

The Civilian Casualties Management Team: A Piece of the Counterinsurgency Puzzle

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IN COUNTERINSURGENCIES, FEW EVENTS SHAPE THE PERCEPTION OF THE legitimacy of military operations as powerfully as those that cause civilian casualties. Civilian leaders and populaces, informed by round-the-clock media, are increasingly intolerant of harm to civilians, and such events directly affect what is recognized as the “information environment,” a critical component of overseas operations. Recent restrictions on airstrikes in Afghanistan underscore this issue and, as one journalist writes, “civilian casualties have risen from a public irritant to a potential roadblock in the U.S.–Afghan strategic partnership.”¹ In this light, the subject of how to minimize and deal with civilian casualties in a war zone merits consideration.

This article proposes an organizational structure that can more effectively prevent and mitigate civilian casualties, and decrease the negative effects such incidents can have on counterinsurgency efforts, including Operation Enduring Freedom. The proposed structure does not require additional personnel, but rather allocates, coordinates, and focuses tasks already assigned to Brigade Combat Teams when they are deployed. This structure, called a Civilian Casualty Management Team (CMT), is based primarily on Civil Affairs Teams, but also includes message coordination capabilities, a critical element considering the reach of globalized media.

As proposed here, the CMT would be a battalion-level, networked team whose role is to address legitimate grievances over civilian casualties at the local level. Civil Affairs Teams now working in Afghanistan typically consist of three soldiers (two enlisted and one officer) who assist in development and reconstruction efforts. These teams are usually assigned to a battalion in conventional operations, but also are considered special operations and often work with Special Forces. Additional capabilities would allow Civil Affairs Teams to act as “case managers” of civilian casualty incidents, and to network with the CMTs of other battalions. To be effective, these networks should be multifunctional and operate both defensively to mitigate civilian casualties, and offensively to respond to casualties caused by insurgents. In the latter event, CMTs could potentially use insurgents’ violence against civilians to win local allegiance, through initiatives tailored to specific locations and situations. Such initiatives could have operational and potentially strategic relevance in the larger counterinsurgency effort.

This article first concentrates on the importance of civilian casualty management, and explains the need for quick and accurate information dissemination. It describes how counterinsurgency goals can be enhanced through offensive and defensive information operations. The second section briefly discusses the training of the CMT. The article concludes by detailing the advantages CMTs could provide commanders who have to deal with the deleterious effects civilian casualties have on their ability to carry out their mission.

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Civilian Casualties: As Much an Enemy as Insurgents

Due to the news media's increased access to the battlefield, and the speed at which information now spreads across the world, civilian casualties at the local level can significantly influence the perceptions of international audiences. Such influence can be seen in the ongoing public debates concerning military operations that have harmed civilians in Afghanistan. The problem is made worse by the demands of the 24/7 news cycle, and the ability to spread a sensational story across the internet before anyone has checked the facts. These are among the factors that make the contemporary operating environment more complex than battlefields of the past.²

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Much has been made of counterinsurgency as a “war of perceptions.” In this type of conflict, international public opinion affects policy formulation and execution.³ For example, escalation-of-force and rules-of-engagement procedures often are contingent on operational and strategic considerations that include the prevention of civilian casualties. More importantly however, preventing civilian casualties is about gaining local populations' trust and ensuring their security, so that they can receive basic services and re-establish local government based on rule of law. To achieve these goals, perceptions play a particularly important role in counterinsurgency operations, where competing ideological narratives are reflected in tactical actions and strategic decisions. Notably, preventing or reducing civilian casualties may determine whether the public views a military operation as successful or not, as many cases in military history illustrate.⁴

Civilian casualties in Afghanistan also exemplify what David Kilcullen termed the “theory of competitive control,” in that they powerfully embody the ongoing contest of narratives.⁵ Similarly, John Arquilla stresses the strategic importance of controlling and preventing such incidents: “Collateral damage’ may be a convenient euphemism, but the real-world effect of killing the wrong people is to spark blood feuds, energize enemy recruitment and, in a case of war contagion, raise the risk of setting off a social revolution in Pakistan.”⁶ For future counterinsurgency forces sent to operate in an already unstable region, where grievances regularly lead to violence, this is an endemic problem that must be addressed.

The UN reports that in 2010, 70 percent of civilian casualties were caused by insurgents.

Kilcullen's theory is further echoed in a report published by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, which notes that in 2010, 70 percent of civilian casualties were caused by insurgents.⁷ What does this statistic indicate regarding the Afghan populace's support for radical insurgents such as al Qaeda, who intimidate and threaten local fighters into battle in support of the group's transnational ambitions? And how can this information be used by counterinsurgency forces to hang the proverbial “millstone” of public wrath around the necks of insurgents?⁸

CMTs, as proposed here, could answer both of these questions. First, by working defensively to mitigate civilian casualties, they can at the very least prevent harm and alleviate grievances. Lessening the number and severity of civilian casualties accomplishes three important tasks: 1) it helps reduce the impact on locals, which is the right thing to do in every sense; 2) it can provide a “backstop” of goodwill to help retain support among the affected

populace; and 3) it potentially contributes to latent offensive information operations opportunities. The second question, how to turn the high percentage of civilian casualties caused by insurgents into an information offensive, is addressed below.

Offensive Information Operations

When civilian casualties are caused by foreign insurgents such as al Qaeda, the CMT may help convince low-level, local fighters to distance themselves from transnational terrorists by driving home the fact that such terrorists are a primary source of civilian deaths in the fighters' own communities. This information could lead to a partial disruption of the cycle of fear and intimidation radicals often impose on locals. It is worth noting that Afghan communities resent being manipulated by any group; after decades of warfare, they primarily want to be left alone.⁹

Insurgent groups, however, try to manipulate grievances, both real and perceived, in those communities. They also take advantage of the culture of *Pashtunwali*, which can be briefly described as an unwritten code of sociocultural practices that predates Islam in the region. It guides many of the tribal cultural traits of Pashtuns, including hospitality (*melmastia*), honor (*nang*), and revenge (*badal*). Counterinsurgent forces should try to honor the codes of *Pashtunwali* by focusing every possible effort on mitigating civilian casualties, especially when insurgents are the cause. Maintaining and emphasizing ethical behavior, and deliberately contrasting that ethical behavior with the actions of insurgent groups, may help advance strategic goals by turning terrorists' brutality on themselves and setting "accidental guerrillas" (as Kilcullen calls them) against those who manipulate them.¹⁰

Deliberately contrasting [counterinsurgent forces'] ethical behavior with the actions of insurgent groups may help advance strategic goals.

The development of CMTs could help achieve both these goals. When civilian casualties occur, the CMT could be deployed to the scene as a type of "first responder." Currently, Civil Affairs Teams are often tasked with this job, but are not always given adequate resources to fully perform it. Because the CMT would essentially be a Civil Affairs Team developed specifically for this purpose, it would be tactically located and supported within the area, as well as properly equipped and trained to manage incidents involving civilian casualties. In addition to the humanitarian response, the CMT could potentially assist in separating transnational radical groups from local, low-level Taliban fighters, who do not necessarily support the extremists' goals. These outside groups provide only local support to insurgents, but when they are connected across districts and provinces, cumulatively provide an important base for terrorist activities. In counterinsurgencies, there are few and fleeting opportunities to separate outside insurgent groups from the local population; effective mitigation of civilian casualties is one way to pursue these openings.

In *The Accidental Guerrilla*, Kilcullen describes how local, low-level fighters are intimidated or manipulated into serving causes that go beyond locally focused goals, through what he terms the "accidental guerrilla syndrome."¹¹ Civilian casualties are an important piece of this process because insurgents regularly stage violence, and then publicly blame coalition forces for any deaths. Insurgent groups will brutalize and intimidate locals who are not necessarily interested in the insurgent cause, in an effort to coerce them into

providing support. This exploitation is often key to the insurgents' manipulation of local populations, and offers an opportunity for counterinsurgency teams to win over local support by providing reliable assistance.¹²

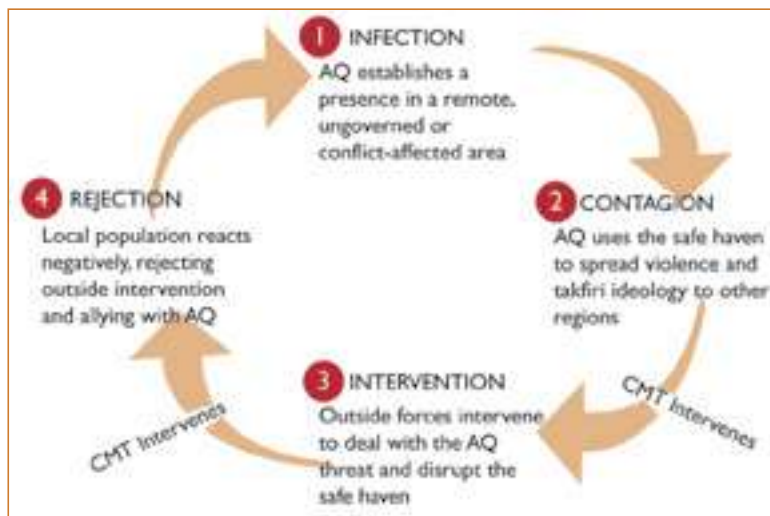


Figure 1: Accidental Guerrilla Syndrome¹⁴

Kilcullen further suggests that al Qaeda is seeking to create a global insurgency through aggregates of localized insurgencies, which are primarily formed through exploiting the accidental guerrilla syndrome.¹³ When people are co-opted and intimidated by terrorists into joining the insurgency at the local level, their actions can prompt a heavy-handed intervention by counterinsurgent forces. That intervention then creates a secondary backlash against the counterinsurgent forces. The model in figure 1 illustrates this process.

In the proposal put forth in this article, the CMT could disrupt the accidental guerrilla syndrome by intervening between the “contagion” and “rejection” phases, when counterinsurgency forces are actively engaging the guerrillas.

By stepping in at these times, the CMT could prevent local grievances over civilian casualties from being manipulated by insurgent groups, and prevent or lessen the effects of any further incidents. Such interventions could potentially prevent local fighters from becoming “infected” by terrorist efforts to manipulate them into becoming accomplices to transnational terrorist goals.

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The syndrome could be further derailed through the quick and thorough resolution of incidents of civilian casualties that have been caused by insurgents. To do so, the CMTs must use information operations to expose the criminal intent of the insurgents' actions.¹⁵ If locals can be coerced into serving terrorists' goals, then it follows that reversing the process (by turning locals against terrorists through mitigation efforts) can achieve the opposite goal of increasing support for counterinsurgency. This is not being accomplished at least in part because local grievances over civilian casualties are not dealt with as systematically and effectively as possible. There currently are insufficient information operations resources and personnel to complete what are highly significant tasks. Although civilian casualties are not the only vulnerability exploited by terrorist groups, local grievances play an important role in terrorist and insurgent calculations. One aspect of counterinsurgent efforts therefore must be to help local Afghans see more clearly that insurgent groups often have nothing positive to offer them.

In sum, if the CMTs could mitigate local incidences of civilian casualties, these seemingly small-scale approaches could potentially accomplish much more by turning the accidental guerrilla syndrome on itself, and using the same principle in reverse to set the local populations against the terrorists. Thus, an underlying goal for mitigating civilian casualties would be to make local, low-level fighters part of this specific recovery process in the short term, and perhaps get them into the Afghan Peace and Reintegration Program in the long term. Resolving civilian casualty incidents at the

community level, regardless of their causes, has the potential to exert a powerful influence within Afghan culture.¹⁶

The Civilian Casualty Management Team: Structure and Training

The proposed CMT would play a crucial role in the defensive handling of incidents involving civilian casualties caused by coalition forces. Despite the guidance laid out in SOP (Standard Operating Procedure) 307, Edition 2, current procedures lack coordination and unity. There is no organization specifically trained and tasked to deal with civilian casualties, thus every Brigade Combat Team approaches these complex events differently, and with various capabilities. CMTs would be specifically designed and trained to fill that gap. This small, networked team of professionals would more effectively address local grievances, and could also increase inter-agency coordination, if members were trained and given the network capabilities to do so prior to deployment. As discussed earlier, controlling the information environment is a vital aspect of success in counterinsurgency operations.

Information is the base for the pillars of security, governance, and development. In order to more effectively manage civilian casualty incidents, which have the potential to affect multiple levels of command, the CMT would have characteristics that reduce the impact of pitfalls such as stove-piping and other common disconnects between levels of command. These obstacles to efficiency are important to identify and correct. “We need to create ‘unity of effort’ at best, and collaboration or de-confliction at least. This depends less on a shared command-control hierarchy, and more on a shared diagnosis of the problem, platforms for collaboration, information sharing and de-confliction.”¹⁷ How would a CMT be structured to address civilian casualties more effectively?

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Structure

The CMT organizational structure would be based on Civil Affairs Teams, which typically consist of three personnel and are led by an officer (usually a Captain/O-3). Civil Affairs Teams are ideally suited to become the nucleus for the CMT concept because they are located at the battalion level. The team’s skills, training, and familiarity with such procedures as the Commander’s Insurgency Response Program, condolence payments for losses, and solatia (solace) payments for emotional distress also make it a logical platform on which to build the CMT.¹⁸

CMT members would serve as “case managers” of events involving civilian casualties, and become the primary point of contact from the initial report of deaths to the event’s resolution. This will require them to receive a module of additional skills training and improved access to resources that will assist them in dealing with civilian deaths. A CMT certification program, and the reconfiguration of Civil Affairs Teams into networks trained to work with other CMTs and aid organizations would enable CMTs to oversee multiple staff functions as they pertain to civilian casualties. Overall, CMTs could achieve a more unified effort because they would be structured as a networked collaboration to a greater degree than the system that currently exists.

The implementation of this Civilian Casualties Management Team proposal consists of three main steps:

- Utilize the 3-person Civil Affairs Team model as the primary structure;
- Incorporate training and subject-matter expertise from relevant staff sections, such as public affairs, legal, information operations, military information support operations (formerly called PSYOP), etc.;
- Augment as needed and directed by the brigade commander/BCT S3.

Training

The following section of this proposal outlines the additional skills and resources required for Civil Affairs Teams in order to create CMTs capable of more effectively managing incidents involving civilian casualties. Because every such incident is unique, training prior to deployment should focus on coordinating additional resources to address these specific incidents. Trainers would draw from sources that include Information Operations, Military Information Support Operations, Medical Operations, the Judge Advocate General, and Public Affairs. Additional training and resources might be provided by human terrain teams, red teams, religious personnel (chaplains and mullahs, contingent on the operating environment), and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), which provides a critical, long-term resource through the Afghan Civilian Assistance Program (ACAP). This program would be an integral component of the CMTs, and exemplifies how the teams may better unify efforts between the military and other agencies. Beyond the current conflict, the development of the CMT concept is relevant to any contingency operation. In the case of Afghanistan, CMTs could support coalition efforts to improve efficiency as troop numbers draw down.

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Civil Affairs.

Civil Affairs Teams possess skills in civil-military relations, and consistently develop partnerships with district officials, local community representatives, provincial governors (in some cases), Provincial Reconstruction Teams, Agricultural Development Teams, and Afghan Security Forces. Further, as mentioned earlier, these teams are already familiar with the outreach processes involving affidavits, sworn statements, and authorizing and disbursing funds. They have opportunities to interact with USAID and other aid organizations, such as the Islamic Relief Organization or Afghan Red Crescent Society. These contacts, skills, and capabilities make the Civil Affairs Teams the ideal platform for additional training to qualify them as Civilian Casualty Management Teams.

Information Operations and Military Information Support Operations.

Information Operations and Military Information Support Operations are responsible for disseminating information to local populations. In this proposal, these detachments would provide the CMT with information on the technical, cultural, and contextual aspects of specific cases, and assist the CMT by providing pertinent media resources. For example, after an incident involving civilian casualties, the CMT would be deployed by the commander to the location. One of the team's first tasks would be to decide what method should be used by Information Operations to report the incident to the community. Should it be by radio-in-a-box (a portable broadcasting system

for remote locations), face-to-face engagement, handbills, or some other method? Because the CMT, as the initial responder and case manager, would have received training for such circumstances, it could more effectively advise the information personnel.

This is important, because Information Operations is a staff function, and teams of personnel cannot be deployed to directly manage the information environment from the location of the incident. A Military Information Support Operations team assigned to the area might be tasked with this responsibility, but these teams do not have the same skill sets that Civil Affairs Teams possess. What is needed is a team with the specific capabilities of both. Although Civil Affairs Teams are a battalion-level capability, the cross-training the CMT members would receive in Information Operations would help alleviate coordination problems. CMT members would have the knowledge to make better use of Military Information Support Operations and their resources, which include public address systems and dedicated interpreters. These information teams could in turn support the CMT with cultural awareness and consequence management skills to help engage the local populace, which is important for regaining people's trust after a tragedy and informing them about what will be done to resolve the situation.¹⁹

As many commanders know, civilian casualties can set off a powder keg of anger and frustration, regardless of their cause. To be effective, mitigation preparations must be made *ahead of time*. If CMTs are already trained in culturally astute consequence management, and to incorporate and coordinate battalion and Brigade Combat Team resources fluidly, these teams would greatly improve the likelihood of resolving the casualty situations satisfactorily for all sides. Notably, maneuver unit leaders, such as platoon leaders and company commanders, must maintain overall control and manage the security of the situation at hand. If they are able to work with a well-trained CMT in managing a specific casualty incident, starting with the initial meeting that typically follows such an event, it significantly increases the commanders' overall ability to manage the larger, evolving tactical concerns.

Judge Advocate General (JAG).

JAG training would include basic legal awareness of relevant issues as they pertain to handling civilian casualties at the unit and individual levels. Clearly defined guidance for units may be channeled from the JAG through the CMT to help clarify legal limits, although CMT personnel would not be lawyers and must *not* provide legal advice. They would, however, be able to assist the JAG in making sure Afghan government and International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) legal guidelines are followed for casualty incidents. This would also help prevent infractions, or the spread of information that could legally implicate a unit or individual.

Religious support personnel.

In Islamic-based tribal societies, proper religious observances for the injured and deceased are imperative. This is particularly true in societies where unwritten codes such as *Pashtunwali* play a major part in how violent events are resolved or, alternately, create a cycle of revenge. For example, if a CMT has previously established contact with a mullah who is accepted within a community and by the locally-based Afghan National Security Forces, this

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mullah could be brought in to help the injured or to respectfully recover the bodies of those killed. Further, such pre-coordination would positively affect the development of the public message as described above. These coordinated efforts to effectively deal with civilian casualties as grievances (or determine whether grievances are legitimate) would also make it more difficult for the incident to be manipulated by outside insurgent groups.

Public Affairs.

The initial reports Public Affairs officials receive of civilian casualties are often inaccurate and confusing. These personnel nevertheless work to quickly and accurately provide basic information to media sources that sometimes know about violent incidents before higher levels of command do. While all public statements must be vetted and coordinated with Public Affairs at the brigade level, and in conjunction with Information Operations, providing CMTs with public affairs training and guidance may do much to defuse a difficult situation and prevent media sources from gleaning inaccurate or incriminating information from inexperienced soldiers. CMTs would assist and help coordinate the work of Public Affairs representatives, in a way similar to how they would work with Military Information Support Operations teams, to prevent events from being announced to the world in an uncoordinated and inaccurate manner.

USAID.

For communities, families, and individuals affected by civilian casualties, being connected with the USAID Afghan Civilian Assistance Program is important for the successful resolution of such tragic events over the long-term. The CMT's task would be to coordinate the initial implementation of this program, and eventually transfer assistance requirements over to USAID, which is the agency responsible for long-term aid commitments to Afghans. Although the CMT would not conduct the work of the program, team members would act as facilitators. Currently, this initial link between recipient and provider is inconsistent because security concerns often prevent USAID personnel from reaching the location or connecting with individuals or communities affected by these events. Utilizing the CMT to establish that initial connection could alleviate that problem.

As set out in USAID guidance:

...[ACAP] provides support for Afghan civilian families and communities that have suffered losses as a result of military operations between coalition forces and insurgents. ACAP provides sustainable assistance directly to families including one or more of the following components: small business start-up, vocational training, literacy training for adults, education support for school-age children, home repair and reconstruction, restoring livelihood sources, and rebuilding vital community infrastructure.²⁰

Judicious use of this assistance program may augment and reinforce the intent behind condolence disbursements. Furthermore, it is an opportunity to mitigate the negative effects of civilian casualties, especially when a family

has lost its income-provider, by providing a sustained flow of resources; this also is consistent with long-term counterinsurgency strategies.

CMT Certification: Recommendations and Conclusion

The CMT, based on the concept of augmenting Civil Affairs Teams through the skills described above, should be a robust and capable organization that would be deployed by the battalion commander to events involving civilian casualties. All alleged incidents must be handled seriously, and the proposed CMT can be a tool for ensuring that guidance is properly implemented beginning with the initial event.²¹ To ensure skills are fully augmented and delivered uniformly, the CMT should be certified through implementation of an additional skill identifier.

Because it synthesizes multiple staff elements and skills, the CMT organizational structure warrants such certification. This additional skill identifier would also reassure battalion commanders that CMTs are equipped with the knowledge, ability, and skills to unify capabilities at Brigade Combat Team and battalion levels, and that CMTs may effectively mitigate and manage civilian casualty incidents. Certification could possibly include the development and implementation of a series of battle drills in real-world scenarios, such as a small-scale version of the Ft. Polk Joint Readiness Training Center or the National Training Center at Ft. Irwin, in the United States. Further, such battle drills could be part of Brigade Combat Team deployment validation training during rotations at Ft. Polk and Ft. Irwin.

The ISAF Civilian Casualties Handling Procedures handbook details the numerous reports required and steps that must be taken to achieve the Commander of ISAF's intent.²² ISAF SOP 307, Edition 2 is a highly complex and important process to execute downrange. That being said, the most important recommendation regarding the CMT is that it must be implemented *before* a deployment. To achieve this, detailed instruction and procedural familiarity with SOP 307, Edition 2's guidance would be a capstone element of the additional skill identifier certification discussed above.

The certified CMT would thus become an important resource to ensure a unified effort when dealing with civilian casualties. This capability could greatly improve counterinsurgency forces' ability to handle civilian casualties in a timely manner, and enable them to more effectively communicate with locals affected by the incidents, the media, and civilian leadership. As a result, it also would be an important step toward more effective counterinsurgency operations. ❖

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NOTES

- 1 Eric Schmitt, "Allies Restrict Airstrikes on Taliban in Civilian Homes," *New York Times*, June 10, 2012: <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/11/world/asia/allies-restrict-airstrikes-against-taliban-in-homes.html>; and Erica Gaston, "Karzai's Casualties Ultimatum," *Foreign Policy: The AFPak Channel*, June 2, 2011: http://afpak.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/06/02/karzais_civilian_casualties_ultimatum
- 2 Stanley A. McChrystal, "It Takes a Network: The New Frontline of Modern Warfare," *Foreign Policy* (March/April, 2011): 2.
- 3 "Increasing Popular Support," *The U.S. Army and Marine Corp Counterinsurgency Field Manual* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), Sections 5–80.
- 4 Robert M. Cassidy, "Back to the Street without Joy: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Vietnam and Other Small Wars," *Parameters* vol. 34, no. 2 (Summer 2004): 75, 80. According to Cassidy, the importance of learning from historical cases of counterinsurgency is critical and deserves improvement: "Instead of learning from our experiences in Vietnam, the Philippines, the Marine Corps' experience in the Banana Wars, and the Indian campaigns, the U.S. Army for most of the last 100 years has viewed these experiences as distractions from preparing to win big wars against other big powers. As a result of marginalizing the counterinsurgencies and small wars that it has spent most of its existence prosecuting, the U.S. military's big-war cultural preferences have impeded it from fully benefiting—studying, distilling, and incorporating into doctrine—from our somewhat extensive lessons in small wars and insurgencies." 75.
- 5 "U.S. Government Counterinsurgency Guide," Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, Department of State, Washington, D.C., 2009: <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/119629.pdf>. This guide articulates the overarching political goal of insurgent and counterinsurgent activities: "Insurgents fight government forces only to the extent needed to achieve their political aims: their main effort is not to kill counterinsurgents, but rather to establish a competitive system of control over the population, making it impossible for the government to administer its territory and people." 6.
- 6 John Arquilla, "Aspects of Netwar and the Conflict with Al-Qaeda," Information Operations Center, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, Calif., 2009, 25.
- 7 Susan G. Chesser, "Afghanistan Casualties: Military Forces and Civilians," Congressional Research Service (CRS) Report for Congress, 7-5700/R41084, January 14, 2011. See also, United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 40 of resolution 1917 (2010) (S/2010/318), June 2010.
- 8 Jim Boone, "Protecting Afghan Civilians a Priority, Petraeus Tells Troops," the *Guardian*, August 2, 2010: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/aug/02/david-petraeus-protect-afghan-civilians-print>. The article cites guidelines published on the website for NATO's International Security Assistance Force, where guidance was given to "fight the information war aggressively" by hanging "their barbaric actions like millstones around the necks." The article also cites the important goal of reducing civilian casualties to an absolute minimum. Also see Colonel John M. Spitzer, "Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan: Lessons Learned by a Brigade Combat Team," *Military Review* (January/February, 2011): 75.
- 9 C. J. Chivers, Alissa Rubin, and Wesley Morgan, "U.S. Pulling Back in Afghan Valley it Called Vital to War," *New York Times*, February 24, 2011: <http://www.newyorktimes.com>. The article describes ongoing reorganization and realignment in the Pech Valley, Kunar Province, and provides evidence about how local Afghans feel about forces in their communities: "What we figured out is that people in the Pech really aren't anti-U.S. or anti-anything, they just want to be left alone," said one American military official. ... "Our presence is what's destabilizing this area." This particular quote corroborates David Kilcullen's theory of the accidental guerrilla syndrome.
- 10 Grasping the importance of *Pashtunwali* in Pashtun culture is imperative. Greater understanding and incorporation of its practices and cultural norms should be a part of intelligence preparation of the battlefield and other operational planning.
- 11 David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 34–38. See also, John Tirman, *The Deaths of Others: The Fate of Civilians in America's Wars* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 276–81. Tirman focuses on the legality of operations and wrongful deaths of civilians in Afghanistan, but his work also demonstrates how civilian casualties contribute to a cycle of violence as individuals seek revenge or retribution when the grievance is not adequately remedied.
- 12 Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla*, 34: "Al Qaeda's ideology tends to lack intrinsic appeal for traditional societies, and so it draws the majority of its strength from this backlash rather than from genuine popular support."
- 13 *Ibid.*, 21: "The *takfiri* extremist enemy is naturally vulnerable to a disaggregation approach that seeks to turn factions against each other and disrupt the overall effects of extremism."
- 14 *Ibid.*, 35.
- 15 Colonel Steven R. Watt, "Can the United States 'Defeat' Al Qaeda?" U.S. Army War College, Carlisle, Pennsylvania, March 19, 2010, 10. In his discussion of the conflict between the Palestinians and Israel, Watt notes a process strikingly similar to that described by Kilcullen: "[Palestinian] leaders use the 'humiliation' grievance to identify and establish a real or perceived national degradation of their 'in' group. They then harness the outrage of group members and encourage acts of extreme violence as a means of retribution."
- 16 ISAF Fragmentary Order (FRAGO) 117 (UNCLASS), which implements ISAF SOP 307, Edition 2, succinctly describes the importance of preventing civilian casualties: "Commander ISAF's view is that CIVCAS (civilian casualty) incidents will fuel insurgent propaganda, increase the threat to ISAF, significantly undermine the Counterinsurgency (COIN) strategy, and increase the chance of mission failure." HQ ISAF//FRAGO/117 – 2010. UNCLASSIFIED. 1. Situation, a. General, (1) and (2), 1/3 and 3. Execution, c. Tasks, (1a). This importance is corroborated by the fact that civilian casualties are cited as a primary grievance by local Afghans. "U.S. Government Counterinsurgency Guide," 9. See also Jon Boone, "Protecting Afghan civilians a priority, Petraeus tells troops," the *Guardian*, 2 August, 2010: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/aug/02/david-petraeus-protect-afghan-civilians/print>
- 17 David Kilcullen, "Three Pillars of Counterinsurgency," lecture given at the U.S. Government Counterinsurgency Conference, Washington D.C., September 28, 2006, 4.
- 18 "Money As A Weapon System—Afghanistan (MAAWS-A)," USFOR-A Pub 1-06, Commander's Emergency Response Program, SOP, December 2009, 14.
- 19 Susan G. Chesser, "Afghanistan Casualties: Military Forces and Civilians," CRS Report for Congress, 7-5700/R41084, January 14, 2011, 2.
- 20 "Audit of USAID/Afghanistan's Afghan Civilian Assistance Program (ACAP)," Audit Report No. 5-306-10-004-P, Office of Inspector General, Manila, Philippines, December 15, 2009. The Afghan Civilian Assistance Program is part of the Leahy Initiative, which was authorized by the Consolidated Appropriations Resolution, 2003 (Public Law 108-7). This law specified that assistance be made available for humanitarian, reconstruction, and related purposes for Afghan communities and families adversely affected by military operations. The program has been under-utilized in the past; a much greater effort is needed to connect Afghans affected by civilian casualties to the program.
- 21 In this case, ISAF SOP 307, Edition 2.
- 22 Due to the restricted status of that document, the reader is referred to it for more information on required step-by-step procedures.