

“Counterinsurgency vs. ‘COIN’ in Bazaar-e Panjwayi and Panjwayi District, 2008-2010: An Illustrative Study of a Canadian Problem.”

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[FINAL]

Canada’s efforts to confront insurgent forces in the town of Bazaar-e Panjwayi, Panjwayi district, Afghanistan from 2009 to 2010 was a case study in exposing the ambiguity and limitations of counterinsurgency operations. Coalition forces slowly lost control of this particular area of operations, in part because of a lack of coordination in the development and governance spheres, and in part because of an inability to identify and then address how enemy operations affected governance. Confusion over what constituted counterinsurgency and its application, coupled with continuity issues, were, however, the primary culprits.<sup>1</sup>

Counterinsurgency sits between stabilization operations and conventional warfare on the spectrum of conflict. However, in the Afghanistan environment, serious blur exists within that counterinsurgency band: there is counterinsurgency and there is ‘COIN’. In terms of general definitions, counterinsurgency operations are the efforts taken to stop an insurgent movement from challenging the government. An insurgent movement may use a variety of methods to accomplish its aims. Counterinsurgency in this sense involves any and all measures taken by the government forces to force the insurgents to cease and desist, no matter what types of activities the insurgent force employs. ‘COIN’, on the other hand, tends to be associated with historic low intensity conflict techniques involving population engagement and protection, strengthening governance, security, and the horizontal integration of these activities. In some ways, ‘COIN’ can be a subset of counterinsurgency. In many ways, however, the Canadians in

Afghanistan during this period moved back and forth between 'COIN' and counterinsurgency, mostly out of phase with what the enemy was doing.

What happens, then, when the insurgents vary how they do business and fluctuate their operations between population intimidation and near-conventional military operations? And then how do the counter-insurgents adapt their forces to deal with it all? 'COIN' doesn't work at the near conventional end of this spectrum, just as one cannot use conventional forces to prevent local intimidation. Indeed, the term 'COIN effect' is often employed by Canadian practitioners in Afghanistan. Its precise meaning varies but tends to suggest the protection of the population from coercion and the fostering governance and development activities with the effect of moving the population towards supporting the government. Consequently, an informal doctrine exists whereby the Canadian Army practices 'COIN' in the winter, when enemy activity has a particular pattern, and counterinsurgency in the summer, the so-called 'fighting season' when the enemy exhibits a different pattern of behaviour.

The constant re-focusing of Canadian efforts in Kandahar province since 2005 makes it difficult to examine any district from a counterinsurgency vs. 'COIN' perspective as there tends to be little continuity of effort. For the most part, Canadian operations in Zharey district and Arghandab districts have tended towards counterinsurgency, not 'COIN' because of the nature of enemy activity. In Panjwayi district, however, it is easier to examine both. How successful have Canadian counterinsurgency and 'COIN' efforts been so far in Bazaar-e Panjwayi and Panjwayi district? And what can we learn from these experiences?

A Brief Introduction to Panjwayi District

Panjwayi district is located west of Kandahar City. It is a primarily rural district surrounded by large hills or “Ghars” with the flatter areas dominated by grape production fields and compound living facilities. When combined, the fields and compounds constitute complex terrain that rivals that of an urban area. The larger population centres include Bazaar-e Panjwayi, the capital; Nahkonay; Mushan and Mushan Bazaar; and Salavat. There is one paved main service route from Kandahar City to Bazaar-e Panjwayi. Bazaar-e Panjwayi serves as the economic hub and transshipment point for agricultural produce as much as it is the governance centre represented by the Panjwayi District Centre, located on the outskirts of the town. Socially, the bulk of the population is from the Noorzai tribal grouping, but there are important minority tribes including the Alikazais and the Alokozais. There is normally a district leader who is appointed by the provincial governor, and a district shura which serves as a governance forum. The district shura members were the elders representing the various communities. At the community level, that is, sub-district, the headman or Malik is the primary elder but there are also community Mullahs, the religious leadership. The state of the relationship between Malik and Mullah varies considerably depending on the community.

As for policing, there were district-level police of varying levels of training led by a district police chief appointed by the provincial Chief of Police. The ‘police’ in Panjwayi district transitioned from an untrained militia with no provincial-level control in 2004-06 to a partially-trained militia with some degree of provincial control, to a trained militia with increased provincial and federal control by 2009.

In 2003-04, the Afghan government initiated the National Solidarity Program. The NSP was supposed to establish Community Development Councils whereby local people working with local leadership were to identify development projects. These were supposed to be submitted to a District Development Assembly, a sub-set of the district shura where the district

leader and other leaders would prioritize CDC projects in the district. The monies for these projects were supposed to be handled through the Provincial Development Council, which reported to the provincial governor. In practice the Canadian-led Provincial Reconstruction Team acted as an ad hoc Provincial Development Council and at the same time was involved in the development relationship between the district and the province through Civil Military Cooperation teams, the Canadian International Development Agency, and the Department of Foreign Affairs.

### Historical Patterns of Insurgent Activity in Panjwayi District Before 2009

During the anti-Soviet jihad in the 1980s, mujahideen forces used Zharey district to the north of Panjwayi as a mounting base for ambush operations against Soviet convoys in Highway 1. The dense terrain discouraged pursuit and Panjwayi district served as a rest and refit area for insurgents who would transit to the mounting base in Zharey, conduct operations, and retire back to Panjwayi. The Soviets established a base in Bazaar-e Panjwayi and used minefields to interdict insurgent movement at key junctures. A spectacular mujahideen raid was conducted against the Soviet administration facility in Bazaar-e Panjwayi in the mid-1980's. This event entered into local legend and the fighters involved remain to this day feted as heroes.

Zharey and Panjwayi districts are seldom mentioned during coalition operations from 2001 to 2005. For the most part the action was in northern districts like Shah Wali Kot, particularly in 2004-05, as the primary enemy strongholds of the day were in adjacent Oruzgan, northern Helmand and Zabol provinces. With the advent of the suicide improvised explosive device campaign in Kandahar City during late 2005, numerous indicators pointed to Zharey and Panjwayi districts as the base areas for IED cells and logistics

nodes. These organizations were the waypoint for bombers and equipment that transited from Pakistan to Helmand to western Kandahar province and through a “ratline” into Kandahar City. Further analysis concluded that the “ratline” went from Bazaar-e Panjwayi through Nahkonay and Salavat, and into a number of compromised Afghan National Police stations in the southwest part of the city. In late 2005, the Taliban increased their ambush activity along Highway 1, using Zharey as a base, These actions were comparatively limited.

In 2006, coalition operations in the province focused on the northern districts, and then on Zharey as indicators suggested that Zharey would be used as a mounting base to conduct Tet-style attacks into Kandahar City (Sarposa Prison was one of the planned targets). Coalition spoiling operations were successful, but then the enemy reinforced Zharey and attempted positional near-conventional defence. At the same time they attempted to use western Panjwayi district as a reinforcement route to back up operations in Zharey, and attempted to reinforce insurgent cells operating around Sperwan in order to draw off coalition forces from the fall 2006 Operation MEDUSA offensive over in Zharey. These operations were limited in scope and time and were not designed to maintain a permanent presence in the district as they were in Zharey.

From late fall 2006 to summer 2007<sup>2</sup>, there was minimal insurgent activity directed at Panjwayi district. The focus of coalition operations was in a series of disruption operations in Zharey and on increased patrolling in Panjwayi. Afghan security forces expanded their operations in Panjwayi, particularly along the Mushan-Bazaar-e Panjwayi road. There were numerous motives behind this security force laydown but it attracted limited enemy activity in 2007. Activity was directed against the police checkpoints along the road and amounted to harassment more than anything. The sea-change in Panjwayi was signaled in June 2007 when nine Canadians were killed in two separate large-scale IED attacks-one near Sperwan Ghar, and

another along the Bazaar-e Panjwayi-Nakhonay road. These events were disproportionate and didn't fit any existing pattern of enemy behavior in the district.

in late 2007, the decision was made to 'harden' Afghan security force checkpoints along the Mushan-Bazaar-e Panjwayi road and then, in time, pave that route down to Mushan. These decisions related to a plan to encircle insurgent forces in Zharey district while at the same time providing employment for people in Panjwayi district, that is, buy off fighting-age males. Once the checkpoint system was hardened, it attracted significant enemy activity. The use of large groupings of armoured vehicles on the western part of the route to resupply the 'police sub stations' attracted even more enemy attention in the form of large IED's and by the spring of 2008 a dual developed between insurgents in western Zharey and Panjwayi and Canadian forces as they sought to resupply and relieve forces along the road. This dual drew in more and more coalition resources and produced record levels of violence in western Panjwayi district.

At the same time in early 2008, discreet insurgent operations conducted from Nahkonay against the relatively stable Dand District became a new cause for concern, but there weren't enough coalition resources to handle Zharey, Arghandab, eastern Panjwayi, and western Panjwayi at the same time.

By the summer of 2008, the insurgents significantly ramped up IED activity along the eastern end of the Mushan road and expanded suicide IED operations inside Bazaar-e Panjwayi itself. The withdrawal of coalition forces from a number of combat out posts and attempts to use aerial resupply instead of armoured resupply columns resulted in an adaptation in enemy tactics, particularly the use of indirect fire against 'tactical infrastructure', the domination of terrain in the western part of the district, and the promulgation of an intimidation campaign against workers involved in road construction. In effect, the situation in Panjwayi district deteriorated from

merely hosting a Taliban logistical 'ratline' into the city in 2005 to acting as a whole new district 'front' on par with Zharey and Arghandab districts in importance to the enemy effort in 2008.

### The War in Bazaar-e Panjwayi in 2008-09

By early 2009, the 3 RCR Battle Group maintained a tank squadron and a mechanized infantry platoon in Forward Operating Base Mas 'um Ghar adjacent to Bazaar-e Panjwayi and an infantry company and an M-777 artillery detachment in Patrol Base Sperwan Ghar. A Canadian Operational Mentor and Liaison Team (OMLT) was also based in Mas'um Ghar and aligned with 2<sup>nd</sup> (Strike) Kandak, an Afghan National Army light infantry battalion. 2<sup>nd</sup> (Strike) Kandak had its Weapons Company in Mas 'um Ghar, and another infantry company situated in 'tactical infrastructure' near Sperwan Ghar. A Canadian Police Operational Mentor Team (P-OMLT), a mixture of military police and combat arms troops, worked with the Afghan Uniformed Police, an organization consisting of partially trained militia.

On the development front, the Construction Management Organization, a Canadian engineer sub-unit, deployed Construction Management Team-1 to Panjwayi district to supervise a road paving project from Bazaar-e Panjwayi to Sperwan Ghar. The Joint District Coordination Centre (JDCC), another Canadian-led and mentored organization, was established at Mas'um Ghar to act as a security coordination centre and nexus between the three Afghan security forces (army, police, and National Directorate of Security) and the Canadian forces in the area. The JDCC was also responsible for running the 911-like phone system for the district.

Task Force Kandahar, the brigade-level headquarters, established Stability Box JUNO in 2008. Stability Box JUNO ran down eastern Zharey district to Bazaar-e Panjwayi. The idea was to establish security in the box with coalition and Afghan forces, and then focus Canadian and Afghan

security and development resources on two critical areas: the Highway 1 to Bazaar-e Panjwayi road and Bazaar-e Panjwayi itself. The idea was to cajole the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) representatives from the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Kandahar City to come out to Zharey and Panjwayi districts so they could make closer contacts with their Afghan counterparts and carry out governance and development activities. Some thought was given at this time to making the JDCC a kind of “PRT forward” at the district level and even bringing out the civilian police (CIVPOL) component of the PRT to work with the Afghan police and the P-OMLT. All of these activities were supposed to be conducted inside Stability Box JUNO: There was little thought given to expanding activities outside of it for the time being- ‘ink spot’ theory was not in play.

The 3 RCR Battle Group’s concept of operations usually involved bringing together the tank squadron, and one or two infantry companies plus close air support aircraft for a deliberate operation in either Panjwayi or Zharey district-it was usually Zharey because of the proximity of Zharey to the vital Highway 1 main service route. The Battle Group’s operations were not formally tied to the stability box, nor were those of the OMLT and 2<sup>nd</sup> Kandak. The reality was that 3 RCR Battle Group was pre-occupied with “killing the red icons” that popped up on the map and it possessed significant weight to do so-if the enemy was engaged in near-conventional operations like he tended to in Zharey or when he attempted to interfere with ground resupply operations directed towards the beleaguered Strong Point Mushan in western Panjwayi district.

It would be easy to draw boundaries on a map and declare that the coalition forces and their Afghan counterparts controlled those spaces and sortied out from time to time into enemy-controlled spaces to destroy them and return. Indeed, a future historian may make that mistake looking at



period maps that clearly delineate sub-unit boundaries, depict with certainty insurgent logistical and command nodes, and assume a sort of linear reality.

There was another, more complex reality however. The insurgent forces' structure in Panjwayi district was itself multi-faceted. There were what we might call 'main force' Taliban. These were trained and organized guerilla infantry with access to heavy weapons and communications. Some were local fighters, while others were out-of-area fighters from Pakistan. For the most part these fighters were located west of Sperwan Ghar.

Then there were IED emplacements. There were at this time two or more specialized cells. One operated on the Bazaar-e Panjwayi-Kandahar City highway to the east, while another operated in and around Bazaar-E Panjwayi itself. One was from the district and another consisted of out-of-area personnel.

The third type of insurgent were the intimidation teams. These consisted of small groups of young men on motorcycles equipped with concealed pistols (so that they could not be targeted as insurgents). Operating at night, they would move north from the Sperwan Ghar area into Bazaar-e Panjwayi for nocturnal activity. There was a relationship between the intimidation teams and the IED cell in the Bazaar.

The pattern of enemy activity involved all three types of insurgents. The 'main force' guerillas kept the Battle Group occupied by day west of Sperwan Ghar and at times moved in to shoot up coalition and Afghan tactical infrastructure in order to harass and provoke. Airpower and artillery might be used in response, or some form of combat-team sized sweep might be mounted from which the main force insurgents would fire at and then quickly disengage, leaving the Battle Group punching into space. At night, the IED cells interdicted the eastern main service route with anti-vehicle IEDs and lay anti-personnel IEDs to inflict damage on dismounted Afghan army and police patrols. The intimidation teams coerced local leaders and pro-government people in Bazaar-e Panjwayi itself. Control wasn't measured by

what ground was staked out on a map by blue icons-control varied depending on the time of day or night. Control of the population through intimidation was more important to the enemy than physical control of the structures that constituted the town of Bazaar-e Panjwayi.

And that was not all. The internal politics of the district were such that there was friction between the district leader on one hand and the chief of police and another local power broker on the other. For the most part, this was related to the district leader's concerns that police from outside the district would examine his extracurricular economic activities. There was widespread belief that the district leader initiated a local protest against the police chief and staged the event in such a way to demonstrate that the police were powerless. A second event involving the shooting of an individual in the bazaar by a young man wearing an police uniform but who was not police. This was believed to be another attempt to discredit the police chief. Taken together and then combined with enemy actions, this contributed to seriously undermining the population's confidence in the police

There was little or no security in the Bazaar-e Panjwayi area at night. Despite the urgings of the P-OMLT, the police would not patrol. The OMLT was working on a night time army patrol schedule but capabilities were limited by the lack of night vision and the lack of a responsive Afghan counter IED and MEDEVAC capacity. The Weapons Company was not high enough up on the priority list for equipment. The insurgents eventually mounted their own local 'spectacular', an event that resulted in the slaughter of an entire police check-point in bazaar itself 500m from FOB Mas'um Ghar. The insurgents even established a temporary checkpoint in the bazaar in the course of one night. Intimidation teams operated freely in the villages south of the bazaar proper and there was no night-time security force response.

Critically, the cell phone system in the area was shut down at night at the behest of the insurgents, who in past years conducted a scorched earth campaign against the cell towers in Panjwayi and Zharey districts. The cell

phone companies acquiesced to the intimidation. Consequently, local people could not call the JDCC and report criminal and insurgent activity to the authorities.

Juxtaposed with all of this was the vibrant economy in the bazaar, where all items necessary for the functioning of every day life were available and luxury goods, by Afghan definition, were available. The insurgency appeared to have little or no effect on the economy per se. One school in Bazaar-e Panjwayi was full of children and active, while another that lay just outside the Afghan security patrol area remained closed, due to insurgent intimidation

The most positive aspect of the coalition forces presence in bazaar-e Panjwayi was Construction Management Team 1. CMT-1, consisting of Navy plumbers, Air Force construction engineers (and even a submariner) and mounted in TLAV armoured vehicles, worked alongside 400 locally-hired people and the Blue Hackle private security company. CMT-1 managed a paving project that slowly inched its way south west from Bazaar-e Panjwayi. This project attracted significant enemy activity starting in November 2008 including a mortar attack; small-arms fire; a suicide bomb attack directed at the administration site; intimidation of workers, through kidnapping, beatings, and subsequent release to 'psyops' the other workers. It is possible the intimidation was not, in fact, insurgent-based and may be the result of the refusal by some workers to kick-back to the district leader or others.

Despite all of this, over 80% of the workers arrived for work regularly. As a group, they significantly improved their living standard-they wore close-toed shoes, had higher-quality clothing, and rode motorcycles to work instead of walking or riding bicycles. A micro-economy emerged in the adjacent communities to supply food and small goods to the workers. It is safe to say that the workers spent the bulk of their earnings in Bazaar-e Panjwayi in support of their families, which in turn boosted the vibrancy of the local economy as a whole. High pay appeared to over-ride the insurgency's

intimidation efforts. It was probable, however, that the insurgents received a kick-back either from the workers or from district power brokers after they took their cut. Alternatively, the attacks against the project may not have been insurgent-based at all and may have been designed to convince the workers to kick back to local power brokers. The use of a suicide bomber, however, was a strong indicator that Taliban insurgents were involved in at least some of the attacks.

Unlike other coalition organizations in the area, CMT-1 developed relationships with the local mullahs along the project route. These were ad hoc personality-based initiatives, in one case led by an infantry corporal who noticed that the local mosque speakers were rusted out and offered to help fix them. Local credibility was gained between the communities, the project workers, and CMT-1 as these relationships developed and as a result more information on what was going on around the project and in Bazaar-e Panjwayi was acquired-calls to the JDCC increased as relatives of the workers had more confidence to call in information on suspicious activity in the district-and as far away as Kandahar City.

### Directions Not Taken

Many of the pieces necessary for successful 'COIN' operations in Bazaar-e Panjwayi were in place. There was a high enough troop density. The town was geographically and economically important. Why were the coalition and Afghan forces unable to generate the 'COIN effect' inside the Bazaar-e Panjwayi portion of Stability Box JUNO in 2008-09?

Local governance in the form of the district leader was a serious impediment. This took two forms. The first was his antagonistic relationship with the police. The police are critical to any 'COIN' effort in that they are the security forces immediate day to day contact with the population, they are the immediate 'face' of the government. One should not use the army to police

the population. The second was the possibility that there was overlap between district leaders interests and those of the insurgents when it came to the paving project. Had there been a strong coalition civilian governance presence in the district, his malfeasance might have come under scrutiny earlier. Having a governance specialist from the PRT visit on a near random basis was not enough.

The lack of effective security force coordination was another serious problem. In theory, the JDCC should have been the mechanism to get the police, the army, their mentors, and the district leader together to formulate a district security plan. In addition to the antagonism between the district leader and the police, there was also animosity between the police and the army, with the army viewing itself as a morally superior institution to the corrupt, untrained police. Canadian staff at the JDCC were new to Afghanistan and did not consist of specially-trained personnel (though there was a CIVPOL representative). The efforts of the OMLT and P-OMLT mentors became key 'connective tissue,' particularly the P-OMLT. The Canadian OMLT mentors could coordinate with the P-OMLT mentors laterally and then each could work on the police and the army to get them to cooperate. The P-OMLT used its initiative and, despite being denied access to higher-level intelligence from the Canadian All Source Intelligence Cell at Kandahar Air Field, was able to collect intelligence with its allies and facilitate police raids that shut down one of the IED cells. The police also participated in IED clearance sweeps east of the bazaar, thus deterring IED emplacement. These activities in turn boosted police morale but were unable to offset the other problems in the police-government relationship.

The CMT-1 experience should have been analyzed and systematized in conjunction with improvements to security force coordination. CMT-1 was generating effects that could have contributed to 'COIN' but the experience was isolated and not systematized. Indeed, the lack of any development facilitated by the Kandahar Provincial Reconstruction Team's CIDA and

DFAIT representatives should be noted. Here was an ad hoc Canadian Forces sub-unit doing what the professional developers were not-and having positive effects that had the potential to be widespread. CMT-1 operations, however, were at a lesser military cultural prestige level than, say, Battle Group combat team sweeps and advance to contact in against insurgent 'main force' guerilla fighters.

All coalition and Afghan activities should have focused on 'taking back the night' from the insurgents. This would have restored security in the eyes of the population to a significant degree and from there this could have served as the basis for improved policing at all levels which in turn would have resulted in better targeting data on the insurgents of all types. The first step should have been to restore cell phone service-despite what the companies were doing elsewhere. The telephone is the 'connective tissue' between the population and the police, via the JDCC. The police needed the capacity to respond to incidents. If the police needed reinforcement, there should have been army quick reaction forces to back them up of the situation escalated.

None of these measures were put into play. Coalition efforts were stove-piped and uncoordinated. There was a lack of will within the Afghan government camp. Consequently, the population in Bazaar-e Panjwayi remained uncommitted to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and increasingly became a haven for insurgent forces to operate in: all this while combat team operations conducted by the Battle Group ranged far and wide into western Panjwayi district and north into Zharey district. Bazaar-e Panjwayi had two governments: Afghan government by day, insurgent rule by night.

The situation in 2010

A year and half later, the situation had not significantly improved in Bazaar-e Panjwayi and, in fact, deteriorated throughout Panjwayi district.

Insurgent activity in Bazaar-e Panjwayi continued unabated. The school closed and the bazaar became loaded with fighting age males with sullen looks. Children made threatening gestures towards coalition forces.<sup>3</sup> Afghan patrols seldom left the main road through the bazaar area. Economic activity, however, remained robust. The bazaar thrived in terms of proliferation of goods, variety of produce, and bustling activity. Solar-powered lamp posts were in evidence. There was substantial shopping activity in the bazaar during the day-and at night. The coalition forces still had no idea what went on inside of the mosques in Bazaar-e Panjwayi.

Since 2009 the insurgents expanded their activities and established four 'defended areas' in eastern Panjwayi district. They also deepened their hold on western Panjwayi. They seriously contested the coalition forces for control over the population of these defended areas using parallel governance techniques coupled to the establishment of defensive belts on the approaches of these comparatively isolated communities.

To counter enemy action in these communities, the Battle Group shifted from a counterinsurgency to a 'COIN' approach. Infantry companies were dispersed to those communities and they conducted partnered operations with Afghan army and police. At the same time, CIMIC tried to work with local leaders on reconstruction and aid projects. The difference between Battle Group operations in 2010 compared to 2009 is that the Canadian battle group area of operations was reduced to a single district from three, and there was a greater recognition in subsequent battle groups in 2009-10 that 'COIN' operations needed to predominate over counterinsurgency. This facilitated the grouping of the infantry companies in Panjwayi district, their dispersion to the threatened communities, and efforts to integrate development and security in their operating areas.

As the Canadian forces adapted, so did the insurgents. The insurgent teams became smaller-4-6 people in order to present a small, fleeting target-and they increasingly concealed their weapons to complicate coalition force

targeting. Insurgent tactics evolved to include the use of children as signalers in their early warning system; assistance with IED emplacement; and as shields to prevent aerial engagement of maneuvering heavy weapons teams. The insurgents engaged local coalition forces' combat outposts and strong points with direct fire and used anti-personnel IED's to contain any forces that project from their bases-these techniques were similar to those employed against the tactical infrastructure established along the Bazaar-e Panjwayi-Mushan road in 2007-08. The added difference is that in 2010 their techniques were specifically designed to limit coalition forces interaction with the population. In effect, this kept coalition forces off balance and ensured that the populations in those areas remained uncommitted to the government.

The enemy's efforts at parallel governance grew dramatically since 2009 and moved from 'negative governance' to positive governance.<sup>4</sup> By 2010 the enemy had:

- a court and dispute resolution system established in Zangabad which administers the whole district. People may be transported there for 'trial' or travel there of their own initiative for land dispute resolution. There is no equivalent functional government structure in Bazaar-e Panjwayi.
- co-opted 'neutral' aid projects and used them to 'psyops' the population.
- established numerous Illegal vehicle check points to exert population control measures
- conducted a systematic intimidation campaign against local elders both in insurgent-controlled areas and in other areas throughout the district.
- provided limited medical care in some areas using 'neutral' or even government resources.

The inability of the coalition to establish a special programme to identify, target and disrupt parallel governance meant that the insurgents developed a deeper hold in the communities they accessed they had two years earlier.



The Afghan National Army company responsible for Bazaar-e Panjwayi was, by 2010, unmentored by the OMLT. The OMLT policy, imposed by ISAF and endorsed by Canada, removed company-level mentoring by the summer of 2010. Even though this company belonged to 2<sup>nd</sup> Kandak, an experienced unit, 4<sup>th</sup> Company was new and inexperienced. It did not conduct partnered operations with the coalition forces, nor did it conduct joint ops with the police. The ANA/OMLT and ANP/P-OMLT patrolling of Bazaar-e Panjwayi and points south ceased to function. This was in contrast to what the OMLT and P-OMLT were doing in 2009. The decision by Task Force Kandahar to stop mentoring at the company-level in early 2010 and the realignment turbulence when the P-OMLT was reassigned by the brigade headquarters from the OMLT to the Task Force Kandahar Military Police Company had detrimental effects on the security presence in Bazaar-e Panjwayi. Any synergy that existed between the OMLT and P-OMLT disappeared.

Policing effectiveness was dramatically reduced. A Focused District Development (FDD) plan, a national plan designed to remove in-situ police, replace them temporarily with a federal gendarmerie, retrain the police and then re-insert them back into the district wasn't implemented at all. The police were in 2010 no better off in terms of equipment, motivation, and training than in 2009. The poor relationship between the Afghan police leadership and the district leader did not improve at all. Indeed, an effective chief of police that had an antagonistic relationship with the district leader was killed by an IED in June 2009 that was not necessarily associated with insurgent activity.<sup>5</sup> The situation deteriorated further when his replacement lost his cool and assaulted the district leader during a meeting in July 2010.

This same ineffective and divisive district leader remained in place generating the same problems as before, including the deliberate antagonization of the police leadership which in turn generated constant turbulence in policing with its obvious and calculated knock-on effects. District development assembly meetings became moribund (and under threat

because of the high-profile assassination of one of its more effective members, an individual who insisted that there be fair bidding on a road construction project), the district shura became unrepresentative of the population and psychologically cowed, and the community development councils became inoperative. All decisionmaking went through the illiterate, uneducated district leader and became projected through the patronage/nepotistic lens held up by the district leader and his backers. Attempts to get governance support in the form of educated advisors came to naught. Line ministries did not, in general, come out to Panjwayi district. Government-controlled dispute resolution was practically non-existent at the district level-but insurgent mechanisms were increasing in influence at the same time.

Astoundingly, one and half years later, the cell phone system in the district remained off at night and on during the day. This in effect severed communications between the population and the police/government for almost 30% of the time, particularly during the critical hours of darkness. This in turn invalidated any local policing or counter-insurgent response plan at the community and facilitated enemy intimidation operations.

The establishment of Operations Coordination Centre-District (Panjwayi) or the OCC-D(P) in 2010 was a significant improvement over the moribund Joint District Coordination Centre both in terms of location, facilities, and effectiveness. Moving the coordination facility next to the district centre and away from the forward operating base at Mas'um Ghar was a positive move. The Mas'um Ghar facilities were primitive and did not physically facilitate good coordination (several maze-like buildings, on a hill, inside ISAF tactical infrastructure). The new district centre was symbolic in a positive sense in that it physically overlooked the southern part of the district as well as Bazaar-e Panjwayi.

The establishment of a permanent District Stabilization Team to work from the OCC-D(P) was a dramatic improvement over the nearly random visits from the Provincial Reconstruction Team CIDA and DFAIT

representatives in the past. The idea of the JDCC or the OCC-D(P) acting as a “Provincial Reconstruction Team-Forward”, mooted nearly two years ago, nearly became a reality in 2010. However, the turbulence generated by the dismantlement of the original Provincial Reconstruction Team structure in the summer of 2010 undermined the support base for a “PRT forward” which in turn forced the District Stabilization Team to act nearly independently. The American DST representatives used whatever influence or resources they had with a variety of American structures to get the job done, while the Canadian DST representative had little or no influence on anything.<sup>6</sup> “Handshake” relationships existed between the DST and the Battle Group which allowed some coordination with the Engineer Construction Squadron (the Construction Management Organization’s replacement in yet another re-organization), and the Battle Group Civil-Military Co-operation teams.

In many ways, the development situation regressed to 2005, in that the OCC-D(P) was in the same position that the Canadian Provincial Reconstruction Team was when it started in 2005, and the various mechanisms designed to get projects out to the communities were not longer functional. The Kandahar Provincial Reconstruction Team was viewed in the summer of 2010 by some as dysfunctional, unresponsive to Panjwayi district requirements, and too Kandahar City-centric. Indeed, during the tour from September 2009 to February 2010 the on-site Canadian commanders in Masu’m Ghar noted that a DFAIT representative from the PRT stayed for five days in Panjwayi-two more than he wanted to because of airlift issue. There was no CIDA representation in the district, nor were there any visits from CIDA personnel during that six-month period. On the positive side, the P-OMLT teams were moved to the coordination centre, as were Canadian civilian police. This generated some positive effects on Afghan policing but it is as if policing support programmes started all over from scratch. This also applied to the reconstruction and development programmes.

Disappointingly, the road paving project on the Bazaar-e Panjwayi-Mushan road completely collapsed back in 2009. The Construction Management Teams were moved to Dand district to support initiatives there by the summer and paving was turned over to a Western contractor. This contractor was unable to work effectively with the district leader (that is, was probably unable or unwilling to come to a suitable financial ‘arrangement’ with him) and violence increased against the workers-in one case IEDs were laid under shaded trees where workers took their lunch. This afforded the contractor the excuse not to complete the project because of the security situation.<sup>7</sup> Contractor-based ‘solutions’ elsewhere in the district became for the most part inoperative for the same reasons. This may have been the result of commercial violence between competitors that masquerades as insurgent violence. The spin-off benefits for the population in 2009 generated by the road paving project appeared to have all dried up.

Legitimacy is Key....but the Lock is Broken

First and foremost neither counterinsurgency nor ‘COIN’ addressed the problems of government legitimacy. As it stood in the summer of 2010, the coalition forces entered a stalemate in the province generally, and Panjwayi district in particular. The insurgency increased its governance capacity in the rural areas it dominated. They continued to challenge the government for control of districts adjacent to Kandahar City and then mounted an urban terrorist campaign inside the city. The substantially increased coalition forces troop density and increased security measures in and around the city held the situation in check. The bulk of the population, however, remained uncommitted in the struggle and tended to support whoever demonstrated strength in the districts. Overlaying this state of affairs was the pervasive loss of legitimacy on the part of the federal, provincial, and local governments in Kandahar Province. The uncommitted portions of the population cannot

shift allegiance to the government of Afghanistan if that governance is suspect and illegitimate. Consequently, the insurgency continued to hold out in these areas and increased its influence with their forms of governance. That was the state of affairs around Bazaar-e Panjwayi and in Panjwayi district.

The perception by the population that the government lacks legitimacy in Kandahar Province and in Panjwayi district was, in 2010, pervasive at a number of levels:

a) Federal Government

The 2009 elections were seen to be fraudulent. The inability of the international community to intervene and correct the situation severely damaged the confidence of the population in both the international community and in the Karzai government. This event and its fallout may prove to have been the tipping point in the increased level of violence seen since mid-2009. The inability of the federal government to reign in NGOs who provide tacit support for the insurgency by remaining 'neutral' damaged the Federal government's image at the local level.

b) Provincial Level

The appointment of demonstrably problematic governors by the president and the subsequent appointment of even more problematic district leaders by the governor was seen by the population as a suspect chain that linked the federal and provincial levels. The Provincial Council, though an elected body, was seen as remote and having little day to day impact on the lives of district residents, particularly those in Panjwayi district. The inability to facilitate the reconstruction a functional justice system so that dispute resolution could take place had in effect ceded that terrain to the insurgency in the rural

areas and reduced confidence amongst the population in the urban areas. Interference with the formation of a functional police service by the district leader ensured that dispute resolution could not take place in the rural areas and, indeed, the poor behaviour of the partially-trained police contributed to the problem at the local level.

#### c) Local Level

Poorly-trained and undisciplined police were viewed as the protectors of the corrupt system. Coalition forces were seen as ignorant outsiders who don't really understand what is going on and leave every six months anyway. Every act of poor behaviour, perceived or otherwise, contributed to the picture of a bunch of infidel mercenaries defending an illegitimate system. Coupled with gender equality programmes pushed by the development community and counter-narcotics operations pushed by the Western law enforcement community, these perceptions were exploited by the insurgency via their religious representatives. NGOs that do not link their programmes with the government are not seen to be neutral-they were seen to be insurgent development projects since they were conducted at the suffrage of the insurgents.

#### d) Religious Level

The insurgency retained religious legitimacy at the local level in Panjwayi district because the coalition forces ceded that ground to them through absolute inaction since 2006. There was no realistic coalition strategy or Canadian policy for religious engagement.

#### e) Tribal Level

There are long-standing grievances at the tribal level pertaining to aid and development dispersions, water rights, land appropriation, and contracting inequalities. Some of these grievances pre-date the existing conflict. These issues overlaid all of the above problems.

In effect, the coalition forces in Panjwayi district were dealing with a 'system of illegitimacy' that undermined the ability to gain the support of the population. Each community consists, in varying proportions, of four types of people:

- Pro-government (or anti-insurgency)
- Uncommitted
- Apathetic
- Pro-insurgency (or anti-government)

The coalition forces' objective should be to decrease the number of apathetic people, convince the uncommitted to support the government, and have those three groups convince the anti-government people to cease and desist-or provide targeting data so they can be removed. The 'system of illegitimacy' ensures that the number of apathetic people remains high, and even pushes uncommitted people into siding with anti-government forces. Indeed, a state of despair may exist in some communities whereby one way out may be presented to young people with no jobs-jihad sanctioned by local religious leaders influenced by anti-government clerics. counterinsurgency and 'COIN' as practiced by the Canadian forces in Panjwayi district, have been unable to address these issues-and possibly cannot.

Conclusions

What are the lessons of the Canadian experience with Bazaar-e Panjwayi and Panjwayi district? First, and most importantly, neither counterinsurgency nor 'COIN' can address legitimacy and the population will remain uncommitted until those problems are addressed. Counterinsurgency and 'COIN' can effectively shield the development and governance efforts, the Canadian army can figure out what the best balance is between counterinsurgency and 'COIN', but neither counterinsurgency nor 'COIN' can replace development and governance.

Second, counterinsurgency and 'COIN', no matter how effective these efforts are, cannot address larger governance issues related to the system of dispute resolution and how that connects with national or provincial-level legal systems. Dispute resolution is a key element in legitimacy. Can or should military security forces be involved in dispute resolution-or police? Of note Canada's predilection towards using the army for 'peacekeeping' may have raised internal army expectations too high in what the institution and its members could or could not accomplish in these areas. It is also probable that the lack of other government department support in this area led to a vacuum that was filled with an army 'can-do' attitude.

The questions that must be asked are these: Where were the Canadian entities whose responsibility it was to handle governance and development issues at all levels? Were they present in the district and just ineffective? Were they effective or ineffective at the provincial and national levels? Or did they focus elsewhere and not prioritize this key town and district-and if so, why? Why were their efforts not properly coordinated with those of the Canadian army in order to produce the synergy needed to achieve success in a place like Bazaar-e Panjwayi?

Third, the counter-insurgent forces can do all sorts of good things in terms of development using CIMIC and other resources, but they must be a link development and governance otherwise there is no benefit to the activities and the insurgents will merely exploit these efforts for their own objectives.



For example, the CMT-1 paving project had positive economic benefits for the population-but it didn't seriously contribute towards shifting the population to supporting the government because nobody established linkages.

Fourth, there was far too much turbulence in Canadian structures and approaches and this produced serious inefficiencies. The constant re-grouping of forces under each commander and nearly monthly re-focusing of operations throughout the area of operations (inside and outside of Panjwayi district) produced a lack of continuity over an 18 month period. Poor conditions became normalized ("Oh, that's just the way it was when we got here, there's nothing that can be done about it") and then were not addressed- the phone system and the district leader were two examples. The insurgents are far more agile, keep their people on the ground until they are killed or promoted, and have a better feel for the operational environment than Canadian forces. They do not have multiple competing layers of bureaucracy and are not hampered by international legal constructs or international media and NGO scrutiny.

The Canadian experience in Bazaar-e Panjwayi and Panjwayi district should serve as a cautionary case study. It is possible in the future that there must be established recognized limits on what the Canadian army can or should do in similar circumstances-regardless of what its members and representatives are capable of doing under similar conditions-and the higher-level headquarters must do what it can and say "Enough!" to force the issue-before it spins out of control.

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<sup>1</sup> . This study is based on the author's in the field observations of coalition and Afghan operations in Bazaar-e Panjwayi and Panjwayi district over a five-year period. The author visited the operating area, accompanied patrols and interviewed participants in winter 2005; summer 2006; summer 2007; spring 2008; summer 2008; spring 2009; and summer 2010.

<sup>2</sup>. Insurgent forces from outside Panjwayi district did transit the district. During Op MEDUSA a substantial enemy force operating in a near-conventional fashion was destroyed by a US Special Operation Task Force around Sperwan Ghar.

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<sup>3</sup> . They draw their thumb across their necks, or make an ‘explosion’ by splaying their fingers out in an upwards gesture while smiling or spitting.

<sup>4</sup> . Sean M. Maloney, “Taliban Governance: Can Canada Compete?” Policy Options June 2009 pp. 63-68.

<sup>5</sup> . This device also killed Corporal Martin Dube’ who was trying to disarm it.

<sup>6</sup> . Most likely due to this individual’s young age, lack of experience, and gender.

<sup>77</sup> . This contractor, Bennett-Fouch and Associates was, apparently, bilking the Afghan Government to the tune of \$33 Million. How, exactly, this organization got the contract really needs to be explored in another venue. See

<http://www.economywatch.com/in-the-news/US-companies-not-paying-afghan-partners-14-07.html> Economy Watch 14 Jul 2010 “US Companies Not Paying Afghan Partners”; Megan Kelly, “US Contractors Breaking Trust,”

<http://www.globalenvision.org/>. ; Carlotta Gall, “US Companies Cheat Locals Out of Millions,” 7 Jul 2010 New York Times,

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/08/world/asia/08contract.html?pagewanted=all>