



LESSONS LEARNED RECORD OF INTERVIEW

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LL-07 – Stabilization in Afghanistan			
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SIGAR Attendees:			
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Early Afghanistan Strategy			

Guidance from Above

(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)



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In 2007, there was no NATO campaign plan, a lot of verbiage and talk, but no plan. (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) [redacted]. That was the guidance: to work well with the German command in Brussels. There simply was not an extraordinary document of any kind, or an extraordinary external source that dialoged with me that offered guidance on how to move forward. So for better or for worse, a lot of what we did, we did with some forethought, but most of it was reacting to conditions on the ground...we were opportunists. It was like the time (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) [redacted]...(missed the rest of this thought.)

There was no campaign plan. There were people who thought it existed and they were taking care of their piece of it, but it didn't exist. (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) [redacted]

There was not an extraordinary document or external source that dialogued with me often that offered guidance on moving in this direction or that direction. For better or worse, a lot of what we did was based on opportunism.

(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) [redacted]

[redacted] believe McKiernan was the first to be dual hatted and that probably occurred some number of months after he assumed command. I believe RC-East Commander (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) [redacted] was designated as COMUSFOR-A (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) [redacted] was aware of, and routinely updated on, most (some State Dept projects being the exception) US efforts. (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) [redacted]

The Desired End State

I tried to get someone to define for me what winning meant, even before I went over, and nobody could. Nobody would give me a good definition of what it meant. After I had been there for a couple weeks in 2007 and...the question became, "What's achievable?" If we can raise them 10-12 spots on infant mortality, and on poverty indexes a few slots, that would be great. That idea came from (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) [redacted]. The responses to the question so widely diverse. Some people were thinking in terms of Jeffersonian democracy, but that's just not going to happen in Afghanistan.

Stabilization Concepts & Principals

A platoon sized ink spot is too small. It needs to be at least as large as a company. And you need to understand the different insurgent motivations—narcos vs. ideology, for example. You have to know what you're facing. There also has to be some semblance of legitimate governance, some police to hold while you build so you can connect the people with a government. There needs to be some rule of law, you have to have the right construct and concept to do reconstruction. And reconstruction should be done with local contractors—which brings some baggage because of the opportunity for corruption—but you still need to use local labor.

You have to have some security before you can get the fruit grown and shipped off to market.



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Richards, ADZ and the PAG

I could not understand the concept of ADZs. When they briefed it made sense, but the areas they were putting them had no rule of law and I knew it wouldn't work until you established security and rule of law. (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) asked the Afghans to explain what the ADZs were: Rasool, Wardak, Qanooni, right down the line they weren't sure. Right from the get go I knew that a lot of resources were going into ADZs and the Afghans didn't understand it. The Afghans didn't have interest or understanding of the concept, so I turned off the resources going to ADZs.

The things they promised me were in the ADZs were not there and no one knew what the ADZ's were supposed to be. On its best day it was dysfunctional, on its worst day it was non-existent.

Karzai

(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)

Karzai could not think in a broader context beyond the model laid out by his father, holding court, reconciling and leading tribal groups. That's not what we needed him to do, that's just the way he wanted it to be. He was what he was, and he thought he would make the most progress by resolving tribal disputes. But he didn't have his father's instincts.

(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)

Iraq

(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)



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(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)

There was fierce competition for resources with Iraq. They were pulling ISR/coms/etc

(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)

In other words, "you're the economy of force who will keep a lid on this place."

Operations & Approach: 2002

There was no campaign plan in early days, in 2002 (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)

No reconstruction during early tour. It was all USAID, a few NGOs, but some of it countered what we wanted. Reconstruction would have been great during that early tour but we really didn't have much. A little ODHACA money.

Rumsfeld would get excited if there was any increase in the number of boots on the ground.

Rumsfeld didn't want our numbers to increase in early tour. He got excited when number fluctuated up.

We helped establish the first PRT during this period.

Operations & Approach: 2007

(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)

You needed to have positive ID, typically voice ID, then you had to consider what else was in the area. We'd look at a UAV feed to see who else was there. And you'd have a weapons guy who would say what was available, and a lawyer who would make the call. (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)

Little changed in terms of top down guidance (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) The instructions were kill terrorists and build the ANA. Also, don't fracture the alliance, and that was it. There was no NATO campaign plan. There was a lot of verbiage. (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)

There was no campaign plan. It just wasn't there. (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) We had five or seven lines of effort. I don't recall what they all were, but only one of them was about kill/capture.



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I would say you can't make stabilization a thing linear. There was patrolling to clear, then rule of law, governance, and then building things more concrete.

(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) in 2007 there was full-scale reconstruction going on. We were in a hurry, the whole alliance. But a lot of it wasn't actually helping. I'll give you a good example. You could only get to Ghor 7-8 months out of the year. So we go see two school with the governor that a French NGO had built. It was not coordinated with the Afghan government, so there were no teachers. The district governor said "we would have done this a lot less money." You'd wind up with teachers if you gave them a couple years warning. Maybe not good ones, but something.

The effort in 2007 was a loosely confederated effort of people trying to make their puzzle piece fit into the larger picture. (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) was generally trying to do—roads, schools, clinics. Roads were along the Pakistani border, where cash for work allowed them to build roads in areas with very little employment.

We had our hands full just trying to clear districts in heartland of Kandahar. We didn't have the resources to go up to northern Kandahar to do a clearing operation if Karzai wanted us to get there. We were looking at the area south of Kandahar city. Our efforts were primarily oriented around roadbuilding.

In Kandahar there were people in Maiwand complained they were growing fruit that couldn't get to market. So the Canadian PRT was going to build a road. We went down to see it. This was a really nice road. It was armed construction though, with as many security personnel as construction workers. On a hill overlooking the project with the district governor, and he said "It's a nice road, but what are you going to do for me?"...he wanted me to build an extension of the road right up to his house, to be his personal driveway. It was all about status.

I don't think there were a lot of civilians involved in that effort south of K-city...KPRT answered to Canadian ambassador.

There was COIN going on, like Nicholson with the 10th Mountain Division in Nangarhar. Others were doing it too. (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) to embrace Nicholson's kind of COIN, tried to get the Brits and Canadians to support COIN too, but limited resources prevented proper COIN. The US did a pretty good job of melding the military effort with reconstruction.

Many supported the idea of COIN, but their efforts weren't coordinated.

It was absolutely part of my mission to build up the legitimacy of the AFG government. We had to extend Karzai's reach and get him out to the provinces.

(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)

Kajaki dam had become centerpiece of what NATO was trying to do (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)

There was no reconstruction going on during Operation Medusa.



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It was difficult to do reconstruction in poppy-heavy areas.

NATO Coalition Issues

Nothing was harder for me than NATO partners putting caveats in place and then denying they had caveats.

COIN is applied in different ways by different countries...Italians and Spanish wouldn't go out

(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)

Each country determined what they'd be doing.

(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)

each country controlled reconstruction in their areas, they did it their way, and it fit into a larger context of what we were trying to do.

SMA was a simple minded tyrant but he was effective as governor, but he kept other bad guys at bay like Rice Baghrani (sp?). SMA was dirty but he kept stability because people were afraid of him. It's not good and I'm not advocating dancing with the devil, but maybe one of his disciples, and that was SMA.

Brits said we won't take over Helmand unless SMA is removed. Brits had designs of doing big CN efforts there and knew SMA would get in the way. Lots of Brits were dying in London because of opium that came from AFG.

Brits also kicked out USSOF in the province, which helped bring stability. That, along with firing SMA, were huge mistakes.

Brits tried to do ink spot with platoon houses, (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) They couldn't get their casualties out. Afghans thought it was 19th century all over again.

Evacuating Musa Qala was a huge mistake. Negotiated from a position of weakness.

A few did COIN but they were constrained by political considerations, PRT commanders reported to ambassador instead of the TF commander.

Security, Rule of Law, and Stabilization

The minute an external force backed away, there was a vacuum no matter how many ANSF was there. It filled quickly. CHB isn't linear. It's a constant cycle. Had to put in a little RoL.

(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)



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We had our hands full trying to clear districts in the Kandahar heartland, so we couldn't devote resources to Arghandab. We were trying to do things south of the city. Mainly road building south of the city to establish rule of law. Police leadership there was ineffective.

Clear-Hold-Build works when conditions are right. In Musa Qala, the Brits had 9 platoons total, only 2 of them in Musa Qala.

CIVCAS

(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)

The Brits could only shoot when shot at

(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)