Landpower Essay

No. 04-2
October 2004

An Institute of Land Warfare Publication

Conventional Forces in Low-Intensity Conflict: The 82d Airborne in Firebase Shkin

by

David L. Buffaloe

Introduction

In May 2003 I was given a remarkable opportunity. I had always wanted to take command of an airborne infantry company and subsequently to lead them in combat, but what ensued over the next three months went beyond my expectations. I took command of a unique company team composed of assets that I never thought I would command. I conducted numerous Civil Military Operations (CMOs) along with intense combat operations. Over the next six weeks, soldiers under my command engaged in six firefights with al Qaeda forces, and none of my soldiers sustained injury. When we left Firebase Shkin, I knew I had just partaken in the experience of a lifetime. I was given an opportunity that no other captain in the Army was given: to fight his own combined-arms, coalition, joint, multi-agency fight in his own Area of Operations (AO). But in addition to my own thankfulness for being given this opportunity, I realized that what we accomplished could and should be accomplished by young company commanders throughout the world in support of the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT). After the high-intensity warfare is complete and we begin fighting an insurgency operation, the best way to find, fix and finish an enemy waging a guerilla war is to give leaders at the small-unit level enough leeway, enough specialized assets and enough firepower to engage their population, develop their own intelligence and be able to crush the enemy.

The enemy we routinely face in the GWOT blends into the population. He might or might not have the support of the locals, but the same can be said for the coalition forces' relationships with the locals. We need to earn local support on a personal level; only then will they assist us in fighting insurgency.

In writing this I have three goals. The first is to get our Army and National Security leaders to recognize that we have, within our existing forces, a remarkable asset for fighting and winning the war on terrorism: our company-sized elements. The way ahead is simple: focus some of our doctrine and training to prepare young company commanders to lead combined-arms warfare, to conduct CMO operations, and to develop and exploit their own intelligence. This leads into my second goal: to provide a short "lessons learned" to my fellow company commanders who are currently or will soon be in a position like mine where they can conduct these types of operations. Finally, I want to share our story; the 200+ American and coalition soldiers and the 180+ Afghan Militia who served

The Landpower Essay series is published by AUSA's Institute of Land Warfare. The series is designed to provide an outlet for original essays on topics that will stimulate professional discussion and further public understanding of the landpower aspects of national security. The content represents the personal opinions of the author and not necessarily the position of the Association of the United States Army or its members. Candidate essays of 5,000 words or less may be submitted to: AUSA's Institute of Land Warfare, ATTN: Landpower Essay Series, 2425 Wilson Boulevard, Arlington, VA 22201. For more information about AUSA and the Institute of Land Warfare, visit our website at www.ausa.org.

with me in the Bermel Valley risked their lives every day and came out with a tremendous sense of accomplishment. We took the Bermel Valley from the enemy, and we won our own battles in this Global War on Terrorism. In no way do I claim to be an expert in either conventional or unconventional warfare. I simply wish to share the experiences of a unit that was successful.

The Bermel Valley

In the Bermel Valley—dubbed "the evilest place" by the XVIII Airborne Corps commander—B Company, 3d Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82d Airborne Division did what had not been done before and did it very successfully. We fought a joint, combined-arms, coalition, interagency fight at the company level. Soldiers under my command fought in six small-arms firefights with al Qaeda. In addition to fighting, however, we conducted numerous CMOs. We met with elders from every village in the Bermel Valley, drank *chai* (tea), and discussed village problems and how to arrive at joint solutions. We provided humanitarian assistance and di-minimus health care (defined as small-scale medical assistance operations using available excess medical supplies) to the population. We laid the groundwork to build wells, hospitals and schools—including the first ever girls' school in the region. We met routinely with the regional governor to discuss security issues. We met monthly with the Pakistani Border Guard commander across the border to discuss cross-border issues and cooperation. We trained, equipped and employed 180 Afghan Militia fighters and conducted joint operations with the Afghan National Army (ANA). Best of all, we did it well. Not one soldier under my command got a scratch from enemy fire. Intelligence reports claimed that we killed about two dozen seasoned, foreign al Qaeda fighters. And the unified effort of engaging the population in CMOs led directly to most of the intelligence we collected—intelligence that saved my life and my soldiers' lives. We applied special operations tactics but with the conventional-force firepower and survivability that Special Forces Operational Detachment Alpha Teams (A-Teams) do not possess.

Throughout this low-intensity war with the al Qaeda and the remaining hostile Taliban forces, conventional forces routinely had difficulty finding and fixing enemy forces. A conventional force usually went into an area with so much strength and firepower that the enemy forces would simply blend into the populace and wait for the battalion to leave the region, hoping we would not stumble upon their weapons cache. A-Teams had much more success finding the enemy while driving around the countryside in convoys of four government motor vehicles, but they did not have the firepower, armor or backup to fight their way through an ambush and come out victorious. We did have that firepower. We were able to provide just enough of a signature to lure out the enemy forces, but with enough firepower and support to destroy them.

As an infantry company commander, my role, my autonomy, my distance from my higher headquarters, my engagement with the local populace was something that up until then was only done by Special Forces A-Team commanders. My task organization and the assets under my command mimicked a small battalion task force. Never had I envisioned that I would be thrown into such a situation; none of my formal military training focused on such scenarios. However, with our nation engaged in a long-term, low-intensity war while trying to conduct stability operations in both Afghanistan and Iraq, and with our Special Forces spread so thin, Bravo Company proved not only that conventional forces can be ultimately successful in this fight, but that we are actually very well adapted to accomplish this mission.

Our operations and our way of doing things should be adapted for the future of low-intensity conflict. Our approach was to give a company commander a combined-arms team, make them mobile—two antitank (AT) platoons and enough cargo high-mobility multipurpose wheeled vehicles (HMMWVs) to move—and give them:

- enough infantrymen—we had six squads;
- local, reactive, accurate fire support—we had two 60mm mortar tubes, 2 x 105mm howitzers and a Q-36 Fire Finder Radar system;
- plenty of intelligence assets—we had a human intelligence (HUMINT) team; a signal intelligence (SIGINT) team; a Remote Battlefield Sensor System (REMBASS); a long-range reconnaissance detachment (LRSD); and scouts with some access to national-level intelligence assets to develop their own intelligence while feeding intelligence to the higher headquarters;
- engineers and/or explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) personnel to blow up stuff and to disarm improvised explosive devices (IEDs) when they find them;
- Civil Affairs (CA) assets so they can engage the population;
- tactical air control parties (TACPs);
- medical assets enough to treat a mass-casualty scenario and also to use for CMO operations;
- Psychological Operations (PSYOP) assets to help convey the coalition message;
- their own cooks and mechanics (as well as augmenting them with local hires);
- a miniature battalion staff—I had a full-time battle captain (lieutenant, junior captain or E-7), an E-5 intelligence analyst as my S2 (intelligence), and S4 (logistics—I had a lieutenant who was serving as the battalion's assistant S4), and S5 (Civil Affairs—I had a CA E-5);
- plenty of interpreters; and
- a local militia force to train and utilize.

Field grade officers were used as well; in one rifle battalion, they could easily split among three locations—the battalion commander at one location, the executive officer at a second location, and the S3 (operations) at a third. This would allow every firebase to be commanded by a field grade officer, while each would have a company commander as the "commander on the ground" for any action that took place.

When we had all that, we were allowed to engage the population and to plan our own missions. We controlled our own AO, and our field grade officer could clear fires. We had enough assets to protect the firebase, provide a quick-reaction force (QRF) and still conduct a good-sized operation (either CMO or offensive).

Tactics in Low-Intensity Conflict

The essence and focus of low-intensity conflict is no different from that of high-intensity conflict. The commander's goal is to find, fix and finish the enemy. The difference lies in the specific tasks. The enemy does not wear a uniform. He blends into the population. Often he invokes fear in the local populace; sometimes he can rally them to his cause. In this instance, he had a pseudo-haven across the border in Pakistan where we could not pursue him unless we maintained positive identification. Finding him was the most difficult task. We used a mixture of scouts; snipers; LRSD; unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs); REMBASS motion sensors; Q-36 Fire Finder Radar; a "big brother" Joint Land Attack Cruise Missile Defense Elevated Netted Sensor (J-LENS) forward-looking infrared system; infantry squads in ambush positions and observation posts (OPs); a tactical HUMINT team and HUMINT sources such as village elders, Pakistanis, the Bermel police, and the regional governor; and the least preferred method—making accidental direct contact with the enemy (sometimes on his terms, but sometimes on our own).

Fixing the enemy usually involved indirect fires. These are most effective when shot beyond the enemy to seal off their suspected escape route. Fixing the enemy could also involve maintaining direct contact with him by the force (such as a mounted antitank patrol) that made initial contact.

Finishing the enemy always involved crushing him with an overwhelming QRF, defeating him with direct-fire weapon systems, and claiming the ground he once held or engaging him in pursuit.

These principles of find-fix-and-finish are what helped us defeat the al Qaeda and anticoalition militants (ACMs) in the Bermel Valley, but what won on the larger and long-term level was getting out and engaging the local population. This was done through various CMOs and local projects completed by members of the Coalition Joint Civil Military Task Force (CJCMOTF) and other government agencies (OGAs), as well as with the support of some nongovernment organizations (NGOs). You only truly know your AO when you get out and engage the population; they only come to trust you when you do so.

Finally, we relied mostly on our own intelligence. We had numerous intelligence-gathering assets. The gathering and analysis of intelligence in our AO was the single piece that helped ensure our success. Only very rarely did we receive national-level intelligence leads; the intelligence we developed was much more reliable.

Command and Control Structure/Unity of Command

The different regions of Afghanistan were divided up into Areas of Operations, each belonging to a different task force. Each task force had different functions, e.g., the Coalition Joint Special Operations Task Force (CJSOTF) conducted special operations missions and the Coalition Joint Civil Military Task Force (CJCMOTF) focused on Civil Military Operations (CMO). My own task force, Task Force Devil, focused mainly on offensive combat operations. A task force might or might not have personnel stationed within another task force's AO. For instance, Task Force Devil personnel were often stationed at CJSOTF and CJCMOTF firebases to provide force protection and QRF in support of the CJSOTF and CJCMOTF missions. To streamline operations and make battle tracking easier, one group has to own any given AO. Unity of command is essential when clearing fires. Ultimately, however, it is essential in creating a unified effort to pacify an area.

Prior to my assumption of command, CJSOTF controlled Firebase Shkin and the AO encompassing the Bermel Valley, while Task Force Devil personnel were simply there providing force protection and limited patrolling. When CJSOTF pulled out of the AO, Task Force Devil assumed control of the firebase and the AO.

The battalion executive officer (XO) served as the overall firebase and AO commander. I was the only company commander. Even though the lines between what fell under his command and what fell under my command were very blurry, this command structure actually worked out perfectly. The battalion XO could always be the overall firebase commander while I could always be the "commander on the ground." He would clear fires in the tactical operations center (TOC) as I requested them. He would send reports higher, request assets such as Army aviation and close air support (CAS); he could coordinate QRFs to reinforce me in a pinch. Our lines of command blurred but never clashed; we had a great working relationship. I highly recommend this as a model for future firebases.

Combat Operations

Firebase Defense. Defending the firebase is paramount, but in a low-intensity conflict it is somewhat different because the enemy is very unlikely to conduct a full frontal attack or penetration. Firebase Shkin had three main defensive perimeters: the outer perimeter, the inner perimeter and the wall.

At any given time, one squad rotated on firebase defense. This squad would man the inner perimeter gate and the two eastern towers, which had the largest fields of fire and most activity since they overlooked the Bermel Valley and could see all the way to Pakistan. The squad leader would serve as the firebase Sergeant of the Guard responsible to the TOC for overall firebase defense and conduct of the guards. One of the other two towers was manned by AT platoons (since we had only six up-armored HMMWVs, this provided one AT section that at any given time was not either patrolling or standing by on QRF), and the other was manned as a shared responsibility by the other soldiers in the firebase such as the mortars, air defense artillery and field artillery. We also always maintained a QRF.

The fire support officer (FSO) produced an awesome plan for overall firebase defense, integrating direct and indirect fire support and considering the dead space. We executed "Blackjack" drills (exercises of our battle drill) in the event of a direct attack on the firebase. These drills helped in a number of ways. First, they ironed out problems that we could face if we did receive a direct attack. Second, they showed the enemy what our capabilities were should they ever think to launch a direct attack. And most important, they showed the soldiers that they were safe, that nothing could penetrate our firebase, and that they were a part of the defensive plan. In each Blackjack drill, we would exercise all assets, whether it was a live-fire drill or not. Everyone would don helmets and body armor and seek cover within the protective walls and structures of the two-foot-thick, mud-built firebase. The squad and section leaders would come to the firebase TOC for their briefing, and we would reinforce one or two of the walls with soldiers ready to engage with direct fire. At times, we would even emplace targets in the fields for the soldiers to engage. We usually would include mass-casualty exercise drills to get the advanced trauma life support (ATLS) team involved and prepared along with preparing the squads to exercise buddy aid, evacuation and reinforcement of a weak section of the wall. And we would exercise resupplying all soldiers with ammunition that was prepositioned on the walls and at the base of the towers.

The firebase was surrounded by wadis that provided avenues of approach about 100–200 meters outside the firebase and in some places right up to the outer AMF perimeter. Prior to my arrival, the infantry squads conducted routine dismounted patrols of these wadi systems and other dead space such as that on the other side of the hills to our west. These patrols could be conducted entirely dismounted, entering and leaving the firebase on foot. Even though they fit in with the standard thought of planning for a defense, I put a stop to these types of patrols for two reasons.

The first was the drain on resources vs. the payoff. These patrols usually took one squad per day. I had only six rifle squads at the firebase; I used my weapons squad as a rifle squad and usually left their M204B machine guns mounted on the towers for firebase defense. Among these six, three squads rotated on "defense," which consisted of QRF, guard and compensation time or training time. The other three rotated on "offense," which consisted of all operations outside of the firebase. Giving up one of these three precious rifle squads for low-payoff dismounted patrols to clear firebase dead space was not an option. Instead, I used other assets at my disposal—Avengers and other soldiers. The Avenger missile trucks were very handy for clearing dead space. Since there was no aerial threat from the enemy, we refocused the Avengers to provide mobile eyes that could see extremely well any movement in the dead space. Although much louder than a dismounted patrol, they were also much quicker and could identify movement at night anywhere in the wadi system.

The second and more important reason for ending the strictly dismounted patrols around the firebase was recognition of the way the enemy fights in a low-intensity conflict. The enemy, whether al Qaeda, hostile Taliban, AMF or some similar group, will not be so bold as to attempt a deliberate attack on an established, defended structure. They fight by conducting indirect fire attacks using mortars and rockets and by ambushing patrols when they are out and exposed. During the GWOT,

there have been remarkably few direct, small-arms attacks on firebases, forward operating bases (FOBs) and larger established structures. (Even in the attacks that are on record, many can be attributed to a small attack on one remote guard post, probably with the intent of killing only those guards rather than penetrating the firebase.) By looking at the points of origin of the rockets and missiles fired and the locations of the ambushes, I determined that the enemy was fighting from between six and 15 kilometers outside the firebase, and mostly near the Pakistani border, rather than close in to the firebase. Since they were fighting us from there, that is where our operations needed to be, rather than close in to the firebase. I was able to focus my efforts there because we did have a strong defense, as demonstrated during live-fire Blackjack drills, and could rely on our close-in safety.

One last topic of great importance to firebase defense is operational security (OPSEC). OPSEC must be maintained. We knew that the enemy collected intelligence on us. We always operated on the assumption that whenever a patrol left the firebase, it was seen and reported in some fashion, even if only by means as primitive as a signal fire, mirror or flashlight. Also, we had to be careful what was said around the local workers and AMF; we had to prevent talk about any operations, even routine patrols, among the locals. Noncommissioned officers (NCOs) monitored weekly calls home to ensure that no information was passed on the satellite phone that might be picked up by the enemy.

Major Operations. We identified a major operation as anything greater than a routine patrol. These operations could range in size from platoon to company plus. In every event, we used every available asset to plan for every conceivable contingency. Whether the mission was a raid, a sensitive-site exploitation (SSE), a cordon-and-search or a CMO, the task organization looked pretty much the same. We always planned for an outer cordon, an inner cordon, a search team, Team Village with security, intelligence-gathering assets, a demolition team, a medical team and responsive fire support. If the operation fell within the standard range of our 105mm howitzers, we left it at that with preplanned targets. If it fell only within rocket-assisted propellant (RAP) range, I displaced the 60mm mortars because I did not trust the variance that RAP produced. If the operation fell outside RAP range, we displaced a howitzer. We also always requested deliberate CAS on any planned operation. Even on CMOs, CAS was very helpful.

Our outer cordon usually consisted of Afghan Militia Forces. The inner cordon usually consisted of elements of my antitank platoon. Both were used for the cordon because they were very quick to establish blocking positions. Occasionally, I would also use infantry squads to help establish the inner cordon in locations where using an AT vehicle was unnecessary. The cordon or “Team Secure” would always fall under the command and control of the AT platoon leader. This ensured that one leader was focused solely on securing the objective. They would initially lock down the objective and then, at my command, would allow both personnel and vehicular traffic to flow in a controlled fashion after a thorough search.

Inside, I would task one platoon with “Search.” Most of our missions—raid, SSE or otherwise—involved a major search of the premises. In any event, we had to be prepared to search anything if we found an intelligence lead. One of the infantry platoon leaders was always assigned as the search platoon leader. He usually had an engineer or EOD team at his disposal to search anything that looked suspicious or to destroy any caches.

We always took along a “Team Village.” This encompassed all of our “squishy” elements, a security force, and usually myself. “Squishy,” a term coined by the battalion commander, roughly meant forces whose primary mission did not involve killing the enemy. It usually applied to Civil Affairs and PSYOP forces who went in to meet with the village elders. I usually used my weapons squad (without their machine guns or Javelins) as Team Village’s personal security detachment.

Team Village was always led by the head CMO person, either my own S5 or the Civil Affairs team (CAT-A) commander. Falling under the Team Village for command and control (C2) but usually operating independently were the tactical HUMINT team (THT). They were best at working the outskirts. During a meeting with village elders, the Team Village leader and I could debrief the S2 on any intelligence that came out of the meeting, but the THT had good success working intelligence from the crowd and the younger members of the village who were not invited into the meeting.

Many operations also included a "Team Overwatch." This was usually simply my fire support officer or NCO along with the Air Force forward air controllers or TACPs and sometimes a sniper. They would take a two-man infantry security element also if need be. Along with the cordon, they would establish an OP on the highest ground available, where they could provide overwatch and coordinate all indirect fire support.

Finally, we always took a medical team, usually a full ATLS team. This would consist of a medical provider (either a doctor or physician assistant) and two medics. On call on most major operations for any casualties sustained, they were also a great CMO asset—the main effort in diminimus health care—for trying to gain the favor of local elders with children who could use medical attention.

Mounted Presence Patrols. These patrols were some of our most effective. Every day we conducted two mounted daytime presence patrols and one mounted nighttime presence patrol. These could coincide with other patrols or operations, but many of them were simply patrols in and of themselves. During daylight, we ran two AT vehicles: up-armored HMMWVs with one MK-19 automatic grenade launcher and one M2 .50-caliber machine gun. These patrols showed the population that we were present and had control of their valley, while also providing me plenty of eyes on my AO. It also allowed the young AT leaders, section leaders, platoon leaders and platoon sergeants a chance to plan and lead their own patrols. They planned fires and shifted priority targets, stopped and searched suspicious vehicles, and provided intelligence in their debriefings that helped us plan future operations.

We learned at night to roll an entire platoon because two vehicles simply did not provide enough firepower. If two vehicles get split in an ambush, they become completely ineffective—we learned this lesson the hard way on 1 June 2003. One two-truck section of AT-2 was conducting a night presence toward the Bermel Bazaar when their two vehicles drove into a near ambush. The enemy initiated with rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs) and PK machine guns. The AT section returned fire as each vehicle drove out of the kill zone on the fastest route possible. Unfortunately the fastest route for the lead vehicle was to drive forward and the fastest route for the trailing vehicle was to back up. Once out of the kill zone, neither vehicle could effectively fire upon the enemy location because they feared stray .50-caliber and MK-19 rounds might hit the other AT truck. Worse yet, one of the trucks had two tires damaged and no assistance from anyone else. We wound up bringing the damaged truck back to the firebase and marrying up the lead truck with a QRF force. The strongest lesson we learned that night was to roll a minimum of four gun trucks during the hours of darkness so they can provide mutual support.

This lesson paid huge dividends eight days later, on the night of 9 June 2003. The four gun-truck patrol by AT-2, moving out to exfiltrate a dismounted ambush, identified movement in an area near recent enemy activity. One of the gunners identified weapons. The platoon formed themselves into an L-shape by sending the lead section along the wadi that started Route Saturn while the trail section remained on Route Chevy. The platoon made simultaneous contact with the al Qaeda—one .50-caliber gunner initiated fire at the same time an al Qaeda operative fired his RPG. After the

firefight, what remained on the battlefield were four dead al Qaeda who had been camping in a listening post/observation post (LP/OP) with eyes on the firebase and equipment, such as antitank mines and detonation cord, to set up an IED-initiated ambush. This night we were entirely successful because AT-2 had enough assets to surround and overwhelm the enemy.

Ambush. The ambush is a simple standard infantry operation that proved very effective. We usually executed these with one rifle squad—often augmented with one M240B machine gun and a forward observer (FO)—with a platoon leader in charge. When conducting these patrols, we cut no corners, executing them exactly the way we were taught in Ranger School and the Infantry Officer Basic Course. These patrols would usually take up a full night for clandestine infiltration, establishment, break-down and exfiltration. There are two keys to conducting ambush patrols during low-intensity conflict. The first is the trickiness of the rules of engagement (ROE), and the second is effectively infiltrating without being seen.

The ROE in Afghanistan, and especially in the Bermel Valley, allowed us to shoot first if we could clearly identify hostile intent; therefore, ambush patrols were effective. The platoon leader would be required to make the call based on his knowledge of the people, terrain, past enemy activity and traffic patterns. A platoon leader was used on every squad-sized mission such as this because there might be a difficult call to be made about whether or not to engage. Obviously not every vehicle or person moving at night was hostile; this was proven by searching numerous vehicles stopped by nighttime AT patrols. Therefore, positively identifying vehicles transporting enemy personnel was nearly impossible. The only hypothetical situation where permission could be granted to open fire would be if armed al Qaeda operatives were seen brandishing weapons from the backs of trucks, or if a highly suspicious, high-end, blacked-out sport-utility vehicle (SUV) convoy was moving through the area. This reinforces the need for unified C2 in the AO so other government agencies, special operations forces, AMF and ANA personnel would not move through the valley without a squad on an ambush line knowing of their movement to avoid fratricide. Most al Qaeda we faced, however, infiltrated and operated on foot, making positive identification at night much easier. However, depending on terrain, enemy activity and ability to positively identify hostile intent, an ambush patrol might become nothing more than a large-sized overnight OP.

Clandestine infiltration is extremely difficult for a squad-plus element in this environment. The Bermel Valley offers limited cover and concealment. Also, given the unconventional warfare waged by the enemy, we had to contend with enemy sympathizers identifying our movement and communicating it. We always assumed that when a patrol rolled out of the firebase gate, someone would count the number of vehicles, estimate the number of personnel and send the message out to our enemies. Working under this assumption, we planned our infiltrations very meticulously. This included rolling with two squads at night along with the AT platoon. The squad that would actually be conducting the ambush would be spread out among the two cargo HMMWVs and the empty seats of the AT vehicles. This way, enemy sympathizers would only be able to communicate and confirm that four gun trucks and two cargo trucks full of soldiers exited the firebase on patrol and were still patrolling around the valley. This also allowed for a much more reactive rolling QRF that could act as the finishing force once the ambush squad fixed the enemy. Rolling insertions, false insertions and insertions in concealed terrain were also key to a clandestine infiltration.

Specific intelligence from higher that an enemy convoy was moving on a specific route at a specific time never came. These patrols were better for simply keeping eyes and firepower out to deny the enemy freedom of maneuver in the AO. Even when an ambush was seen by a watchful enemy eye, it let them know we meant business and probably made them think twice about infiltrating on key routes.

Clearing Missions. There are two types of clearing: systematically clearing a group of compounds and simply clearing empty terrain. Although we cleared a number of compounds, these were always major operations and usually intelligence-driven. Clearing empty terrain is very simple to plan but tiresome to execute. Such operations do, however, often yield very good intelligence. These were dismounted missions to walk a patch of ground looking for clues of enemy activity. As for any mission, we had to plan for fire support, casualty evacuation and QRF. The chance of actually finding any enemy on these missions was slim, as we could be easily seen as we entered the area and as we approached. However, in an attempt to get away quickly, the enemy could leave behind equipment or evidence of their presence. In addition, when we cleared areas that were frequently used by the enemy, it familiarized the soldiers and leaders with ground that they might have to fight on one day, and like any other show of force, it denies the enemy that piece of terrain. We quickly learned why nobody lived or trafficked the mountains leading into Pakistan—one trip up them in body armor was plenty!

Static Observation Posts/Snipers. These were among the most effective operations we conducted. The best way to "find" the enemy is to physically see them moving when they believe they are not being watched. By the end of our tenure at Shkin, we had a large-sized scout and LRSD element that we rotated every 72 hours to maintain continuous coverage on our two most used areas: around Losano Ridge and in the vicinity of Route Saturn. We also used infantry squads in 48-hour operations. On one occasion, I even had the privilege of employing an Italian target acquisition detachment (TAD). Each had its strengths and weaknesses.

Using a rifle squad was effective, especially when scout or LRS assets are not available, but that approach had its weaknesses. Sustainability was usually no more than 48 hours. Also, the squad was cumbersome and had a tendency to receive a "soft compromise" (discovery by a neutral force such as a child, villager or farmer). They were also difficult to infiltrate clandestinely. Due to the size of the rifle squad, however, it could usually cover more ground by splitting up into three separate elements. Each fire team would occupy its own OP, and the squad leader, FO, radio-telephone operator and platoon leader would occupy a separate C2 OP. The individual fire teams would maintain short-range communications with the squad and platoon leaders, while the C2 OP would maintain communications with the firebase. One of the most effective uses of the squad LP/OP was the "stay-behind" LP/OP. Whenever we conducted a major operation in a village—either a CMO mission or a clearing operation—we would try to leave a stay-behind. It is much easier to infiltrate a small force when rolling in with such a large fighting force. Besides, many villages say they don't want to accept your help because the al Qaeda would come after them. Stay-behind OPs could find out who, if anybody, did. The al Qaeda are curious about why we come to the village, and they want to gather intelligence about us. Even if the squad receives a soft compromise and everyone knows a covert LP/OP was in place, all is not lost because it makes the enemy feel we are always watching and it makes the villagers feel either safe or reluctant to assist the enemy.

Battalion scouts and snipers were a smaller, more adept element. They were able to effectively stay out for 72 hours at a time and could infiltrate much better locations. Additionally, in our battalion, the sniper teams are intermixed with the battalion scouts, so often I could send out a team to conduct reconnaissance, and they would also have the additional capability to take a precision shot using an M24 or a Barrett .50-caliber sniper rifle. Of course, precision shots are crucial during a low-intensity conflict due to the requirement to minimize collateral damage. Scouts and snipers are usually better at planning for the missions and better at back-briefing than the rifle squads. The drawback is that they are not an effective fighting force by themselves, so we made up for that with responsive indirect fire (priority targets) and with a dedicated QRF.

LRSDs, effectively able to sustain themselves for 96–120 hours, were even better suited than the battalion scouts. Continuous coverage became necessary in one particularly volatile area, so I used my LRSD team much more like a scout team. They split their six-man team (the sixth man was their medic) into two three-man teams, one led by the team leader and the other by the assistant team leader. Their planning methods and back-briefs were even better than those of the scouts. They were able to send photos back to us using Tactical Satellite Data messages while the team was in the hide-site, and they made extensive use of a digital camera for back-briefs. Similar to the scouts, however, they are not an effective fighting force by themselves. The only compromise to either the scout or LRSD teams came on 29 June 2003, when the LRS team received a "hard compromise"—they were engaged by the enemy using an automatic weapon from about 600 meters out. Of course, we had a priority 105mm artillery target laid on for protection, and although it was not accurate, the enemy stopped shooting and evacuated back to Pakistan once the artillery began landing in their vicinity. We were easily able to extract the LRSD team with the QRF and sustained no U.S. injuries.

For a short period of time I also had the opportunity to employ an Italian target acquisition team. Very similar to LRSD, they were able to sustain themselves for a much longer period of time than the assets at our battalion level. They also had amazing optics and camera capability. Their thermal sites were much clearer than ours and with much greater magnification. They had digital cameras that could take what looked like a close-up photo from over a kilometer away. We were glad to use to the fullest any advanced reconnaissance asset we were given.

Sensitive-Site Exploitations. Many sensitive-site exploitation missions are required. Some are intelligence-driven; others result from contact that requires a later search of the surrounding area; still others come from a need to deny sanctuary, or discovery of a compound that looks suspicious. The SSE, or "cordon and knock," as I heard the 4th Infantry Division call them in Operation Iraqi Freedom, has its own art form. It must be planned as though it is the last stronghold of the al Qaeda, Osama bin Ladin is inside, and they will fight to the death. The compound must be entirely surrounded so no one can escape. We always used the major-operation template discussed earlier: outer cordon of AMF, inner cordon using AT vehicles and some infantry, FO/TACP team on the highest observation point, engineers working for team search, and the CA, the THT and I ready to do the talking. We expected to do a "soft" breach, meaning we knock on the door and they let us in, but we planned a "hard" or "deliberate" breach, meaning we either break or blow the door off its hinges if necessary.

We found that the best method was to knock on the door and ask for the man of the house, bring him outside and explain to him that we were going to search his quarters. We would tell him to bring all of the men outside and move all women and children into one room, thus showing respect for the women. We made sure he understood that our soldiers would assume the rooms were empty, and if a child was left in the room, he or she risked getting shot. We gave him just enough time to accomplish this task, and then the search team searched the men first to ensure they were not a threat. (When documenting the men's names, we didn't ask an individual just for his own name; we took him aside and asked him for the other men's names as well. In a country like Afghanistan where identification is easily forged, this is crucial for finding "black-list" personnel who are blending into the population.) Then we searched the first empty room and marked it. We moved all of the women and children from the room where they first gathered into this newly searched room. (ACM sympathizers or anyone with something to hide might attempt to put it into the women and children's room, thinking that room will not be searched.) When all the women and children were in their new location, the search team went back into the room where they gathered first, and the female searcher began searching the women and children. We always ensured that she had two large men as sentries

standing outside the room to give her backup, mainly to let everyone know that if they interfered with the female searcher, the other two would come in butt-stroking or shooting if necessary. Also, if a man was attempting to hide in a *burka* (women's clothing covering the whole body, including the face), we dealt harshly with him. Everything was searched very thoroughly. We used the engineers' or EOD's metal detector to search for false walls and floors. We searched on the roofs and down wells; EOD robots are great for this.

Now, here is the key piece: dealing with this family based on what was found. If we found nothing, and it was a routine search, we brought in "Team Village." We told the man we wanted to talk to him about things going on in the region and apologized for the search of his compound—but reassure him that it is standard U.S. Army procedure before sitting down to talk to the head of a household. If we had a CA package (such as blankets, school supplies, PSYOP radios or halal meals—food prepared following Muslim religious guidelines) to offer, now this was a great time to distribute them—the locals would not mind getting searched and might invite us to search them again if they receive something for it. It is best to leave on very good terms, making the head of the compound feel he was selected not because we wanted to search his compound but because I, who was in effect the local warlord, wanted to talk to him and seek his opinion. This would place him in a position of honor amongst his village, rather than one of dishonor for having his compound searched.

Of course, if we did find something, the situation was different. We had to judge based on their cooperation. We definitely confiscated any contraband. We always allowed one AK-47 or Enfield rifle and one magazine per man in the compound. Excess weapons, weapons larger than an AK-47 and excess ammunition were usually confiscated with nothing further, sometimes with a promise to return the AK if they brought proper documentation or, better yet, information about the al Qaeda to the firebase. This is why it was so important to tag all confiscated equipment, to ensure that it would get back to its proper owner if that promise was made. Items such as armor-piercing ammunition (routinely used and distributed by the al Qaeda), RPGs and any IED-making material immediately aroused suspicion and usually meant placing under custody the head of the house and bringing him back for further questioning. If they were uncooperative and had contraband, Team Village did not get involved and the village would receive nothing.

Vehicle Checkpoints. Vehicle checkpoints (VCPs) are an excellent way to prevent the ACMs and al Qaeda freedom of movement throughout the AO. They can be very elaborate with Pashtun signs, cones and concertina wire, but we relied on a very simple VCP that could be established and broken down easily—locals and ACMs alike knew what we were doing and respected the rules we established. The key to remember is that within 30 minutes of establishing a VCP, the ACMs knew it was there and any high-value targets (HVTs) moving through the AO would find a bypass. Within 90 minutes of our being there, everyone would know we were there and would have found a bypass. We were better off establishing for short periods of time, and then moving to an alternate location. When we had the assets, we established our primary VCP and then established a secondary VCP on an alternate route. When we had recon assets such as scouts, LRS or a Predator UAV, we used them to see what was happening on the route prior to vehicles approaching. We found that vehicles in the outgoing lane would often warn those approaching of our existence. As when conducting an SSE, we searched every person and every compartment of every vehicle. If a large commercial truck had a big cargo, we sometimes went so far as to have them down-load if we could not determine that nothing was being smuggled. Here, it was crucial that our lowest private knew our "black/grey" list and could identify HVTs on site or upon hearing their names. Here also we used the technique of not only asking the males their names but also asking them to identify the others by name to see if someone is trying to hide his identity. When we had female searchers, we used them; ACMs are

more likely to hide in Burkas when traveling then when stationary. We always planned for a pursuit force in case a suspicious vehicle saw our VCP and attempted to escape. I will elaborate more under the section "Use of AMF" why we usually relied on AMF for our pursuit force, but the bottom line is that if someone is obviously trying to get your attention, he might be trying to lure you away so the true HVT (whether a person or munitions stock) can use the route you are blocking, or to lure you into an ambush.

Use of a Quick-Reaction Force. QRF is absolutely essential. We found that our own QRF force, along with aerial QRF and X-CAS (airborne nondedicated CAS providing protection in the theater), rather than simply being a reactionary force in the event of an emergency, became our finishing force. In the standard scenario, a finding force locates the enemy. They fix them with artillery or direct fires so they can be finished by the QRF force that arrives. At any given moment we had one infantry squad, one lieutenant, one FO and one AT section available to launch from the firebase in five minutes. We also usually had a second QRF force ready to launch within 20 to 30 minutes. If lucky enough to have the C2 relationship I enjoyed, the company commander should always launch with QRF, because the situation could develop so that "commander on the ground" is needed to make decisions.

On every mission, we calculated the length of time for reaction if contact was made and then prepositioned the QRF or other force. In the Bermel Valley, we often prepositioned the QRF force at the AMF border checkpoint next to Angor Adda. This not only helped to shorten the amount of time it would take for the QRF to reinforce forward-positioned troops, but it also helped show force forward and support for our AMF. The position was hard and reinforced, with good observation where our soldiers could use their night observation equipment to identify movement.

Use of Afghan Militia Forces. I have the utmost respect for the Afghan people as a fighting force. I look forward to a future where we can fight alongside the Afghan National Army as a coalition force. Having grown up knowing nothing but conflict, these men have become some of the bravest and most hardened fighters imaginable, with a stunning sense of pride. They took great pride in leading all joint patrols. Although they wore no helmets or body armor and drove soft-skin vehicles— Toyota Hi-Lux 4x4s— they would take no other position than the lead, earning the joking title from many of my soldiers of "Afghan Mine Finders." The Afghan Militia knew the risks they were taking and they took them willingly. I once saw my border guard commander stomp his foot on suspected mines and then get in his Toyota 4x4 and drive very fast across the suspected mined patch of road, presumably in the hopes that he would outrun the blast. Like all other forces, we used them for their strengths but knew their limitations.

AMF led every joint mounted patrol and most major operations. They did this, of course, to fulfill their role as mine finders. They also knew the ground better and could more easily spot something that was out of place or suspicious. Having them lead became very tricky at times, because to maintain OPSEC we would give them only brief versions of our operations orders at the last possible moment, and the lead driver usually did not know our destination. We developed a standard operating procedure in which the lead American vehicle maintained communications with the AMF lead vehicle through a radio and an interpreter. Also, the AMF did not have night vision equipment, so an AMF-led night patrol was a nightmare as they kept turning on their headlights, giving away our position and blinding our night observation devices.

The AMF were raised in a society where conquering forces are expected to take loot, so when we could help it, we did not use AMF to search. If we had no choice, we ensured that the search took place under the direct supervision of our own soldiers. Had we used AMF alone, the locals

would have complained that they stole property, disrespected the women and elders, etc. A member of a rival tribe could have made claims against our AMF of thieving or disrespect and we would have had no way to disprove it. And even if the AMF were to do everything right, the locals would rather submit to Americans than to what they identify as a rival tribe.

When we rolled into town, we used the AMF for our outer cordon. They would quickly surround the village and stop anyone from escaping. Our AMF were great at climbing mountains quickly. We would roll onto a group of compounds surrounded by hills, and after one word to my AMF commander I could look up and see one AMF soldier standing on each hilltop. I would never dream of sending my own troops up there without communications, by themselves, with heavy body armor to climb up those hills, but the AMF were great for it. Also, if we had a runner, i.e., if we went into a village and saw someone leaving quickly in the other direction, I would send AMF out to chase them. They would chase them down and bring them back from wherever. I would not do that with Americans without communications, supporting fires, etc., and by the time I put the complex American patrol together for the chase, the guy would be long gone and blended into the crowd. This alone provided an amazing capability to the battlefield that could not be had with strictly coalition forces.

Training the AMF was a key task, difficult at times but very rewarding. My small-unit leaders and young soldiers really enjoyed training these hardened foreign fighters on the rifle range or on small-unit operations. The mutual respect and trust, forged in training and proven side-by-side in battle, was awesome.

Similar to the AMF but much better, however, was the Afghan National Army. In my opinion, this is one of the greatest programs going on in Afghanistan. One issue with the AMF (or any indigenous "militia" force) that a commander needs to recognize is that they have local and tribal loyalties. Afghanistan in general is a conglomeration of tribes and warlords who constantly fight one another. In their history, they have banded together only to oppose outside invading forces like the Russians. Almost every Afghan has a much stronger allegiance to family, tribe, region or warlord than to the country of Afghanistan. My AMF were all Tajic or Orgune. This helped me because they were not from my AO and had a great distrust for almost all tribes in the Bermel Valley, especially the Wasiris, Harote and Karote. Prior to my arrival, all of the Wasiri AMF quit at the command of their tribal elder. Using Tajic AFM, however, resulted in many complaints from the locals. The ANA, however, were enlisted from all over Afghanistan and trained and employed in various regions. They had no group loyalty to anything but Afghanistan and President Karzai. When they came into town, clean-shaven and well-equipped, the locals thought they were foreign fighters. They could be trusted to search locals, and there would not be the complaints we heard about the Tajic AMF. The only difficulty we met was a degree of jealousy between the AMF and ANA when we had a chance to employ both forces.

Civil Military Operations

Team Village Concept and Operations. "Team Village" was an expression we learned from our predecessors, the Red Devils of 1-504 Parachute Infantry Regiment. It usually referred to a group of personnel tasked with conducting a CMO function within a larger operation. Many times Team Village was the main effort, as many missions were executed solely for CMO purposes. Often Team Village was a mix of Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations at a minimum. Usually the senior infantry commander would also participate in the CMO function of the operation, but always focused on the security and the overall operation. Other assets within Team Village could be, but were not limited to, medics with a health care provider to administer di-minimus health care, military intelligence professionals and security personnel.

Classifying forces by function made it easy for everyone to understand their task and purpose and where they fit into the operation. We usually had Team Secure under the leadership of the AT platoon leader, Team Clear or Team Search under the leadership of the rifle platoon leader, Team Overwatch under the FSO or FSNCO, and Team Village under the C2 of the head Civil Affairs or PSYOP personnel (also Team Fires when we displaced a mortar). Although both CA and PSYOP vehemently claimed to be highly specialized, each can do the other's jobs, and they work well together.

We really never knew exactly which way a mission would take us. There were missions where we planned to search a suspected ACM compound, ready to conduct a deliberate breach, blow the door off, and come in shooting; but then we found the occupants to be hospitable and friendly and the compound to be clean. Here shifting the focus from an aggressive mission to a CMO opportunity—acting as though the purpose of our mission was to seek the counsel of the head of the compound, and also to provide a humanitarian assistance package—helped win us allies in the Bermel Valley. Being able to shift focus and win friends ultimately helped us pacify the region. Also, once while we were conducting a di-minimus health care operation, the villagers, probably pleased with the health care that they had just received, gave us information about an ACM we were looking for. We searched his compound, took him prisoner and sent him up to Bagrahm and on to Guantanamo. In every case, having the flexibility to go either way—to have a friendly mission go hostile or to make friends out of a hostile mission—was crucial.

Even in strictly friendly CMO operations, the combat arms guys always had to set the conditions first. The Team Village commander (who often outranked me when we had a CAT-A at the firebase) had to understand that he was waiting in the wings for the go-ahead from the infantry platoon leader that "all is secure" and he was "cleared to proceed" with Team Village operations. Also, depending on the mission, an infantry squad might be tasked to provide security for Team Village. If we planned to distribute a large humanitarian assistance package or provide di-minimus health care, we made sure the locals lined up in an orderly fashion and did not become unruly. Simply throwing a box of blankets into a crowd could have gotten someone injured or killed, and then we would have lost the favor of that person's family. By the way, it is amazing the respect Afghans have for white engineer tape. By simply laying out "do not cross" lines of white engineer tape on the ground, we could achieve an orderly line in no time.

Meetings with the Elders. Working with a foreign culture requires working within that culture's norms. In Afghanistan, the tribal elders are in charge. Each village, and each compound, has at least one patriarch who is the recognized head of the household. These people have a lot of influence within their tribe. If they tell the village to aid the al Qaeda, the village will; likewise, if they tell the village to aid the coalition, they will all do that as well. When going to the village, we always asked to speak to the elders. They would usually ask us to sit down to a *shura* or meeting. They might offer a little food, or at least a drink of *chai*, but seldom a full meal. Here, we had to simply grin and bear the camel's milk in our tea. (Afghan *chai*, by the way, has so much sugar in it that it is almost like syrup) On one occasion the elders even brought out a blanket for us to sit on, picnic style; our snack was provided by a boy who climbed up the apricot tree we were sitting under and shook it until apricots landed all around us.

As with major operations, we began by showing force. For all we knew, a village might be hiding Osama bin Ladin, so we were prepared to fight. We sealed off the village quickly. If our sole purpose is to meet with the elders (as a new commander/warlord in the region, it is important to take time to go to each village within the AO to get a feel for each of the elders there), once we had the village secured we simply started asking around for the elders, telling them we wished to have a meeting, and before we knew it, they would have a meeting room cleared (there are no chairs in

Afghanistan outside the firebase, so we usually sat on blankets). They respected the force we brought to their village and were usually be very happy to learn that we came only to talk to them rather than to search through everybody's home. Showing that we wished to meet with them reinforced their status as the heads of the village. (We could further reinforce the elders' status by distributing HA packages through them to the needy members of their village.)

Once everything was set, we started the introductions, letting them know that I was the one in charge of all of the security of the valley, while the Civil Affairs guy was there to find out what projects they needed help with. We usually engaged in a good dialogue, starting off with talk of future CMO projects such as building wells, schools and hospitals. We found out their concerns and then, at the end, asked if they have seen any al Qaeda or if they knew of any al Qaeda movement through the AO. We made them understand that NGOs and other humanitarian assistance would not arrive if they deemed the area to be unsafe. If we had asked those questions first, they would have initially denied everything. We first had to earn their trust. We seldom gathered much intelligence from the elders at a first meeting, but when we followed through, they were likely to come at a later date to the firebase to give us information one-on-one. We were always careful to extend them that invitation.

During the meetings, it did help to show our muscle. We had security personnel waiting either behind us or just outside the room, where they can be seen or at least make their presence felt. They do not let anyone in unless they had searched them and then looked to me for a nod of approval. Other acts of both strength and kindness were helpful. Once during a meeting, my AT platoon leader called in on the radio that they had stopped a vehicle that had two men with two AK-47s attempting to enter the village while we were there. I asked the village elders whether the men should be allowed in or seized. This showed the elders that I had a strong hand, but that I would trust their judgment, help their friends, and hurt their enemies. Also, I usually used preplanned CAS for major operations. Having the CAS conduct a "low pass" usually scared the hell out of everyone in the village. The elders would beg me not to let them continue. I would then call my TACP on the radio and tell him not to let the CAS conduct any more low passes. Once again, this showed that I had the power to command the airplanes, but also that I would heed the elders' request and call them off.

While the meeting was going on, one squad with some engineers would roam around looking simply for anything suspicious, or anything that looked like it was recently dug in when the village received early warning of our arrival. The infantry platoon leader would conduct some minor "winning hearts and minds" outside the big meeting by passing out candy and other small things to the kids. (The best presents we could ever give Afghan children were Polaroid photo of themselves. They had probably never seen their own pictures, let alone owned one.) While he was working the crowd outside, the HUMINT guys were working right alongside him. All the intelligence that came out of the elders' meeting would be provided later to the firebase officer-in-charge in the back-brief the Team Village commander and I would attend; the professional HUMINT guys were much better used outside talking to the younger men who were not important enough to go to the village elders' meeting but wanted to make themselves feel important by talking to the Americans while the elders were not watching. Often the picture painted by them was much different from the story we got from the elders.

Meetings with the Regional Governors. We usually had a sit-down meeting once a month with the regional governor. This reinforced his status as the legitimate head of the region working under President Karzai. These were often tricky, because to meet with him we had to go into the Bermel Bazaar, where we would be surrounded not only by my men but also by his Bermel police. The regional governor managed and controlled his own police force. All of them appeared to be about 17

years old, and all were very thin. Although we didn't feel very safe with them around carrying AK-47s, we knew they would never challenge our forces in the valley, and they looked to us to be their ally. So we showed we had the power. We would seal off the place and have our security personnel stop anyone who entered the room and look for a nod of approval from me. We could then show good faith by letting the young Bermel policeman serve us *chai* and peanuts with his AK-47 strapped to him, showing that we trusted the governor and his men but could disarm his police force with only a word.

Often the focus of these meetings was a request from the governor for arms, ammunition and other assistance. I was very limited in my ability to provide anything to him. The governor saw me as his direct link to the U.S. Military Command in Afghanistan, but most of his concerns were with matters that involved the support he received from the Afghan central government.

One issue with this regional governor is that although his region included the entire Bermel Valley, his only secure stronghold was at the Bermel Bazaar. This was not to say he could not exert influence throughout the valley as much of the commerce of the region centered around the Bermel Bazaar, and many tribal and village elders often went to the Bermel Bazaar to meet and discuss issues.

Hosting a *Shura.* Our overall CMO operation within the valley depended on coordination among all villages and tribes, since many of the benefits of U.S. or NGO assistance would go to aid the entire population of the valley. This could become very difficult when the Karotes don't trust the Wasiris and vice versa. Our repeated theme was that NGOs were afraid to work in the Bermel Valley because there was too much al Qaeda activity. One of the best methods of pacifying the entire valley was to host a *shura*—a meeting of all the tribal elders. We conducted these both at the governor's headquarters and at our own firebase.

Conducting a *shura* at the governor's quarters helped to establish the hierarchy from the regional governor to the tribal elders. The biggest problem was that we would get more participation from the governor's tribe than from the other tribes. We were more successful hosting the event at our own firebase because it represented neutral ground for all elders involved. Another technique was to host the *shura* with all the elders and not invite the governor. That way we were likely to get much more candid talk from the various elders. It was also a good technique for finding out if the governor's actions matched his talk or if there were problems with corruption among the governor's police force.

Shuras were always dicey as the rival tribes would want to begin by sending accusations back and forth against one another. Sometimes it was hard to remember that my Team Village commander and I were in charge of the meeting and that working together for the mutual benefit of all was the goal. *Shuras* were always a necessary step because the last thing we wanted in our CMO campaign was to make one tribe or village feel that we favored their rivals. We had to use such rivalry to our advantage, making each tribe or village feel that they would receive the most humanitarian assistance by working the most with us and by providing us with the best information leading to captured or more likely killed al Qaeda.

Meetings with the Pakistanis. In the Bermel Valley, the greatest threat came from al Qaeda, who seemed to have both sanctuary in Pakistan and freedom of movement along the borders. There were actually three different borders identified: the Nima Line, the Durrand Line and the line the Pakistanis claimed. All of them were within one or two hundred meters of one another. In general, the border was not clearly marked with anything man-made but was distinguished by a large mountainous region. The Pakistanis, of course, claimed the high ground of the border and manned outposts along key overwatch positions. Many of the locals actually had little concept of either Afghanistan or Pakistan or of borders; they believed they all lived in "Wasiristan" since Wasiris lived on both sides of the border and, if they were willing to hike the mountains, could move back and forth

freely. Within the entire valley, the only major crossing not blocked by a natural mountain barrier was at the main Pakistani Bazaar in Angor Adda. Angor Adda was so well known for its al Qaeda activity that *Time* magazine published a story about it entitled "Al Qaeda Town."

Prior to my arrival the Pakis left security of the entire region to their "frontier troops," the local South-Wasiri Scouts (SWS). Like many of the AMF and other regional militia forces, these troops had more loyalty to the local leaders than to Pakistan as a country. We always assumed that many members of the SWS were openly supporting the al Qaeda. When I was in Afghanistan in December 2002 learning the ropes under our sister brigade, the 505 PIR Panther Brigade lost their first paratrooper to al Qaeda right there in the Bermel Valley. Shortly after that incident, another American soldier was shot in the head by a South Wasiri Scout after a meeting with them. The SWS had excellent observation throughout the Bermel Valley, advanced optics including night vision, and communications gear. It seemed that whenever one of our night patrols left the firebase, fires would spring up along the border at the SWS outposts.

My first formal meeting with the Pakistani Border Guard commanders occurred within minutes of my arrival to assume command. The battalion XO rushed up to me and began cutting off my name tapes. "You will be known as 'Captain Dave.' I won't let you make the same mistake your predecessor and I made and let them know your full name." Apparently, after the first few of these meetings, national-level intelligence assets reported that the al Qaeda knew the names of the XO and the previous Bravo Company commander, and the XO didn't want me to live in fear of retaliation against my family back home.

Arriving at the Angor Adda border checkpoint was always very "Checkpoint Charley"-ish as we pulled up with plenty of U.S. military and AMF to assume security overwatching the Pakistani positions as our small delegation walked the "demilitarized zone" up to the gates of Pakistan and only we walked in.

Apparently before my arrival, these meetings had been very tense, as was the relationship with the SWS. Luckily things started to change from within Pakistan starting near the time of my arrival. The SWS commander was removed (we were told at first he was unable to attend the meeting, and later that he was transferred). Pakistani Regular Army commanders arrived to take over operations, and many Paki Regular troops began to assist the SWS with manning the border checkpoints.

Meetings were always cordial. It was obvious that the Pakistanis were more advanced and westernized, as we sat on chairs and ate excellent food (especially the curry). The key is to work together, but not to share too much information. We always talked about our "mortars" as we didn't want them to know that we had replaced them with artillery (our mortars came up frequently as many outposts claimed that we shot harassing fires into Pakistan). We exchanged maps so they could identify what we recognized as the Nima Line for the border, and they would share the locations of their new border outposts so we would not bump into them with a patrol. We also had specific Thurya cell phones that we would use to contact each other to give a cordial alert when we were in a firefight or if we were shooting artillery near the border.

As much as I did not trust the SWS, I did trust the Pakistani Regulars. Their arrival was much needed. Very recently, they have proven their resolve against the al Qaeda by conducting numerous raids in the area against al Qaeda strongholds and capturing HVTs such as Nik Mohammed. Unfortunately, as in other cases of unconventional warfare and low-intensity conflict, we never knew if we were being watched by an outpost manned by Pakistani Regulars who were loyal to General Musharrif or by the SWS who might have other loyalties. But Pakistan is definitely moving in the right direction in the Bermel Valley.

Conducting Di-minimus Health Care Operations. These operations were awesome for winning the "hearts and minds" of the locals. The doctors, medics and physician assistants enjoyed the contribution they made to the locals. Like other CMO operations, these were always accomplished first by securing the village and then telling the village elders of our intent. We always had a line of patients for everything from mild bumps, bruises and stuffy noses to more serious injuries and illnesses. These could be treated from the backs of the HMMWVs, but they were better done in a secure compound arranged by the elders. Also, it was key to have a female medic available to treat the women and children, otherwise they would be either reluctant or forbidden to seek medical help—and they were usually the ones who needed it most. As always, we respected the local pecking order, i.e., an elder with a minor injury would expect to be seen before a child with malaria. If we did set up a station for females and children, we ensured that it was behind closed doors for their privacy. Also, we always made sure our security squad was present and that all patients were kept orderly and were searched prior to entering—although I believe the villagers would be able to spot a terrorist act long before we could and would either tell us about it or act very scared and suspicious and then leave.

These operations were great for generating intelligence for later use. Many people were so happy to receive health care from us that they became very willing to assist in our fight against the al Qaeda. Also, we had one-on-one, private opportunities to communicate with people who were very grateful for our helping them or literally saving their lives.

Running a Firebase Clinic. This proved very effective as well and was not nearly as difficult or as dangerous as going out to conduct di-minimus health care operations. We ran a clinic twice a week in the mornings, inside the AMF perimeter but not within the firebase. This also proved to demonstrate our help and support for the local population and helped bring us intelligence, as people could come under the guise of seeking health care. Also, they felt that having come to us for help, information was their only means to pay us back.

Using Civil Military Operations to Help Gather Intelligence. Anyone who is strictly a combat-arms soldier and doesn't see or feel the need for CMO or how CMO can help is unbelievably mistaken. Even those not convinced of the mantra of "winning the hearts and minds" must appreciate the most effective use of CMO: intelligence gathering. Many a CA, PSYOP and intelligence soldier will contend that CMO personnel are not intelligence gatherers—that intelligence gathering is not their mission—and they are 100 percent correct. But a tactical commander can greatly benefit by gathering intelligence while helping CMO soldiers accomplish their mission. While a tactical HUMINT team or an intelligence analyst must not be confused with CMO personnel, CMO operations do greatly assist in a commander's intelligence-gathering campaign by providing allies. CA and PSYOP personnel do their respective jobs, and HUMINT folks and analysts do theirs. If the combat-arms commander secures the CMO operations, works with the Team Village commander toward the overall CMO campaign, and works with analysts to help develop the intelligence preparation of the battlefield, he can arrive at the same success we achieved at Firebase Shkin and the Bermel Valley.

CMO helps develop intelligence in various ways. First and foremost, CMO operations are ripe with opportunity for intelligence gathering. Whether the intelligence comes in the form of HUMINT, SIGINT or clandestine observation, whenever we conducted a major operation into a village the enemy and the local population were interested. During our movement and operation, SIGINT could spike. While in the village, once we had secured it and established the friendly operation, many villagers were willing to provide HUMINT. The Team Village commander and I would simply take notes and provide a debrief to the analyst afterwards on the content of the village elders' meeting.

Our tactical HUMINT team (THT) would work the crowd outside to gather intelligence from the young men who were not invited to the elders' meeting. During di-minimus health care operations, locals would be willing to provide intelligence in private during or after receiving care. Also, during our early operations, we received the line that the village would not want any humanitarian assistance because the al Qaeda would retaliate if they accepted help from the Americans. Here, a hidden stay-behind observation post would prove effective for seeing exactly who went into the village after our departure.

The second and more long-term impact of CMO on intelligence gathering is that of developing friendly relations with all the inhabitants of the region so they would come to the firebase and provide unsolicited information. Setting up a venue for them to come—or an excuse, as was sometimes needed if someone wanted to provide intelligence without letting his acquaintances know—provided an excellent source of HUMINT collection. This is why elders and others were always welcome to come to the firebase to discuss current and potential future "CMO" operations and also why we ran a firebase clinic.

The dividends of our combined combat arms and CMO campaign in the Bermel Valley were obvious on 22 June 2003, when a local who had come to the firebase for a *shura* told us about al Qaeda-emplaced mines in the road. We followed him to the location, dismounting before we reached the suspected mine site. We found the al Qaeda ambush unprepared and initiated an attack, killing or wounding the entire patrol, gathering more intelligence about the al Qaeda's techniques, and walking away with no friendly casualties—instead of driving into a coordinated IED/RPG ambush as al Qaeda had intended.

Conclusion

The conclusion of this paper is simple: we broke the mold and proved effective. I hope others can learn from our success.

Our Special Forces have done an amazing job in the Global War on Terrorism. I don't know if anyone truly appreciates exactly what the 5th Special Forces Group (SFG) actually accomplished during the liberation of Afghanistan. The Afghans are a fierce, violent, warring people who fight amongst themselves and their tribes and band together only to oppose an outside invader like the Russians. In 10 years, the Russians were unable to defeat Afghanistan. The 5th Special Forces Group was able to take Afghanistan in a matter of weeks because they gave the victory to the people. Rather that being seen as an outside invader, they were seen as a big brother, a liberating force helping the Northern Alliance, building on past assistance given to the Mujahadden during the Russian resistance, and showing our support for them. Had we gone in with a lot of strength, rather than with the finesse shown by the 5th SFG, we would have taken many more casualties.

However, our Special Forces are a small element and they are spread thin. Their traditional role of foreign internal defense has been assumed by conventional forces throughout Iraq training the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps. Now it is time to move low-intensity conflict and unconventional warfare over to the conventional side—not only because there are not enough Special Forces to go around but also because conventional forces have more assets to find, fix and finish the enemy.

Fighting low-intensity conflict at the small-unit/company-sized level has proved to be very effective. A company commander, much like an A-Team commander, can really get to know personalities, terrain and enemy in an area. He can engage the population and have a much better lasting effect than that of a battalion that air assaults in, clears compounds for a few days, and then leaves. What I have provided is only a brief and very rough "lessons learned" for future company operations such

as these. By refocusing our efforts at the company level with these types of assets and these types of operations, we can make a tremendous impact in the Global War on Terror.

As an epilogue note, my company was later tasked with securing the enormous, 15,000-man Logistical Supply Area Anaconda in Iraq. Here, on numerous occasions, soldiers under my command, while guarding the entry control points (ECPs), watched and recorded on our Forward Looking Infra Red (or "big brother" system) enemy forces conducting operations, launching rockets or mortars, or setting up IEDs. It burned us that we did not have the assets or availability to engage these forces. Our mission was to guard the ECPs; the tank unit colocated with us owned the ground outside. If that area were the Bermel Valley, we could have fixed them with our artillery and finished them with our QRF, CAS and aerial QRF. We could have engaged the elders of the villages and the compounds surrounding the enemy activity to help us stop the militants. We could have done so much, but there was not one company commander with that kind of responsibility and those kinds of assets to deal with that kind of situation there on the ground in Iraq. The overall mission was so cumbersome that it was ineffective. Usually the outcome was a report higher, a passing off of the DVD recording of the enemy activity, and a report of compound clearing with nothing found later. The tactics that we, B/3-504 PIR, employed at Firebase Shkin should be the model for winning this war in Afghanistan, Iraq and wherever else we may go, once the conflict reaches the low-intensity phase.

(Captain David L. Buffaloe continues to command B Company, 3-504 Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82d Airborne Division. The company, which deployed to Afghanistan and later to Iraq, has redeployed and is now training for Division Ready Force 1—the nation's strategic reserve force able to jump into combat within 18 hours of notification.)