and mobile recovery teams when RAF patrols got bogged or were IED’d.²

Canadian PSYOPS worked with British PSYOPS in Daman District from time to time, but the RAF Regiment field squadron never managed to coordinate CIMIC activity in the GDA with the Provincial Reconstruction Team. (Considered relatively secure, Daman was unofficially recognized as Barakzai territory controlled by the Sherzais, whose militia

was based there.) The field squadron routinely received information from the Canadian UAVs, and one of the Sperwer TUAVs would be dedicated to KAF Force Protection when no MQ-1 Predators were available.³

This leads us to a discussion of enemy activity and Kandahar Air Field. Enemy action against Kandahar Air Field took three forms. First, and best known, were the rockets attacks. Second, as time went on, there were small ground assaults against the facility. Third, there was enemy parasitical logistics activity conducted within the confines of the base itself.

Countering rocket attacks absorbed substantial resources. In a general sense, there appeared to be two entities engaged in firing free-flight rockets against Kandahar Air Field. The first could be characterized as insurgent indirect fire against a logistics node, while the second could be classified as commercial activity. In some cases it is likely both entities who were engaged in rocketeering overlapped when it was convenient. U.S. diplomat Peter Tomsen noted that, in 1989, Gul Agha Sherzai collaborated with a corrupt Communist Kandahar governor

... to stage fake “attacks” ... on the American-built Kandahar Airport southeast of the city. At the appointed time, for the benefit of ISI agents observing the operation, Gul Agha’s Mujahidin harmlessly fired off rockets and light weapons near the airport. Along the runways, Ulumi’s troops set oil drums on fire and made loud noises. In return, Ulumi allowed Gul Agha to sell ISI-provided American wheat inside Kandahar City in return for keeping the peace. Gul Agha pocketed the profits. He submitted voucher requests to the ISI for more money and additional ammunition to replenish that expended during the farcical airport operations.⁴

There is no reason to believe that things were any different between 2006 and 2011.

There were two identifiable “rocket boxes”: Kvosh Ab and Mandi Sar. The rockets themselves were usually Chinese-made 107mm free-flight rockets. Some came from Iran and others from Pakistan. Some rockets were Iranian but came in through Pakistan. Others were Chinese that came in through Iran. All were launched from crude improvised launchers using rudimentary timing devices. The adjacent Arghistan District was part of a ‘rat line’ extending back through Maruf District and then to Pakistan: the Arghistan Mujahideen had been firing rockets at Kandahar City as far back as 1989 and thus had some experience with the activity.⁵ The insurgent rocket team worked the Mandi Sar rocket box, while the commercial entities, believed to be Kutchie nomads, tended to work in the Kvosh Ab rocket box. Rocketeers apparently received \$200 per rocket fired at Kandahar Air Field. The people in Mandi Sar were believed to be motivated by Pashtunwali, which was regularly stoked by the Taliban for their purposes. In 2001 a compound was apparently hit during an OEF airstrike killing some local people, and their involvement in rocketeering was considered

to be some form of *badl* payback.⁶ There were also land issues in the Mandi Sar area related to Barakzai and Popalzai power brokers, and their commercial activities along Highway 4. Those involved included Colonel Tor Jan at the PRT, who used appropriated land in the area for his car dealership. In other words, there was a tangle of grievances activated by the insurgents for their purposes.

The Taliban extorted protection from wealthy merchants in Quetta in the form of a tithe. Those merchants funded and transported the 107mm rockets to their end users via trucks through Spin Boldak and up Highway 4. This was clever on the part of the Taliban: it implicated otherwise apolitical Quetta businessmen *bazzaris* who used their own resources to support the insurgency in Afghanistan, affording the Taliban and their backers some deniability. It also added yet another category of ambiguity. Were these merchants insurgents or not?⁷

In some cases, it seemed as if the insurgency used rocket attacks against Kandahar Air Field as a signaling tool to let coalition VIP visitors know that they remained in the fight. For example, when the insurgency learned that there were high-level visitors on base, there would be an attack within 24 hours, sometimes less. One of these occurred on 8 May 2009 when multiple attacks were launched while the Prime Minister, the Chief of Defence Staff, and the Chief of the Land Staff were at Kandahar Air Field on a visit. This was assessed by TF Kandahar as “no coincidence.”⁸ Similarly, the enemy attempted to rocket night-time ramp ceremonies in the hopes of generating mass casualties among the ranks of the hundreds of coalition personnel who turned out to pay their respects to the fallen. This made for surreal dynamics in that soldiers and civilian personnel in ceremonial mass ranks were in some cases subjected to enemy fire on an open field, which was some ways more like a 19th Century battlefield than the 21st Century one twenty kilometers to the west.

The impact of the cumulative damage caused by rocket attacks against Kandahar Air Field was debatable. Did the attacks generate some friction in Kandahar Air Field activities? Yes. Did the rockets kill and maim personnel and destroy some equipment at Kandahar Air Field? Yes: numerous Canadians were wounded by rocket attacks during the course of the war. Were there psychological casualties among the Kandahar Air Field residents? Yes. Did any of this significantly affect combat or development operations in the province? No. The net effect of the rocket attacks, however, was to force COMKAF and the various coalition forces at Kandahar Air Field to purchase substantial numbers of increasingly larger and thicker concrete blast barriers, so much so that each compound on the base looked like a small fortress by 2009. That money went to Kandahar construction companies dominated by the Barakzai and Popalzai power structures, which in turn employed hundreds of their associates. To what extent this distorted the economy in the province and generated new or augmented existing grievances among the non-Popalzai and non-Barakzai populations remains as unclear as it is unexamined.

One perplexing aspect of the KAF Rocket War was the lack of technological or tactical sophistication employed by those engaged in launching the rockets. There was no attempt to acquire a multiple-launch unit, essentially a trailer with a row of tubes mounted on it, and there were hundreds of such derelicts from earlier days. Rockets usually came in one at a time, sometimes in pairs, but there was no stonk of rockets. Though there was a 2006 report that some rockets had white phosphorous warheads, none were ever employed against Kandahar Air Field. In many cases the high explosives on the warheads did not even detonate. It was almost as if some of the rockets were not intended to generate serious damage.

Another perplexing aspect of the war revolved around the inability of the insurgency to acquire and use man-portable anti-aircraft missile systems against coalition aircraft landing or departing Kandahar Air Field. A pair of Chinese-made shoulder-launched HN-5 SAMs were unearthed in a cache east of KAF near Mandi Sar in 2007.⁹ There was at least one suspected SAM strike but this was never fully confirmed as the aircraft in question belonged to the covert arm of a NATO-member government. The number of small arms fire incidents against aircraft at KAF was remarkably low and in no way interfered with NATO's ability to logistically sustain its forces in southern Afghanistan through Kandahar Air Field.

Ground assaults against Kandahar Air Field were extremely rare. None of the recorded assaults got past the initial wire fence on the perimeter. One attempt in 2011 was conducted at night by a larger force of insurgents but was stopped in its tracks by a U.S. Air Force AC-130 gunship before it could even approach the perimeter.¹⁰

Enemy parasitism took several forms. The most subtle consisted of insurgent revenue generation by taxing those merchants selling goods at the weekly bazaar set up in a specially protected compound at Kandahar Air Field. The extent of this is not well documented. The second was the infiltration of agents into the work force to collect intelligence in a traditional sense. A variant of this included the use of infiltrated personnel to act as spotters for rocket attacks and to conduct battle damage assessment afterwards. Third, enemy personnel collected discarded material like batteries and wires from garbage at Kandahar Air Field for IED construction. Indeed, an enemy IED production facility was discovered in a building less than 50 meters away from the Canadian Detainee Transfer Facility.¹¹ The market was also used as a means to introduce cyber weapons into coalition systems at Kandahar Air Field. For example, a Chinese-made MP3 device sold at the market came equipped with interesting additional features including embedded viruses and trojan horse programs. These programs permitted remote access to computer systems they interacted with.¹²

All in all, Kandahar Air Field was not a rear-area communications zone of the type familiar to students of the Second World War, but a distinct area of operations for both the insurgency and the coalition forces in Kandahar Province.

ENDNOTES

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3. *Ibid.*
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5. *Ibid.*, page 333.
6. COMKAF briefing to the author (9 February 2008).
7. Confidential interview.
8. JTF-A HQ DSR (8 May 2009).
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10. The author was present for these events.
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12. TFK INTSUM (5 September 2010).

GLOSSARY

ACP	Access control point
ADATS	Air defence anti-tank system
ADZ	Afghan Development Zone
AEV	Armoured engineer vehicle
AHDS	Afghan Health Delivery Services
AHP	Afghan Highway Police
ALP	Afghan Local Police
ANA	Afghan National Army
ANCOP	Afghan National Civil Order Police
ANDS	Afghan National Development Strategy
ANP	Afghan National Police
ANSF	Afghan national security forces, ISAF shorthand for both the Afghan National Army and the Afghan National Police as a collective.
APC	Armoured personnel carrier
APPP or AP3	Afghan Public Protection Program
APRP	Afghan Peace and Reintegration Program
ARSIC	Afghan Regional Security Integration Commands
ARV	Armoured recovery vehicle
ASIC	All Source Intelligence Centre
ASOP	Afghan Social Outreach Program
AUP	Afghan Uniformed Police

GLOSSARY

AVIDV	Arghandab Valley Integrated Development Vision
AVLB	Armoured vehicle-launched bridge
AWK	Ahmad Wali Karzai
Bdr	Bombardier
BG	Battle group
BIP	Blow in place
BSC	Battle space commander
C/S	Callsign
CADG	Central Asian Development Group
CANSOFCOM	Canadian Special Operations Forces Command
CCDC	Clustered Community Development Council
CDC	Community Development Council
CEFOM	Canadian Expeditionary Force Command
CER	Combat Engineer Regiment
CEXC	Combined Explosives Exploitation Cell
CF	Canadian Forces
CFC-A	Combined Forces Command–Afghanistan
CFNIS	Canadian Forces National Investigative Service
CGSO	Canadian Government Support Office
CHF	Canadian Helicopter Force
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
C-IED	Counter-IED
CIMIC	Civil-military cooperation

GLOSSARY

CIVPOL	Civilian Police, or the 30-strong RCMP contingent assigned to the civilian police component of the United Nations Protection Force
CJSOTF	Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force
CJTF	Combined Joint Task Force
CLJ	Constitutional Loya Jirga
CLP	Combat logistics patrol
CMO	Construction Management Organization
CMT	Construction Management Team
CNN	Cable News Network
CO	Commanding Officer
COIN	Counterinsurgency
COP	Combat Outpost
CPEP	Central Poppy Eradication Program
CSOR	Canadian Special Operations Regiment
CSTC-A	Combined Security Transition Command–Afghanistan
CSYEP	Culturally Structured Youth Employment Program
CTF	Combined Task Force
CTKC	Combined Team Kandahar City
DAFA	Demining Agency for Afghanistan
DAGR	Defence Advanced Global Positioning System (GPS) Receiver, a Canadian GPS system
DCC	District Community Council
DCO	Deputy Commanding Officer
DComd	Deputy Commander
DDA	District Development Assembly
DDCT	Dand District Combat Team

GLOSSARY

DDD	District Delivery Program
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration
DEVAD	Development Advisor
DFAIT	Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade
DFFC	Directionally focused fragmentation charge
DND	Department of National Defence
DST	District Support Team
EBO	Effects-based operations
ECM	Electronic countermeasures
ECP	Entry control points
ECS	Engineer Construction Squadron
ECT	Engineer Construction Team
EDD	Explosive detection dog team
EOD	Explosive ordnance disposal
EROC	Expedient route-opening capability
ESU	Engineer Support Unit
ETT	Embedded Training Team
Eurocorps	European Corps
EW	Electronic warfare
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Agency
FDD	Focused District Development
FOB	Forward Operating Base
FOO/FAC	Forward observation officer/forward air controller
GBU	Guided bomb unit
GIRoA	Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

GLOSSARY

GMIC	Government Media and Information Centre
GMLRS	Guided multiple-launch rocket system
HALO	Hostile Artillery Locating
HELQUEST	Helicopter Request Message
HESH	High-explosive squash-head (munition)
HFA	Haji Fazluddin Agha
HiG	Hezb-e Islami Gulbuddin
HME	Home-made explosive
HQ	Headquarters
HSU	Health Service Unit
HTT	Human Terrain Team
IC	International community
ID	Identification
ICATS	ISAF Contract Air Transport Support
ICEPAK	ISAF Coordination Element Pakistan
IDLG	Independent Directorate for Local Governance
IDP	Internally displaced person
IEC	Independent Electoral Commission
IED	Improvised explosive device
IFF	Identification friend or foe
IFOR	Implementation Force
IJC	ISAF Joint Command
ILDS	Improved landmine detection system
Int	Intelligence
IO	Information operations

GLOSSARY

IPAP	Interim Provincial Action Plan
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
ISI	Inter-Services Intelligence
ISID	Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate
ISR	Intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance
ISTAR	Intelligence, surveillance, target-acquisition and reconnaissance
JAG	Judge Advocate General
JDAMS	Joint direct-attack munition system
JDCC	Joint District Coordination Centre
JECB	Joint Effects Coordinating Board
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
JOA	Joint operating area (ISAF)
JOC	Joint Operations Centre
JOG	Joint Operations Group
JP	Joint patrols
JPCC	Joint Provincial Coordination Centre
JPEL	Joint Prioritized Effects List
JTAC	Joint terminal air controller
JTF	Joint Task Force
JTF-A	Joint Task Force–Afghanistan
K-9	Dog team
KAJ	Kandahar Air Field
KAP	Kandahar Action Plan
KC	Kandahar City
KCSWG	Kandahar City Security Working Group

GLOSSARY

KFC	Kandahar Fusion Centre
KIFC	Kandahar Intelligence Fusion Centre
KLE	Key leader engagement
KLIP	Kandahar Local Initiative Program
KMTC	Kabul Military Training Centre
KPRT	Kandahar Provincial Reconstruction Team
KTD	Key terrain districts
KUS	Kandahar Ulema Shura
KVA	Key Village Approach
KVI	Key Village Insurgent
LAV	Light armoured vehicle
LAW	Light Antitank Weapon
LCMD	Lightweight counter-mine detector
LCMR	Lightweight counter-mortar radar
LeT	Lashkar-e-Taiba
LLD	Light Logistics Detachment
LORIT	LAV Operational Requirements Integration Task
MASCAL	Mass casualty event
MASINT	Measurement and Signature Intelligence
M-ATV	MRAP all-terrain vehicle
MCLC	Mine-clearance line charge (micklick)
MDC	Mine Detection Centre
MEDEVAC	Medical evacuation
MEU	Marine Expeditionary Unit
MEWT	Mobile Electronic Warfare Team

GLOSSARY

MILAD	Military advisor
MMU	Multinational Medical Unit
MP	Military Police
MPMTT	Military Police Mobile Training Team
MRAP	Mine-resistant ambush-protected (vehicle)
MRRD	Ministry of Rural Reconstruction and Development
MSO	Municipal Support Office
MTTF	Mission Transition Task Force
MWR	Morale, welfare and recreation
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCCIS	National Command and Control and Information Systems
NDC	New District Centre
NDS	National Directorate of Security
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NIS	National Investigative Service
NORSOF	Norwegian Special Operations Forces
NSE	National Support Element
NTM-A	NATO Training Mission–Afghanistan
OCC-D(D)	Operations Coordination Center–District (Dand)
OCC-D(P)	Operational Coordination Centre–District (Panjwayi)
OCC-D	Operational Coordination Center–District
OCC-K	Operational Coordination Center–Kandahar City
OCC-P	Operations Coordination Center–Province (replaced JPCC)
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
ODA	Operational Detachment Alpha

GLOSSARY

ODRP	Office of the Defense Representative Pakistan
OEF	Operation ENDURING FREEDOM
OGD	Other government departments
OMLT	Operational Mentor and Liaison Team
OP	Observation post
Op	Operation
OPLAN	Operation Plan
OPORD	Operation order
OPP	Operations planning process
Op tempo	Operational tempo
OPV	Optionally piloted vehicle
OSC-A	Office of Security Cooperation–Afghanistan
PAG	Policy Action Group
PAKMIL	Pakistani military
PB	Patrol Base
PD	Police district
PDC	Provincial Development Committee
PECOG	Panjwayi East Combined Operations Centre
Pfc	Private First Class
PMN	A type of Soviet pressure-activated anti-personnel mine
PMT	Police Mentor Team
POC	Provincial Operations Centre
POLAD	Political Advisor
P-OMLT	Police Operational Mentor and Liaison Team
PPCLI	Princess Patricia’s Canadian Light Infantry

GLOSSARY

PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Team
PSS	Persistent surveillance system
PSS	Police sub-station
PSYOPS	Psychological operations
PTDS	Persistent threat-denial system
PTS	Program Takhim-e Sohl
QIP	Quick-Impact Project
QRF	Quick-Reaction Force
RASC	Rapid Accelerated Security Course
RBG(S)	Regional Battle Group (South)
RC	Regional Command
RC (South), RC(S)	NATO ISAF Regional Command (South)
RCIED	Radio-controlled improvised explosive device
RCP	Route-clearance package
RIP	Relief in place
RoCK	Representative of Canada in Kandahar
RPAC	Regional Policing Assistance Command
RPG	Rocket-propelled grenade
RWS	Remote weapons system
SA	Situational awareness
SAT-A	Strategic Advisory Team–Afghanistan
SBPF	Security Belt Protection Force
SBS	Special Boat Squadron
SEAL	Sea, Air and Land, i.e, U.S. Navy special forces operators
SECFOR	OMLT Security Force

GLOSSARY

SET	Specialist Engineer Team
SFAT	Security Force Advisory Teams
SIGACT	Significant Action
SLTCA	Staff and Language Training Centre Afghanistan
SMA	Sher Mohammad Akhundzada
SNC	SNC-Lavalin Group Inc.
SOF	Special Operations Forces
SOIC	Special Operations Intelligence Centre
SOTF	Special Operations Task Force
SRPF	Security Ring Protection Force
STA	Surveillance and target acquisition
Stab	Stabilization
SUAV	Small unmanned aerial vehicle
SVBIED	Suicide vehicle-borne IED
TAA	Tactical assembly area
TACNET	Tactical air control network
TACSAT	Tactical satellite; i.e., a type of crypto-capable radio
TAV	Tactical assistance visit
TET	Tactical Exploitation Team
TF	Task Force
TFK	TF Kandahar
TFK/BG	Task Force Kandahar Battle Group
TFK/GDA	Task Force Kandahar Ground Defence Area
TFS FOM	Task Force Stryker Freedom of Movement (corridor)
THREATWARN	Threat warning

GLOSSARY

TI	Tactical infrastructure
TIC	Troops in contact
TLAV	Tracked light armoured vehicle
TMJ	Taj Mir Jawad Network
TOC	Tactical Operations Centre
TSB	Theatre Support Base
TSE	Theatre Support Element
TTP	Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan
TTP	Tactics, techniques and procedures
TUAV	Tactical unmanned aerial vehicle
UAV	Unmanned aerial vehicle
UGS	Unattended ground sensors
UIP	Unified Implementation Plan
UN	United Nations
UN HABITAT	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNAMA	United Nations Mission in Afghanistan
UNAMIR	United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda
UNDP-ELECT	United Nations Development Program–Enhanced Legal and Electoral Capacity for Tomorrow
UNHCR	United Nations Commission on Human Rights
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNMACA	United Nations Mine Awareness Centre
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UNPA	United Nations Protected Area
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

GLOSSARY

USG	United States Government
USPI	United States Protection and Investigation
UTAMS	Unattended transient acoustic MASINT (measurement and signature intelligence) system
UXO	Unexploded ordnance
VBIED	Vehicle-borne improvised explosive device
VHF	Very high frequency
VMO	Village Medical Outreach
VR	Voter Registration
VSO	Village Stability Operations
WHO	World Health Organization
WHOPPER	Whole of Government Panjwayi Program for Enhanced Revitalization (or Reconstruction)
WMD	Weapons of mass destruction
XO	Executive Officer

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Sean M. Maloney is a Professor of History at Royal Military College and served as the Historical Advisor to the Chief of the Land Staff during the war in Afghanistan. He previously served as the historian for 4 Canadian Mechanized Brigade, the Canadian Army's primary Cold War NATO commitment. Dr. Maloney has extensive field experience in the Balkans, particularly in Croatia, Bosnia, Kosovo and Macedonia from 1995 to 2001. His work on the Balkans was interrupted by the 9/11 attacks. Since 2001, Dr. Maloney focused exclusively on the war against the Al Qaeda movement and its allies, particularly on the Afghanistan component of that war. He traveled regularly to Afghanistan from 2003 to 2014 to observe and record coalition and Canadian operations in that country. In addition to *The Canadian Army in Afghanistan*, he has authored 14 other books, four of which deal with the war in Afghanistan.



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