Sgt. 1st Class Hussain Dad (*left*) with the 201st Afghan National Army (ANA) Corps watches a fellow ANA soldier review targeted frequencies on the Wolfhound's signal scanning device 25 January 2014 during Afghanistan's first Wolfhound fielding and training at Forward Operating Base Gamberi, Laghman Province, Afghanistan. The Wolfhound allows 201st ANA Corps soldiers to hear and locate the enemy's radio transmissions. (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class E. L. Craig, U.S. Army)

The State of Afghanistan's Intelligence Enterprise

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It is October 2016. The Taliban has been pressing hard for several weeks to take the provincial capital of Uruzgan. North of Kandahar, it has been attacking Afghan National Police (ANP) checkpoints and police stations, killing police and innocent civilians, and looting supplies and equipment from overrun or abandoned buildings. On an early morning in late October, a group of Taliban insurgents takes respite in an isolated compound of several buildings. Haphazardly occupying a single fighting position over the last few days, the insurgents take advantage of the brief pause.[1]

Unbeknownst to this band of insurgents, an Afghan PC-12 reconnaissance plane has been loitering high above for several hours, keeping a close eye on them and relaying every detail back to a nearby Afghan National Army (ANA) commander on the ground. The PC-12 pilot reaffirms to the commander that the Taliban insurgents remain entrenched in the compound below and that there is a complete absence of civilians.

Suddenly, an Afghan A-29 Super Tucano attack aircraft descends from the cloudless sky, lining up its attack run on the unsuspecting insurgents. The detonation of two MK81 bombs ends the lives of those insurgents hiding out in the northernmost building of the compound. Once the realization of what has just happened settles in, the remaining Taliban insurgents make the fateful mistake of rushing to the only fortified fighting position in the compound. The PC-12 pilot is talking directly to the pilot of the attack aircraft, giving him instant feedback on the A-29's first attack run, and now lining him up for a second and final run. As the last insurgent reaches the final fighting position he will ever occupy, the A-29 pilot releases his remaining MK81 bomb.

Precise airstrikes such as these do not happen by chance; they are complex operations that are the result of a deliberate targeting process that relies on an ever-growing and robust Afghan intelligence structure. It is a process that requires the mentoring and assistance of a dedicated group of U.S. and coalition trainers and advisors. More importantly, there is a committed group of Afghans who are willing and able to adapt to an ever-changing environment, both militarily and politically. Maj. Gen. Abdul Manan Farahi, the ANA general staff chief of intelligence (GSG2), who is responsible for all of the ANA's intelligence structure, often states, "Where you have good partners, you will have success."[2] As the coalition and Afghanistan continue to partner, the Afghans will continue to demonstrate many successes.

Afghan Intelligence Systems

The description of the A-29 air strike is representative of the numerous success stories attributed to the Afghan intelligence structure and the targeting process that supports it. Several intelligence systems within the Afghan military play a significant role in that success, underscoring the importance of these systems within an intelligence architecture.

National Information Management System. The system with the largest contribution to Afghan intelligence success is the National Information Management System (NIMS). Similar to the U.S. Army's Distributed Common Ground System, the NIMS allows military units across Afghanistan to share real-time intelligence and provides decision makers the ability to make informed and time-sensitive decisions.

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The initial version of the NIMS provided only basic information-sharing capabilities; analytical tools and targeting-specific modules were almost nonexistent. As Afghan intelligence officers struggled to develop a complex and transparent targeting process, they realized the initial limitations of the system. Working closely with their coalition advisors, several modifications were brainstormed and developed in July 2016. In less than two months, the requested modifications were incorporated, resulting in an enhanced Afghanistan-wide targeting process. Nearly every facet of the process was streamlined and simplified.

PC-12 reconnaissance aircraft. In the "find" phase of the F3EAD targeting process (find, fix, finish, exploit, analyze, and disseminate), a key Afghan intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) asset enters the scene.[3] The PC-12 is a single-engine, turboprop, manned aircraft that provides the Afghans with a dedicated ISR platform capable of both real-time full-motion video (FMV) and communications intelligence. It was fielded to the Afghan Special Mission Wing (Afghanistan's day/night, air assault, and ISR aviation special mission unit) in early 2014.

The PC-12 played a critical role in the A-29 airstrike narrative above. The real-time FMV capability confirmed the existence and precise location of the Taliban compound in the target package for Afghan national-level approval. The PC-12 maintained a persistent eye on its target while concurrently confirming the absence of civilians within collateral-damage range. The PC-12 pilot communicated directly with the pilot of the A-29, ensuring the pilot's situational awareness of the target area.

The PC-12 is a critical asset in both the "exploit" and "analyze" targeting phases, collecting real-time battle-damage assessment that can be fed directly to an A-29 pilot and an Afghan commander on the ground. This information feeds the decision-making cycle of the pilot and commander on whether to conduct follow-on strikes. A final and more thorough strike assessment is also conducted by intelligence analysts at the national level based on the PC-12's video, which is linked into the NIMS.

ScanEagle. Afghanistan's first and only unmanned aircraft system (UAS) provides a real-time FMV capability in direct support of corps-level operations; the ScanEagle UAS has the potential to tremendously enhance the Afghan's ability to conduct successful targeting across the battlefield.

Two ScanEagle systems are currently in operation in Afghanistan, with six additional systems scheduled to be fully operational by 2019. The first ScanEagle system in operation is a U.S. government-owned and contractor-operated (GOCO) system used solely for ANA training. The second ScanEagle system, also a GOCO system, became the first to be operated primarily by trained Afghan operators upon the graduation of the first class of Afghan students from ScanEagle training in November 2016. As such, the system is a perfect example of the success of coalition fielding, training, and advising with the ANA.

Wolfhound. Another ISR system having positive effects on the battlefield for the Afghans is the Wolfhound, a low-level voice intercept system. The successful employment of the Wolfhound highlights both the quality work of our U.S. and coalition advisors and the adaptability of our Afghan partners to learn and adjust to a new way of operating.

Afghan units initially opted most often to employ the Wolfhounds in a purely defensive posture, keeping each system of three direction-finding (DF) radios in a static position. The Wolfhound system is effective to a small degree in this defensive posture; however, it was apparent to advisors that the Wolfhounds were not being used to the system's full potential. In discussions between a U.S. intelligence advisor and his Afghan counterpart, the deputy G-2 (intelligence officer) of an ANA unit, the deputy G-2 expressed his struggle with his ANA soldiers continually coming under attack while trying to clear a critical route between two remote ANA bases in Uruzgan.[4] He knew his soldiers would receive contact from the mountainous high ground in northern Kandahar, but they could never determine where along the route the enemy attacks would occur until it was too late.

The U.S. advisor realized the ANA soldiers were not deploying the Wolfhound systems to their maximum potential. A simple dialog on how radio DF and triangulation work led to an immediate change in how the ANA deployed their Wolfhound systems during route-clearing operations. The deputy G-2 organized training sessions and rehearsals, preparing the soldiers to not only triangulate enemy positions but to also then quickly call for indirect fire onto those locations. Less than two weeks later, during a continuation of their critical route-clearing

A ScanEagle image taken 31 October 2016 in Kandahar Province, Afghanistan. (Image courtesy of authors)

A PC-12 image taken 5 November 2016 in Kandahar Province, Afghanistan. (Image courtesy of authors)

mission to Tarin Kot, these soldiers once again made contact with local Taliban insurgents firing from several spots on the surrounding high ground. Executing the battle drill they rehearsed numerous times the previous week, this unit was able to obtain precise locations of the enemy insurgents, call for both D-30 artillery and 82 mm mortar indirect fire, and neutralize each of the enemy

positions. Furthermore, the updated technique allowed the ANA corps to later identify and arrest an Afghan police officer who was informing the Taliban on the locations of the ANA patrols. The dedication and persistence of U.S. advisors to advise and assist, and the willingness of their Afghan counterparts to learn and adapt epitomizes the advisor-counterpart relationship.

Persistent Surveillance System. Providing a tremendous ISR capability for the Afghans at numerous locations across Afghanistan, the Persistent Surveillance System consists of both aerostat balloons and Rapid Aerostat Initial Deployment (RAID) towers. Currently, six ANA aerostat balloons and twenty-two RAID towers are in operation across Afghanistan. These systems provide persistent ISR coverage for force protection, intelligence generation, patrol overwatch, countering improvised explosive devices, and countering indirect fire. In October 2015 in Zabul Province, an ANA 205th Corps' RAID tower operator identified over twenty-five Taliban insurgents and six motorcycles preparing for an attack. Through coordination with the supporting ANA artillery unit, the Afghans used indirect fire to effectively disperse the insurgent group and prevent their attack on the local city.

In another incident in January 2016, following an insurgent rocket attack near the Italian embassy inside the Kabul Green Zone, an Afghan-operated aerostat in Kabul was able coordinate with coalition aerostat operators to identify the origin of the rocket launch. This effort enabled Afghan police to quickly converge on the site and recover several unfired rockets that would have otherwise been launched at coalition bases later.

Preliminary Credibility Assessment Screening System. A final key intelligence asset worth mentioning is the ANA GSG2's Preliminary Credibility

Assessment Screening System (PCASS) program. This polygraph program ensures Afghans are properly screened prior to assuming sensitive positions throughout the ANA and Afghanistan government. Initiated in late 2012 due to the unacceptably high rate of "green-on-blue" incidents, the PCASS program is credited with a significant reduction of insider threats. Between December 2012 and June 2016, the Afghans have conducted over thirty thousand PCASS exams, resulting in over four hundred Afghans being removed from positions of proximity to coalition forces.[5] During this timeframe, several insurgent infiltration cells were also disrupted, making it possible for U.S. and coalition advisors to continue the mission of advising Afghans while concurrently ensuring the integrity of the Afghan targeting process.

Afghan National Army students receive National Incident Management System training February 2017 at the National Military Command Center in Kabul, Afghanistan. (Photo by Muhammad Aslam, Afghanistan Development and Registry Services)

National Information Management System (NIMS)

· Secure, modular, web-based intelligence operations reporting database
· Similar to the U.S. Army's distributed common ground systems-army
· Locally developed
· Afghan-requested modifications (July 2016) included:
  - video feedback component
  - target pack serial number tracking mechanism
  - tool to link intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance requests to specific target packs
  - digital authority approval from national leaders, significantly expediting targeting process

The Afghan Targeting Process

Even the most capable ISR systems require the right people in the right organizations to maintain, manage, and operate them. In the past two years, the Afghanistan Ministry of Defense has established important intelligence organizations and structures in order to manage and fuse intelligence across the country. The most important organization in Afghanistan's national targeting processes is the National Military Intelligence Center (NMIC), the all-source, intelligence fusion center. Organized under the ANA GSG2, the NMIC's focus is primarily on counterinsurgency, providing analytical capability in support of targeting operations for both special operations and conventional forces. The NMIC is critical for the targeting process of strategic strikes involving the A-29 aircraft.

The Afghan targeting process begins with the submission of a target request originating at a tactical unit from one of the several ANA corps. The request passes through the NIMS to the NMIC Targeting Section.

An Afghan National Army aerostat balloon prepares to deploy 28 January 2015 at the Afghan Intelligence Training Center in Sia Sang, Afghanistan. (Photo courtesy of Combat Information Center, New Kabul Compound, Afghanistan)

Persistent Stare System (PSS)

· Six aerostat blimps
  - day/night, electro-optical/infrared (EO/IR) cameras
  - Afghan operated
  - two additional aerostats to be fielded by fiscal year 2019
· Twenty Rapid Aerostat Initial Deployment towers
  - Star SAFIRE III EO/IR camera
  - Afghan operated
  - two additional towers to be fielded in fiscal year 2017

The NMIC targeting staff conducts a thorough review of the information in the request to ensure there is a viable target for execution.

The targeting staff then develops a target package that includes, but is not limited to, the locations of civilian population and infrastructure, antiaircraft weapon systems, and friendly forces within the target area; friendly force frequencies, call signs, and mobile numbers; data-mining of recent intelligence reporting within the NIMS; and geospatial imagery content. The Current Intelligence Section provides recent and relevant intelligence updates and the Geospatial Section provides the imagery to create a full and robust all-source product.

Once the target package is developed, it is included for consideration on the agenda of the daily GSG2-led Target Working Group meeting. The NMIC targeting chief chairs the meeting, bringing together representatives of

agencies from across the Afghan government, including the office of the ANA general staff chief of operations (GSG3), the National Threat Intelligence Center, the Ministry of Interior, and the National Directorate of Security. This daily meeting is an excellent example of the intelligence sharing and intragovernment teamwork that is occurring in Afghanistan to ensure the success of complex operations like targeting.

Target packages that meet the stringent criteria of the Target Working Group proceed to the ANA Targeting Board, where the collateral damage estimate level is determined. If the collateral damage estimate is at an acceptable level, the GSG3, the chief of general staff, or the minister of defense then approves the target package for A-29 execution.

Finally, the Mission Planning Cell, manned by experienced and dedicated Afghan officers, conducts an additional review of the entire target package and coordinates ISR support. Nearly every A-29 mission includes pre- and poststrike ISR support by a PC-12 or a ScanEagle.

The entire targeting process can be conducted in less than twenty-four hours; this is made possible by the NIMS targeting module and the proven abilities of

An Afghan National Army soldier conducting training on the Wolfhound system 14 February 2017 at Camp Commando, Afghanistan. (Photo by Capt. Lindsay Gaylord, U.S. Army)

Wolfhound

· Enhanced low-level voice intercept
· Dismounted, backpack system
· Detects, identifies, and direction finds VHF or UHF push-to-talk
· One Wolfhound system consisting of three nodes
· All six Afghan National Army corps fully fielded

A ScanEagle prepares for launch 14 April 2016 in Helmand Province, Afghanistan. (Photo by Lt. Charity Edgar, U.S. Navy)

ScanEagle Unmanned Aircraft System

· Electro-optical/infrared/full-motion video capability directly supporting Afghan National Army ground commanders
· Fielding started April 2016
· One government-owned contractor-operated system dedicated to training Afghan soldiers
· One Afghan operated system in Helmand Province
· Six more systems to be fielded by fiscal year 2019

A member of the Afghan Air Force guides an A-29 Super Tucano 15 January 2016 at Hamid Karzai International Airport, Kabul, Afghanistan. The aircraft was added to the Afghan Air Force's inventory in the spring of 2016. Designed to operate in high temperatures and in extremely rugged terrain, the A-29 Super Tucano is a highly maneuverable fourth-generation weapons system capable of delivering precision-guided munitions. (Photo by Tech. Sgt. Nathan Lipscomb, U.S. Air Force)

the Afghans who own the targeting process. The NIMS targeting module allows complete transparency of target requests countrywide and eases tracking target requests. The module standardizes targeting-related forms and allows for operations-intelligence integration and synchronization with Afghan organizations external to the Ministry of Defense.

Tangible Results

The successes of the ANA's intelligence structure mentioned above are significant, especially when compared to its status from a mere two years ago. In 2014, none of the ISR systems mentioned above existed in the ANA. ANA units then were conducting military operations under a more robust presence of coalition forces, and all the supporting ISR assets were owned and operated by the coalition. Today, the story is different, with a much more capable and better-equipped Afghan military on the cusp of being self-sufficient.

Tangible results abound, such as with the NIMS modifications. From September through November 2016, almost two hundred target requests were submitted through the NIMS, resulting in sixty-five

A-29 strikes across every ANA corps.[6] And, in early 2016, the first ScanEagle system was fielded to directly support ANA operations in Helmand Province, although it was U.S. owned and operated. Since then, the first class of Afghan students has graduated from the ScanEagle School and now operates that ScanEagle system in support of military operations.

Just as significant as having these systems is having personnel trained to operate and sustain them. The ANA now conducts training for selected soldiers on how to use both the aerostat and the RAID tower at the Intelligence Training Center in Kabul. Afghan soldiers perform their own maintenance on the

Wolfhound systems, and the ANA recently contracted an Afghan company to provide field-service representatives to maintain all these systems used by ANA corps throughout Afghanistan.

The corps commanders across the ANA recognize and appreciate just how far the intelligence apparatus has come. During a recent Afghan Corps Commanders Conference (held at the Ministry of Defense in November 2016), the current state of Afghan intelligence was highly praised, and the consensus was that intelligence was indeed driving operations throughout Afghanistan.[7]

The Future

Novelist Louis L'Amour said, "Nobody got anywhere in this world by simply being content," and neither the coalition advisors nor their Afghan counterparts are yet content.[8] As far as we have come in the past two years, great things await us in the years to come. The deliberate targeting process described above continues to be refined and honed, ensuring the right enemy targets are hit in a timely manner without civilian casualties. The next step is already being undertaken, as the ANA general staffs work on a formal dynamic targeting process utilizing F3EAD, which will greatly expand the Afghan targeting process by allowing moving targets to be engaged, enhancing its effects against the Taliban.

Finally, within the next two years, the ANA will procure two more aerostats and two more RAID towers. They will also field six more ScanEagle systems, giving each ANA corps its own organic unmanned aerial ISR system. These ScanEagle systems will be operated and maintained by the Afghans and will give each corps the ability do what they currently rely solely on the PC-12 to do.

In the not so distant future, it will be an Afghan-operated ScanEagle providing the "find" and "fix" phases of a dynamic targeting opportunity. It will be an Afghan pilot sitting at the ground control station in Uruzgan, maintaining persistent observation from high above. A team of Afghan soldiers helping to operate the ScanEagle will vector in the highly reliable A-29 strike aircraft. The target this time might be Taliban insurgents fleeing the battlefield in pickup trucks. The A-29 will come swooping down to deal yet another lethal blow to the enemy insurgency, delivering a small but important victory to a dedicated Afghan military force and the coalition advisors who advise them, and providing yet another concrete example of how capable the Afghan intelligence enterprise has become. ∎

Notes

1. Andrew Lowe (GSG2 National Military Intelligence Center targeting mentor and Operations Team lead, Headquarters, Resolute Support), interview by Loren Traugutt, 26 October 2016, Kabul, Afghanistan.

2. Abdul Manan Farahi (Afghan National Army general staff chief of intelligence), interview by Loren Traugutt, 5 November 2016, Ministry of Defense, Kabul, Afghanistan.

3. Joint Publication 3-26, *Counterterrorism* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Publishing Office, 24 October 2014), V-4, fig. V-2.

4. Alexander Driscoll (captain, U.S. Army, ANA 215th Corps senior intelligence advisor), interview by Loren Traugutt, 25 October 2016, Kabul, Afghanistan.

5. Micah Reel (GSG2 strategic counterintelligence mentor, Headquarters, Resolute Support), interview by Loren Traugutt, 14 December 2016, Kabul, Afghanistan.

6. Lowe, interview.

7. General remarks from Afghan officers during the Afghan National Army Corps Commanders Conference, November 2016, Ministry of Defense, Kabul, Afghanistan.

8. Louis L'Amour, *Bendigo Shafter* (New York: Bantam Books, March 2004), Kindle edition.