

Toppling the Taliban

**Air-Ground Operations in Afghanistan,
October 2001–June 2002**

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Preface

Toppling the Taliban reports the results of an analysis of Army operations in Afghanistan between October 2001 and June 2002. It discusses strategy, planning, and organization for Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF); examines Army operations; reports on deployment and logistics issues; describes coalition operations; and considers civil-military operations. Although the main focus is on the Army, attention is also given to other aspects of the joint fight. No modern war can be explained or understood from the perspective of a single Service; OEF is no exception.

The analysis is based on review of contemporary records and interviews with key participants in OEF in Central Asia. Research began in April 2002 and was completed in December 2003. This report, which is based on unclassified source material only, presents a summary of a larger work that drew from both classified and unclassified sources; both were submitted as drafts in May 2006. Since the research was completed and recommendations formulated several years ago, the situation is likely to have changed—some recommendations might already have been implemented, in whole or in part, while events that occurred after December 2003 might alter some of the conclusions and recommendations. Nevertheless, the report's recommendations are provided as they were originally formulated.

This work will interest those involved in organizing, training, and equipping military capabilities for planning, operating, deploying, and supporting joint and coalition operations. The report also includes analyses of such topics as special operations forces contributions, surveillance and reconnaissance, strategic mobility, air support operations, and others.

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Summary

Overt combat operations in Afghanistan began on October 7, 2001, less than a month after the September 11 terrorist attacks. The al Qaeda–supported Taliban regime collapsed with stunning rapidity, exceeding the hopes of even the most optimistic planners and policymakers. However, the Taliban has continued to wage an insurgency in Afghanistan since the collapse of its regime. U.S. and Coalition forces are now scheduled to end operations in late 2014, making the war in Afghanistan the U.S. military’s longest campaign.

The Army wanted an authoritative history of operations in Afghanistan so that it could derive important insights from this conflict and use the data collected for further research in combat operations. As it did after the Kosovo conflict, the Army asked the RAND Arroyo Center to undertake this project. This report presents the results of that effort. It examines the planning of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in Afghanistan and military operations from October 7, 2001, through June 30, 2002.

A Very Different Kind of War for U.S. Forces

The war in Afghanistan was unlike any other that the United States had fought before. While each aspect of this war may have historical precedents, the presence of all elements simultaneously made OEF in Afghanistan a very different kind of war. To begin with, there was no adequate war plan on the shelf. The campaign in Afghanistan was carried on within the context of a larger war—the global war on terrorism. Second, most of the forces directly engaged in ground combat against the Taliban and al Qaeda were not from the United States. The Northern Alliance, a military front assembled by key leaders of the Islamic State of Afghanistan, particularly president-in-exile Burhanuddin Rabbani and former Defense Minister Ahmad Shah Massoud, provided the bulk of the ground forces. Third, the operational force employment concept was unusual: small groups of special operations forces (SOF), military and civilian, operating in conjunction with indigenous forces and supporting them with advanced technology that used air-delivered precision-guided munitions to an unprecedented degree. Fourth, the United States carried out humanitarian operations simultaneously with

combat missions. Fifth, the war got under way quickly, less than a month after 9/11. This set of distinctive features contributed to the observations and recommendations described in this report.

We divide our account of OEF into three parts: laying the groundwork, defeating the Taliban and dispersing al Qaeda, and the continuing hunt for remnants of the Taliban and al Qaeda forces. The first part recounts events from 9/11 until the air attacks started in Afghanistan on October 7. The second portion chronicles events from early October until the fall of the Taliban, marked by the fall of Kandahar in early December 2001. The next portion carries the story through June 2002. It addresses stability and reconstruction activities, operations against the remnants of the Taliban and al Qaeda, and the reconstruction of Afghan civil administration, a task that continues to this day. Then conclusions and recommendations are presented. The report ends with an Epilogue that briefly assesses the situation at the end of 2004.

Of course, the hunt for Taliban and al Qaeda remnants continued well beyond June 2002; the stopping point for this report was chosen to cover the takedown of the Taliban regime, the dispersion of al Qaeda, and initial post-conflict efforts in Afghanistan. We believe that this period provides important implications for the Army.

Laying the Groundwork

Several factors shaped the planning and preparation for what came to be called Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. First, the pressure for a quick but effective response was considerable. The U.S. homeland had been attacked for the first time in 60 years. Thousands of its citizens had been killed. The nation demanded action. A traditional military response—a deliberate buildup of forces followed by preparatory bombardment and then attack with decisive force—was deemed too slow.

The objectives of the initial operation were the second factor influencing the operation. National leaders needed to think through the issues of war aims for two distinct, albeit linked, entities: al Qaeda and the Taliban. In both cases, the United States had a strong interest in setting precedents for destroying terrorist organizations that attack the United States and punishing states that harbor them. As in all military operations, the agreed ultimate objectives—destroy al Qaeda and remove the Taliban—had major influences on the planning.

Another key factor was the crucial importance of transit and basing rights. It would be difficult to find a more remote theater than Afghanistan, a landlocked central Asian country whose infrastructure, while never extensive, had been devastated by decades of fighting. Deployments to well-prepared theaters can take a long time. The remoteness and underdeveloped nature of Afghanistan prolonged the deployment of U.S. forces. Furthermore, no plans on the shelf on 9/11 addressed the new mission

and objectives. Finally, the operation evolved rapidly, and had to change frequently in response to a rapidly developing situation.

Beyond transit and access rights, many states quickly offered support for the United States in the global war on terrorism. Some nations offered forces for operations in Afghanistan. Others offered support to those military operations. Still others proposed various sorts of related capabilities. Building an effective coalition was an immediate task for the Bush administration, one that required extensive diplomatic and military support. As the Secretary of Defense put it, the approach was to let the mission determine the coalition and not vice-versa.

Building and Managing the Coalition

The scale and scope of international assistance offered in support to operations in Afghanistan was staggering. By March 2003, 70 countries had offered some form of assistance, and 21 of these deployed a total of more than 15,000 troops to the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) area of responsibility. This included more than 8,000 troops in support of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and OEF in Afghanistan itself—more than half the 15,000 non-Afghan forces in Afghanistan.

Coalition contributions ranged from direct involvement in combat operations by Great Britain and Australia to offers of assistance with humanitarian operations and stabilization activities by Yemen and Lithuania. OEF marked the first deployment of German forces outside of Europe since World War II, as well as the first dispatch of Japanese troops abroad for military conflict since that time. Building this coalition was as much about refusing proffered assistance from some nations as it was about convincing nations to contribute military forces. For many nations, their good intentions could not be matched by their ability to provide useful support. The delicate task of constructing an effective combat force proved to be a formidable task, and the United States declined most of the offers of combat forces that it received.

Coordinating contributions to support humanitarian relief efforts as well as combat operations also proved to be a formidable task. With most countries willing only to support operations conditionally through bilateral agreements with the United States, the challenge was to ensure that all requirements were met within agreed constraints. A Coalition Coordination Center was established at CENTCOM Headquarters in Tampa, Florida, for this purpose.

Planning

Some U.S. planning against al Qaeda began well before 9/11. The threat had been recognized, if not fully appreciated, for some time, and both Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and military operations attempted to track and kill Osama bin Laden. The Intelligence Community (IC) had sharpened its focus on both the organization and the

region. The Department of Defense (DoD) had been directed to consider options other than cruise missile attacks against bin Laden, including the use of U.S. ground forces inside Afghanistan. Early in the Bush administration, the National Security Council reviewed several courses of action aimed at eliminating bin Laden. Still, by early September, none had won formal approval, even for further development. None of the earlier planning had contemplated removing the Taliban from power and establishing a new regime in Kabul.

CENTCOM in Florida had the lead in planning. It had to develop everything from a campaign plan to targeting lists from the outset. Complicating the process was the fact that the overall war aims were being developed and refined concurrently with military planning. The national leadership put substantial pressure on CENTCOM to develop courses of action and recommendations quickly. But discussion of war aims and varying interpretations of the problem—was the focus to beat al Qaeda, the Taliban, or both?—complicated the process. The difficulty of collecting intelligence on the array of enemy forces within Afghanistan further compounded planning difficulties. The IC had been studying bin Laden and al Qaeda and had amassed considerable information. But that information was not integrated with that of the military, which had to develop its own often-duplicative databases.

The CENTCOM staff began planning for operations against al Qaeda in Afghanistan immediately after 9/11. Even in the absence of specific war aims on the part of the national leadership, it was clear that the United States was going to carry the war to the enemy. Recognizing that, the staff began the process of gaining basing and transit rights and putting together notional target lists. Planning also commenced at CENTCOM's subordinate headquarters and at the supporting commands. Some of the most experienced planners on the subordinate staffs were pulled up to CENTCOM headquarters, hampering planning at the lower levels. The forward location of the Combined Air Operations Center (CAOC) in Saudi Arabia also complicated planning—it made both the planning and subsequent air operations more difficult.

Ultimately, CENTCOM published a formal campaign plan in November 2001, well after the attacks had begun. The plan had four phases: set conditions, initial combat operations, decisive operations, and sustain and preempt.

Maintaining a Small Footprint

While there is scant evidence of an explicit overall force cap, the clear intention of the national leadership was to keep force levels in Afghanistan low. Despite assertions about “force caps,” we have no evidence that troop limitations affected any operational outcome.

In a departure from typical major contingency operations, the bulk of the forces were combat. The “tooth-to-tail” ratio (that is the ratio of combat forces to support forces) was high, ranging from 2:1 to as high as 3.6:1. By way of comparison, the ratio in the Persian Gulf War was 0.6:1. This force composition reflected many influences: a

desire for a small overall force presence, limited deployment capabilities, the ability to provide some support from afar, and concerns about force protection. By implication, the support forces that were present had to be efficient.

Deployment Operations

The theater commander's priorities were an important influence on deployment times. In OEF, large numbers of conventional ground combat forces were not required early on because of the SOF-centric, unconventional nature of the conflict. In addition, there was considerable competition for airlift/airfield throughput capacity for such functions as sustainment, SOF-unique requirements, and detainee movements. CENTCOM set priorities among these competing demands for scarce resources, and Army movements were not always at the top of the list.

A Joint Forces Command review of deployment operations during the first eight months of OEF highlighted "joint interoperability issues" as a key problem. Sources of the problem included compartmented planning, multiple deployment orders, changing priorities, and lack of understanding of deployment planning and execution systems as the underlying problems. Our analysis confirms these problems. More positively, the Joint Forces Command report concluded that unanticipated battalion and smaller-sized deployments could be accomplished in 12 to 18 days.

Defeating the Taliban

The strategic calculus to bring about the downfall of the Taliban without igniting regional or ethnic conflicts involved a difficult balance of important considerations. Deep seated and enduring rivalries among Afghans had to be considered. Supporting the Northern Alliance could provoke the southern Pashtuns to support the Taliban, particularly if northern forces moved south. Each anti-Taliban warlord had his own interests, supporters, and forces. Pakistan gave welcome support important to the U.S. effort to prosecute the war. But Pakistan had nurtured the Taliban and might do so again. The short- and long-term interests of other interested powers, mainly India, Russia, and Iran, had to be weighed and accommodated. Each factor had the potential to affect military operations in Afghanistan. However, none of these factors seriously impeded operations. In fact, the Taliban fell much faster than they rose.

Command and Control

Complicating command and control was GEN Tommy Franks's decision not to establish an in-country joint task force and, instead, control the war from Tampa. With the president pressing for action, time was an issue, and it would have taken too much time to assemble and move a headquarters forward. CENTCOM enjoyed unprecedented

communications with the forward elements, with high bandwidth capabilities that enabled secure videoconferences and rapid transmission of information.

The command and control process that evolved featured highly centralized command and, within limits, decentralized execution. Absent an in-theater joint task force headquarters, CENTCOM exercised command and control from Tampa, delegating execution to component commanders in theater, with exceptions for such matters as attacks on key, time-sensitive targets or collateral damage issues. However, the geographic dispersion of the component commanders' headquarters prevented face-to-face formal and informal contacts among them and their staffs. Time-zone differences between the area of operations and Tampa also created occasional problems. Although the scheme worked reasonably well, at times the command and control process was not agile enough, such as during the rapidly evolving fight at Tora Bora.

Furthermore, it was difficult to wield influence over indigenous forces, for many reasons other than geographical distance. Tribal and ethnic loyalties were stronger than any alliance with U.S. forces, although the Northern Alliance was perfectly happy to accept help in ridding Afghanistan of the Taliban. Northern Alliance commanders had their own turf to protect and the forces to do it, so they made decisions with respect to what would happen after the war. Moreover the Afghan way of war differed radically from that of U.S. forces. Afghan fighters preferred frontal assaults preceded by indirect fire rather than maneuver warfare. For the Afghans, negotiated surrenders and switching of sides were common practices. While fighting to dislodge the Taliban, anti-Taliban warlords' interests generally matched those of the United States; once that outcome was achieved they often acted to protect their own interests.

Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance

It is important to note the crucial contribution of the CIA's sources in Afghanistan. Over a number of years, the CIA had developed contact with warlords fighting the Taliban, and these were key to U.S. SOF teams' activities and OEF's success. Little is clear about any human intelligence sources within the Taliban or al Qaeda. Unmanned aircraft systems (UASs) and other sensors can support intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) but cannot substitute for painstakingly developed human intelligence sources. Yet information from the anti-Taliban warlords often proved unreliable given their complex motivations.

The war in Afghanistan saw the UAS come of age for U.S. forces. Both the Global Hawk and Predator performed well, with the latter filling many roles and becoming the sensor of choice for pursuing time-sensitive targets.

The impressive array of intelligence collection assets notwithstanding, intelligence failures occurred. A major objective was the elimination of key Taliban and al Qaeda leaders. This goal largely went unmet because intelligence assets were unable to locate them accurately or in time to strike them. Both technical and human intelligence failures occurred, sometimes with tragic results: an attack on a wedding party and one

on a compound believed to contain a Taliban leader turned out to belong to a friendly warlord. Furthermore, the intelligence system never painted a comprehensive surface picture of all forces in Afghanistan, a key element of U.S. doctrine.

Air Operations

U.S. air attacks against the Taliban regime began October 7, 2001. Targets included leadership, communications, air forces, air defense weapons, and military installations. The United States quickly achieved air superiority at all altitudes and complete supremacy at mid- and high altitudes, outside the range of air defense artillery and the man-portable air defense missiles available to the Taliban. Low-altitude operations remained hazardous. The United States did not attack infrastructure targets, such as transportation and electrical power, because such attacks would have generated criticism from key allies and alienated the Afghan people.

Air-Ground Operations with Anti-Taliban Forces

The concept of operations was to support indigenous opposition forces against the Taliban regime, primarily through air power controlled by U.S. forces. These teams usually combined an Operational Detachment–Alpha (ODA) of Army Special Forces with Air Force combat air controllers. The teams would equip and supply opposition fighters and call for close air support during combat against Taliban and al Qaeda fighters. By mid-November, enough teams had arrived to support all of the important regional leaders. While leaders of the Northern Alliance welcomed the teams' arrivals, the situation in southern Afghanistan was different, where there was no armed opposition to the Taliban. The teams had to help bring one into being.

Navy and Marine Forces: Task Force 58

A Navy Amphibious Ready Group (ARG) carrying the marines of the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) (MEU [SOC]) moved into the northern Arabian Sea off Pakistan late in September. It arrived early in October. The carrier USS *Kitty Hawk* arrived in the northern Arabian Sea on October 15 carrying U.S. SOF equipped with MH-47E and MH-60K helicopters.

The 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit and Navy SEALs established a small presence at Jacobabad, Pakistan. The initial plan for the main task force effort was to seize a forward operating base (FOB) in southern Afghanistan and conduct a series of raids from it. A shortage of worthwhile targets in the region eventually changed the marines' primary operational objectives to interdiction of Taliban forces and securing Kandahar's airport.

Few worthwhile targets were within the reach of strikes by Marine Corps forces at sea. As Taliban authority declined, CENTCOM and Marine Corps planners began to consider how to block Taliban movement around Kandahar. Because Pakistan did not

allow ground transportation of supplies, logistics flow to the FOB had to be entirely by air. A FOB ashore with an airfield was needed.

Camp Rhino eventually emerged as the best candidate. The hope was that seizing Camp Rhino and conducting raids from there would lure the Taliban into a fight that would expose them to U.S. combined arms. Camp Rhino was also to serve as a base to support follow-on operations against Kandahar.

Subsequent Marine Corps operations included supplying security forces to the American embassy in Kabul and seizing of the Kandahar airfield. Marines also carried out numerous sensitive site exploitations, operations designed to search sites for the presence of chemical or biological weapons. Additionally, they participated in the reception of the first detainees in Kandahar. In late December, members of the task force returned to the USS *Peleliu* ARG in the Arabian Sea.

Conventional Army Forces

The role of conventional Army forces in late 2001 was primarily to provide security for the support of SOF operating in Afghanistan. In early December, a month after the fall of Kabul, conventional combat forces of the 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry) amounted to 12 percent of total Army forces in Central Asia. Only about 10 percent of them were in Afghanistan. Most conventional forces and headquarters, mainly from the 10th Division, remained in Uzbekistan and Pakistan, where they provided force protection and prepared to move into Afghanistan and conduct operations there. By the end of December, the size of Army conventional forces in Central Asia had grown but their deployments remained largely outside of Afghanistan.

Logistics

U.S. force deployments before and since the 1990–1991 Persian Gulf War have rarely unfolded according to logistics doctrine. Deployments to Afghanistan followed that pattern. Afghanistan deployments can be characterized as a successful struggle to adapt organizations and doctrine designed for a much larger, slower developing conflict to a new kind of “small” war in a remote and austere theater.

The nature of Afghanistan, a landlocked nation with the nearest port 300 miles away, drove the need for support bases in adjoining countries and dictated that the majority of the support would be delivered by air. Another complicating factor was the fact that both conventional Army units and SOF were operating from widely separated fixed sites. The success of logistical operations in Afghanistan was in part attributable to a large logistics structure and a relatively small demand.

Logisticians faced many challenges in providing routine base operations support to U.S. forces deployed in Afghanistan. The Army had recognized this problem during the deployments to Southwest Asia in the early 1990s, and developed a program called Force Provider to deal with it. Force Provider takes a modular approach to support. Each module provides billeting, laundry and bath, and dining support for 550 people

and can be run by military or contractor personnel. However, the Force Provider concept had not been integrated into an overall concept of how to provide base support in austere locations. The Army personnel and equipment deployed to Afghanistan to establish Force Provider modules and sustain their operations was insufficient. Eventually, civilian contractors were brought in.

Across the board, the logistics system responded to the demands, often displaying considerable innovation and imagination, such as accommodating a sharp increase in demand for fuel. Still, contingency deployments had been a fact of life for more than a decade, and a more flexible supply information system should have been developed. Support for SOF, including those who were operating with the Northern Alliance, proved challenging. In part, this was because of the ad hoc nature of the support structure. But it was also because the standard supply technique—prepackaged bundles of equipment and supplies requested by simply using a number—was both dated and inappropriate. The supply system adapted and was soon able to fill even unusual requests in 48 hours.

Concurrent Humanitarian Operations

One of the distinctive aspects of OEF was the requirement to conduct humanitarian operations simultaneously with combat. This reflected a key policy decision to underscore that the war in Afghanistan was against the Taliban and al Qaeda and not the Afghan people. It was also necessary to avoid a potential humanitarian crisis after decades of war and several years of drought. Afghanistan was ill equipped to meet the needs of its people, and most international aid organizations had pulled their staffs out of the country following the 9/11 attacks in anticipation of U.S. military action.

C-17 aircraft flying from Ramstein, Germany, delivered initial humanitarian relief. Food in the form of humanitarian daily rations was the primary commodity, but blankets and other supplies were also provided. Airdrops of food started in early October and ended in mid-December, once the Taliban regime had fallen. Over the 72 days of the airdrop missions, an average of 34,300 rations were dropped each night, for a total of about 2.5 million meals along with 55,000 blankets, wheat, and other humanitarian supplies.

Overall, the effect of the humanitarian operation was small but positive. At best, 2.5 million meals provided one day's food to 2.5 million people out of a total population of 25 million. But the effort had a broader effect. Many who never received any food knew of the effort, which helped underscore the point that the war was against the Taliban and al Qaeda. Furthermore, it helped with the international community. To the extent that the food found its way to members of the Northern Alliance, it may have helped speed the defeat of the Taliban, which meant that far more robust relief efforts could get under way sooner.

Detainee Operations

As with many other aspects of the war in Afghanistan, the situation of captured enemy fighters was unusual. In normal combat, an opponent captured would be classified as a prisoner of war and treated in accordance with the provisions of the Geneva Convention. Those provisions guarantee a prisoner of war certain rights, describe how they are to be treated, and stipulate their repatriation when hostilities end.

The United States did not want to classify either Taliban or al Qaeda fighters as prisoners of war. Instead it chose to declare captured fighters enemy combatants, referred to as detainees. Considerable controversy arose over the U.S. insistence that detainees were not prisoners of war with respect to their treatment in Afghanistan detention facilities and at Camp X-Ray at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Several international organizations, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, Amnesty International, and the Crimes of War Project, all took the position that the detainees are indeed prisoners of war and should be treated accordingly. As a matter of U.S. policy, detainees have been granted most of the privileges of prisoners of war. The International Committee of the Red Cross, which does not agree with the United States on the status of the captured fighters, was given access to them.

Stability and Reconstruction Operations

With the Taliban out of power, the combat task remaining was to hunt down the fleeing al Qaeda and other foreign fighters. The more difficult task of rebuilding a nation lay ahead. A government had to be put in place. The population had to be secured against remnants of the Taliban and al Qaeda forces. They also needed food and shelter. The infrastructure had to be rebuilt. In all of these tasks, the U.S. and its allies played a prominent role.

The Interim Administration

The United States and its allies were worried about what authority would replace the Taliban. The power vacuum and chaos that ensued after the fall of the Russian-supported government in 1989 had enabled the Taliban rise to power. The United States wanted to avoid a situation that might allow an organization friendly to al Qaeda or the Taliban to seize power. One plan was for a provisional council to choose interim leaders, who would then draft a constitution and a plan for a two-year political transition. A *loya jirga*, or grand council, comprised of ethnic and religious leaders from around Afghanistan would then approve those actions.

The United Nations (UN) Security Council endorsed this approach and called for all member states to support it. A conference comprised of four Afghan groups was held in Germany in early December 2001. The delegates focused on two main ques-

tions: the composition of a new national government and the composition of a peace-keeping force for Kabul.

After considerable give and take, the conferees agreed on Hamid Karzai as the chairman of the Interim Administration and identified the other officials of the Interim Administration. They also established a special commission to convene an emergency *loya jirga* within six months of the establishment of the interim authority, which would create a transitional administration to govern for up to two years during the drafting of a new constitution. Another *loya jirga* would be held at that time to ratify the new constitution. Ratification would be followed by elections for the permanent government of Afghanistan. The Security Council approved the agreement and, on December 22, 2001, Karzai and the rest of the Interim Administration were officially sworn in as the new government of Afghanistan.

The International Security Assistance Force

An international security force of about 5,000 personnel was created to operate in and around Kabul. UN Security Council Resolution 1386, adopted December 20, 2001, established ISAF to maintain security. Its mission was to provide security and stability in the Kabul area. Initial ISAF elements deployed to Kabul in late December 2001. By June 2002, ISAF had been relatively successful, sporadic incidents of violence notwithstanding. It worked with local police and enjoyed the support of the city's population.

However, in 2002 ISAF was limited in three important ways. First, it only operated in and around Kabul. Consequently, local warlords retained their own armed forces. Second, ISAF did not have a permanent commander. Command was to rotate every six months. This meant that the country leading ISAF must begin the search for a successor immediately upon taking command. It also made countries unwilling to make long-term commitments of their forces. Third, the United States chose not to participate in ISAF. This limited ISAF's ability to recruit force contributors, since some countries did not want to participate in an operation that lacked the support of U.S. forces.

The Continuing Hunt for Taliban and al Qaeda Remnants

The nature of combat in Afghanistan changed after the fall of the Taliban. In large measure, this reflected al Qaeda's ability to adapt its tactics and techniques to the Coalition's capabilities. Initially, Taliban fighters deployed in ways that made them suitable targets for air attack. Taliban forces had fought the Northern Alliance for years using such tactics, and they hoped their tactics would draw U.S. forces into set-piece battles that might result in high U.S. casualties. However, they had never experienced the effects of precision-guided bombs. While al Qaeda and other foreign fighters fought tenaciously and at times innovatively, in the end they were no match for U.S. firepower.

Anticipating the impending fall of the Taliban, al Qaeda dispersed in small groups and moved toward their traditional support enclaves, such as the mountains that lie along the border with Pakistan near Tora Bora. In this evolving situation, Afghan allies proved less reliable than they did in toppling the Taliban regime. Once the Taliban regime fell, the Afghan allies were not concerned about its remnants, nor were they interested in chasing al Qaeda. Even when well rewarded, they displayed little enthusiasm and advanced against al Qaeda remnants reluctantly or not at all. U.S. conventional forces, first Task Force 58 (TF 58) (Marine Corps) and later Task Force Rakkasan (TF Rakkasan) (Army), provided an alternative to indigenous forces.

Building for the Long Run

Despite the obvious success of establishing the Interim Administration, bringing stability to Kabul, and beginning the creation of the Afghan National Army (ANA), the situation in Afghanistan remained precarious at the end of June 2002. Regional commanders and tribal leaders still controlled their areas and maintained forces that dwarfed the nascent national army. Al Qaeda and Taliban elements remained at large, and the lack of security outside Kabul slowed the spread of aid and reconstruction.

Stabilization Role of U.S. Forces

The United States resisted pressure to expand security forces outside of Kabul. Approximately 8,000 U.S. forces remained in country in 2002. Their main mission was to continue the hunt for al Qaeda and Taliban remnants. Still, the requirement to expand order and stability was well recognized.

The initial approach to help stabilize the country was to station Army Special Forces and civil affairs teams in major cities in several regions. These elements were small, generally fewer than ten soldiers. Their task was to work with local leaders and gain influence by means of financial and humanitarian assistance. This approach worked reasonably well until the focus shifted to strengthening the central government, threatening the power of the regional commanders.

The number of U.S. and ISAF peacekeepers per 1,000 Afghans was small compared with other operations. Since the ISAF force was restricted to the area around Kabul, the ratio there in June 2002 was 3.3 ISAF personnel for each 1,000 citizens. Outside Kabul, the force was comprised almost entirely of U.S. units. The comparable figure for the countryside was only 0.4 military personnel for every 1,000 Afghans, an order of magnitude smaller than that present in Haiti in 1994. U.S. forces created the concept of the provincial reconstruction team (PRT), 60–80 person detachments stationed in key locations in an attempt to expand the “ISAF effect.” By spring 2004, 12 of these PRTs were deployed across the country, and more were being planned.

Numerically, this increase—in the range of 900 to 1,200 personnel—had only a small effect on the Coalition force presence.

The Afghan National Army

The long-term solution to peace and stability in Afghanistan was seen to be for the Afghan government to take firm control. The national army was seen to be key to that process. At the time, the United States and France were training the ANA, but the challenge was great in 2002. In spite of relatively good pay (\$30 per month in training; \$50 after graduation), the completion rate was low, with most units graduating at about half strength. The absence of a sustainment program after graduation led to further attrition.

Other Stability Influences

A number of other organizations operated in Afghanistan with an eye to reestablishing order and stability. The UN maintained a mission, albeit a much smaller one than it had in Kosovo. It had been unable, by June 2002, to establish an overarching framework for reconstruction and aid efforts that would help engender stability. Also, the initial focus was on the *loya jirga* and getting the Interim Administration established. As time passed, the UN mission expanded its focus, and the Secretary General's Special Representative had advisors for human rights, gender, drugs, rule of law, police, military, and demobilization.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Although OEF raised issues for all Services, this report focuses on the Army. Based on our analysis of operations through June 2002, we offer recommendations in the following selected areas:

- joint and combined operations
- deployment and sustainment
- intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance
- operations with special operations forces
- stability and support operations.

The recommendations are based on the record of operations in Afghanistan in the nine months covered by this report. The sources we used often highlighted problems that arose and suggested how they might be resolved. They generally gave little attention to routine activities that went as expected. The use of contemporary records provided an authoritative record, but at the same time raised the risk of missing processes, systems, procedures, and activities that “worked well.”

Joint and Combined Operations

The most significant lesson from Afghanistan is that joint action—long advocated for many reasons—sometimes must occur at the lowest echelons. The Army, in partnership with the other Services, continues to plan and train for joint operations at the brigade and battalion task force level, with air support being pushed to company level and lower.

Air-land synergy proved its worth both in the initial campaign to destroy the Taliban regime and in the ensuing hunt for the remnants of al Qaeda and the Taliban. In the former effort, the Taliban chose to fight in fixed positions and were systematically defeated by air-delivered fires directed by SOF and Air Force air controllers operating with Afghan forces. In the latter effort, the hunt was largely frustrated until Operation ANACONDA, when conventional U.S. forces operating with SOF and Afghan units closed with al Qaeda fighters in the Shah-i Kot Valley. The combination of substantial ground forces with on-call air power was highly effective.

Time precluded General Franks from assembling and deploying a joint headquarters. Having one in country would have been beneficial, particularly during the planning of Operation ANACONDA. The Army should be prepared to provide personnel to such joint headquarters even when only one or two brigades deploy; the typical size of post-Cold War contingency deployments. Joint headquarters can facilitate joint planning from the outset of an operation, as opposed to the more common technique of each Service planning its operation and addressing joint issues subsequently.

The emphasis on joint fire support at tactical levels—brigade through battalion and possibly even company—suggests that more personnel and equipment should be devoted to terminal air control. Additional radios to facilitate communication and laser designators for targeting are needed. It may be necessary to create more tactical air control parties, and the Army should address this jointly with the Air Force. The Army could train its personnel to Air Force standards, or another solution would be to have additional Air Force parties serving with the Army.

Deployment and Sustainment

The Army logistics community should develop doctrine and organizations capable of rapidly responding to small-scale contingencies in austere locations. Army logistics doctrine has been designed for the big war, a low-probability but high-stress event. In this doctrine, multiple echelons of support must be present before a comprehensive logistic capability is available. But the recent past has seen a number of operations that entailed deploying unusual configurations of units to unusual places. These operations have not deployed the echelons envisioned in doctrine for sustainment. Flexible information systems are needed to ensure that supply systems can adapt quickly and respond to rapid and frequent changes in supply delivery points.

Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance

UASs such as the Predator and Global Hawk proved their worth in Afghanistan and continue to provide considerable value. Their success has prompted the Services to modify and expand their plans for UASs. The Army should continue to pursue its plans to develop tactical UASs, but the criticism that Service UAS plans are uncoordinated has merit. The Army should develop its UAS fleet with an eye to maximizing joint interoperability.

Operations with Special Operations Forces

During OEF, the mix of special and conventional operations shifted over time. All of the Services and several allied countries contributed SOF, but the Army's Special Forces played a large and pivotal role. However, coordination of special operations and conventional operations caused problems that needed to be addressed. SOF often depend on air support for their very survival, yet they are normally not well integrated with air controllers. They learn how to call in air support but are not versed in air platforms and weapons. For this, they depend on tactical air control parties, but there are not enough of these at their home stations to meet all requirements, nor are they adequately equipped to support SOF.

A second issue is the coordination of operations between special and conventional forces. SOF operate differently from conventional forces. Normally this is not a problem. However, when both types of forces participate in the same operation, as they did in Operation ANACONDA, the different operating practices can cause coordination problems. It is important that the Army develop coordination measures to ensure that conventional and special operations forces work together more smoothly and train together more frequently.

Stability and Support Operations

Reconstructing Afghanistan remains a work in progress—even as we prepare to withdraw forces in 2014. The international community recognized early on the enormous scope of the task and sought to achieve critical goals. It successfully established a functioning interim government and gathered potential donors to help fund efforts. The international community was also successful in stabilizing Kabul.

Given its ongoing and likely future role, the Army should restructure its humanitarian assistance process and clarify the Army's humanitarian assistance mission. The initial focus of the Coalition Joint Civil Military Operations Task Force on humanitarian aid delayed it from providing more traditional civil affairs assistance.

Epilogue

On balance, much was accomplished quickly in Afghanistan. The Taliban was removed from power; al Qaeda was driven into hiding and its training camps eliminated; and the Interim Administration was organized and installed. The expected humanitarian crisis was avoided. Within a year, more than a million and a half Afghan refugees returned to Afghanistan. However, almost 12 years later, the end of the conflict is not in sight, but the U.S. and the coalition involvement is.

The Military Situation

Coalition operations against Taliban and al Qaeda fighters continue, and although Osama bin Laden has been killed, Mullah Omar remains at large. The Afghan border with Pakistan quickly became the focus of efforts to capture or kill Taliban and al Qaeda fighters and their leaders. The numbers of terrorists located in the region was hard to discern because of the ease with which they were able to flow back and forth across the border with Pakistan, where the terrain is favorable for hiding. A loose affiliation developed among al Qaeda fighters, Taliban diehards, and the forces of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, the leader of Hezb-i-Islami. Substantial resources were added to support efforts to hunt down and destroy these opposition fighters.

U.S. force levels in Central Asia grew as large as 20,000 in mid-2006. Today, approximately 66,000 U.S. troops are stationed in Afghanistan. Troop strength is expected to shrink to 32,000 by the end of February 2014 and by the end of 2014, most U.S. troops are expected to be out of the country. About 40,000 additional troops from America's allies, such as Britain, are also stationed in Afghanistan.

In August 2003, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) took over the command of ISAF, thus ending six-month national rotations and providing much-needed continuity in leadership. At the same time, NATO efforts were expanded beyond the Kabul area as the United Kingdom, Germany, and others provided PRTs.

Prospects

The prospects for peace and stability in Afghanistan after the United States and its allies depart in 2014 are uncertain. The goals are demanding and the challenges formidable. Security, prosperity, and a strong central government depend on one another, and each also relies on strong, continuing external support. With continued support of the international community and neighboring states, progress toward peace and stability can continue. A resurgent Taliban probably cannot regain power, but a long and costly struggle that has begun to eat into international support may reduce support even further. If the international community walks away from Afghanistan, a return to chaos is likely.

The post-2014 status of U.S. involvement in Afghanistan is not clear. The United States is not likely to abandon its efforts in Afghanistan if a suitable status of forces agreement can be agreed. This would imply a continuing role for the Army.

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During the course of the analysis that underlies this report, project staff members visited CENTCOM, its component commands, various special operations commands and units, relevant Army division staffs, logistics commands, civil affairs organization, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), UN programs, State Department offices, and the Office of the Secretary of Defense. Researchers also met with pertinent organizations of the U.S. Marine Corps, the U.S. Navy, and the U.S. Air Force. To tap into British experience, we met with the British Embassy in Washington and two organizations in the United Kingdom. The researchers conducted more than 70 interviews and combed through hundreds of documents, briefings, messages, and reports.

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Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations

AB	Air Base
ANA	Afghan National Army
AOR	area of responsibility—The geographical area associated with a combatant command, within which a combatant commander has authority to plan and conduct operations.
ARCENT	(United States) Army, Central Command—Headquartered at Ft. McPherson, Georgia. Forward headquarters for OEF was located at Camp Doha, Kuwait.
ARG	Amphibious Ready Group
AWACS	Airborne Warning and Control System—Airborne battle management, warning, and control system carried aboard E-8 aircraft.
BDA	battle damage assessment—The timely and accurate estimate of damage resulting from the application of military force, either lethal or nonlethal, against a predetermined objective. Also commonly referred to as “bomb damage assessment.”
C2	command and control—The exercise of authority and direction by a properly designated commander over assigned and attached forces in the accomplishment of a mission.
CAOC	Combined Air Operations Center—This is the principal air operations installation from which joint air operations are planned, directed, controlled, and executed. OEF’s CAOC was located at Prince Sultan Air Base, Saudi Arabia, and served as the senior agency for the CFACC.
CCC	coalition coordination cell [center]—An ad hoc unified or sub-unified staff organization composed of staff elements required to integrate coalition forces and capabilities into a contingency operation.

CENTAF	(United States) Central Command Air Forces—Headquarters located at Langley Air Force Base, Virginia. During OEF forward headquarters was located at Prince Sultan AB, Saudi Arabia.
CENTCOM	U.S. Central Command
CFACC	Combined/Coalition Force Air Component Commander—The designated (see also) JFACC for OEF, headquartered at Prince Sultan AB, Saudi Arabia.
CFLCC	Combined/Coalition Force Land Component Commander—The designated combined and joint forces commander for OEF, headquartered at Camp Doha, Kuwait. <i>See also</i> JFLCC.
CFMCC	Combined/Coalition Force Maritime Component Commander. <i>See also</i> JFMCC for OEF.
CFSOCC	Combined/Coalition Force Special Operations Component Commander. <i>See also</i> JFSOCC for OEF.
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CINC	Commander in Chief
CJCMOTF	Coalition Joint Civil-Military Operations Task Force—Created in October 2001, was responsible for planning, coordinating, and executing coalition humanitarian operations in Afghanistan.
CJCS	Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
CJFACC	Combined Joint Force Air Component Commander—The JFACC for OEF. <i>See also</i> CFACC.
CJFC	Combined Joint Force Commander—A commander authorized to exercise combatant command or operational control over a joint force.
CONOP	concept of operations—This is a broad outline of the commander's assumptions or intent in regard to an operation or a series of operations.
CSAR	combat search and rescue—A specific task performed by rescue forces to affect the recovery of distressed personnel during war or other military operations.
DCI	Director of Central Intelligence
DoD	Department of Defense
EOD	explosive ordnance disposal
EPW	enemy prisoner of war

EUCOM	U.S. European Command
FARP	forward arming and refueling point—A temporary facility that allows combat aircraft to rapidly refuel and rearm simultaneously, normally located in the main battle area.
FOB	forward operating base—An airfield used to support tactical operations without establishing full support facilities.
GPS	Global Positioning System—A satellite constellation that provides highly accurate position data for users.
HUMINT	human intelligence—A category of intelligence derived from information collected and provided by human sources.
IC	Intelligence Community
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IFAV	Interim Fast Attack Vehicle
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
ISR	intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance
JDAM	Joint Direct Attack Munition
JOPES	Joint Operational Planning and Execution System—This system is used to monitor, plan, and execute mobilization, deployment, employment, sustainment, and redeployment activities associated with joint operations. It includes joint operation planning policies, procedures, and reporting structures and is used by the national- and combatant command-level commanders and their staffs.
JSOTF-S	Joint Special Operations Task Force—South—A second special operations task force built around a SEAL detachment and coalition SOF, headquartered in Oman, designated TF K-Bar and primarily tasked with SSE. Also known as CJSOTF—South.
JSTARS	Joint Surveillance Target Attack Radar System
MARCENT	(United States) Marine Component, Central Command
MASINT	measurement and signature intelligence—Scientific and technical intelligence obtained by quantitative and qualitative analysis of data derived from specific technical sensors for the purpose of identifying any distinctive features associated with the target, source, emitter, or sender of the same.
MEB	Marine Expeditionary Brigade—A Marine air-ground task force constructed around a reinforced infantry regiment, a composite Marine aircraft group, and a brigade service support group.
MEU	Marine Expeditionary Unit

MEU(SOC)	Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable)—The Marine Corps standard, forward-deployed, sea-based expeditionary organization, augmented with selected personnel and equipment.
NALT	Northern Alliance Liaison Team—Clandestine CIA operations teams operating with Northern Alliance forces.
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NAVCENT	(United States) Naval Forces Central Command
NGO	non-governmental organization
NIMA	National Imagery and Mapping Agency
nm	nautical mile
NSC	National Security Council
NSPD	National Security Presidential Directive
ODA	Operational Detachment–Alpha—U.S. Army SOF teams deployed into Afghanistan to assist the Northern Alliance. Also called A-Teams.
OEF	Operation Enduring Freedom—The designation for counterterrorist operations in and around Afghanistan and in other parts of the CENTCOM AOR.
OHDACA	Overseas Humanitarian, Disaster, and Civic Aid
POW	prisoner of war
PRT	provincial reconstruction team—A team of about 60 people designed to improve security in several Afghanistan cities and to support aid and reconstruction efforts.
RFF	Request for Forces
ROE	Rules of Engagement—The directives that delineate the circumstances and limitations under which U.S. forces will initiate and/or continue combat engagement with other forces.
SAR	synthetic aperture radar
SOCENT	U.S. CENTCOM, Special Operations Component
SOCOM	U.S. Special Operations Command
SOF	special operations forces—Active component, Reserve, and National Guard forces designated by the Secretary of Defense and specially organized, trained, and equipped to conduct and support special operations.
SSE	sensitive site exploitation

TF 58	Task Force 58—A task force consisting of three MEUs and supporting Navy amphibious squadrons, first deployed in February 2002.
TF Dagger	Task Force Dagger. <i>See</i> JSOTF-N.
TF K-Bar	Task Force K-Bar. <i>See</i> JSOTF-S.
TF Leader	Task Force Leader
TF Raider	Task Force Raider
TF Rakkasan	Task Force Rakkasan—Task force built around elements of the 3rd Brigade, 101st Air Assault Division and 1/87 Infantry, 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry), plus the Canadian 3 PPCLI Battle Group.
TF Summit	Task Force Summit
TLAM	Tomahawk Land-Attack Missile
UAS	unmanned aircraft system—A powered, aerial vehicle that can fly autonomously or be piloted remotely, can be expendable or recoverable, and can carry a lethal or nonlethal payload.
UCAV	unmanned combat aerial vehicle
UN	United Nations
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
VTC	video teleconference

Introduction

Americans treated the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, as a declaration of war. President George W. Bush declared “Make no mistake: The United States will hunt down and punish those responsible for these cowardly acts.” That evening he vowed that

The search is underway for those who are behind these evil acts. I’ve directed the full resources of our intelligence and law enforcement communities to find those responsible and to bring them to justice. We will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them. . . . America and our friends and allies join with all those who want peace and security in the world, and we stand together to win the war against terrorism.¹

In the following days and weeks, the president, the Secretary of Defense, and other national leaders made clear that this would be a war *unlike any other* the United States had ever fought. Self-defense against terrorists would require taking the fight to them, wherever they can be found. Traditional military action might only be a minor part of the worldwide fight against terrorism. In the war against terrorism, financial support for terrorism would be choked off and law enforcement activities would track down and prosecute terrorists worldwide. Diplomacy to build coalitions would be vital, but there would be many coalitions and the requirements for capabilities would determine coalition membership, not vice versa. Action in the war on international terrorism would ebb and flow and the campaign could be expected to go on for many years. Setbacks were to be expected and even the beginning and end of this war would be ambiguous. In the long run, victory would mean “crippling the ability of terrorist organizations to coerce the United States and its allies.” As the president made clear the evening of 9/11, the enemy in this fight would not be limited to a few terrorist organizations. The U.S. response would simultaneously be aimed at nations and organizations that support and harbor terrorists. In short, the war on terrorism would be a

¹ George W. Bush, “Address to the Nation on the September 11 Attacks,” Washington, D.C., September 11, 2001.

long one, with many missions on many fronts, some large and some small, some overt, some covert.

A Different Kind of War for U.S. Forces

The war in Afghanistan was indeed unlike any other that the United States had fought. While each aspect of this war may have historical precedents, the presence of all elements simultaneously made Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in Afghanistan a very different kind of war. To begin with, there was no relevant war plan on the shelf. The campaign in Afghanistan was carried on within the context of a larger war—the global war on terrorism. Second, most of the forces directly engaged in ground combat against the Taliban and al Qaeda were not from the United States. The Northern Alliance provided the bulk of the ground forces. Third, the operational force employment concept was unusual: small groups of special operations forces (SOF), military and civilian, operating in conjunction with indigenous forces and supporting them with advanced technology that used air-delivered precision-guided munitions to an unprecedented degree. Fourth, the United States carried out humanitarian operations simultaneously with combat missions. Fifth, the war got under way quickly, less than a month after 9/11. This set of distinctive features contributed to the observations and recommendations in this report.

Defense planning processes during the 1990s did little to prepare the Services for operations like OEF. During the 1990s, the Office of the Secretary of Defense directed Army planners to concentrate on understanding force requirements for major theater wars (also known as major regional conflicts). The most pressing issue for Army force planners was to determine the size and composition of the force needed to fight and win one of these campaigns. This was important because the national military strategy was to have the Department of Defense (DoD) prepare to fight two such campaigns that were “nearly simultaneous.” If the answer were that seven and two-thirds divisions were needed for a single contingency, then the Army would need to organize, train, equip, and maintain fifteen and one-third divisions.

Success in these campaigns meant stopping an enemy force that was invading an allied nation (usually South Korea or Southwest Asia) and pushing it back to restore the original borders. With this planning construct, there was no occupied territory to be administered, no need for post-war planning. Whatever the size of the Army, capabilities for smaller contingencies were considered to be lesser-included cases. Army leaders assumed that the forces designed for major theater wars were sufficiently large and capable of handling “brushfire wars” around the globe. This planning process had two important consequences. First, only cursory attention was given to planning for post-conflict operations. The objective in the 1990s was to push the enemy back into

his own territory, not to depose his government and replace it.² Second, planners did not spend much time investigating the conditions and requirements for smaller contingencies. The Army was built for “big” wars involving multiple corps fighting other large armies in combined arms campaigns.

This account of the early period of operations in Afghanistan follows the general chronology of significant events in the OEF campaign. Table 1.1 provides a brief chronology of these events during the nine months this report covers. December 2001 was a crucial month. Organized resistance to coalition forces ended with the fall of Kandahar and military operations shifted from displacing the Taliban to hunting down the remnants of al Qaeda and Taliban forces and leadership. Implementation of the Bonn Agreement in Afghanistan began when Hamid Karzai took over as the leader of the interim government.

Table 1.1
Chronology of Key Events in Operation Enduring Freedom

Date	Event
2001	
September 11	Al Qaeda attacks the United States
October 7	United States begins air attacks on al Qaeda and Taliban forces in Afghanistan
October 19	First SOF teams inserted in North Ranger raid on Taliban compound in the south
November 9	Mazar-e Sharif taken by Northern Alliance
November 13	Kabul falls without fighting in the city
December 5	The Bonn Agreement, establishing roadmap for successor regime, is signed
December 4–17	Action at Tora Bora, bin Laden escapes
December 22	Hamid Karzai installed as leader of the Interim Administration
December 28	International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) established with UK in command
2002	
March 1–18	Operation ANACONDA in Shah-i Kot Valley
May 1	Training of Afghan National Army begins
June 13	<i>Loya jirga</i> elects Karzai as head of state
June 21	Turkey assumes command of ISAF

SOURCE: Selected media reports.

² This thinking carried over into Operation Iraqi Freedom, which followed quickly on the heels of OEF. Post-war planning consisted of plans to withdraw forces within three months of the end of major combat operations.

Throughout the planning and combat operations, the public's support for military action in Afghanistan remained high. Between 85 and 90 percent of Americans supported military action in response to 9/11. Table 1.2 illustrates this with the results of a single poll covering a six-month period. Moreover, support for military operations was nearly as high when the prospect of large numbers of casualties was mentioned. Support for the president's actions in the global war on terrorism was consistently above 75 percent for the first nine months of OEF.³ Planners could be assured of support for the resources they needed.

Other Military Demands of the War on Terrorism

The focus of this report is the planning and execution of military operations in Afghanistan, but those operations took place in the context of the global military operations against terrorism. Many military homeland security missions and antiterrorism training and support operations abroad drew on the same types of resources

Table 1.2
Public Support for Military Operations, September 2001–
March 2002

Survey Date		Percent Supporting	Percent Opposing
2001	September 19–20	89	6
	October 3–4	82	8
	October 17–18	89	6
	Oct. 31–Nov. 1	87	8
	November 14–15	91	6
	November 28–29	91	5
	December 12–13	91	6
2002	January 9–10	90	5
	January 30–31	89	5
	February 26–27	82	11
	March 12–13	91	6

QUESTION: "Do you support or oppose the U.S. military action being taken in response to the terrorist attacks?" Fox News/Opinion Dynamics

³ For a comprehensive analysis of public opinion on military operations in Afghanistan after 9/11, see Eric V. Larson and Bogdan Savych, *American Public Support for U.S. Military Operations from Mogadishu to Baghdad*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MG-231-A, 2005, pp. 91–127.

used in Afghanistan. Increased force protection demands also tapped many of these Army capabilities. An understanding of these demands for Army capabilities—when added to those developed for operations in and around Afghanistan—provides a perspective on the total demands placed on the Army.

Homeland Security

Homeland security demands for military support to civilian authorities were apparent from 9/11. Across the country, National Guard soldiers were immediately called to active duty. In short order, some 7,000 state active duty guardsmen were manning emergency operations centers, providing security, and performing related services. At the end of June 2002, a total of 15,000 reserve and National Guard soldiers had been activated and employed in support of Operation Noble Eagle homeland security activities.

Force Protection

After the terrorist attacks, DoD increased the force protection alert level to “Condition Delta,” the highest level at that time. Though the level was subsequently relaxed, the additional force protection requirements proved to involve a large number of soldiers. Higher alert levels meant rigorous checking, additional patrols, and tighter security across the board. A year after 9/11, the Army was providing nearly 16,000 reserve and National Guard soldiers for force protection duties at Army installations and facilities in the United States and Europe.

The War on Terrorism Outside Central Asia

Operations in Afghanistan seized center stage in the global war on terrorism, but new operations were under way in the Philippines, Georgia, and Yemen.⁴ These activities were relatively small (600 to 1,000 in the Philippines, perhaps 150 in Georgia, and 50 at most in Yemen for short periods) but they drew on some of the same capabilities that were in high demand for Afghanistan. In addition, they involved military/diplomatic negotiations that required leaders’ attention as OEF was under way.

Meeting the Manpower Requirements

Many of the requirements just discussed were “eaten out of hide” as soldiers in many places did double duty, performing in their specialty and acting as security guards or manning operations centers. Others made back-to-back deployments to meet essential

⁴ The port of Aden in Yemen was the scene of the al Qaeda bombing of the USS *Cole* in October 2000 that killed 19 sailors. Yemen was a major source of Arabs fighting the Soviets in Afghanistan in the 1980s and was considered a potential “relocation site” for al Qaeda fleeing Afghanistan. DoD, “Background Briefing on the Horn of Africa,” transcript, March 8, 2002.

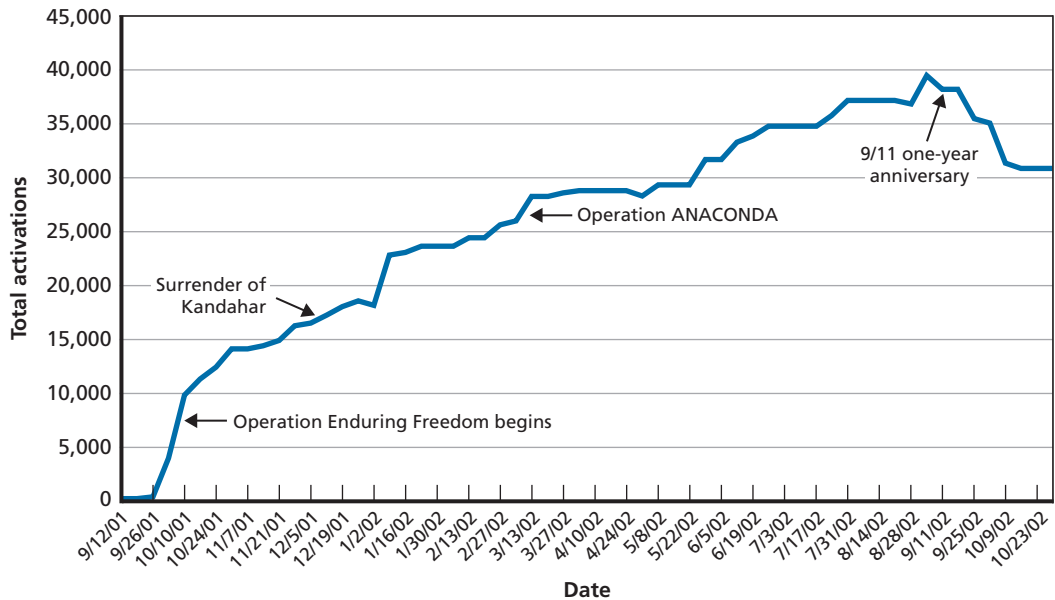
operational requirements. The magnitude of these efforts differed from place to place with soldiers on smaller installations doing double duty more often than those at larger bases did. It also differed among the different military occupations. Some of the new demands fell on units and soldiers that had already been categorized as having “high-demand, low-density” capabilities.

Activation of reservists and guardsmen became the major source of soldiers for meeting expanded requirements. Figure 1.1 depicts the level of Army Reserve and National Guard soldier activations for the year following 9/11. By October 10, 9,582 guard and reserve soldiers had been called up. Infantry and military police accounted for about 7,000 of the total. After these substantial calls to service in the first two months following 9/11, the number of reservists and guardsmen called to duty grew at a small but steady rate, reaching a peak of nearly 40,000 around the time of the one-year anniversary of the attacks. This includes those serving in Afghanistan as well as elsewhere in the global war on terrorism.

The Area of Operations

To help the reader place operations in Afghanistan in geographical context, we provide two maps, Figures 1.2 and 1.3. The first depicts Afghanistan and its surrounding

Figure 1.1
Army Reserve and National Guard Soldiers on Active Duty



SOURCE: DoD, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs), “News Releases Archive,” web page, various dates.

Figure 1.2
Afghanistan and Its Surrounding Region



SOURCE: Microsoft Encarta, 2001.

RAND RR381-1.2

region, while the second focuses on Afghanistan itself. Both are annotated with points of interest to OEF. The reader is cautioned that the English spelling of place names on the maps may not always correspond to the spelling in the text. Throughout the text, we cite the names of cities, towns, and villages where combat ensued or where forces were staged. In some cases we include additional maps in the text.

About This Report

This report is based on a comprehensive analysis completed in 2002. Two types of sources were used to create an accurate record of what happened during the planning and conduct of OEF. First, members of the project interviewed more than 70 military and civilian personnel in 2002. The interviewees including many of the top leaders, combat commanders, staff officers, and enlisted men involved in OEF. For example, the staff met with logistics leaders from U.S. Central Command's (CENTCOM's) J-4 and the Combined Forces Land Component Commander (CFLCC), but also met

Figure 1.3
Afghanistan



SOURCE: Microsoft Encarta, 2001.

RAND RR381-1.3

with officers and enlisted personnel who executed support operations in the United States, Europe, and Central Asia.

The second authoritative source for the earlier project was the records created and reported when plans were being debated and operations were underway. RAND analysts looked at thousands of briefings, reports, messages, and tabulations.⁵ For example, these analysts examined the daily briefing given to Army leadership, CENTCOM databases on personnel, requests for forces, and battle damage assessments (BDAs). In a few cases, unclassified information about support activities could be extracted from classified records, but almost all information of the details of planning and combat operations was classified.

This account maintains the scope and structure of the original report and contains all of its conclusions and recommendations. Where data and views remain classified, we state issues and evidence in a more general manner. For readers interested

⁵ Although several of these sources were classified, those cited in this report were not.

in subsequent accounts or analysis of operations in Afghanistan, we have included a bibliography that includes relevant publications through 2005. We have also added an Epilogue that recounts, in broad terms, developments in the security situation, governance, and economy of Afghanistan through May 2013.

Purpose

This report provides a record of Army and Joint military operations in and around Afghanistan, called Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF).⁶ It describes military operations against al Qaeda terrorists in Afghanistan and their Taliban supporters in Afghanistan and the adjoining nations. It covers the first nine months of the campaign, the period between 9/11 and the end of June 2002, although, in some cases, the analysis is based on later events. The scope of the work is broad; it addresses planning, command and control; intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR); air, ground, and SOF combat operations; deployment and logistics support; coalition activities; humanitarian operations; and ongoing stability operations. Army leaders encouraged the Arroyo Center to undertake a broad study and address the contributions of the Army as well as joint and coalition forces.

The research approach was to draw on contemporaneous and original sources in building this account. It strives to describe what the participants did and reported at the time. The analysis aims to highlight planning and operational considerations that made OEF “a different kind of war” for land, air, and naval forces. This work also examines key issues that could affect operational concepts, doctrine, Army transformation, and other Army Title 10 responsibilities.

Organization of This Report

We divide our account of OEF into six chapters that provide a roughly chronological account of the first nine months of OEF in Afghanistan. Chapter Two recounts events from the 9/11 attacks until the air attacks started in Afghanistan on October 7. Chapter Three focuses on the ensuing military operations in and around Afghanistan from early October until the fall of the Taliban, marked by the fall of Kandahar in early December 2001. Chapter Four examines military operations to hunt down the remnants of al Qaeda and Taliban forces following the fall of Kandahar. Operations at Tora Bora and the Shah-i Kot Valley (Operation ANACONDA) figure prominently in this chapter. Chapter Five addresses the establishment of the Interim Administration, building of Afghan civil administration, and other reconstruction activities. Chapter Six then presents conclusions and recommendations. The report ends with an Epilogue that briefly assesses the situation as of May 2013.

⁶ The operation is also referred to as Operation Enduring Freedom–Afghanistan (OEF-A). In this work, we will use the abbreviated form, OEF. It is understood that we are referring to Afghanistan only. The earlier designation for the war in Afghanistan was Operation Infinite Justice. This was quickly changed to OEF because of the religious implications of the word “infinite.”

Of course, the hunt for the remnants of the Taliban and al Qaeda and reconstruction efforts continued well beyond June 2002; the stopping point for this report was chosen to cover the takedown of the Taliban, the dispersion of al Qaeda, and the initial post-conflict efforts in Afghanistan. We believe that operations during this period contain important implications for the Army.

Laying the Groundwork

Military operations in Afghanistan were unanticipated and very different from those U.S. planners had considered. Military planners faced many new challenges, but they also had some opportunities that their predecessors had not had. The planners for OEF faced distinctive factors, including the political-military setting, the nature of the enemies, geography, unique force requirements, and new technologies. The results of the OEF experience provide perspective on how to organize for similar conflicts in the future.

The planning process was especially difficult for OEF. Planners had little time to organize, and no set plan from which to work, meaning that CENTCOM staff and others had to craft plans from a blank slate.¹ Following 9/11, the president, other senior U.S. leaders, and the people of the United States expressed a clear desire that a response be made quickly.² The country had been dealt a blow and prompt action was necessary to show adversaries, allies, and America itself, that it could and would respond with vigor. Military planners answered this challenge. The first overt military strikes took place on October 7, less than a month after the terrorist attacks. Planning and organizing processes that often take weeks or months were compressed into hours or days.

The challenging factors of OEF included the strategic context of the war, the nature of the adversary, the physical setting, the historical background, the composition of the coalition, the combining of a variety of different forces with dissimilar capabilities, and an elusive end state. This discussion introduces factors that OEF planners had to consider as well as the actions that they took to address them.

¹ “This plan was cut from whole cloth . . . between September 12 and when it was briefed to the president a week or ten days later” (Christopher Buchanan, “Campaign Against Terror,” transcript of interview with GEN Tommy Franks, *Frontline*, June 12, 2002).

² See Bob Woodward, *Bush at War*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 2002.

The Strategic Context

The U.S.-led combat operation in Afghanistan was viewed as the first campaign in the larger global war on terrorism. This larger counterterrorism effort launched by the United States is itself a war unlike any other. It was recognized as such at virtually all military and political levels and among the general population. While operations to take down the Taliban in Afghanistan were, in terms of military combat, relatively short, the larger war against al Qaeda and the resurgent Taliban has proven to be a much longer-term undertaking, making operations in Afghanistan the United States' longest conflict.

There were no plans on the shelf for either the war on terrorism or operations in Afghanistan and both were launched with urgency in the immediate aftermath of 9/11. OEF in Afghanistan was viewed with an eye to producing results in the near-term in Afghanistan; the larger war on terrorism was viewed as inherently long-term and global in character. The combination made a challenging set of problems for military planners. From a military organizational and planning standpoint the situation was further complicated by other factors:

- **Unclear Objectives:** There was some disagreement at senior levels over the scope of the initial response.
- **Need for Speed:** There was pressure from senior civilian leaders to respond militarily to 9/11 as quickly as possible, essentially precluding traditional military deliberate planning processes.
- **High-Level Oversight:** Planners experienced direct involvement by the president and other senior civilian officials in the initiation and refinement of overall strategy and objectives, concepts of operations, and even the selection of targets in the military campaign's initial phases.³
- **Uncertain International Support:** There were uncertainties about the outcome of negotiations over coalition membership and basing and transit rights.
- **Need for Interagency Coordination:** The nature of the conflict required the military to act in conjunction with intelligence services and other branches of the U.S. government in ways that had not previously been considered. The absence of an established interagency process for readily engaging the full spectrum of participants added complications to the planning and conduct of the operation.

³ It is not clear that this oversight established a precedent; however, the same intense involvement of national leaders in operational planning was repeated in the planning for Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2002.

Building and Managing the Coalition

DoD's unified command plan assigns global responsibilities to combatant commands. Afghanistan falls into the area of responsibility (AOR) of CENTCOM, which, at that time, spanned the area from Egypt and East Africa through most of the tumultuous area of the Middle East to Kazakhstan, a former Soviet republic (see Figure 2.1).⁴ CENTCOM was tasked to plan for and conduct OEF. This forced the command to address the many problems associated with building a military coalition from among disparate nations with widely differing capabilities and national interests. CENTCOM's familiarity with the area helped expedite the efforts to gain access and build an effective "coalition of the willing."

Figure 2.1
U.S. Central Command Area of Responsibility, Fall 2001



SOURCE: U.S. Central Command.

RAND RR381-2.1

⁴ The exception is that Israel was not and is still not included in CENTCOM's AOR.

The Coalition

However, senior administration officials were wary of allowing coalition members to complicate what would become a complex military operation. They were determined to have the “mission define the coalition” and not the other way around.⁵ Operation ALLIED FORCE in Kosovo was well known for time-consuming debates between coalition members about specific targeting choices. The administration did not want to repeat this experience.⁶ The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) took the unprecedented step of invoking Article 5 of its charter, which authorized the alliance to take action in defense of one of its members. The United States used NATO assets to fill gaps in its homeland defense caused by deploying forces to Afghanistan instead of using the alliance directly in OEF.⁷

In building this coalition of the willing, U.S. military planners were able to recruit beyond the NATO group of nations. By March 2002, 50 countries had offered some form of assistance, and 20 of these deployed a total of more than 8,000 troops to the CENTCOM AOR. This included more than 5,000 troops in support of ISAF and OEF in Afghanistan—more than half the 15,000 non-Afghan forces in Afghanistan. Eventually planners incorporated contributions from some 70 countries, a larger number than those that participated in the first Gulf War.⁸ Some of the countries involved possessed a high level of military capability and were able to contribute to OEF with relatively little adjustment. Other coalition contributions would put a strain on logistics and other support services and would present interoperability challenges.

The coalition received contributions from some countries that faced domestic opposition to OEF’s aims. For example, political constraints on Pakistan’s support for OEF placed limits on using Pakistani territory to support operations in Afghanistan and also hindered the effectiveness of efforts to kill or capture top al Qaeda leaders.⁹ Even this limited support proved vital to accomplishing early OEF’s aims.

⁵ GEN Tommy Franks (Buchanan, 2002).

⁶ For discussion of the targeting process for Kosovo, see John E. Peters, Stuart E. Johnson, Nora Bensahel, Timothy Liston, and Traci Williams, *European Contributions to Operation Allied Force: Implications for Transatlantic Cooperation*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MR-1391-AF, 2001; and Bruce R. Nardulli, Walter L. Perry, Bruce R. Pirnie, John Gordon IV, and John G. McGinn, *Disjointed War: Military Operations in Kosovo, 1999*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MR-1406-A, 2002, p. 27.

⁷ For more detail, see Nora Bensahel, *The Counterterror Coalitions: Cooperation with Europe, NATO, and the EU*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MR-1746-AF, 2003.

⁸ Buchanan, 2002; Charles Portman, “Coalition Support Grows for Operation Enduring Freedom,” CENTCOM Public Affairs, October 7, 2002; Paul Wolfowitz, “Coalition News Briefing on Humanitarian Assistance,” remarks, February 28, 2003; CENTCOM, “International Contributions to the War on Terrorism,” February 27, 2003; and U.S. Department of State International Information Programs, “International Contributions to the War Against Terrorism,” fact sheet, June 14, 2002.

⁹ Michael R. Gordon, “A Nation Challenged: Military Strategy; Gains and Limits in New Low-Risk War,” *New York Times*, December 29, 2001.

Contributions ranged from direct involvement in combat operations by the United Kingdom and Australia to offers of assistance with humanitarian operations and stabilization activities by Yemen and Lithuania. OEF marked the first deployment of German forces outside of Europe since World War II and the first dispatch of Japanese troops abroad for military conflict since that time. Operation Ptarmigan was the Royal Marines' first combat mission since the Falklands War. Slovakia's deployment of an engineering unit made it the first NATO candidate country to deploy forces to OEF. Building this coalition was as much about refusing proffered assistance from some nations as it was about convincing nations to contribute military forces. For many nations, their good intentions could not be matched by their ability to provide useful support. The delicate task of constructing an effective combat force proved to be a formidable task.

The United States was inundated with offers coming in from a wide variety of channels, including embassies and regional commands. The process of determining the capabilities that would be needed was time-consuming. In several cases, the delays caused by U.S. efforts to sort through offers and requirements left it unable to take advantage of opportunities and may well have offended many prospective partners who saw the delays as an insult. In many cases, the United States failed to even respond or acknowledge the offer in any way, prompting the prospective contributor to wonder whether the offer had even been received. The United States declined most of the offers of combat forces that it received.

In many cases, the offers of assistance were not as clear-cut as they appeared. Some countries could provide equipment and personnel only if the United States could provide airlift or some other mechanism of getting that equipment and personnel into the theater. In other cases, payment for use of an asset was expected, at times at sufficiently high rates that it offered no savings over using a U.S. asset.

Intelligence cooperation was (and remains) a recurring problem. U.S. military personnel have cited the NATO countries (especially the United Kingdom), Pakistan, the United Arab Emirates, and Jordan as particularly helpful in providing useful and timely intelligence. At the same time, the question of providing intelligence to coalition partners came up against U.S. classification procedures and concerns for security.

Coordinating contributions to support humanitarian relief efforts as well as combat operations also proved to be a formidable task. With most countries willing only to support operations conditionally through bilateral agreements with the United States, the challenge was to ensure that all requirements were met within agreed constraints. A Coalition Coordination Center was established at CENTCOM Headquarters in Tampa, Florida, for this purpose. Its purpose was to provide a mechanism to integrate regional and nonregional partners willing to participate at some level in operations in Afghanistan.

Indigenous Partners

Local forces opposed to al Qaeda and the Taliban also played a key role in OEF. Forces led by indigenous commanders did a great deal of the actual fighting on the ground. These local leaders received air support, funding, and other assistance from the OEF coalition.

The use of local fighters brought with it a number of advantages: direct interest in the fighting (especially against the Taliban), direct knowledge of the terrain and the opponent, and lower coalition casualties. On the other hand, these troops had their own interests, which were not always in line with OEF objectives. They proved willing and able to act on their own.

Joint and Covert Forces

The challenges of coordinating forces within the U.S. military proved even more difficult than working with other countries' military forces. OEF required significant contributions from all four major U.S. Services, which had to work together in a number of ways. Limitations on lift and force protection concerns led U.S. commanders to chose not to bring 105-mm howitzers to Afghanistan, increasing their reliance on air support.¹⁰ All forces in Afghanistan relied on one another for ISR; ground spotters called in targets for air strikes; headquarters used unmanned aircraft system (UAS) imagery to plan maneuvers and select targets; and AC-130s provided cover for ground troops under fire.

Beyond the conventional spectrum, OEF accorded an important role for SOF and covert forces from outside DoD, particularly the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). A legacy of involvement in Afghanistan provided the CIA with working knowledge of the political and military landscape in the country, along with contacts with some local commanders. Nevertheless, incorporating unconventional forces with the rest of the joint and coalition force provided yet another challenge. The use of Army Special Forces to direct strikes from aircraft, for example, was without precedent.¹¹

Technology

The interoperability challenges posed by person-to-person interaction came alongside those involved with incorporating technology into the operation. OEF incorporated new technologies, such as the first use of the Predator UAS armed with missiles and

¹⁰ Franklin L. Hagenbeck, "Afghanistan: Fire Support for Operation Anaconda," transcript of interview with Robert H. McElroy, *Field Artillery Journal*, September–October 2002, p. 6.

¹¹ GEN Tommy Franks (Buchanan, 2002).

the first operational use of the Global Hawk UAS.¹² It also used previously existing technologies in new ways, such as having Army Special Forces call in air strikes. While these technologies won plaudits for their effectiveness later on, before the operation military planners had to account for the possibility that they might not work as hoped.

The decision to manage the operation from CENTCOM headquarters in Florida—rather than establishing offices closer to the action—stemmed, in part, from the ability of communications to provide the bandwidth required to “view” the battlespace from Tampa. CENTCOM planners argued that advances in information technology made the location of the headquarters irrelevant. This issue is related to the question of whether technology would allow for more innovation and independent decisionmaking by soldiers on the ground or if commanders would use their access to more information to manage the battle from headquarters.

Humanitarian Operations and Reconstruction

The CENTCOM commander directed that humanitarian operations be conducted in conjunction with combat operations, which added further twists. The Bush administration wanted to demonstrate to the people of Afghanistan that they were not the focus of the military intervention.

Also, the administration and military planners, seeking to avoid the mistakes of the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, realized the importance of winning the support of the local populace. The Soviets fought without an international coalition. Their strength in Afghanistan at its peak was about four divisions and 120,000 troops. A decade later, in 1989, they withdrew in defeat; having lost, by some estimates, 15,000 lives and 450 aircraft. Neither their greater numbers nor their superior firepower enabled them to defeat the mujahideen. The United States structured its operations in Afghanistan to avoid that outcome.¹³ The lessons taken from the Soviet experience that guided military planners in CENTCOM included the following:

¹² Vernon Loeb, “Afghan War Is a Lab for U.S. Innovation; New Technologies Are Tested in Battle,” *Washington Post*, March 26, 2002. Technically speaking, an armed UAS is aUCAV, or Unmanned *Combat* Aerial Vehicle.

¹³ Several interviewees stressed that avoiding the mistakes the Soviets had made in Afghanistan played an important role as OEF was being planned. A number of books and reports had extracted lessons from the Soviet experience in Afghanistan. Lester W. Grau, an analyst at the Army’s Foreign Military Studies Office, Fort Leavenworth Kansas, has written about the Soviet-Afghan War from the point of view of both the mujahideen and the Soviets. See Ali Ahmad Jalali and Lester W. Grau, *The Other Side of the Mountain: Mujahideen Tactic in the Soviet-Afghan War*, Quantico, U.S. Marine Corps Study DM 980701, 1998; and Lester W. Grau, *The Bear Went Over the Mountain: Soviet Combat Tactics in Afghanistan*, Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1996. A column by Christian Lowe, published in *Defense Week* on October 1, 2001, was titled “What Not to Do: The Soviet’s Afghanistan War.” Within CENTCOM’s headquarters a briefing that summarized lessons from Grau’s and other studies was circulated as planning for OEF proceeded.

- Do not become or appear to become an occupying army; keep the coalition footprint in Afghanistan small.
- Do not alienate the population by creating substantial collateral damage to civilians and infrastructure.
- Carry out humanitarian and combat operations simultaneously.
- Initiate psychological “influence operations” to bolster all objectives.

To manage the humanitarian tasks, CENTCOM established the Coalition Joint Civil-Military Operations Task Force (CJCMOTF) in Kabul in December 2001. The relationships between the military and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) turned contentious, as the NGOs demanded that all military civilian-affairs personnel wear uniforms. The NGOs argued that if the military dressed as civilians, the likelihood that NGO personnel would be targeted for attack would be higher.¹⁴

Even after the demise of the Taliban government in Afghanistan, questions about U.S. and other international support for humanitarian operations and the development of Afghanistan’s infrastructure remained unanswered.¹⁵ Military planners sought to help maintain stability and help the country develop, knowing that considerable ambivalence existed within the administration over the desirability and effectiveness of a policy of nation building.

Pre–September 11 Planning and Operations Against Al Qaeda

U.S. planning and operations against al Qaeda and the Taliban began well before 9/11. From 1995 to 1998, during the Clinton administration, concern grew at the CIA and, subsequently, the White House, about the depth and breadth of Osama bin Laden’s al Qaeda network. By the end of 1997, the White House decided that “the threat posed by al Qaeda had grown enough that it began pushing executive-branch agencies to increase their efforts to disrupt the network.”¹⁶

From 1998 to 2000, the Clinton administration mounted several covert actions against bin Laden and his organization. For example, the CIA worked with other

¹⁴ Elizabeth Neuffer, “Fighting Terror: Uniform Concerns Safety; U.S. Soldiers Worry Aid Workers, Troops Dressed in Civilian Clothes Blur Distinctions,” *Boston Globe*, May 16, 2002; and Michelle Kelly and Morten Rostrup, “Identify Yourselves,” *The Guardian*, February 1, 2002.

¹⁵ Rupert Cornwell, “US Bows to Pressure to Expand Peace-Keeping Beyond Kabul,” *The Independent*, August 31, 2002; Ahmed Rashid, “US Signals Afghan Policy Shift,” *London Daily Telegraph*, August 27, 2002; James Dao, “Powell Urges Nations to Fulfill Afghan Aid Pledges,” *New York Times*, September 27, 2002. For an argument that more needs to be done, see James Dobbins, “Afghanistan’s Faltering Reconstruction,” *New York Times*, September 12, 2002, A1.

¹⁶ Daniel Benjamin and Steven Simon, *The Age of Sacred Terror*, Random House, 2002, p. 256.

countries' intelligence services to undertake a series of "takedowns" against al Qaeda entities around the world.¹⁷

The administration had also undertaken diplomatic approaches to the Taliban. A team of senior Clinton administration officials traveled to Kabul in April 1998 to try to improve relations with the Taliban government and convince them that harboring al Qaeda was not in their interests and that they should hand bin Laden over to the United States.¹⁸ Between August 1998 and the end of the Clinton administration, senior State Department officials and National Security Council (NSC) staffers met with Taliban leaders at least 20 times in an effort to increase the pressure on them to expel al Qaeda and turn over bin Laden. President Clinton also pressed Pakistan's leaders during a 1999 trip there to help bring bin Laden to justice.¹⁹

A more critical view of events during the decade prior to 9/11 is that, however much President Clinton might have hoped for decisive preemptive action, the United States was consistently ineffective in its counter-terrorist efforts and that 9/11 could be seen as a massive failure of deterrence.²⁰ Further evidence is provided by bin Laden himself, quoted in a 1999 *Time* article. Commenting on the U.S. cruise missile attack in Afghanistan, he offered this critique:

The American bombardment had only shown that the world is governed by the law of the jungle. The brutal, treacherous attack killed a number of civilian Muslims. As for material damage, it was minimal. By the grace of God, the missiles were ineffective. The raid proved that the American army is going downhill in its morale. Its members are too cowardly and too fearful to meet the young people of Islam face to face.²¹

After the U.S. embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania on August 7, 1998, were linked to al Qaeda, planners from the Intelligence Community (IC) and Pentagon drew up a list of potential targets for a U.S. military retaliatory strike, which was then forwarded to the key members of the NSC.²² Based on intelligence that bin Laden and the senior leadership of al Qaeda would be meeting at a camp near Khost on August 20, 1998, President Clinton ordered an attack on four al Qaeda training camps

¹⁷ Benjamin and Simon, 2002, p. 268.

¹⁸ Alan Cullison and Andrew Higgins, "A Once Stormy Terror Was Solidified by Cruise Missiles," *Wall Street Journal*, August 2, 2002, p. 1.

¹⁹ See Benjamin and Simon, 2002, pp. 272–273, 279.

²⁰ Jonathan Schacter, *The Eye of the Believer: Psychological Influences on Counter Terrorism Policy Making*, dissertation, Santa Monica, Calif.: The Frederick S. Pardee RAND Graduate School, RGSD-166, 2002.

²¹ "Wrath of God: Osama bin Laden Lashes Out Against the West," *Time*, January 11, 1999.

²² See Benjamin and Simon, 2002, p. 259.

in Afghanistan and the al Shifa chemical complex in Khartoum, Sudan.²³ About 70 Tomahawk Land-Attack Missiles (TLAMs) launched from ships and submarines operating in the Arabian Sea were used against the targets. Operational planning for the strikes was kept to a small group of senior officials and military planners.²⁴ While the facilities were heavily damaged and some al Qaeda personnel apparently killed, bin Laden himself escaped injury. Moreover, the media voiced significant criticism about how verifiable the links were between the chemical plant in Khartoum and chemical weapons production.

In the aftermath of the August 1998 strike, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright made two statements that take on added significance in light of the development of the Bush administration's policy after 9/11 on attacking global terrorism. Albright said, "This is a long-term battle that we are engaged with—fighting a group of people who are determined to disrupt the way of life that our society and others want to follow . . . it is part of a long-term battle against terrorism—the terrorists who have, in fact, declared war on us." She went on to say that, "This was a threat to U.S. national interests. The United States will act unilaterally when we are doing something in the defense of our national interests."²⁵

While various sources indicate some U.S. military planning against al Qaeda continued after August 1998 and prior to 9/11, the extent of that planning remains unclear. Reportedly, after the August 1998 strikes, President Clinton ordered two *Los Angeles*-class attack submarines to remain on station in the northern Arabian Sea throughout 2000, ready to attack bin Laden with TLAMs if he could be located.²⁶ Three different times over a 15-month period, the submarines apparently geared up for an attack against bin Laden. However, each time the intelligence on bin Laden's exact whereabouts was considered insufficient to launch TLAMs.²⁷

During this period, the CIA also devoted a considerable amount of effort to locating and eliminating bin Laden. President Clinton approved five separate intelligence orders, or Memoranda of Notification, authorizing covert action to attempt to destroy the al Qaeda network and disrupt or prevent their operations.

As early as November 1998, the White House also began asking DoD for more options beyond using cruise missiles to try to take out bin Laden. Although asked to find a range of suitable al Qaeda and Taliban targets inside Afghanistan, the military and intelligence communities had difficulty coming up with fixed targets within strik-

²³ Secretary of Defense William Cohen and GEN Hugh Shelton, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff, transcript of DoD News Briefing, Washington, D.C., August 20, 1998.

²⁴ Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and National Security Advisor Sandy Berger, transcript of briefing, Washington, D.C., August 20, 1998.

²⁵ Albright and Berger, 1998.

²⁶ Michael Elliott, "Special Report: The Secret History," *Time*, August 12, 2002, p. 33.

²⁷ See Benjamin and Simon, 2002, pp. 280-81.

ing distance. During this period, the White House also relayed a request to DoD from President Clinton for options on targeting Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda in Afghanistan that included U.S. troops' "boots on the ground." According to one published account, while the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), GEN Hugh Shelton, did provide a briefing in response to this request to the president's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, Samuel "Sandy" Berger, and the "Small Group" of the Principals Committee, he mostly laid out obstacles to success and was unenthusiastically received. Other accounts suggest that as early as 1999 a raid utilizing a small U.S. Army Special Forces unit to capture bin Laden inside Afghanistan was considered but rejected for lack of actionable intelligence. However, U.S. SOF were kept on alert for such an operation, along with attack submarines.

Military planning to target al Qaeda and the Taliban inside Afghanistan appears to have been done reluctantly and only to a limited degree prior to 9/11. While the IC continued to monitor al Qaeda closely, Afghanistan remained a "back-burner" planning contingency at CENTCOM headquarters at MacDill Air Force Base, Florida, and at the Joint Staff in the Pentagon. Deliberate planning within the CENTCOM AOR instead focused on Iraq and Iran. However, according to CENTCOM planners, the command had been tasked to develop some form of a concept of operations (CONOP) for targeting Afghanistan as part of the Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan (JSCP), which provides guidance for the preparation of operations and concept plans to all of the combatant commands and apportion forces and resources within those plans. The plan had been on the shelf since 1997, although it was largely focused on using TLAMs against al Qaeda training camps.²⁸

One idea put forward by the Joint Staff that was acted on was to develop an armed capability for the Predator UAS. Reportedly, this capability was tested in the United States in the summer of 2000 and then, beginning in September 2000, the Predator flew reconnaissance missions about a dozen times searching for bin Laden and other al Qaeda leaders.²⁹

Officials responsible for counterterrorism within the NSC staff were also apparently working on "an aggressive plan" of their own to "take the fight to al Qaeda." Immediately after the presidential election, on November 7, 2000, National Security Advisor Berger met with Secretary of Defense William Cohen in the Pentagon to press again for more detailed planning, including use of U.S. Army Special Forces, to go after bin Laden in Afghanistan.

While the Clinton administration appears to have been pursuing bin Laden and al Qaeda in fits and starts throughout most of President Clinton's second term in office, its retaliation for the August 1998 embassy attacks and subsequent covert operations and other activities did not appear to have had a lasting impact on the al Qaeda orga-

²⁸ See September 4, 2002, RAND interviews with CENTCOM J-3, J-2, and J-5 planners.

²⁹ See Benjamin and Simon, 2002, pp. 321-22.

nization or its ability to carry out further operations. These actions and efforts by the Bush administration prior to 9/11 were insufficient to prevent al Qaeda's attacks.

During the transition period and the Bush administration's first months in office, the campaign against al Qaeda appears to have been a relatively low priority. However, in spring 2001, the then-Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, Condoleezza Rice, directed an interagency review of U.S. policy toward al Qaeda. During that review, the NSC staff reportedly pushed forward three initiatives, each of which had grown out of an options paper produced the previous October: arming the Predator UAS and using it over Afghanistan and elsewhere both as a reconnaissance and weapons platform to target al Qaeda leaders; inserting a proxy force in the field against bin Laden, perhaps from Uzbekistan; and providing armed support to the opposition Northern Alliance then operating inside Afghanistan.³⁰

Each of these proposals inspired debate. The idea of arming the Predator and giving it to the CIA to operate was highly contentious. Director of Central Intelligence (DCI), George Tenet and others apparently were concerned about which agency would fund it, which would operate it, and which would have final authority to fire it if targets became available. The interagency review continued through the summer and into early fall 2001. On September 4, 2001, when the Principals Committee convened to review a draft of a National Security Presidential Directive (NSPD) on counterterrorism policy and al Qaeda, most of the proposals raised by the first NSC staff papers were still undecided, including whether to arm the Predator and who would operate it. The meeting apparently did not finalize the NSPD document to send to the president.³¹

Developing the War Plan: September 11–October 6, 2001

Senior civilian and military leaders, including President Bush, were involved from the outset in crafting overall strategy and objectives. They met frequently to determine key objectives and review operational concepts. They involved themselves in the details of operational planning, down to what many would consider the tactical level. They pressed military staffs early and often for an innovative plan to attack global terrorism and, more specifically, al Qaeda. As early as September 13, less than 48 hours after the 9/11 attacks, the president was saying to his senior advisors, "I want a plan—costs, time. I need options on the table. . . . I want decisions quick."

War Aims Emerged

Complicating the issue of developing overall objectives and war aims was the character of the adversary or adversaries and how and whether to distinguish between

³⁰ See Benjamin and Simon, 2002, pp. 335–338.

³¹ See Benjamin and Simon, 2002, pp. 343–346.

the Taliban and al Qaeda. From the outset it was recognized that the perpetrators of 9/11 belonged to a terrorist organization, as distinct from a nation-state. At the very first NSC meeting, convened while President Bush was still at Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska, on 9/11, DCI Tenet reported with near certainty that bin Laden was behind the attacks.

The notion that the Taliban's role in supporting terrorism would have to be addressed emerged from the outset. On the evening of 9/11, the president inserted the following statement into a speech from the Oval Office: "We will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them."³² He reiterated the point later that evening in a meeting with his most senior advisors in the White House bunker when he said, "We have made the decision to punish whoever harbors terrorists, not just the perpetrators." This statement by President Bush at the beginning of the planning process had consequences beyond the Taliban, for it formed one of the founding principles of what would be called the "global war on terrorism."

Thus, the president decided to go after al Qaeda not only in Afghanistan but also globally. However, U.S. objectives relative to the Taliban were considerably debated and they evolved over time. The issue was challenging in several ways:

- Its importance in terms of the successful formation of a coalition for anticipated military operations (as well as other cooperative efforts to deal with al Qaeda).
- The precedent that would be set concerning the appropriate level of punishment for other nations who harbor terrorists.
- The reluctance of senior Bush administration officials to embrace a war aim of regime change in Afghanistan because of the obvious concomitant need to engage in "nation-building," a role that the administration had explicitly rejected in the 2000 presidential campaign.

Ultimately, the administration decided to provide the Taliban an opportunity, even after military operations had begun, to surrender bin Laden, remove Mullah Omar from power, and expel al Qaeda.

Early discussion of war aims was not limited to al Qaeda and the Taliban. At a September 12 meeting of what became known as the "War Cabinet," Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld stated, "It is critical how we define goals at the start, because that's what the coalition signs on for." He went on to ask, "Do we focus on bin Laden and al Qaeda or terrorism more broadly?" The president indicated his instinct was to start with al Qaeda and not make the target too diffuse. "Start with bin Laden, which

³² See "President Bush's Remarks," *Washington Post*, September 12, 2001, p. 2; see also Woodward, 2002, p. 30.

Americans expect. And then if we succeed, we've struck a huge blow and can move forward."³³

Nevertheless, discussion and debate about broadening the immediate response beyond al Qaeda, the Taliban, and Afghanistan continued. At a September 13 briefing to Pentagon reporters, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz stated that U.S. objectives included "ending states who sponsor terrorism," in a context where his language was seen as a reference to undertaking an effort to remove Saddam Hussein as the leader of Iraq. This is reported to have immediately caused concern among other members of the national security team, on the grounds that the matter of articulating clear war aims/goals had not yet been resolved for Afghanistan, much less for possible future action against countries like Iraq. Reportedly, Wolfowitz continued to be a strong advocate at meetings of the senior U.S. leadership for expanding the initial response to include targeting Iraq.³⁴

The president's characterization of the attacks as "acts of war" at his September 12 news conference—as well as later that day, telling congressional leaders, "This is not an isolated incident. This is war."—placed the issue of war aims, not only for the Afghan campaign but also for the longer term "war on terrorism," squarely before both the military and the country. Later that same day, the president modified a Deputies Committee draft "Statement of Objectives" in the war on terrorism to state that the goal was to "eliminate terrorism as a threat to our way of life *and to all nations that love freedom*, including terrorist organizations, networks, finances, and access to weapons of mass destruction" (president's addition in italics).

³³ Various sources use the terms "National Security Council Meeting," "Cabinet meeting," "War Cabinet meeting" to describe different meetings between President Bush and his senior advisors in the White House Situation Room, at Camp David, and elsewhere after 9/11. Full, formal cabinet meetings were rare in the Bush White House. The full NSC in the Bush administration included the President, the Vice President, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, and the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs. The DCI and CJCS also attended as statutory advisors to the NSC. The President also designated his Chief of Staff and Assistant to the President for Economic Policy to attend any NSC meeting. Finally, the Attorney General and Director of the Office of Management and Budget were invited when meetings pertained to their responsibilities (see National Security Presidential Directive [NSPD]-1, "Organization of the National Security Council System," The White House, February 13, 2001). The full Cabinet included senior members of the administration (the Secretaries of Agriculture, Commerce, Health and Human Services, etc.) that were not part of the full NSC. The "War Cabinet" is a subset of the full NSC that varied in composition but usually excluded the Director of the Office of Management and Budget and several others while it included, on occasion, the Director of the FBI, deputies of the various statutory and nonstatutory NSC members, and others invited to sit in to provide expertise or to brief the other members. The NSC "Principals Committee" had essentially the same makeup as the NSC, minus the President, and was chaired by the Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs.

³⁴ See Kathleen T. Rhem, "DoD to Get Much of Bush Emergency Budget Request," *Armed Forces Press Service*, September 13, 2001; See also Woodward, 2002, pp. 60–61, 83–85.

Initial Military Planning

Immediately after 9/11, senior civilian leaders turned to the military to produce credible military options quickly, and Secretary Rumsfeld began pressing Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Gen Richard Myers for military options to respond to the attacks.³⁵ On September 12, the Secretary of Defense directed the preparation of “credible military options” to respond to international terrorism. The commanding general of CENTCOM, Tommy R. Franks (Army), later characterized that directive as guiding the preparation of the war plan that eventually emerged and, as discussed below, CENTCOM, U.S. Special Operations Command (SOCOM), the Joint Staff, and others got planning under way. However, neither the war aims for the Afghan campaign nor for the global war on terrorism had yet been clearly articulated.³⁶

On September 13, DCI Tenet briefed the War Cabinet on an emerging concept for combining the IC, Northern Alliance, Special Forces, and other U.S. military assets to go after al Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan. Tenet’s presentation laid out the overall strategic concept that formed the basis for the plan that was eventually implemented. The then-Director of the CIA’s Counterterrorism Center, Cofer Black, also participated in the briefing, at one point allegedly asserting, “Give us the mission. We can get ‘em.”

There was early recognition that building a plan to target al Qaeda in Afghanistan and globally would be a significant challenge given the lack of detailed plans “on the shelf.” At a September 13 NSC meeting, Secretary Rumsfeld noted that if the military was going to be asked to go after states harboring terrorists, it would need new direction because, “We’ve never done that before.” At the previous NSC meeting on September 12, General Shelton had stated that the only military contingency plans on the shelf for Afghanistan involved mostly cruise missile attacks against al Qaeda training camps. As is now known, the president opposed any such option that would suggest a response similar to what the Clinton administration undertook in August 1998, an operation President Bush considered a failure.

President Bush and Secretary Rumsfeld continued to press for receiving a military plan as soon as possible. Secretary Rumsfeld’s comment at the September 13 meeting that, “We need new options. This is a new mission,” gave further emphasis to the challenge of reaching early agreement on war aims—and associated war plans—in a situation that had no meaningful precedent and cast unforeseen “new missions.”

The September 15 War Cabinet meetings at Camp David, Maryland, featured a more detailed presentation by DCI Tenet on his proposed overall plan for Afghanistan called “Initial Hook.” It called for CIA paramilitary teams to be deployed with the

³⁵ General Myers (Air Force) became the CJCS on October 1, 2001. He served a full tour to September 30, 2005, when he was replaced by Gen. Peter Pace of the Marine Corps.

³⁶ Tommy Franks, *Prepared Statement of General Tommy Franks, CINC CENTCOM, Testimony Before the Senate Armed Services Committee*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, February 7, 2002a, p. 3.

Northern Alliance and for the United States to provide additional funds, equipment, weapons, and other support to the Northern Alliance and other opposition forces in southern Afghanistan. The CIA teams would eventually link up with U.S. Army Special Forces units, who would help guide U.S. airpower and bring other firepower to bear.

At the same meeting, General Shelton also gave a presentation on three broad military options or courses of action: TLAMS-only against al Qaeda targets in Afghanistan; cruise missiles plus bombing; and cruise missiles plus bombing plus U.S. Army Special Forces inserted into Afghanistan, or what he referred to as “boots on the ground.”

President Bush stated that the ideal result from the upcoming military campaign would be to kick terrorists out of places like Afghanistan and through that action persuade other countries that had supported terrorism in the past, such as Iran, to change their behavior. No clear indication was given that overthrowing the Taliban regime was to be an explicit objective, though both the CIA and CJCS presentations could be seen as implicitly embracing such a goal. Attention focused on the goal of destroying al Qaeda as the first priority, with the Secretary of Defense stating that the worst thing the United States could do in the situation would be to misstate the objective. This was further emphasized by White House Chief of Staff Andrew Card’s expressed concern over the problem of “the definition of success.”

At another key War Cabinet meeting on September 17, President Bush decided that, as part of the first wave of the war on terrorism, he would approve Tenet’s recommendations and requests for authority via a Memorandum of Notification (MON), in addition to approving General Shelton’s “third option” for cruise missile attacks, conventional bombing, and “boots on the ground.” In this context, he asked the military to prepare a detailed war plan consistent with that broad option. His guidance was conveyed via a Top Secret message from General Shelton to General Franks and his staff.³⁷

On September 18, President Bush signed Public Law 107-40, which stated that, “the President is authorized to use all necessary and appropriate force against those nations, organizations, or persons he determines planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks that occurred on 11 September 2001, or harbored such organizations or persons”³⁸

Starting in mid-September, an interagency crisis-response group led by a senior NSC staff member also began dealing with the myriad of international and interagency issues associated with the post-9/11 planning and preparation process. These included key coalition issues regarding basing and transit rights. It is unclear to what

³⁷ Interview with CENTCOM J-5 planner, December 6, 2002.

³⁸ See Public Law 107-40, Authorization for Use of Military Force, September 18, 2001.

extent this interagency group took up the issue of whether the U.S. military and the IC needed further high-level guidance on war aims.

On September 21, General Franks briefed the president on CENTCOM plans. Around that time, another problem emerged. Initially, the planned operation had been designated “Infinite Justice.” However, as word reached the Secretary of Defense that Islamic scholars were objecting to the term (arguing, apparently, that only God or Allah can impose infinite justice) the senior DoD leadership huddled with CENTCOM and the Joint Staff and the operation was redesignated “Enduring Freedom.”³⁹

At the NSC meeting on September 25, the issue of the appropriate military strategy was again addressed. General Franks emphasized that, without cooperation from Uzbekistan, the initial military attack would have to be against the southern areas of Afghanistan, even though the Northern Alliance was fighting Taliban and al Qaeda forces in the northern part of the country.

For the next ten days, attention at the top levels of government focused on refining the military strategy, with particular emphasis on the critical role of Uzbekistan, both as a base for combat search and rescue (CSAR) teams and SOF and on the refinement of and decisionmaking on the emerging Afghan target list. At the same time, concerns were emerging that the United States, while developing a response, did not yet have a well-developed, long-range strategy, but rather a short-term plan that appeared as if they were making it up as they went along.

On October 1, 2001, the president and Secretary Rumsfeld approved General Franks’s proposed “military course of action” for the region.⁴⁰ On October 3, Secretary Rumsfeld issued a Top Secret memorandum entitled, “Strategic Guidance for a Campaign Against Terrorism.” Presumably meant to supplement the guidance he had issued through General Shelton on September 17, it explained that the coming campaign was to be a *global* war on terrorism [emphasis added], meaning multiple operations in different theaters, and that “all tools of national power” would be employed.⁴¹

By October 3, there appears to have been a consensus among most War Cabinet principals that removal of the Mullah Omar–led Taliban regime was both a preferred and probable outcome of a U.S.-led attack on Afghanistan, and that such an outcome would lead to an inescapable period of stability operations (i.e., peacekeeping) and nation-building. Nevertheless, as described below, even after the bombing campaign began, the possibility of an outcome that had a new “moderate” Taliban government giving up al Qaeda was both still under consideration and influencing the targeting

³⁹ See Edward Walsh, “Rumsfeld Might Change Infinite Justice Name,” *Washington Post*, September 21, 2001, p. 2; and Linton Weeks, “Operation War Language,” *Washington Post*, September 21, 2001, p. C1.

⁴⁰ Tommy Franks, *Prepared Statement of General Tommy Franks, CINC CENTCOM, Testimony Before House Armed Services Committee*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, February 27, 2002b.

⁴¹ Woodward, 2002, p. 189. OEF was meant to designate the overall U.S. military effort against terrorism, of which the planned operations in and around Afghanistan were only the first stage.

process. Also, any tasks suggesting a prolonged U.S. military presence in Afghanistan were conspicuously absent from the sections on “endstate” in key planning documents.

Intelligence Community Planning

Although only limited military planning relative to al Qaeda and Afghanistan took place prior to 9/11, the CIA had begun well before then to gather intelligence and build a relationship with the Northern Alliance and other opposition groups inside Afghanistan. (Of course, it had also been extensively involved in Afghanistan during the 1980s, through its support for the Mujahideen and indigenous resistance elements after the Soviet invasion.) The CIA’s insight into the situation in Afghanistan obtained through these prior relationships appears to have been a major contributor to the swift success of the overall operation.

In addition, a significant effort had been undertaken by the IC (including the intelligence directorates of the Joint Staff, CENTCOM, SOCOM, and other commands) to gather information on the military capabilities (order of battle, doctrine, and tactics) of the Taliban from 1996 to 2000. Of particular interest in this context was the increasing contribution to Taliban military capability of al Qaeda fighters as the Taliban sought victory over the Northern Alliance in the Panjshir Valley.⁴²

As a result, the U.S. military in its post-9/11 planning efforts had access to a reasonably well-vetted order of battle for the Taliban and some appreciation of their military doctrine and tactics. Baseline information on al Qaeda, its leadership, and known locations and activities was also available. No evidence exists, however, that a canonical analysis of strategic “centers of gravity”⁴³ was undertaken for either group by the CIA, CENTCOM, or any interagency working group—a serious impediment to the coherent development of war aims in the post-9/11 environment.

According to some planners, at the outset of OEF, national-level databases on terrorists in general and al Qaeda in particular were not easily accessible. As a result, analysts from such commands as SOCOM had to go through the time-consuming process of building their own.⁴⁴

After 9/11, the National Imagery and Mapping Agency (NIMA) was tasked to immediately complete the production of digital point precision databases that would be needed for precision bombings.⁴⁵

⁴² Interview with Director, J-2, CENTCOM, September 3, 2002.

⁴³ Centers of gravity are the characteristics, capabilities, or sources of power from which a military force derives its freedom of action, physical strength, or will to fight.

⁴⁴ Interestingly, RAND and other research centers, such as the Monterey Institute, had terrorism databases available that SOCOM, CENTCOM, and other planners could have easily accessed. It is not known whether any planners took advantage of these sources of terrorist information.

⁴⁵ See David A. Fulghum and Robert Wall, “U.S. to Move First, Plan Details Later,” *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, September 24, 2001, p. 40. NIMA has been renamed the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA).

Role of the Allies in Planning

From 9/11 to October 6, 2001, and beyond, President Bush and other senior officials consulted constantly with allies over a range of issues, from overflight and basing rights to potential force contributions to humanitarian aid and other considerations.

The views of Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom were apparently an important input to the planning process, in particular in emphasizing allied concerns about the appropriate response to 9/11. This was manifest in both the discussions between the president and the British Prime Minister on September 12 and thereafter, and in the British effort to provide early advice to the United States on how the campaign against terrorism should be shaped and prosecuted in the five-page think piece transmitted that same day. UK access to detailed information on planning and intelligence information and involvement in the planning process at CENTCOM headquarters in Tampa was greater than any other coalition member. This stemmed from the long-standing “special relationship” between the two countries; the early commitment by the United Kingdom of a range of military forces and capabilities, including special forces, TLAMs, ships, support and strike aircraft; and Prime Minister Blair’s strong early support and developing close relationship with President Bush.

Planning at CENTCOM

From CENTCOM’s perspective, senior administration officials’ interest in the urgent development of war plans was clear and palpable. It was also recognized early on that the United States was in an unprecedented situation—a new kind of war—where clear guidance on war aims would not necessarily be forthcoming, or at least not quickly. Nonetheless, CENTCOM planners understood that some kind of military response inside Afghanistan was almost certainly going to be authorized as part of the initial wave of the campaign.

Thus, planning against al Qaeda, especially targeting its organization operating from inside Afghanistan, began almost immediately. In effect, CENTCOM planners “dusted off” previous contingency plans and used them as the initial basis for developing a framework for the initial plan, even though it soon became apparent that they were woefully inadequate, given the scope of the campaign that senior officials in the White House and Pentagon envisioned. CENTCOM relayed a briefing on initial strike recommendations to General Shelton and Secretary Rumsfeld in less than a week. This formed the basis for General Shelton’s September 15 briefing to the War Cabinet.

During this period, various parts of the CENTCOM staff were set in motion. For example, J-5 personnel were brought in to begin working on host-nation support basing and overflight rights and similar tasks.⁴⁶ Planning also began almost immediately at CENTCOM’s subordinate (e.g., Army Central Command [ARCENT]; Naval Forces, Central Command [NAVCENT]; Central Command Air Forces [CENTAF],

⁴⁶ Interview with J-3 staff at CENTCOM, July 2002.

and Marine Component, Central Command [MARCENT]) and supporting (e.g., SOCOM, U.S. European Command [EUCOM], U.S. Pacific Command, and U.S. Transportation Command) commands. Planning at some of the subordinate commands was complicated because they were tasked to send some of their best and most experienced planners directly to Tampa. In addition, CENTAF was directed to deploy forward and establish a Combined Air Operations Center (CAOC) at Prince Sultan Air Base (AB), Saudi Arabia. This physical separation of most air operations planners from CENTCOM complicated planning and operations later in the campaign. The Air Force did send a limited number of rather junior officers to CENTCOM to act as liaison officers between the CAOC and CENTCOM for planning the air campaign. Nevertheless, considerable tension over control of the targeting and damage assessment processes was apparent between the CENTCOM commander, General Franks, and the Combined Joint Forces Air Component Commander (CJFACC) during much of the campaign.⁴⁷ General Franks insisted on controlling air operations from Tampa, prompting the CJFACC to declare that he was just an administrator executing orders and passing on information.⁴⁸

CENTCOM planners describe an “iterative” initial planning process with General Franks. They knew that certain operational challenges would arise. Afghanistan was a landlocked country with poor airfields and roads. They were not certain from which, if any, of the surrounding countries the United States and its allies would be able to operate. While they had a baseline of knowledge on al Qaeda and the Taliban, they knew that this would be an intelligence-driven operation and that “actionable” intelligence—the kind necessary to find and strike key leaders—would be critical.⁴⁹ Much of the guidance received from General Franks was verbal, passed along in daily (and sometimes more frequently) face-to-face meetings or video teleconferences (VTCs) with directors of the various J-directorates, component commanders, and CENTCOM staff. Soon, General Franks was also giving twice-daily updates via VTC to Secretary Rumsfeld and General Shelton, which created another planning burden for CENTCOM staff.⁵⁰

On September 14, CENTCOM began coordination with the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Staff, and the Office of the Secretary of State to expedite

⁴⁷ February 2002 RAND interviews with Air Force planners assigned to CENTCOM staff.

⁴⁸ David Deptula, *The Challenges of Modern Warfare: Some Observations from Operation Enduring Freedom*, briefing, undated.

⁴⁹ Interview with J-3 staff at CENTCOM, July 2002.

⁵⁰ Interview with J-3 staff at CENTCOM. In the Kosovo conflict, the use of the VTC as a command-and-control conduit proved problematic. Senior commanders were able to issue orders two or three levels down, thereby circumventing the chain of command. In OEF, General Franks imposed more discipline over the VTC sessions by restricting participants. The research team found no evidence of the problems experienced in Operation Allied Force in 1999. VTC continues to be a primary command-and-control tool. It was used extensively in Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom and it continues to be used in Afghanistan to this day.

gaining host-nation involvement, establishing rules of engagement (ROE), and ensuring capability to provide airspace defense over critical U.S. infrastructure (equipment and personnel) in the area of operations.

Guidance to Planners

President Bush and his advisors were well aware of the Soviet Union's disastrous experience in Afghanistan. They had no reason to assume that U.S. and allied (especially Northern Alliance) offensive military operations would be successful quickly and that the Taliban and al Qaeda military forces would, as subsequently occurred, collapse so fast or so completely. The plans that emerged in the first weeks after 9/11 had to consider the possibility that the Northern Alliance would prove to be an ineffective offensive force, even when aided by U.S. and allied bombing, and contemplate the possible need to deploy a large U.S. ground force into Afghanistan to achieve U.S. war aims.

However, the Soviets' experience remained foremost in General Franks's mind. He constantly reminded his planners of the lessons of previous campaigns in Afghanistan—to avoid being seen as an invading force and work with (rather than against) the Afghan people. This perspective created pressures to keep the coalition's "footprint" in Afghanistan as small as possible. Planning involved not only an evaluation of the enemy situation and order of battle but also the history of military operations in Afghanistan and the political and military situation across the region.

General Franks also directed his planners to look at how information operations could be used effectively.⁵¹ They examined coalition building. They looked at how civil-military operations and humanitarian assistance could be utilized to gain the acquiescence, if not the full support, of the Afghan people. They were aware of pressures from the White House and the Pentagon to come up with a plan quickly but also recognized the limitations of what could be done in the near term, since it would take months to build up a substantial U.S. force in the region.

In less than a week after 9/11, the president had available for consideration both (1) a CIA plan for immediately deploying paramilitary and special operations forces into Afghanistan to link up with the Northern Alliance and gain intelligence on the Taliban and al Qaeda forces and (2) a CENTCOM concept to expeditiously flow forces into the region in anticipation of conducting extended air and ground operations against those forces. However, the detailed plans for the broader military campaign were still in an early stage of development.

On September 17, General Franks and his planners received detailed strategic guidance from President Bush and Secretary Rumsfeld via a message from General Shelton. That guidance, which resulted from the discussions that President Bush had with his senior advisors over the preceding six days, laid out the basic CONOPs he had

⁵¹ Information operations are actions taken to affect adversary information and information systems while defending one's own systems.

approved and directed that the initial focus of the global war on terrorism was to be on al Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan. According to CENTCOM planners, this allowed them to prioritize their planning efforts, which began in earnest.⁵²

During various briefings in mid- and late September, President Bush pressed for humanitarian assistance to be part of the strategy from the very start of the operation. Accordingly, providing humanitarian assistance was pulled forward in the campaign plan from a later phase to the first phase of the campaign, and food and other drops would occur from the first days of operations.⁵³

On September 21, General Franks again briefed President Bush and other senior officials on the basic plan for “operations in response to terrorist attacks.” The concept proposed that “U.S. Central Command, as a part of America’s Global War on Terrorism, . . . would destroy the al Qaeda network inside Afghanistan along with the illegitimate Taliban regime, which was harboring and protecting the terrorists.”⁵⁴

By late September, the outlines of an initial attack on Taliban and al Qaeda forces in Afghanistan were taking shape. It was also clear by this time that the Taliban was not going to yield to U.S. requests to give up bin Laden and other top al Qaeda leaders and that conflict in Afghanistan was inevitable.

Component and Supporting Command Planning

In the period immediately after 9/11, additional planning efforts also took place at various component and supporting commands (SOCOM, ARCENT, CENTAF, etc.). However, some officers and planners interviewed spoke of the absence of clear written guidance from General Franks early in the planning process to the component and supporting commands. As a consequence of this lack of broad understanding of key objectives, missions, and tasks in the critical mid-September to early October planning period, these commands did not always have a clear understanding of the commander’s intent. Coupled with the absence of an existing Operations Plan, this became an important issue during initial crisis action planning.⁵⁵

Under normal circumstances, where time is not an issue, this planning would be accomplished through the use of the Joint Operational Planning and Execution System (JOPES) process and procedures. However, this is an extremely cumbersome and time consuming process, and the pressure from the president and Secretary of Defense for quick military options meant that it had to be scrapped. This meant that the first four phases of the six-phase Crisis Action Planning process had to be compressed into a single phase.

⁵² RAND interview with former CENTCOM J-5 planner, December 5, 2002.

⁵³ RAND interview with CENTCOM J-5 Planner, March 2003; see also Woodward, 2002, p. 130.

⁵⁴ Franks, 2002b.

⁵⁵ RAND interviews with various Army, Navy, and Air Force planners.

To respond to this situation, General Franks requested execution of a quick-response plan to expedite force alerting and deployment. When senior DoD leaders denied his request, he was forced to specifically request all required forces. This was accomplished using an existing, but little known, procedure that used a request for forces (RFF) process by which forces were identified and sent to CENTCOM.⁵⁶ Combined with the attempt to shortcut the Crisis Action Planning process, this helps explain the large number of RFFs and deployment orders.⁵⁷

The RFF process involved several steps, beginning with an identified need for certain types of forces and a subsequent request for them. For Afghanistan, the bulk of these requests originated from the component commanders in CENTCOM. These requests moved up and down the approval chain, frequently being consolidated. The Secretary of Defense had the final word and could approve, modify, or reject the request.

Figure 2.2 shows the key steps in the formal RFF process as it was employed during OEF. The top row of boxes shows the process for developing an RFF within CENTCOM. RFFs originated in CENTCOM's components and its headquarters. During OEF, these requests were generally packaged into bundles and sent out for review within CENTCOM. When internal staffing was completed, the RFFs were forwarded to General Franks for review and approval. Once approved, they were sent to the Joint Staff by message, where they were reviewed internally and coordinated with the Service staffs.

Following this, the RFFs were sent through the Joint Staff hierarchy to the Secretary of Defense's staff and, when all tests were passed, received the Secretary's approval. Deployment orders for the requested capabilities were issued to the Services, setting Service processes in motion to alert, ready, and eventually deploy the approved units.

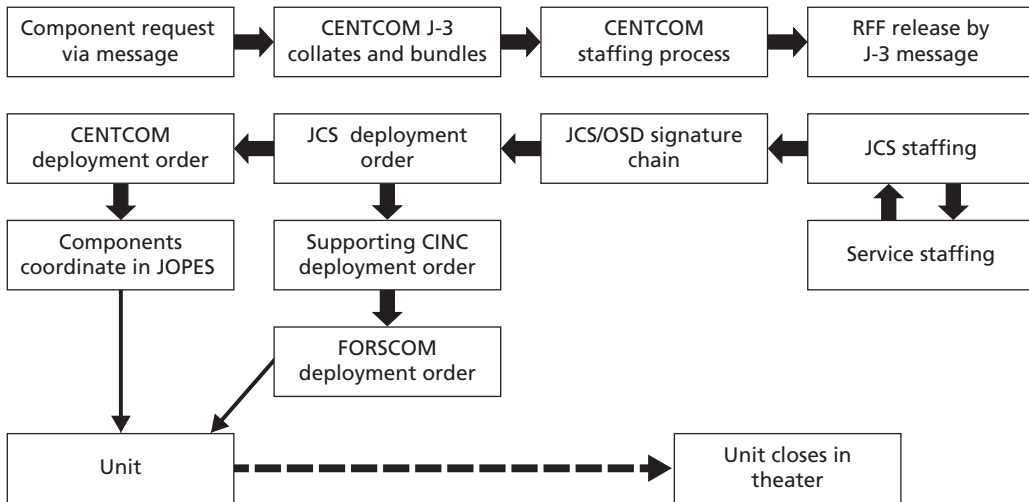
The RFF process was criticized by some interviewees as slow and unresponsive. General Franks told us that he got the forces he needed for OEF, though not always as soon as he wanted them. An absolute judgment on the responsiveness of the RFF process hinges on the standard applied. Operations leaders told us that the process did not appear to have inhibited operations or resulted in bad outcomes. Over 150 RFFs for OEF were forwarded from CENTCOM to Washington. Ultimately about 80 percent won approval, though not necessarily as submitted. Approval was sometimes the result of back and forth negotiations over the size and timing of the delivery of the capabilities requested.

Informal communications between CENTCOM staffs and the Services worked to offset the effects of delays in the formal staffing process depicted in Figure 2.2. Army planners often got "heads up" notices when an RFF was being formulated and reviewed within CENTCOM. In turn, the planners began to consider how they might

⁵⁶ Several Army officers reported handling RFFs in the 1990s.

⁵⁷ See Originator: Joint Staff/J4, Joint Lessons Learned (JULLS) database number 64106-74657, 2002.

Figure 2.2
RFF Process During OEF



SOURCE: Interviews at CENTCOM and Army Staff.

NOTES: JCS = Joint Chiefs of Staff; OSD = Office of the Secretary of Defense; FORSCOM = U.S. Army Forces Command.

RAND RR381-2.2

fill the request and passed the informal notification onward up and down command chains. This helped to somewhat smooth the staffing process but was not “actionable” information that enabled staffs to initiate formal actions.

We analyzed the data for the RFFs submitted to the Pentagon and found that they initially moved through the process relatively swiftly.⁵⁸ The average processing time was less than five days during the initial force build up for OEF. The first RFF, the result of the intensive planning reviews up and down the command chain, was approved in a little more than 24 hours.⁵⁹ By early 2002, the average processing time in Washington was about two-and-a-half weeks. However, it appears the RFF system had the capability to respond quickly. When the CFLCC needed additional helicopters for the ANACONDA fight, the RFF was processed in the Pentagon in less than 18 hours. Still, the number and level of review steps for more routine requests seems high. A less cumbersome process, whether new or existing, might serve better.

From the perspective of ensuring civilian control over the forces that flowed into OEF, the process was a success. The RFFs passed through high-level civilian review. This helped achieve the goal of keeping the U.S. force presence in Afghanistan small.

⁵⁸ The data discussed here are the date/time group of the messages identified in Figure 2.2.

⁵⁹ None of these estimates takes into account the time it took to formulate the original request within CENTCOM, which we could not establish with confidence.

This approach seems a better alternative than arbitrary force limits because it provides a mechanism for commanders to make the case for desired forces.

ARCENT Planning

On 9/11, 3rd U.S. Army/ARCENT was under the command of LTG Paul T. Mikolashek. ARCENT was focused on its core missions: forward defense of Kuwait, security cooperation with regional partners, providing air defense for Saudi Arabia, and protecting U.S. prepositioned sets of equipment in the region. ARCENT had a small forward headquarters in Kuwait of approximately 50 personnel that had been there since Operation DESERT THUNDER in 1998. At the time of 9/11, ARCENT's other main focus was Exercise Bright Star, a regular multinational exercise staged in Egypt involving some 20,000 personnel from 15 countries scheduled to run from October 8 to November 1, 2001.⁶⁰

Although ARCENT was brought into the planning process for OEF from the outset, its effectiveness was hampered by several factors, primarily a shortage of experienced personnel. Much of its experienced planning staff had deployed to Egypt to prepare for Exercise Bright Star and others were directed to report to CENTCOM headquarters in Tampa to support planning efforts there.

Nevertheless, on October 12, ARCENT assumed the force-protection mission at the U.S. base then being established at Karshi-Khanabad in Uzbekistan.

CENTAF Planning

Gen Charles Wald, CENTAF and 9th Air Force Commander, was designated as air component commander for the combined force on September 18 and directed to deploy with approximately 50 personnel to Prince Sultan AB, Saudi Arabia, to establish the CAOC. General Wald and his staff began immediately to work on a number of tasks, from developing a concept of operations for the air portion of the campaign to taking the lead on many transit and "bed-down" issues.

In addition, CENTAF and other Air Force units and organizations sent personnel to augment the CENTCOM staff. However, some have complained that the Air Force neither sent its most capable and experienced people to CENTCOM nor had officers as senior as other Services' liaisons in Tampa and that both factors may have complicated interaction between the two staffs.⁶¹

The Combined Forces Air Component Commander (CFACC) appears to have been hampered in its planning effort by several factors. Its early deployment to Saudi Arabia and physical separation from CENTCOM headquarters contributed to friction by limiting direct interaction between CENTAF and CENTCOM. Whether because of the physical separation or for other reasons, a lack of coordination existed between

⁶⁰ Interviews with senior military officials at ARCENT, August 5, 2002.

⁶¹ RAND interviews with Air Force officers assigned to CENTCOM, February 2002.

CENTCOM's headquarters in Tampa and Air Force planners, whether deployed to Prince Sultan AB under the CFACC or back in the United States at various bases and component headquarters.⁶²

The CFACC staff has also been criticized by a number of participants from other Services for other planning problems. Some considered it unresponsive to requests from General Franks and lacking innovation in its approach to the initial air campaign. Others said it was too doctrinaire in its approach to the use of airpower against al Qaeda and the Taliban, thereby allowing SOCOM and the CIA to be the prime developers of the CONOPs in Afghanistan. Some Air Force planners complained that the main problem was the "land focus" of General Franks and much of the CENTCOM staff, which led them to reject much of the CONOPs that the CFACC produced and that neither General Wald nor his staff were ever asked to present their "air warfare" strategy to General Franks.⁶³

Observations

Because planning time for OEF was unusually short—less than one month—shortcuts were necessary, and, in some cases, this led to inefficiencies. Nevertheless, the military operation against the Taliban during this period was an unqualified success. Although not necessarily an effect of hurried planning, the operation to eliminate the al Qaeda fighters and the subsequent efforts at reconstruction were less successful and continue to be so as U.S. forces prepare to end combat operations in Afghanistan in 2014. In this final section, we offer a few observations on the processes reported in this chapter and we defer recommendations to Chapter Six.

Coordination with Coalition Partners

The inability to fully share information with coalition partners was a serious obstacle to combined operations. This is a continuing problem that was also manifest in Operation Iraqi Freedom—especially for our closest partners, such as the United Kingdom and Australia. Two separate classified computer systems were used to coordinate activities and pass information: SIPRNET for U.S. forces and CENTRIX for all others. In Afghanistan yet another system has been introduced to support NATO forces in ISAF. This multiple-system structure persists today, with even more systems to support operations.

⁶² RAND interviews with Air Force officers assigned to CENTCOM, February 2003.

⁶³ RAND interviews with Air Force personnel, February 2003.

Inter-Agency Coordination

The compartmentalization of planning efforts involving SOF and other government agencies did not allow for early coordination on integrating requirements and building the required logistics infrastructure. The character of the early military response to 9/11—authorizing the CIA to deploy paramilitary units into Afghanistan and take the lead in initial interactions with the Northern Alliance less than a week after 9/11—dictated an immediate requirement for extensive interactions between CIA planners and military planners. Compartmentalization of SOF planning also complicated support and the general lack of organic or habitual logistics infrastructure with the SOF community raised problems in inserting SOF requirements into the existing U.S. military logistics infrastructure.

Humanitarian Operations

The relationship between the military and NGOs was contentious. The NGOs viewed the military (especially civil-military affairs personnel) as usurping their responsibilities. In addition, they felt that they would become targets because they feared that the enemy would associate them with the soldiers in civilian clothes performing the same or similar functions.

Deliberate Planning

The deliberate planning process did not prepare the U.S. military adequately for the contingency it faced in Afghanistan. While DoD's deliberate planning process produces numerous operations plans and contingency plans (CONPLANs), none of the "on-the-shelf" plans foresaw the contingency that occurred after 9/11. As a result, the planning effort from 9/11 to October 7 did not utilize established procedures and created subsequent complications in logistics, force deployments, and other aspects of the operation. While, in retrospect, the absence of significant planning prior to 9/11 related to a significant U.S.-led military effort in Afghanistan to destroy al Qaeda and eliminate the Taliban is not surprising, this situation raises the issue of how to plan for military and intelligence operations in cases where the developing crisis is unanticipated and where immediate demands for early military options are required.

Toppling the Taliban

The strategic calculus to bring about the downfall of the Taliban without igniting regional or ethnic conflicts involved a difficult balance of important considerations. Deep-seated and enduring rivalries among Afghans had to be considered. Supporting the Northern Alliance could provoke the southern Pashtuns to support the Taliban, particularly if northern forces moved south. Each anti-Taliban warlord had his own interests, supporters, and forces. Pakistan gave welcome support that was important to the U.S. effort to prosecute the war, but Pakistan nurtured the Taliban. The short- and long-term interests of other interested powers, mainly India, Russia, and Iran, had to be weighed and accommodated. Each of these factors had the potential to affect the conduct of military operations in Afghanistan.

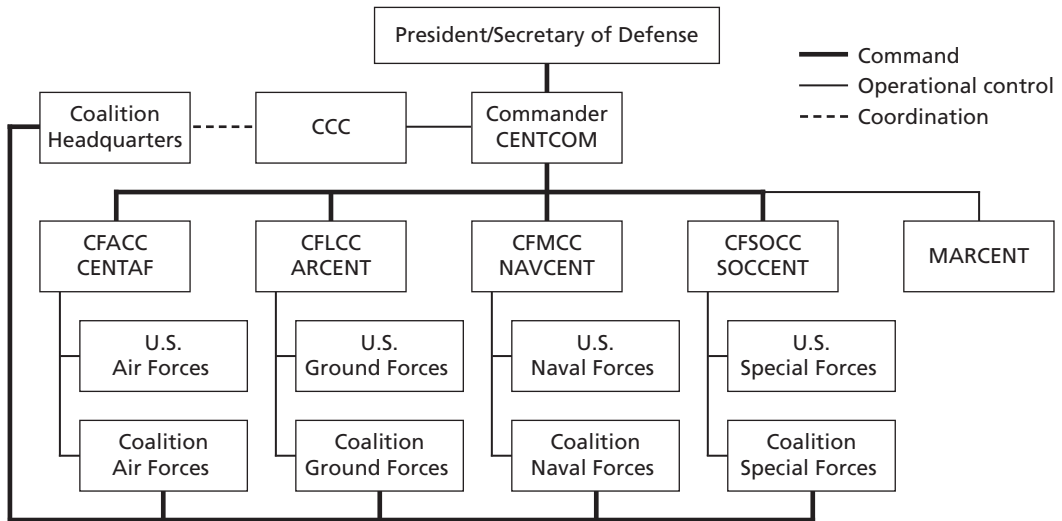
However, none of these factors seriously impeded operations against the Taliban. In fact, the Taliban fell much faster than it rose. Pitched battles were few and short, particularly after Army Special Forces joined the Northern Alliance, helping to focus U.S. air power more precisely. Some engagements were decided without fighting, sometimes as a result of bribes. The Taliban's own excesses worked against them, eroding support among the Afghan people.

Command and Control

The presence of multiple operating elements complicated command and control arrangements. While CENTCOM was in charge overall, CIA personnel also reported to their headquarters, and some coalition partners reported to their national governments. At times, these different organizations had different priorities, which caused some confusion and tension among them. For example, guidelines for limiting collateral damage differed within the coalition and the CIA sometimes disagreed with military planners on such issues as target selection and bombing efforts. Because each group was responsible to a different high-level civilian authority, disputes had to be resolved, consuming valuable planning time.

The command arrangements Franks decided upon are depicted in Figure 3.1. He exercised direct command and control over his major component commanders: the

Figure 3.1
Military Command Arrangements



SOURCE: "OEF Working Chronology," Headquarters, CENTCOM, August 1, 2002.

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CFACC at Prince Sultan AB in Saudi Arabia, the CFLCC at Camp Doha in Kuwait, the Combined/Coalition Force Maritime Component Commander (CFMCC) in Bahrain, and the Combined/Coalition Force Special Operations Component Commander (CFSOCC) at Doha in Qatar. When afloat, MARCENT was controlled by the CFMCC and when conducting operations in Afghanistan it was controlled by the CFLCC. The Coalition Coordination Center (CCC) coordinated operations with the coalition forces, as mentioned in Chapter Two.

Further complicating command and control was General Franks's decision not to establish an in-country joint task force and, instead, to control the war from Tampa.¹ With the president pressing for action, time was an issue, and it would have taken too much time to assemble and move a headquarters forward. CENTCOM enjoyed unprecedented communications with the forward elements, with high-bandwidth capabilities that enabled secure VTCs and rapid transmission of information.² General Franks was confident that his component commanders knew the theater well and could be relied on to conduct a rapid and effective military operation.

¹ It was not until late May 2002 that Combined Joint Task Force 180 (CJTF-180) was operational in Kabul, three months after the last major combat operation in OEF.

² Thomas Ricks, "A War That's Commanded at a Distance," *Washington Post*, December 27, 2001, p. 1. General Franks remarked during an interview with the RAND research team in November 2001 that CENTCOM measured communications capacity in terms of "T3, not T1 and T2."

The command and control process that evolved featured highly centralized command and, within limits, decentralized execution. Absent an in-theater joint task force headquarters, CENTCOM exercised command and control from Tampa, delegating execution to component commanders in theater, with exceptions for such matters as attacks on key time-sensitive targets or collateral damage issues.³ However, the geographic dispersion of the component commanders' headquarters prevented face-to-face formal and informal contacts among them and their staffs. Time zone differences between the area of operations and Tampa also created occasional problems. Although the scheme worked reasonably well, at times the command and control process was not agile enough, such as during the rapidly evolving fight at Tora Bora.

CENTCOM found it difficult to wield influence over indigenous forces, for many reasons other than geographical distance. Tribal and ethnic loyalties were stronger than any alliance with U.S. forces, although the Northern Alliance was perfectly happy to accept help in ridding Afghanistan of the Taliban. Northern Alliance commanders had their own turf they wanted to protect and the forces to do it, so they made decisions with respect to what would happen after the war. Moreover, the Afghan way of war differed radically from that of U.S. forces. Afghan fighters preferred frontal assaults preceded by indirect fires rather than maneuver warfare. For the Afghans, negotiated surrenders and switching of sides were common practices. While fighting to dislodge the Taliban, anti-Taliban warlords' interests generally matched those of the United States. Once that outcome was achieved, they often acted to protect their own interests.

Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance

The panoply of sensors used in Afghanistan created one of the most technologically sophisticated intelligence efforts ever assembled by the U.S. military up to that time. They ranged from satellites to aircraft with multiple advanced sensors to UASs. Systems included U-2, RC-135, P-3, E-8C, EC-130 aircraft, Predator and Global Hawk UASs, and multiple satellites. These manned and unmanned aircraft began conducting ISR missions over and around Afghan airspace before the onset of air operations on October 7. Coalition partners also provided surveillance and intelligence collectors. All these systems' contributions and those of the specialists and analysts who used their products contributed significantly to the success of operations to defeat the Taliban in OEF.⁴

By mid-December 2001, around the time of the Tora Bora operation, most key U.S. airborne ISR assets in the region were supporting U.S. and coalition operations

³ The CENTCOM J-3 coordinated special operations activities, the air war, and attack of high-value targets.

⁴ See U.S. Department of the Army, Operation Enduring Freedom Daily Briefings, October 1–31, 2001.

over Afghanistan. However, some were also tasked to support collection against Iraq and other areas of interest. By mid-January 2002, some 15 Air Force, 21 Navy, and 13 allied aircraft (a total of 49) were available for ISR taskings in support of OEF.⁵

Role of the CIA

CIA sources in Afghanistan also contributed in an important way. Over a number of years, the CIA had developed contact with warlords fighting the Taliban, and these were key to U.S. SOF activities and OEF's success. Little is clear about any human intelligence sources within the Taliban or al Qaeda. UASs and other sensors can support ISR but cannot substitute for painstakingly developed human intelligence sources. Yet information from the anti-Taliban warlords often proved unreliable given their complex motivations.

Unmanned Aircraft Systems

The war in Afghanistan saw the UAS come of age for U.S. forces. While OEF was not the first operational use of advanced UASs by U.S. forces, it was probably the most extensive up to that time. Both the Predator⁶ and Global Hawk⁷ UASs were used throughout OEF in early operations and continue today, both for ISR missions and, in the case of the Predator, for strike missions.

Predators were used to cue combat aircraft directly to attack emerging targets.⁸ In one example, when known al Qaeda operatives were fleeing from a suspected terrorist site, a Predator UAS tracked the site and fed targeting data to an AC-130 Spectre gunship, which engaged the targets at night using infrared capabilities. In another example, after an air strike against an al Qaeda meeting site at Bag Bala, a vehicle attempted to escape. A Predator UAS was loitering overhead and followed the vehicle. Once an

⁵ U.S. Air Force, Headquarters, Task Force Enduring Look, *Afghan Operations: The Facts*, July 2002, p. 5-2.

⁶ The Predator is a medium-altitude, long-endurance UAS. A fully operational system includes four airframes, a ground-control station, and about 50 personnel. The aircraft carries a TV camera, an infrared camera, and a synthetic aperture radar (SAR). These sensors produce full motion video and SAR still-frame radar images. The three sensors are carried on the same airframe but cannot be operated simultaneously. Certain airframes were also modified to carry a laser-designator payload, although that pod had to substitute for the electro-optical/infrared sensor for such missions. Subsequently, the Air Force developed the Multispectral Target System (MTS), which allowed the Predator to carry all three sensors in one package. The aircraft operates between 8,000 and 25,000 feet, cruises between speeds of 75 and 100 knots, and can loiter for 18 to 20 hours. See U.S. Air Force Fact Sheet, "RQ-1 Predator Unmanned Aerial Vehicle," undated; and CENTCOM, "Celtic Straw (Predator) Concept of Operations," November 2001, pp. 1-3.

⁷ The Global Hawk system features a UAS that flies at altitudes over 60,000 feet above inclement weather and prevailing winds. The Global Hawk can accurately survey vast geographic regions. Mission parameters are programmed into the Global Hawk. Under the safeguard and control of ground-based operators, it can take off, fly, return, and land autonomously. While humans oversee the programming and tell the UAS where to go, it is the onboard computer that actually controls the air vehicle in flight.

⁸ "Senior Pentagon Official Backs UAVs," *Unmanned Systems*, May/June 2002, p. 42.

F/A-18 strike package was in place, the Predator passed its video feed to the F/A-18s and they successfully struck the vehicle.⁹

Nevertheless, some technical and organizational issues associated with operating the system remained. Predator video between the air vehicle and ground-control station was unencrypted and could be intercepted. In addition, ground commanders complained that, because the Predator was controlled by the CFACC at Prince Sultan AB, Saudi Arabia, it would occasionally be pulled away from support to the ground commander for other so-called “higher-priority” missions, even when U.S. troops were under fire. In their view, this command and control issue with respect to such theater-level assets creates a need for better CONOPs for UASs or for the CFLCC to have his own Predator-type asset.¹⁰ For their part, Air Force officers on the CFACC staff and elsewhere have spoken of a “Predator fixation” among certain ground commanders and their staffs—individuals transfixed watching a Predator follow a particular target (e.g., a moving vehicle) while ignoring the overall tactical situation.

The Global Hawk UAS-3 was deployed shortly after 9/11 because the Air Force quickly realized the system’s value in pinpointing critical targets. However, in early February 2002, the Joint Staff denied CENTCOM’s request to extend the use of Global Hawk in theater to support OEF. In late March, the CJCS overrode that decision and the Global Hawk’s deployment was extended until September 30, 2002.¹¹

Intelligence Fusion Centers

Several innovative techniques were used to collect intelligence on the locations of al Qaeda leaders. One was the establishment of intelligence fusion cells at key headquarters.¹² Another was the forward deployment of representatives of various national agencies to create National Intelligence Support Teams (NISTs) to support operational commanders with national intelligence. Still another was the establishment of measurement and signature intelligence (MASINT) “cells” at various locations.

In addition, human intelligence (HUMINT), from both U.S. operatives and other surrogates or informants, was used extensively. One good source of HUMINT was the Northern Alliance. However, some CENTCOM analysts concluded that OEF

⁹ U.S. Space Command, “Lessons Learned,” staff briefing on Operation ENDURING FREEDOM, March 2002, pp. 26–28.

¹⁰ This problem persisted during major combat operations in Iraq. UASs and other surveillance assets were considered strategic assets. Their main function was searching for weapons of mass destruction, locating high-value individuals, and uncovering missile sites in the western Iraqi desert.

¹¹ Joint Staff/J3/J2 to USCINCCENT/J3/J2 et al., “Request for Mod to JCS DEPORD Serial 001A,” message, 062344Z FEB 2002; USCINCCENT/J3 to CENTCOM/CFACC et al., “MOD 001 to USCINCCENT OEF Deployment Order 001A,” message, 252245Z March 2002.

¹² In OEF, fusion cells were established at CENTCOM headquarters and at Bagram Airfield in Afghanistan. Their role was to gather information from sensors, sources, intelligence agencies, Special Forces, and detainee interrogations. From this a common picture of the situation was developed and periodically revised.

exposed shortfalls in the U.S. HUMINT tactical force structure. They saw a particular requirement to add linguists with security clearances in “low-density” languages (such as Dari).¹³

Intelligence Failures

Although the array of intelligence collection and processing assets was impressive, intelligence failures occurred. A major objective of the war was the elimination of key Taliban and al Qaeda leaders. This goal was largely unmet because intelligence assets were unable to locate them accurately or in time to strike them. Both technical and human intelligence failures occurred, sometimes with tragic results, as in the cases of the attack against a wedding party and the attack against a compound believed to contain a Taliban leader; the compound turned out to belong to a friendly warlord.¹⁴ Furthermore, the intelligence system was never able to create a comprehensive surface picture of all forces in Afghanistan, an important condition for achieving dominant battlespace awareness, a key element of U.S. doctrine.

Air Operations

U.S. air attacks against the Taliban regime began October 7, 2001. Targets included leadership, communications, air forces, air defense weapons, and such military installations as barracks and storage facilities. U.S. forces quickly achieved air superiority at all altitudes and complete supremacy at mid- and high altitudes, outside the range of air defense artillery and the man-portable air defense missiles available to the Taliban. Low-altitude operations remained dangerous, as the Operation ANACONDA battle in the Shah-i Kot Valley showed. The United States did not attack infrastructure targets, such as transportation and electrical power, because doing so would have generated criticism from key allies and alienated the Afghan people.

Basing

Basing constraints had a significant effect on air operations. Even though basing rights had been negotiated, operations were restricted by limitations. In some cases airfields were in poor condition and lacked necessary services, limiting the types of aircraft that could be employed. Still other bases were a great distance from the operating area, requiring lengthy flights and multiple air-to-air refuelings. Some nations did not allow combat operations from the bases they allowed U.S. forces to use. Overall, the Air

¹³ Daniel L. Scott and Donald D. Kolts, “HUMINT Tactical Force Structure,” USCENCOM J2 Information Paper, October 22, 2002.

¹⁴ See Alan Sipress and Walter Pincus, “Pentagon Acknowledges 16 Were Killed,” *Washington Post*, February 22, 2002, p. 1; and Carlotta Gall and Craig Smith, “Afghan Witnesses Say G.I.’s Were Duped in Raid on Allies,” *New York Times*, February 27, 2002, p. 1.

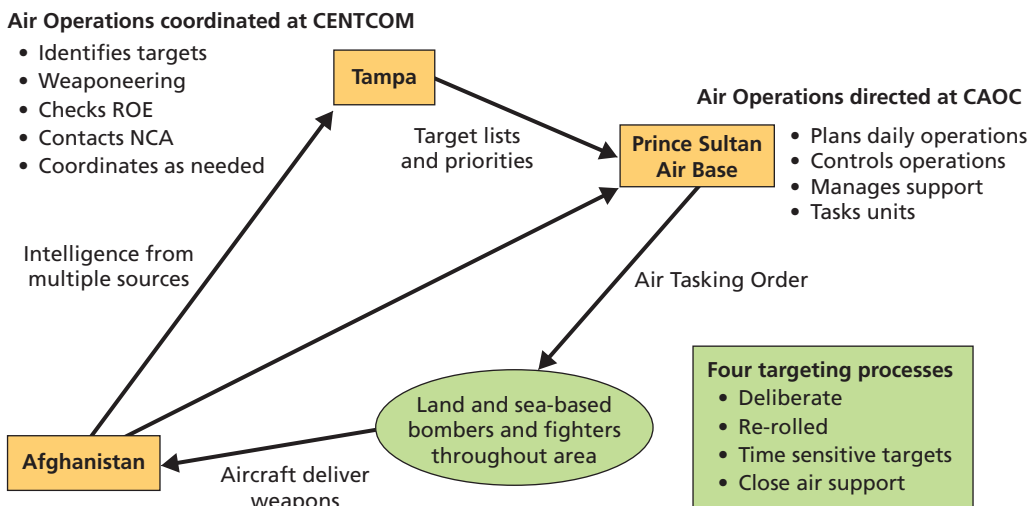
Force’s ability to operate from bases in or near Central Asia was delayed by the sequential requirements of gaining access and making the bases operational once clearance to use them had been granted. In all, the Air Force used 14 “beddown locations” and about 12,000 personnel for OEF air operations and support.

Delays in Air Force basing forced air combat operations to be staged from U.S. Navy aircraft carriers operating in the Indian Ocean or from Diego Garcia. Initial bombing operations included six B-2 flights that originated in the United States. Navy pilots operated at the limits of their endurance, particularly for strikes from carriers into northern Afghanistan. Carrier-based pilots flew four-to-six-hour missions and refueled three or four times. Loiter time over the target area was limited to about an hour.

Control of Air Assets

Figure 3.2 illustrates how the command and control process worked for air operations. Most targeting for aircraft missions was done in Tampa. Information about potential targets flowed from Afghanistan to both CENTCOM’s headquarters in Tampa and to the CAOC in Saudi Arabia. Staffs in Tampa selected targets, checked them for consistency with the ROE, contacted higher authorities when the rules required such contact, and coordinated with other agencies and governments when conditions required it. Selected targets and priorities were passed to the CAOC, which planned and controlled daily operations and tasked air and naval units to attack the targets CENTCOM had approved and prioritized.

Figure 3.2
Command and Control for Air Missions



SOURCE: Interviews at CENTCOM and Army Staff.

Some Air Force officers felt that this process of close control resulted in centralized control over execution of air operations. They argued that the preferred mode of operation (and joint doctrine) called for decentralized execution, in which component commanders should be issued guidance, directions, and general intentions rather than specific targeting lists. Even though such a process may work in small contingencies, it would not be workable for larger operations.¹⁵

Like complaints about the RFF process discussed in Chapter Two, this issue reflects the tension between top-level leadership wishing to maintain close control and the natural desire for operators to have latitude in executing an operation. Top-level leaders are concerned that decentralized operations may unintentionally create conditions that work against broad geopolitical goals. Operators know that they have detailed expertise and information and can use their resources in a more timely way to create effects. In air targeting, as in the RFF process, leadership is increasingly enabled by new technologies to make their decisions and impose them on subordinate commands. Future military operations are likely to encounter the same sorts of centralization.

The Bombing Campaign

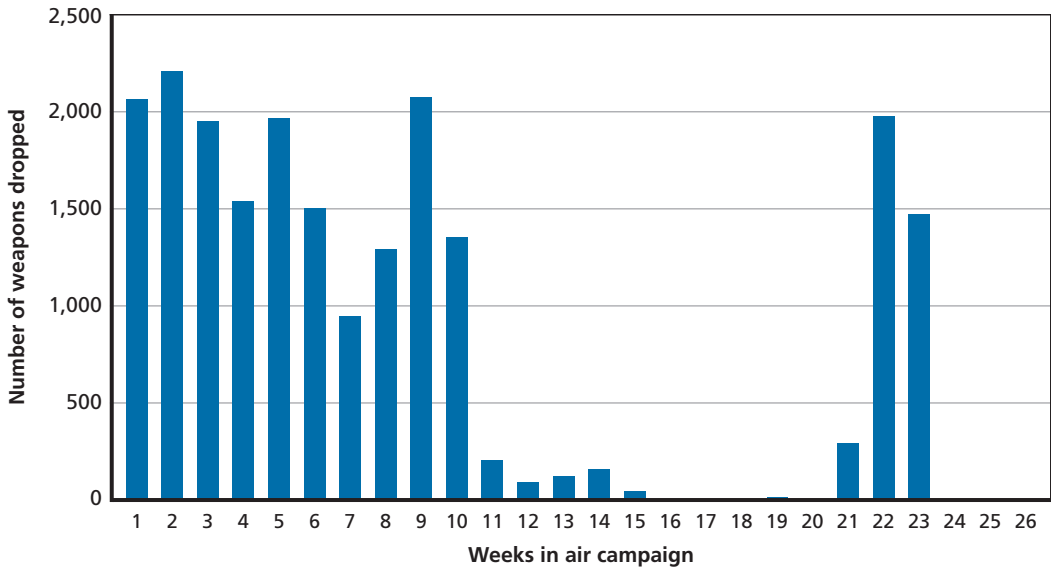
The intensity of the bombing effort, measured by the number of weapons dropped in Afghanistan each week for six months, is recorded in Figure 3.3. In spite of the Air Force basing delays, air power was ready when the president initiated OEF on October 7, 2001. Air Force bombers and Navy fighter-bombers delivered over 2,000 weapons the first week and even more the second week. Following the fall of Kabul in the fifth week of major combat operations, the number of weapons dropped began to fall off, only to rise again to over 2,000 weapons during operations at Tora Bora (week nine). The number of bombs dropped then fell sharply and averaged one or two hundred per week for five weeks and then to near zero until Operation ANACONDA in the Shah-i Kot Valley from March 1 to March 18 (weeks 22 and 23).

Analysis of data on the bombing effort shows that Navy and Marine Corps aircraft flew most of the strike sorties: 1,200 sorties for the F-14 Tomcat and 3,700 for the F/A-18, for a total of 4,900 sorties in all; 75 percent of the roughly 6,546 strike sorties flown. Air Force B-1 and B-52 bombers accounted for 320 and 375 strike sorties, respectively, but they dropped about three-quarters of the bombs dropped between October 7, 2001, and March 30, 2002.¹⁶ Navy fighter-bombers accounted for another 18 percent of the weight of munitions dropped in the same time period. Laser-guided bombs and other guided weapons accounted for most of the remainder of bomb ton-

¹⁵ Deptula, undated. General Deptula's comments about centralized execution were also voiced in interviews with Air Force officers at other commands.

¹⁶ John Mazach, "The 21st Century Triad: Unconventional Thinking About the New Realities of Conventional Warfare," *Sea Power*, March 2002.

Figure 3.3
Number of Weapons Dropped Each Week



SOURCE: Data provided by CENTCOM.

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nage dropped in Afghanistan. Together, Air Force bombers and Navy and Marine Corps carrier-based aircraft flew 88 percent of the sorties and delivered 94 percent of the munitions dropped.¹⁷

The use of strategic bombers delivering precision-guided weapons in a close support role was a first. They were able to play this role because the Global Positioning System (GPS)–guided weapons provided the required accuracy. Guided munitions (laser and GPS guided) became the weapon of choice, accounting for almost 60 percent of the 22,434 munitions dropped.¹⁸ The Joint Direct Attack Munition (JDAM) accounted for 6,500 of the munitions. The B-1s and B-52s delivered almost all of the JDAMs dropped, frequently acting in a close support role. However, a bomber on station could only carry out one mission about every ten to 30 minutes because of the time it took to complete the necessary calculations and make another bombing run.

Air controllers on the ground were able to call in air strikes for some JDAM targets and could use lasers to designate targets when they had line of sight. When they did not have line of sight, as was often the case after the fall of Kabul, they were provided aim points for JDAM by CENTCOM and CENTAF. Though they were unfamiliar with using bombers and JDAMs in this manner, air controllers quickly adapted.

¹⁷ Mazach, 2002.

¹⁸ This increased to 71 percent of the 29,200 bombs dropped during Operation Iraqi Freedom a year later.

The most intense period of air operations occurred during Operation ANACONDA in early March 2002. Bombing tonnage quickly exceeded 100 tons per day and remained at this level for ten days. Bombers dropped most of the bombs, though fighter and attack aircraft also flew sorties in support of the operation.

Air-Ground Operations with Anti-Taliban Forces

The concept of operations was to support indigenous opposition forces against the Taliban regime, primarily through air power controlled by U.S. forces. These teams usually combined an Operational Detachment–Alpha (ODA) of Army Special Forces with one or two Air Force combat air controllers. The teams would equip and supply opposition fighters and call for close air support during combat against Taliban and al Qaeda fighters. By mid-November, enough teams had arrived to support all the important regional leaders. While leaders of the Northern Alliance welcomed the teams' arrivals, the situation in southern Afghanistan was different. In the south, there was no armed opposition to the Taliban, and the teams had to help bring one into being, on occasion fighting simply to protect a regional opposition leader from Taliban attacks.

Many operations were conducted employing these tactics against the Taliban, and all were successful. Among these were the battle for Mazar-e Sharif and operations in Kandahar city. All were instrumental to the downfall of the Taliban. The former was the first major victory for the alliance, and the latter resulted in the final collapse of the Taliban forces as an organized military force.

Mazar-e Sharif

At the time, Mazar-e Sharif was the largest city in northern Afghanistan, with an estimated population of around 200,000. The population was composed primarily of two minority groups: Uzbeks and Hazaras.¹⁹ The city lies on a strategically important crossroads for north-south traffic from the Uzbekistan border to Kabul and east-west traffic from Kunduz to Herat.

The fall of Mazar-e Sharif in early November 2001 was the first major victory in the U.S.-led campaign in Afghanistan. It opened a large gap in the Taliban's defense of northern Afghanistan, cleared the route to Kabul, and isolated the Taliban forces in Kunduz. This allowed opposition forces to concentrate on Kunduz, leading to the sur-

¹⁹ Sharon LaFraniere, "Taliban Reinforces Front Near Key City; Rebels Are Held Back from Mazar-e Sharif," *Washington Post*, October 18, 2001; Andrew Maykuth, Sudarsan Raghaven, and Ken Moritsugu, "After Successful Capture of Mazar-e-Sharif, United Front Moves Toward Herat," *Knight Ridder/Tribune News Service*, November 11, 2001.

render of Taliban forces there. It also gave U.S. forces a new base of operations, including the associated airfield.²⁰

Numerically inferior and lightly equipped Northern Alliance opposition forces won the battle for Mazar-e Sharif with the help of U.S. airpower. The Northern Alliance included as many as 15,000 fighters, primarily from three ethnic groups: Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Hazaras, plus small numbers of Pashtuns. The charismatic Ahmed Shah Massoud commanded the Northern Alliance until he was assassinated on September 9, 2001. When Mohammad Fahim became the overall Northern Alliance commander, cohesion within the Alliance eroded and it devolved into its ethnic components. When OEF was initiated in October, the United States normally worked with these semiautonomous ethnic armies, not the Northern Alliance as a whole.²¹

Three opposition leaders, sometimes called “warlords,” led the fighters who participated in the campaign at Mazar-e Sharif. These were Abdul Rashid Dostum, Ustad Atta Mohammed, and Haji Mohammad Mohaqiq. These three leaders came from disparate ethnic and religious backgrounds and had a long history of infighting. The deep animosity among them constricted the effectiveness of the campaign at Mazar-e Sharif. Their common enemy, the Taliban, was the one motive strong enough to make them join forces.²²

Abdul Rashid Dostum, a 46-year-old ethnic Uzbek, controlled the largest army involved in the offensive, estimated to be around 8,000. He was a tall, burly man with a gregarious nature and a reputation for brutality. He spoke Uzbek and a smattering of Russian and Dari. Dostum had served in the now-defunct national army during the Najibullah regime. He rose to the rank of general in the Soviet Army, which gave him an unusually high degree of military experience, including some appreciation for air power.²³

Dostum had a long history of switching sides, taking advantage of any opportunity to gain power. He fought with the Soviets when they invaded Afghanistan in 1979 only to switch sides when they withdrew ten years later. He helped to topple Najibullah in 1992. He repeatedly fought against the Northern Alliance under Burhanuddin Rabbani until the Taliban seized control of Kabul in 1996, when he joined forces with Rabbani. He defended Mazar-e Sharif against the Taliban until 1998 when defeat

²⁰ Drew Brown and Jonathan S. Landay, “Alliance Says U.S. Assisted Attack; Move Against Taliban Would Mark First Such Coordination in War,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, November 7, 2001.

²¹ U.S. Army Center of Military History, “Information Paper: The Battle for Mazar-e-Sharif, October–November 2001,” April 28, 2001.

²² John Anderson and Molly Moore, “For Now, Rival Warlords Put Aside Bitter Feuds of Past,” *Washington Post*, November 12, 2001.

²³ Sudarsan Raghavan, “Uzbek Chieftain Important to Afghan Future,” *Knight Ridder*, April 2, 2002.

became inevitable. He fled the country, but returned from Turkish exile in April 2001 to rejoin the Northern Alliance.²⁴ Ahmad Khan was his most important follower.

Ustad Atta Mohammed, an ethnic Hazara, was head of the Jamiat-i-Islami, a Tajik militia. Estimates of Mohammed's force size during the Mazar-e Sharif offensive vary widely, from 2,000 to 7,000 fighters. Atta had commanded mujahideen forces in the war against the Soviets and had fought against Dostum. Their rivalry slowed the campaign.²⁵

Haji Mohammad Mohaqiq, an ethnic Tajik, controlled an estimated 3,000 fighters from the Shiite Muslim fighting force, Hizb-i-Wahdat-i-Islami. Mohaqiq's forces played a role in ousting Dostum from Mazar-e Sharif in 1997.²⁶

In late September or early October, the CIA inserted two Northern Alliance Liaison Teams (NALTs) into northern Afghanistan. Team Alpha operated in the northwest and team Bravo around Mazar-e Sharif. Team Bravo reported that while the Taliban had a large force in the north, they would likely crumble under sustained and accurate air strikes.²⁷

On October 8, Dostum's fighters advanced, pushing the Taliban out of the mountains and into the town of Samangan on the road to Mazar-e Sharif.²⁸ According to open sources, Dostum commanded some 8,000 fighters, fewer than the Taliban forces. He relied primarily on light infantry and cavalry and had almost no heavy weapons.²⁹ The United States attacked Taliban air defenses, a suspected training camp, and Taliban forces.

On October 15, Atta's fighters approached Mazar-e Sharif from the southeast with an estimated 2,000 fighters and occupied Shadia and Marmoul near Mazar-e Sharif.³⁰ Late in the night, his fighters attacked the airport about ten kilometers outside of the city.³¹ Atta's forces were southeast of the city while forces headed by Dostum were approaching from the southwest and were about 13 miles away. Dostum's forces

²⁴ Anna Badkhen, "Battle for City Could Make or Break Rebels," *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 4, 2001; Anderson and Moore, November 12, 2001.

²⁵ Anderson and Moore, 2001.

²⁶ Anderson and Moore, 2001.

²⁷ U.S. Army Center of Military History, 2001.

²⁸ Peter Baker and Susan B. Glasser, "Rebels Capture Northern Alliance Areas, Cut Off Taliban Supply Routes," *Washington Post*, October 10, 2001.

²⁹ Baker and Glasser, 2001.

³⁰ Andrew Maykuth and Sudarsan Raghaven, "Anti-Taliban Forces Set to Take City," *Hamilton Spectator*, October 17, 2001.

³¹ Maykuth and Raghaven, 2001; U.S. Department of Defense, "DoD News Briefing—ASD PA Clarke and Lt. Gen. Newbold," DoD news transcript, October 16, 2001.

ran into supply problems but survived by seizing Taliban trucks and supply depots, according to opposition officials.³²

On October 16, LtGen. Gregory Newbold (U.S. Marine Corps), director of operations for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said that U.S. air attacks had done enough damage to allow Northern Alliance forces to advance to the airfield.³³ Atta took control of the perimeter of the airport. Ahmad Khan's forces took the strategic outposts of Balkh, Sopya, and Mangah. Atta's forces were bolstered by some 500 ethnic Tajiks from the region as well as by an undetermined number of Taliban defectors as he advanced.³⁴

On October 17, Taliban forces in Mazar-e Sharif ignored an ultimatum to surrender. Opposition forces had advanced to within three kilometers of the city when Taliban fighters counterattacked.³⁵ By afternoon, the Taliban were attacking opposition strongholds in the mountains beyond a narrow plain south of the city. According to one account, the Taliban had ten tanks, numerous BM-21 multiple-rocket launchers, and large numbers of trucks. Halted by the Taliban counterattack, opposition commanders requested more air attacks.³⁶ Figure 3.4 highlights the key events in the campaign to drive the Taliban and al Qaeda from Mazar-e Sharif beginning on October 19, 2001.

During the night of October 19–20, Tiger 2, a SOF unit, infiltrated by MH-47 to a landing zone 75 kilometers south of Mazar-e Sharif where it linked with Dostum's fighters.³⁷ Tiger 2 included ODA-595 and two Air Force combat air controllers.³⁸ CAPT Mark Nutsch, commanding Tiger 2, eventually split his team into four three-man elements to provide better coverage for calling air attacks. The team was equipped with the SOF Laser Marker.

Dostum ordered his mounted fighters to provide horses to the team. Of the members, only the leader was a proficient horseman: Captain Nutsch had grown up on his family's ranch in Kansas and competed in rodeos as a calf roper. The ride from the landing zone to Dostum's location took six hours over narrow mountain trails in darkness. The team members arrived aching with fatigue and hardly able to sit down. Dostum greeted the team with great cordiality and enthusiasm. He realized that the team would be his greatest asset in the upcoming battles and therefore was highly concerned with its safety. Indeed, he initially tried to keep the team members from

³² Maykuth and Raghaven, 2001.

³³ Dalon Sang, "Taliban Enemies Close in on Key City," *St. Petersburg Times*, October 17, 2001.

³⁴ Roslie DiManno, "Anti-Taliban Forces Poised for Major Victory," *Toronto Star*, October 17, 2001.

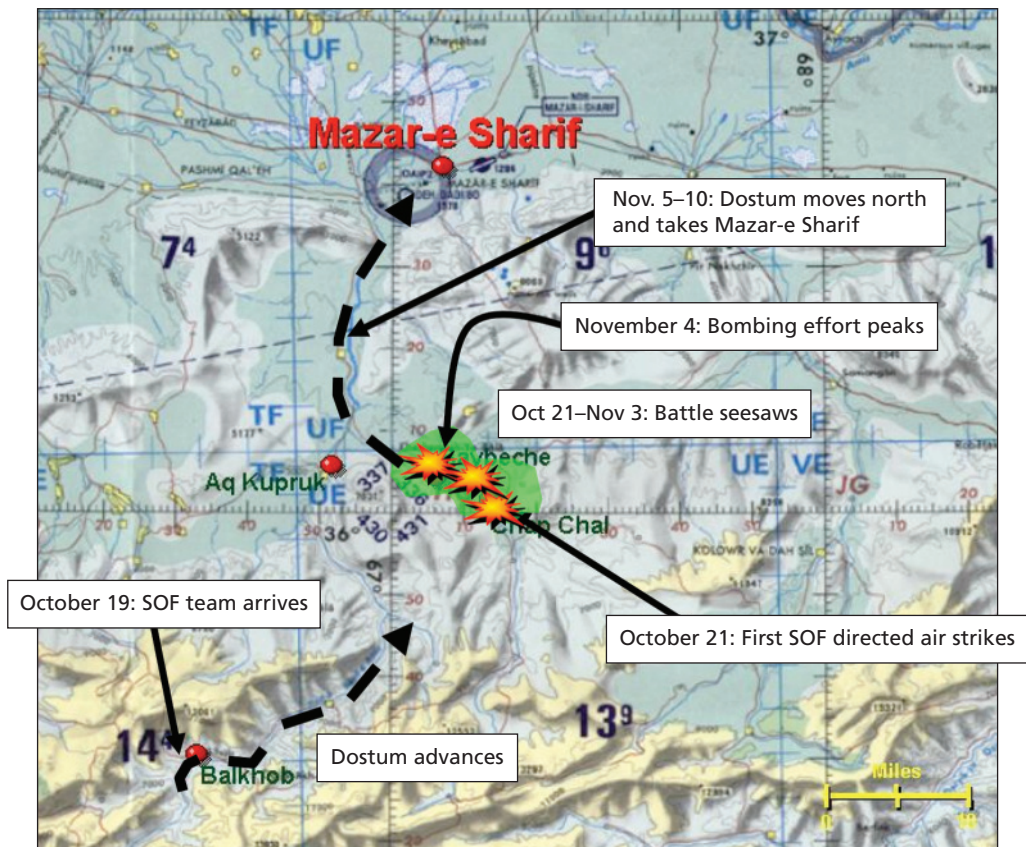
³⁵ Mike Blanchfield, "Rebels Close In on Key City: Taliban Ignore Ultimatum to Surrender," *Ottawa Citizen*, October 18, 2001; Richard S. Smith, "Afghan Rebels Besiege Key City; Taliban Loss of Mazar-e Sharif Would Be Likely U.S. Gain," *Washington Times*, October 18, 2001.

³⁶ LaFraniere, 2001.

³⁷ U.S. Army Center of Military History, 2001.

³⁸ Richard W. Steward, "Afghan War Chronology," U.S. Army Center of Military History, April 25, 2002.

Figure 3.4
The Campaign to Take Mazar-e Sharif



SOURCE: Compiled by the authors.

RAND RR381-3.4

approaching the front lines for fear they would be killed and the United States would withdraw its support.

Dostum had no deputy commander and directed all operations personally. His fighters included a small core of paid regulars, who stayed with him constantly, and a much larger number of unpaid militia, who mustered for battle when called. As a result, fighting strength varied widely from time to time, and Dostum himself had only a general idea of the size of his forces. Opposition fighters and Taliban alike wore civilian clothes, making recognition difficult. Tiger 2 members also wore items of civilian clothing to avoid standing out. Since being alerted in mid-September, they had been growing beards and they were dressed in local costumes with checkered scarves and the distinct round cap often associated with the assassinated Tajik leader Ahmad Shah Massoud. Supplies were airdropped, often a frustrating process. Bundles often

landed far from the intended drop point and sometimes were destroyed by hard landings. On one occasion, the team came under fire while collecting the bundles.

Upon arrival, Tiger 2 began directing air strikes against Taliban forces and positions. During the day, the team called in support from Navy and Marine Corps F/A-18 aircraft and Air Force B-1s and B-52s. At night, it had support from AC-130 gunships. Initially, a cultural clash erupted between Army Special Forces soldiers and the CAOC at Prince Sultan AB. The CAOC was accustomed to clearly defining and precisely locating targets. It was startled to receive calls for bracketing fire—i.e., firing beyond and short of a target to determine its range. In one incident, a team member berated a Navy pilot for showing less proficiency and aggressiveness than a Marine Corps pilot who had preceded him.³⁹

On October 21, Tiger 2 directed air attacks against Taliban positions at Chapchal, a village overlooking the Darya Suf Valley, approximately 20 kilometers southeast of the confluence of the Darya Suf and Balkh rivers (see Figure 3.4). The team supported Afghan forces under Dostum as they advanced toward Mazar-e Sharif.⁴⁰ Around this time, the Northern Alliance launched a cavalry charge against Taliban forces situated east of Keshendeh-ye Bala in the southern Balkh Valley. Afterward, U.S. Army Special Forces established Keshendeh-ye Bala as a new base camp. Army Special Forces teams then split up into two- and three-man elements as they moved north.⁴¹

On October 22, heavy fighting occurred around Mazar-e Sharif, and Taliban forces pushed back the Afghan opposition forces. The United States had been supporting the opposition fighters with air strikes, although the number of sorties flown and their impact on Taliban forces was unclear. Reportedly, the three primary opposition forces were approaching Mazar-e Sharif from different directions. Atta's forces were stalled in the mountains south of Mazar-e Sharif and were in need of re-supply. Dostum's forces, which had sought to cut off a key road from Kabul to Mazar-e Sharif through Samangan, came under attack. Opposition forces fighting around Samangan, 60 miles southeast of Mazar-e Sharif, indicated that they were on the defensive. Finally, Ishmael Khan's forces, far to the west of Mazar-e Sharif, were attempting to cut the road between Mazar-e Sharif and Herat.⁴²

On October 23, air strikes continued to focus on engagement zones around Mazar-e Sharif against forces in the field and targets of opportunity. The Northern Alliance commanders met to plan a joint advance on the city. The battle on the ground was moving very slowly with exchanges of artillery. The opposition forces had not

³⁹ Robin Moore, *The Hunt for Bin Laden: Task Force Dagger*, New York: Random House, 2003, p. 73.

⁴⁰ Steward, 2002; U.S. Army Center of Military History, 2001.

⁴¹ U.S. Army Center of Military History, 2001.

⁴² Doug Struck, "Rebels Tell of Battles with Taliban; Northern Alliance Still Far from Key City of Mazar-e Sharif," *Washington Post*, October 23, 2001.

advanced their lines closer to retaking the airport near Mazar-e Sharif, according to RADM John D. Stufflebeem.⁴³

On October 29, U.S. air strikes against entrenched Taliban forces intensified in preparation for a new opposition offensive. Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld indicated that the United States had begun to airdrop ammunition to opposition forces in Afghanistan, though his statements did not directly refer to Mazar-e Sharif. The Taliban remained in complete control of the city.⁴⁴ At some point during the week, the Taliban were reinforced by a band of hundreds of Pakistani guerilla fighters, according to the opposition commanders.⁴⁵ On November 2, the United States intensified its air strikes around Mazar-e Sharif. B-52 bombers dropped cluster bombs on line positions and employed “carpet bombing” tactics.⁴⁶ On November 3, U.S. air strikes continued an intense bombing campaign around Mazar-e Sharif in an attempt to open the way for an impending Northern Alliance advance. According to one Northern Alliance official, there was “continuous bombing” against Taliban positions in the Samangan province approximately 40 miles east of the city. There was an unverified claim by the Northern Alliance that they had taken the Agipruk district, which is some 30 miles southwest of the city.⁴⁷ On November 4, following heavy U.S. bombing, Northern Alliance forces launched a three-pronged offensive south of the city in the Kishanday district. The three opposition columns led by Dostum apparently made little progress and the assault faltered. Dostum’s forward forces consisted of 700 to 1,000 fighters.⁴⁸

On November 5, Dostum’s cavalry forces attacked entrenched Taliban forces in the hamlet of Bai Beche. The first attempt failed and Dostum’s troops withdrew. Seeing this failure, Tiger 2 called for heavy air strikes on the Taliban positions and gave Dostum’s fighters a warning order that they should prepare to advance. They misinterpreted the warning and started to charge just as a series of laser-guided bombs began to fall on the Taliban positions. Tiger 2 feared that a friendly fire incident would occur, but fortunately the bombs hit just seconds before Dostum’s cavalry galloped through the smoke and dust of the explosions, causing a rout of the Taliban defenders. Through sheer good fortune, the timing had been exactly right.⁴⁹ On the same day,

⁴³ DoD, “DoD News Briefing—Rear Admiral Stufflebeem,” *Defense Link*, October 24, 2001.

⁴⁴ Sudarsan Raghaven and Jonathan S. Landay, “U.S. Steps Up Attacks On Taliban Forces,” *Knight Ridder/Tribune Business News*, October 30, 2001.

⁴⁵ Sudarsan Raghaven, “Capture of Mazar-e Sharif Boosts Confidence of Anti-Taliban Forces,” *Knight Ridder/Tribune News Service*, November 11, 2001.

⁴⁶ Steward, 2002.

⁴⁷ Badkhen, 2001.

⁴⁸ “Move on Mazar-e Sharif Likely,” *St. Petersburg Times*, November 5, 2001.

⁴⁹ Stephen Biddle, “Afghanistan and the Future of Warfare,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 82, No. 2, March/April 2003, pp. 41–42.

Dostum received his first major delivery of military supplies, which included small arms, ammunition, and rocket-propelled grenades.⁵⁰

On November 6, the Northern Alliance launched a coordinated assault with U.S. air support. Taliban forces retreated from the Balkh Valley toward Mazar-e Sharif.⁵¹ During this action, Tiger 2 identified Taliban positions west of the Balkh River from a ridgeline four to five kilometers away.⁵² According to reports by Northern Alliance officials, soldiers under Atta's command captured the front-line villages of aq-Kuprik and Kshindi in the Sar-e-Pol province, some 40 miles south of Mazar-e Sharif. Secretary Rumsfeld said: "The forces on the ground have gone up . . . about two and a half times, and there are others prepared to go in as soon as weather and circumstances on the ground permit." U.S. forces were supplying Northern Alliance troops with airdrops by helicopters. In one instance, U.S. helicopters delivered ammunition to the Northern Alliance forces in the town of Dara-e Suf, 50 miles south of Mazar-e Sharif around November 3.⁵³

On November 7, intense fighting broke out around Mazar-e Sharif. Northern Alliance officials reported that anti-Taliban forces, working closely with U.S. Special Forces, had pushed to within ten miles of Mazar-e Sharif. They had overrun the hill-top village of Chesme Shafa southwest of the city. However, no clear delineated front lines existed in this fluid battle. The Afghan fighting styles often involved rapid attacks and quick withdrawals. Marine Corps General Pace, then Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, reported that opposition fighters had been making cavalry charges, "riding horseback into combat against tanks and armored personnel carriers,"⁵⁴ although this could be interpreted as an embellishment of what actually took place. The cavalry assaults involved up to 1,000 opposition fighters on horseback, armed with rocket-propelled grenade launchers and light machine guns. A Kashmiri separatist group inside Pakistan, the Harkat-e-Jehad-e-Islami, said that some 85 of its fighters had been killed in U.S. air strikes around Mazar-e Sharif.⁵⁵

On November 8, fighting continued around Mazar-e Sharif. The Northern Alliance made significant gains, especially south of the city, taking the districts of Zari,

⁵⁰ Stephen Biddle, *Afghanistan and the Future of Warfare: Implications for Army and Defense Policy*, Carlisle Barracks, Penn.: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, November 2002.

⁵¹ U.S. Army Center of Military History, 2001.

⁵² Biddle, 2003, p. 35.

⁵³ Brown and Landay, 2001.

⁵⁴ "Opposition Fighters Say They Have Moved Closer to Strategic City in North Afghanistan; Capture of Mazar-e Sharif Would Be Major Gain in Battle Against Taliban," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, November 8, 2001; Don Pathon, "U.S., Afghan Opposition Aim for City," Associated Press, November 8, 2001.

⁵⁵ Steven Gutkin, "Gunfight Reported Outside Mazar-e Sharif; France Warns Taliban Still a Threat," Associated Press, November 8, 2001; Pathan, 2001; "Opposition Fighters Say They Have Moved Closer to Strategic City . . ." 2001; Kathleen T. Rhem, "Operation Commander Gives His Take on War Against Terrorism," *American Forces Press Service*, November 8, 2001.

aq-Kupak, and Keshendeh. Northern Alliance commanders appeared confident the city would be taken shortly and met to discuss how to storm the city with the least damage. General Franks told reporters that “there is a gunfight that is going on in the vicinity of Mazar-e Sharif” but said it was “a bit too early to characterize this as a success.” Northern Alliance officials reported that they had captured some 300 Taliban soldiers, with an additional 500 defectors.⁵⁶

On November 9, the Northern Alliance reported that it had broken through the Taliban defenses at the Pul-e-Iman Bukhri Bridge on the southern edge of the city, had overrun the airport, and had entered the city.⁵⁷ Northern Alliance forces moved in a pincer movement from the southeast and southwest. The Northern Alliance seized the military airport southwest of the city. Simultaneously, Dostum’s forces, under the command of Ahmad Kahn, approached from the southeast from Samangon, going through Dar-e Suf, Kishande, and Shulgarem, eventually seizing the civilian airport east of the city. The two forces joined and confronted the Taliban in an area known as “the bakery,” between the airport and the heliport. The fight began around midafternoon and ended with a Taliban retreat.⁵⁸

Dostum said that the Taliban troops appeared to be retreating east toward the Samangon province.⁵⁹ He indicated that there had been heavy fighting in a nine-hour battle leading up to the city, in which he estimated more than 500 Taliban were killed. Northern Alliance forces met with little resistance upon entering the city.⁶⁰ Publicly, U.S. sources remained more cautious on the outcome, indicating the potential for a Taliban counterattack. In a DoD briefing, Rear Admiral Stufflebeem said (with regard to Northern Alliance reports of taking Mazar-e Sharif), “Well, I think that is a positive sign. That report, to hear that from a commander.”⁶¹ The commander of the USS *Theodore Roosevelt* said that air strikes from the aircraft carrier left late in the day to target Taliban troops retreating from Mazar-e Sharif. The rapidity of the apparent collapse of the Taliban in Mazar-e Sharif caught some military authorities by surprise. RADM Mark Fitzgerald said, “We thought this would be a very slow advance on the

⁵⁶ “Battle Rages Near Key Taliban City,” *The Record*, November 9, 2001; Mike Blanchfield and Levon Sevunts, “Northern Alliance Expects City to Fall; Mazar-e Sharif Ready to Fall, Rebels Insist,” *Edmonton Journal*, November 9, 2001.

⁵⁷ U.S. Army Center of Military History, 2001.

⁵⁸ Keith B. Richburg and Doug Struck, “Afghan Rebels Claim Key City; Attack Aided by U.S. Forces Taliban Fighters to Flee ‘in Doves,’” *Washington Post*, November 11, 2001.

⁵⁹ Kathy Gannon, “Opposition Claims to Have Entered Mazar-e-Sharif,” Associated Press, November 9, 2001; “8th LD: Afghan Rebels Capture Mazar-e-Sharif,” *Japan Economic News*, November 9, 2001.

⁶⁰ Richburg Struck, 2001.

⁶¹ Victoria Clark, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, and Rear Admiral John Stufflebeem, “Department of Defense Operational Update,” *Federal News Service*, November 9, 2001.

city, [but it] appears the Taliban have fallen back and over the course of the day, we've seen numerous convoys coming out of the area."⁶²

On November 10, the Taliban acknowledged that they had lost the city. Taliban Defense Minister Obaidullah Akhund said: "[T]he city and its airport are with the opposition. Our forces are in Tangi Tashgurghan," referring to a town some 40 miles east of Mazar-e Sharif.⁶³ The Taliban said that they were forced to retreat because of sustained U.S. bombing.⁶⁴ Dostum and Atta took some 3,000 Taliban prisoners.⁶⁵

U.S. officials, including Secretary of State Colin Powell, remained reluctant to declare victory in the city. However, one senior U.S. official said that while fighting was continuing in the city, "really, it's the Taliban fleeing the city in droves." He said the Taliban were heading to Kabul.⁶⁶ A Northern Alliance official said that, following the fall of Mazar-e Sharif, anti-Taliban forces seized three northern provincial capitals: Shibarghan in the Jozjan province, Aybak in the Samangon province, and Maimana in Faryab province.⁶⁷

On November 11, Northern Alliance forces continued to secure control of Mazar-e Sharif. Secretary Rumsfeld said, "the Northern Alliance has effective control of Mazar-e Sharif at this moment. There are pockets of resistance in the city that continue."⁶⁸ U.S. Army Special Forces had moved into the city and were helping to rebuild communication and intelligence facilities, according to one senior opposition commander.⁶⁹ The Northern Alliance appeared to have capitalized on their success at Mazar-e Sharif: they pushed after the retreating Taliban, claiming to have seized five northern provinces.⁷⁰

⁶² Steven Gutkin, "U.S. Says Opposition Forces in City," Associated Press, November 9, 2001.

⁶³ "Alliance Captures Key City Taliban Say Bombs Drove Them Out," *Seattle Times*, November 10, 2001; "Alliance Captures Key City; Pounded by Airstrikes, Taliban Fighters Flee Mazar-e Sharif," *Richmond Times Dispatch*, November 10, 2001.

⁶⁴ "Afghan Rebels Capture Key City; Fall of Mazar-e Sharif the First Major Victory in War on Terror," *Times Colonist (Victoria)*, November 10, 2001; Drew Brown and Warren P. Strobal, "Anti Taliban Forces Reportedly Enter Strategic City in Major Battlefield Victory," *Knight Ridder/Tribune News Service*, November 10, 2001.

⁶⁵ "Loss of Mazar-e Sharif No Big Deal: Taliban: Opposition Plans More Attacks," Associated Press, November 11, 2001; Steward, 2002; U.S. Army Center of Military History, 2001.

⁶⁶ Bill Getz, "Taliban Loses Mazar-e Sharif to Opposition," *Washington Times*, November 10, 2001; "Opposition Forces Claim Major Victory: Reportedly Capture Key Northern City," *The Leader-Post (Regina)*, November 10, 2001a.

⁶⁷ Kathy Gannon, "Taliban Move Southward After Losing Key Northern City of Mazar-e Sharif to Opposition," Associated Press Worldstream, November 10, 2001.

⁶⁸ DoD, "Secretary Rumsfeld interview with Fox News Sunday," DoD news transcript, November 11, 2001.

⁶⁹ Maykuth, Raghaven, and Moritsugu, 2001.

⁷⁰ Doug Struck and Keith B. Richburg, "Afghan Rebels Advances Across North," *Washington Post*, November 11, 2001.

On November 25, about 600 prisoners being held at the Qala Jangi, a 19th-century fortress near the Beh Dari airfield southwest of Mazar-e Sharif, overpowered their guards and seized weapons from the fort's armory. In the ensuing fight, John Michael Spann—an operative of the CIA who had been interrogating prisoners—was killed while his partner managed to escape. Following an intense fight, the prisoners gained control over the southwest corner of the compound. Elements of 3rd Battalion, 5th Special Forces Group, British Special Boat Service, and one platoon from the 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry) helped suppress the revolt. An AC-130 gunship attacked the compound, causing a large secondary explosion. U.S. special operators exchanged fire with the prisoners and called in air support, including laser-guided weapons and seven JDAMs. Some of this ordnance landed well inside the normal safe distance from friendly forces. On the third day of the uprising, an Air Force combat air controller called in a strike that demolished part of a wall where Army Special Forces soldiers were positioned to fire on the compound. CAPT Kevin Leahy, CAPT Paul R. Syverson, and SFC Paul Beck were injured by the blast, Leahy the most seriously.⁷¹ Two British soldiers were also wounded.⁷² The besieging force flooded the basement of the prison compound to force out the defenders. When flooding did not work, it began pouring in diesel fuel and gasoline to burn them out. After four days of fighting, the revolt finally flickered out. About 80 of the 600 prisoners lived through the siege, suffering from hypothermia, concussions, and gunshot wounds.⁷³

Following the surrender, a *Newsweek* reporter found an American citizen named John Walker Lindh lying wounded in a makeshift hospital. Lindh was emaciated, hypothermic, and suffering from several minor wounds. Lindh said that he had fled from the bombing on foot to Kunduz, where he had been taken prisoner and eventually transferred to the Qala Jangi prison. Spann had questioned Lindh hours before the prison uprising began.⁷⁴ Tiger 2 took custody of Lindh, and he was returned to the United States for trial. In an agreement with the prosecution, Lindh pled guilty to two charges: supporting al Qaeda and carrying firearms while committing a violent crime. He agreed to drop all charges of mistreatment by the U.S. government and to forfeit any profit from selling his story. He was sentenced to serve two consecutive ten-year sentences, without parole. As of this writing, he is still incarcerated.

U.S. air power was critical to the success of the offensive at Mazar-e Sharif and was very effective overall. According to one source, U.S. air strikes were particularly effective in Mazar-e Sharif—where they were concentrated on specific roads, valleys,

⁷¹ Moore, 2003, pp. 174–175.

⁷² U.S. Army Center of Military History, 2001.

⁷³ U.S. Army Center of Military History, 2001.

⁷⁴ Edward Epstein, “Lindh Tied to Killing of CIA Agent,” *The San Francisco Chronicle*, June 5, 2002.

and other limited areas—and less effective in other places, such as the capital city Kabul, where the front lines covered a much wider area.⁷⁵

Conflict among the Afghan warlords, particularly Dostum and Atta, severely hurt the effectiveness of Afghan forces in the early stages of the offensive. The long history of animosity emerged at various times in the Mazar-e Sharif offensive. In one instance in October, it was reported that Atta's forces moved to within a few miles of the city, but were rapidly forced to withdraw when they were left exposed by Dostum, who failed to support the advance. While little evidence has come to light about whether Dostum did this intentionally, it seems clear that Dostum and Atta were not working in any coordinated manner early in the offensive. It was only after this incident that Dostum and Mohammad agreed to temporarily reconcile their differences and work together.⁷⁶ After this reconciliation between the Afghan leaders, the offensive could proceed under the nominal guidance of Mohammad Fahim. That the United States was able to pressure these two former enemies to work together was, in and of itself, an operational success and was vital to the fall of Mazar-e Sharif.

Kandahar

On November 14, Texas 12 infiltrated from Pakistan into southern Afghanistan by MH-60 helicopters.⁷⁷ Texas 12 included ODA 574 and an Air Force combat air controller, Sgt Alan “Yoshi” Yoshita. Most infiltrations involved only the lift helicopters, but this one had Predator coverage and support from AC-130 gunships. Hamid Karzai's men had been instructed to mark the landing zone with chemlights, but instead they started bonfires. When the MH-60s approached the landing zone, the pilots' night vision equipment was swamped with light and they were unable to land in the dust clouds caused by their blade wash. The pilots could not find the secondary landing zone and finally set down on the best ground they could find using ordinary white light. Fortunately, the first men to approach the site were Hamid Karzai's fighters, who had seen the lights.⁷⁸ Shortly after its arrival, Texas 12 contacted Hamid Karzai and accompanied him into the mountains north of Kandahar. In contrast to other opposition leaders, Karzai spoke fluent English, eliminating the usual communications barrier.

When Texas 12 infiltrated, Karzai had only a handful of ill-equipped supporters, most without any military experience. During the first night after insertion, Texas 12 received a drop of weapons and ammunition to arm Karzai's men. The Army Special Forces soldiers tried to organize Karzai's men, but had little success. Karzai's first objec-

⁷⁵ Steve Gutkin, “Afghan Opposition Mobilizes for Major Offensive Against Capital,” Associated Press Worldstream, November 10, 2001.

⁷⁶ Anderson and Moore, 2001; Badkhen, 2001.

⁷⁷ Texas 12 was the radio call sign for ODA 574 augmented by Sergeant Yoshita.

⁷⁸ Moore, 2003, pp. 192–194.

tive was Tarin Kowt, the undefended capital of Oruzgan province north of Kandahar. During the night of November 17–18, Karzai's fighters and Texas 12 drove into Tarin Kowt in a convoy of miscellaneous vehicles and occupied the governor's house, where Karzai held a council. The next day, Karzai tried to rally people to defend the village but could convince only a few to stay.

Early on the morning of November 18, an AC-130 aircraft warned Texas 12 that a Taliban convoy was approaching from the south. Sergeant Yoshita aimed a laser at vehicles in this convoy for attacks by Navy F/A-18 aircraft. For the remainder of the day, Yoshita and other members of the team designated targets using the SOF Laser Marker, GPS, and laser range finders. Most of the newly recruited opposition fighters ran away, leaving Texas 12 to fight almost alone. Although the team had excellent air support, lead vehicles in the convoy approached the friendly positions to within M-4 range, before being destroyed. The team subsequently reported having destroyed about half of an 80-vehicle convoy.

During the night of November 19–20, part of Texas 17 infiltrated by helicopter into the Shin Nari Valley south of Kandahar and made contact with Gul Agha Shirzai.⁷⁹ Shirzai's fighters, numbering about 600, were an armed mob, unorganized and untrained. On November 22, the rest of Texas 17, including an Air Force combat air controller, infiltrated also by helicopter. On November 25, Texas 17 and Shirzai's fighters secured the town of Takteh-Pol on Highway 4 between Kandahar and Spin Boldac, the main crossing point between southwestern Afghanistan and Pakistan. Shirzai wanted to move south toward Spin Boldac, but the detachment persuaded him to concentrate on blocking Highway 4 to support the capture of Kandahar. Together with Shirzai's fighters, Texas 17 advanced to a point south of the Argestan River. From this vantage point, Texas 17 could see all the way to Kandahar Airport using "Big Eye" long-range optics. For the next five days, Texas 17 called in air attacks, especially on columns of Taliban and al Qaeda vehicles.⁸⁰

Taliban fighters fled from air attack by hiding under bridges, possibly because they realized that U.S. ROE prohibited attacks on infrastructure. Texas 17 asked for a change that would allow attacks on bridges when forces sheltered there, but no change was made. To counter this tactic, Texas 17 called off fighters, which were visible from the ground, and called in bombers, which were nearly invisible at their operating altitudes. Texas 17 attempted to synchronize the impacts of the bombers' JDAMs with movements of the convoys, a hit-or-miss proposition. Several times, the team laser-designated aim points just below a bridge to hit forces beneath it.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Texas 17 was the radio call sign for ODA 583.

⁸⁰ "Texas 17, Sharzai's Move on Kandahar," Office of the Command Historian, U.S. Special Operations Command, undated.

⁸¹ Moore, 2003, pp. 208–209.

On December 2, Texas 12 and approximately 700 opposition fighters reached the town of Sayd Alim Kalay north of Kandahar, where they encountered ten to 15 Taliban fighters. They drove these fighters from the village and prepared to secure a critical bridge on the road to Kandahar. During the night of December 3, the team called air strikes on an enemy convoy of eight to ten vehicles moving in the vicinity of the bridge. The next morning, an element of the detachment, together with about 100 Afghan fighters, deployed on high ground above the bridge, where they came under small-arms fire.⁸² Back at the base camp, MAJ Donald C. Bolduc overheard Taliban transmissions on a captured radio. These transmissions indicated the Taliban intended to attack on the eastern side of the bridge, in an attempt to outflank the defenders. Army Special Forces soldiers deployed on both flanks and repelled several attempts by Taliban fighters to cross the riverbed. An intense firefight developed in which the sides were often too close to allow air strikes. During this action, SFC Wesley McGirr received a bullet in the shoulder while coming to the assistance of two other team members pinned down by fire.⁸³ That evening, Karzai and LTC David Fox, call sign "Rambo," decided to fall back a few miles and rest for the night. The following day, Texas 12 and Karzai's fighters crossed the bridge without encountering resistance.

On December 5, Texas 12 and Karzai's fighters were about 20 miles north of Kandahar in a static position, planning an assault on the city. Early that morning, a newly assigned combat air controller was trying to engage a few Taliban fighters about 1,000 meters to his front. He mistakenly gave his own coordinates to the crew of a B-52 bomber as a target. The B-52 crew asked for confirmation because the coordinates had previously been reported as a friendly location. The controller noted that Taliban forces were close to his own position and confirmed the coordinates. The B-52 delivered a single GBU-31 2,000 lb bomb, which exploded on friendly forces. Three of Karzai's fighters were killed and Karzai himself was slightly wounded by shrapnel. While standing in the midst of this carnage, Karzai learned over satellite phone that he had been chosen as Chairman of the Interim Government and, moments later, that the Taliban commander Mullah Naqub was prepared to surrender in Kandahar. Also on December 5, Python 33 and Python 36 infiltrated by MH-53J helicopters to support Karzai, replacing men lost during the friendly fire incident.

⁸² Biddle, 2003, p. 36.

⁸³ Donald C. Bolduc, "Rambo 24/Texas 12, Bridge at Sayd Alim Kalay," Command Historian's office, U.S. Special Operations Command, undated. Endnote indicates that the vignette is based on entries in Major Bolduc's diary.

The Collapse of the Taliban

U.S. planners expected that the opposition would merely hold its positions through the winter and perhaps progress in spring. They were surprised when first the Northern Alliance leaders, then the Pashtun opposition leaders, swept to victory during November and early December. Why did the Taliban regime collapse so rapidly? Several fundamental factors contributed to the collapse:

- Afghans disliked the repressive Taliban regime.
- Many Taliban leaders defected when its power waned.
- Taliban fighters were largely committed to static defense.
- Al Qaeda could offer little assistance to the Taliban.
- Opposition and the Taliban were closely matched.
- Air attack targeted and controlled by ground forces was devastatingly effective.

The Taliban regime discredited itself by fundamentalist excesses and incompetent governance. Most Afghan people were either indifferent to the Taliban's fall or welcomed it. Had they supported the regime, toppling it would have been far more difficult and Taliban remnants could have offered much greater resistance after losing strongholds. But even Pashtuns had little affection for the regime, although Tajiks and Uzbeks initially dominated the opposition.

The Taliban regime came to power as a popular movement in revulsion to interminable civil war. Its power increased as local Pashtun leaders voluntarily joined an increasingly successful cause. These leaders owed no deep allegiance to the Taliban and defected when its power waned. Some major battles were as much negotiated as fought, especially in the case of Kandahar.

The regime employed almost all its forces in static defense of urban areas, deployed in outposts, checkpoints, bunkers, and trenches. Some of these positions, especially north of Kabul, had been unchanged for years and were well known to the opposition fighters. Such positions were easy to spot from the ground and to attack with air forces. Moreover, Taliban fighters were poorly organized, indifferently equipped, and ill-trained, making them hard to employ in mobile warfare.

Al Qaeda was composed of foreigners, mainly Arabs, who had volunteered to join a jihad against the Soviet occupation. Because they were foreigners, al Qaeda fighters could not blend into the population and knew they could expect little mercy if they surrendered. They usually fought with great determination and in some cases prevented Afghani fighters from surrendering, but the al Qaeda members were too few to offer much assistance. At most, they helped stiffen resolve and put off defeat by a few days.

Although the Taliban had almost twice as many fighters and much more heavy equipment, Taliban and opposition forces were closely matched in northeastern Afghanistan. The Taliban could not send reinforcements to Mazar-e Sharif because the Northern Alliance blocked the Salang Tunnel. Where the roads were open, the Taliban

had little ability to transport and sustain forces over operational distances. Moreover, the leadership feared to shift forces because it felt threatened everywhere. The Taliban employed only small amounts of heavy equipment and quickly lost those to air attack.

Air attacks were devastating when controlled by special operations teams. The forward air controllers included U.S. Air Force special operators, Air Force conventional air controllers, and Army Special Forces. Most of these attacks employed JDAMs or gravity bombs against Taliban forces in static positions. But on several occasions, most dramatically to protect Hamid Karzai, the special operations teams controlled attacks against forces on the move, especially convoys advancing to the fight. These attacks were extremely demoralizing because the Taliban fighters were utterly defenseless against air attacks and could only strive to endure them. To achieve success, air attacks did not need to kill all the Taliban, only enough to help the opposition to victory. Thus, the fall of the Taliban was caused by joint operations that integrated air power with the actions of land forces. Air attacks provided leverage, but success depended on local conditions that existed before OEF began.

Role of Special Forces

The Army's Special Forces played a key role in toppling the Taliban. Support to indigenous forces is a primary mission for Special Forces, one they routinely practiced in training and exercises. The most disconcerting aspect of the campaign was its great compression. Normally, Special Forces teams would have spent considerable time with indigenous forces, learning their capabilities and building their confidence, before attempting to support them in risky offensive operations. During OEF, however, the teams began operating within days or even hours of their arrival.

Air and Air-Ground Operations

While air support was crucial to the outcome, problems with air-ground integration did crop up. Initially, Army Special Forces were unfamiliar with Air Force combat air controllers, their equipment, method of operation, and limitations, but learning was fast on the ground. Army Special Forces were sometimes frustrated by delays in getting close air support, which they saw as central to establishing their credibility and influence with indigenous anti-Taliban force commanders.

Pilots and Army Special Forces on the ground did not always understand each other. For example, SOF might want to drop some bombs to give their Afghan counterparts a graphic demonstration of the support they could provide. But Air Force pilots could not appreciate the need to deliver bombs when no clear targets were present. In some cases, inherent limitations of weapons created difficulties in targeting. Some weapons were not good against moving targets and the use of others could be limited by bad weather. Misdirected supply drops were particularly frustrating because the SOF teams depended on them for supplies and influence over their Afghan allies.

Air-dropped supplies sometimes missed drop zones and an error of just a few hundred meters in rough terrain could entail considerable work to retrieve the supply bundles.

The use of Predators in conjunction with AC-130 gunships was an effective combination and one of the war's success stories. The combination was active almost nightly and was effective against al Qaeda and Taliban time-sensitive targets, presaging the more widespread use of UAS-targeted attacks.

Conventional Ground Forces

Conventional ground forces made only marginal contributions to the fall of the Taliban. Marine Corps forces were concentrated in the south, but the Taliban and al Qaeda avoided confrontation with them. Army conventional forces, few in number, had supporting roles in widely distributed locations.

Marines

A Navy Amphibious Ready Group (ARG) carrying the marines of the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) (MEU[SOC]) was ordered to move into the northern Arabian Sea off Pakistan late in September and it arrived early in October. The carrier USS *Kitty Hawk* arrived in the northern Arabian Sea on October 15, carrying U.S. SOF troops equipped with MH-47E and MH-60K helicopters.

The 15th MEU(SOC) and a Navy SEAL team established a small presence at Jacobabad, Pakistan. The initial plan for the main task force effort was to seize a forward operating base (FOB) in southern Afghanistan and conduct a series of raids from it. A shortage of worthwhile targets in the region eventually changed the Marine Corps' primary operational objectives to interdiction of Taliban forces and securing Kandahar's airport.

In late November, Marine Task Force 58 (TF 58) was established.⁸⁴ The plan called for the task force to seize Camp Rhino.⁸⁵ Operations began with the insertion of a SEAL team to carry out reconnaissance and surveillance operations. On November 25, an air-delivered Marine Corps force linked up with the SEAL team at Camp Rhino and secured the airfield. Some 400 marines followed the assault force. After consolidating their position and improving the airfield to the point that it could support the landing of C-17 aircraft, the task force carried out operations to interdict Route 1, which connected Kandahar with Lashkar Gah.

⁸⁴ A more detailed account of TF 58 operations can be found in Chapter Four.

⁸⁵ In mid October, Rangers from the 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, and other SOF were dropped onto a landing strip near Kandahar designated Objective Rhino. See U.S. Army Center of Military History, *The United States Army in Afghanistan: Operation Enduring Freedom, October 2001–March 2002*, Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, CMH Pub 70-83-1, 2006.

Army Forces

The role of conventional Army forces in late 2001 was, for the most part, to provide security for the support of SOF operating in Afghanistan. In early December, a month after the fall of Kabul, conventional combat forces of the 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry) amounted to 12 percent of total Army forces in Central Asia and only about 10 percent of them were in Afghanistan. Most conventional forces and headquarters, mainly from the 10th Division, remained in Uzbekistan and Pakistan, where they provided force protection and prepared to move into Afghanistan and conduct operations there. By the end of December, the size of Army conventional forces in Central Asia had grown, but their deployments remained largely outside of Afghanistan.

Logistics

U.S. force deployments before and since the 1990–1991 Persian Gulf War have rarely unfolded as depicted in logistics doctrine. Deployments to Afghanistan followed that pattern. With the exception of Operation Iraqi Freedom, recent deployments can be characterized as a successful struggle to adapt organizations and doctrine designed for a much larger, slower-developing conflict to a new kind of “small” war in a remote and austere theater. Because most logistics doctrine did not apply to operations in Afghanistan, peacetime training had done little to prepare units. Logistics operations had to be adapted on the fly.

The nature of Afghanistan, a landlocked nation with the nearest port 300 miles away, drove the need for support bases in adjoining countries and dictated that the majority of the support would be delivered by air. Another complicating factor was the fact that both conventional Army units and SOF were operating from widely separated fixed sites. The success of logistical operations in Afghanistan was in part attributable to a large logistics structure and a relatively small demand.

The only doctrinal logistics force element that deployed was a portion of a Corps Support Command, which was located at Karshi-Khanabad airport in Uzbekistan. The Corps Support Command’s headquarters did not deploy, neither did the Division Support Command of the 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry). Army Special Forces operating in Afghanistan got their supplies and support either from the deployed element of the Corps Support Command element or from a Special Operations Support Battalion at Karshi-Khanabad.

Logisticians faced real challenges in providing routine base-operations support (food, bath, laundry, etc.) to U.S. forces deployed in Afghanistan. The Army had recognized this problem during the deployments to Southwest Asia in the early 1990s and had developed a program called Force Provider to address it. Force Provider takes a modular approach to support. Each module provides billeting, laundry, bath, and dining support for 550 people and can be run by military or contractor personnel.

The Army personnel and equipment deployed to Afghanistan to set up Force Provider modules and sustain their operations was insufficient. It takes a platoon to run each module. The Army had one company (three platoons) in the active component and four planned companies (12 platoons) for the reserves and National Guard. Unfortunately, the reserve and National Guard platoons were established in name only and not manned. Two Army Reserve company headquarters were sent to Afghanistan along with the equipment, but they were too few to establish and sustain operations. Small detachments of specialists were also sent (e.g., power-generation personnel) to get operations up and running. Eventually, civilian contractors were brought in.

Analysis of supply support data indicates a relatively low rate of fill of requisitions compared with what the same units accomplished at their home stations. For example, the supply support activity that supports the 3rd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, filled about 34 percent of its requisitions at home but only about 8 percent in Afghanistan, a rate typical of other support units in Afghanistan. These conventional performance measures do not take into account the unusually diverse demands imposed on the unit in theater. For example, at Fort Campbell, the supply activity supported 26 customers. In Afghanistan, the number was 129.

Another problem associated with supporting troops in Afghanistan was the need to create new automated addresses for the units that deployed. Use of a unit's normal address would deliver supplies to the home station. Therefore, the Army had to develop a way to address supplies for units in theater. That required additional computers and the development of appropriate databases for the units (or parts of units) in the theater. Anecdotal information indicates that these changes made it difficult for some units to process requisitions, but there is no indication that these difficulties affected operations.

Across the board, the logistics system responded to the demands placed on it, often displaying considerable innovation and imagination, such as accommodating a sharp increase in demand for fuel. Still, contingency deployments had been a fact of life for more than a decade prior to operations in Afghanistan, and a more flexible supply information system should have been developed to avoid such a large number of address changes.

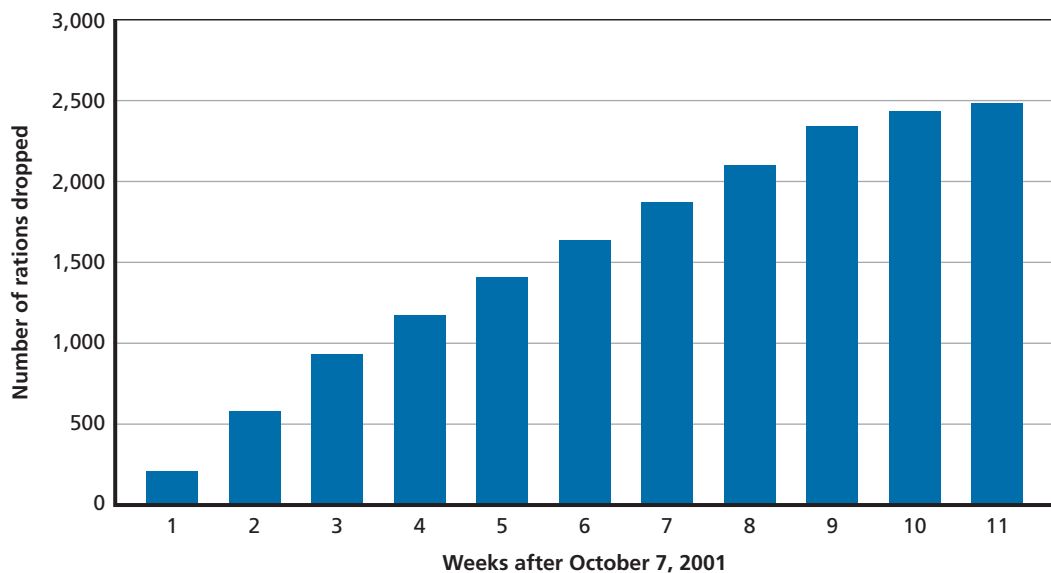
Support for Special Forces, including those operating with the Northern Alliance, proved challenging. In part, this was because of the ad hoc nature of the support structure. It was also because the standard supply technique—prepackaged bundles of equipment and supplies that can be requested by simply using a number—was both out of date and inappropriate. The supply system adapted and was soon able to fill even unusual requests in 48 hours.

Concurrent Humanitarian Operations

One of the distinctive aspects of OEF was the conduct of humanitarian operations simultaneously with combat. This reflected a key policy decision to underscore the fact that the war in Afghanistan was against the Taliban and al Qaeda but not against the Afghan people. It was also necessary to avoid a potential humanitarian crisis after decades of war and several years of drought. Afghanistan was ill equipped to address the needs of its people. Furthermore, most international aid organizations had pulled their staffs out of the country following 9/11, in anticipation of U.S. military action. So both the normal and emergency means of feeding the people had been disrupted, and winter was approaching. The potential for mass starvation was real.

Initial humanitarian relief was delivered by means of airdrops from C-17 aircraft flying out of Ramstein AB, Germany. Food, in the form of humanitarian daily rations, was the primary commodity, while blankets and other supplies were also provided. Airdrops of food started in early October and ended in mid-December, once the Taliban regime had fallen. By then, NGOs had returned to Afghanistan and resumed their role in distributing relief supplies. Over 72 days of airdrop missions, an average of 34,300 rations were dropped each night, for a total of about 2.5 million meals along with 55,000 blankets, wheat, and other humanitarian supplies. Figure 3.5 shows the rate of delivery of humanitarian daily rations through week 11 in late December 2002.

Figure 3.5
Cumulative Weekly Drops of Humanitarian Daily Rations



SOURCE: Data provided by CENTCOM.

RAND RR381-3.5

Overall, the effect of the humanitarian operation was small but positive. It probably did little with respect to feeding the hungry. At best, 2.5 million meals provided one day's food to 2.5 million people out of a total population of 25 million. But the effort had a broader effect. Many who never received any food knew of the effort, which helped underscore the point that the war was against the Taliban and al Qaeda. Furthermore, it helped with the international community. To the extent that the food found its way to members of the Northern Alliance, it may have helped speed the defeat of the Taliban, which meant that far more robust relief efforts could get under way sooner.

The avoidance of the feared famine is probably attributable to the swift take-down of the Taliban regime and the effective operations of the several relief agencies that also took advantage of newly opened transportation arteries, such as the bridge between Uzbekistan and Afghanistan. CENTCOM played a role in the continuing humanitarian relief operations by setting up a coordination center in Tampa that operated during this period and participated in working groups. The center and working groups provided a forum for a range of organizations, such as the United Nations (UN), NGOs, and others, to raise problems and coordinate actions to address problems.

The Detainees

As with many other aspects of the war in Afghanistan, the situation of captured enemy fighters was unusual. The United States took the position that captured al Qaeda prisoners were not covered by the Geneva Convention because they were not a state party to the convention, whereas Taliban captives were. However, the United States maintained, without explanation, that neither the Taliban nor al Qaeda fighters qualified as "prisoners of war" (POWs).⁸⁶ Consequently, captured prisoners were (and still are) simply referred to as "detainees" and labeled "enemy combatants." Although not considered POWs, detainees were to be provided many POW privileges, as a matter of U.S. policy.⁸⁷

Considerable controversy has arisen over the U.S. insistence that the prisoners are not POWs and over the treatment they receive both in Afghanistan detention facilities and at Camp X-Ray at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba (Figure 3.6 depicts the detention facility at Kandahar, as it existed in January 2002, approximately 90 miles north of FOB Rhino). Several international organizations, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Amnesty International and the

⁸⁶ White House, "Status of Detainees at Guantanamo," Fact Sheet, February 7, 2002.

⁸⁷ White House, 2002. Since this report was prepared, reports stated that the treatment of detainees at Guantanamo and elsewhere was far from compliant with applicable Geneva Conventions. In fact, the military has been accused of "hiding" detainees from the Red Cross and of physically abusing detainees during interrogations and at other times. Although we recognize these reports exist, we do not report on them in this document.

Figure 3.6
Detainee Facility at Kandahar, January 2002



SOURCE: "OEF/NE Initial Impressions Conference," CJFLCC Briefing, August 22, 2002.
 RAND RR381-3.6

Crimes of War Project, all take the position that the detainees were indeed prisoners of war and should be treated in accordance with Part III of the Geneva Convention.

Treatment of Detainees

Once in U.S. custody, U.S. policy concerning the treatment of detainees was to be implemented through a series of detainee operations guidance messages from the Joint Chiefs of Staff and CENTCOM. The first of these outlined the legal status of detainees:

Al Qaeda and Taliban individuals under DOD control are not entitled to EPW [enemy prisoner of war] status for purposes of the Geneva Conventions. In detaining al Qaeda and Taliban individuals, components will treat al Qaeda and Taliban detainees humanely and, to the extent appropriate and consistent with military necessity, in a manner consistent with the principles of the Geneva Convention.⁸⁸

It is clear from this that humane treatment consistent with the Geneva Convention was not to interfere with military necessity. Indeed, as events unfolded in Afghanistan and more egregiously in Iraq, treatment was anything but humane. The reasons for detaining captured Taliban and al Qaeda fighters were to exploit them for intelli-

⁸⁸ GENADMIN to CJCS, "SECDEF determination regarding legal status of Al Qaeda and Taliban detainees," message 211933, January 2002.

gence and to ensure that they do not escape to further threaten the United States and its forces.

National Detainee Database

Once in U.S. custody, a detainee review and screening team (DRST) began to collect identifying data from each detainee. This resulted in assigning a personal identification data set to each detainee, which was subsequently used to create a national detainee database. The data collected consisted of the detainee's name, fingerprints, and a DNA sample (see Figure 3.7). This information was entered into a database maintained by the FBI, where it would reside for the life of the detainee. At the time, the local opposition leaders controlled the detention facilities throughout Afghanistan, and therefore it was important to secure their cooperation.

Treatment in Afghanistan Facilities

Reports surfaced that direct attacks against the detention facilities at Kandahar and Bagram were about to begin in mid-March 2002, as well as kidnapping of children of prominent personnel to exchange for prisoners and suicide attacks against U.S. forces. Although none of these things actually occurred, such reports prompted extraordinary security measures.⁸⁹

Figure 3.7
Military Police Process Detainees in Shebergen



SOURCE: U.S. Air Force photos by Staff Sgt. Cecilio Ricardo.

RAND RR381-3.7

⁸⁹ "Detainee Issues," CCJ3 Issue Paper, undated, unclassified (mid-March 2002).

Inside the facility, detainees were first searched, given uniforms, and then placed in irons. The lessons of Qala Jangi Garrison had been learned. Detainees were required to wear hand and leg irons at all times and random searches were regularly conducted. Guarding the facilities at Kandahar and at Bagram consumed a battalion-sized force of 807 personnel, fully 12.4 percent of the available forces in Afghanistan (see Table 3.1).⁹⁰

The ICRC regularly visited prisons in Afghanistan and, beginning on December 24, 2001, regular visits to U.S.-run detention facilities in Afghanistan began.⁹¹ Complaints about conditions at Kandahar were countered by pointing out that conditions for the U.S. troops guarding the prisoners were no better. The ICRC also complained of interviewing men in shackles. It was explained that the shackles were for the safety of all concerned.

Rules for the Use of Force

The rules established for applying force were reasonable—on paper. In general, the use of force was discouraged and when it was required, guards were cautioned to use the minimum amount necessary to maintain order and discipline. Firing warning shots was never authorized. Guards were also authorized to use riot-control personnel and riot-control measures in general. In particular, measures were to be taken to protect

Table 3.1
Detainee Support Forces, as of March 18, 2002

Personnel Type	Mission	Number
Military police	External operations	170
Support		100
C2		65
Logistics	Internal operations	82
Military police		250
Medical		100
Military intel		40
Total		807

SOURCE: "Detainee Issues," undated.

⁹⁰ "Detainee Issues," undated.

⁹¹ By December 12, 2001, the ICRC registered and visited more than 1,000 detainees in Afghanistan run by local opposition leaders to check the conditions of their arrest and detention. ICRC, "Afghanistan: ICRC Position on Alleged Ill Treatment of Prisoners," ICRC Press Release 01/69, December 12, 2001. See also ICRC, "Afghanistan/United States—'War against Terror' Prisoners in Touch with Families," ICRC News 02/23, June 6, 2002b.

prisoners from third parties. It was important to emphasize this given the likelihood that attempts would be made to kill prisoners and thereby make them martyrs.

Deadly force was authorized only when there was an immediate threat to innocent persons and force was necessary to protect U.S. forces or prevent detainees from escaping (not to gain intelligence). Guards were instructed to ensure that all detainees understood the word “halt.” It was to be shouted three times before applying deadly force.

Treatment at Camp X-Ray

Beginning on January 18, 2002, the ICRC began regular visits to detainees kept at detention facilities at Guantanamo. Although the ICRC disagreed with the U.S. policy that declared that the prisoners were not POWs, they nevertheless initially praised the United States for allowing them access to the prisoners.⁹²

Procedures for the treatment of detainees at Camp X-Ray were set forth in U.S. policy.⁹³ Even though the detainees were considered ineligible for POW status, they were to be provided many POW privileges as a matter of policy. Among the privileges were meals that met Muslim dietary laws, the opportunity to worship, and correspondence materials. They were not to be subjected to mental abuse or cruel treatment and access was to be provided to the ICRC to visit the detainees privately.⁹⁴

Figure 3.8 depicts a group of detainees arriving at Guantanamo in January 2002 and their cells at Camp X-Ray. Prisoners were transported blindfolded with bound and gloved hands.

The treatment afforded the detainees depended upon their status. The consequence of their official status was summarized in an April 2002 report to Congress by the Congressional Research Service:⁹⁵

- **Intelligence Value:** As non-POWs, detainees could be interrogated to uncover information that might thwart further terrorist attacks. This, unfortunately, is what led to the reported abuses.
- **Security Measures:** Non-POW status allowed the Army to apply more stringent security measures—including confinement in prison-like cells. The more severe security measures taken with the prisoners were justified by alluding to the upris-

⁹² ICRC, “Geneva Convention on Prisoners of War,” ICRC Press Release, February 9, 2002a.

⁹³ White House, 2002.

⁹⁴ After the invasion of Iraq in March 2003, treatment of detainees—especially in Iraq—deteriorated. The premium placed on generating actionable intelligence seemed to trump humane treatment. The result was the shocking pictures of prisoner abuse at Abu Ghraib in Iraq.

⁹⁵ Jennifer Elsea, “Treatment of ‘Battlefield Detainees’ in the War on Terrorism,” Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, RL31367, April 11, 2002.

Figure 3.8
Detainees at Guantanamo



SOURCE: U.S. Navy photo by PH1 Michael W. Pendergrass.
 RAND RR381-3.8

ing at Mazar-e Sharif in November 2001 (discussed above). The detainees were considered to pose a “grave security risk.”⁹⁶

- **Release and Repatriation:** If the detainees were granted POW status, they would have to be released at the termination of hostilities, thus freeing them to commit further acts of terrorism.
- **Trials:** Finally, POWs accused of crimes are entitled to courts martial or civil trials. Military commissions for violations of the law of war may try non-POWs.

The Debate over Detainee Status—The U.S. Position

As mentioned earlier, considerable controversy arose over the U.S. position that the detainees are not considered POWs and therefore need not be afforded the rights spelled out in Articles 17 and 118 of the Geneva Convention, pertaining to interrogation and to release of detainees at the cessation of hostilities, respectively. Next, we present the arguments on both sides of this issue, beginning with the U.S. position.

Although the non-POW status of detainees was established earlier in the conflict, it was only made official U.S. policy on February 7, 2002. The president determined that the Geneva Convention applied to members of the Taliban, but not to those of

⁹⁶ Elsea, 2002.

al Qaeda. At the same time, however, he made it clear that none of the detainees at Guantanamo or in Afghanistan would be granted POW status.⁹⁷

The administration defended its position by arguing that the detainees were indispensable sources of intelligence. In addition, these prisoners were extremely dangerous and extraordinary security precautions had to be taken to ensure against future uprisings. Article 21 of the Geneva Convention allows for close confinement of prisoners of war only “where necessary to safeguard their health and then only during the continuation of the circumstances which make confinement necessary.”⁹⁸ If designated POWs, detainees could not have been placed in irons or confined to cells, thus risking a possible uprising.

It was decided in March 2002 that certain detainees were eligible to be tried for offenses outlined in the “President’s Military Order.”⁹⁹ In late March, DoD issued Military Commission Order Number 1 authorizing the establishment of military commissions and the rules governing their operation.¹⁰⁰ The commissions were to be military tribunals and the rules allowed for public trials (although the presiding officer may rule that proceedings be closed), the presumption of innocence requiring proof of guilt beyond a reasonable doubt, and the right of the defendant to choose a civilian lawyer to cross-examine witnesses. However, the rules neither allowed for appeal to a higher court nor allowed for a defendant to be set free if found not guilty of the offense charged. Several human rights groups attacked these two omissions as well as what they viewed as the administration’s vagueness concerning the eventual release of all detainees.

In late March 2002, in response to criticism of this policy, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld held a press conference in which he sought to clarify the U.S. position.¹⁰¹ He justified keeping detainees in prison for the duration of the conflict by stating:

As has been the case in previous wars, the country that takes prisoners generally decides that they would prefer them not to go back to the battlefield. They detain those enemy combatants for the duration of the conflict. *They do so for the very simple reason, which I would have thought is obvious—namely to keep them from going right back and in this case killing more Americans and conducting terrorist acts. . . . To release enemy captives so that they could return to the battlefield would put the*

⁹⁷ White House, 2002.

⁹⁸ “Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War,” 75 UNTS 135, 1950, Article 21.

⁹⁹ George W. Bush, “Military Order of November 13, 2001—Detention, Treatment, and Trial of Certain Non-Citizens in the War Against Terror,” 66 FR 57833-57836, November 16, 2001.

¹⁰⁰ Donald H. Rumsfeld, “Military Commission Order No. 1, Procedures for Trials by Military Commissions of Certain Non-United States Citizens in the War Against Terrorism,” March 21, 2002.

¹⁰¹ DoD, “Department of Defense News Briefing—Secretary Rumsfeld and Gen. Myers,” March 28, 2002.

lives of more young American servicemen at risk, and in my view would be mindless.
[Emphasis added]¹⁰²

He was vague, however, about what was meant by “the duration of the conflict”: the war in Afghanistan or the global war on terrorism. We have subsequently learned that the latter appears to be the case, although the 12 years of war in Afghanistan makes the issue moot.

Rumsfeld offered the following argument in defense of the policy not to release a detainee found not guilty of a crime before a military tribunal:

If one were to be acquitted by a commission of . . . a specific charge, that would not necessarily change the fact that the individual remains an enemy who was captured during an armed conflict, and therefore one who could reasonably be expected to go back to his terrorist ways if released. . . . In some cases it might not be possible to establish beyond a reasonable doubt that an individual committed a particular crime, and therefore he might be acquitted of that crime. However, it does not change the fact that he is an enemy combatant. He may be guilty of other crimes, but at the minimum he is someone to be kept off the battlefield, from going right back and killing more Americans.¹⁰³

In both these arguments was the concern that released terrorists would continue to commit terrorist acts against the United States and therefore all detainees considered to be terrorists should continue in captivity.

Although there is no provision for appeal to a higher court, the rules do provide for three levels of review—all within the military justice system: review by the appointing authority, if not the Secretary of Defense; a review panel consisting of three military officers appointed by the Secretary of Defense; and review by the Secretary of Defense.¹⁰⁴ Understandably, the lack of external judicial review was not acceptable to civil rights groups, as we shall see next.

Arguments Against U.S. Policy

In an April 2002 memorandum to the U.S. government, Amnesty International complained that what they referred to as the U.S. government’s “pick and choose” approach to the Geneva Convention was unacceptable. The memorandum declared: “Amnesty International believes that those captured and held by the USA during the conflict in Afghanistan must be presumed to be prisoners of war, whether they belong to the Tali-

¹⁰² DoD, March 28, 2002.

¹⁰³ DoD, March 28, 2002.

¹⁰⁴ Rumsfeld, 2002, pp. 13–14.

ban or al Qaeda.”¹⁰⁵ It offers as evidence that “the Taliban were effectively the armed forces of Afghanistan and the al Qaeda fighters appear to have been an integral part of that force thus fulfilling Article 4(1) of the Third Geneva Convention.”¹⁰⁶ And just to be sure, it further stated, “under the Third Geneva Convention, any dispute about [detainees’] status must be determined by a ‘competent tribunal’ (which necessarily must fully respect the right to a fair trial).”¹⁰⁷

The ICRC echoed this charge, stating, “There are divergent views between the United States and the ICRC on the procedures which apply on how to determine that the persons detained are not entitled to prisoner of war status.”¹⁰⁸ However, as mentioned earlier, the ICRC did commend the United States on its willingness to grant it access to prisoners in Afghanistan and at Guantanamo Bay. However, it continued to insist that the confinement conditions were inconsistent with provisions of Article 21 of the Geneva Convention, in that detainees were held in “close confinement” at Camp X-Ray and in shackles at Kandahar.

Human Rights Watch and the Crimes of War Project focused their objections on the rules for military commissions set forth in Military Commission Order Number 1. Both praise the order for allowing for public trials, establishing the presumption of innocence, requiring proof beyond a reasonable doubt for conviction, and allowing the defendants access to civil lawyers to advise them and cross-examine witnesses. However, both object to the lack of appeal outside the military chain of command and that exonerated defendants might not be set free.

Human Rights Watch argued that, because the United States failed to properly determine the legal status of prisoners, it was not certain if military commissions could legally try detainees accused of crimes. Under the Geneva Convention, POWs accused of crimes are to be tried by military courts martial. Under the rules adopted by the United States, any detainee may be subject to trial by military commission and any non-U.S. citizen accused of being a terrorist was denied any recourse to civilian courts to determine the lawfulness of military detention and trial by military commission.¹⁰⁹

The Crimes of War Project offered essentially the same argument. However, it voiced additional concern over the conditions under which detainees would be released. Although the U.S. government claimed that prisoners would be released at the termi-

¹⁰⁵Amnesty International, *Memorandum to the US Government on the Rights of the People in US Custody in Afghanistan and Guantanamo Bay*, Amnesty International Index AMR 51/053/2002, April 15, 2002.

¹⁰⁶Article 4(1) states that prisoners of war are “members of the armed forces of a party to the conflict as well as members of militias or volunteer corps forming part of such armed forces.” “Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War,” 1950.

¹⁰⁷Amnesty International, 2002, p. 2.

¹⁰⁸ICRC, 2002a.

¹⁰⁹Human Rights Watch, “U.S.: Commission Rules Meet Some, Not All, Rights Concerns,” Human Rights News Press Release, March 21, 2002.

nation of hostilities—in compliance with the Geneva Convention—the Crimes of War Project claims that it is unclear whether the administration was referring to the war in Afghanistan or to the wider global war on terrorism. If it is the latter, the Crimes of War Project foresees unlimited detention.¹¹⁰

Implications

The global war on terrorism was begun auspiciously in September 2001 with operations in Afghanistan. Prisoners captured during the conflict were considered to be valuable (and in some cases indispensable) sources of intelligence. Also, because enemy “soldiers” in this war were considered terrorists willing to commit any atrocity to advance their cause, they continued to be considered dangerous to themselves and their captors and, as such, they required extraordinary restraints. This same view carried over to Iraq, where the value of the detainees as sources of intelligence was far greater still.

Unfortunately, the Geneva Conventions governing the treatment of prisoners captured in armed conflicts do not explicitly include provisions for dealing with prisoners classified as terrorists.¹¹¹ Consequently, the regulations governing the treatment of captured enemy combatants are also silent on the status of terrorists.¹¹² Four categories of prisoners are identified in the military regulations: EPWs, retained personnel, civilian internees, and other detainees. The regulations deal with both the treatment of prisoners and the information to be collected from them. Although regulations state that all categories of detainees are to be treated humanely, certain protections are granted to EPWs, retained personnel, and civilian internees that are not granted to other detainees. However, it is clear that the treatment of prisoners—of any type—in contravention of the Geneva Conventions is officially prohibited.

Unfortunately, the ambiguous status of the detainees and a lack of clear guidance concerning their treatment, coupled with a strong desire to gain actionable intelligence, led directly to the abuses observed in Iraq. Although not as prevalent as in Iraq, there were reports of abuses in detention facilities in Afghanistan and Guantanamo. Indeed, the desire for more intelligence from detainees led to de facto placement of the prison at Abu Ghraib in the hands of a military intelligence officer, contrary to accepted military practice.

President Bush stated on several occasions that the war on terrorism was likely to continue for quite some time and clearly that has been the case. Since the demise of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, hundreds of “enemy combatants” have been

¹¹⁰ Anthony Dworkin, “U.S. Administration Defends Its Rules for Treatment of Afghan Captives,” Crimes of War Project, March 29, 2002. In effect, the fact that the war has continued this long makes this argument moot.

¹¹¹ See “Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War,” 1950, Article 4.

¹¹² As mentioned earlier, a single regulation was developed with Service-specific references that governs the treatment of enemy prisoners: U.S. Department of the Army, AR 190-8, *Enemy Prisoners of War, Retained Personnel, Civilian Internees and Other Detainees*, OPNAVINST 3461.6, AFJI 31-304, MCO 3461.1, October 1, 1997.

detained.¹¹³ What was required was a clear statement of U.S. policy concerning their treatment with the force of law. In March 2009, in a respondent's memorandum regarding the government's detention authority relative to detainees held at Guantanamo, the Obama administration declared that it will no longer claim the power to detain terrorism suspects under the label "enemy combatant," even while claiming broad authority to detain those who are a part of terrorist networks or who supplied "substantial support" to such forces. The exact wording is as follows:

The President has the authority to detain persons that the President determines planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001, and persons who harbored those responsible for those attacks. The President also has the authority to detain persons who were part of, or substantially supported, Taliban or al-Qaida forces or associated forces that are engaged in hostilities against the United States or its coalition partners, including any person who has committed a belligerent act, or has directly supported hostilities, in aid of such enemy armed forces.¹¹⁴

Although the term is no longer used, conditions remain the same with regards to the detention of persons involved in 9/11 and persons who "were part of, or substantially supported" Taliban or al Qaeda forces.

Observations

The hastily assembled coalition of allies and indigenous forces toppled the Taliban regime much quicker than anyone expected. This was accomplished despite the deep-seated rivalries among Afghans and the threat of an expanded regional conflict. Army Special Forces operating with the Northern Alliance helped to focus U.S. air power more precisely and with devastating effect. Nevertheless, as we have seen, problems did arise. Several were due to the speed with which planning and early execution were accomplished, but others were endemic. In this last section, a few of the problems we have observed are listed.

Command and Control

Establishing workable command relationships among the several U.S. and coalition military organizations was challenging: CIA operatives answered directly to CIA headquarters

¹¹³As of May 15, 2006, 759 such individuals had been detained at Guantanamo Bay since January 2002. See Office of the Secretary of Defense, "List of Individuals Detained by the Department of Defense at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba from January 2002 through May 15, 2006," May 15, 2006.

¹¹⁴Hertz, Michael, Acting Assistant Attorney General, *Respondent's Memorandum Regarding the Government's Detention Authority Relative to Detainees Held at Guantanamo Bay*, in RE: Guantanamo Bay Detainee Litigation, filed in the United States District Court for the District of Columbia, March 13, 2009.

at Langley, Virginia; U.S. and coalition nations' SOF operated with indigenous forces, answering directly to Tampa; air operations were orchestrated from Prince Sultan AB in Saudi Arabia and included aircraft from carriers at sea, long-range bombers from Diego Garcia and the United States, C-17s from Ramstein Air Force Base in Germany, and U.S. and French aircraft from bases in the area of operations. In addition, a full-scale humanitarian mission was under way involving several NGOs and international organizations along with U.S. forces.

Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance

The dual, and sometimes conflicting, goals of locating elusive targets and avoiding collateral damage placed a high premium on real-time, "actionable" intelligence. Several intelligence assets were brought to bear to locate al Qaeda and Taliban fighters in time to deliver weapons on their locations. The following are observations on several aspects of OEF ISR operations:

- **The common operating picture:** For years preceding OEF, DoD invested in command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities aimed at achieving "dominant battlespace awareness" and a "common relevant operating picture" of the battlespace. Although considerable improvements were made in the three years from Operation Allied Force, achievement of a comprehensive ISR picture of the battlespace remained elusive. At higher command echelons at fixed locations and enjoying considerable bandwidth, we find sophisticated common operating pictures. However, at the lower echelons, bandwidth is still lacking.
- **Sensitive targets:** Many planners and operators felt that the time-sensitive targeting process used in Afghanistan was too cumbersome. CENTCOM exercised command and control from Tampa, delegating execution to component commanders in theater, with exceptions for key time-sensitive targets. Senior civilian and military decisionmakers chose to retain control over these targets.
- **Creative use of MASINT:** The innovative use of MASINT contributed significantly to the success of major combat operations in OEF, especially in prosecuting such difficult tasks as attacking caves (Tora Bora) and tracking small elements of al Qaeda and Taliban fighters.
- **Predator's major role:** OEF was a major test of what was then a rather new technology, and much has been written about the Predator's success and its continued success today. The Predator was certainly a critical ISR platform that contributed significantly to the operation's success. It was the sensor (and sometimes the weapon) of choice for attacking time-sensitive targets. It took on many tasks—targeting, BDA, positive identification, and more. It could feed video directly to certain shooter platforms as well as aim lasers at targets for others. However,

Army officers complained that the platform was controlled by the CFACC and was frequently pulled away to support “higher-priority” missions.

- **“Predator fixation”:** This phenomenon found its origin during major combat operations in OEF. Some commanders and their staff were transfixed watching a Predator follow a single moving vehicle or other time-sensitive target while ignoring the overall tactical situation.
- **Lack of imagery analysts:** Many commanders and their staffs, as well as intelligence professionals, complained that the number and quality of analysts in all ISR areas (e.g., imagery analysts, interpreters, etc.) had not kept pace with the explosion in all forms of intelligence the many airborne and spaceborne sensors produce. Commanders complained of being “buried in intelligence” without sufficient means to process, analyze, and exploit it.
- **Interagency intelligence sharing:** CIA intelligence on al Qaeda infrastructure and movements was not promptly shared with military planners. The CIA had been tracking al Qaeda operatives for several years and had accumulated considerable intelligence on their procedures and movements. This information was not routinely shared with military planners until after operations were well advanced. Consequently, military planners grouped Taliban and al Qaeda together when, in fact, they were distinct groups with possibly divergent operational objectives.

The Coalition

Fighting with a large coalition magnifies traditional operational and planning problems.

At the outset of the war in Afghanistan, the problems of fighting a war with coalition partners were not new. Problems with the command and control of forces; interoperability of equipment; access to intelligence; and incompatible techniques, tactics, and procedures had been present in several previous conflicts. However, in Afghanistan, the sheer size of the problem was overwhelming. With more than 60 nations negotiating bilateral agreements with the United States, management as well as command and control dwarfed anything the U.S. military had ever experienced. The establishment of the CCC at CENTCOM headquarters in Tampa proved to be effective in negotiating with allied governments. However, the CCC was still required to respect the several bilateral agreements when requesting assistance, thus greatly complicating planning and operations.

Humanitarian Assistance

Army humanitarian assistance efforts benefited the Afghan population and some believe that it furthered the commander’s intent of winning hearts and minds and enhancing force protection. Yet complicated organizational structures for providing humanitarian assistance somewhat reduced the effectiveness of these efforts. The CJCMOTF initially focused on logistics issues, which led to delays in providing more traditional civil-affairs

assistance. Overseas Humanitarian, Disaster Assistance, and Civic Aid (ODHACA) funding enabled the Army and other U.S. government agencies to become directly involved in assistance projects, but created disincentives to coordinate their efforts with NGOs and other assistance providers.

The mismatch between available resources and the humanitarian assistance mission stretched the force thin. Humanitarian assistance efforts were guided by two somewhat contradictory principles. The force structure for OEF was guided by the need to have a small footprint in theater, while the humanitarian mission required active involvement and a visible presence in Afghan communities. This created considerable strains on the relatively small number of forces involved in the humanitarian assistance mission.

Treatment of Detainees

Considerable controversy has arisen over the U.S. position that the detainees are not considered POWs and therefore need not be afforded the rights spelled out in Articles 17 and 118 of the Geneva Convention. The U.S. government was accused of implementing a “pick and choose” approach to the Geneva Convention, that is, choosing not to comply with those provisions that limited the ability to extract intelligence from the detainees.

Four categories of prisoners are identified in military regulations: EPWs, retained personnel, civilian internees, and other detainees. The regulations deal with both the treatment of prisoners and the information to be collected from them. Although all categories of detainees are to be treated humanely, certain protections are granted to EPWs, retained personnel, and civilian internees that are not granted to other detainees. However, it is clear that the treatment of prisoners—of any type—in contravention of the Geneva Conventions was and still is prohibited.

Hunting Down Taliban and Al Qaeda Remnants

With the Taliban out of power, the combat task remaining was to hunt down the fleeing al Qaeda and other foreign fighters. The population had to be secured against remnants of the Taliban and al Qaeda forces. The difficult task of rebuilding a nation began at about the same time the Taliban and al Qaeda were dispersed. This chapter addresses the military's intelligence and combat operations; Chapter Five reports on the initial stability and reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan.

Until the Taliban regime fell, CENTCOM concentrated on Taliban fighters that were deployed defensively, making them easy targets for air attack. Taliban forces had fought the Northern Alliance for years using such tactics. It may be that they hoped their tactics would continue to work and draw U.S. forces into set-piece battles that might result in high U.S. casualties. However, they had never experienced the effects of precision-guided bombs. After the Taliban fell, CENTCOM faced the difficult problem of finding their remnants and al Qaeda fighters dispersed in small groups—and this difficulty persists. Positive target identification became extremely difficult and patterns of activity did not suffice to identify this elusive enemy. While al Qaeda and other foreign fighters fought tenaciously and at times innovatively, in the end they were no match for U.S. firepower.

In the continuing hunt, CENTCOM found its Afghan allies less reliable than before, especially in southern Afghanistan where most activity occurred. Once the Taliban regime was toppled, they were neither concerned about its remnants nor interested in chasing al Qaeda. Even when well rewarded, they displayed little enthusiasm and advanced reluctantly or not at all. Their lackluster performance, coupled with lack of good targeting data, made the Tora Bora operation of December 2001 frustrating. All indications were that Osama bin Laden was in Tora Bora when the operation began, but he escaped the air attacks directed against him.

Army forces, organized as Task Force Rakkasan (TF Rakkasan), were tasked to secure Kandahar Airport and to provide quick-reaction forces until they executed Operation ANACONDA in March 2002. Despite lapses in planning and some raggedness in execution, this operation was a greater success than Tora Bora. During Operation ANACONDA, Taliban remnants and al Qaeda fighters attempted to engage U.S. forces as they had the Soviets, but the severity of U.S. air attacks and the tenacity of

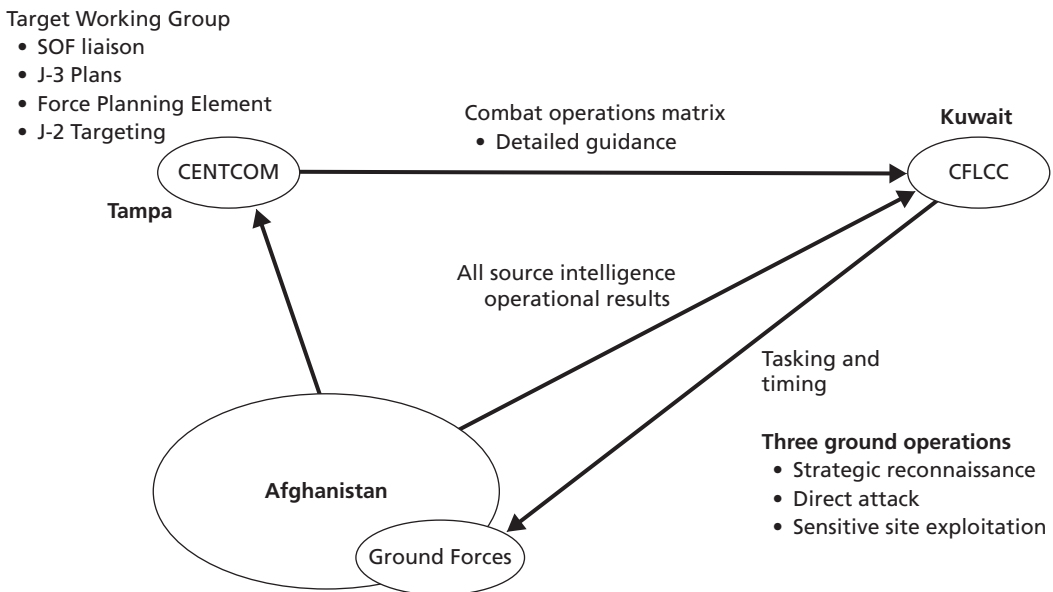
U.S. infantry quickly discouraged them. Thereafter, they conducted sporadic hit-and-run attacks, but avoided protracted combat.

Strategic reconnaissance became a key mission for all coalition forces. There was no doubt that small “pools and pockets” of resistance fighters existed within the country. The problem was to search them out, make sure that they could be attacked within the ROE, and destroy them. The middle step often required getting “eyes on” the potential targets for positive identification and targeting. Sensitive site exploitations were undertaken aimed at uncovering al Qaeda and Taliban camps, headquarters houses, and caves and possible weapons of mass destruction storage facilities. Identifying and visiting these sites required teams of specialists who could find evidence about enemy plans, capabilities, technologies, leaders, and practices. These activities became, for a time, an important task requiring “boots on the ground.”

Control of Ground Forces

As with the bombing campaign, high-level direction and tasking was directed from CENTCOM’s headquarters in Tampa. The process is depicted in Figure 4.1. Information about potential targets and the results of recent operations was sent to CENTCOM headquarters and the CFLCC from within Afghanistan. A “target working group” in Tampa collated the intelligence and, with approval from leadership, sent

Figure 4.1
Management Process for Ground Operations in 2002



detailed guidance and priorities to the CFLCC in Kuwait. The CFLCC then sent specific directions for SOF to conduct selected missions.

Task Force 58

When the 9/11 attacks occurred, the 1st Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) was participating in Bright Star 01/02, a multinational exercise held in Egypt. At the conclusion of Bright Star, BGen. James N. Mattis, the commanding general of 1st MEB, went from Egypt to Bahrain, where he took up duties as commanding general of MARCENT Forward. On September 28, the 15th MEU(SOC) had deployed forces ashore to provide security for aircraft deployed at Jacobabad, Pakistan. In addition, planners expected that the 26th MEU(SOC) would soon become available. The 26th MEU(SOC) had recently completed an exercise in Egypt and was conducting a port visit in Souda Bay, Crete. On November 11, it was redirected to the northern Arabian Sea, where it arrived on November 22.

Formation of Task Force 58

On October 30, a small operational planning team, consisting of Navy and Marine Corps officers, formed to collect information and conduct an initial analysis for potential amphibious missions. This team became the genesis of TF 58.¹ Later on the same day, Mattis met with VADM Charles Moore, the commander of the Fifth Fleet, to discuss planning for Marine Corps operations. Moore designated Mattis commander of TF 58—to be composed of the 15th MEU(SOC) embarked on the USS *Peleliu* ARG already in theater and 26th MEU(SOC) embarked on the USS *Bataan* ARG, whose arrival was anticipated. Since September 28, 15th MEU(SOC) personnel had provided security ashore for aircraft deployed in Jacobabad, Pakistan, charged with CSAR. Moore directed that the 26th MEU(SOC) relieve the 15th MEU(SOC) in Jacobabad.

Mattis began operations with a small staff whose officers were drawn from Camp Pendleton, California, and from the MARCENT headquarters in Tampa, Florida. His initial concerns included the relief of 15th MEU(SOC), establishment of intermediate support bases in Pakistan, provision of rehearsal sites, incorporation of British SOF into TF 58, availability of transport aircraft, and identification of potential targets. The force would arrive directly from the USS *Peleliu* using six CH-53E helicopters.

The plan was to conduct brief, small-scale raids near the southern border of Afghanistan using the limited number of CH-53E transport helicopters available.

¹ Following the conclusion of operations at Camp Rhino, the commander of TF 58 tasked those staff members returning to Bahrain with collecting operational data and writing a chronology and narrative, documenting lessons learned during OEF. TF 58 staff, liaison officers from the 15th MEU(SOC) and 26th MEU(SOC), and a Marine Corps historian did this work. The chronology from TF 58's perspective is the backbone of the account presented here.

Mattis's intent was to establish tactical positions quickly and to leverage the power of Marine Corps aviation and theater air assets against any response from Taliban forces, but none of these planned raids were ever executed.

On November 2, planning began for combat missions in southern Afghanistan. It was decided that, rather than combining the two MEU(SOC)s, a working relationship would be established between them. While one MEU(SOC) conducted a mission, the other would conduct plans for the follow-on mission.

Coordinating Operations with Pakistan

CENTCOM tasked components to provide liaison officers to assist with operational and support requirements for coalition forces operating in and through Pakistan. The CENTCOM liaison cell reported directly to CENTCOM and to the Pakistani Joint Services Headquarters in Islamabad, Pakistan. By October 1, component representatives and liaison officers from the United Kingdom and Pakistan were in theater. The only component that did not initially provide liaison officers was the CFLCC. Marine Corps liaison officers coordinated all ground-support requirements until CFLCC liaison officers arrived on January 28, 2002.

The desire for a small coalition force footprint in Pakistan compelled liaison officers to serve multiple functions. Action officers were trained in airspace coordination, ground operations, intelligence, logistics, force protection, and contracting requirements. The CENTCOM liaison cell was in communication with the airborne command and control platforms controlling the airspace over Pakistan and Afghanistan, the Pakistan Joint Headquarters, Pakistan Air Traffic Control, the CAOC at Prince Sultan AB, U.S. naval forces in Bahrain, and several coalition bases and diverse airfields in Pakistan.

Pakistan allowed the coalition to use about two-thirds of its airspace. The liaison cell established operational procedures for air traffic control within Pakistani airspace. These procedures were coordinated with Pakistani authorities for military and civil aviation. The cell obtained approval to establish air bases to support combat operations out of Jacobabad, Pasni, Dalbandin, and Shamsi. More than 50 aircraft and 2,000 military personnel eventually deployed to these bases. In addition to access and bases, Pakistan provided approximately 100,000 gallons of fuel each day for coalition aircraft and forces operating in Afghanistan. Through the liaison cell, the Pakistani Navy, Maritime Security Agency, and Coast Guard coordinated interdiction operations. Over the course of the fight to take down the Taliban government, Pakistani forces captured more than 400 al Qaeda and Taliban members attempting to escape from Afghanistan.

Joint and Coalition Operations

Mattis began building working relationships with sister Services and coalition forces, including Task Force Sword (TF Sword); Task Force 57 (a P-3 squadron conducting

reconnaissance sorties over Afghanistan)²; and Joint Special Operations Task Force—South (JSOTF-S), later renamed Task Force K-Bar (TF K-Bar). He also met with SOF then in southern Afghanistan.

Few worthwhile targets were within the reach of strikes from Marine Corps forces at sea.³ As Taliban authority declined, the desired effect became reinforcement of its decline. In addition, planners began to consider how to block Taliban movement around Kandahar. Because Pakistan did not allow ground transportation of supplies, logistics flow to the FOB would have to be entirely by air. An FOB with an airfield would be needed. Camp Rhino emerged as the best candidate.

On November 7, Mattis met for the first time with MG Dell Dailey, commander of TF Sword. By this time, Dailey had been operating in southern Afghanistan for more than a month. The meeting took place at the U.S. Embassy in Muscat, Oman. Dailey said that helicopters would be operating at the limits of their capabilities in this environment. He warned that in southern Afghanistan they had to maintain forward movement while taking off and landing to stay clear of their own dust cloud.

Dailey and Mattis agreed that SOF would conduct “surgical” operations while marines would provide a “ball-peen hammer.” Dailey warned that the identification of targets would be difficult, that some elements of the Taliban would “move to the sound of guns,” and that Taliban employment of anti-air weapon systems was ingenious. He expected the Taliban to engage Marine Corps helicopters with rocket-propelled grenades as they attempted to land.

FOB Rhino

Mattis was instructed to prepare to seize an FOB. At the time, TF 58 staff was assessing Rhino, the desert airstrip that TF Sword had raided on October 19. MG Dailey considered Rhino the best choice for an operating base. The choice changed several times in the following days but returned to Rhino. The commander’s intent was to attack targets that would compel the enemy to react; exposing him to U.S. combined arms. Targets were to be within 120 miles of the FOB. Operations would be constrained by the ability to supply forces by air, because ground movement through Pakistan was infeasible.

The 15th MEU(SOC) would occupy and secure the FOB in Afghanistan. The 26th MEU(SOC) would conduct raids, interdiction, and seizure missions from the

² Appropriately equipped P-3s could provide live video from two of its three suites: electro-optical, infrared, and synthetic aperture radar. Using the tactical common data link, marines at Camp Rhino could see what the P-3 was viewing. Anti-Surface Warfare Improvement Program P-3s can carry the Standoff Land-Attack Missile, which they shot during Operation Allied Force against Serbia. P-3s flew armed missions throughout this period of OEF.

³ To illustrate, Lashkar Gah was one of the closest targets identified. To reach it, Marine Corps helicopters would have to fly 20–30 nm from sea to shore and 195 nm to refuel at Shamsi. From there, they would have to fly an additional 75 nm to Dalbandin and another 160 nm to reach Lashkar Gah. In all, such a strike would require helicopter flights of about 450 nm on ingress and egress.

FOB. However, this plan would conflict with manpower ceilings later placed on Marine Corps forces in Afghanistan that limited ground forces to the equivalent of less than one MEU(SOC). Each Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) has approximately 2,200 personnel, but Marine Corps personnel in Afghanistan were initially limited to 1,400.⁴

On November 25, six CH-53E helicopters lifted an initial assault force from the USS *Peleliu* to Camp Rhino. This force linked with a SEAL team already at Rhino, secured the immediate area, and cleared the runway of obstructions. Personnel from an Air Force special tactics squadron set out runway lights and established air traffic control. During the first night, Marine Corps KC-130 aircraft landed 400 marines and four interim fast attack vehicles (IFAVs). During the initial buildup, close air support was provided by four AH-1W attack helicopters, eight AV-8B Harriers, and other fixed-wing aircraft. After the special tactics squadron had determined that the runway would support C-17 aircraft, they began flying into Camp Rhino. To evade man-portable air defense missiles, C-17s initially used Rhino only during hours of darkness. The first C-17 sorties delivered elements of Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 133, which graded and maintained the dirt runway.

Conditions at Camp Rhino were extremely rugged. Daytime temperatures rose to 80 degrees Fahrenheit but dropped below freezing during the night. The terrain was sandy, rocky, and covered with a fine dust that caused brownouts when aircraft took off and landed. On December 6, a UH-1N aircraft crashed and burned during a brownout. Planners considered matting, but the lift requirement was excessive. Aviators recommended a stabilizing agent employed at Marine Corps Air Station in Yuma (referred to as “Gorilla Snot” by those who used it at Rhino). This stabilizer improved the stability of the runway but did not prevent dust clouds.

Operations

After seizing Camp Rhino, TF 58 planned to interdict enemy movement along Route 1 connecting Kandahar with Laskar Gah. On December 4, a light armored force conducted a 120-kilometer road march across the desert to blocking positions on Route 1. Late on December 6, P-3 aircraft alerted Marine Corps forces on Route 1 that a column of vehicles was approaching their position. The marines engaged the lead vehicles, and a Marine Corps forward air controller called in air support to destroy the remaining vehicles as they attempted to evade the ambush.

On December 7, CFLCC directed TF 58 to provide a security force for the U.S. embassy in Kabul, which had been closed since 1997. Marines assigned to 26th MEU(SOC) flew from the USS *Bataan* to Bagram Airfield north of Kabul and then were taken by bus to the embassy compound.

⁴ The originator of this limit is unknown. General Franks denied ever placing troop ceilings on any of his commands. However, whether explicitly imposed or not, commanders felt that such limits had been established. More recently, such restrictions on troop size have been referred to as “BOG [boots on ground] restrictions.”

Taking the Kandahar Airport

Since November, TF 58 had been planning an advance to Kandahar, the spiritual center of the Taliban movement. Two opposition leaders were operating in southwestern Afghanistan: Shirzai, who would later become governor of Kandahar province, was south of Kandahar, while Hamid Karzai, who would become interim president and eventually the first elected president of the new government, was north of the city. On December 12, Mattis and officers from the 15th MEU(SOC) flew by MH-53J helicopters to Mullah Omar's former compound on the outskirts of Kandahar. There they met first with the special operations personnel who had supported Karzai and then met with Karzai himself. The Afghans did not attempt to limit Marine Corps forces at the Kandahar Airport, instead encouraging them to establish a large presence. Karzai expressed confidence that the marines could enter unopposed during daylight. The opposition leaders informed the marines about locations of minefields, buildings known to be booby-trapped, and conditions at Kandahar Airport.

On December 13, elements of 15th MEU(SOC), which had been patrolling Route 1, and elements of 26th MEU(SOC) joined forces 40 miles south of Kandahar. These forces proceeded east through the city of Kandahar during the night and reached Kandahar Airport without incident. After the initial force had secured the east end of the runway, an additional company of marines arrived in CH-53E helicopters. During the advance to Kandahar, AH-1W attack helicopters and AV-8Bs from the USS *Bataan* plus other coalition aircraft were on call to provide close air support. Lieutenant General Mikolashek, CFLCC, and his staff in Doha observed the movement in near-real time through a Predator.

On December 14, marines cleared and repaired the runway to receive aircraft. The following day, they heard gunfire that sounded menacing but was just a celebration marking the end of Ramadan. Later that day, they began receiving Marine Corps KC-130 aircraft. After Air Force assessment teams had inspected the runway, C-17 aircraft began arriving on December 18.

Mattis established a close relationship with Galaluy, the commander of local Afghan forces, who had previously marked Rhino with a transponder to assist TF Sword. Galaluy's forces helped secure Kandahar Airport by establishing outposts and conducting combined patrols with marines. They also assisted in clearing local workmen to build various structures around the airport. In return, they received funds to purchase motorcycles, radios, tents, and blankets. Unknown enemy forces fired on Kandahar Airport from the north and west during the evening of January 10. Marines responded with small arms, 25-mm cannon, mortars, and attack helicopters. Flight operations were suspended for three hours because of this firefight.

Sensitive Site Exploitations

During December, TF 58 planned to conduct sensitive site exploitation (SSE) in the Kandahar area. A chemical-biological inspection team arrived at Kandahar and imme-

diately began exploiting sites in the immediate vicinity. At the same time, TF 58 was tasked to plan an operation to attack enemy forces in the vicinity of Tora Bora, a mountainous area on the border with Pakistan. The planners quickly realized that marines would need cold-weather clothing and boots to operate in this area. They continued to plan for this operation until January 9, 2002, when it was officially canceled.

During late December, TF 58 conducted SSE in eight villages near Kandahar. Platoon-sized Marine forces arrived by helicopter and linked with ground forces advancing in IFAVs escorted by AH-1W attack helicopters. Marine Corps and Afghan forces approached the villages and requested to speak with village elders. As marines searched the villages, curious onlookers, especially children, surrounded them. Having anticipated this reaction, the marines had brought candy, fruit, and writing materials as gifts. On January 1, 2002, Mattis and Shirgai, now appointed as governor, ceremoniously raised the American flag and the Afghan flag together at Kandahar, symbolizing a friendly combined effort.

Detainee Operations⁵

In mid-December, CFLCC tasked TF 58 to be prepared to receive detainees. Although their status was in doubt, Mattis ordered that detainees be treated in accordance with provisions of the Geneva Convention with regard to prisoners of war—in compliance with directives. He also gave guidance that the detainees be confined under conditions that would preclude resistance or escape.

The first detainees arrived at Kandahar on December 19, and by December 21 the holding facility could hold 200 detainees, later expanded to 500.

Mattis granted full access to detainees for all agencies of the U.S. government and coalition governments, on the condition that they share their results and report actionable intelligence to TF 58.

Elements of the 202nd Military Intelligence Battalion interrogated detainees, and later Army military police arrived to control them. In early January, CFLCC instructed TF 58 to prepare detainees for movement to the holding facility at Guantanamo.

Air Support Operations

Typically, TF 58 provided helicopter support to special operations and also kept a quick-reaction force in readiness. It supported operations by SOF from Australia, Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, New Zealand, and the United States. During these operations, helicopters made hard landings near Laskar Gah and Garmabak Ghar. In both instances, TF 58 secured the crash sites and recovered the helicopters. During the first week of January, TF 58 provided security to operations by TF K-Bar in the vicinity of Khost. Originally planned to last only hours, the operation continued for nine days.

⁵ See Chapter Three for a more detailed discussion of detainee operations, including the controversy over their treatment.

During this operation, U.S. aircraft destroyed caves and weapons caches through precision bombing while marines employed satchel charges. To support operations in the vicinity of Khost and Gardez, TF 58 secured an airfield at Band-e-Sardeh with one reinforced platoon drawn from 26th MEU(SOC).

Difficult flight conditions contributed to several crashes. On January 9, a KC-130 crashed on final approach to Shamsi, Pakistan, killing all seven marines on board. On January 19, one CH-53E lost an engine while flying between Bagram and Khost, killing two marines and wounding several others. A Predator UAS detected an “SOS” stomped into the snow, allowing a quick recovery of the crew.

End of Mission

CENTCOM ordered TF Rakkasan, built around the 3rd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, to relieve TF 58 at Kandahar. During December, 15th MEU(SOC) recovered to the USS *Peleliu* ARG in the Arabian Sea. In January, TF Rakkasan began to arrive incrementally at Kandahar Airport. On January 19, Colonel Weircinski, commanding TF Rakkasan, and COL Andy Frick, commanding 26th MEU(SOC), agreed that Rakkasan should assume responsibility for Kandahar Airport. The 26th MEU(SOC) then recovered to the USS *Bataan* ARG. However, Marine Corps involvement in Afghanistan continued. On February 11, the CFLCC ordered TF 58 to support SSE by TF Rakkasan and TF K-Bar in two localities about 30 miles northeast of Gardez. Marine KC-130s lifted U.S. forces from Kandahar to Bagram and three Marine CH-53 helicopters provided tactical airlift. In addition, Marine AH-1W attack helicopters supported Afghan forces led by Mohamed Zia during Operation ANACONDA.

Tora Bora

By late November 2001, the goal of rooting out al Qaeda, especially its leaders, led the coalition to focus on the area around Tora Bora, where intelligence indicated that Osama bin Laden was hiding. As before, planners intended to use friendly Afghan fighters, SOF, and air power in this effort. This concept, which had been successful against larger Taliban formations, proved less successful against small groups of al Qaeda fighters. As a result, bin Laden and other leaders escaped from the Tora Bora area into northwestern Pakistan and southwestern Afghanistan.⁶ On November 12,

⁶ Rod Nordland, Sami Yousafzai, and Babak Dehghanpisheh, “How Al Qaeda Slipped Away,” *Newsweek*, August 19, 2002; Michael O’Hanlon, “Did Military Misstep Let bin Laden Escape?” *Baltimore Sun*, April 28, 2002; Philip Smucker, “How bin Laden Got Away,” *Christian Science Monitor*, March 4, 2002a; “Bin Laden Escaped during December Offensive, U.S. Intelligence Believes: Report, ‘Speculation’ Rumsfeld Insists,” *Edmonton Journal*, April 18, 2002.

2002, the al-Jazeera channel in Qatar released an audiocassette recording of bin Laden's voice, confirming that he was still alive.⁷

The Area of Operations

The village of Tora Bora ("black dust" in Pashtun) is located in the Namgarhar province of southeastern Afghanistan (see Figure 4.2). It lies where the Wazir and Agam valleys disgorge from the Spinghar ("White") Mountains, about 50 kilometers south of Jalalabad. Numerous small caves and declivities can be found in the mountains overlooking Tora Bora and throughout the area. U.S. intelligence reported that mujahideen had extended and fortified some of these caves during the 1979–1989 war of liberation from the Soviets.⁸ But after exploring some 180 to 200 caves, CENTCOM ultimately found that most were very shallow and the deepest extended only about 30 meters.⁹

The view in Figure 4.2 is from the north, inside Afghanistan, looking south toward the border with Pakistan. The border runs near and along the high ridge at the top of the figure. In all, the area is about 35 square kilometers, with the altitude increasing from approximately 3,000 feet in Afghanistan at the bottom of the picture to some 12,000 feet in places along the border with Pakistan. The terrain is rocky and in places lightly covered with vegetation. Three ridges form two valleys; each had local Afghan forces stationed near the bottom. To the east (left), the friendly Afghan forces were led by Hazrat Ali; to the west (right), they were commanded by a Hajji Zaman. U.S. capabilities on the scene included some U.S. Army Special Forces soldiers. Their goal was to locate and destroy the escaping fighters. Bin Laden was the focus of the effort.

Indigenous Forces

During operations around Tora Bora, friendly Afghan fighters were the largest force on the ground. The most prominent leaders were Hazrat Ali and Hajji Zaman Ghamsharik (Figure 4.2). They were primarily concerned with their power and prestige in post-Taliban Afghanistan and had little interest in the search for al Qaeda, except to be rewarded with money and goods. They were prone to misrepresent al Qaeda and their own efforts to maximize rewards.¹⁰ Al Qaeda may also have attempted to bribe Afghan leaders. For example, rival commanders alleged that Hajji Zaman Ghamsharik

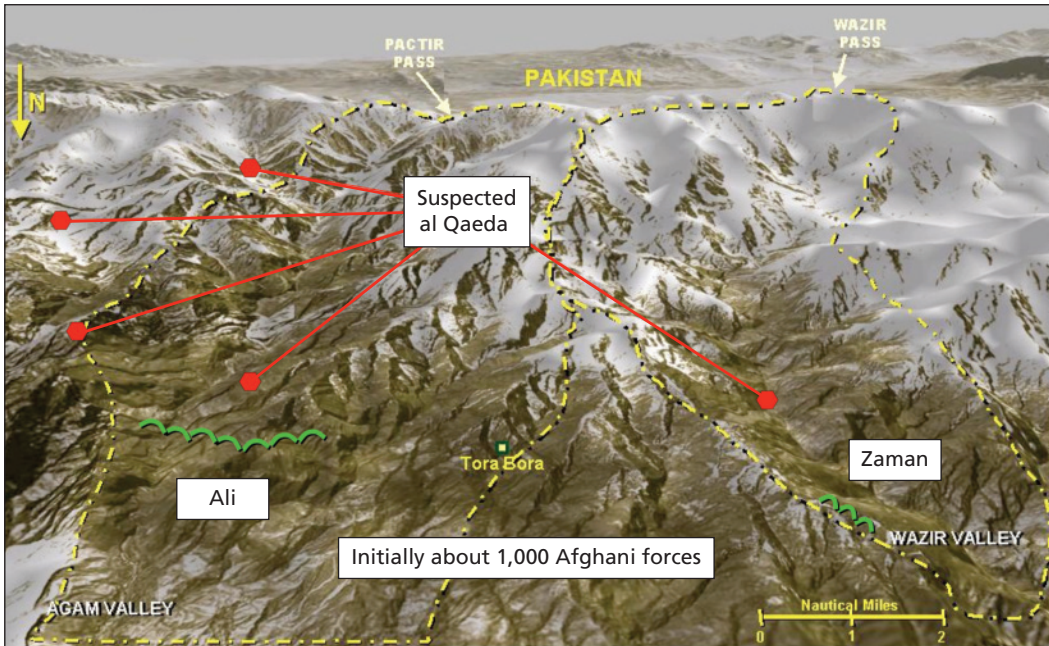
⁷ Johanna McGeary and Douglas Waller, "Why Can't We Find Bin Laden?" *Time*, November 25, 2002, p. 28.

⁸ "Bin Laden's Fortress Caves," *BBC News*, November 26, 2001.

⁹ Drew Brown, "Rival Warlords and Treachery Helped Al-Qaeda Forces Flee," *Knight Ridder News Service*, October 14, 2002; John Donnelly, "How U.S. Strategy in Tora Bora Failed," *Boston Globe*, February 10, 2002a.

¹⁰ Megan Stack, "Afghan Warnings That Went Unheeded at Tora Bora," *Los Angeles Times*, April 25, 2002; Philip Smucker, "Liabilities of Using Afghan Informants," *Christian Science Monitor*, December 24, 2001c; Susan B. Glasser, "U.S. Backing Helps Warlord Solidify Power," *Washington Post*, February 18, 2002a.

Figure 4.2
Tora Bora Area of Operations



SOURCE: Compiled from interviews at CENTCOM.

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had requested a bombing halt so that al Qaeda leaders would have an opportunity to escape.¹¹

Hazrat Ali is a member of the small Pasheyi tribe, who grew up in an isolated mountain village without formal education. He was a junior mujahideen commander during the war with the Soviets. After the fall of the Taliban, he became security chief for the Eastern Shura, a self-proclaimed government in the Jalalabad area. He claimed to control up to 18,000 troops, by far the largest force in eastern Afghanistan.¹² Ali supplied most of the fighters in operations around Tora Bora. Judging from interviews, his sole agenda was to consolidate his power, if possible with U.S. assistance.¹³ Hajji Zaman Ghamsharik is a Pashtun, who lived in exile in Dijon, France, through late

¹¹ John F. Burns, "Threats and Responses: The Manhunt; 10-Month Mystery: Is bin Laden Dead or Alive?" *New York Times*, September 30, 2002.

¹² According to other sources, this figure might be closer to 5,000. See Tanya Goudsouzian, "Local Alliances Fuel Colorful Leaders' Power," *Montreal Gazette*, September 8, 2002.

¹³ Glasser, 2002a.

September 2001. He became the Jalalabad commander of the Eastern Shura in an uneasy power-sharing arrangement with Hazrat Ali.¹⁴

Operations

U.S. forces began bombing in the area around Tora Bora in early October 2001. On October 8, Gen Richard Myers, CJCS, reported that the United States had dropped 32 2,000-pound bombs on Tora Bora.¹⁵ On October 10, senior DoD leaders indicated that they were focusing on Tora Bora and that a 12-man Army Special Forces ODA was waiting to deploy to the area.¹⁶

On December 4–5, Ali's fighters attacked Tora Bora, supported by air strikes. His commanders reported heavy resistance from hundreds of al Qaeda fighters besieged in the caves and concealed among the trees. Al Qaeda commanders held their fire to draw attackers into the mountain and entrap them, according to the Afghan commanders.¹⁷ Three days after the offensive began, 40 U.S. Army Special Forces soldiers established a headquarters in the Agam Primary School about three miles from the front lines.¹⁸ Afghan forces captured a large cave at Tora Bora but found it to be vacant.¹⁹ The bombing had caused some civilian casualties. The humanitarian organization Medecines Sans Frontiers later estimated that more than 80 Afghan civilians were killed and 50 others wounded by U.S. bombs around Tora Bora up to this time.²⁰

On December 7, Afghan fighters continued to meet heavy resistance, including mortar, rocket, heavy machine gun, and small arms fire, as they advanced into the mountains, supported by U.S. air strikes. An additional 2,000 Afghan troops were sent from Jalalabad to Tora Bora, boosting the number of Afghan fighters to a reported 5,000.²¹

On December 9, Afghan fighters made little progress against what they described as heavy resistance. The United States dropped a 15,000-pound BLU-82 “daisy cutter”

¹⁴ Phillip Smucker, “A Day-by-Day Account of How Osama bin Laden Eluded the World’s Most Powerful Military Machine,” *Christian Science Monitor*, July 30, 2002b.

¹⁵ Woodward, 2002, pp. 201–202.

¹⁶ Woodward, 2002, pp. 221–222.

¹⁷ Susan B. Glasser, “Bin Laden Forces Resist Afghan Foes as U.S. Planes Pound Mountain Caves,” *Washington Post*, December 6, 2001a; Susan B. Glasser, “Al Qaeda Aides Killed in Raids: U.S. Strikes Said to Hit Top Advisor,” *Washington Post*, December 5, 2002b; James Dao, and Eric Schmitt, “Bin Laden Hunted in Caves; Errant U.S. Bomb Kills 3 G.I.’s,” *New York Times*, December 6, 2001.

¹⁸ Donnelly, 2002a.

¹⁹ “U.S., Anti-Taliban Forces Focus on Tora Bora,” *PBS Online News Hour*, December 7, 2001.

²⁰ “Bin Laden Fighters Make a Stand,” *BBC News*, December 7, 2001.

²¹ “Assault Continues on Tora Bora,” *CNN*, December 8, 2001.

bomb near a cave where senior al Qaeda leaders were believed to be hiding.²² A dispute between Haji Zaman Ghamsharik and Haji Zahir, the Afghan regional governor's son, over control of a prisoner nearly ended in a firefight between these ostensible allies.²³

About this time, the Pakistani army received permission from tribal elders to deploy troops in the autonomous tribal areas south of the White Mountains, where Army forces had not previously operated. According to Pakistani sources, these forces, including attack helicopters, were on the Afghan border by December 9.²⁴

On December 10, Vice President Richard Cheney, speaking on NBC's "Meet the Press," said that "the preponderance of the reporting at this point" indicates that bin Laden was still in the Tora Bora region.²⁵ That morning, a U.S. aircraft dropped a BLU-82 near cave entrances.²⁶ Ali's fighters, backed by Soviet-built T-55 tanks, advanced up the Agam Valley, forcing al Qaeda fighters to retreat into the mountains. The Afghan commanders claimed that large numbers of al Qaeda forces were in the valley, variously estimated from 800 to 2,000. By sunset, Afghan fighters claimed to have captured a ridge in the Milwawa Valley adjacent to the Tora Bora Valley.²⁷

On December 11, al Qaeda fighters contacted Zaman by radio, claiming they wanted to surrender and asking for a cease-fire, apparently because they were hard-pressed by Ali's fighters, not Zaman's. He agreed to a cease-fire that would extend until 8:00 a.m. local time the following day. The United States did not recognize this arrangement and continued to fire on al Qaeda positions with an AC-130 gunship teamed with a Predator.²⁸

The End Game

Cease-fire negotiations collapsed when al Qaeda demanded that a UN representative and representatives from their home countries be present at the surrender and that they be turned over to the UN.²⁹ Afghan commanders were in open disagreement on

²² Bill Getz, "Strike Targets Bin Laden," *Washington Times*, December 11, 2001b; Susan B. Glasser, "Al Qaeda's Forces Flee Caves for Mountains," *Washington Post*, December 11, 2001c.

²³ Philip Smucker, "Dissent Grows in Caves of Tora Bora," *Christian Science Monitor*, December 11, 2001a.

²⁴ Chris Tomlinson, "U.S. Jets Pound Tora Bora Caves," Associated Press, December 10, 2001; Jim Garamore, "Hunt For Al Qaeda, Taliban Leader," *American Forces Press Service*, December 10, 2001.

²⁵ Susan B. Glasser, "U.S. Attacks on Al Qaeda Intensify," *Washington Post*, December 10, 2001b.

²⁶ John Kifner, "Anti-Taliban Troops Take Up Positions on Mountainsides," *New York Times*, December 12, 2001.

²⁷ Brian Knowlton, "No Letup in Effort to Trap Bin Laden," *International Herald Tribune*, December 11, 2001; Glasser, 2001c.

²⁸ Chris Tomlinson, "Afghan Fighters Advance on Tora Bora," Associated Press, December 11, 2001b; "Eastern Alliance Overruns Some Al Qaeda Caves," *USA Today*, December 11, 2001.

²⁹ Chris Tomlinson, "Tora Bora Bombing Starts Again After Missed Deadline," Associated Press, December 12, 2001c.

these negotiations. Hazrat Ali said that the surrender offer was insincere, while Zaman argued that resumption of U.S. bombing had ruined an opportunity.³⁰ The United States suspected that al Qaeda was merely using these negotiations to gain time for escape. CJCS General Myers said the Pentagon had “no confirmation” of surrender talks and that U.S. air attacks would continue.³¹ U.S. forces intensified air strikes, including the use of B-52 and AC-130 gunships. To intercept al Qaeda fighters fleeing to Pakistan, U.S. forces flew AC-130 aircraft and Predators along the border.

On December 13, Ali continued to advance and the U.S. intensified air attacks.³² According to Secretary Rumsfeld, the Army Special Forces engaged in close combat along with Afghan allies and two U.S. soldiers were lightly wounded.³³ On the following day, Afghan fighters advanced more than a mile and 50 al Qaeda fighters surrendered.³⁴ Ali’s fighters were pushing south through the Agam Valley to the east, while Zaman’s fighters were at the entrance to the Wazir Valley to the west.³⁵ About this time, Ali assumed control over all Afghan military operations around Tora Bora. Zaman stood accused of allowing al Qaeda fighters safe passage out of Tora Bora.³⁶

On December 15–16, U.S. Navy F-14 and F/A-18 aircraft conducted strikes around Tora Bora.³⁷ Afghan fighters claimed to have captured the last of al Qaeda positions, killing 200 fighters and capturing 25. Some estimates indicated that as many as two-thirds of the original 1,500 to 2,000 Arab, Afghan, and Chechen fighters may have fled. The chief of special operations at the CIA thought that bin Laden had walked or ridden into Pakistan with a few followers, possibly at Parachinar, a sliver of Pakistani territory that juts into Afghanistan.³⁸ Al Qaeda fighters could also have used smuggling routes that wind over trails north and south of the Khyber Pass.

A Missed Opportunity

The Tora Bora operation drove al Qaeda from its best hiding place but failed to capture or kill the al Qaeda leaders, including Osama bin Laden. Al Qaeda survived and continued to present a threat, although presumably much diminished. Although bin Laden has been killed, the search for al Qaeda continues with no end in sight.

³⁰ Susan B. Glasser, “Afghans Say U.S. Scuttle Surrender,” *Washington Post*, December 13, 2001d.

³¹ “No Sign of Al Qaeda Surrender as Deadline Passes,” *CNN*, December 12, 2001.

³² “Opposition Closes In on Al Qaeda at Tora Bora,” *CNN*, December 14, 2001.

³³ “U.S. Soldiers Wounded in Tora Bora,” *CBS News*, December 14, 2001; Jonathan Marcus, “Analysis: End-game at Tora Bora,” *BBC News*, December 14, 2001.

³⁴ “Opposition Closes In on Al Qaeda at Tora Bora,” 2001.

³⁵ “Warplanes Pound bin Laden’s Supposed Hiding Place,” *CNN*, December 14, 2001.

³⁶ Philip Smucker, “Tora Bora Falls, but No Bin Laden,” *Christian Science Monitor*, December 17, 2001b.

³⁷ U.S. Department of State International Information Programs, “Operations Focus on Searching Caves, Tunnels in Tora Bora,” December 17, 2001.

³⁸ Woodward, 2002, p. 315.

The most controversial aspect of Tora Bora was the decision not to employ larger U.S. ground forces against al Qaeda. U.S. troops might not have caught bin Laden, but they would certainly have outperformed the Afghan fighters. In early December, the United States had 1,200 marines at Kandahar and a battalion of the Army's 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry) at Karshi-Khanabad in Uzbekistan.³⁹ Why were they not used? One reason was to avoid a heavy-handed approach that would awaken memories of the Soviet occupation. In Senate testimony, General Franks said:

We were very mindful—and I guess I will take the credit or the blame for this. I was very mindful of the Soviet experience of more than 10 years, having introduced 620,000 troops into Afghanistan, more than 15,000 of them being killed, more than 55,000 of them being wounded.⁴⁰

Blocking al Qaeda's escape into Pakistan was a greater challenge than defeating it in Afghanistan. In December, the mountain passes were choked with snow, making movement on foot very laborious. Helicopter operations were also risky in the thin mountain air. The best blocking positions were below the summits on Pakistani territory, but Pakistan refused to allow U.S. troops to operate in this region, where tribal leaders ruled with little interference from Islamabad.

Reliance on Afghan forces was a central weakness of the operation.⁴¹ If the United States had used Afghan forces in combination with American ground troops it could have produced a more positive outcome. Ali and Zaman were jealous rivals who bickered over the plan of attack and moved very slowly thereafter. They saw a greater threat from each other than from al Qaeda. In the tradition of Afghani fighting, they would have preferred to negotiate with al Qaeda rather than fight.⁴²

The December 12 cease-fire, which Zaman negotiated with al Qaeda without American consent, shows the limited control the United States exerted over Afghan forces at that time. Although Zaman lost his post of regional defense chief because of this cease-fire agreement, the damage was already done. Several hundred al Qaeda fighters may have slipped across the mountains into Pakistan during the cease-fire.⁴³

Pakistan ultimately deployed substantial forces along the border, but not until well into December, after President Pervez Musharraf had obtained agreement from

³⁹ Carol Morello, "New Marine Unit Lands in Afghanistan," *Washington Post*, December 3, 2001; Bradley Graham, and Vernon Loeb, "U.S. Maintains Slow Approach in War in South," *Washington Post*, December 4, 2001; Philip Smucker, "How bin Laden Outsmarted America's Military Might in the Caves of Tora Bora," *Daily Telegraph*, September 11, 2002c.

⁴⁰ DoD, "Testimony of the U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld before the Senate Armed Services Committee on Progress in Afghanistan," *DoD News*, July 31, 2002.

⁴¹ "Bin Laden Escaped During December Offensive..." 2002.

⁴² Drew Brown, 2002.

⁴³ Donnelly, 2002a.

local chieftains. Moreover, Pakistani troop deployments stopped after an attack in the Indian Parliament on December 13 by a Kashmiri separatist group associated with al Qaeda. Following this attack, India and Pakistan increased their readiness and deployed troops to the Line of Control in Kashmir. Pakistani troops had difficulty securing the extremely rugged border region, but they eventually intercepted about 300 al Qaeda fighters fleeing from Tora Bora.⁴⁴

Operation ANACONDA

Operation ANACONDA in the Shah-i Kot Valley in March 2002 revealed another adaptation on the part of al Qaeda. The battle at Tora Bora suggested that, when confronted, al Qaeda would try to slip away without becoming decisively engaged. Unexpectedly, the reverse occurred during Operation ANACONDA. Once in contact, enemy on the ground nearby moved into the valley. They recognized that a large U.S. force was involved in the battle and may have seen an opportunity to inflict heavy casualties (as the Afghans had on Soviet forces in this same area in the 1980s). The fighting was fierce during the first few days, but, again, U.S. firepower prevailed.⁴⁵

Planning

The CFACC Lt Gen T. Michael Moseley controlled fixed-wing air support for ANACONDA, including an Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS), Joint Surveillance Target Attack Radar System (JSTARS), tankers, Predators, bombers (B-1 and B-52), and fighters (F-16 and F/A-18), through his CAOC located at Prince Sultan AB. MG Franklin Hagenbeck, Commanding General of the 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry), controlled the conventional ground forces.⁴⁶ During the planning

⁴⁴ Barton Gellman and Thomas E. Ricks, "U.S. Concludes Bin Laden Escaped at Tora Bora Fight; Failure to Send Troops in Pursuit Termed Major Error," *Washington Post*, April 17, 2002.

⁴⁵ This section is based on interviews with Army and joint intelligence personnel, operational planners, and participants in the ANACONDA battle, as well as contemporaneous records and briefings. Sean Naylor, a journalist who covered this operation on the scene, provides a comprehensive and detailed account in his book, *Not a Good Day to Die* (New York: Berkley Books, 2005). Briefings consulted include presentations by Col William Forrester, Commander of the 159th Aviation Brigade of the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) in Afghanistan and TF Rakkasan in Operation Anaconda (July 22, 2002). Another briefing from the 101st addresses AH-64 employment in Operation Anaconda. An article in *The Journal of Electronic Defense*, "Choppers in the Coils" by Dodge Billingsley (September 2002) covers Army aviation operations and issues in ANACONDA. See also Center for Military History, "Operation Anaconda, 2–13 March 2002," information paper, April 29, 2002; Adam Geibel, "Operation Anaconda, Shah-i-Khot Valley, Afghanistan, 2–10 March 2004," *Military Review*, May–June 2002; and DoD, "Interview with U.S. Army Soldiers Who Participated in Operation Anaconda," news transcript, *Defense Link*, March 7, 2002.

⁴⁶ Conventional combat power was concentrated in TF Rakkasan (3rd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division commanded by COL Frank Weisinski), composed of elements of three battalions, two from 101st Airborne Division and one from Hagenbeck's 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry).

phase, Hagenbeck's staff and Moseley's staff failed to coordinate closely. Preparation and coordination with the Air Force was inexplicably limited, consisting of a VTC and set of briefing slides attached to an email sent to the CFACC a few days before the operation began. Neither Task Force Mountain nor the CFACC took the initiative to ensure that air forces were available to support the operation.

Operation ANACONDA was planned as a search-and-destroy operation in the Shah-i Kot Valley. Unexpectedly fierce opposition developed, particularly at the landing zones, and this turned the planned operation into a battle. In addition to the conventional forces commanded by Major General Hagenbeck, Afghan forces were also involved and COL John Mulholland, Commander of the 5th Special Forces Group, coordinated their efforts. Army Special Forces teams from the United States and coalition nations mounted overwatch and perimeter operations at selected points around the valley as well.

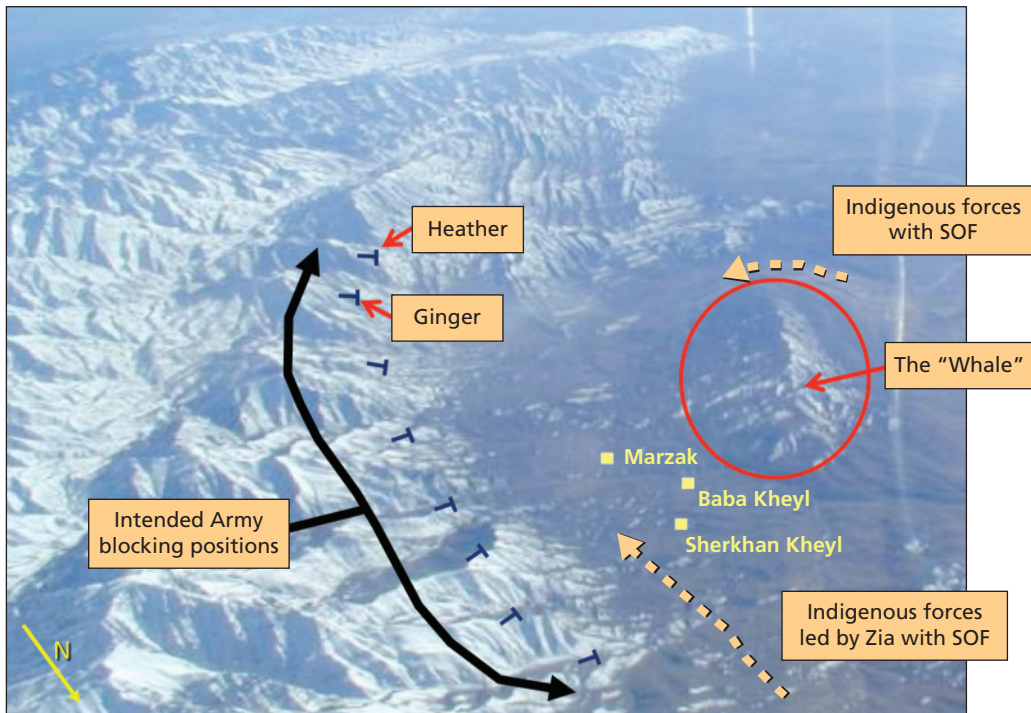
The planned operation is depicted in Figure 4.3. The view is into the Shah-i Kot Valley from the north. Operational planners expected that the enemy fighters would be found on the valley floor, in the vicinity of the hamlets shown in the figure. Afghan forces, directed by U.S. SOF, would initiate the attack into the valley from the northwest (the lower-right corner of the figure). Army conventional forces would take up a series of blocking positions along expected escape routes leading away from the valley floor. Planners and commanders expected the enemy to flee into the blocking forces.

During the first few weeks of 2002, intelligence analysts at CENTCOM and in the operating area sought to identify concentrations of al Qaeda and Taliban fighters. Their work slowly highlighted a substantial concentration of al Qaeda and Taliban fighters in southeastern Afghanistan, in the Shah-i Kot Valley, south of Gardez. But the intelligence provided little detailed information about exactly how many fighters were there, whether and how they were organized, or how well they were armed. Aerial observation provided little more useful intelligence. Ground intelligence identified the presence of some heavy machine guns and light mortars. Initial intelligence estimated that there were 200–250 enemy fighters in the area. Estimates of their intentions varied. One interpretation was that they were planning to resume fighting when spring arrived. Another was that they were waiting for the right time to escape into Pakistan. By all accounts, no one expected a fight.

Operational planning proceeded on the basis of this estimate. The Shah-i Kot Valley floor held three small hamlets, at an altitude of 8,000 feet. The valley ran north to south with mountains to the east and west rising as high as 12,000 feet. In early March, temperatures were below freezing and the mountains and passes were largely covered with snow.

The concept of the operation called for the Afghan forces to sweep through the valley and for the infantry of TF Rakkasan to establish blocking positions along a ridge to the east of the valley. They were to be the "anvil" in a hammer-and-anvil operation. The expectation was that the enemy would flee the valley using passes that led from the

Figure 4.3
Terrain and Concept of Operation for ANACONDA



SOURCE: Compiled from interviews with participants.

RAND RR381-4.3

valley to the east. U.S. conventional forces would be flown into the blocking positions to round up the fighters fleeing the valley as the Afghan allies (the “hammer”) swept in. Since no one expected a fight, little attention was given to planning and coordination of indirect fires from the air or ground.

Execution

Unfortunately, early on March 2, an AC-130 aircraft opened fire on a convoy of Afghan forces accompanied by Army Special Forces soldiers under the mistaken impression that the convoy was hostile. The senior U.S. SOF soldier and two Afghans were killed, while 24 Afghans were wounded. After that attack, the steam went out of the planned sweep. Afghan commanders refused to enter the valley, thus shifting the responsibility for clearing it to U.S. forces.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Bradley Graham, “Mistaken Fire Killed American, U.S. Says,” *Washington Post*, October 30, 2002c, p. A18. The U.S. soldier was CWO Stanley Harriman.

The 3rd Brigade was organized into three task forces: Task Force Leader (TF Leader) (elements of 1st Battalion, 187th Infantry), Task Force Raider (TF Raider) (elements of 2nd Battalion, 187th Infantry), and Task Force Summit (TF Summit) (elements of 1st Battalion, 87th Infantry)—approximately 1,400 soldiers in all—to be inserted by Army CH-47 helicopters. TF Summit was from Hagenbeck's 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry). 1-187 Infantry and 2-187 Infantry were highly experienced in operating with AH-64 Apache attack helicopters, but 1-87 Infantry was much less experienced.

Six Apaches were initially committed to Operation ANACONDA. Two (Team One) would enter the valley from the north ahead of the landings, reconnoiter the landing zones (numbered 1–15), and remain ready to support TF Rakkasan as needed. Team One was to report conditions at the landing zones as “cherry” (defended) or “ice” (undefended). The team saw no signs of enemy activity, so it declared all landing zones “ice.” Two additional Apaches would escort and support forces at the northern end of the valley, while two more would escort and support forces at the southern end of the valley. A final pair of Apaches remained at the Kandahar Airport.⁴⁸

Though the initial observation flights over the valley drew no fire, two of the three task forces came under fire shortly after landing.⁴⁹ Hagenbeck might have declared the prospective landing zones “hot” and thereby have received permission to prepare them with fire, but he would have forfeited surprise. Moreover, intelligence indicated that few fighters would oppose the landings.

The Apache teams generally received targeting information—normally a vector and range accompanied by a brief target description—from troops on the ground. The Apaches conducted running attacks, taking most of their shots at close ranges, often at distances no more than a few hundred yards.⁵⁰ There were few opportunities to employ Hellfire missiles, generally against bunkers and caves. Rockets were the weapons of choice, followed by cannon fire using high-explosive rounds. Because there was not enough time or enough distance to employ laser range-finding, pilots did almost all of the shooting, essentially conducting old-fashioned strafing runs. Almost anywhere in the narrow valley, the Apaches could be taken under fire from several directions: from

⁴⁸ 3rd Battalion, 101st Aviation Brigade, “AH-64 Employment, Operation ANACONDA, 2 March 2002,” briefing, Fort Campbell, Kentucky, undated, unclassified.

⁴⁹ Because of the ROE, a paucity of observed targets, and a desire to achieve surprise, little fire preparation preceded the air assault. The ROE were initially strict, implying observation of hostile intent and positive identification of the target.

⁵⁰ The valley floor was approximately 8,000 feet above sea level, an altitude that greatly affected the performance of helicopters. Apache pilots normally have reserve power that they can apply quickly to overcome difficulties, but at this altitude they were forced to fly close to the limits of performance throughout the mission. If a pilot reduced forward speed below about 40 knots, he came in danger of “settling,” which is analogous to a stall in fixed-wing aircraft. But hovering was not only difficult in the thin air; it would also have been nearly suicidal because of the high volume of ground fire. Hence, the strafing tactic was used.

villages on the valley floor and from positions along the eastern ridge. Indeed, enemy fire was so intense that within a few hours most of the helicopters were forced to retreat due to the damage they had sustained.

The loss of the Apaches made other types of fire support more important, but no artillery had deployed to Afghanistan. Higher commanders had earlier decided not to deploy artillery in Afghanistan because of lift constraints. However, even if artillery had been in country, it would have been difficult to move into the area of operations, presumably slung under CH-47 aircraft. While useful as counterbattery fire, mortars lacked enough power to suppress the heavy volume of incoming fire, especially in the rugged terrain that offered excellent cover and concealment. Thus, close air support had to carry the load. Fire support during the remainder of the operation was provided by a combination of organic mortars, AC-130 gunships, fighters, and bombers.

Roberts Ridge

A dramatic fight occurred on the third day of the battle, when a CH-47 received heavy ground fire while attempting to insert SOF to carry out reconnaissance from what became known as Roberts Ridge.⁵¹ The initial insertion resulted in a member of the SEAL team falling out of the helicopter. A second helicopter was sent to rescue him. The team inserted by the second helicopter got pinned down by heavy enemy fire, and a quick-reaction force was called in to aid them. The quick-reaction force itself came under heavy fire, and the helicopter carrying the first element was shot down.

Sharp fighting ensued at close ranges, fewer than 100 meters. The enemy was well dug-in with bunkers. F-15Es and F-16s supported the U.S. troops with cannon fire, not willing to drop bombs because of the closeness of the enemy to U.S. forces. An Air Force combat controller used a Predator UAS to gain intelligence on enemy movements and to help direct Air Force assets to fire on enemy positions. A second element of the quick-reaction force joined those in the vicinity of the downed helicopter, assaulting and overrunning enemy positions near it. The combat controller and the Predator pilot continued to use air support to stave off enemy counterattacks. After dark, the forces on the ridge were extracted by helicopter. Seven U.S. SOF troops died on Roberts Ridge. Throughout this fight, the forces on the ground and the aviators who supported them showed a great deal of heroism.

⁵¹ The Roberts Ridge fight was quickly and widely reported. Bradley Graham published two articles in the *Washington Post*, “Bravery and Breakdowns in a Ridgetop Battle” (May 24, 2002a) and “A Wintry Ordeal at 10,000 feet” (May 25, 2002b). DoD released an “Executive Summary of the Battle of Takur Ghar” on May 24, 2002, and provided a background briefing by an anonymous “senior military official” on the same date. (Takur Ghar was the name of the mountaintop on which Roberts Ridge can be found.) Malcolm MacPherson’s book, *Roberts Ridge*, (New York: Delacorte Press, 2005) provides a detailed account of this fight.

End Game

During the night of March 3–4, the remainder of TF Leader (1-187 Infantry) and B Company, 1-87 Infantry, arrived and linked with the elements that had arrived during the previous afternoon. TF Leader spent the next two days in defensive positions while conducting patrols to clear the ridge of enemy.

By March 6, all of TF Rakkasan's forces were in the Shah-i Kot area. Zia had left Gardez and advanced to a ridge dubbed "Little Whale" west of the Whale ridge (see Figure 4.3), encountering some resistance. Marine AH-1W attack helicopters supported Zia's forces with fires on the Little Whale and the western slope of the Whale. On March 9, Hagenbeck directed heavy fires by fixed-wing aircraft on Ginger and the "ratline," a road leading through the Ginger Pass between blocking positions Heather and Ginger (Figure 4.3). Bombing Ginger produced large secondary explosions, indicating that the summit had been heavily defended. TF Summit began its assault during the evening of March 9 and secured the area before dawn. On March 10, the Texaco forward arming and refueling point (FARP) closed. TF Rakkasan consolidated its positions and was finally airlifted out of the Shah-i Kot Valley.

It is uncertain whether the enemy withdrew some of his forces, presumably in small groups afoot. Throughout Operation ANACONDA, TF Rakkasan soldiers were frustrated by an inability to close with and destroy the enemy. After donning their rucksacks, the soldiers carried about 75–80 pounds on average, including body armor, weapons, ammunition, water, and other gear. Moreover, they were climbing through very rugged terrain two miles above sea level. Although in excellent physical condition, they could not move quickly, certainly not fast enough to catch a fleeing enemy who was lightly burdened. To add to the difficulty, they were using outdated Russian maps, whose contour lines often failed to match the terrain.

Summing Up

The enemy put up the most intense resistance during the first two days of the operation. Resistance declined to virtually zero after the third day. Without access to enemy personnel and reports, the reasons for this are unclear. However, it appears as though enemy forces initially either thought they could defend the valley or inflict enough casualties on the U.S. units to force them to withdraw, as had happened with Soviet forces. The amount and accuracy of U.S. firepower seems to have made the difference, particularly fixed-wing aircraft. The enemy simply had no response. Enemy strong points became killing fields, and it is likely that they withdrew once this was realized.

It is difficult to draw broad conclusions based on a single battle. Still, some observations on Operation ANACONDA have important implications for the Army. First, complete situational awareness remained an unrealized goal. The terrain in the Shah-i Kot Valley resembled a moonscape, devoid of vegetation. But the rugged terrain afforded many hiding places. The ability of the enemy to hide exceeded the ability of U.S. forces to detect him.

Second, transport and attack helicopters were important in the fight, but they were also vulnerable. The enemy had almost no anti-aircraft artillery and few shoulder-fired air defense weapons. Yet intense enemy ground fire—mostly automatic weapons and rocket-propelled grenades—downed transport helicopters and took four of five attack helicopters out of action within minutes. The weapons used against the helicopters were unsophisticated, cheap, and widely available. Any operational concept calling for aircraft to operate at low levels will face the same challenge that heliborne forces faced in 2002.

Third, air-ground coordination was largely successful, despite some glaring faults. Supported by U.S. air power, ground forces were able to dislodge a well dug-in force of determined opponents. As Army forces become lighter and more agile, their need for air-delivered fire support will increase. Finally, the battle attests to the continuing need for dismounted infantry to fight in constricted terrain.

Building for the Long Run

Well before 9/11, the international community had recognized the poverty, brutality, and starvation faced by the Afghani people. UN relief agencies and many non-governmental humanitarian organizations were well aware of the situation. Some had had offices in Afghanistan that shut down as OEF unfolded. The United States, working largely through the State Department, had been part of these earlier humanitarian efforts. Thus, the United States and the international community were aware of the situation in Afghanistan and were ready to act to handle any humanitarian needs, though their plans were not necessarily coordinated. Coordination of post-conflict plans and programs proved to be a problem for all planners and operators—as was the case in Iraq the following year.

Putting International Efforts in Place

When the Taliban began to crumble, the challenge of building a durable government had to be faced. Many Afghans also needed food and shelter. The infrastructure had to be rebuilt. The United States, its allies, and many international organizations played a prominent role in all of these tasks. Their collective efforts started before the fall of Kandahar, which signaled the end of Taliban rule. The first steps were to create mechanisms for governance within Afghanistan and to create a stable environment in which the new government could take root. But funding and security were also essential for lasting progress.

Establishing the Interim Administration

The United States and others were worried about what authority would replace the Taliban. The power vacuum and chaos that ensued after the fall of the Russian-supported government in 1989 had enabled the Taliban rise to power. The United States wanted to avoid a situation that might allow an organization friendly to al Qaeda or the Taliban to seize power. So discussions began early, but the unexpectedly rapid fall of the Taliban lent urgency to the issue.

On November 12, 2001, a group of six states bordering Afghanistan plus the United States and Russia issued a statement calling for a “broad-based, multiethnic, politically balanced, freely chosen Afghan administration” to serve as the government of Afghanistan after the fall of the Taliban.¹ UN Secretary General Kofi Annan also expressed support for this idea, noting, “As things are moving very fast, we need to bring the political aspects in line with the military developments on the ground.”²

On November 13, 2001, UN Special Envoy for Afghanistan Lakhdar Brahimi briefed the UN Security Council on a preliminary blueprint for establishing a transitional government. The plan called for the establishment of a provisional council that would choose leaders of an interim government, which would be responsible for drafting a new constitution and outline a plan for a two-year political transition. Those actions would then be endorsed by an emergency *loya jirga*, or a grand council, comprised of ethnic and religious leaders from around Afghanistan. On November 14, the Security Council adopted Resolution 1378, which endorsed Brahimi’s plan and called on all member states to support it.³ After several days of negotiations about the meeting’s location, Northern Alliance leaders accepted the UN’s proposal to meet in Germany to work out the composition of the transitional government.⁴

The negotiations began November 27, 2001, near Bonn, Germany. Four groups were invited to participate in the conference: the Northern Alliance,⁵ a group supporting the return of exiled king Mohammed Zahir Shah, an Afghan exile group based in Pakistan, and an Afghan exile group based in Cyprus. However, representation was heavily weighted in favor of the Northern Alliance and the supporters of the king, with those groups providing 11 delegates apiece while each of the exile groups only brought five delegates. There was consternation about the composition of the conference, with some complaining that they were excluded while other members of the Northern Alliance refused to attend the conference because they feared that their newfound authority would be undercut if they left Afghanistan.

The delegates to the conference focused on two main issues: reaching agreement on the composition of a new national government, and the composition of a peacekeeping

¹ This group of states, informally known as the “Six plus Two,” included China, Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, in addition to the United States and Russia. Serge Schmemmann, “U.S. and Partners Quickly Set Sights on a Post-Taliban Kabul,” *New York Times*, November 13, 2001.

² Alan Sipress and Colum Lynch, “Leaders Shifting Focus to Interim Government: Taliban Retreat from Kabul Accelerates Diplomacy,” *Washington Post*, November 13, 2001.

³ The full text of this and other UN resolutions can be found on the UN’s website.

⁴ The Northern Alliance wanted to hold the talks in Kabul, so that their de facto government there would have a bargaining advantage over the other Afghan factions. Keith B. Richburg and Colum Lynch, “Afghan Victors Agree to Talk in Berlin; Northern Alliance Acceptance of U.N. Invitation Called ‘Very Important Step,’” *Washington Post*, November 21, 2001.

⁵ The Northern Alliance is itself a conglomeration of various groups with some very different and often conflicting interests.

force for Kabul (discussed below). UN Special Envoy Brahimi led the talks, using the proposals he had submitted to the UN as a basis for discussion. The negotiations progressed in fits and starts, with long stalls while delegates balked at making needed concessions. One of the longest of these came when the Northern Alliance refused to submit its list of candidates for the Interim Administration, saying that the members of the interim council should be chosen through elections in Afghanistan rather than by the delegates in Germany. This move was widely interpreted as a delaying tactic to allow the Northern Alliance to further consolidate power before reaching a final agreement.

After considerable give and take, the conferees agreed on Hamid Karzai as the chairman of the Interim Administration and identified the other officials of the Interim Administration.⁶ The conference also established a special commission to convene an emergency *loya jirga* within six months of the establishment of the interim authority, which would create a transitional administration to govern for up to two years during the drafting of a new constitution. Another *loya jirga* would be held at that time to ratify the new constitution. Ratification would be followed by elections for the permanent government of Afghanistan. The Security Council approved the agreement on December 6 and, on December 22, 2001, Karzai and the rest of the Interim Administration were officially sworn in as the new government of Afghanistan. Although the leadership of the Interim Administration was generally representative of the Afghan population, three key ministries—defense, interior, and foreign affairs—were given Tajik leaders. In particular, Fahim Khan, a powerful warlord who had led the Northern Alliance forces, became the defense minister.

Providing International Financial Assistance

Afghanistan's funding needs were much larger than the Afghans could possibly provide. It was widely understood from the beginning that reconstructing Afghanistan would require large and comprehensive financial support based on broad international cooperation. Planning for where the funding would come from and how it would be channeled was in motion well before the interim government was installed.

The initial meeting of the Afghanistan Reconstruction Steering Group was held on November 20, 2002, in Washington, D.C. In attendance were senior officials, mostly at the deputy minister level, from the G-8 nations,⁷ Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Qatar, South Korea, and the European Union, as well as representatives of the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, Islamic Development Bank, and Asian Development

⁶ International representatives played a crucial role during the conference. Diplomatic observers from 19 countries joined Brahimi in consistently pushing the factions to overcome their differences and reach some sort of agreement during the meeting. The 19 observer countries included France, Germany, India, Iran, Pakistan, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

⁷ The G-8 nations include Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

Bank. Twenty-two states, including China and India, attended the November conference. Initially conceptualized as a ministerial-level meeting, co-chaired by Japan and the United States—in part because of Japan’s desire to have a significant role in reconstruction efforts—the meeting was in the end held at the working level. Specific topics discussed included aid to ensure refugees were housed and fed through the cold weather, costs of reconstruction, and the structuring of a new government. The United States and others indicated that the initial focus would be on “high-impact” projects to ensure a good reception by the people of Afghanistan early on. The group also agreed to hold a ministerial-level conference in January, hosted by Japan.

By the time of the Tokyo Conference, held on January 21 and 22, 2002, Afghanistan’s interim government was in place and discussions on assistance began in earnest. By the end of the two-day meeting, the participants had pledged to provide Afghanistan with \$4.5 billion over five years, including \$1.8 billion in 2002, for a wide range of reconstruction tasks. The funds pledged for 2002 were mostly required for emergency food and refugee assistance, although some of the first funds to be disbursed by the UN Development Programme helped pay for the operating budget of Afghanistan’s new interim government.⁸

The financial requirements for the reconstruction of Afghanistan were daunting. The former U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan estimated them at a minimum of \$500 million a year for the next few years. This was to cover the expenses of restoring the government’s basic operations, training the Afghan military, building police and penal systems, and rebuilding the country’s infrastructure, including roads and irrigation systems.⁹ At the time of the Tokyo Conference, the World Bank and the UN estimated that Afghanistan would require over \$10 billion in reconstruction funds over a five-year period, in addition to the funds that had been pledged before the Tokyo Conference. The amount pledged in Tokyo was less than half that.

At the same time that cost estimates were rising, international commitments were being cut or deferred. For example, although the United States had pledged more than \$700 million in aid to Afghanistan for “food and seeds and roads and bridges, water, and sanitation systems,”¹⁰ the Bush administration also announced in August 2002 that it would only be spending \$40 million of the \$130 million in Afghanistan aid authorized by Congress in a supplemental appropriation.

Thus, financial aid for reconstruction proved to be well short of what had been promised. Because the aid pledged at Tokyo was slow in coming, many projects lagged. Moreover, the aid was coming through a variety of channels with sporadic coordination. The Tokyo Conference did not create any formal international structure

⁸ “Unhappy New Year,” *The Economist*, March 23, 2002; Todd S. Purdum and Howard W. French, “A Nation Challenged: Donors; U.S. Makes Pledge for \$300 Million in Aid to Afghans,” *New York Times*, January 21, 2002.

⁹ Peter H. Stone, “Unfinished Business in Afghanistan,” *National Journal*, September 21, 2002.

¹⁰ \$400 million of this aid was pledged before Tokyo, and the rest was pledged during the conference.

to coordinate the reconstruction effort (as had been done in previous international reconstruction efforts), although donor countries have continued to meet in various forums to coordinate assistance.¹¹ The Tokyo Conference did not settle the question of how the financial burdens were to be distributed. At the end of 2001, some European and UN officials said that they expected the United States to pay perhaps one-third of reconstruction costs, with the remainder split between Europe and Japan, although they noted that they would be satisfied with a smaller contribution from the United States.¹² Indeed, the U.S. pledge at Tokyo was significantly less, with the United States noting that it had borne more than its share of the burden for the war itself.¹³

In mid-2002 it was not yet clear whether state donors would remain committed to the reconstruction of Afghanistan over the long term. Pledges were not disbursements and many of the most critical donors, including Japan, Turkey, and the United States, faced considerable domestic constraints. Moreover, many international organizations, including those that belong to the UN, relied on nation-states for their funding. They were fearful that the international commitment to Afghanistan would wane over time. With promised assistance already falling well below the levels of what was needed, and being slow to arrive, these fears were well-founded.

Setting Up the International Security Assistance Force

As soon as military operations in Afghanistan commenced, the international community started planning for some form of international peacekeeping force that would ensure stability after the defeat of the Taliban. At first, UN officials and the members of the Security Council favored establishing a UN-led peacekeeping force. After much negotiation, they agreed to a U.S. proposal for a force that would be authorized, but not controlled, by the UN. Instead, the force would be a coalition of the willing under the command of a lead nation, and command would rotate among nations.

The delegates to the Bonn meeting focused considerable attention on the composition of a stabilization force. The Northern Alliance representatives initially supported creating some form of an Afghan security force without international participation. During the first few days of the talks, however, they agreed to accept an international peacekeeping force as part of a larger agreement on the composition of the Interim Administration. The December 5 Bonn Agreement included an annex that asked the UN Security Council “to consider authorizing the early deployment to Afghanistan of a United Nations mandated force” that would “assist in the maintenance of security for Kabul and its surrounding areas.” Although initially limited to Kabul,

¹¹ “More than Money,” *The Economist*, January 24, 2002; U.S. government officials, RAND interviews, March 2003.

¹² Elizabeth Becker, “A Nation Challenged: Postwar Afghanistan: U.S. Questions Its Share of Reconstruction Costs,” *New York Times*, December 18, 2001.

¹³ Purdum and French, 2002.

the annex noted, “Such a force could, as appropriate, be progressively expanded to other urban centers and other areas.”¹⁴ UN Resolution 1386 authorized ISAF to operate in and around Kabul.

During the Bonn negotiations, the United Kingdom expressed its willingness to organize and lead an international peacekeeping force if the Afghans agreed to such a proposal. Although other countries had expressed some interest in leading this force, the British offer was appealing since the British could deploy their forces quickly and rapidly stand up an international command headquarters. As soon as the Bonn Agreement was signed, the British military staff started to organize and deploy the international force so that it could be in place when the Interim Administration took power on December 22.¹⁵

The initial ISAF deployment involved approximately 5,000 troops from 19 countries. The United Kingdom contributed 1,800 personnel to ISAF, including several headquarters, an infantry battalion, and support troops.¹⁶ British commanders oversaw the creation of the force and its initial work, which included thousands of patrols with Afghan security forces in Kabul, munitions and landmine disposal, humanitarian assistance, and training of Afghan forces.¹⁷ Other major contributions included approximately 500 French troops, including a large contingent of infantry forces, and a German-led multinational infantry battalion. Table 5.1 lists the types of contributions constituent countries made to ISAF.

Table 5.1
Composition of ISAF, January–June 2002

Country	Contribution
Austria	Infantry troops (within German-led battalion)
Belgium	Air transport
Bulgaria	Nuclear, biological, and chemical decontamination unit
Czech Republic	Medical support (field hospital)
Denmark	Explosive ordnance disposal Infantry troops (within German-led battalion)
Finland	Civil-military cooperation unit

¹⁴ UN, Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan Pending the Re-Establishment of Permanent Government Institutions, December 5, 2001, Annex I.

¹⁵ Interviews with British military personnel, August 2002.

¹⁶ Darren Lake and Lale Sariibrahimoglu, “Shape of Security Force Causes Controversy,” *Jane’s Defence Weekly*, January 16, 2002.

¹⁷ Michael Smith, “Turks Plan to Take Over from British,” *Daily Telegraph* (London), January 3, 2002; British Ministry of Defence, “International Security Assistance Force (Operation FINGAL),” December 3, 2001.

Table 5.1—Continued

Country	Contribution
France	Explosive ordnance disposal Infantry troops Logistics assets Reconnaissance squadron
Germany	Air transport Explosive ordnance disposal Infantry battalion (multinational) Helicopter support Medical support Military police
Greece	Air transport Engineer group
Italy	Air transport Engineer group Infantry troops Other specialist troops
The Netherlands	Air transport Infantry troops (within German-led battalion)
New Zealand	Air loading team
Norway	Explosive ordnance disposal Movement control team
Portugal	Air transport Medical support
Romania	Air transport Military police platoon
Spain	Air transport Engineer group Explosive ordnance disposal Helicopter support Logistics assets
Sweden	Air transport Intelligence unit
Turkey	Explosive ordnance disposal Infantry battalion
United Kingdom	Air transport Engineer group Logistics assets Medical support Military police

SOURCES: British Ministry of Defence, 2001; DoD, Office of Public Affairs, "International Contributions to the War Against Terrorism," fact sheet, June 7, 2002 (revised June 14, 2002).

As soon as the initial command arrangements were set, negotiations began on who would assume responsibility for ISAF when the United Kingdom relinquished command. Turkey was automatically considered because of its offer to lead the initial operation, and it became the only viable candidate after Germany and Italy declined to be considered. Turkey wanted the United States to provide the airlift and strategic communications necessary.

Turkey engaged in protracted negotiations with the United States for the support operations, as well as for funding to compensate Turkey for any expenses.¹⁸ As the negotiations continued, it soon became clear that they would not reach an agreement that would allow Turkey to take command quickly. The United Kingdom made clear that it would not extend its responsibilities past June 2002. Eventually, the Turkish cabinet approved an agreement at the end of April, which included a U.S. commitment to provide Turkey with \$228 million in economic assistance.¹⁹ That figure included \$28 million in Foreign Military Financing (FMF) grants, as well as funds to lease lift capacity.²⁰ The United Kingdom relinquished command of ISAF to Turkey on June 20, 2002. As soon as Turkey took command, the search for a successor began once again.

ISAF was generally considered to be succeeding at its limited mission of providing security in Kabul, which was relatively stable in 2002. Despite sporadic violence and attacks against President Karzai and other government officials, the streets of the city were alive with economic activity.²¹ ISAF took care to project a friendly attitude, and it saw its assistance efforts as contributing in part to force-protection goals. It published a biweekly newspaper in English, Dari, and Pashtun, and despite limited access to television and radio on the part of the local populace, it enjoyed broad awareness and support among Kabul's residents. About half of its patrols were mounted, and half carried out jointly with Afghan police personnel. ISAF personnel saw its effectiveness as in large part psychological. While they did not rule Kabul, they provided advice to political officials, and they were more trusted by local citizens than the local police and security forces.²²

ISAF also provided support to the Afghan Transitional Authority government, including airport security, route security for travel to and from the airport, and assis-

¹⁸ EUCOM interview.

¹⁹ Douglas Frantz, "Turkey Will Take Command of the Security Force in Kabul," *New York Times*, April 30, 2002.

²⁰ EUCOM interview.

²¹ See "So Much Done, So Far to Go," *The Economist*, June 8, 2002; "Securing the Peace," *The Economist*, September 14, 2002.

²² ISAF personnel, RAND interviews, November 2002.

tance with the destruction of old currency. It also helped train government bodyguards and security forces.²³

However, in 2002, ISAF was limited in three important ways. First, it only operated in and around Kabul. Consequently, local warlords retained their sources of support and their own armed forces in other parts of the country. This positioned them to challenge the fledgling authority of the centralized government in the future. Second, ISAF did not have a permanent commander. Command was to rotate every six months. This meant that the country leading ISAF must begin the search for a successor immediately on taking command, making long-term planning challenging, if not impossible. It also made countries unwilling to make long-term commitments of their forces. Third, the United States chose not to participate in ISAF. This limited ISAF's ability to recruit force contributors because some countries did not want to participate in an operation that lacked the support of U.S. forces.²⁴

Coordinating and Conducting Civil Affairs Activities

The presence of many organizations complicated civil affairs operations in Afghanistan. In early 2002, multiple military civil affairs organizations had different but occasionally overlapping responsibilities. In addition to the Combined Joint Task Force, there was the CJCMOTF and, of course, ISAF, which had its own civil-military structure. Added to this mix were NGOs, private organizations, and international organizations involved in humanitarian and other assistance operations. There were also national organizations, principally the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). This patchwork complicated coordination and created the potential for misunderstandings.

What was unusual—as well as a further complicating factor—was the direction to the CJCMOTF to “do things” to undertake visible aid and reconstruction projects. Carrying out such activities directly had not been a typical civil-affairs mission, and it set the military in competition with some of the NGOs and international organizations.

Other factors complicated coordination and cooperation. One was fundamental differences in goals among military assistance providers, NGOs, and international organizations. For the military, assistance was one component of the overall operation, a means to an end, its priorities balanced against other priorities. For the NGOs and international organizations, assistance was the key goal. Furthermore, the NGOs and international organizations wanted to keep a clear demarcation between them and the

²³ ISAF personnel, RAND interviews, November 2002.

²⁴ In late 2002, the United States announced a measure designed to respond to the first and third problems identified above. U.S. officials decided to establish provincial reconstruction teams (PRTs) in key regions to support aid and reconstruction efforts. Initially each team of about 60 people was planned to include combat soldiers, civil affairs personnel, Afghan troops, and civilians, representing the United States and other coalition countries.

military. Should the attitude toward the United States change, they did not want the impression left that they were associated with the U.S. military. They also worried that they could be mistaken for U.S. forces. These concerns manifested themselves most sharply over the issue of U.S. military forces wearing civilian clothes while engaged in assistance activities. The practice led a number of organizations to protest. The practice was later stopped, but only after it had soured relations. NGOs and international organizations held the view that the military should concentrate on what it was good at—large infrastructure projects and providing security—and leave the assistance business to the professionals.

As the initial fighting died down, the task of restoring stability and rebuilding Afghanistan was recognized as an enormous one. It was expected to take years, if not decades, to accomplish. The initial steps faltered and were marked with difficulties and disputes. That said, the efforts achieved some successes. For example, Kabul was stabilized. During 2002, assistance and reconstruction efforts were under way and, in broad terms, were successful. Coordination with the many organizations involved in rendering aid, while at times contentious, occurred and even worked well at different levels.

Still, problems and concerns remained in June 2002. A primary problem was a lack of clear guidance about the civil-affairs mission. The direction to “do things” diverged from the doctrinal mission and was difficult to carry out, given the goal of a small force presence. Critics argued that the involvement in direct civil affairs action hampered the ability of the military to carry out the more traditional civil affairs tasks. The reconstruction effort moved slowly, in no small measure because of the slowness and uncertainty of the funding. However, the projects that were undertaken put soldiers in day-to-day contact with Afghans of many communities and provided solid, albeit local, benefits.

A concrete definition of an appropriate level and form of civil affairs involvement was lacking. The experience of the years leading to the start of the Afghan war had been mixed. Clearly, such operations as OEF require a reconstruction component, and civil affairs forces are the natural personnel to be involved in these efforts for the U.S. military. It is unlikely that the United States will find many future conflicts in which the U.S. military is the only organization that can provide assistance. Rather, hundreds of organizations have made it their business to go into countries that are in disarray as soon as most of the shooting has stopped. This raises questions about the extent to which the military should be directly involved in these efforts and thus about the role of civil affairs troops in assistance and reconstruction. The benefits and costs of direct involvement must be assessed. Leaders need to make decisions about U.S. government and military priorities for these efforts and the extent to which assistance and reconstruction should be a priority for the U.S. Army and for DoD as a whole.

Despite the obvious success of establishing the Interim Administration, bringing stability to Kabul, and beginning the creation of an Afghan National Army, the situation in Afghanistan remained precarious at the end of June 2002. Regional command-

ers and tribal leaders still controlled their areas and maintained forces that dwarfed the nascent national army. Al Qaeda and Taliban elements remained at large, and the lack of security outside Kabul slowed the spread of aid and reconstruction. Indeed, this situation persists to this day in some areas.

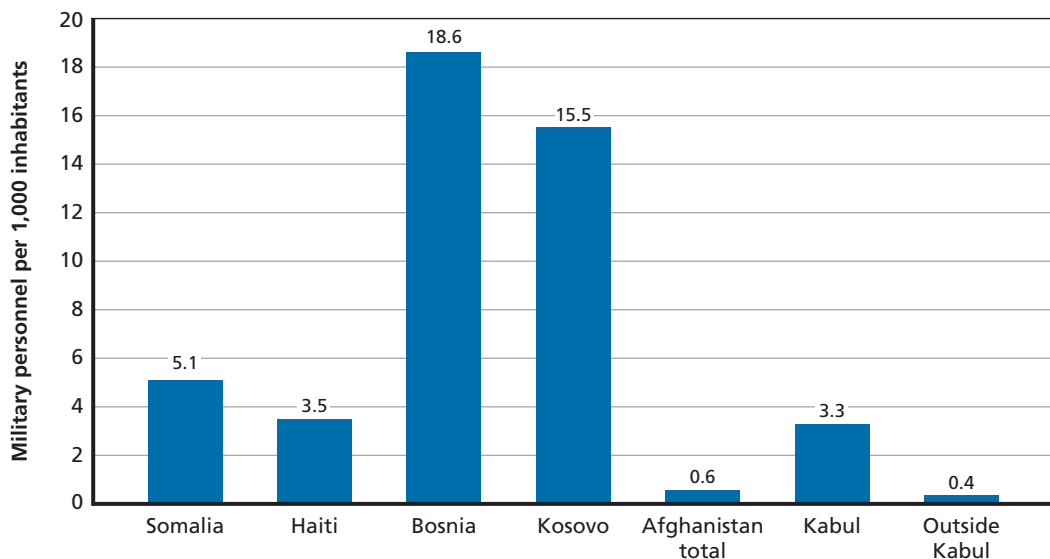
Stabilization Role of U.S. Forces

The United States resisted pressure to expand security forces outside of Kabul. Approximately 8,000 U.S. forces remained in country in 2002. Their main mission was to continue the hunt for al Qaeda and Taliban remnants. Still, the requirement to expand order and stability was well recognized.

The initial approach to help stabilize the country was to station Army Special Forces and civil affairs teams in major cities in several regions. These elements were small, generally fewer than ten soldiers. Their task was to work with local leaders and gain influence via financial and humanitarian assistance. This approach worked reasonably well until the focus shifted to strengthening the central government, threatening the power of the regional commanders.

Members of the international community, including the aid organizations, lobbied hard to expand the peacekeeping effort, which was small in comparison to others in such places as Bosnia and Kosovo. Figure 5.1 compares the initial ratio of forces with the population in recent operations.

Figure 5.1
Military Presence at Outset of Post-Conflict Operations



As the figure shows, the number of U.S. and ISAF peacekeepers per 1,000 of population in Afghanistan is tiny compared with other operations. Because ISAF was restricted to Kabul, the ratio there in June 2002 was 3.3 ISAF personnel for each 1,000 citizens in Kabul. Outside Kabul, the force was almost entirely U.S. units. The comparable figure for the countryside was only 0.4 military personnel for every 1,000 Afghans, an order of magnitude smaller than that present in Haiti in 1994. Neither the United States nor any of its coalition partners displayed the stomach for an expanded peacekeeping force in Afghanistan that would match the ratio achieved in other recent contingencies. As an alternative, U.S. forces created, in 2003, the concept of the provincial reconstruction team (PRT), detachments of 60–80 people stationed in key locations in an attempt to expand the “ISAF effect.” By spring 2004, 12 of these teams were deployed across the country, and more were being planned. Currently there are 26 such teams. Numerically, this increase in 2004—in the range of 900 to 1,200 personnel—had only a small effect on the coalition force presence.

The Afghan National Army

The coalition realized early on that the long-term solution to peace and stability in Afghanistan is for the Afghan government to establish and maintain it. Key to that process is a national army. The United States and France were training the Afghan National Army, but the challenge was great in 2002. In spite of relatively good pay (\$30 per month while training; \$50 per month after graduation), the completion rate was low, with most units graduating at about half strength. The absence of a sustainment program after graduation led to further attrition.

Ethnic and tribal influences affected the success of the Afghan National Army. While the recruits were motivated and ethnically diverse, the officer corps in 2002 was composed almost entirely of Tajiks from northeastern Afghanistan, the power base of Fahim Khan, the defense minister. Although he repeatedly voiced support for the national government, tribal and regional loyalties ran deep, and it was not clear where the loyalties of the officer corps lay. This situation engendered mistrust among other elements, particularly ethnic Pashtuns.

Other Stability Activities

A number of other organizations operated in Afghanistan with an eye to reestablishing order and stability. The UN maintained a mission, albeit a much smaller one than it had in Kosovo. It had been unable, by June 2002, to establish an overarching framework for reconstruction and aid efforts that would help engender stability. Also, the initial focus was on the *loya jirga* and getting the Interim Administration established.

As time has passed, the UN mission expanded its focus, and the Secretary General's Special Representative has advisors for human rights, gender, drugs, rule of law, police, military, and demobilization.

Individual nations also volunteered to assist in restoring governmental infrastructure. The United Kingdom led the counternarcotics efforts. Germany undertook the training of the Afghan National Police. Italy helped to recreate the legal and justice system. In addition to training the Army, the United States helped to create and train a border security force. Still, the international effort was not robust, and progress during 2002 was slow.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Although OEF raised issues for all Services, this report focuses on the Army. Based on our analysis of operations through June 2002, we offer recommendations in the following areas:

- joint and combined operations
- deployment and sustainment
- intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance
- operations with SOF
- stability and support operations
- Army transformation.

The recommendations are based on the record of operations in Afghanistan aimed at toppling the Taliban government summarized in the preceding chapters. The sources we used—situation reports, briefings, messages, and interviews—often highlighted problems that had arisen and how they might be resolved. They generally gave little attention to routine activities that went as expected. The use of contemporary documents provides an authoritative record, but at the same time raises the risk of missing processes, systems, procedures, and activities that “worked well.”

What Worked Well

Before addressing specific recommendations for improving Army capabilities for future operations, we want to highlight some of the activities that worked well during the first nine months of OEF in Afghanistan:

- **Special Operations Forces:** The selection, training, equipping, and rigorous preparation of SOF clearly played a major role in the destruction of the Taliban government as well as in the early hunt for al Qaeda. Their ability to meld indigenous forces into a joint U.S. operation was the key enabler to these successes. Moreover, SOF commanders were able to effectively integrate coalition SOF into these operations.

- **Soldier Performance:** Small-unit leaders and soldiers were put to many tests in the harsh environment in Afghanistan. The abilities of junior officers and noncommissioned officers and the skills of the troops served their commanders responsively and effectively. Army investments in training soldiers in essential skills and testing them collectively at Combat Training Centers and elsewhere clearly paid off.
- **Force Protection:** Although Army forces were based at many small and dispersed locations, in some cases amid hostile populations, force protection discipline was maintained. As a result, Army bases were well protected and did not suffer significant casualties.
- **Detainee Operations:** Controlling, sorting, and supporting several hundred detainees required rapid organization and assignment of military police, infantry, engineering, and logistics skills. The Army in Afghanistan accomplished these tasks quickly and effectively when assigned the detainee operations mission.
- **Logistics Operations:** The harsh environment and dispersed operations challenged the Army's logisticians. Although logistics operations in Afghanistan were beyond the bounds of doctrine, operators reported that no major operation was hampered by materiel shortfalls. Logisticians found new ways to deliver fuel and to support dispersed SOF teams. Aircraft maintenance personnel got all but one of the helicopters damaged in Operation ANACONDA back into the fight within three days.
- **Communications:** Distant and widely dispersed operations presented challenges to Army communicators. Their initiative in acquiring satellite bandwidth more than doubled the Army's capacity. The added capacity enabled both combat and support operations to perform more responsively.
- **UASs and Other New Technologies:** Of several new technologies employed by the Army in OEF, UASs had the most significant effect on the command and management of operations. They provided ISR information with unprecedented detail and timeliness. Other important new technologies on the battlefield included SOF targeting and communications suites, air-delivered weapons, and the Gator all-terrain vehicle.

Recommendations

We now turn our attention and focus on six specific areas where our analysis suggested management attention was needed and additional resources required. These recommendations were made based on observations from our research conducted immediately after major combat operations succeeded in toppling the Taliban regime in early 2002. Several of the recommendations have subsequently been acted upon by the Army and the other Services. Nevertheless, we include them here for completeness.

Joint and Coalition Operations

We note here, at the outset, that since the 2002–2003 period important steps have been made to improve the Combatant Commander’s ability to create joint task force headquarters for particular missions. The Army should continue to support this approach to joint operations. The discussions below focus on specific ways to improve jointness—some of which the Army has adopted.

The most significant lesson from Afghanistan was that joint action—long advocated for many reasons—sometimes must occur at the lowest echelons. The Army, in partnership with the other Services, must plan and train for joint operations at the brigade and battalion task force level, with air support being pushed to company level and lower. Jointness at lower levels does not mean that every junior officer must become an expert in other Services’ doctrines, but they must participate in planning and training for tactical-level jointness as the norm rather than the exception.

Air-land synergy proved its worth both in the initial campaign to destroy the Taliban regime and in the ensuing hunt for what was then considered to be just the remnants of al Qaeda and the Taliban. In the former effort, the Taliban chose to fight in fixed positions and were systematically defeated by air-delivered fires directed by SOF and Air Force air controllers operating in conjunction with Afghan forces. In the latter effort, the hunt was largely frustrated until Operation ANACONDA, when conventional U.S. forces operating with SOF and Afghan units closed with al Qaeda fighters in the Shah-i Kot Valley. The combination of substantial ground forces with on-call air power was highly effective.

The Army can take a number of steps to embed a joint view in its operations. Time precluded General Franks from assembling and deploying a joint headquarters. Having one in country would have been beneficial, particularly during the planning of Operation ANACONDA. The Army should prepare, as far as possible, the needed capabilities to organize and lead joint task forces. In addition, the Army must be prepared to provide personnel to such joint headquarters even when only one or two brigades deploy—the typical size of post–Cold War contingency deployments. Joint headquarters will facilitate joint planning from the outset of an operation, as opposed to the more common technique of each Service planning its operation and addressing joint issues subsequently.

The Army should embrace joint planning for the employment of its attack helicopters. The heavy damage sustained during a relatively short period in Operation ANACONDA underscores the need for joint planning and execution. TF Rakkasan used attack helicopters immediately because they were the most familiar and readily available fire support, not because they were the most appropriate. They were flying into intense ground fire, an environment for which they were not designed and in which they could not long survive. Fixed-wing aircraft employed in a simultaneous joint air attack would have provided some suppression and made it impossible for the enemy gunners to focus exclusively on the Apaches.

The emphasis on joint fire support at tactical levels—brigade through battalion and possibly even company—suggests that more personnel and equipment should be devoted to terminal air control. Additional radios to facilitate communication and laser designators for targeting are needed. It may be necessary to create more tactical air control parties, and the Army should address this jointly with the Air Force. The Army could train its personnel to Air Force standards, or another solution would be to have additional Air Force parties serving with the Army.

Deployment and Sustainment

The type and scale of operations in Afghanistan were unanticipated and were conducted in a harsh, demanding environment. At the time, existing support locations were far away, and Afghanistan lacked the infrastructure to support the necessary logistics sustainment effort. However, logistics support to operations in Afghanistan can be characterized as generally successful, but largely because the relatively small scale of the operation was such that Army logisticians had sufficient capacity in transportation, supplies, and personnel to enable them to cobble together reasonable support.

That said, the Army logistics community needs doctrine and organizations capable of rapidly responding to small-scale contingencies in austere locations. Army logistics doctrine was designed for the big war, a low probability but high-stress event. In this doctrine, multiple echelons of support must be present before a comprehensive logistic capability is available. The decade preceding the start of operations in Afghanistan had seen a number of operations that entailed deploying unusual configurations of units to unusual places. In these operations, the echelons envisioned in doctrine for sustainment were not deployed. Operations of this nature require flexible information systems to ensure that supply systems can adapt quickly and respond to rapid and frequent changes in supply delivery points.

Also needed are doctrine and resources for setting up and running bases in an austere environment. The Force Provider modules addressed part of this need, but the personnel resources allocated were not matched to the equipment.

As the Army tailors its support doctrine, it should account for the possibility of supporting a theater where SOF mix with conventional forces. SOF figured prominently in toppling the Taliban and continue to be responsible for a major portion of the continuing fight against al Qaeda and the Taliban. These forces impose unusual demands on the logistics system. Further, they lack the organic assets to provide basing or other long-term sustainment needs.

Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance

UASs, such as the Predator and Global Hawk, proved their worth in Afghanistan. Their success has prompted the Services to modify and expand their plans for UASs.

Today, there exists a greatly expanded fleet operating in Afghanistan and elsewhere around the globe. The Army should continue to pursue its plans to develop UASs.¹

Operations with Special Operations Forces

During early operations to topple the Taliban regime, the mix of special and conventional operations shifted over time. The U.S. Army, Navy, and Air Force and several allied countries contributed SOF, but the Army's Special Forces played a large and pivotal role. However, coordination of special operations and conventional operations caused some problems. SOF often depend on air support for their very survival, yet they were not well integrated with air controllers. They learned how to call in air support but were not versed in air platforms and weapons. For this, they depended on tactical air control parties, but neither were they adequately equipped to support SOF.

A second issue was the coordination of operations between special and conventional forces. SOF operated differently from conventional units. So when both types of forces participate in the same operation, as they did in Operation ANACONDA, the different operating practices need to be reconciled. Numerous ways to solve this problem exist, but it is important that the Army develop coordination measures to ensure that conventional forces and SOF work together more smoothly and train together on a more regular basis.

Stability and Support Operations

To this day, 12 years on, reconstructing Afghanistan remains a work in progress. The international community recognized early on the enormous scope of the task and sought to take steps to achieve critical goals. It successfully established a functioning interim government and gathered potential donors to help fund efforts. The international community was also successful in stabilizing Kabul. However, in 2002, there was little international support to expand the peacekeeping mission beyond the capital and even less success in maintaining the commitment to financial and other assistance. Things have changed considerably since then: the Village Stability Operations (VSO) program, initiated in late 2009, has focused on local security through much of Afghanistan and has had limited success in providing the security necessary for normal life. The Army has had a major role in these activities, and its role in reconstruction, humanitarian relief, and security measures continues in Afghanistan and will likely occur elsewhere.

Given its ongoing and likely future role, the Army should restructure its humanitarian assistance procedures and clarify the Army's humanitarian assistance mission.

¹ As of March 2013, the Army possessed nearly 7,000 UASs. Over 6,000 are micro-UASs, such as the Raven and Puma. These tiny (under 6 kg/13.2 pounds) reconnaissance aircraft use a radical new military aircraft technology. The Army has nearly 1,798 Raven and 325 Puma UASs in use by ground troops. These micro-UASs have changed how the troops fight and greatly reduced the Army's dependence on the Air Force for air reconnaissance. See "U.S. Army UAVs Frozen in Time," *Strategy Page*, March 13, 2013.

The initial focus of the CJCMOTF on humanitarian aid delayed it from providing more traditional civil affairs assistance. Furthermore, tension existed between its mandate to carry out aid and assistance projects and the desire to limit the number of U.S. forces in Afghanistan. Additionally, it was clear that it would have been helpful to deploy civil affairs troops in theater early, but the active force has relatively little civil affairs force structure. An ability to get civil affairs forces in theater relatively soon would be useful, and the Army should explore ways to do this, including high priority for deployment.

Implications for Army Modernization

OEF in 2001 and 2002 was of a small scale and heavily weighted toward special operations. Light forces played a dominant role in Afghanistan because of an elusive enemy operating in rugged terrain. The Army's Special Forces played a central role in toppling the Taliban and hunting for al Qaeda, sometimes relying on helicopters to negotiate Afghanistan's difficult terrain. The Army's light infantry and air-mobile forces were also well suited to operations in Afghanistan. Ultimately, only dismounted infantry could pursue al Qaeda into its mountainous lairs. Only the valley floors and some mountain trails are accessible to vehicles the size of a Stryker. The Army could not have accomplished its mission in Afghanistan without light forces, both SOF and conventional forces. The diversity and unpredictability of future operations suggest that a diversified force structure makes the most sense. In 2001, the Army plan was to create a force of homogeneous "full-spectrum" units. The experience of early operations in Afghanistan showed that this would have been a mistake. The 2001 plan was later revised to modularize a more diverse force structure. The issue for planners and programmers remains how best to modernize light force capabilities for the war on terrorism.

During operations in the Shah-i Kot Valley, enemy fighters remained largely unobserved until they opened fire—despite the fact that the landing zones had been reconnoitered by UASs and manned and other reconnaissance systems. It is even more difficult to distinguish enemy forces from noncombatants when the ROE require positive identification. The Army should not base its modernization efforts on an assumption that friendly forces will see enemy forces before they engage. On the contrary, the Army's operational concepts should assume a continued risk of tactical surprise.

Imagery produced by UASs demands considerable bandwidth. In OEF, bandwidth had to be purchased from commercial sources to satisfy the requirements of the relatively small number of UASs operating in theater. The Army should explore sources of needed bandwidth before placing such heavy reliance on a large fleet of organic UASs.

Epilogue

On balance, much was accomplished quickly in Afghanistan. The Taliban were removed from power; al Qaeda was driven into hiding and its training camps eliminated; and the Interim Administration was organized and installed. The expected humanitarian crisis was avoided. Within a year, more than 1.5 million Afghan refugees returned to Afghanistan. However, 12 years later, the end of the conflict is not in sight, but the U.S. and the coalition involvement is.

The Military Situation

Anti-government forces continue to carry on their fight. Coalition operations against Taliban and al Qaeda fighters continue, and although Osama bin Laden has been eliminated, Mullah Omar remains at large. The Afghan border with Pakistan quickly became the focus of efforts to capture or kill Taliban and al Qaeda fighters and their leaders. The numbers of terrorists located in the region was hard to discern because of the ease with which they were able to flow back and forth across the border with Pakistan, where the terrain is favorable for hiding. A loose affiliation developed among al Qaeda fighters, Taliban diehards, and the forces of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, the leader of Hezb-i-Islami. Substantial resources were added to support efforts to hunt down and destroy these opposition fighters.¹

Apart from occasional flare-ups and incidents in the Kabul area and elsewhere, unrest was concentrated in the south and east, where opposition to the new central government was strongest. After three years of low-level activity, the number of Taliban anti-government attacks within Afghanistan grew significantly in 2005. The Taliban and al Qaeda began using suicide bombers and improvised explosive devices in their attacks. During 2005, opposition violence was targeted against U.S., NATO, and NGO personnel. Ninety-two U.S. military personnel were killed in Afghanistan in 2005, nearly half the total U.S. military losses there since October 2001. As of Novem-

¹ Much of this section is based on discussions in a book by Seth Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires: America's War in Afghanistan* (Norton, 2009).

ber 8, 2013, there have been 3,395 coalition deaths in Afghanistan, 2,290 of which were U.S. military.

Beginning as early as November 2001, while operations at Tora Bora were in progress, the United States turned its attention from Afghanistan to Iraq. Afghanistan then took a backseat in terms of policy oversight, equipment, and trained personnel. The United States deployed a total of 8,000 troops to Afghanistan in 2002. Their mission was to hunt for al Qaeda and Taliban fighters: their mission was neither to be peacekeepers nor to deploy outside of Kabul.

U.S. military efforts were focused almost exclusively along the porous Afghanistan border with Pakistan through 2005. In September 2006, NATO forces began operations against entrenched Taliban forces in Kandahar province, thus marking the expansion of operations to the south. By October 2006, coalition forces in Afghanistan were divided into four regional commands: East, North, West, and Central. Beginning in 2002, U.S. forces took on a larger role in reconstruction in selected areas, providing PRTs of 75 to 100 military and civilian personnel. Fourteen coalition PRTs were operational in March 2006 and there are 26 today. Each team is designed to focus on the coordination and integration of security measures and development resources and projects.

In February 2009, President Obama authorized a 50-percent increase in U.S. forces in Afghanistan, an increase from 34,000 to approximately 51,000 and eventually reaching 100,000 in 2011.

In August 2003, NATO took over the command of ISAF, thus ending the six-month national rotations and providing much-needed continuity in leadership. At the same time, NATO efforts were expanded beyond the Kabul area as the United Kingdom, Germany, and others provided PRTs. While ISAF's mandate was initially limited to providing security in and around Kabul, in October 2003, the UN Security Council extended ISAF's mandate to cover the whole of Afghanistan (Resolution 1510), paving the way for an expansion of the mission across the country. Eventually, ISAF established "regional commands" in all parts of the country. As the international direct action effort waned, Afghan forces began assuming the lead of security efforts nationwide during the spring of 2013 and U.S. forces transitioned to a training, advising, and assisting role.

Governance

Key security positions in the Interim Administration formed by the Bonn Agreement were dominated by mostly minority Northern Alliance personnel. An emergency *loya jirga* reaffirmed Karzai as head of the Interim Administration in June 2002. A constitutional *loya jirga* approved the constitution in January 2004, which provided for a strong presidency, gave men and women equal rights under the law, allowed for politi-

cal parties as long as they are not “un-Islamic,” and allowed for court rulings according to Hanafi (Sunni) Islam.

Elections were held for a president and two vice presidents, each to serve five-year terms, on October 9, 2004. Turnout was 80 percent of 10.5 million registered voters. Karzai was elected with 55 percent of the votes against 16 opponents. Parliamentary elections were held September 18, 2005. Candidates stood as individuals, not affiliated with any party. Parliament consisted of a 249-member elected lower house and a selected 102-seat upper house. Turnout was 57 percent of 12.5 million registered voters. Appointments to the upper house were selected by Karzai (34 seats, half of which are to be women) and by the provincial councils (68 seats).

A second presidential and provincial election was held August 20, 2009. The presidential contest required a runoff because no candidate received over 50 percent of the certified results issued on October 20. However, the second round was not held because Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, the other candidate with a sufficient plurality, pulled out of the runoff.

A second parliamentary election was held September 18, 2010. Although the results were disputed, an agreement was reached to allow Karzai to inaugurate a new lower house on January 26, 2011. For the upper house, 68 council members were appointed to four-year terms by the elected provincial councils in each of Afghanistan’s 34 provinces, and remain in office today. Karzai made his 34 appointments on February 19, 2011.

A third presidential and provincial election is to be held on April 5, 2014. There is no clear Pashtun frontrunner to succeed Karzai, who is precluded from a third term by law, and several Northern Alliance (Tajik) figures might run separately or as part of a national unity ticket. Candidate registration was due by September 20, 2013.² A total of 27 candidates applied, but only ten were approved by the Independent Election Commission. Those disqualified did not meet new, tougher criteria.³

Despite the appearance of a democratically elected government in Afghanistan, the reality on the ground was quite the opposite. The Taliban continued to terrorize much of the country. The central government’s influence was transitory at best and mostly felt in urban areas. By late 2005, whatever pro-government political forces and supporters there were in several rural villages were driven out and the villages were taken over by the Taliban. This lack of Afghan security force presence made it ripe for Taliban takeovers. Attempts were made to train the Afghanistan National Police, but it was not until 2009 that the Village Stability Operations program was initiated. This program was designed to recruit local Afghans to form the Afghanistan Local Police.

² This section derived primarily from Kenneth Katzman, *Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy*, Congressional Research Service, RL30588, April 9, 2013.

³ Frud Bezhan, “Disqualification of Afghanistan Presidential Candidates Spark Row,” *Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty*, October 25, 2013.

The idea was to create a local government security presence at the village level. This was initially resisted by the Karzai government because of fears of creating local militias independent of the national government. Indeed, many international organizations also fear this will be the result. However, the program has met with some uneven success, and is generally seen as contributing to a more secure environment at the moment. Whether enough of these groups will retain any loyalty to the central government after their U.S. supporters and trainers depart is an open question.

International Financial Support

The international community has been generous with financial support of many kinds. On a per capita basis, external economic assistance for Afghanistan was initially well below that provided in Bosnia, Kosovo, East Timor, and Iraq. A March 2004 conference of donors in Berlin drew commitments to double the recent contribution rate from about \$2 billion a year to more than \$4 billion. More than half this sum was to come from the United States. At the London Conference on Afghanistan in January 2006, donor nations pledged over \$10 billion in aid, including a U.S. commitment of \$1.1 billion in aid for the coming year. But long-run needs exceeded even these amounts.⁴ The requirement to put these resources into productive use rapidly across Afghanistan proved difficult, given the level of security.

Non-U.S. donors, including such institutions as the European Union and the Asian Development Bank, have provided over \$29 billion in assistance to Afghanistan since the fall of the Taliban. When combined with U.S. aid, this by far exceeds the \$27.5 billion for reconstruction identified by the International Monetary Fund as required for 2002–2010. Major pledges have been made primarily at donor conferences. Among multilateral lending institutions, the World Bank is expected to be key to sustaining Afghanistan in the long term. In May 2002, the World Bank reopened its office in Afghanistan after 20 years. Its projects have been concentrated in the telecommunications and road and sewage sectors. The Asian Development Bank has played a major role in Afghanistan, including in financing railway construction.

Donor aid currently accounts for more than 95 percent of Afghanistan's gross domestic product. Because of the paucity of funds taken in by the Afghan government—about \$2 billion in revenue for all of 2012—donors provided at least two-thirds of total Afghan government expenditures (operating budget and development budget) in 2012.⁵

⁴ From 2006 to 2010, donor nations contributed 90 percent of the total \$55 billion in Afghanistan's public expenditures. See U.S. Government Accountability Office, "Afghanistan Donor Dependence," Washington, D.C., GAO-11-948R, September 20, 2011.

⁵ Katzman, 2013.

The Afghan Economy

Economic progress in Afghanistan remained a largely unfulfilled promise through 2005, despite some progress in Kabul. However, even then the economy was growing, and agriculture began to recover from the damage and disruption from years of conflict and drought. Although the production of legitimate crops grew, the cultivation of poppies and the production of opium grew as well. A hardtop road from Kabul to Kandahar was completed, but internal trade was widely hampered by poor infrastructure, lack of security, and regional warlords. Nonetheless, the International Monetary Fund estimated that per capita gross domestic product in Afghanistan was about \$300 in 2005, a small amount by any standard, but an improvement over earlier levels. Some reports indicate that Afghanistan benefited from high rates of economic growth but that the base was appallingly low. More recently, Afghanistan's gross domestic product has risen to \$1,100 per capita.⁶

There is an undeniable link between accelerating economic development and security in Afghanistan. Consequently, economic gains are critical to stability in the post-2014 era. Presumably, once U.S. and coalition forces pull out of Afghanistan at the end of 2014, donor financial aid will wind down as well. In advance of the December 5, 2011, Bonn Conference, the World Bank warned that an abrupt aid cutoff could lead to fiscal implosion, loss of control over the security sector, the collapse of political authority, and the possibility of civil war.⁷

Afghanistan's economy and society are still fragile from decades of warfare that left about 2 million dead, about 700,000 widowed and/or orphaned, and caused about 1 million Afghan children to be raised in refugee camps outside of Afghanistan. Although more than 3.5 million Afghan refugees have since returned, a comparable number remain outside Afghanistan. The literacy rate is very low and Afghanistan has only a small pool of skilled labor, middle managers, accountants, and information professionals.

Nevertheless, efforts to build the legitimate economy are showing some results. There has been substantial new construction, particularly in Kabul, including luxury hotels; a \$25 million Coca Cola bottling factory (opened in September 2006); apartment and office buildings; and marriage halls and other structures. The Serena luxury hotel was built by the Agha Khan Foundation, a major investor in Afghanistan. Phase one of a major, multi-billion-dollar development near the Kabul airport, called "New Kabul City," is in the early stages of construction. On the other hand, uncertainty about the post-2014 political and security situation is causing some Afghan businessmen to relocate outside the country, or to develop external components of their business in case the situation in Afghanistan deteriorates. Others say that private invest-

⁶ This is a 2012 estimate. See CIA, "South Asia: Afghanistan," *The World Factbook*, October 21, 2013.

⁷ Katzman, 2013.

ment could have been healthier if not for the influence exercised over it by various faction leaders and Karzai's relatives.

Reconstruction and Human Development

In 2001, Afghanistan was among the poorest, least-developed states in the world. Years of war, civil strife, and Taliban rule had devastated the country. Even under the best conditions, the task of creating necessary infrastructure, developing human capital, creating a prosperous private sector in the economy, and establishing a peaceful and stable civil society would be daunting. In the absence of a strong, well-financed central government to set priorities, a variety of international agencies independently pursued well-intentioned but often conflicting programs.

Afghanistan continues to need physical infrastructure, including roads, schools, power generation and distribution, hospitals and other medical care facilities, communications, water supplies, and a wide array of facilities for government activities. However, prominent accomplishments have been made in the following sectors:⁸

- **Education:** Despite the success in enrolling Afghan children in school since the Taliban era, setbacks have occurred because of Taliban attacks on schools, causing some to close. Afghanistan's university system is underfunded, in part because Afghans are constitutionally entitled to free higher education. Afghanistan requires about \$35 million to operate its universities for one year; USAID spent about \$20 million to help fund those activities in fiscal year 2012.
- **Health:** The health care sector has made considerable gains in reducing infant mortality and provides about 65 percent of the population with at least some access to health professionals. International support to the health care sector includes U.S. assistance to develop capacity, Egypt's 65-person field hospital at Bagram Air Base that instructs Afghan physicians, and Jordan's similar facility in Mazar-e Sharif.
- **Roads:** Road building has been USAID's largest project category, taking up about 25 percent of USAID spending since the fall of the Taliban. Roads are considered key to enabling Afghan farmers to bring legitimate produce to market. The major Ring Road has been completely repaved using funds from various donors. Among other major projects completed are a road from Kandahar to Tarin Kowt (Uruzgan province) built by U.S. military personnel and a road linking the Panjshir Valley to Kabul. In several provinces, U.S. funds are being used to build roads that link farming communities to the market for their products.

⁸ The following are summaries of status assessments in Katzman, 2013.

- **Electricity:** This has been a major U.S. focus because the expansion of electricity is popular with the Afghan public. The Afghan government's goal of providing electricity to 65 percent of households in urban areas and 25 percent in rural areas by 2010 was not met. Nevertheless, severe power shortages in Kabul have been alleviated by Afghan government agreements with several Central Asian neighbors to import electricity, as well as construction of new plants, such as that at Tarakhil in north Kabul. In January 2013, Afghanistan gained formal title to the Tarakhil plant as well as two less-efficient power plants built by Iran in western Afghanistan. The key long-term project is to expand the capacity of the Kajaki Dam, located in Helmand province (called the "Kandahar-Helmand Power Project," or KHPP). Currently, two turbines are operating—one was always working, and the second was repaired by USAID contractors. This has doubled electricity production in the south. As of December 31, 2012, USAID has obligated \$140 million to the project.
- **Agriculture:** Approximately 80 percent of Afghans live in rural areas, making agriculture key to Afghanistan's economy and stability. In 2010, the policy of the United States was to boost Afghanistan's agriculture sector to reduce drug production and to make agriculture an engine of economic growth. Prior to the turmoil of the late 1970s, Afghanistan was a major exporter of agricultural products. From 2002 until the end of 2012, USAID obligated \$1.9 billion to build capacity at the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock; increase access to markets; and provide alternatives to poppy cultivation. USAID programs have helped Afghanistan double its legitimate agricultural output over the period from 2008 to 2013. While licit agriculture is not the major source of income for Afghans, it is the major source of employment.
- **Telecommunications:** Several Afghan telecommunications firms have been formed. For example, the highly successful Roshan cellphone company was founded with startup funds from the Agha Khan Foundation (the Agha Khan is leader of the Isma'ili community, which is prevalent in northern Afghanistan). The most significant post-Taliban media network is Tolo Television, owned by Moby Media. U.S. funds are being used to supplement private investment.

Prospects

The prospects for peace and stability in Afghanistan after the United States and its allies depart in 2014 are uncertain. The goals are demanding and the challenges formidable. Security, prosperity, and a strong central government depend on one another, and each also relies on strong, continuing external support. With the continued support of the international community and neighboring states, progress toward peace and stability can continue. A resurgent Taliban probably cannot regain power, but a

long and costly struggle that has begun to eat into international support may reduce support even further. If the international community walks away from Afghanistan, a return to chaos is likely.

The post-2014 status of U.S. involvement in Afghanistan is not clear. The United States is not likely to abandon its efforts in Afghanistan if a suitable status of forces agreement can be arranged. This would imply a continuing role for the Army. The need to provide security and to hunt down al Qaeda and Taliban fighters will go on and require SOF supported by intelligence and airpower. Reconstruction efforts will also be needed for many more years. A stable and secure environment is required for the international organizations and NGOs that will continue with reconstruction work.

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The September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks caught the United States without a plan for military operations in Afghanistan. In less than 30 days, the Department of Defense created a plan that involved an unprecedented combination of special operations forces (SOF), Afghan fighters, and airpower. Operations were initiated on October 7, and Afghanistan's Taliban government was toppled in less than two months. An interim administration was installed on December 22, and civil-military operations began. This report describes the preparations for Operation Enduring Freedom at CENTCOM and elsewhere, Army operations and support activities, building a coalition, and civil-military operations in Afghanistan through the end of June 2002. The research used contemporary records and interviews with key participants to gain authoritative perspectives on events and issues.

U.S. forces were surprisingly successful in toppling the Taliban. The rigorous preparation of SOF clearly paid off. Air-land operations were decisive. Small-unit soldiers and leaders passed the tests of the harsh Afghan environment. Force protection, logistics operations, and communications each worked well. Nonetheless, several problems emerged. Joint planning and training needed to be pushed to lower levels, underscoring the need for the Army to jointly plan the employment of its fire support assets. Other issues included logistics procedures for small operations and civil-military organization and procedures. Many of these issues were later addressed by Army leaders.



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