

“Lethal Three-card Monte: SOF and Economy of Effort Operations in Southern Afghanistan.”

[FINAL]

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“I know its crooked, but it’s the only game in town.”

-Canada Bill Jones

The current military taxonomy regarding special operations forces mission types categorizes them into direct action, special reconnaissance, and indigenous cooperative/foreign internal defence missions. There is substantial focus on the mechanics of these mission types in the literature and more generalized discussions. For example, the tactical specifics of direct action, including weapons load outs, insertion techniques and the like tend to dominate professional and non-professional discussions. The novelty of working with a particular ethnic indigenous group may be another aspect in the literature. The technical parameters of UAVs and SOFLAMs and how they are employed occupy another sphere. We may distinguish between “strategic” SOF operations and “operational-level” SOF operations. Strategically, for example, a national command authority may authorize a specific deniable direct action mission to eliminate a terrorist personality or recover a high value individual or item. Those sorts of missions are generally understood to be SOF operations from popular culture (first-person shooter games like “Call of Duty: Black Ops” and the television series “The Unit”) as much as reality. There is relatively little discussion on or understanding of how SOF are used by commanders in the pursuit of their objectives at the operational-level, however, and that is one area where SOF has really performed valuable service in the Afghanistan war.¹

This lack of understanding is not surprising. Operational security considerations, the comparatively mundane nature of some of the activity, the increased complexity of military operations in general and the inability or unwillingness of operators to articulate what they are doing out of cultural norms are some reasons why this aspect of SOF operations is under-examined. In Afghanistan, the centrality of SOF employment has waxed and waned. In 2001, SOF worked alongside the Northern Alliance providing specialist targeting capabilities and liaison/coordination with American air power long before conventional forces were on the ground. In 2002, SOF hunted high value leadership targets and performed special reconnaissance missions at the theatre-level. After 2002, however, this centrality receded as the nature of the war shifted. In 2006 however, US and NATO planning recognized to a greater extent that SOF should play a significant and integrated role in the emergent country-wide strategy. In that strategy, SOF was to play an Economy of Effort role.

The Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan Campaign Plan and SOF in Afghanistan, 2003-05

Before moving on to the specifics of the 2006 strategy and how it was implemented in 2007-08, it is essential that we establish what the previous strategy was and where SOF fit into it. In 2003 there were serious concerns within the American commands in Afghanistan that there was a lack of synergy between Operation ENDURING FREEDOM forces and the International Security Assistance Force. ISAF was about to expand outside of its Kabul enclave. At the same time, Combined Forces Command Afghanistan inherited the Provincial Reconstruction Team concept from CJTF-180, the “division”-level headquarters that ran the show previously. In the OEF PRT concept, PRTs that were located in “front line” provinces along

the Durand Line were to have SOF operating from them in a targeting and a coordination role. The information that would come in from improved coordination would assist the Tier I and Tier 0 SOF targeting Al Qaeda, Taliban, HiG and Haqqani Tribal Network leadership targets. At the same time, Tier II SOF would be working with the Afghan Militia Forces in those provinces as well to improve security and increase the professionalism of those forces. Tier II SOF also targeted local and provincial-level insurgent commanders on an opportunistic basis.

There was no real concept of NATO ISAF SOF employment nor was there a SOF concept of operations associated with PRTs that ISAF was scheduled to take over in 2003-04. These were the “stabilization” PRTs, not the “counterinsurgency” PRTs. The British used their SOF in a counter-narcotics role in northern Afghanistan but on a strictly national basis. Other nations’ SOF, including CANSOF, tended to be used in a close protection role in Kabul, or (as certain commanders believed) as the Deputy Chief of Defence Staff’s ‘commissars’ to keep an eye on Canadian commanders. With the prospects of ISAF expansion and with no prospects of combining ISAF and OEF in Afghanistan, there was initially no real impetus to come up with a country-wide strategy and then situate SOF within it. Ironically, one block to OEF-ISAF merger revolved around preventing NATO control over Tier I/Tier 0 operations directed against high value targets. This was based on a series of poor experiences in Bosnia where the French were suspected of blowing American PIFWC seizure operations.

When LGen David Barno took over as the senior American commander in Afghanistan in late 2003, the American headquarters re-examined their country-wide strategy and came up with a campaign plan in informal consultation with the UN, NATO ISAF, and other interested parties. That campaign plan, called “Counterinsurgency Strategy for Afghanistan”, consisted of five pillars:

- defeat terrorism and deny sanctuary
- enable Afghan security structures
- sustain area ownership
- enable reconstruction and good governance
- engage regional states

For the most part, the CFC-A campaign plan was designed to improve interagency and international community coordination and to establish unity of purpose between the various entities seeking to stabilize the country as much as it was to address the security conditions of Afghanistan. The decisive points that the strategy focused on included the 2004 national elections and the 2005 provincial elections, not detailed specifics over how forces in the field should be used to achieve coalition objectives. Barno and his British advisors understood that these elections were critical in establishing the legitimacy of the Afghan government. The role of SOF in this approach was general and identified as continuing the high value enemy leadership hunt with a particular emphasis on Al Qaeda. It also recognized that Tier II SOF would play an intelligence and targeting role in the “counterinsurgency” PRTs.

That said, the implementation of the CFC-A campaign plan established three command areas: Regional Command (East), Regional Command (South), and the CJTF-76 operating area which corresponded to the other half of the country not adjacent to Pakistan (and overlapping with the expanding ISAF area of operations and their PRTs). The Regional Commands were essentially brigade-level conventional commands. Regional Command (South) for example, consisted of the 173rd Airborne Brigade headquarters, a re-roled artillery battalion, an infantry battalion, an independent recce company, and four PRTs in 2005. At the same time, the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force Afghanistan (CJSOTF-A) deployed Tier II and allied SOF units to the two Regional Command areas-but under CJSOTF-A

command. The Tier I SOF also had a separate reporting chain. All three units-conventional, Tier II SOF, and Tier I/Tier 0 SOF were operating in the same area with different mandates and separate control mechanisms.

At some point in late 2004, the situation in RC(South) was rationalized. Nobody could coordinate with Tier I/Tier 0, so they were effectively out of the loop and did their own thing, which apparently was very little give the paucity of high value enemy leadership targets. That left the issue of delineating between conventional and Tier II SOF units. Regional Command (South) had only two maneuver units and a sub-unit for all four provinces. At the same time, Oruzgan province was and had been a SOF 'playground' going back to 2001. The decision was made to focus the recce sub-unit in Helmand, the re-rolled artillery battalion in Kandahar and the infantry battalion in Zabol province. CJSOTF-A assumed responsibility for Oruzgan province, plus three districts in southern Kandahar.

In effect, this constituted an Economy of Effort operation, though it wasn't formally designated as such. There simply weren't enough conventional forces to occupy each and every district in each province in Regional Command (South). Nor was there an apparent need to at the time given the threat level. Tier II SOF, based on TF-71 and then TF-31 (battalion-sized US Special Forces units) worked alongside indigenous Afghan forces mostly drawn from the Afghan Militia Forces (allies from the 2001-02 period) in areas that the Taliban were known to be operating (Those areas were comparatively limited in the 2003-05 period compared to after 2006). Dutch and French SOF operated in southern Kandahar province along the border interdicting the then-small Taliban groups passing through their respective districts.

The CFC-A campaign plan was designed for the low-level insurgency that existed in Afghanistan in 2003-04. SOF's role in that strategy was clearly defined where Tier II SOF occupied their "boxes" and Tier I/Tier 0 hunted leadership targets. The approach was deliberately general and its

dispositions were not intended to withstand the calculated assault on Afghanistan that was unleashed in late 2005.

The Changing Situation, 2005-06

In mid-2005, American Tier II SOF commanders noted that the pattern and nature of insurgent activity was changing in southern Afghanistan. The number of direct-fire attacks on SOF-Afghan forces was dramatically up in Oruzgan and Zabol, as well as Paktia and Kowst. Sensitive site exploitation determined that there were increased numbers of Arab and Chechen fighters training Afghan insurgents. Dead foreign fighters were photographed and identified, as were members of the Pakistani government's covert action directorate. "Political" targeting designed to influence the 2005 elections was increasingly sophisticated. The advent of the suicide bombing campaign in Kandahar and the significantly increased use of other improvised explosive devices during September-October was the real harbinger of change. It was becoming a new war.

The situation steadily deteriorated throughout the first half of 2006 as the insurgency took on a more organized, near-conventional turn culminating in the Zharey and Panjwayi district battles in the summer and fall of 2006. TF-31 found itself engaged in a conventional fight near Sperwan Ghar in September and October 2006 during the MEDUSA battle. This fight essentially eliminated the equivalent of an insurgent light infantry battalion. Prior to that, Task Force BUSHMASTER, a CJTSOTF-A controlled organization, cut their way across Oruzgan province and into northern Helmand province. TF BUSHMASTER was a combination of Tier II SOF from TF-31; a company from a 10th Mountain Division battalion; and indigenous Afghan militia. For the most part, TF BUSHMASTER acted as a conventional mobile formation. The infantry company was inserted onto prominent features in northern Helmand, the enemy was drawn to these

temporary FOBs, and they were attacked and attrited. The Tier II SOF and even Tier I SOF went after any leadership targets that revealed themselves in the area with a mobile column. The whole process was repeated elsewhere as the force moved west out of Oruzgan and south into Helmand in the summer of 2006.

The TF-31 Sperwan Ghar battle and the activities of TF BUSHMASTER were conducted by CJSOTF-A and coordinated with CTF AEGIS, the Regional Command (South) brigade. CTF AEGIS could not use or task these organizations as part of their larger campaign plan, which differed somewhat from the CFC-A campaign plan.² US Tier II SOF activities were completely separate, as were the strikes conducted by Tier I/Tier 0 forces against Taliban high value leadership targets throughout this time. The opportunistic and reactive nature of SOF operations during this time makes them difficult to classify as planned Economy of Effort missions, though these operations still had the effect of degrading the insurgents capacity in the areas they operated.

Towards the Afghan Development Zone Strategy

At this time, NATO ISAF was in the process of expanding throughout Afghanistan in a staged plan. The irrational concept of two international coalitions operating in Afghanistan was about to be jettisoned during this process, once Stage III and Stage IV ISAF expansion was completed (Stage III was Regional Command (South) and Stage IV was Regional Command (East)). The incoming ISAF command led by Lt Gen David Richards, formulated its country-wide strategy in the spring of 2006 in preparation for the ISAF takeover.

The ISAF planners drew on work conducted by OEF planners back in 2003. One issue with the CFC-A campaign plan was its detailed implementation. An important concept that was pursued by the CFC-A

planners was the Regional Development Zone or RDZ concept. The idea was to generate a stabilization, development and security synergy in selected provinces, particularly those with large population centres. The RDZ, with prioritized reconstruction monies, would use the PRT in a given province as the main coordination point between the central government of Afghanistan, the provincial leadership, Afghan and coalition security forces, NGO's and other developers. Kandahar was identified as the first RDZ as early as fall 2003. By mid- or late- 2005, the RDZ idea collapsed, however, through a combination of lack of money and little continuity across the stake holders as they rotated out of the country.

RDZ's were revived under the Richards strategy and called Afghan Development Zones or ADZ's. Unlike the RDZ, the ADZ concept was THE approach in that it was central to the strategy, not just the piecemeal or tentative implementation of a more generalized campaign plan. ADZ's were also linked to the upcoming Afghan National Development Strategy (ANDS), the Canadian-mentored country strategy that essentially replaced the Bonn Agreement and created independently from the CFC-A campaign plan. There would be several ADZ's created simultaneously in critical areas. At the core of each zone were the governance structures, the bulk of the population, and development resources provided by a variety of agencies and organizations. The inner security for the zone was to be provided by the Afghan national security forces, police and army. The next outer layer of security for the zones were the ISAF manouvre forces. Reconstruction resources would be centralized in the zone first, and then pushed out later as the security situation improved. Each ADZ would be connected by main service routes, which could become lateral hubs for expansion. The ADZ approach accepted that some districts where reconstruction work was progressing would have to be scaled back or abandoned. Outside of the zone lay the SOF operating areas. These areas were to act as filters and to disrupt enemy activity before it could get into the zone. This was pure economy of effort-the ISAF planners

knew that they did not have enough forces to control the entirety of each province-there were only so many ISAF and OEF maneuver units, and the Afghan National Army was still a long way from being able to handle even battalion-level activities.

From Theory to Reality

The coalition effort in Kandahar province in 2007-08 was a critical fight during the war and consequently is a good example to explore how SOF was employed within the context of the ADZ strategy. The culmination of two near-conventional operations in the fall of 2006, Operation MEDUSA and Operation BAAZ TSUKA, presented coalition leaders with a steady-state into the spring of 2007. Working around the province, the Taliban guerilla forces were active in Shah Wali Kot and the northern districts; Zharey district with some activity in Panjwayi; Maywand district, and in Khakriz. Registan, Maruf and Arghistan were infiltration areas from Pakistan, while Shorabak and Spin Boldak constituted a special case because of the unique leadership and tribal political situation there. Terrorist cells operated in Kandahar City proper. The pattern of guerilla operations in the rural districts and terrorist operations in the built-up areas was not as supported with religious/political mobilization as it would be by 2009-10. The insurgents practiced negative governance, that is, they disrupted government of Afghanistan development and reconstruction activities without providing an alternative parallel structure. They specifically targeted the religious authorities in order to shape their information operations.

The implementation of the ADZ strategy in Kandahar province in late 2006 resulted in a re-focus of the coalition effort to contain the enemy in Zharey district and a withdrawal of coalition conventional forces from Shah Wali Kot. The ADZ was defined, for all intents and purposes, as the City and

its immediately adjacent districts-Arghandab, which was self-protecting and nearly self-governing under Mullah Naquib; Dand, Daman, and Panjwayi districts. Spin Boldak on the border, with its unique governance structure under Colonel Abdul Reziq, was almost a mini-ADZ unto itself. At this point the ANSF was still limited in capability, especially the 'police'. For the most part there was one Canadian battle group, the Canadian recce squadron, and one Afghan kandak available for operations at any one time. Recce Squadron handled Spin Boldak, the 2 RCR Battle Group focused solely on Zharey and Panjwayi with as many Afghans as could be made available from the ANA. 'Police' units were essentially untrained militias wearing police uniforms.

The number of available SOF organizations increased in 2007 and became more integrated into ISAF planning in Kandahar. As before, there were not enough conventional coalition or Afghan forces to occupy each and every district in the province. The Polish SOF unit, Grupa Reagowania Operacyjno-Manewrowego or GROM, deployed around February 2007. A ground-mobile organization with no integral helicopter support, it was assigned the Maruf and Arghistan districts. GROM's task was to interdict insurgent resupply and reinforcement movement in those districts. GROM operated without the development and reconstruction resources needed to gain the population's support. It lacked a robust integral CIMIC or PSYOPS capability. This was in part due to issues within the Provincial Reconstruction Team and their emphasis on Kandahar provincial governance. PRT priorities were the ADZ : Maruf and Arghistan lay outside the ADZ. GROM was not under the command of Task Force Kandahar, though it retained close liaison with it. Its reporting chain was through CJSOTF-A. In many ways, GROM's mission was a continuation of the French SOF mission back in 2005, but the force did not bring a coordinated direct action-CIMIC-PSYOPS approach to the fight in those districts. There was some coordinated Afghan National Security Forces-SOF approach, but there was a significant language barrier issue. At best GROM was a Tier II unit that performed a disruptive function but it did

not set out to shape the districts population to resist insurgent activity in any comprehensive fashion.

Contrast this with British SOF operations under TF 42. TF 42 tended to be more of a Tier I 'scalpel', but not under TFK or NATO command. It consisted of a combination of elements from the Special Air Service, Special Boat Squadron, the Special Reconnaissance Regiment, and integral helicopter support from 7 Squadron, RAF. The highly-mobile TF 42 tended to work in Helmand province (the SAS component generally) with the SBS working in and around Kandahar City. TF 42 had a close relationship to the police forces, the Canadian PRT, and the Canadian intelligence structures. At times TF 42 and the PRT were the only coalition forces operating in the city as opposed to just transiting it. TF 42 hunted urban terrorists. Later on, TF 42 developed actionable intelligence on cells operating between Kandahar City and in Spin Boldak. The Canadian Recce Squadron, itself already acting in an Economy of Effort role in Spin Boldak alongside local Afghan militia forces, worked with TF 42 to track down IED cells. Like GROM, however, TF 42 lacked a comprehensive approach to the population.

The US Special Forces generally deployed a battalion-sized Special Operations Task Force to work in Kandahar, Oruzgan, and Zabol provinces starting in 2006 (before that the task force had responsibilities in Regional Command (East) as well). The American approach was very different from GROM and TF 42. Special Operations task forces TF-31, TF-71, and TF-73 rotated in and out of Kandahar province in 2007-08 on six-month rotations. The US special operations task force, unlike the British and Polish SOF, brought a more comprehensive approach to the fight. Special Forces Operational Detachment Alphas's or ODAs, generally 12-man teams, worked alongside Afghan forces of platoon and company size. These Afghans came from different sources. Some were trusted militia forces from the 2001-02 period who had not been disarmed and demobilized in the DDR and DIAG processess. As the Afghan National Army expanded in 2007-08, the US SOTF

leveraged its influence and had regular infantry companies and even a whole kandak assigned to it. Later on when specialized Commando Kandaks came on line they deployed commando companies with the ODAs.

The US SOTF had Civil Affairs and PSYOPS capabilities integrated into their structures and operations. As such, the US SOTF could occupy a district and bring information operations and civil affairs projects to it in order to influence the population. This in theory could act as a gateway for the larger governmental development projects handled by the PRT though in practice US SOTF and PRT coordination was not optimal in 2007-08.

The US SOTF operated in an arc across northern Kandahar province, moving back and forth from Shah Wali Kot into Khakriz and then Ghorak on occasion. Once again, these districts lay outside the ADZ and therefore an integrated development approach was not possible. This left the US SOTF to conduct mobile operations and disrupt insurgent activity (in most cases supported with Canadian M-777 artillery-sometimes a detachment of two guns was cut to the SOTF for operations). Unlike Maruf and Arghistan, Shah Wali Kot and Khakriz hosted comparatively robust and resilient guerilla forces that were supplied through logistic chains running through the mountainous terrain in Oruzgan, Helmand and Zabol provinces.

Once again, the US SOTFs reported to CJSOTF and not Task Force Kandahar. This is a critical point. GROM, TF-42 and the US SOTFs retained different rules of engagement from the NATO ISAF conventional forces operating in the province. This had advantages and disadvantages. On the down side, there were problems with effects mitigation when a SOF operation killed the wrong people under looser rules of engagement. It was next to impossible to explain to the media 1) that there were SOF present and operating, because they were special and deniable and 2) that they didn't belong to the Canadian-led command structures in the province. On the plus side, non-ISAF SOF could be used by ISAF forces to do things that ISAF was

restricted from doing-if the coordination measures were acceptable to both parties.

The CANSOF organizations during this time tended towards a TF-42 model rather than a GROM or US SOTF approach (but without the integral helicopter support). One CANSOF organization was more direct-action oriented and went after vetted enemy leadership targets, IED cells and networks within the ADZ. Another CANSOF organization sat somewhere between Tier II and Tier III. It did some direct actions within the ADZ. In time this organization developed relationships with Afghan structures. There was little or no integral CIMIC or PSYOPS capacity to the CANSOF task forces in the way the US SOTF employed CA and PSYOPS.

As we can see, the Economy of Effort organizations within the ADZ strategy were GROM and the US SOTFs. As in the past, there were not enough conventional forces to go around. SOF was employed to maintain a disruptive influence on the approaches to the ADZ in Kandahar. How well did they perform?

Criteria for success and measures of effectiveness have bedeviled the coalition effort in Afghanistan at the best of times. We can, however, look at this issue broadly. First, to what extent did the SOF organizations attenuate enemy activity? Second, what type of enemy activity was attenuated? Third, how did that attenuation contribute to the situation as it evolved in 2007-08? To answer those questions, we need to further identify how the enemy was behaving and what tools he was using. In 2007, the situation in Kandahar province had the enemy building up in upper Shah Wali Kot, Nesh, and upper Khakriz and influencing upper Ghorak. He was holed up in Zharey district, and was using Panjwayi and Maywand districts as rest/logistic zones. There was urban terrorism and information operations conducted inside the city. The insurgents had just suffered significant casualties in the fall of 2006 and were shifting gears into the spring and summer of 2007.

Throughout 2007, the enemy eyed Arghandab district. First, Arghandab's tribal/political structure was crucial for the defence of the city proper and second, any moves on Arghandab would relieve pressure on their allies in Zharey. The death of Mullah Naquib was the kick-off for a campaign versus Arghandab but then it stalled out. It is probable that the SOTF operating in an arc north and forward of Arghandab had a disruptive effect. The enemy mounted a major operation in November which did penetrate to Arghandab but it was routed using conventional forces, police and the US SOTF.

As for GROM over in Arghistan and Maruf, it is difficult to measure how many insurgents were deterred, stopped, or otherwise thwarted from moving through those districts. The rugged terrain was undoubtedly a factor, as was enemy access to other high-speed routes adjacent to those two districts. GROM basically introduced some increased friction into the enemy's plans but it wasn't seriously coordinated with any other coalition effort.

In both cases, battlefield success was theoretically translatable into local support-but only if there were a permanent security presence coupled with development projects. In neither case could the American SOTFs and GROM generate a state whereby governance and development could take off. They could set the conditions for it, but without police and ANA there was no way this was going to take hold. And, given the ADZ strategy, it wasn't considered crucial anyway.

By early 2008, some thought was given to expanding the ADZ into Zharey and then Maywand. For the most part this was a conventional show handled by the Regional Battle Group (South) (1 Royal Gurkha Rifles) which conducted Economy of Effort operations in Khakriz and Maywand. The US SOTF generally stuck to Shah Wali Kot and Arghandab, with some forays into Ghorak. The enemy repeated his Arghandab adventure in June 2008 and was handed the same result-conventional forces ejected them from Arghandab. The fact that this was the second time the insurgency was able to penetrate the SOTF screen in Shah Wali Kot-Khakriz indicates that

something wasn't working with the SOTF and its operations, either in concept of operations, target acquisition or response. As for GROM, its effectiveness was questioned by its own leadership and by August 2008 the organization was withdrawn and sent to Ghazni in Regional Command (East). This left virtually no coalition forces or presence in Maruf or Arghistan.

After the second Arghandab foray, the insurgents altered their approach to the district and emphasized a constant assault on the tribal/political structure using assassination and intimidation. The US SOTF was not structured to handle this sort of attack-generally, a policing and governance response is more appropriate. The US SOTF continued with its disruptive operations in Shah Wali Kot and Khakriz. This probably attenuated enemy guerilla forces and kept leadership targets in a state of agitation, but it had no effect on preventing the destabilization of Arghandab. The SOTF probably prevented a guerilla force follow-up and consolidation of the "political" campaign.

Another probable SOTF success was in the upper Shah Wali Kot area, in a zone called "the Jet Stream." This insurgent logistics route running from Zabol into Oruzgan and then to northern Helmand, with branches south into upper Kandahar province, was a serious target of opportunity for the US SOTF. Disruption operations against the Jet Stream would have had a deleterious effect on support for the Shah Wali Kot-Khakriz insurgents who were in turn supporting the Arghandab operations-and to some extent, the insurgents in Zharey district as well. Once again, there are intangibles in play that cannot be measured with existing tools. What amount of money, weapons, leaders, and reinforcements did the enemy put into the system and how much of that made it through the system to its end users, for example? To what extent did the enemy NOT do something or move through an area because they THOUGHT SOF was working there?

What is clear is that the ADZ strategy, even with its Economy of Effort aspects, was itself under-resourced. Of the seven active districts adjacent to the ADZ, only three or four contained SOF forces in an Economy of Effort role. The RBG(S) operated in two others sharing one with SOF. It was like a game of three-card monte. Recall at the same time there was only one coalition battle group (the Canadian one) and up to two Afghan kandaks in play in the province-these were focused solely on Zharey and Panjwayi-and then hived off to deal with Arghandab and even to support British operations in Helmand province from time to time. It is highly likely that the SOTF and GROM played a role in interfering with the enemy's designs on Kandahar province.

Ultimately, the ADZ strategy would be subsumed by subsequent headquarters and commanders who had, in their view, better ideas. Richards' successor spent the bulk of his time attempting to establish a replacement strategy in 2008 -to no avail. During that time, the SOF involved with Economy of Effort missions continued with their tasks in the province, but operated in a strategic vacuum as the province-level concept of operations supposedly governing the behavior of its adjacent units changed repeatedly. Having two coalitions occupy the same battlespace but having different concepts was not a useful proposition and reduced the ability for the SOF to be fully effective. At the same time, the lack of progression in the governance and development arenas meant that SOF in the Economy of Effort role were buying time, but for something that didn't-and still hasn't-arrived.

¹ . This study is based on the author's observations during deployments to Afghanistan from 2003 to 2010. It does not pretend to be a comprehensive overview of coalition SOF in Afghanistan.

² . CTF AEGIS established a relationship with TF-42 the UK SOF task force which was at this time largely based around the SBS and the SRR. TF-42 had its own national reporting chain and tended to focus on special reconnaissance operations in Helmand and direct action in Kandahar City.