



An 18-foot bronze “horse soldier” statue, dedicated to the U.S. troops who responded in those weeks following 9/11, is located in Liberty Park which overlooks the 9/11 Memorial and Museum in New York City. Photo by Mark Nutsch/used with permission

In this monograph, William “Bill” Knarr, Mark Nutsch, and Robert Pennington offer an unvarnished examination of America’s initial response to 9/11—the battle for Mazar-e Sharif and the events that preceded and followed that critical battle. Most remember the “horse soldiers” and the role U.S. Special Forces played fighting alongside the Central Intelligence Agency and Northern Alliance forces. Accounts of this operation have been portrayed in movies, but the difference between this monograph and other accounts is simple: the authors employ an academically rigorous methodology that is based on documentary evidence supplemented by interviews with those involved in the operations.

Joint Special Operations University
7701 Tampa Point Boulevard
MacDill AFB, FL 33621

<https://jsou.libguides.com/jsoupublications>



ISBN 978-1-941715-52-9

JSOU Report 21-2

Mazar-e Sharif: The First Victory

Knarr/Nutsch/Pennington



JOINT SPECIAL OPERATIONS UNIVERSITY



Mazar-e Sharif: The First Victory of the 21st Century Against Terrorism

William Knarr, Mark Nutsch, and Robert Pennington

JSOU Report 21-2

Joint Special Operations University and the Institute for SOF Strategic Studies (IS3)

The Joint Special Operations University (JSOU) generates, incubates, and propagates (delivers and communicates) ideas, education, and training for expanding and advancing the body of knowledge on joint and combined special operations. JSOU is a ‘hybrid organization’ that performs a hybrid mission—we are a ‘corporate university’: an academic institution serving a professional service enterprise, ‘by, with, and through,’ the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM). As such, we are both a direct reporting unit to the Commander, USSOCOM, on all Combined Joint Special Operations Forces (CJSOF) education and leader development matters, as well as the educational and leader development component of the Command.

The JSOU Mission is that JSOU prepares Special Operations Forces professionals to address strategic and operational challenges, arming them with the ability to think through problems with knowledge and insight. **Our Vision** is to constantly strive to be(come) USSOCOM’s “think-do tank,” world-class leader in “All Things” CJSOF strategic and operational education, training, and leader development, and the advancement of knowledge on the utility of CJSOF, for the Nation. We pursue this mission and vision through our best-practice teaching & learning, research & analysis (R&A), and engagement & service-outreach operations, activities, and initiatives. We achieve these outcomes-based goals by providing specialized joint professional military education, developing SOF-specific and unique undergraduate, graduate, and post-graduate-level equivalent curriculum, and by fostering special operations-focused R&A and outreach, in support of USSOCOM objectives and United States national and global strategic goals.

JSOU carries forward its R&A roles and responsibilities led by, and through its IS3, where our efforts are guided and informed by the most current U.S. National Security, Defense, and Military Strategies, and the **USSOCOM Mission: USSOCOM develops and employs fully capable Special Operations Forces to conduct global special operations and activities as part of the Joint Force to support persistent, networked, and distributed global Combatant Commands operations and campaigns against state and non-state actors, to protect and advance U.S. policies and objectives.**

Joint Special Operations University

Isaiah “Ike” Wilson III, Ph.D., HQE, Colonel, U.S. Army, Ret., *President*

Scott M. Guilbeault, Colonel, U.S. Air Force, *Vice President*

Shannon P. Meade, Ph.D., *Director, Institute for SOF Strategic Studies (IS3)*

Christopher Marsh, Ph.D., Political Science, *Director, Center for Strategic Research*

Lisa Sheldon, B.A., Advertising, *JSOU Press Editor*

Claire Luke, *Part-time Editor and Layout Designer*

IS3 Professors

Peter McCabe, Ph.D., Political Science, Colonel, U.S. Air Force, Ret.

Will Irwin, MMAS, Lieutenant Colonel, U.S. Army, Ret.

David Ellis, Ph.D., International Relations, Comparative Politics

A. Jackson, Ph.D., International Relations

Mark G. Grzegorzewski, Ph.D., Government



JSOU Press publications are available for download at <https://jsoulibguides.com/jsoupublications>.

Print copies available upon request by writing jsou_research@socom.mil.



*Mazar-e Sharif:
The First Victory of the 21st
Century Against Terrorism*

*William Knarr, Mark Nutsch, and
Robert Pennington*

JSOU Report 21-2
The JSOU Press
MacDill Air Force Base, Florida
2021



Recent Publications of the JSOU Press

The Blurred Battlefield: The Perplexing Conflation of Humanitarian and Criminal Law in Contemporary Conflicts, JSOU Report 21-1, Patrick Paterson

Iranian Proxy Groups in Iraq, Syria, and Yemen: A Principal-Agent Comparative Analysis, JSOU Report 20-5, Diane Zorri, Houman Sadri, and David Ellis

Special Operations Forces Civil Affairs in Great Power Competition, JSOU Report 20-4, Travis Clemens

Informal Governance as a Force Multiplier in Counterterrorism: Evidence for Burkina Faso, JSOU Report 20-3, Margaret Ariotti and Kevin Fridy

Village Stability Operations and the Evolution of SOF Command and Control in Afghanistan: Implications for the Future of Irregular Warfare, JSOU Report 20-2, William Knarr and Mark Nutsch

Decision-Making Considerations in Support to Resistance, JSOU Report 20-1, Will Irwin

On the cover. General Abdul Rashid Dostum addresses his horsemen before battling Taliban forces in 2001. Photo by Ak Yasin and Mark Nutsch/used with permission.

Back cover. An 18-foot bronze “horse soldier” statue, dedicated to the U.S. troops who responded in those weeks following 9/11, is located in Liberty Park which overlooks the 9/11 Memorial and Museum in New York City. Photo by Mark Nutsch/used with permission.

This work was cleared for public release; distribution is unlimited.

April 2021.

ISBN 978-1-941715-52-9

The views expressed in this publication are entirely those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views, policy, or position of the United States Government, Department of Defense, United States Special Operations Command, or the Joint Special Operations University.

Comments about this publication are invited and should be forwarded to the Director, Institute for SOF Strategic Studies, Joint Special Operations University, 7701 Tampa Point Blvd., MacDill AFB, FL 33621.

The JSOU Institute for SOF Strategic Studies is currently accepting written works relevant to special operations for potential publication. For more information, please contact the Director, Institute for SOF Strategic Studies at jsou_research@socom.mil. Thank you for your interest in the JSOU Press.

Contents

Foreword	vii
About the Authors.....	ix
Acknowledgements	xiii
Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1. Preparation and Initial Contact.....	13
Chapter 2. Infiltration	29
Chapter 3. Organization and Buildup	45
Chapter 4. Employment.....	59
Chapter 5. Transition.....	73
Chapter 6. Discussion: Successes, Failures, and Implications.....	83
Chapter 7. Summary.....	101
Epilogue	111
Acronyms	115
Endnotes.....	119

Foreword

In this monograph Bill Knarr, Mark Nutsch, and Robert Pennington offer the reader an unvarnished examination of America's initial response to the 9/11 terror attack. They cover the timeframe from 11 September 2001 to June 2002 (the swearing in of Hamid Karzai as the Interim President of Afghanistan for the Transitional Administration). So much has been written about the initial U.S. response to the 9/11 attacks. Unfortunately, not all accounts have been accurate, or at the very least, they have been sensationalized to promote commercial sales. The difference between this monograph and other accounts is simple: the authors employ an academically rigorous methodology that is based on documentary evidence supplemented by interviews with those involved in the operations.

The central element of this monograph is a case study of the battle for Mazar-e Sharif and the events that preceded and followed that critical battle. While the authors focus on events in Northern Afghanistan, other related events in the south are also addressed. Most remember the "horse soldiers" and the role of U.S. Special Forces fighting alongside the Central Intelligence Agency and Northern Alliance forces. This monograph moves beyond this superficial view and recognizes the various joint, interagency, and international contributions that led to the success of the Taliban's defeat. This study presents the case study using the seven phases of U.S.-sponsored unconventional warfare (UW): preparation, initial contact, infiltration, organization, buildup, employment, and transition. Each phase is a chapter and concludes with a discussion of the success, failure, and implications of the UW campaign.

The authors conclude that the Mazar-e Sharif campaign contained more successes than originally attributed and that UW was a successful method of employment. Failures are also addressed, which focus on U.S. intelligence shortcomings. Finally, the monograph presents implications for special operations of these successes and failures. This important volume will be a valuable part of educating the current and future special operations community, which include conventional, joint, interagency, and international partner enablers. This monograph is especially important as the focus of the Department of Defense is shifting from countering terrorism to great power

competition. Direct action and conventional force-on-force battles are not envisioned; instead, irregular and UW will be more likely as evidenced by Russia's "little green men" in Ukraine or Iran's use of proxies throughout the Middle East. UW concepts that have atrophied of late will once again become important to special operations due to how great power competition will engage in influence, information, and military operations with and among diverse indigenous populations. What better way to further the knowledge of UW than to educate oneself, study its employment, and learn to achieve strategic outcomes. Luckily, the special operations community has this monograph for just that purpose.

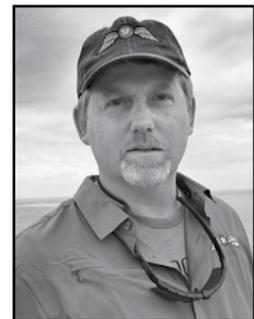
Peter McCabe, Ph.D.
Professor, Joint Special Operations University

About the Authors

Dr. William Knarr is a non-resident Senior Fellow at the Joint Special Operations University (JSOU) in Tampa, Florida, where, on a part-time basis supports their research program and teaches/leads seminars on irregular warfare. He also serves as an adjunct professor at the National Intelligence University where he teaches graduate courses on intelligence and special operations. Dr. Knarr retired from the U.S. Army in 2002 as a colonel. His operational experience included intelligence, aviation and special operations. He has a doctorate in education, and master's degrees in national security strategy and systems management. His projects and publications include *The 2005 Iraqi Sunni Awakening: The Role of the Desert Protectors*, JSOU monograph 15-4, and *Mazar-e Sharif: The First Victory of the 21st Century Against Terrorism*, IDA Document D-4015—both highlight the power of small adaptable units leveraging joint/coalition capabilities and working “by, with and through” indigenous forces. His most recent publication, coauthored with Mark Nutsch was *Village Stability Operations and the Evolution of SOF Command and Control in Afghanistan: Implications for the Future of Irregular Warfare*. In April of 2019 he was inducted into the Infantry Officer Candidate School Hall of Fame.



Former U.S. Army Major Mark Nutsch recently provided contract support to USSOCOM J3 Training and Education joint assessments of SOF baseline interoperability standards for combat skills. Major Nutsch served in the Army, in active and reserve capacities as a 101st Airborne Infantry, 75th Ranger Regiment, and Special Forces officer and mobilized as an operations officer in support of SOF counter-ISIS efforts. He deployed repeatedly with multiple combat tours to the Middle East and Central Asian States. Working with the National Labs as a program manager, he led diverse collaborative teams of contract aircrew and intel analysts and conducted groundbreaking



manned aerial wide area counter-network surveillance efforts as part of Task Force (TF) ODIN. In America's response to the attacks of 9/11, Captain Nutsch led one of the first TF Dagger combined Special Forces teams; Operational Detachment Alpha (ODA) 595 with Combat Controllers and CIA into Northern Afghanistan. He advised the area command leadership of three different resistance factions. Uniting those factions together against the Taliban and al-Qaeda, they spearheaded unconventional warfare operations while mounted on horseback. The "Campaign for Mazar-e Sharif" resulted in the liberation of six northern Afghan provinces, and with other follow-on TF Dagger teams was the catalyst for the Taliban regime collapse. Major Nutsch and the ODA 595 "Horse Soldiers" are the design inspiration of the "America's Response Monument," a tribute to the SOF and intelligence community. He and his team are featured in the books *The Last Warlord* and *The Horse Soldiers*. He is a featured guest speaker for public, professional, and military institutions including JSOU Senior Enlisted Academy courses. Mark and his team are featured in the documentary film "Legion of Brothers" and portrayed in the feature film entitled "12 Strong."

Mark led a team of American and French special operations veterans to parachute from historic C-47 aircraft into Normandy on 5 June 2019 to honor the Office of Strategic Services and WWII special operations veterans for the 75th anniversary of D-Day airborne commemorations. This adventure was featured in a powerful documentary film "Here Am I, Send Me!"

Mark, his former SF teammates, and business partners now operate a nationally growing craft distillery brand featuring their award-winning, Horse Soldier Bourbon.

His most recent publication, coauthored with Dr. Bill Knarr, was *Village Stability Operations and the Evolution of SOF Command and Control in Afghanistan: Implications for the Future of Irregular Warfare*, JSOU Report 20-2.

Chief Warrant Officer 4 Robert (Bob) Pennington (Ret.) served over 30 years in the U.S. Army, including 26 years as a Green Beret. He served as both an Assistant Detachment Commander and Detachment Commander. He also held positions at the company level as an Operations Warrant, Executive Officer and Company Commander. At the battalion level, in 2012–14 he held the position as a Senior Warrant Officer Advisor assigned to 1st Battalion, 1st Special Warfare Training Group at Camp Mackall, N.C.

There, as the plans officer, he oversaw all efforts that shape the future of the Special Forces Qualification Course (SFQC). While assigned to Special Warfare Center and School from 2010–12, Chief Warrant Officer 4 Pennington served as the team chief for the doctrine division’s principal tasks cell, where he assisted and oversaw the production of key doctrinal manuals that support the Special Forces Regiment and other special operations throughout the Services. As a subject matter expert for Special Forces Advanced Special Operations Techniques, Chief Warrant Officer 4 Pennington assisted in the updating and revising of ATP 3-18.20 ASOT and its supporting manuals. He also assisted in the revisions of TC 18-01 SF *Unconventional Warfare*, FM 3-18 SF *Operations* (special forces keystone manual), where he authored the appendices, as well as assisted in the development of 5 of the 6 chapters and ATP 3-18.72 SF Personnel Recovery. He also made critical changes to the SF Detachment Mission Planning Guide, resulting in a complete revision to support students at the SFQC. As America’s response to the 9/11 attacks, then Chief Warrant Officer 2 Pennington served as the Assistant Detachment Commander for ODA 595 during their historic campaign, conducting textbook UW operations while on horseback against a formidable Taliban and al-Qaeda force 10-times the strength of the allies. Now featured in several books, manuals, and films (major motion picture *12 Strong* and the documentary film, *Legions of Brothers*), Chief Warrant Officer 4 Pennington is often a guest speaker for the SFQC and other events. He is a 2014 Saint Philip Neri (Bronze) Award and 2018 Major General Sidney Shachnow Award recipient. In 2020, he was selected as a distinguished member of the Special Forces Regiment. Additionally, Chief Warrant Officer 4 Pennington was inducted into the Georgia Military Veteran’s Hall of Fame-class 2020.



Acknowledgements

We would like to thank a number of people and organizations for their advice and assistance, and for sharing their valuable time and experiences with the authors during the development of this monograph.

Special thanks to Kristian Krempel, president and publisher for FX Marketing Group. The story line for ODA 595 in Afghanistan was based on an article written by the men of ODA 595 with Dr. William Knarr entitled “Mazar-e Sharif: The First Victory of the 21st Century.” The article was written for *The 60th Anniversary: U.S. Special Forces 1952–2012*, and published by FX Marketing Group. Kristian graciously allowed the article to be used here.

Much of the groundwork had been done from 2001 to 2010 while the principal author worked at the Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA). All of the Afghan interviews, as well as the battle site surveys published by IDA, contributed to and are cited throughout this monograph. The study could not have been conducted without the full support of General Tommy Franks, Combatant Commander, United States Central Command, his staff, the United States Special Operations Command, and particularly the 5th Special Forces Group.

Introduction

The United States of America's initial response to terrorism in October 2001 included the insertion of U.S. Army Special Forces teams into Northern Afghanistan in the opening phase of Operation Enduring Freedom-Afghanistan (OEF-A). A week after the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001, U.S. Army Special Forces Operational Detachment Alpha (ODA) 595, a uniquely experienced unconventional warfare (UW) team of 12 men from C Company, 3rd Battalion, 5th Special Forces Group (SFG) (Airborne) was alerted and selected for deployment to Central Asia.¹ Three weeks later, the team relocated to a secret location in Uzbekistan known simply as K2—an overnight tent city boomtown built by the Joint Special Operations Task Force North (JSOTF-N), or Task Force (TF) Dagger. On the edge of a former Russian Airbase in a small field tent, ODA 595 received its mission. In 48 hours they would conduct a nighttime helicopter infiltration into Afghanistan and link up with the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) teams and resistance forces in the Darya Suf Valley, approximately 50 miles south of Mazar-e Sharif in Northern Afghanistan.³ Their initial contact would be General Abdul Rashid Dostum, who was communicating with other ethnic leaders to convince them to rally together against the common enemy.

Like their Office of Strategic Services (OSS) forefathers of World War II and Army Special Forces brethren before them, ODA 595's mission was to conduct UW. Very little was known about the situation on the ground or the potential Afghan allies. The team was to assess the situation and sort it out. If captured, they would likely face brutal torture and certain death. With the full weight of a nation's foreign policy in their rucksacks and the resources behind and literally above them, they were "America's Response."

The battle for Mazar-e Sharif is legendary and hailed as transformational by Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld. It was the first major victory against terrorism following 9/11 and key to the coalition force victory in the north and ultimately Afghanistan. While many recall the image of American Special Operations Forces (SOF) fighting from the backs of Afghan horses, this monograph enhances our understanding of the various aspects of this novel campaign and provides important lessons for the future.

Although the centerpiece of this monograph is reflected in the perspectives from the men of ODA 595 during the period of September to late November 2001, the story would be incomplete without discussing other significant events in Afghanistan that take the reader through the transition phase, phase 7 of UW. As such, it generally addresses the campaign in the south, the significance of Operation Anaconda and the political/military dynamics leading up to electing the Interim President of the Transitional Administration in June 2002.

Purpose

UW is at the core of the heritage of the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM). As indicated, it traces its roots to the OSS and their UW mission during World War II. Although the 12-man ODA is the nucleus for the Department of Defense's (DOD's) UW team—trained, educated and experienced in the conduct of indigenous force operations—success required a much larger team effort: intra-service, joint, interagency and multinational/international partners.⁴

The Case

The purpose of this research and monograph, first, is to tell the story. There are several versions of the ODA 595 story. The two most prevalent are *The Horse Soldiers* and *12-Strong*—the former a bestseller book published in 2009, and the latter, a hit movie released to theaters in 2018. Both are based on the truth, supported by the DOD, and met their twin objectives of great entertainment and making money. Some parts are so compelling that they are being used as teaching tools for training and education. That is okay if the context and correct messages are sent. The authors suggest that since this is a SOF story, SOF need to tell it—not to point out what is wrong in other versions, but as a case study, to lay the investigative groundwork for follow-on analysis in terms of concepts, doctrine, training, and education. Therefore, the first objective of this monograph is to get the case right, that is, to tell the story.

The Study

The next part is to get the “study” right, that is, to identify successes, failures, and their implications; specifically, the educational objectives and learning

outcomes that are brought to life, as well as its implications for future warfare. As such, there are several contentions:

1. **Successes, failures, and implications.** The 9/11 Commission report stated that “failures of imagination” prevented the U.S. from having a better understanding of the gravity of the terrorist threat.⁵ Dr. Konrad Trautman, former USSOCOM J2, in a 2014 JSOU Press monograph cited the 9/11 report and expanded that finding to include the SOF lack of “strategic unconventional or irregular options to address the rising al-Qaeda threat” prior to 9/11. Specifically, he cited the necessity for intelligence to guide planning and operations as a “distinct lesson learned as SOF go forward.”⁶ This monograph contends that while there were “failures of imagination,” there were also successes.

One example at the strategic level was CIA Director George Tenet’s perseverance and pursuit after the USS *Cole* incident to execute a covert action plan that went further than cruise missile strikes on empty training camps. To be discussed later, luck—or more professionally characterized as fate—played a part in this. That is, it was fortunate that UW was the only practical option on the table post-9/11 that could immediately respond to the situation. This monograph contends that, had there been a glimmer of a conventional force hope, UW would not have been the primary venue and may not have happened at all.⁷ Unfortunately, as soon as America had the opportunity to turn it into a conventional fight, it did. Successes, failures, and implications are addressed throughout the monograph.

2. **Relationships and interdependencies.** A major theme in the story is the interdependencies and trust among the indigenous forces, SOF, air operations and other government agencies; and the power of small, adaptable units integrating joint/coalition capabilities. Embedded within that is the importance of alliances at the tactical through strategic levels. The argument is: “Interdependencies and trust were so critical, that the UW mission might not have succeeded, absent any of those relationships and competencies.”
3. **Doctrinal definition and phases.** “Joint Doctrine constitutes official advice; however, the judgment of the commander is paramount in all situations.”⁸ The quote best describes Joint Doctrine but also recognizes

that battlefield events are “situation dependent” and defers to commander’s judgement. The endnote provides a more complete characterization. It is important to state that up front since this monograph uses doctrine to structure the discussion of UW and subsequently to make recommendations as to whether it needs to be changed.

The first joint publication for UW was released in September 2015 providing “joint doctrine to assess, plan, and execute unconventional warfare.” Although the publication is not public releasable, this monograph will use other releasable material to argue that the definition and phases are about right—unique enough to be SOF specific, but general and flexible enough to be applicable to changing conditions and future environments. This is important because some contend that the battle for Mazar, was not UW because it did not incorporate all of the components such as an underground or auxiliary, or because the compressed timelines did not truly represent the typical UW timeline. This monograph contends that all the components of UW were present at Mazar-e Sharif and any attempt to apply a typical timeline template to all UW operations suffers from a failure of imagination.

This monograph sorts through and analyzes those contentions and finds much more success than failure as well as implications for the future, in particular how these seemingly unique innovations address larger doctrinal issues.

Framing the Discussion

The authors have chosen definitions, phases, and timelines to frame the discussion—specifically the definition of UW, the seven phases of UW, and major events in a timeline that extends from 9/11 to June 2002 when Hamid Karzai was sworn in as the Interim President of Afghanistan for the Transitional Administration. Although it does not ignore events before or after that timeline, it will focus its attention on that period.

Definition

UW is defined as “activities conducted to enable a resistance movement or insurgency to coerce, disrupt, or overthrow a government or occupying power by operating through or with an underground, auxiliary, and guerrilla

force in a denied area.”⁹ A number of the key terms, such as underground and auxiliary, will be defined as they are discussed in the monograph.

It is important to note that doctrinal terms change every few years depending on lessons (such as those from Mazar) or the perceived changing character of war and the environment. By the time this monograph is published, the definitions cited throughout this monograph might change. In fact, there are those that would say, “Dump [the term] Unconventional Warfare,” and advocate it be replaced by a “more comprehensive concept of ‘political warfare’ that incorporates all elements of U.S. national power.”¹⁰ Some say the term warfare is offensive and a turn-off for agencies other than DOD, such as the Department of State (DOS) or United States Agency for International Development.

Having said that, the terms and definitions provided here are a good point of departure for discussion.

Phases of UW

In addition to the definitions, the seven phases of UW operations help frame the discussion. They are: preparation, initial contact, infiltration, organization, buildup, employment, and transition.¹¹ In a general sense, those phases will be discussed throughout the monograph.

Events that Help Frame the Discussion

There were a number of events preceding 9/11 that constitute the commission’s characterization that 9/11 was “a shock, but not a surprise.” Examples include the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, Osama bin Laden’s 1996 and 1998 declared fatwas against America, the 1998 U.S. Embassy bombings in Africa, and the 2000 attack on the USS *Cole*. Those events serve as the prelude to 9/11 and fuel the counterterrorism (CT) community’s frustration with administrations that did not alert to those indicators. While important and generally addressed in the chapter on “Preparation,” this monograph chronology starts with 9/11 and ends with Karzai’s selection as the Interim President of the Transitional Administration in June 2002. The following is a general chronology to help frame the discussion and put it in context.

11 September: al-Qaeda struck the United States.

12 September: United Nations Security Council Resolution 1368 condemned 11 September terrorist acts.

14 September: U.S. Congress passed a joint resolution (JR 23) authorizing the president of the United States to “use all necessary and appropriate force” against those who were involved in the terrorist attacks that occurred on 11 September 2001.

17 September: President George W. Bush approved the CIA plan to insert teams into Afghanistan to work with indigenous/anti-Taliban forces.¹²

26 September: A seven-man CIA team, known as the Northern Afghanistan Liaison Team (NALT) entered Afghanistan via a CIA-owned Russian helicopter.¹³

7 October: President Bush addressed the nation; U.S. forces began bombing Afghanistan.

9 October: President Bush informed Congress, in accordance with the War Powers Act that combat actions in Afghanistan started on 7 October.

17 October: Team Alpha, the second CIA team linked up with General Dostum southeast of Mazar-e Sharif.¹⁴

19 October: 5th SFG inserted two teams into Afghanistan: ODA 595 was inserted southeast of Mazar-e Sharif to link up with Team Alpha and General Dostum, and ODA 555 was inserted into the Panjshir Valley to link up with General Fahim Khan and the NALT.¹⁵

20 October: 1st airstrike of a B-52 aircraft directed by ODA 595 as a capability demonstration for General Dostum’s forces.

24 October: Lieutenant Colonel Chris Haas, Commander, 1st Battalion, 5th SFG and Operational Detachment Charlie (ODC) 51 deployed to the Bagram area as the senior military advisor to General Fahim Khan and his subcommanders to include General Bismullah Khan.¹⁶

28–29 October: 1st Area Commander’s meeting between factional leaders General Dostum, Commanders Atta and Haji Mohammad Mohaqeq, facilitated by Team Alpha, and ODA 595.

2–3 November: SOAR inserts Lieutenant Colonel Max, Commander, 3rd Battalion, 5th SFG and ODC 53, to the Darya Suf Valley as the senior advisor to General Dostum and ODA 534 to the Balkh Valley to support Commander Atta.¹⁷

5–6 November: The Northern Alliance (see administrative note on use of term Northern Alliance) with small teams of United States forces fought the Battle for the Darya Suf.

9–10 November: The Northern Alliance (led by General Dostum) with a small contingent of U.S. forces broke through the Tiangi and liberated Mazar-e Sharif.

13 November: The Northern Alliance (led by Bismullah Kahn) with U.S. forces liberated Kabul.¹⁸

14 November: Karzai was inserted near Tarin Kowt with ODA 574.¹⁹

14 November: Jalalabad fell, essentially closing the Kyber pass to fleeing Taliban and al-Qaeda.²⁰

17 November: Battle of Tarin Kowt was fought.²¹

18 November: Elements of ODA 583 linked up with Gul Agha Sherzai, former governor of Kandahar, southeast of Kandahar.²²

20 November: 3rd Army Headquarters assumed responsibilities as the Combined Forces Land Component Commander (CFLCC) at Camp Doha, Kuwait.²³

25 November to 1 December: Uprising at Qala Jangi fortress, near Mazar-e Sharif. Elements of al-Qaeda's 55 Brigade and Taliban prisoners killed CIA agent Mike Spann, the first American to die in Afghanistan during OEF-A.

27 November: Lieutenant Colonel David Fox, commander 2nd Battalion, 5th SFG, ODC 52 linked up with ODA 574 near Tarin Kowt.²⁴

5 December: Bonn Agreement established an interim authority designating Karzai as the chairman.²⁵

5 December: Tragically, a friendly fire bombing struck Karzai's force, the ODA 574 and ODC 52 element, resulting in three American and 20 Afghan killed in action.²⁶

6–17 December: Battle for Tora Bora was fought.

7–9 December: Kandahar fell to Karzai and Sherzai anti-Taliban forces.²⁷

12 December: Major General Franklin Hagenbeck, Commander 10th Mountain Division assumed duties as the CFLCC Forward at Karshi Khanabad.²⁸

22 December: Karzai was sworn in as Afghanistan's Chairman, Interim Administration.

15 February 2002: Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF) Mountain assumed command and control (C2) of Operation Anaconda forces.²⁹ Operation Anaconda was conducted from 2–19 March 2002.³⁰

13 June 2002: Karzai was chosen as the Interim President of the Transitional Administration by a Loya Jirga.

Methodology

A case study methodology based on a literature review and interviews was used. The interviews/discussions span the strategic to the tactical. They included a former U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan, a former United States Central Command (USCENTCOM) commander, SOF commanders and CIA participants as well as discussions with the various Afghan Uzbek, Tajik and Hazara faction leaders such as General Dostum, Commander Ustad Atta Mohammed Noor, and Commander Mohaqeq, respectively.

The centerpiece of this monograph is an article written by the men of ODA 595 with Dr. William Knarr titled “The 1st Victory of the 21st Century: Mazar-e Sharif,” for *The 60th Anniversary of U.S. Special Forces: 1952–2012*.³¹ It provides the men of ODA 595’s perspective verbatim. In addition, it includes strategic and operational aspects from those points of view, as well as the rest of the story through the fall of Kabul and Kandahar and the transition from the interim authority to the transitional administration in June 2002. The ODA’s perspective within each of the chapters is introduced as “The Men of ODA 595.” In some cases, the reader will see a restatement of events or facts at the strategic and operational levels repeated at the tactical level by the men of ODA 595 that may seem redundant. That was intended to show where there was an agreement, or not, among the strategic, operational, and tactical levels. That is important in order to reflect connects or disconnects among the various levels of war.

Scope

In addition to the timeframe, this project will also be scoped by selected initiatives and geography. As indicated above, it specifically covers September through late November with ODA 595’s deployment. However, a discussion of the transition phase of UW requires coverage of the campaign in the south—predominantly Pashtun country—in order to discuss the political dynamics of transition to the selection of Hamid Karzai as Interim President of the Transitional Administration in June 2002.

Geographically, the project will focus more on Northern Afghanistan to include the provinces of Jawzjan, Sari Pul, Balkh, Samangan, Kunduz, Takhar, Faryab, Bamian, and Panjshir (see map at figure 1). It will generally cover events in the south.

Administrative Notes

The following protocols are used in this paper for consistency. In text/context this paper will normally refer to military members by their rank at the time of the event. In the endnotes they will be referred to by their rank at the time of the interview.

When speaking of strategy, this monograph uses a combination of the strategy framework and the levels of war. The strategy framework conceptually defines strategy as “the relationship among ends, ways, and means. Ends are the objectives or goals sought. Means are the resources available to pursue the objectives. And ways or methods are how one organizes and applies the resources.”³² This paper also uses the levels of war as described in Joint Publication 3-0, *Joint Operations*, 11 August 2011, “Three levels of war—strategic, operational, and tactical—model the relationship between national objectives and tactical actions.”³³

The name “Northern Alliance” is used throughout the monograph for convenience and in this context refers to those Tajik forces that belonged to Ahmad Shah Massoud, Uzbek forces of General Dostum, and Hazara forces of Commander Mohaqeq. The Northern Alliance has also been referred to as the United Islamic Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan,³⁴ United Front, and anti-Taliban Forces. Because of the tenuous C2 arrangements and the informality of the coalition, some suggest that “Anti-Taliban Forces” is a more accurate descriptor. The adoption of Northern Alliance is discussed later and is probably a more helpful characterization as the campaigns in the north and south are discussed.³⁵

For clarity in this monograph, CIA teams are referred to as Teams Alpha through Hotel and the special forces split team nomenclature will be reflected as Captain Mark’s Section and Chief Bob’s Section.

ODA team members in the sections written by “The Men of ODA 595” are referred to by their rank and first names as it was approved for public release by the Office of Security Review, Department of Defense on 16 November 2006 and again on 18 July 2012.

Structure

There are seven chapters and an epilogue, beginning with this introduction and then the following chapters:

1. **Preparation and Initial Contact.** Preparation, specifically for UW, didn't start until the president approved the CIA's plan on 17 September to insert their teams followed by SF teams. Subsequently, the CIA's Northern Alliance Liaison Team made initial contact with General Fahim Khan, Commander of the Northern Alliance, on 26 September 2001.
2. **Infiltration.** This chapter begins with the establishment of the JSOTF in K2 on 5 October 2001 and ends with ODA 595's bombing of Taliban in the Chapchal/Beshcam area on 20 October as an initial demonstration of America's might. While chapter 1 set the strategic context, this chapter focuses mainly on the operational level of war and transition to the tactical. The central theme of this chapter is the infiltration of ODA 595, phase three of unconventional warfare.
3. **Organization and Buildup.** These phases were characterized, as titled, by the organization and buildup of forces. Important to that organization was the rapport building, on-going assessment of indigenous force capabilities, the unification of those various factions and an agreed upon plan of action. That was a tall order.
4. **Employment.** The period 5 to 10 November 2001, specifically for the assault on Mazar-e Sharif, was titled "Employment" because the conditions were set during the previous phases. The plan had been laid out and agreed to by the principals (Americans and the three faction leaders in the Mazar-e Sharif area: General Dostum, Commander Atta, and Commander Mohaqeq), forces were organized and in place, and resources were available. Although ammunition had not been distributed from the most recent drop, General Dostum was comfortable that enough ammunition was available for the 5 November engagement as well as engagements during pursuit and exploitation of the enemy forces towards Mazar.
5. **Transition.** The purpose of this chapter was to discuss transition, however, before starting that discussion, the authors needed to bring up the campaign in the south because transition speaks to the whole of Afghanistan, not just the north. The fight in the south is important because of its relevance to the defeat of the Taliban and al-Qaeda in

Afghanistan, the transition from UW to foreign internal defense (FID), and the standup of an Afghanistan government.

6. **Discussion.** Successes, Failures, and Implications. This chapter takes the reader back to the introduction and addresses earlier contentions such as failures/successes of imagination, whether or not the battle of Mazar-e Sharif was UW, and the impact of the battle on the overall campaign in overthrowing the Taliban.
7. **Summary.**

Epilogue. While this monograph centered on the ODA 595 storyline, the epilogue provides the team members an opportunity to reflect on their success.



Figure 1. Afghanistan's Provinces. Source: Golbez/GNU Free Documentation License/CC BY-SA 3.0

Chapter 1. Preparation and Initial Contact³⁶

Immediately following the 9/11 attacks by al-Qaeda on the United States, countries around the world condemned the act. On 12 September, in a rare show of solidarity, the United Nations Security Council unanimously passed Resolution 1368 calling “on all states to bring the perpetrators to justice.”³⁷ Additionally, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) invoked Article 5 of the charter “declaring the [terrorist] act against the United States [on 9/11] as an act against them all.”³⁸ On 14 September, the United States Congress passed Joint Resolution 23 granting the president unprecedented authority “to use all necessary and appropriate force against those nations, organizations, or persons he determines planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001, or harbored such organizations or persons.”³⁹

National Security Council (NSC) and the Interagency

The NSC “was established by statute in 1947 to advise the President with respect to the integration of domestic, foreign, and military policies relating to the national security.” During the initial days of planning and execution, it is important to understand who the NSC members were, their roles, responsibilities, objectives, and perspectives.

NSC statutory membership in 2001 included President George W. Bush, Vice-President Richard Cheney, Secretary of State Colin Powell, and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. Statutory advisors included the Director of the CIA George Tenet and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Hugh Shelton.⁴⁰ President Bush, under National Security Presidential Directive, included the Secretary of the Treasury Paul O’Neill and the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, Condoleezza Rice, as regular attendees but also invited other expertise as needed to address pressing issues.⁴¹ Such was the case on Saturday, 15 September 2001 as he convened a NSC meeting, also referred to as the war council and/or war cabinet at Camp David.⁴²



Figure 2. The NSC meets at Camp David on 15 September 2001. Photo courtesy of George W. Bush Library

Typically on a Saturday, the CIA director and his Executive Assistant Michael Morell met President Bush to review the Presidential Daily Briefing. However, this meeting would be followed by discussions on the U.S. response to the 9/11 attacks.⁴³ The meeting included the usual members listed above as well as some of their deputies: Undersecretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz; Deputy Director of the CIA John McLaughlin; Deputy National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley⁴⁴ and General Richard Myers (the incoming Combined Joint Chiefs of Staff replacing General Hugh Shelton on 1 October); Robert Mueller, Federal Bureau of Investigation Director; Richard Clark, the Chief Counterterrorism Advisor to the NSC; Cofer Black, Director of the CIA's CT Center; Andrew Card, the President's Chief of Staff; Alberto Gonzales, White House Counsel; Lewis Libby, Chief of Staff to the Vice-President; and John Ashcroft, the Attorney General.⁴⁵ The following addresses the evolution of various topics during September 2001, but focuses primarily on the discussions of 15 September because the plan and agency positions became much clearer; the President's decisions from the discussions were forthcoming on 17 September, Monday morning.

The Plan

By most accounts, the CIA was well prepared for the 15 September meeting and had already socialized its proposal at previous meetings. Rumsfeld described Tenet's plan as "interesting" where he proposed sending small CIA teams to Afghanistan to collect information on Taliban and al-Qaeda targets.⁴⁶ However, it was much more than that; as presented in meetings leading up to 15 September, those teams would link up with the Northern Alliance; subsequently special forces would join the CIA teams, bringing with them overwhelming firepower. According to Morell, the overall plan was based on the "Blue Sky" memorandum produced by CIA in the wake of the al-Qaeda bombing of the USS *Cole* on 12 October 2000 in Yemen's Port of Aden. "It was remarkably detailed—for example, outlining relationships among the hundreds of different tribes in Afghanistan and how those could be used against the Taliban and al-Qaeda."⁴⁷ The plan included covert action on terrorist network finances and coordination with the FBI on the Afghan community residing in the United States. Additionally, this would be a global initiative against al-Qaeda, not just geographically focused on those in Afghanistan. To execute the plan, Tenet drafted a Memorandum of Notification (MON), known by most as a finding. This one was based on U.S. President Ronald Reagan's 1986 World-wide Counterterrorism Intelligence Finding. It superseded those approved by U.S. President Bill Clinton (to be discussed later) and broadened the CIA's authorities and resources.⁴⁸

Iraq Becomes a Major Distraction

As Tenet presented and sold his plans on dealing with Afghanistan and the global threat posed by al-Qaeda, there were other agency agendas, primarily within the defense department. Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz agreed that they were dealing with a global threat but, seemed obsessed with Iraq, suggesting that Saddam should be the main target.⁴⁹ In fact the Defense Department's 14 September read-ahead for the 15 September meeting cited three priority targets for America's response: the Taliban, al-Qaeda, and Iraq. It argued that of the three, al-Qaeda and Iraq were strategic threats: Iraq because of its (alleged) ties to terrorism as well as its pursuit of weapons of mass destruction.⁵⁰ While Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz saw 9/11 as an opportunity to attack Iraq under the wider umbrella of this Global War on Terrorism, many of the others saw their fixation on Iraq as a major distraction from

the business at hand.⁵¹ Additionally, there was no proof that there was any connection between Saddam Hussein/Iraq and 9/11.⁵²

Ever-the-diplomat, Colin Powell, commended by President Bush for “rallying other countries” to join the coalition, argued that going after Iraq at the time would be perceived by coalition members as a bait and switch. Tenet agreed. Andy Card, the President’s Chief of Staff added that the “American people would expect us to go to war against Afghanistan not Iraq.”⁵³ Condoleezza Rice, characterized as a facilitator/liaison officer “bridging the gap between the State and Defense Departments,”⁵⁴ described Wolfowitz’s interjection of Iraq into the discussion of al-Qaeda and 9/11 as a “huge distraction.”⁵⁵ And as the world would see several years later, it would continue to be a distraction from the U.S. and coalition’s efforts in Afghanistan.

As General Shelton presented three military options, Wolfowitz interrupted with yet another pitch for Iraq.⁵⁶ According to Shelton, the “President became irate. ‘How many times do I have to tell you, we are not going after Iraq right this minute, we’re going to go after the people we know that did this to us. Do you understand me?’” General Shelton left the meeting convinced that America would be at war with Iraq before the end of the President’s first term in office.⁵⁷

On 17 September, President Bush approved the CIA’s plan.⁵⁸ On 23 September President Bush signed Executive Order 13224, *Blocking Property and Prohibiting Transactions with Persons who Commit, Threaten to Commit, or Support Terrorism*.

Finance

The Treasury Department, pre-9/11, was opposed to attacking threat finances for fear that their (the threat) retaliation against U.S. financial institutions would, proportionally, be much more devastating. According to General Shelton, who had proposed attacking threat finances several times previous to 9/11 without much success, before Secretary of the Treasury O’Neill could echo his predecessors’ position

the President interceded immediately, as if he knew what was coming. He said, “We are going to use every tool that we have, to include economics; so let’s start figuring out what we can do to destroy these guys economically.”⁵⁹

Intelligence

This section on intelligence is addressed from a CIA perspective since it is under the rubric “interagency” and at the time of 9/11 the Director of Central Intelligence was the principal advisor to the President “for intelligence matters related to the national security; and serve[d] as the head of the United States Intelligence Community.”⁶⁰ This is important for several reasons: (1) the CIA defines intelligence and the intelligence profession differently than the military, (2) the CIA had the lead on CT for the nation, and (3) authorities.

The following definition for intelligence was obtained from the CIA Publication, *Studies in Intelligence*:

Intelligence is the collecting and processing of that information about foreign countries and their agents which is needed by a government for its foreign policy and for national security, the conduct of non-attributable activities abroad to facilitate the implementation of foreign policy, and the protection of both process and product, as well as persons and organizations concerned with these, against unauthorized disclosure.⁶¹

This parallels William Daugherty’s characterization of the “three disciplines, or missions, inherent within the intelligence profession: intelligence collection and analysis, counterintelligence/counterespionage, and covert action.”⁶²

In addition to the military version being more focused on military missions rather than at the national security/presidential level, the difference between this definition/characterization and the military’s definition of “intelligence” is generally CIA’s inclusion of counterintelligence/counterespionage and particularly covert action.⁶³ That’s an important distinction because it provided the CIA the authorities to collect intelligence and the authorities, under a MON to act on that intelligence. A good example is the MON President Clinton signed in response to the August 1998 Embassy bombings in Africa “authorizing the CIA to let its tribal assets use force to capture Bin Laden.”⁶⁴ That MON was broadened in February 1999 to allow the Northern Alliance the same latitude (albeit the same restrictions), as other tribal assets.⁶⁵

At the operational level, Henry “Hank” Crumpton, the operations officer for the CIA’s clandestine services, documented much of the work the CIA had done inside Afghanistan in search of Osama bin Laden, prior to 9/11. As an example, in September 1999 he was assigned as one of the deputies to Cofer Black, director of the CIA’s Counterterrorism Center (CTC). Although CTC’s mission was global, the most immediate objective was the nexus of Afghanistan and al-Qaeda. Within several weeks a six-man team from CTC headed to Dushanbe, Tajikistan, to link up with Ahmed Shah Massoud’s people. From there they caught a ride into the Panjshir Valley on one of Massoud’s MI-17 helicopters. Rich, the team leader made it very clear to Massoud that “their mission was about AQ ... and the United Front should not expect any help in overthrowing the Taliban Government.” They were there to collect intelligence and to pursue Osama bin Laden. In turn, Massoud described the United Front’s capabilities to include their “source network which extended into the Pashtun areas.”⁶⁶ The CIA would “deploy four more teams in the next eighteen months” as well as meet Northern Alliance representatives in adjacent countries. They would mostly work through the Northern Alliance head of intelligence, Engineer Aref and his deputy Amrullah Saleh.⁶⁷ According to Crumpton:

By September 2001 [prior to 9/11], CTC had more than a hundred human sources operating in Afghanistan, in every province and tribe. This included penetrations of the Taliban and support networks for AQ [al-Qaeda]. We had unarmed and armed Predators in the air. We had other technical collection systems in place. We knew Afghanistan, friend and foe.⁶⁸

Osama bin Laden understood the value of Ahmad Shah Massoud, not just because of the insurgent infrastructure he had built to fight the Taliban but because of his charisma as a leader. On 9 September 2001, two al-Qaeda members, representing themselves as Arab reporters gained access to Massoud for an interview to discuss the Northern Alliance fight against the Taliban. The camera they carried was an explosive device and killed Massoud along with one of the al-Qaeda members.⁶⁹ Some questioned whether the Northern Alliance could “pull themselves together after Massoud’s assassination.”⁷⁰ But Tenet was optimistic:

Masood's brutal murder by al-Qaeda on the eve of the 9/11 attacks might have undone our plan before it got under way if we hadn't maintained contact with other warlords in the north. And we also had long-standing, if much weaker, relationships with the Pashtun tribes in the south. We knew who the players and who the pretenders were. [Tenet reiterated Crumpton's claim, that by 9/11] CIA had more than one hundred sources, sub-sources, and relationships with eight tribal networks spread across Afghanistan.⁷¹

Despite the CIA's connections and claimed dearth of knowledge on the tribes and various indigenous actors in Afghanistan, they shared very little with the DOD, and, in particular, with the ground forces destined to link up with the Northern Alliance who were left in the dark until 48 hours before their insertion—more on that later.

Two weeks after 9/11, the CIA inserted a seven-man NALT known as Jawbreaker and led by Gary Schroen, into the Panjshir Valley on 26 September to work with General Mohammed Fahim (also known as Fahim Khan).⁷² Additionally, Crumpton planned to insert three more teams to support each of the area power brokers: General Dostum south of Mazar; Karim Khalili, the Hazara faction leader in the Bamian area—central Afghanistan; and Ishmael Khan in the west near Herat.⁷³

While Crumpton extolls the success of CTC in developing sources and networks and generating intelligence (and most of the publications seem to focus on their efforts), it is important to address the work of the CIA station in Islamabad. On 9/11, Robert Grenier was the Islamabad station chief and responsible for all "U.S. clandestine intelligence activities in both Pakistan and Taliban controlled Afghanistan—fully 90 percent of the country."⁷⁴ According to Grenier, it was an "anomaly" to have CTC "desk-bound headquarters case officers assert primacy in the north" and "normally, those contacts in the north would have been 'maintained by an overseas outpost—perhaps in Central Asia.'"⁷⁵ The reason why Grenier was running the clandestine efforts in the south is because his station in Islamabad was the closest and most involved station in those operations since there was no U.S. Embassy in Afghanistan. According to him,

Thus, the CTC-vs-Islamabad, Northern Alliance-vs-southern strategy dynamic, which had risen in the spring of 2001 through

difference of opinion as to how best to exert pressure on the Taliban [and find bin-Laden], was now being further reinforced.⁷⁶

He had hoped that a Presidential finding would permit them to “encourage, fund, and support a Pashtun insurgency against the Taliban; [however] the finding never materialized.” During the days and weeks following 9/11, his team met tirelessly with tribal leaders and warlords to determine their positions and incentives to fighting the Taliban. In most cases they were not willing to cross that line until they had a better understanding of the risk versus gain.⁷⁷ After all, the United States had abandoned them before. More on that dynamic later, in particular as the coalition searched for a political solution to uniting the country.

During the days and weeks following 9/11, his team met tirelessly with tribal leaders and warlords to determine their positions and incentives to fighting the Taliban.

Legal Initiatives

Immediately following 9/11, realizing disconnects between the intelligence agencies and law enforcement, specifically the FBI, attorney General John Ashcroft completed a “new legislative package for Congress to authorize expanded legal authority for the FBI to track terrorists in the United States.”⁷⁸ His efforts, along with congressional staffers, resulted in the USA Patriot Act signed into law on 26 October 2001.⁷⁹

Building the Coalition

As indicated in the opening paragraph, the United Nations and NATO passed resolutions and declarations condemning the attack, demanding the perpetrators be brought to justice, and pledging support. For the most part, world opinion was on America’s side. That made negotiations/opening doors, easier. But the bottom line was that countries based their decision (on how they would support the coalition) on their national interests. Part of their “self-interest” equation was influenced by the President’s 20 September declaration:

we will pursue nations that provide aid or safe haven to terrorism. Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists. (Applause.) From

this day forward, any nation that continues to harbor or support terrorism will be regarded by the United States as a hostile regime.⁸⁰

The countries impacted most by the U.S. declaration were those bordering Afghanistan, in which the U.S. needed for entry into Afghanistan, such as Uzbekistan and Tajikistan to the north and in particular Pakistan to the east and south east. According to the Secretary of State Colin Powell:

The whole world shared America's pain and outrage. The one potential problem was Pakistan and its relationship with the Taliban ... [but] they had neither the time nor the inclination to beat around the bush with Pakistani President Musharraf. He had to be told in no uncertain terms that it was time to choose sides.⁸¹

Powell and Armitage drafted a list of demands on Pakistan and passed it to Musharraf:

end all logistical support for al-Qaeda and close its borders to terrorists; give the United States blanket access to its airspace, ports and borders and share all intelligence and immigration information; condemn the September 11 attacks ... ban its citizens from crossing the border and joining the Taliban.⁸²

And the list went on. On Friday the 14th, Powell called Musharraf for an answer—Pakistan would comply with all of their demands.

Diplomacy was complex. While Pakistan supported the Pashtun in the south and saw the Northern Alliance as an enemy, i.e., inimical to their interests, the Northern Alliance found sanctuary in Tajikistan.⁸³ Typically, the CIA would meet with Massoud or members of his staff in Dushanbe and Gary Schroen launched the NALT from Tajikistan into the Panjshir Valley. But the Northern Alliance was a misnomer.⁸⁴ While the Northern Alliance Tajiks were aligned with Tajikistan, General Dostum, as an Uzbek was more closely aligned with Uzbekistan. Therefore, deciding who to support in the quest for Mazar-e Sharif (General Dostum, an Uzbek; or Commander Atta, a Tajik) was as much a political decision as it was operational.

Massoud, had he been alive, would have courted General Dostum for the very reason that he was Uzbek, had the confidence of people in the region, and was a proven leader. In fact, General Dostum's return to Afghanistan in

April 2001 was at the request of Massoud to open a second front to support/complement Massoud's efforts in the Panjshir."⁸⁵

General Dostum's operational prowess tipped the scales. According to Schroen, General Dostum was seen as "a known quantity—an effective battlefield commander with forces fairly well equipped and well trained."⁸⁶ Additionally, the CIA had already established communications with him.⁸⁷ That decision, choosing General Dostum over Commander Atta, was just as sensitive as telling General Fahim Khan that the Americans would deal directly with individual Northern Alliance commanders, effectively taking Fahim out of the chain of command. Despite Fahim's protest, he was told it was non-negotiable.⁸⁸

Another issue that Schroen surfaced with General Fahim was that of soldier's attire.⁸⁹ The Northern Alliance was insistent that the soldiers wear civilian clothes, while the Americans insisted, just as strongly, that they be in uniform. According to General Franks, there were legal concerns in Washington that any Soldier not in uniform could be executed as a spy and would not be treated as a prisoner of war. Eventually the solution was for the soldiers "to wear at least one 'prominent' item of regulation uniform—a DCU [desert camouflage uniform] shirt, jacket, or trousers would suffice."⁹⁰

Additionally, Russia was a prominent player holding sway in both Uzbekistan and Tajikistan and, of course, they had firsthand experience fighting in Afghanistan (1979 to 1989) with disastrous results. Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage and Director of the CTC Cofer Black met with the Russians to solicit their help—or at least not work against U.S. efforts in Afghanistan. The Russians agreed, but predicted that the Americans would follow in the disastrous footsteps of the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, they sent a team to the CIA to "provide extensive on-the-ground intelligence."⁹¹

Not all-inclusive, but other countries with major interests to be engaged/probed included India, Bangladesh, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Iran. Colin Powell's 13 September 2001 talking points concluded with the comment, "The world has changed: It is time to change the world."⁹²

Although the State Department was the lead agency for diplomacy and coalition building, everyone had a part. Chiefs of mission, as well as CIA chiefs of station, were actively engaged throughout the region and, in particular Pakistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. While the Secretary of Defense and his staff, as well as the chairman contacted their counterparts in other

countries, the command responsible for strategic, as well as operational planning, was USCENTCOM in Tampa, Florida.

USCENTCOM

General Franks, USCENTCOM Commander, immediately recognized that no plans were on the shelf for conventional operations in Afghanistan. As such, there had been no diplomatic efforts to secure “basing, staging, overflight and access” with Afghanistan’s neighbors.⁹³ He ruled out Iran to the west, but recognized that Uzbekistan was vital to the operations with the Northern Alliance operating along the Uzbek/Afghan border. He had met with Uzbekistan’s President Islam Karimov several times in the last year but characterized him as “sitting on the fence” in terms of supporting the United States. His concern, as expressed by many other countries, was whether or not the United States was committed for the long term. Karimov was also concerned about the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan—a terrorist organization that had supported the Taliban and al-Qaeda against the Northern Alliance. Additionally, Karimov feared Russian involvement, in the event war flared up in the area. Prior to 9/11 General Franks and Karimov had spoken of using the abandoned Soviet airbase in Karshi-Khanabad, or K2. However, its value had increased significantly. Although he would coordinate with the heads of state, ministers of defense, and military leaders that he knew, the primary channel was through Secretary of State Colin Powell.

The USCENTCOM staff had work to do. As an example, Lieutenant General Charles “Chuck” Wald, as the Joint Forces Air Component Commander, met with officials from countries in the region to gain overflight and basing rights, and as Major General Gene Renuart, Director of Operations (J3), USCENTCOM pointed out, “overshoot” rights for the Tomahawk Land Attack Missile that would be crossing through a country’s airspace.⁹⁴ Those were complex negotiations and depended on whether the aircraft were carrying weapons/munitions, or less sensitive if they were intelligence systems or carrying supplies. Each country was different, but all had the same priority—their own self-interests. See fig. 3 map.

General Franks discussed his plan and strategy. The plan consisted of four phases:

Phase I: “Set the conditions and build forces to provide the national command authority credible military options.” It included inserting advanced



Figure 3. Northern Afghanistan. Source: Derivative work courtesy of the Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division

teams of CIA officers to work with the anti-Taliban force. Special forces ODAs would follow.⁹⁵

Phase II: “Conduct initial combat operations and continue to set conditions for follow-on operations.” It would start with air operations (General Franks made it very clear that there was not an “Air Campaign” and “Ground Campaign.” There was only one campaign).⁹⁶ Special Operations would infiltrate as the ground element and provide air support. The aircraft carrier *USS Kitty Hawk* would provide SOF forward operating base (FOB) capabilities in the Arabian Sea.⁹⁷

Phase III: “Conduct Decisive Combat Operations in Afghanistan; continue to build coalitions, and conduct operations AOR [area of responsibility] wide.” In this phase, it is important to note that General Franks envisioned, “once the indigenous allies, augmented by about 200 SOF, had routed the enemy, we would bring in Coalition troops—including American soldiers and Marines—to seek out and eliminate pockets of resistance.” He estimated that this would consist of less than 12,000 American troops.⁹⁸

Phase IV: “Establish capability of Coalition partners to prevent the re-emergence of terrorism and provide support for humanitarian assistance efforts.” He estimated that it would take about three to five years to do this.⁹⁹

The strategy consisted of eight lines of operations and exploiting the success of those that proved to be more productive.¹⁰⁰

One can either develop a single operation that says we will apply kinetics from either air to the ground, we will use conventional ground forces, or we’ll only use Special Operations Forces, or we’ll use only humanitarian assistance, or we’ll use only information operations. Or, one can take all of these lines of operation, apply them simultaneously, and be willing to adjust the plan based on where we see success and the opportunity we see for greater success.

Since USCENTCOM was the supported command, other agencies and combatant commanders were supporting USCENTCOM’s efforts. As an example, EUCOM, as a supporting command would provide logistical support to include warehousing and air transport for materials destined for Coalition operations in Afghanistan. Additionally, the CIA stockpiled “large quantities of former Soviet Army weapons and ammunitions—the standard ordnance of all Afghan combatants ... in Europe” for transport via C-130 and air dropped into Afghanistan. Since UW would dominate the effort, Special Operations Command Central (SOCCENT) would have the lead with SOF expertise, and particularly special forces, supporting from USSOCOM, United States Army Special Operations Command (USASOC), and other components such as Special Operations Command Europe and Special Operations Command Joint Forces Command (SOCJFCOM).

General Franks also recognized that the huge commitment of support from Coalition partners demanded accommodations for their liaison elements and “within three months our ‘Coalition Village’ ... would eventually consist of 68 single- and double-wide trailers, housing the offices of 52 nations.”¹⁰¹

Since the initial plan called for CIA teams followed by SOF, SOCCENT played a significant role in marshalling the forces, developing and executing the plans.

SOCCENT

Admiral Calland and his staff were overwhelmed. Doctrine and practice at the time reflected the standup of the Joint Special Operations Task Force (JSOTF) around a theater special operations command staff.¹⁰² This was contentious. This wasn't just about Afghanistan—this campaign plan encompassed the entire USCENTCOM AOR, as well as various SOF disciplines and supporting enablers. As an example, special forces were the only forces specifically trained in UW. Additionally, this would also require psychological

This wasn't just about Afghanistan—this campaign plan encompassed the entire USCENTCOM AOR, as well as various SOF disciplines and supporting enablers.

operations and civil affairs expertise. SOCCENT did not have the resources to staff a JSOTF and coordinate campaign efforts with other countries in the region such as Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Oman, and others. Both USASOC and SOCJFCOM immediately responded with planners and trainers to support SOCCENT in this monumental effort. Eventually, he established his SOC-

CENT Forward element in Qatar.¹⁰³ He also realized that the situation may require more than one JSOTF.¹⁰⁴ As he had anticipated, another JSOTF would be established in the south under the command of Naval Special Warfare Group One from San Diego. The 5th SFG was tagged to form the JSOTF.

5th SFG

The only organization more unprepared than SOCCENT to establish the JSOTF was a SFG. Doctrinally, they were responsible for the Army component of SOF, or Army Special Operations Forces.¹⁰⁵ They had never planned, trained, nor been resourced to lead a JSOTF. They would require a full contingent of other Service personnel to man this joint force. They also received assistance from both USASOC and SOCJFCOM in the form of planners, trainers, and eventually staff augmentation.

Summary

The United States made contact with the Northern Alliance many years before 9/11, first in the context of the Soviet occupation and later in search of support for finding and capturing/killing Osama bin Laden. In that capacity,

the agency made a number of assessments—all of which were in the context of hunting for Osama bin Laden without putting boots-on-the-ground. 9/11 was a game changer in terms of motivation. Given the number of significant events, in particular the 2000 USS *Cole* bombing, some would argue that there was enough reason to commit SOF to the hunt prior to 9/11. However, at the national level, those events did not break the threshold for committing the military. At the 15 September 2001 Camp David war council, CIA director George Tenet briefed his plan that included CIA in the lead with their operators on the ground linked with Northern Alliance leaders, to be followed by special forces. Support was unanimous, and on 17 September President Bush approved the plan. On 26 September 2001 Jawbreaker entered Afghanistan and linked up with General Fahim Khan, Commander of the Northern Alliance. DOD was busy coordinating actions, developing plans, and readying forces for deployment.

Chapter 2. Infiltration

This chapter begins with the establishment of the JSOTF in K2 on 5 October 2001 and ends with ODA 595's bombing of Taliban in the Chapchal/Beshcam area on 20 October as an initial demonstration of America's might. While the last chapter set the strategic context, this chapter will focus mainly on the operational level of war and transition to the tactical. The central theme of this chapter is the infiltration of ODA 595, phase three of UW.

JSOTF-N

Despite insufficient resources—equipment and manpower, in terms of numbers and expertise—the job of pulling together a JSOTF in the north ultimately fell to Colonel John Mulholland, Commander of the 5th SFG because of the UW mission. They were immediately supported by USASOC and SOCJFCOM with planners and then augmented by other Service personnel to man this joint force. However, the first/immediate mission was not UW, it was combat search and rescue (CSAR) to support air operations, scheduled to commence on 7 October. SOF needed a forward operating area to support CSAR in Afghanistan. Finally, on 5 October, the Secretary of Defense received approval to use K2. Things happened quickly/near simultaneously. Colonel Kisner arrived before the fleet of C-17s to set up the JSOTF in preparation for personnel recovery. As the senior U.S. representative, he became the first JSOTF commander, as well as the on-the-ground authority, to the Uzbek government.¹⁰⁶ Signal assets also arrived to set up the critical communications systems. Additionally, elements of the soon-to-be Joint Special Operations Air Component Command (JSOACC) were established under the command of Lieutenant Colonel James Brinks, an Army aviator and commander, 2nd Battalion, 160th SOAR.¹⁰⁷

The floodgate of transport aircraft laden with people, supplies, and infrastructure (building/billeting materials, and communications equipment) headed towards K2. With a “C-17 arriving every two hours by 6 October ... the population [at K2] exploded from 100 personnel to more than 2,000 in a week.”¹⁰⁸

On 7 October President Bush addressed the nation:

On my orders, the United States military has begun strikes against al-Qaeda terrorist training camps and military installations of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. We are joined in this operation by our staunch friend, Great Britain. Other close friends, including Canada, Australia, Germany and France, have pledged forces as the operation unfolds. More than 40 countries in the Middle East, Africa, Europe and across Asia have granted air transit or landing rights. Many more have shared intelligence. We are supported by the collective will of the world.¹⁰⁹

On that same day, Operational Detachment Bravo (ODB) 580 arrived to set up the Isolation Facility (ISOFAC) to prepare 11 ODAs for insertion.¹¹⁰ ODA 595 deployed with ODB 580 as Chalk 5 on the C-17. When they stepped off the aircraft, they were greeted by an Uzbek officer they had trained with the previous year during a Joint Combined Exchange Training (JCET) event. The value of those JCETs are discussed in chapter 6.

On 10 October, the 5th SFG main body began to arrive with primary group staff officers and several ODAs for initial missions. With the JSOAC established and the CSAR mission well in hand, Colonel Mulholland assumed command of the JSOTF to lead the next part—the UW operation and the insertion of ODAs into the battlespace to work with the indigenous forces.

established and the CSAR mission well in hand, Colonel Mulholland assumed command of the JSOTF to lead the next part—the UW operation and the insertion of ODAs into the battlespace to work with the indigenous forces. The JSOTF-N was named TF Dagger and Colonel Kisner became Mulholland’s deputy.¹¹¹

On 12 October, Lieutenant Colonel Brinks was told to start planning air infiltration operations into Afghanistan. Their first mission was to insert an 8-man CIA team, called Team Alpha and led by J.R., south of Mazar-e Sharif to link up with General Dostum.¹¹²

Counterterrorism Center/Special Operations and the NALT

In late September, the CIA created the Counterterrorism Center (CTC)/Special Operations (SO) Branch, a separate command organization within the CTC to work with the JSOTF to “destroy the Taliban and drive Al-Qaeda out

of Afghanistan.”¹¹³ Hank Crumpton, a seasoned CIA officer with extensive interagency, counterinsurgent, and African experience, as well as experience leading the CIA team to Yemen to investigate the USS *Cole* bombing, was tapped to head the branch.¹¹⁴ The CTC/SO was the civilian organization that would work with the JSOTF-N to fight the Taliban and force al-Qaeda out of the Afghanistan.¹¹⁵

As indicated previously, the NALT, also known as Jawbreaker, entered Afghanistan on 26 September 2001.¹¹⁶ Gary Schroen, a former senior CIA officer in Islamabad, Pakistan, described CIA organizational relationships. The “Near East division owned the turf on which we would be operating—Afghanistan—but CTC owned the problem we would be working on—terrorism.”¹¹⁷ Additionally, CTC had a close working relationship with the Special Activities Division (SAD). According to Hank Crumpton, SAD supplied expert manpower to CTC as well as “weapons, expeditionary technologies, training facilities.”¹¹⁸

The overall mission, as stated before was to eliminate Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda and the use of Afghanistan as a sanctuary. In line with that, the NALT’s mission was:

to establish a solid relationship with the Northern Alliance leadership, to secure the cooperation of the Northern Alliance military forces in working in concert with the U.S. military in attacking the Taliban, and to arrange for the Panjshir Valley to serve as a base of operations for U.S. military Special Operations forces in the coming battle to crush the Taliban.¹¹⁹

Their immediate mission was intelligence collection. They would work with the Northern Alliance “to conduct GPS mapping of their frontline positions” to ensure that friendly air attacks avoided Northern Alliance forces.¹²⁰

In addition to the NALT led by Gary Schroen, CTC/SO would eventually deploy eight teams into Afghanistan, Alpha to Hotel. The first four teams would support operations in the north and west: Team Alpha would link up with General Dostum south of Mazar-e Sharif; Team Bravo, formed from elements of Team Alpha, would support Commander Atta, also south of Mazar-e Sharif; Team Charlie would support Ishmael Khan in the west; Team Delta, would work with Karim Khalili, the Hazara Shia leader located in Bamian Province.¹²¹

Schroen visualized the battlefield as two fronts (refer to fig. 3 map).

The Taliban and their Arab allies had the majority of their combat forces deployed in the north on two main fronts. One ran west to east from above Kabul [Kabul Front] over to Jalalabad, near the Pakistani border. The other ran north to south, from the Tajik border down to connect with the lines above Kabul [Takhar Front]. On the map it was if a large “L” had been drawn ... with the Panjshir Valley forming the heart of that block of territory. The Northern Alliance forces, about 8,000 fighters were deployed in static positions in lines opposite of the Taliban forces. Neither side was strong enough to break the other, and the situation had been stalemated for well over a year.¹²²

Despite Schroen’s visualization that the majority of Taliban forces occupied two fronts, the Coalition would open a third front in the Darya Suf focused on Mazar. Taliban forces in the area were commanded by Mullah Razak and consisted of a corps with five divisions: approximately 10,000 soldiers with tanks, artillery and air defense weapons—large, but not to be confused with/compared to the size and capabilities of a U.S. corps. Many of those Taliban soldiers, were part-timers, on-call in the event of a crisis. Three thousand to 5,000 of those soldiers were mustered and deployed to the Darya Suf to fight General Dostum, Commander Atta, and Commander Mohaqeq.¹²³ More on that later.

Team Alpha, led by J.R. would be the first team to deploy. They would link up with General Dostum to take Mazar-e Sharif from the Taliban. According to J.R., the team’s goal was to:

establish a working relationship with known resistance fighters in five provinces of North-Central Afghanistan, serve as pathfinders for the insertion of U.S. and UK Special Forces (who would support combat operations) and then use any means necessary to subvert Taliban control of the area.¹²⁴

According to General Franks, Mazar-e Sharif was “an important fight for us because it was the fight that opened the land bridge to Central Asia to the north.”¹²⁵ Additionally, the airfield at Mazar-e Sharif could accommodate heavy lift aircraft for the movement of supplies, vehicles, and troops into Afghanistan, as well as being the closest capable airfield to K2. The city was also the political center of Northern Afghanistan and controlled the lines

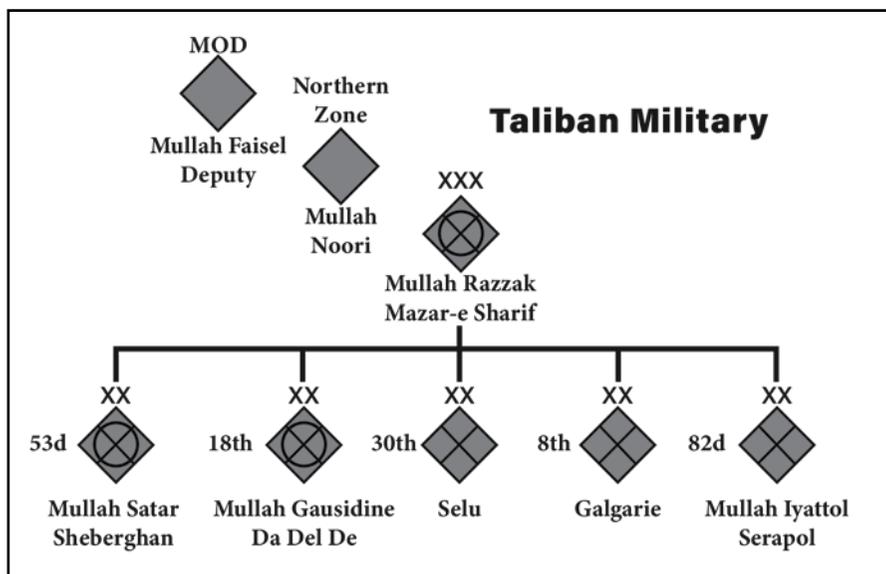


Figure 4. Taliban Military Structure in the North. Source: Bill Knarr

of communications to the northern provinces in the west and east as well as south towards Kabul.

On 17 October Team Alpha was inserted via two MH-60L Direct Action Penetrators (DAPs) into Samangan Province and linked up with the three resistance leaders in the area: General Dostum, Commander Atta, and Commander Mohaqeq. Up until that time, those resistance leaders competed for control and barely, if ever, cooperated towards a common goal. Their tactics consisted of raids, ambushes, and hit and run operations. They had neither the forces nor the resources to hold ground.

However that would change with the arrival of the Americans; not because they had a change of heart or suddenly developed a sense of nationalism, “but the opportunity to work with the U.S. and, most especially, to receive U.S. support meant that they were willing to collaborate at least until the Taliban were defeated.”¹²⁶

The Human Terrain

Approximately 28.5 million people lived in Afghanistan. There are four major ethnicities in the country. The Pashtun, with 42 percent of the population, primarily lived in the south and comprised the majority, if not all, of the

Taliban under the leadership of Mullah Omar. Taliban leadership in the north will be discussed later. The Tajiks, with 27 percent of the population, mostly lived in the Panjshir Valley north of Kabul and were mostly Sunni Muslim. The Uzbeks with 9 percent of the population lived across the northern plains of Afghanistan and were mostly Sunni Muslim. The Hazaras at 9 percent of the population, were mostly Shia Muslim who lived in the central mountainous region with some in the border areas with Iran, as well as in the north in the Mazar-e Sharif area.¹²⁷

From the Men of ODA 595 with Dr. William Knarr

This section and all of the sections entitled “From the Men of ODA 595” were written from the perspective of the men of ODA 595, and are extracted with permission from an article written for *The 60th Anniversary: U.S. Special Forces 1952–2012*.¹²⁸ The protocol of using rank and first name was approved for public release by the Department of Security Review on 16 November 2006 and again on 18 July 2012. Their review was coordinated with USSOCOM.¹²⁹

The three primary resistance leaders were: General Dostum, an ethnic Uzbek from Jowzjan Province and leader of the Jumbish militia who had opposed the Mujahedeen during the 1980s, before joining them in 1992;¹³⁰ Commander Atta, the ethnic Tajik leader of the regional Jamiat-e Islami political party and one of the most powerful Mujahedeen commanders in Northern Afghanistan; Commander Mohaqeq, leader of the Hezbe Wahdat party and the Hazara people, Shi’a Afghans, who had been severely persecuted and slaughtered by the Taliban since 1997.

After years of surviving the Taliban onslaught, the remaining active resistance members of each of these elements—collectively known as the Northern Alliance—had been pushed deep into the rugged and isolated Hindu Kush regions of the North Central Provinces. Each group had their own goals and agendas and had all previously fought against each other at some point, but independently moved with varying success against the Taliban days and weeks prior to the arrival of American forces. They had a common hatred for the foreign al-Qaeda and repressive Taliban forces scattered across the north, who had terrorized their families, villages, and ethnic groups.

Effective leadership of the Afghan forces was critical if the operation was to be a success—as was reassuring them of U.S. support. General Dostum,

Commander Atta, Commander Mohaqeq, and their subordinates proved to be competent and aggressive leaders who quickly capitalized on the capabilities provided by the United States to conduct a decisive ground campaign.

Each of these leaders thanked the Americans for coming to help them fight the foreigners, the al-Qaeda terrorists, and Taliban who had brutalized the people of Afghanistan. But they warned the Americans, “Do not become perceived as the invading conqueror, like the Russians, or the entire country will eventually unite against the U.S.”¹³¹

Mullah Mohammad Fazl, Taliban Deputy Minister of Defense, and Mullah Noorullah Noori, commander of the Northern Regions, were both

General Dostum, Commander Atta, Commander Mohaqeq, and their subordinates proved to be competent and aggressive leaders who quickly capitalized on the capabilities provided by the United States to conduct a decisive ground campaign.

organizing Taliban defenses across the area, and actively searched for General Dostum; Commander Atta; Commander Mohaqeq’s forces; their supporters; and the newly arrived Americans who were rumored to be in the area.¹³² A substantial cash reward was offered for any American captured or killed. Mullah Fazl is responsible for killing thousands of Hazara and Uzbeks between 1996 and late 2001. These Mullahs would eventually surrender in late November 2001 to the Northern Alliance at Kunduz. Both Fazl and Noori were detained at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, but, despite public outrage, were released from Guantanamo in 2012 as part of the prisoner exchange for Staff Sergeant Bergdahl. In 2018, Fazl was inducted into the Taliban political office in Qatar and became part of the Taliban’s negotiating team.¹³³

Mullah Razak commanded the Taliban Corps, headquartered in Mazar-e Sharif. It consisted of approximately 10,000 troops garrisoned across the northern region. The Taliban controlled the ground from Mazar-e Sharif, south through the Balkh Valley, and into the Darya Suf region, where there were approximately 5,000 troops, as well as armor and artillery in various states of readiness.¹³⁴

In addition, al-Qaeda’s elite Foreign Brigade, or “al-Ansar,” meaning the supporters, operated across the north and reported directly to Mullah Fazl. Members of this unit are committed to the goals of Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda. As they would clearly demonstrate, they were willing to fight to their death. They were comprised mostly of Arab speakers and experienced foreign

guerrilla fighters from the Middle East and Central Asia and were often employed in smaller groups to reinforce Taliban elements as shock troops. They used threats and intimidation to achieve their objective of enforcing compliance with Taliban ideals.

ODA 595 team members were mature and experienced. They were cross-trained extensively outside their primary MOS and had executed training and operations in cellular manner (alone or in 2-, 3- and/or 4-man cells) on previous deployments. Everyone had demonstrated proficiency in basic communications and medical trauma skills. It was a given they all could shoot expertly—nine were qualified Special Operations Target Interdiction Course level 3 snipers and were experienced in the employment of heavy weapons, mortars, close air support, and aerial gunnery. The average age of the team members was 32 with eight years' time-in-service. Ten of the team members were married and nine had two or more children. The team consisted of senior mature noncommissioned officers (NCOs) who had been working together two plus years through numerous regional deployments to the Middle East and Central Asia—notably Uzbekistan. Five of the team

The team consisted of senior mature noncommissioned officers (NCOs) who had been working together two plus years through numerous regional deployments to the Middle East and Central Asia—notably Uzbekistan.

members were SF combat veterans prior to 9/11—Desert Storm, Somalia, and Bosnia.

ODA 595 and Team Alpha from the CIA coordinated directly with each other. The plan called for the CIA element to insert a short time before 595. Several of their veteran officers had local language and cultural capabilities, and even some prior experience on the

ground in Afghanistan. They would make the initial direct contact with the main Afghan commanders and gauge their willingness to work with the Americans. On the ground, ODA 595 and the CIA team would gather critical intelligence, send prolific reports, establish initial contact with additional Afghan leaders, and arrange for important lethal-aid airdrops of weapons, supplies, and equipment. The teams would integrate to maximize each organization's strengths and authorities, quickly forming into an effective element.

To the American planners, Mazar-e Sharif was significant for several reasons. Militarily, it provided two possible airfields to support heavy airlift

operations, and provided ground access to U.S. forces and logistics located in Uzbekistan via the international bridge at Hairaton and Termez.¹³⁵ Just as importantly, the city was the political center of Northern Afghanistan and controlled the lines of communications to the Northern Provinces and Kabul.

To General Dostum and the Afghanistan people, Mazar-e Sharif was particularly significant because it is the site of the holiest of ancient shrines, the Blue Mosque, which is the reputed tomb of Hazarat Ali, cousin and son-in-law to the Prophet Mohammed.

General Dostum's bold plan foretold that whoever controlled the Darya Suf and Balkh Valleys would control Mazar, thus controlling the Northern Provinces. Further, they would possess the key to wresting Kabul from Taliban control.

At the time of their mission briefing in K2, the plan was for ODA 595 to endure a "Valley Forge"-type winter, and come down out of the mountains in the spring with General Dostum and an Afghan militia army to support U.S. conventional force actions across the country.¹³⁶ Neither the political circumstances, the Northern Alliance, the Afghan people themselves, nor ODA 595, however, were going to wait that long.

Insertion and Initial Operations, 19–20 October

ODA 595 was one of two detachments initially inserted by the Night Stalkers of 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (SOAR), flying from K2 into Afghanistan. Plans called for insertion of ODA 555—the "Triple Nickel"—in the northeastern Panjshir Valley to support Northern Alliance Marshal Fahim Khan on 16 October. ODA 595 was scheduled for insertion the following night to link up with General Dostum. Severe weather delayed both insertions.

On 19 October, the two ODAs departed for Afghanistan.¹³⁷ Conducting simultaneous high-risk insertions was an audacious move given the limited number of helicopter assets available for unexpected contingencies. Political pressure to get the special forces teams on the ground was building on the TF Dagger headquarters, and on its commander, Colonel John Mulholland.

ODA 595, aboard a single MH-47E and escorted by two MH-60 DAPs to provide armed escort, departed K2 at approximately 22:00 local time. The aircrews, under night vision goggles, conducted a low-level aerial refueling with an awaiting U.S. Air Force Special Operations MC-130P Combat

Shadow. The MH-47E pilots flying on instruments used their terrain following/terrain-avoidance multimode radar. Without an on-board radar, the DAP pilots worked to maintain visual contact and avoid mid-air collisions. Once in Afghanistan, the flight encountered an unexpected sandstorm. As conditions worsened, the air mission commander directed the DAPs to return to base.¹³⁸

The unarmed MH-47 proceeded to fly on instruments for several hours. Captain Joe Garst, air mission commander, describes terrain following, or “TF’ing,” in the sandstorm:

You are TF’ing normally in the sand. There’d be time to times you’d see the sparkle come up from the ground. RPG[s] sparkle when they come at you. You’d see the occasional tracer pass by. There were cases when the sand would be so heavy in the air that the end of the probe and the pitot tubes would be glowing from the sand striking; they would be sparkling. We always thought that was special that the end of our refueling tube was glowing.¹³⁹

Without armed escorts and flying on instruments for the next several hours, the pilots intensely focused flying this behemoth of a helicopter, hugged the terrain on an aerial rollercoaster ride, while 595 and the door gunners shivered in the icy blasts flowing through the cabin. Finally, they safely set down for a few minutes to off-load the special forces team and their gear. The helicopter then returned to Uzbekistan, facing weather and another aerial refueling before arriving back at K2. They would repeat this in other locations in Afghanistan for many nights to come, delivering critical supplies and personnel. The aircrews of the 160th SOAR set new records and standards on those early infiltration missions.

At 02:00 local time on 20 October 2001, the 12-man team of Army special forces landed approximately 50 miles south of Mazar-e Sharif. As ODA 595—now under the call sign Tiger-02—stepped off the MH-47E Chinook special operations helicopter of Company B, 2nd Battalion, 160th SOAR, they pulled security, obscured in the choking dust and still-swirling rotor wash of the brownout dusting.¹⁴⁰

Around the helicopter landing zone, appearing in the green glow of night vision goggles and infrared lasers figure eight dancing in a deadly fan, were small, armed groups of General Dostum’s forces. They remained near the tree line in a tense silence while two men dressed as Afghans and carrying

AK-47s cautiously approached and greeted them in English. It was quickly apparent that these two “Afghans” were with the CIA team they had met briefly at K2.

The Green Berets of ODA 595 were in—TF Dagger had boots on the ground. This linkup would begin the intense planning, intelligence, ground and air operations to liberate Mazar-e Sharif and Afghanistan.

Cowboy Up!

Within a few hours, General Dostum joined them. He rode up with a group of thirty horsemen, and jumping down from his horse, warmly greeted them as guests.¹⁴¹ Later that morning, following introductions by Team Alpha and a breakfast of chai tea and naan (bread), General Dostum laid out the enemy and friendly situation then introduced his strategy to liberate Mazar-e Sharif. The men of Tiger-02 listened intently to General Dostum’s plan as he explained it on his hand drawn field map, annotated with Russian military graphic symbols.

ODA 595 split into two teams of six men each—the standard Special Forces “split A-team configuration” that provided equivalent manning, capabilities, and communications resources between the two groups. Half of the team, led by Captain Mark, the Team Leader/Detachment Commander, and Sergeant First Class Andy, their team’s Assistant Operations and Intelligence



Figure 5. General Dostum. Photo by Mark Nutsch/used with permission

Sergeant, mounted up for an unexpected horseback ride to General Dostum's mountain headquarters.

Chief Bob's 6-man section remained in the vicinity of Dehi to set up an initial logistical base for his split team collocated with Team Alpha. The Dehi area was a remote crossroads that had become the temporary center of the resistance forces guerilla bases. The occupying Taliban had been pushed out of the area by General Dostum and Commander Mohaqq's forces in the days prior to the 595 arrival. Each of the militia factions—Hazara, Tajik, and Uzbek had setup temporary operations and their own camps and safehouses. The area would provide multiple drop zones to receive lethal and non-lethal aid, medical and humanitarian drops.

Most of the detachment members had never ridden a horse before, but over the next several weeks they would ride 10 to 30 kilometers per day—from dawn to dusk. According to the ODA Commander:

Ten of the twelve of us had never seriously ridden a horse. A couple of guys rode when they were about six-years-old when they went with Mom and Dad to the carnival and rode the little ponies in a circle, but that doesn't quite cut it. So these guys were doing a magnificent job for the first time learning how to ride, in combat, over daunting terrain, along narrow, treacherous mountain trails often at night—and did I mention there were minefields?¹⁴²

Once at General Dostum's mountain headquarters, Captain Mark's section immediately demonstrated U.S. firepower and capability, calling in air support from a pre-planned and awaiting B-52, high above in the area. General Dostum and his men were ecstatic and cheered with their newly arrived American allies. Despite their jubilation, ODA 595 wasn't satisfied. With weather and haze they were initially too far away to adequately spot the targets.¹⁴³

General Dostum, concerned with the safety of the Americans, reluctantly approved the team moving closer to the Taliban positions. General Dostum stated, "I can lose five hundred of my men, but not one American can be killed or injured or the USA will leave!" This was the world's perception of American political and military will to fight the al-Qaeda and Taliban forces in direct combat.¹⁴⁴

The presence of the Americans and their willingness to share the austere and harsh operating conditions clearly demonstrated U.S. commitment and

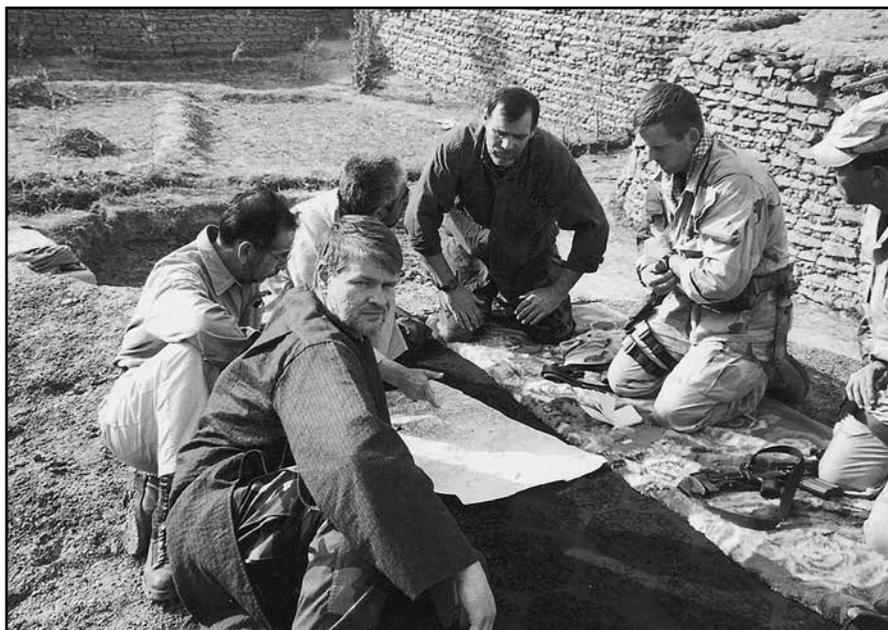


Figure 6. ODA 595, Team Alpha and General Dostum meet in the Dehi vicinity. Photo by Mark Nutsch/used with permission

resolve to fight a common enemy. Most importantly it gave the Afghans hope for the future and a better way of life for their family, village and region.

Meanwhile, near Dehi, the other six team members of 595, led by their Chief Bob and their Team Sergeant, Master Sergeant Paul, worked with Commander Satar Khan to receive an automatic resupply of team equipment that night. The 7th Special Operations Squadron, flying thirteen to fifteen-hour missions in MC-130Hs from K2 and Incirlik Air Base in Turkey, conducted nightly parachute re-supply drops to the teams. Sergeant First Class Bill, the team's direct support connection to TF Dagger, would be seen regularly with the aircrews, pushing bundles to the teams on the ground.

The presence of the Americans and their willingness to share the austere and harsh operating conditions clearly demonstrated U.S. commitment and resolve to fight a common enemy.

In addition to the insertion of ODAs 595 and 555 on 20 October, the following detachments would be inserted during the next two weeks: ODA

585 on 23 October near Konduz to support Burillah Khan; ODA 553 on 2 November near Bamian to support Kareem Kahlili; ODC 53 on 3 November south of Mazar-e Sharif to support General Dostum; and ODA 534 on 2 November near Ak Koprak to support Commander Atta. CIA Team linkup with indigenous forces would precede the insertion of ODAs: CIA Team Bravo would linkup with Commander Atta, and CIA Team Charlie would link up with Kareem Khalili.

It is important to note that while this monograph has been structured around the doctrinal seven phases, each of the ODAs execution of UW could be described in the same manner, i.e., seven phases, however, at different times and different periods of longevity.

Comments and Summary

it may have been in early November that I flew into Mazar-e Sharif ... You couldn't tell the agency people from the military people. They literally treated each other as brothers. - General Franks¹⁴⁵

That may have been the way it was at the bottom, but at the top, "Who is in charge?" rang loud and clear from Rumsfeld's office. George Tenet, CIA director characterized it as "bureaucratic tension" and recognized, as did General Franks, that the special operators and CIA personnel on the ground "melded together immediately."¹⁴⁶ They did not worry about who was in charge." But Rumsfeld would not let go of the issue. Eventually a memorandum of agreement was drafted with USCENTCOM.¹⁴⁷ According to Rumsfeld: "The CIA would have the lead initially, since its personnel would be in Afghanistan first. Command would shift to Franks and USCENTCOM, as the campaign took on more of a military flavor ... we could not afford to have confused lines of command."¹⁴⁸

The purpose of this chapter was to focus on the operational level of war at the JSOTF and CTC/SO level and move to the tactical with accounts from the ground by "the men of ODA 595." In doing so, we could not help but comment on strategic disposition and how that might, or might not, affect events on the ground. The above is an example. Despite a penchant for lines of command at the DOD level, the soldiers and CIA men on the ground sorted it out and made it work. Which was probably a better solution than designating one in charge of the other. This is an example of a "failure of

imagination” at the DOD level, while the tactical level was very comfortable with the “command relationship.”

The theme of this chapter was “infiltration”—phase three of UW, and centered on ODA 595’s infiltration into the Darya Suf to link up with General Dostum’s forces and CIA’s Team Alpha. Political pressure on the entire chain of command from Secretary of Defense down to Colonel Mulholland was intense to get special forces teams on the ground. As an example, on 10 October Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld sent a note to Generals Richard Myers and Peter Pace entitled “What Will Be the Military Role in the War on Terrorism?” It outlined the “one-third of a trillion dollars per year” the American people were spending on defense, and what all the other departments, such as Treasury, Justice, and State were contributing to the cause, but, “DoD has come up with a goose egg.”¹⁴⁹ According to General Franks, Rumsfeld was never “personally abusive. But he was not what you would call ‘user-friendly.’ His questions continued—relentlessly,” and for the next 10 days the Secretary would start “virtually every conversation” with, “When is something going to happen, General?”¹⁵⁰ Finally, General Franks had enough and told the Secretary, “If you have lost confidence [in me] ... then you should select another commander.”¹⁵¹ Rumsfeld backed off, temporarily, but General Franks and his staff would refer to that period as the “ten days from hell,” that finally ended on 19 October when 595 and 555 were inserted.¹⁵²

Once inserted, the ODA quickly demonstrated their capabilities by guiding ordnance from an overhead B-52 on an unsuspecting Taliban stronghold across the Darya Suf. General Dostum and his followers were ecstatic over the performance. Captain Mark, however, was not satisfied and requested that they move closer to the enemy to better calculate their location and increase the effectiveness of the bombing. General Dostum approved, albeit very cautious and concerned with losing American lives and risking their support.

Chapter 3. Organization¹⁵³ and Buildup¹⁵⁴

Despite planning for a “Valley Forge” type winter and the start of operations in the spring, SOF commanders also realized that the seven phases of UW were not dictated by rigid timelines. Additionally, conditions in one area for one ODA, may allow for a faster, or slower, transition than conditions in another area.¹⁵⁵ As an example, initial contact and infiltration for ODA 595 started on 19–20 October, however, for ODA 583 it started on 23 October. The same applied to follow-on phases.

However, the rapid organization and buildup phases from 21 October to 4 November, as well as the employment phase addressed in the next chapter, caught many off-guard. Reinforcing the Valley Forge scenario were dismal reports from the Pentagon and press reporting and predicting the lack of progress. But they weren’t necessarily without merit as early reports from the field on the bombing campaign were not optimistic.

On 23 October, Gary Schroen met with Bismullah Khan on the Kabul front who complained, very graciously, that the bombing had no effect—in fact, “The Taliban laugh each morning as they survey their lines. ‘Once again no damage!’”¹⁵⁶ This was not an isolated case. Commander Atta made a similar comment to the CIA representative in the Mazar-e Sharif area before SOF was on the ground and directing airstrikes. The Americans “have been bombing for almost 15 days, but you have not captured any significant areas.” He went on to say that this had a negative impact on the morale of his soldiers but a positive effect on al-Qaeda and the Taliban.¹⁵⁷ Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, in hindsight, echoed that comment in remarks several months later.

Getting U.S. Special Forces on the ground early dramatically increased the effectiveness of the air campaign. In Afghanistan, precision-guided bombs from the sky did not achieve their effectiveness until we had boots, and eyes, on the ground to tell the bombers exactly where to aim.¹⁵⁸

On 25 October 2001, Rumsfeld distributed a Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) assessment to members in the situation room that painted a very glum picture of Northern Alliance prospects. The paper asserted that Northern

Alliance forces were not capable of “overcoming Taliban resistance” in the north, “particularly in the strategic city of Mazar-I Sharif.” It provided an equally dismal projection for the taking of Kabul and for enlisting Pash-tun support in the south.¹⁵⁹ Journalists were making their own assessments that were not helpful. As an example, the *New York Times* published an article comparing Afghanistan to the “quagmire” America found itself in Vietnam.¹⁶⁰

Of concern to General Franks was the approaching holy month of Ramadan, Islam’s most sacred period, starting on 17 November. His concern, of course, was continuing the fight during the holy period when Muslims are expected to pray and fast. How would that be perceived by the Muslims of the region?¹⁶¹ As such, he conferred with Crown Prince Abdullah and others in Saudi Arabia as well as Sultan Qaboos in Oman to solicit their thoughts. Those leaders hoped that the fight would be over by that time but understood that it might not. Qaboos responded that Muslims sometimes fight during Ramadan and urged General Franks to “continue the battle. This Ramadan is for war.”¹⁶²

General Franks was also asked by the Secretary of Defense whether or not the special forces team leaders were senior enough and opined that the “Northern Alliance generals won’t really listen to young captains and majors.”¹⁶³ General Franks responded that those captains and majors are very good at what they do and was confident that the Northern Alliance leaders would see them as their sons. Despite General Franks’ confidence in the ability of the captains and majors, Colonel Mulholland had always intended on introducing the battalion commanders to advise the most important Afghan resistance leaders. On 24 October he deployed Lieutenant Colonel Chris Haas, Commander, 1st Battalion, 5th SFG and ODC 51 to be the senior military advisor to General Fahim Khan and his subcommanders to include General Bismullah Khan in the Bagram area.¹⁶⁴ On 2 November 2001, he deployed Lieutenant Colonel Max, commander of the 3rd Battalion, 5th SFG and ODC 53, to be the senior advisor to General Dostum.¹⁶⁵ On 27 November he deployed Lieutenant Colonel Fox, commander of 2nd Battalion, 5th SFG and ODC 52 to the Tarin Kowt area in Uruzgan Province to advise and assist Hamid Karzai.¹⁶⁶ More on this later in chapters 5 and 6.

General Franks met with General Fahim Khan in Dushanbe on 30 October to discuss operations in the north and funding to support those operations. In what he described as, good cop/bad cop, he worked with

Hank Crumpton, the CTC/SO chief to bring Fahim down to what General Franks considered to be a reasonable price for delivering the major cities of Northern Afghanistan. For five million dollars Fahim committed to taking Mazar-e Sharif before Ramadan and not entering Kabul until he received permission.¹⁶⁷

This next section covers the organization and buildup phases for ODA 595 during the two-week period of 21 October to 4 November. Major themes include the continued assessment of anti-Taliban commanders and their militias, and planning and preparation for the decisive battles to take place during the follow-on phase of “Employment” in the next chapter.

From the Men of ODA 595

Again, to preserve their perspective, this section—written by the men of ODA 595—was extracted mostly verbatim from an article written for *The 60th Anniversary: U.S. Special Forces 1952–2012*.¹⁶⁸

Building Coalition Confidence and Strategy, 21–28 October 2001

On 21 October, the six special forces men of ODA 595, General Dostum, and 20 Northern Alliance horsemen moved closer to the Taliban in the Cobaki area. Here they set up an observation post south of the Darya Suf, where they



Figure 7. General Dostum describes the uphill movement to Chapchal.
Photo by Bill Knarr/used with permission



Figure 8. The rough terrain is shown in this photo taken from the top of the ridge-line at Chapchal down to the Darya Suf. Photo by Bill Knarr/used with permission

called airstrikes on tanks, artillery, and a Taliban command post. General Dostum had planned on the impending damage and chaos resulting from the air strikes, and that morning moved several hundred horsemen and light infantry up the steep slopes from the Darya Suf to Chapchal. They prepared a mid-afternoon cavalry charge to take the Taliban positions.¹⁶⁹

Surprise, speed, violence of action, synchronizing fires, and ground maneuvers were absolutely critical to taking the Taliban positions. Commanders Lal and Kamal led their respective groups of horsemen through the low areas to close the distance and then used a bounding overwatch to maneuver into position and a swarming technique to overwhelm entrenched defenders still reeling from the aerial assault directed by ODA 595.

Patrols and attacks mounted on a daily basis by Northern Alliance and special forces soldiers that helped secure the Chapchal and Beshcam areas by 23 October. General Dostum, Captain Mark, and two of the 595 sergeants moved north of the Darya Suf to survey the battlefield. There, they met a

Kalashnikov machine gun (PK) gunner that had walked over ten miles on an artificial leg to join the fight against the Taliban.¹⁷⁰

Every day, the team interacted with Afghan “Minutemen”—common citizens who walked or rode horseback from tens, even hundreds of miles away to rally and stand with their leaders, clans, or countrymen. As individuals or in small groups of ten to twenty, they came to the Darya Suf as brothers, fathers, sons, entire villages, and small units. They typically carried worn AK-47 rifles, the clothes on their back or horse, and a heavy blanket. They came as volunteers to stand up against the evil and devastation that had overtaken their country. They knew it was a fight against incredible odds, and that they were outgunned and outequipped. Their numbers quickly grew, as did logistical sustainment needs. They put their personal and ethnic differences aside to stand with the small group of Americans—with ODA 595 and the United States of America that they represented. The American presence energized them, renewing hope that there was a way to defeat the Taliban and that a better way of life was on the horizon.

Every day was a history lesson for 595 as they rode horseback through those mountains. From the Afghans’ extensive underground and auxiliary network, they gained an understanding of the situation they faced. The Americans learned of the Taliban, al-Qaeda, and international terrorists, and the atrocities and ethnic cleansing perpetrated in the name of Allah. They learned of the tactics, historical battles, and skirmishes that had been fought repeatedly over the same terrain on which they stood. The team also learned how the Afghans fought amongst the various Mujahedeen factions and then later joined together against the Russians and the Taliban. Switching sides was an Afghan art form, necessary to survive in this harsh land.

The Afghans welcomed the special forces men and made them part of their village. The Americans got to know their families and were made part of the family, and were later even invited to play the traditional centuries old “goat grab” game of “Buzkashi.” The special forces teams built a bond that continues today.

*The special forces
teams built a bond
that continues today.*

Political Pressure: From the Strategic to the Tactical

Meanwhile, immense political pressure was building in Washington. Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld was not happy with the overall results, despite ODA 595's tactical successes thus far.¹⁷¹

He spoke directly with the TF Dagger commander, Colonel Mulholland, pushing him hard to achieve more strategic results. The colonel in turn sent a message to the ODA 595 commander, essentially saying, "When are you guys going to get off your ass and do something?"

The message reached an exhausted Captain Mark at the end of a very long day, in which they had completed another close reconnaissance patrol of the battlefield and engaged in an impromptu cavalry charge. This time they had succeeded without air support, assaulting and capturing a ZSU 23-2—a Soviet anti-aircraft gun mounted in a truck that had stymied their advance. General Dostum personally led the assault, Captain Mark, Staff Sergeant Chad and Dave from Team Alpha had joined in that attack. Afterward, they rode hard and fast on their weary mounts to descend back into the Darya Suf canyon before nightfall. While using their PVS-14 night vision goggles, at times riding and leading their mounts along the twisting trail, they ascended the slope and returned to their teammates at Cobaki late that evening.

Exhausted and frustrated with the message, Captain Mark responded with blunt details about the situation. He later found out that "it went all the way through the chain of command, through Mr. Rumsfeld, to POTUS himself."

"Who?" Mark asked.

Sergeant First Class Bill, the now familiar voice at the other end of the SATCOM [satellite communications] radio replied, "President Bush is reading your team's message traffic."

Tiger 02 field report, 25 October, 2001, Northern Afghanistan¹⁷²

In regards to your questions about us and the Northern Alliance just sitting around and doing nothing, let me explain some of the realities on the ground.

I am advising a man on how best to employ light infantry and horse cavalry in the attack against the (Russian manufactured) Taliban T-55 Tanks, armored personnel carriers, BTR's, mortars, (D-30) artillery, ZSU (23-2) anti-aircraft guns and machine guns (Dshk and

PKM). A tactic which I think became outdated with the invention of the machine gun. I can't recall the U.S. fighting like this since the Gatling gun destroyed Pancho Villa's charges in the Mexican Civil War in the early 1900's.

We have done this every day since we hit the ground. The men attack with ten AK-47 bullets per man, with their machine gun (PK) gunners with less than 100 rounds, and with less than 5 rounds per RPG 7 (rocket propelled grenade launcher). They have little water and less food.

I have observed a PK gunner who walked 10 miles to get into the fight, who was proud to show his artificial right leg from the knee down, caused by a Talib round years ago.

We have witnessed the horse cavalry bounding overwatch from spur to spur against Taliban strong points, the last several kilometers under heavy mortar, ZSU, artillery, RPG, and PK fire ... and to carry their wounded from the field. There is little medical care for the injured, only a donkey ride to the (SF) aid station, which is a mud hut.

We are doing amazingly well with what we have. We have killed over 125 Taliban and captured over 100 while losing only 8 KIA today. Frankly, I am surprised that we haven't been slaughtered.

We will get better at working things out as we go. It is a challenge just to have food and water for a few days. These folks have nothing. I have ridden 15 miles per day since arriving, yet everywhere I go the civilians and the "Muj" soldiers are always telling me they are glad the USA has come here with soldiers and planes to help them kill the Taliban. They all speak of their hopes for a better Afghanistan once the Taliban are gone. We killed the bastards by the bushel full today, and we'll get more tomorrow. The team sends its regards. – Tiger 02¹⁷³

The message helped provide insight into what the team was facing. However, the requirement for information and reporting did not stop.

Centralized Adaptive Planning, Decentralized Execution

By day, ODA 595 was advising General Dostum in the tactical fight. By night, they were advising him on the strategic fight in coordination with numerous commanders across the Northern Provinces, communicating with them via Thuraya, Inmarsat phone, or emissary. They requested airdrops for these forces to coordinate attacks and allow them to rise up in key adjacent provinces in order to overwhelm and isolate the Taliban. An Afghan network of spies kept careful watch on the Taliban movements, reporting by mountain telegraph—a Motorola radio or satellite phone—and in turn relayed to TF Dagger.

Empowered by Colonel Mulholland, the men of Tiger 02 and other SF teams had the freedom and authority to make decisions at the lowest level in this different kind of war, in which special forces were the main effort for both the tactical and strategic fight. America's secret weapon is its special forces sergeants and officers. 595 was a cohesive, mature, and experienced UW team. Five of the team members were veterans of previous combat operations, quickly adapted to fit the situation daily and withstood the pressure cooker of the challenges faced. They worked to exhaustion, coordinating intelligence operations, conducting reconnaissance, and coordinating ground tactical movements with the Afghan commanders and their units. Afghan morale and confidence surged as they rallied together. With each bomb, skirmish, patrol, and meeting, their trust in each other grew.

Despite some initial hard-won tactical successes, losses, and lessons learned, 595 was confident and determined they could defeat this overwhelming force of Taliban arrayed against them. Each night they sat down and discussed with the Afghan Commanders and amongst themselves, as well as conferring with the team members and CIA men in Dehi. "What had gone right that day?" or "What had to be improved immediately?" Each man was asked, "What did you personally do today to get the Afghans and us out of this situation?" and "What are you/we doing tomorrow to improve the situation?" From this, the team had a plan that was shared with Colonel Mulholland and TF Dagger.

Working from a Commander's intent and a decentralized plan of execution, they decided to split into 2- to 3-man cells, spreading out in an L-shaped configuration across 60 kilometers of rugged, mountainous terrain, separated by an 8- to 24-hour horse ride from each other. SATCOM would

be their main link, as they were confident that they had thoroughly cross-trained in every functional skillset. On previous deployments throughout the Middle East and Central Asian region they had operated in a similar decentralized manner.

On 26 October, the six-man section in Cobaki split down further. A three-man cell led by Sergeant First Class Andy was designated as call sign Tiger-02-Alpha. They proceeded west with a small force of horsemen under the command of Haji Habib. Their mission was to interdict Taliban reinforcements moving south from Mazar-e Sharif through the Shulgareh Valley and into the Darya Suf Valley. 595 had to buy themselves time to build up this growing militia army.¹⁷⁴

This isolated and exposed cell of special forces sergeants operated deepest in Taliban territory, and was a 24-hour horseback ride away from the rest of the Americans. In priority, the cell destroyed armaments and formations that could range and hurt them. They attacked enemy armor, vehicles, and artillery, and eliminated their quarry's capability, who found themselves immobilized. Their choices were to fight, abandon their equipment, or defect to the Northern Alliance. Local Afghans who had joined the Taliban in order to survive chose the latter. This theme was promoted tactically and strategically through psychological and information operations.

On 27 October, Captain Mark and two Sergeants traveled with General Dostum for nearly 18 hours in the saddle, back to Dehi for a two-day area command meeting. Facilitated by the Americans, the Afghan ethnic and regional resistance leadership rallied together. Agreeing upon an alliance, they briefed their operations orders.¹⁷⁵ Dehi and its immediate surroundings were overflowing with newly arrived militia fighters from differing factions. An uneasy truce between the various anti-Taliban ethnic groups seemed to be holding.

On the night of 28 October, two requested man-portable, satellite-capable radios and Special Operations Laser Marker (SOFLAM) targeting equipment arrived via an MH-47. They were to be operated by an Air Force joint terminal attack controllers (JTAC) and an Enlisted Terminal Attack Controller (ETAC), both newly attached to the team. Their arrival provided 595—now totaling fourteen men—the additional manpower and equipment to completely reorganize into four three-man cells. Their call signs were Tiger-02-Alpha, Bravo, Charlie, and Delta. They also established a two-man C2

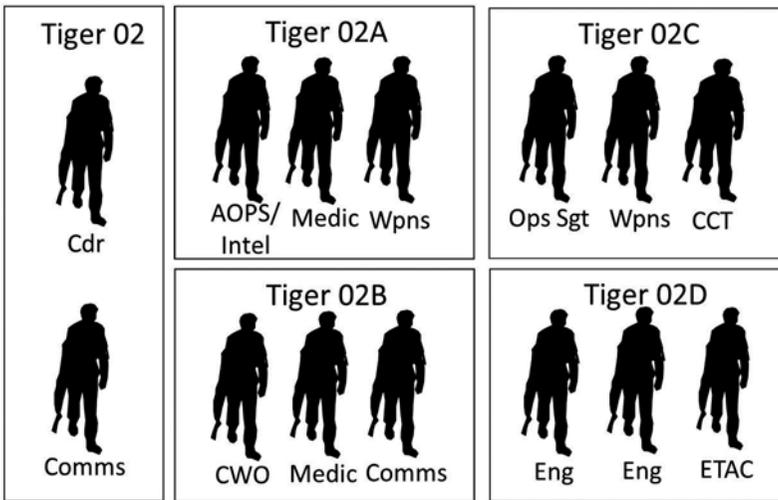


Figure 9. ODA 595 Task Organization. Source: Bill Knarr/used with permission

element designated Tiger-02. They now had the resources to support the Afghan’s plan to liberate Mazar-e Sharif and the Northern Provinces.¹⁷⁶

Alpha cell was the anchor point for ODA 595’s high-risk plan. According to local Afghans and Taliban that were captured, Tiger-02-Alpha was known as “The Beast of the Balkh Valley,” chewing up Taliban and al-Qaeda reinforcement convoys over the following days and weeks.

In a three-week period, ODA 595 would synchronize and employ over 300 close air sorties and 1,100 munitions in the campaign for Mazar-e Sharif. The team quickly racked and stacked aircraft day and night, clearing them hot to take out targets and shape the battlefield. They were trained and experienced in indirect fire coordination and close air support in accordance with the standard at that time, using such techniques as talking pilots onto targets, aircraft sensors to pinpoint targets, and guiding precision munitions with handheld commercial Garmin global positioning systems and a SOFLAM.

Airborne C2 aircraft relayed coordination as the team employed all manner of interservice offensive aircraft, including U.S. Air Force F-16 fighters, B-52 and B-1 bombers from the Indian Ocean and Gulf States. Two U.S. Navy carriers provided F-14s and Marine Corps F/A-18s. Collectively, they destroyed artillery, tanks, vehicles, command posts, fuel dumps, and enemy troops. Even greater numbers of refueling and resupply aircraft supported this effort, delivering men, weapons, equipment, and humanitarian aid.

Throughout the entire phase of the operation, the team's primary reliable intelligence was human intelligence (HUMINT) derived on the ground from Afghan sources with limited radio communications ability. This insurgent intelligence network reported to General Dostum providing access and reports on enemy movements and activities from across the northern provinces using unencrypted UHF/VHF radios, satellite phones, and handheld Motorola radios. Information was relayed in basic form. If a Taliban armored convoy began movement across the city of Mazar-e Sharif it was reported. If that same convoy departed the city and headed south towards the Balkh Valley, it was reported periodically as it passed through key villages. These reports continued. An area the ODA had to contend with concerning information they received from the Northern Alliance was credibility. According to Chief Warrant Officer Bob, the issue became, "Could we trust them [Northern Alliance]? Did they have ulterior motives? I'm not sure that we had the full trust of the Air Force for some of those targets, and at times we were second-guessed by our JSOTF S-2 on some of the information we passed. This became very problematic and lengthened our reports, taking away needed time for patrolling and planning for follow-on missions."

As rapport was built and trust established there were several discussions between Captain Mark with TF Dagger and even Airborne Warning and Control Systems (AWACs) (overhead) explaining that the militia intelligence network had helped become the eyes and ears of ODA 595, i.e., extended their reach and increased their understanding of the situation.



Figure 10. A tank is destroyed by Coalition airpower directed by Tiger 02 Alpha. Photo by Bill Knarr/used with permission

General Dostum's intelligence network had even established spies inside the Taliban camps including in Mazar-e Sharif. Some Taliban commanders, mainly local Afghans who had been coerced to fight for the extremists, reported directly to General Dostum on the Taliban movements.

Tactical surveillance aircraft or unmanned aerial vehicles were not available to support the team, except in one event where an unarmed predator had been passing through the area and was available to help, unbeknownst to the ODA that it was a predator.

Over the next week, the Afghan coalition and 595 prepared for a major engagement in the Baluch area. They positioned the additional three-man cells to support General Dostum's strategy. They also debriefed sources and Taliban defectors, conducted further recon patrols and aerial resupply, and engaged in battlefield recovery operations and reception of additional special forces teams.

Battlefield Positioning and Preparation: 29 October–4 November 2001¹⁷⁷

Sergeant First Class Andy's cell, contending with heavy snow in the region, continued orchestrating the destruction of enemy forces west along the Darya Suf and deeper in the Shulgareh area. Their efforts kept the Taliban off balance and prevented them from finding the growing militia forces to the east.

On 31 October, cells Bravo, Charlie, and Delta prepared for their deployment to positions on the north and south rim of the Darya Suf Canyon. Charlie was positioned to the north near Charsu. With sheer 600-foot cliffs as obstacles, Delta and Bravo were positioned astride the Darya Suf Canyon to support the main attack pushing northwest toward the Balkh Valley and Mazar-e Sharif. Delta returned to the vicinity of Oimatan, along the south rim of the Darya Suf Valley, where they recovered the gear Tiger-02 had cached in a cave the week before.

3 November was a big day in terms of air support, parachute and helicopter resupply, and additional arriving personnel. A special forces forward deployed battalion headquarters element also known as an ODC 53, arrived at Helicopter Landing Zone Burro, established and secured by Bravo. This element—call sign "Boxer"—consisted of an eight-man joint team, led by Lieutenant Colonel Max. This team was comprised of the battalion operations officer, a company sergeant major, additional special forces communications

and medical sergeants, as well as Air Force Special Operations JTACs and their equipment. They arrived with two John Deere Gators for their team.¹⁷⁸

Repeatedly requested all-terrain vehicles and Australian horse saddles had still not arrived for ODA 595. The 200-pound Americans and their stripped-down combat loads were breaking the Afghan saddles—stirrup straps and girths tore as they stepped into the saddle. They used parachute cord to repair the bridles and saddles, and for broken girths they used parachute bundle webbing. Military purchasing officers were working overtime to procure these and other commercial off-the-shelf items on the economy in Germany, Turkey, and near stateside U.S. bases.

A small CIA cell traveled west and established the infiltration point for an integrated ODA 534, which was soon to arrive. Call sign “Tiger-04,” was inserted by MH-47E and linked up with Commander Atta in order to support his assault on Ak Koprak in the southern Balkh Valley, and then moved north toward Mazar-e Sharif in mutual cooperation with General Dostum and Commander Mohaqeq’s forces.¹⁷⁹ In this short time, Commander Atta’s forces had grown to nearly 1,500 fighters. Tiger-04 received aerial resupply drops of lethal and nonlethal aid and began calling in close air support on enemy positions. They initially did this on horseback or foot, and later, through battlefield recovery operations, secured several Toyota pickup trucks formerly used by the Taliban.

The Northern Alliance forces, two ODAs, the ODC, and CIA teams were now prepared for a climactic battle to descend from the mountains and ultimately liberate the key city of Mazar-e Sharif.

Comments and Summary

The ability to bring the three factions of Uzbek, Tajik, and Hazara, led by General Dostum, Commander Atta, and Commander Mohaqeq respectively, together at a point in time to agree and execute a plan as a United Front was probably one of the most significant accomplishments of this joint inter-agency CIA/SOF team. As their Jedburgh forefathers had testified: “They [the Jedburghs] spent much of their time preventing the various resistance factions ... from fighting each other and keeping them focused on the common enemy”—in their case it was the Germans.¹⁸⁰

There are differences of opinion on the contribution of deploying ODCs into the battle, in particular the timing of those deployments. The two most

notable being ODC 53 to advise General Dostum and later command/staff elements of ODC 52 to advise Hamid Karzai where ODA 595 and ODA 574

The ability to bring the three factions of Uzbek, Tajik, and Hazara, led by General Dostum, Commander Atta, and Commander Mohaqeq respectively, together at a point in time to agree and execute a plan as a United Front was probably one of the most significant accomplishments of this joint interagency CIA/SOF team.

had already been deployed to provide advice and assistance. Did the deployment of ODC 53, particularly two days before the big battle in the Baluch area, confuse relationships between the Americans and General Dostum? Clearly Captain Mark and Lieutenant Colonel Bowers knew who

was in charge on the ground on the American side, but who did General Dostum turn to for trusted advice? The senior American commander who had just arrived, or the less senior commander who General Dostum had fought with and learned to trust through a number of engagements over the previous two weeks? The same questions are relevant when discussing the relationships among Hamid Karzai and Captain Amerine of ODA 574 and Lieutenant Fox of ODC 52. That topic will be discussed more in chapter 6.

Events during this period were also testimony to how quickly phases could move in different geographical areas and how in one area progress may be quicker, or slower than other areas. As an example, by 5 November General Dostum was prepared for a final offensive, Fahim Khan was stalemated in the Panjshir, and CIA teams and ODAs were being introduced, or yet to be introduced into Southern Afghanistan.

By 5 November, General Dostum, Commander Atta, and Commander Mohaqeq were prepared for a coordinated offensive against the Taliban and al-Qaeda forces arrayed against them in the Darya Suf and Balkh Valleys. General Dostum and his commanders had also coordinated for other outlying militia commanders in other provinces like Faryab, Sare Pul, Jawzjan, Balkh, Samangan, and Bamian to rise up and fight in those area, ambushing the enemy along the main ring road and isolating the Taliban in Mazar-e Sharif. On the other hand, Fahim Khan and Bismullah Khan's forces, despite being armored, mechanized and having their own direct support artillery and despite countless ODA 555 directed airstrikes at Bagram airfield, remained stalemated or unwilling to move in the Panjisher against the Taliban.

Chapter 4. Employment

So then out of nowhere, precision-guided bombs began to land on Taliban and al-Qaeda positions. Explosions were deafening, and the timing so precise, that, as the soldiers described it, hundreds of Afghan horsemen literally came riding out of the smoke coming down on the enemy in clouds of dust and flying shrapnel. That day, on the plains of Afghanistan, the 19th century met the 21st century, and they defeated a dangerous and determined adversary. A remarkable achievement. - Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld¹⁸¹

The period 5 to 10 November 2001, specifically for the assault on Mazar-e Sharif, was titled “Employment” because the conditions were set during the previous phases. The plan had been laid out and agreed to by the principals (Americans and the three faction leaders in the Mazar-e Sharif area: General Dostum, Commander Atta and Commander Mohaqeq), forces were organized and in place, and resources were available. Although ammunition had not been distributed from the most recent drop, General Dostum was comfortable that enough ammunition was available for the 5 November engagement, as well as engagements during pursuit and exploitation of the enemy forces towards Mazar-e Sharif. This was a pivotal moment in the battle. According to General Dostum’s deputy, Commander Fakir:

General Dostum was communicating with the Taliban leaders [via ICOM radio] and he was telling them, “Listen Taliban, I am going to capture this area.” And on the return the Taliban Commander [Mullah Guhaire] replied, “Listen, if you capture this area that means you capture the whole north.” And then General Dostum replied, “I will do that; when I capture it I will say it on the radio that I captured the north.” And then he captured this little village [Baluch].¹⁸²

The Men of ODA 595: Told from their Perspective

The Fight for Baluch

By 5 November, General Dostum was confident in the American ground and air commitment, which had thus far provided devastating fire support. The

Northern Alliance provided the maneuver force that included Commander Atta in the west near Ak Kopruck, General Dostum (now with nearly 2,500 horsemen), and Commander Mohaqeq in the east with approximately 500 light infantry soldiers.¹⁸³

General Dostum had most of his forces focused on the Baluch area. Commander Ahmed Khan Samangani was to the north with 750 horsemen, Commander Lal was in the center with 750 horsemen, and Commander Kamal had 500 horsemen in the south. Located south of the Darya Suf, General Dostum had 200 horsemen with his deputy, Commander Fakir. Further west on Oimatak Mountain, Commander Haji Habib's force had grown to nearly 300 fighters. Each group was loosely subdivided into groups of 10 horsemen with a designated commander. Roughly five squadrons of cavalry were ready to take on the Taliban in a decisive battle.¹⁸⁴

Meanwhile, the Taliban, under the command of Mullah Razak, had an estimated 3,000 fighters remaining in the Darya Suf Valley. They were supported by armor and artillery and had consolidated in the Baluch area in previously prepared bunkers and trenches.¹⁸⁵

The coordinated attack by the Northern Alliance was postponed 48 hours due to a lack of ammunition. Resupply arrived by parachute in the early morning hours of 5 November. Although too late to distribute to all

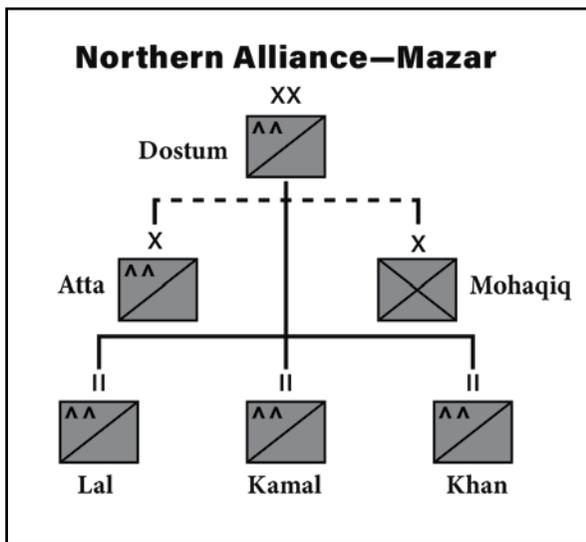


Figure 11. General Dostum's forces. Source: Bill Knarr

the commanders, General Dostum was now confident that he had enough ammunition to continue the fight.

That same morning, [Tiger 02] Charlie began receiving small arms and machine gun fire, which sporadically hit the side of their forward-positioned bunker. The Taliban had split their forces, with one group approaching from the west and the other from the southwest, attempting to turn the Northern Alliance right flank. Charlie was about to be pinned down and overrun.

Commander Ahmed Khan Samangani, Commander Haji Chari, and 30 horsemen worked to clear a corridor for the special forces team's escape route. The horsemen temporarily held their position but were soon out of ammunition and had to withdraw to the east for resupply. This wasn't unusual. Commander Ahmed Khan's forces had been very aggressive in their previous reconnaissance patrolling and attacks, repeatedly riding in behind and amongst the Taliban positions to obtain information, harass and confuse the enemy, much like the "Mangudai" tactics of the region's Mongol legend. They were consistently the farthest from resupply areas and were frequently low on ammunition.

Meanwhile, the Taliban continued its attack from the west. According to Master Sergeant Paul, "Staff Sergeant Matt, [JTAC] calls in a 'Danger Close.' He was doing a good job talking to the aircraft; he brought them in less than 500 meters out—like eight 1,000-pound Joint Direct Attack Munitions (JDAMs)—and I mean, it rocked our world!"¹⁸⁶

Charlie cell was now on foot, breaking contact and withdrawing through the low ground. Staff Sergeant Matt directed a pair of U.S. Navy F-14s, call sign "Arnold 01" to the pursuing Taliban. They flew multiple strafing runs, which aided Charlie in its escape. The cell made it back to their starting point of the morning. There, Staff Sergeant Mike viewed Taliban in their previous position, feasting on his still-cooking meal. A precision-guided GPS bomb strike, provided by the U.S. Air Force was called in and JDAMs made short work of the feast.¹⁸⁷

The Delta cell spotted activity in a bunker complex that was believed to be the command post of Mullah Razak, the Taliban corps commander. Tiger-02-Delta used GPS and SOFLAM to score a direct hit on the complex. Meanwhile, Alpha cell found their path from the mountain blocked by a Taliban element. To their surprise, a loitering Predator UAV operator pinpointed the activity and passed the video to the Combined Air Operations Center (CAOC) in Saudi Arabia. Precision was vital—near a village,

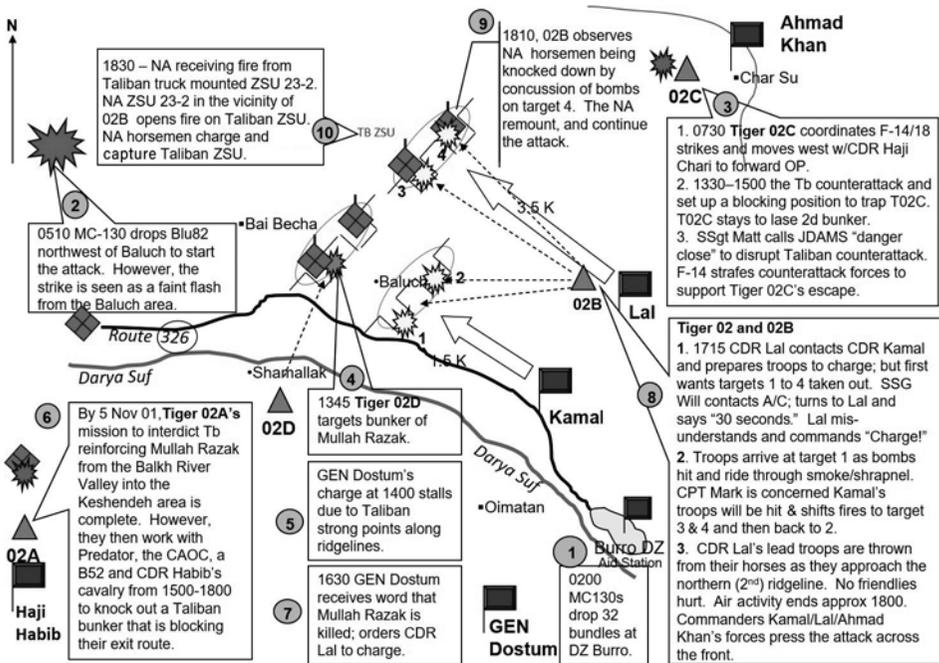


Figure 12. 5 November 2001 engagement broke the back of the Taliban in the North. Source: Bill Knarr

any error could cause civilian casualties. Measured coordinates were plotted by the CAOC and passed along to Alpha and a B-52; Alpha moved off the mountain with Habib's force.¹⁸⁸

Meanwhile, General Dostum intercepted Taliban radio traffic confirming that Mullah Razak was indeed killed by the Delta strike. He ordered Commanders Lal and Kamal to conduct a cavalry charge, readying their horses and men for the assault.¹⁸⁹

Bravo cell worked the radios and SOFLAM to strike four bunker complex targets in quick succession. As two F/A-18s released their first laser-guided bombs, Staff Sergeant Will turned to Commander Lal and said, "Thirty seconds." But the charge had already begun, and four waves of horsemen galloped though the low ground. They charged forward across the entire front of Lal, Kamal, and Ahmed Khan's positions. Dismounted horsemen laid down suppressing fires with PK machine guns and rocket propelled grenades; it was an incredible sight.

Commander Kamal's troops arrived at the first target just as the bombs hit. As one team member described it: "The Northern Alliance commander gave the order to charge a little too soon, and we literally had bombs impacting on Taliban positions and Northern Alliance horsemen charging through the debris cloud, through the dust cloud, taking that position. We observed horsemen being knocked down from the blast concussion. Fortunately, none of them were injured. They were able to remount and continue on and they took that objective."¹⁹⁰

Later, Commander Lal commented on the courage of the horses and the men: "Yes, I remember that moment, but it comes to me that the horses are also used to that bombardment, the feeling that it was an American bomb, a friendly bomb." After so many days of heavy combat, the horses were probably already deafened by the gunfire and explosions and seemed used to their riders shooting from the saddle.¹⁹¹

Although there was more fighting throughout the night and the next morning, the coalition continued to exploit its earned successes. While General Dostum's forces advanced in the Baluch area, Commander Atta and Tiger-04 achieved similar successes in Ak Kopruk, reducing the Taliban strongpoints with close air support. Commander Atta's forces soon controlled the city.

Consolidation and Pursuit, 6–8 November 2001

So we broke through this [Taliban] defense on the morning of the 6th, and the horse race to Mazar-e Sharif was on. - ODA 595 Commander¹⁹²

The Taliban defenses evaporated as the remaining survivors withdrew through the Balkh Valley to positions north of the Tiangi gap. Boxer and the Tiger-02 and Tiger-04 elements started walking or riding west. On 7 November, Tiger-02, Bravo and Charlie cells, and an estimated 2,500 horsemen descended on the Keshendeh-ye Bala Bazaar.¹⁹³

With a few hours rest and some further planning, Tiger-02 on horseback, Bravo on two John Deere Gators, and a small group of horsemen took point. They pushed north at a gallop on the road, wary of any possible ambush, and spearheaded the entire movement to contact. The road and hillsides were littered with destroyed vehicles—a testament to Tiger-02-Alpha's work. Local Afghans stepped forward and reported on the fleeing Taliban.



Figure 13. Donkey trains. Photo by Mark Nutsch/used with permission

Commander Atta's force linked up with General Dostum and Commander Mohaqeq. They met to finalize the strategy to take Mazar. The main body of their army remained in the bazaar to rest and refit, awaiting supplies from donkey trains coming from the Darya Suf Drop Zones.

Alpha and Delta cells, while still south of the Darya Suf Canyon, had linked up with each other along the north slopes of Oimatan Mountain and descended to Keshendeh-ye Bala. Without pack transportation, they shifted their equipment to the horses and proceeded on foot for a 25-mile forced march that went late into the evening. They eventually linked up with the Tiger-02 and Bravo cell members north of the community of Shulgareh. They were positioned for the upcoming battle and the prize: Mazar-e Sharif.

Tiger-04 was with Commander Atta's forces pushing north from Ak Koprak toward Shulgareh. Boxer was moving west on foot to Keshendeh-ye Bala.

Breaking Through the Tiangi, 9–10 November 2001

The Taliban survivors of the battles in Darya Suf and Balkh Valleys fled to Mazar-e Sharif, spreading word of the approaching army. A determined group composed mostly of Pakistani and foreign fighters opted to put up a last stand defense at the north end of the Tiangi or "pass," roughly 15 miles south of Mazar-e Sharif.

ODA 595's Tiger cells with their vanguard of Northern Alliance horsemen and foot soldiers led the way, advancing first into the pass. Heavy fighting ensued through the dust and debris, and Northern Alliance morale began waning rapidly. This is where they suffered the majority of their casualties. The Afghans and Americans, rallying their combined forces, eventually secured the far side. The gateway to Mazar-e Sharif had been literally blown open by two circling B-52s carrying JDAMs. The Afghan and special forces soldiers seized the opportunity in the chaos, despite the many obstacles they encountered.¹⁹⁴



Figure 14. Tiangi (Pass) is shown, as approaching from the south. Photo by Bill Knarr/used with permission

On the night of 9 November, General Dostum and Commander Atta's advance forces pushed to the outskirts of Mazar-e Sharif, reporting back that the Taliban were fleeing. Defeated in the mountains, the Taliban had been abandoned by their senior leadership. Without guidance from their al-Qaeda advisors, they no longer felt that momentum was on their side. Some chose to flee, while other local Afghan Taliban chose negotiation in order to join the Northern Alliance forces.

The Fall of Mazar-e Sharif, 10 November 2001¹⁹⁵

In the early morning hours of 10 November 2001, the Afghan and American forces pushed through the pass and rode into Mazar-e Sharif. Massive, jubilant crowds lined the streets. The night before, Commander Atta's forces, accompanied by ODA 534, had pushed through the pass on captured trucks, moving into the Eastern outskirts of the city and near the Mazar-e Sharif Airport.

For the first time since their infiltration on 20 October, all members of 595 were at the same location. They rallied inside Qala Jangi ("The Castle of War")—a medieval fortress that had been General Dostum's headquarters before the Taliban takeover.

Later that afternoon, fighting resumed in the heart of Mazar-e Sharif, just blocks from the Blue Mosque. At the Sultan Razia, a former girl's school used



Figure 15. ODA 595 moving into Qala Jangi "The Castle of War."
Photo by Mark Nutsch/used with permission

as a military barracks, several hundred Pakistani Taliban holdouts murdered local emissaries who were trying to negotiate their surrender.

General Dostum, Commander Atta, and Commander Mohaqeq convened another area commander's meeting with their primary commanders and then a Loya Jirga (council meeting) with the local political and civilian leadership of Mazar-e Sharif.

The special forces teams embedded themselves in the local landscape, living on the economy. A few days later, ODC 53, which had initially been at Qala Jangi, moved into a former Turkish school compound in Mazar-e Sharif. Both 595 and 534 co-located near their respective counterparts, refitting and readying for the next phase of operations.

Each man on 595 had lost between 15 to 25 pounds of bodyweight in less than a month. Their uniforms seemed draped across their bodies. In the mountains, they ate one shared MRE a day, and if lucky, a handful of dirty rice, a piece of goat knuckle, or baked bread. Sharing meals with the Afghans was a daily routine. Once in the city, their meals greatly improved.

Over the coming months, they would advise their counterparts to maintain peace and work together between the ethnic factions, establish civil security services, and coordinate medical and humanitarian aid for the refugees and people in Mazar-e Sharif. Together, they would begin to rebuild infrastructure and support for an interim government.

The Aftermath of ODA 595's Fight for Mazar-e Sharif and the Rest of their Story

The teams had further skirmishes with al-Qaeda and Taliban remnants in the area. A major battle unfolded at Qala Jangi itself, as the al-Ansar (or "Foreign Brigade") under Mullah Fazl attempted to spearhead a counterattack and recapture Mazar-e Sharif.¹⁹⁶

The ground and air battle shifted to the east as Taliban forces fled towards Kunduz. Within a few days, Northern Alliance Marshal Fahim Khan's forces, in concert with ODA 555, decided to move quickly on Kabul. ODAs 574 and 583 advanced on Kandahar, while ODAs 585 and 586 advanced toward Kunduz. Each moved with their respective counterpart Afghan militia forces. Afghan leadership and the presence of American Special Forces advisors, combined with overwhelming precision fire support, served as the catalyst for a Northern Alliance victory.¹⁹⁷

Liberating Mazar-e Sharif and the six Northern Provinces caused a rapid deterioration of Taliban C2 throughout the north and facilitated the rapid domino-like collapse of the Taliban government. This saved countless American and Afghan lives.

With the aid of other special forces teams from TF Dagger, it took a mere 49 days to liberate all of Afghanistan. The harrowing insertion, the unconventional missions, and the extraordinary valor of each of these other

The harrowing insertion, the unconventional missions, and the extraordinary valor of each of these other special forces teams are an incredible story in their own right.

special forces teams are an incredible story in their own right. ODAs 555, 534, 585, 586, 553, 554, 572, 574, 583, 592, and 594, and ODCs 51, 52, and 53, each played critical roles on the ground, working directly alongside their Afghan counterparts, and contributed to the defeat of the Taliban

regime. Each of these teams lived the experience of liberating a people and country, exemplary of the special forces motto: “De Oppresso Liber”—to liberate the oppressed.

When asked General Dostum’s thoughts on ODA 595, he commented: “I asked for a few Americans. They brought with them the courage of a whole army.”

Former President George W. Bush, in a video tribute to ODA 595 on 5 May 2011 summarized it best:

In November 2001, Northern Alliance fighters and Special Forces operators including the men of ODA 595 mounted a cavalry charge and liberated the strategic city of Mazar-e Sharif ... Within days almost every major city in the north fell. The Taliban fled Kabul for mountain hideouts in the east and south. Thanks largely to special operators, the Taliban is gone from power, the al-Qaeda training camps are closed, millions of Afghans people are free, and the American people are more secure.¹⁹⁸

Comments and Summary

Quickly after Mazar-e Sharif fell on 10 November, “Bamian in the central region, Taloquan in the north and Herat in the west surrendered” and on 12

and 13 November Northern Alliance forces entered Kabul. Jalalabad in the east fell on 14 November.¹⁹⁹ This section addresses the clearing of the north and then summarizes the fight in the rest of Afghanistan, particularly the south.

Clearing Northern Afghanistan

Although the Northern Alliance forces liberated Mazar-e Sharif on 10 November, there were several significant events that followed including the clearing of the Sultan Razia Girl's School, negotiations and the Taliban's surrender in Konduz, the Taliban counterattack in Mazar, the uprising in Qala Jangi and the capture of John Walker Lindh.

Sultan Razia School. Although most of the Taliban and foreign fighters had fled east to Konduz, several hundred had taken refuge in the Sultan Razia Girl's School in Mazar-e Sharif and were discovered by Commander Atta's forces as they were clearing the city of Taliban.²⁰⁰ Two of Commander Atta's envoys tried to reason with the Pakistanis, approaching the building with a Koran outstretched in front of them, but struck by Taliban automatic fire, they lay dead in front of the building. Despite the loss, Commander Atta had not given up and nine of his men had made it to the building and were attempting to continue negotiations. In the meantime, General Dostum was made aware of the siege and decided that the building needed to be bombed and sent a message to Commander Atta. According to Commander Atta, he replied that he had the building surrounded, that bombing within the city was too risky given the school's proximity to other buildings, and if need be, he would starve them out.²⁰¹

Evidently there was a breakdown in communications. Despite their skepticism over bombing the building, Bowers/Nutsch sent a team consisting of a 595 cell plus a tactical air control party and CIA representative to the school as General Dostum asked. Arriving in a couple of locally acquired Toyota Hilux 4x4 pickups, the scene was chaotic. According to Captain Nutsch:

Small arms fire and RPGs were exchanged as the militia worked to contain the enemy that was held up in the school compound as well as evacuate or guide the surrounding civilian populace to nearby shelter. The [interagency] team was led to an observation point atop a multi-story building across the street overlooking the school. However, their position was too close for a laser guided

munition to be effective so they spent considerable care and time talking the overhead sortie of two F-18's onto the target that was just blocks from the Hazrat Ali shrine. This would be the team's first urban airstrike.²⁰²

On target, four bombs—four hits with estimates of 100 plus Taliban and al-Qaeda fighters killed.²⁰³ Unfortunately, Commander Atta's men were still inside the building.²⁰⁴ This incident was not helpful in maintaining relationships between General Dostum and Commander Atta.

The Deception: Konduz, Qala Jangi and Shebergan. By late November, a major pocket of resistance still remained in Konduz where Mullah Fazl and his forces fled after their defeat in Mazar. Two weeks after the liberation of Mazar-e Sharif, Mullahs Fazl and Noori under a white flag of truce asked to meet with General Dostum, Commander Atta, and Commander Mohaqeq at Qala Jangi to discuss terms of surrender. According to Commander Mohaqeq they promised that they would not kill the Taliban if they surrendered, “now you are safe if you surrender.”²⁰⁵

I was given charge of the security of the city ... General Dostum and General Atta went to disarm the Taliban. I think that when Mullah Fazl and the others went back, they changed their minds [and decided not to surrender.]

Evidently, they needed more persuasion. In addition to the B-52s, Mohaqeq announced:

A new type of plane, an AC-130. So many holes ... came from that plane. So after the bombardment, they changed their mind and announced they were going to surrender.²⁰⁶

Not only was it powerful, but the psychological impact of a woman's voice over the radio emanating from the AC-130, that General Dostum aptly named the “Angel of Death,” killing them was shameful. General Dostum leveraged that to its fullest by taunting them.

Meanwhile on 24 November, 300 al-Qaeda and Taliban had surrendered outside of the Mazar-e Sharif Airfield. Williams described them as “several hundred foreign Ansar fighters ... known for their zeal in combat and focus on martyrdom.”²⁰⁷ All the Americans were concerned with the casual manner in which these “prisoners” were handled, in particular their

screening for any hidden weapons and their lack of restrictive bindings. But, Commander Mohaqeq was suspicious:

Many hundreds of foreigners Uzbeks, Pakistanis, Arabs ... started marching towards Mazar-e Sharif, and they reached the outskirts of the city. There was a plan [he discovered later] that they would return into the city, and they would destroy, killing everybody who will come in front of them. They would try and recapture the city.²⁰⁸

When asked for their weapons, they would not hand them over. He went to the Americans and asked for air support to reinforce his demands on the prisoners. “After two or three flight of B-52s they realized the danger and laid down their weapons,” all except the ones that could be hidden under their clothing. They carried those to Qala Jangi.

Qala Jangi. On 24 November the prisoners were transported, or, in most cases transported themselves to Qala Jangi and placed in the southern section of the fort. Immediately things started to worsen. One of the prisoners, rushed General Dostum’s security chief (thinking that he was General Dostum) and detonated a hand grenade that he had hidden from the guards.²⁰⁹ That night, a suicidal al-Qaeda prisoner killed two guards and himself with a hand grenade.

The next day it got worse. The prisoners found weapons and ammunition that had been stored in the southern section of the fortress. They had overcome the guards and the two American CIA operatives that were in the compound questioning prisoners. Mike Spann was killed, and Dave Tyson escaped. Major Mark Mitchell, the operations officer for FOB 53 assembled a 15-man rescue team including a UK Special Boat Service team and headed towards Qala Jangi. For the next three days they, along with Northern Alliance soldiers and close air support, would be fighting the foreign fighters. Finally, on 28 November, they recovered Mike Spann’s body and on 29 November the last of the foreign fighters surrendered—only 86 survived and some accounts record deaths as high as 514.²¹⁰

Among those prisoners was a John Walker Lindh, mislabeled as the American Taliban when in fact he was al-Qaeda, and an Arab speaking member of the 055 Brigade of foreign fighters. Over a several year period prior to 9/11, Lindh was recruited at a mosque in California, travelled to Yemen multiple times and then trained in Pakistan before entering Afghanistan

in summer 2001. Each time he was trained further in extremist militant ideology at known or suspected al-Qaeda related madrassahs. Osama bin Laden himself met with the American Lindh at Tarnak Farms prior to 9/11. Lindh did not speak Pashtu and was assigned to Al Ansar, fighting against the Northern Alliance.²¹¹

Meanwhile, at the agreed upon surrender location west of Konduz city, thousands of prisoners were being herded into transport containers to be taken to Shebergan, west of Mazar. Some died from battle wounds, some from exposure and/or asphyxiation as the unmonitored Afghan guards crowded them into CONEX containers for the movement. The number of prisoners simply overwhelmed the resources available to support them medically/logistically.

The men of ODA 595 provided a critical perspective on the application of UW in Northern Afghanistan and particularly as it pertained to the battle for Mazar-e Sharif. From their vantage point they also commented on operational and strategic events and implications.

The next chapter addresses the rest of the story in terms of other events in Afghanistan and what is called the “Transition” phase.

Chapter 5. Transition

Generally, transition refers to “a change between phases ... This shift in focus by the joint force often is accompanied by changes in command or support relationships and priorities of effort.”²¹² However, in UW, transition is a phase in-and-of-itself. As phase seven and the last phase of UW, transition marks the changeover where SOF conducts UW “until they assist the resistance in removing the hostile power and the indigenous population becomes the government.”²¹³ Best said by the USASOC *Unconventional Warfare Pocket Guide*,

At this point, it is critical to shift mindsets from defeating the adversary regime to protecting the newly installed government and its security personnel from insurgency, lawlessness, and subversion by former regime elements that attempt to organize their own resistance.²¹⁴

This is reflected at figure 16, “Relationship Between Special Operations and Irregular Warfare.” As an example, in this case (early stages of OEF), on the left side of the diagram, the United States provided support to the Anti-Taliban fighters against the Taliban Regime (the hostile nation). As the Taliban regime was overthrown, the United States and Coalition provided support to the newly recognized government. Special operations support at that point transitions to FID, counterinsurgency (COIN), and/or CT. However, the big question, entertained from the very beginning, had to do with the political aspects: Who, from what ethnicity, is going to run this new government once the Taliban are removed from power? There are a number of events that are relevant to the transition. The first one military—overthrowing the Taliban, and the second—political; installing a government that garners legitimacy from the people. This chapter will provide context for that discussion. The focus of the monograph thus far has been on ODA 595 and events in Northern Afghanistan. In order to discuss the transition phase it is important to address events in the south, particularly those that involved the Pashtun leadership, and Hamid Karzai. Next, it will address the various events/phases leading up to transition such as the overthrow of the Taliban government, appointment of an interim government, the rising

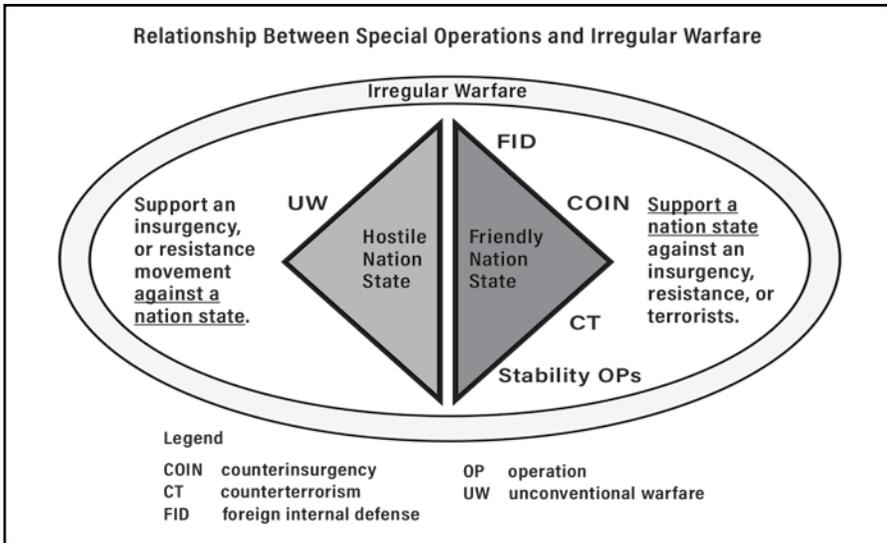


Figure 16. Relationship Between Special Operations and Irregular Warfare. Source: JP 3-05, *Special Operations*

role of the CFLCC and conventional forces (CF), the change of mission for SOF and political milestones.

The Taliban: A Southern Afghanistan Problem

The Taliban was a southern problem; the solution lay in the south.²¹⁵

The Islamabad Chief of Station Robert Grenier saw the Taliban as a southern Afghanistan problem that had to be solved in the south without interference/support from the north.²¹⁶ The conditions that existed in the north for an existing anti-Taliban force to rapidly generate with U.S. support and take over in the north did not exist in the south. In the north, the CIA had already established contacts and developed relationships with those commanders that had been engaged in combat with the Taliban. The south was different. Despite the number of contacts/sources and networks that the CIA had established, collecting intelligence was far different than executing operations. As indicated in chapter 1, those tribal leaders and warlords in the south—unlike those in the north that were already committed—were very cautious to aggressively expose any anti-Taliban sentiments until they were assured of U.S. support. Given the U.S. abandonment of those same

leaders and warlords after the Soviet withdrawal in 1989, they had every right to be skeptical.

Ethnic Differences and Conflict

Not only were the sentiments different, the population centers, ratio, culture, and ethnicity were very different between north and south. With Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Hazaras dominating the north, the Pashtun typically lived in the east, southeastern and southern parts of Afghanistan with tribal elements spreading into the northwest and western regions of Pakistan. As indicated earlier the Pashtu are the largest and most dominant group in Afghanistan with 42 percent of the population, the Tajiks at 27 percent, the Uzbeks and Hazaras at 9 percent each and “others” filling the remainder.²¹⁷ Not only were the Pashtu the largest ethnic community there were other considerations that reinforced the Pashtun sense of entitlement such as their name and lineage. Additionally, cultural characteristics make it more difficult for them to centralize power and achieve a national unity.

Pashtun means “Afghan” and the Pashtun have dominated the Afghan political scene for the last 200 years. They mostly speak Pashtu. They are primarily Sunni Muslim and practice Pashtunwali which literally means the way of the Pashtun. Pashtunwali provides the basis for tribal life emphasizing rules of behavior to include honor/shame, law, and governance.²¹⁸ As a communal society, relationships are extremely important and emphasize milmastia (hospitality) and the use of tribal jirga (councils) to reconcile differences and provide group decisions.²¹⁹ A very tribal culture, the Pashtuns can be divided into a number of tribes, the two major confederations being the Ghilzai and Durrani. Although the Taliban are Sunni and Pashtun, their mode of operation was based on religious zealotry and breaking down familial ties to include executing the tribal leadership that did not succumb to their way of thinking. Additionally, the Taliban did not play well with the other ethnicities, and in particular the Hazaras, where, according to Commander Mohaqeq, a leader of the Hazaras in the north, in August 1998 the Taliban had killed 10,000 residents of Mazar, 90 percent of which were Hazaras.²²⁰

Although the Taliban are Sunni and Pashtun, their mode of operation was based on religious zealotry and breaking down familial ties to include executing the tribal leadership that did not succumb to their way of thinking.

The point being, ethnic lines were pretty visible between the north and the south and culminated in the fronts previously described by Schroen. The stark differences in conditions between the north and the south raised additional concerns. The U.S. government, and in particular CIA, was very sensitive to any hint that the Northern Alliance might be used against the Pashtun in the south. They feared that any perception of a Tajik-Uzbek-Hazara alliance against traditional Pashtun territory would unite the Pashtuns—both Taliban and anti-Taliban Pashtuns—against the “invaders,” American and Northern Alliance. The CIA understood that, as difficult as it may be, they needed to generate a Pashtun tribal uprising against the Taliban, independent of any help from the north.

Challenges

It is not easy to condense challenges to bite-size topics, but there were at least three:

1. The difficulty in finding credible anti-Taliban leaders within Pashtun community willing to commit to, and lead an uprising,
2. A lack of sanctuaries in the south for organizing and training a resistance force as there had been in the north, and
3. The potential that the Pashtun as a community, though seemingly fragmented, would unite against a perceived invasion by outsiders such as the Northern Alliance or a large American military force.

The first challenge, finding a credible Pashtun leader, will be addressed in more detail later. The second, as expressed by Robert Grenier was particularly interesting. The CIA felt comfortable deploying advance teams in the north ahead of SOF because the security conditions allowed that. That is, they had developed the network and Northern Alliance controlled ground, such as on the Takhur and Kabul Fronts (as described in chapter 1 by Gary Schroen), to accommodate developing and organizing the resistance force and to protect those CIA advance teams. But in the south, the situation was too fluid, and the CIA teams needed SOF to accompany them to provide security. So, on 14 November 2001, CIA Team Echo was accompanied by elements of ODA 574 for their insertion into Tarin Kowt along with Karzai.²²¹ The same occurred when elements of ODA 583 accompanied CIA Team Foxtrot to support Gul Agha Sherzai in the Shin Narfay Valley, east of Kandahar.²²²

The third challenge became more acute as the Northern Alliance seized Kabul. As Schroen had previously indicated, the majority of Taliban forces were committed to the north against the Northern Alliance and now many were fleeing south. Grenier was concerned that the Taliban leadership in the north, such as Mullah Fazl, would relocate south to plan the defense of the Taliban homeland—Kandahar.²²³ He had hoped that the Northern Alliance would fix those Taliban forces in the north. He saw the worst case scenario as, (1) Taliban forces and leadership moving/fleeing south to reinforce Taliban defenses in the south before the U.S. was able to generate enough anti-Taliban forces, and (2) the Taliban using the fear of an invasion by the north to unite the Pashtun community.²²⁴

Who Would Lead the Pashtun Anti-Taliban Movement?

As questioned before, who would step forward as the credible anti-Taliban Pashtun leader? There were several that stepped forward: Hamid Karzai, Abdul Haq, and Gul Agha Sherzai.²²⁵ Unfortunately Abdul Haq met an early demise at the hands of the Taliban as he crossed the border from Pakistan into Afghanistan in late October 2001. Grenier's assessment, supported by others in the CIA as well as State Department, was that of the two remaining, Karzai was by far the more polished and credible, and although he had no military experience, he was able to recruit Pashtun tribes into his ranks. He was also the senior leader of the Popalzai tribe of the Durrani Confederation and his father was a famous Pashtun leader, so he had both lineage and credibility within the Pashtun community.

In short, Kandahar fell on 7 December 2001 with Gul Agha Sherzai approaching from the east and Karzai's forces approaching from the north. It's not the intent of this monograph to detail actions leading up to the fall of Kandahar as it did for Mazar-e Sharif. Those actions are generally mentioned and in the following timeline to address critical events and personalities leading up to the transition. For more detailed information on the heroics of both Karzai and Sherzai and their accompanying CIA and SOF teams see Grenier's *88 Days to Kandahar*. Additionally, he credits Eric Blehm's *The Only Thing Worth Dying For*, for providing detailed accounts of Karzai's campaign from the ODA's perspective.

The signature event in the south, in what Karzai called the turning point, was the battle for Tarin Kowt on 17 November. According to Briscoe:

Not only was the battle to protect Tarin Kowt a decisive military success, it was also an overwhelming psychological and political victory. Had Karzai been defeated, the hopes that the U.S. government had for him as a southern Afghanistan war leader and future president would have been dashed. Instead, his stature increased immeasurably. His credibility among the regional leaders, with the leaders of the Northern Alliance, and with the U.S. government had been ensured. As [Captain] Amerine [ODA 754 Commander] said, “After the battle of Tarin Kowt, Hamad Karzai was a leader to be reckoned with [in Afghanistan].”²²⁶

The Timetable to Transition: Events to Consider

13 November: The Northern Alliance enters/captures Kabul. This event is used as a pivot point between the successes in the north and the campaign in the south in the Pashtun areas.

14 November: ODA 574 commanded by Captain Jason Amerine, a six-man CIA Team Echo and a three-man special mission element and Karzai were inserted near Tarin Kowt, north of Kandahar.²²⁷

17 November: Battle of Tarin Kowt. Hamid Karzai called it “the turning point.”²²⁸

18 November: Captain Harry Sims, commander of ODA 583 and two other detachment members, linked up with Gul Agha Sherzai, former governor of Kandahar, southeast of Kandahar.²²⁹ On 19 November the rest of his team joined him.

20 November: 3rd Army Headquarters deployed to Camp Doha, Kuwait, commanded by Lieutenant General Paul T. Mikolashek, and officially assumed responsibilities as the CFLCC.²³⁰

25 November: Representatives from Afghanistan met in Bonn, Germany. They began planning interim post-Taliban government.

27 November: Lieutenant Colonel David Fox, Commander 2nd Battalion, 5th SFG, and Major Bolduc, the operations officer, and one other staffer of ODC 52 landed at ODA 574’s location.²³¹

5 December: A misguided JDAM landed in the middle of ODA 574’s position killing three and wounding nine ODA members, as well as killing and wounding a multitude of Afghan militia. Karzai received minor wounds.²³² Master Sergeant Jeff Davis, Sergeant First Class Dan Petithory

and Staff Sergeant Cody Prosser died in the mishap. ODB 570, commanded by Major Chris Miller, was brought in immediately to support ODA 574 as were reinforcements from ODA 524.²³³

5 December: Bonn Agreement established an interim authority until a transitional authority could be established by Loya Jirga in June.²³⁴ Additionally, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) was established to help the Afghan government provide security in the Kabul area.²³⁵ Their charter would later expand to include all of Afghanistan.

7 December: Khandahar fell. Gul Agha Sherzai, former governor of Kandahar, seized the governor's palace in Kandahar. On 9 December Karzai entered Kandahar.

12 December: 10th Mountain Division Headquarters, commanded by Major General Franklin "Buster" Hagenbeck assumed duties as the Commander, CFLCC Forward at Karshi Khanabad.²³⁶

22 December: Hamid Karzai was sworn in as Afghanistan's Chairman, interim administration.

4 January 2002: Sergeant First Class Nathan Ross Chapman with the 1st SFG became the first American soldier to be killed in combat by the enemy in the war in Afghanistan while serving with CIA Team Hotel. In 2015, the CIA acknowledged Sergeant First Class Chapman's Service with the CIA as a carved star on the Agency Wall of Honor.

15 February: C2 of Anaconda forces assumed by CJTF Mountain under the command of 10th Mountain Division Commander, General Hagenbeck.²³⁷

2–19 March: Operation Anaconda²³⁸

1 May: 1st Battalion, 3rd SFG began to train the first battalion of recruits for the Afghan National Army (ANA).

June 2002: Karzai was chosen as the Interim President of a Transitional Administration by a Loya Jirga, a traditional Afghan assembly.

Which of the Events Constituted Transition?

The transition consisted of a multitude of events. First of all, what were the criteria for ending the UW mission? There are several candidates.

The Definition of UW. UW is defined as:

Activities conducted to enable a resistance movement or insurgency to coerce, disrupt, or overthrow a government or occupying power

by operating through or with an underground, auxiliary, and guerilla force in a denied area. Also called UW.²³⁹

The overthrow of the Taliban government was technically accomplished when the Northern Alliance captured the capital, Kabul, on 13 November 2001, but arguably more significant was the Pashtun anti-Taliban forces capture of Kandahar on 7 December 2001.

Unfortunately, the definition only marks the beginning of the transition phase.

UW Pocket Guide. The pocket guide characterizes the transition as a shift in mindset “from defeating the adversary regime to protecting the newly installed government and its security personnel from insurgency, lawlessness, and subversion by former regime elements.”²⁴⁰ Trying to use “mindset” as a metric for transition is difficult, but doctrine provides some guidance.

Doctrine Meets Reality. Specifically, figure 18 from Joint Publication 3-05: “Relationship Between Special Operations and Irregular Warfare” figuratively reflects that shift from UW to FID, COIN, and stability operations to support a nation-state.²⁴¹ So, when did that happen?

Briscoe, in *Weapon of Choice*,²⁴² dates the “Campaign in Transition” as a period from 8 December 2001 to 28 February 2002.²⁴³ 8 December 2001 was the day after Kandahar fell and the day that 5th SFG soldiers raised the American flag over the U.S. Embassy in Kabul. He doesn’t specifically indicate the significance of 28 February, but it generally coincides with the period that Major General Hagenbeck, Commander of the 10th Mountain Division and CFLCC Forward, assumed command of CJTF Mountain on 15 February 2002 and all forces participating in Operation Anaconda.

This shifting of the primary mission from SOF to CF became evident

8 December 2001 was the day after Kandahar fell and the day that 5th SFG soldiers raised the American flag over the U.S. Embassy in Kabul.

on 2 March with Operation Anaconda directed at a major concentration of “terrorists” in the Shahi Kowt Valley in eastern Afghanistan.²⁴⁴ It was at this point that the character of the campaign started to change from SOF to conventional.²⁴⁵ Although SOF played a significant

role, the proportion of SOF to CF changed significantly when compared to earlier operations that saw very little, if any, CF participation.²⁴⁶

According to President Bush:

Operation Anaconda marked the end of the opening phase of the battle. Like any war, our campaign in Afghanistan had not gone perfectly. But in six months, we had removed the Taliban from power, destroyed the al-Qaeda training camps, liberated more than twenty-six million people from unspeakable brutality, allowed Afghan girls to return to school and laid the foundation for a democratic society to emerge.²⁴⁷

After the conclusion of Operation ANACONDA, Task Force Dagger and Task Force K-Bar stood down (deactivated) and the CJSOTF-Afghanistan, built around the 3rd Special Forces Group, was stood up (activated). Although the UW mission was on-going in some parts of the country, it started its transition to FID and expanded its strategic reconnaissance mission as it capitalized on the influx and supported the expansion of the CF role. Its priority was to establish the Kabul Military Academy—a critical component for increasing the Afghan government’s ability to provide security to the people of Afghanistan.²⁴⁸ On 1 May, the 1st Battalion, 3rd SFG began to train the first battalion of recruits for the ANA.

Discussion/Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to talk about transition. However, before starting that discussion, the chapter talked about the campaign in the south because transition speaks to the whole of Afghanistan and not just the north. The fight in the south is important because of its relevance to the defeat of the Taliban and al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, the transition from UW to FID and the standup of an Afghanistan government.

First, what was the U.S. national objective? According to the President’s 7 October 2001 address to the nation the objective of the attack was to “disrupt the use of Afghanistan as a terrorist base of operations, and to attack the military capability of the Taliban regime.”²⁴⁹

In order to do that, the President approved the CIA’s plan to insert CIA operatives followed by SOF to work with and through indigenous forces to defeat the Taliban and al-Qaeda. As an example, ODA 595’s mission was:

ODA 595 conducts Unconventional Warfare (UW) in support of General Dostum in order to render UW operational area unsafe for Taliban and terrorist organizations.²⁵⁰

What constitutes transition? Militarily there were two parts. The first is the defeat of the Taliban/terrorist military capability in the country, as well as the overthrow of the Taliban government. That essentially occurred on 7 December with the capture of Kandahar and through March with the ouster of overt elements of Taliban and al-Qaeda from eastern Afghanistan. Second, the transition from UW, i.e., supporting a resistance to overthrow the government or occupying, to FID, COIN and or stability operations to support a nation-state against an insurgency, resistance, or terrorists. That occurred from February to June 2002, as the mission of SOF changed and as CF and C2 became dominant.

Politically, that transition occurred when Hamid Karzai was sworn in as Afghanistan's Chairman, Interim Administration on 22 December 2001—this was a UN recognized body to administer the affairs of Afghanistan, and more significantly, in June 2002 when Karzai was elected as the president of the transitional administration by a Loya Jirga, a traditional Afghan assembly.

Chapter 6. Discussion: Successes, Failures, and Implications²⁵¹

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss topics and themes of importance to teachers in terms of the discussion, successes, failures, and implications. Much of this is a consolidation of material from documents published earlier by the authors.

Discussion

This initial section addresses some of the earlier contentions that may not fit nicely into the following sections on successes, failures, and implications. It includes topics such as, “Was the battle for Mazar-e Sharif ‘unconventional warfare,’” that is, does it fit into the current doctrinal lexicon, in particular the UW definition and its phases. The second concerns the importance of Mazar, “Was the victory at Mazar-e Sharif key to the downfall of the Taliban?” The third topic has surfaced in recent years: “Who is/was a Horse Soldier?”

Mazar-e Sharif: A Case Study in UW

Despite there being only U.S. Army doctrine and no published joint doctrine specifically for UW until September 2015, there were enough guiding principles to succeed.²⁵²

One of the monograph objectives was to look at doctrine today and assess its applicability and relevance to the early events in OEF and particularly the battle for Mazar-e Sharif. Since the current Joint Publication 3-05.1 Unconventional Warfare contains sensitive information, this monograph relied on less specific public releasable information to make that assessment. The first example is the definition of UW:

Activities conducted to enable a resistance movement or insurgency to coerce, disrupt, or overthrow a government or occupying power by operating through or with an underground, auxiliary, and guerrilla force in a denied area. Also called UW.²⁵³

It is also interesting to note that the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2016 defines UW as:

activities conducted to enable a resistance movement or insurgency to coerce, disrupt, or overthrow a government or occupying power by operating through or with an underground, auxiliary, or guerrilla force in a denied area.²⁵⁴

Note the singular difference between the two is the use of the conjunction “or” rather than “and” making this a moot point, but to be consistent this monograph will use the current DOD version. The question is, in today’s terms does the battle for Mazar—and generally the period of September 2001 to June 2002—meet the definition? Some parts are easy. As an example, “to coerce, disrupt or overthrow a government or occupying power.” Certainly, the battle for Mazar-e Sharif contributed to the overthrow of the Taliban Government. “Activities conducted to enable a resistance movement;” absolutely: advice and assistance, firepower, logistics to include lethal aid. Was it a denied area? Again, absolutely.

“By operating through or with an underground, auxiliary, and guerrilla force.” There is no question about the “guerrilla force.” However, there have been questions about the operating “through or with an underground and auxiliary.”

Human Factors Considerations of Undergrounds and Insurgencies characterizes an underground as:

A clandestine organization established to operate in areas denied to the armed or public components or conduct operations not suitable for the armed or public components.²⁵⁵

The same publication characterizes an auxiliary as:

The support element of the irregular organization whose organization and operations are clandestine in nature and whose members do not openly indicate their sympathy or involvement with the irregular movement. Members of the auxiliary are more likely to be occasional participants of the insurgency with other full-time occupation.²⁵⁶

As examples of each, USASOC’s *Unconventional Warfare Pocket Guide* lists intelligence networks for underground and intelligence collection for auxiliary.²⁵⁷

A great example of the auxiliary as well as the underground is the clandestine intelligence network the Northern Alliance set up throughout the north and extended into the Pashtun areas that provided both low (part-time) and significant (high level) support.²⁵⁸ In 2002, two of the authors interviewed General Habib Bullah. Habib was part of that network and one of General Dostum's principal sources in Mazar-e Sharif. He rose to the rank of Taliban commander and finally (physically) defected in the Darya Suf during one of General Dostum's engagements with the Taliban. During our interview, he mapped the Taliban military organization in the north. There were a number of other Afghans that spotted Taliban and Pakistani movement through the Balkh River Valley and passed that information from ridgeline to ridgeline (line of site ICOM) to General Dostum who was located in the Darya Suf.

The ODA may not have controlled those efforts, but they worked with them and were beneficiaries of those efforts.

Was the Victory at Mazar-e Sharif Key to the Downfall of the Taliban?

Clearly President Bush, as mentioned earlier, thought Mazar-e Sharif was pivotal to the downfall of the Taliban. General Franks stressed the importance of Mazar-e Sharif as well as Dostum's commitment to the fight. As stated previously, Mazar-e Sharif provided a land bridge to Central Asia, a heavy lift airfield to transport supplies, vehicles and troops, and it dominated the lines of communications across the north. Additionally, General Franks had confidence in General Dostum as one of the principal Afghan commanders, and much less respect for Fahim Kahn. As such he devoted resources first to General Dostum and the fight for Mazar-e Sharif. In hindsight this strategy (to take Mazar-e Sharif first) and confidence (in General Dostum) proved even more important than originally planned. Not only did General Dostum prove himself to be the leader they needed in the north, his dramatic and rapid success spurred a reluctant (some might say "recalcitrant") Fahim Kahn. That is, Fahim realized he had better start progressing in the Panjshir or risk humiliation should General Dostum exploit success, bypass him (Fahim Kahn), and move towards Kabul on his own.²⁵⁹

But not everyone held that view. Gary Schroen was convinced that a victory in Mazar-e Sharif would not break the back of the Taliban. According to him, the key event rested with Fahim Khan in the Panjshir. Other dissenters included J.R., the leader of CIA Team Alpha. According to him, "the defeat

of the Taliban in Kabul, Jalalabad and Qandahar had far more to do with the overall collapse of the regime and the end of AQ [al-Qaeda] operations in Afghanistan [than did the success of the campaign in Northern Central Afghanistan].”

Unfortunately, it misses the point if each battle/victory is looked at individually—that is, if they are assessed out-of-context of the other events. “Face validity” would tell us that the subsequent rapidity of surrenders following the liberation of Mazar-e Sharif on 10 November had a major effect: The immediate surrenders of Taliban forces in Bamian in the central region, Taloqan in the north and Herat in the west, and on 12 and 13 November Northern Alliance forces entered Kabul. Jalalabad in the east fell on 14 November.²⁶⁰ A major part of Taliban surrenders was certainly psychological. They were clearly afraid of General Dostum’s prowess and the devastating effects of the bombardment both impact and accuracy that was displayed during the battle of Mazar-e Sharif.²⁶¹

As Grenier and Schroen indicated, most of the Taliban forces were in the north, because that is where most of the enemy was located—ethnically-based and militarily-organized and resourced. They could take care of the Pashtun tribes in the south with minimal forces, if as Grenier hoped for the Taliban forces committed to the north were either killed, captured, fixed, (unable to move) or fled. His concern was whether or not those that fled would flee south to reinforce efforts against rising Pashtun anti-Taliban forces in the south, such as those led by Karzai. Fortunately, in many cases that did not happen as evidenced by Mullahs Fazl and Noori’s capture in the north.

Who Were the Horse Soldiers?

Success has many fathers. - General Franks²⁶²

The title “Horse Soldier” became widely publicized in the movie “12-Strong” released in January 2018 that was based on Doug Stanton’s 2009 book, “Horse Soldiers.” The book itself was a bestseller, but the movie, with stars such as Chris Hemsworth and Michael Shannon exponentially increased its popularity by appealing to the moviegoers.²⁶³

Who are the horse soldiers? In Stanton’s book they were introduced as the “small band of Special Forces soldiers who secretly entered Afghanistan following 9/11 and rode to war on horses against the Taliban ... and after a

series of intense battles, captured the city of Mazar-e Sharif [on 9-10 November 2001].”²⁶⁴ In the opinion of this author, that is very close.

To the other extreme, some staffers have allegedly claimed the horse soldiery title in partnership with the Northern Alliance when their service was in support of the Pashtun south (an anathema to the Northern Alliance) after the big battles where they may have ridden horses more as a novelty than a requirement. The interesting aspect is, they, in most cases are respected heroes in their own right and don’t need another badge of bravery.

So how does this monograph define “horse soldiers?” Not perfect but, “Those Americans REQUIRED (not those that merely opted) to ride horses in combat.” In the case of ODA 595, it was because the Taliban owned the roads, as well as the SUV capable off-road areas. Clearly the trails to General Dostum’s mountain headquarters, Chapchal/Beshcam, Tigers 02 Bravo and Charlie areas, the Tiangi and others, were horseback or boots only areas. It included ODA 534 and ODC 53. Although the title says “soldiers,” this also included airmen and CIA team members were required to ride horseback to complete the mission.

In the opinion of these authors, and arguably millions of other people, both the movie and the book are “close enough” to the story line to make great entertainment. This monograph does not fault commercial media (authors and movie script writers) for including compelling stories that may not completely reflect the ground truth—that’s expected because their objectives are different from those of trainers and educators. But it does caution teachers in their selection of material for the classroom to ensure students learn the right lessons. It also questions the motives of those that, after-the-fact embrace the romantic narratives offered by the storytellers and subsequently overstep their contributions by attempting to squeeze into the in-group where they are not legitimately entitled.²⁶⁵

Successes

Overall, the operation was a success—certainly not without pain and challenges—but overall, extremely successful. There were limitations—embedded throughout this section—and failures discussed in the next section.

Intelligence

The first success was the CIA’s insistence on maintaining and developing contacts in Afghanistan, particularly as they related to Osama bin Laden.

Without that, none of this might have occurred. The second was President Bush’s approval of the MON to conduct UW “designed to disrupt the use of Afghanistan as a terrorist base of operations, and to attack the military capability of the Taliban regime.”

Trautman’s follow-up work in subsequent years to document the shortcomings and suggest improvements in SOF intelligence, was instrumental in improving forward deployed ISR direct support as well as SOF HUMINT capabilities.²⁶⁶

Another area for intelligence exploration, particularly for a different perspective, is SOF contact with the business and expatriate communities. Post mission, Captain Mark had the opportunity to interview “Harley,” an American businessman who had visited the Northern Afghanistan region, had known and frequently spoke to General Dostum prior to 9/11 and more frequently in the immediate days afterwards. Harley was extensively interviewed by reportedly DIA personnel, providing information from General Dostum on the friendly and enemy situation—insight that would have been invaluable to 595 prior to their insertion but was not shared with TF Dagger J-2. Arriving in Afghanistan, General Dostum repeatedly stated to Mark, “I’ve explained things to Harley, why have you not spoken with him?” Tapping the business and expatriate world is another avenue into expanding the SOF network and perspective.²⁶⁷

UW Capabilities and SOF Partnerships²⁶⁸

As they linked up and trained with anti-Taliban forces, they learned from their new allies about the realities of war on Afghan soil, and they assisted the Afghans with weapons, with supplies, with food, with tactics and training. And they helped plan the attack on Mazar [Mazar-e Sharif]. - Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld²⁶⁹

This sub-paragraph details how small, agile U.S. ground force teams (CIA and SOF) worked with committed indigenous forces to train, equip, plan, and subsequently synchronize precision fires and ground-force maneuvers to defeat the Taliban and al-Qaeda. The U.S. ground forces each provided unique capabilities that consisted of the following:

- CIA paramilitary teams to lay the groundwork for the ODA arrival, closely coordinated Afghan services, and provided incentives for continuing indigenous support.²⁷⁰

- The ODA unit itself—a 12-soldier team of experts in various combat disciplines—was cross-trained to enhance independent operations, language-qualified, and culturally-focused to live, work, and fight with and train indigenous forces.
- Air Force Combat Controller and ETAC personnel enhanced and expanded the ODA 595's close-air support capabilities.

Mazar-e Sharif demonstrated the benefit of highly trained military forces capable of executing all aspects of UW.

Trust and Interdependence—A Measure of Jointness and Combined Operations²⁷¹

Interdependence and trust were critical for Mazar-e Sharif. Without any one of the following elements, the mission would not have succeeded: CIA paramilitary teams, SOF, Northern Alliance, tanker aircraft, fighter and bomber aircraft of all Services, long-range communications, effective C2, and logistics.

- CIA paramilitary teams were necessary to lay the groundwork for ODA arrival, closely coordinate Afghan services, and provide incentives for continuing indigenous support.²⁷²
- Trust within the SOF (three-man) cells, as well as trust across the larger team was evident and crucial—it meant the survival of all members.
- The ODA members demonstrated an unprecedented level of trust in the Northern Alliance forces—team members were warned during mission preparation that they could die during insertion due to duplicity on the part of General Dostum. They instead found him supportive of the U.S. presence and willing to work hard to integrate U.S. capabilities into his plan of action.
- Northern Alliance trust in the United States—committing forces on the ground to fight alongside Northern Alliance forces, ensuring supplies of needed lethal aid were delivered and coordinating for precision strikes from the air helped generate confidence in U.S. commitment. The measure of that trust was demonstrated by Commander Ahmed Khan's forces charging objectives on 5 November with only 10 rounds of ammunition per man—aid had been delivered early that morning but had not reached his forces in time for the attack. Trust in

the timing and accuracy of precision munitions—ground forces used them closer to friendlies and against different targets than in previous contingencies. The result was maximum effect and little collateral damage.

- Trust by the strike pilots that the tankers were going to be there to refuel them—the combined air operations center, on-scene AWACS aircraft, and tankers themselves did a phenomenal job maintaining that support—there was not one incident of fuel exhaustion.
- Almost-too-late-logistics—the United States successfully delivered the minimum needed to operate: cold-weather gear for Tiger 02A, lethal aid for General Dostum for 5 November, batteries for radios, unique items such as cash, horse feed and saddles, and food—in 3 weeks the ODA members lost an average of 20 pounds per man with their allies having even less food than they did. Logistics, getting what you asked for and needed in this environment was an extreme challenge.²⁷³

Developing Partnerships

ODA 595 trained an Uzbek airborne brigade and Uzbek Spetsnaz during Centrazbat 2000. These special forces exercises are conducted today under the Joint Combined Exchange Training (JCET) program, and they are extremely useful in developing the experience of our forces in other countries, as well as developing the foreign country as a potential base for future operations. This relationship proved valuable as the United States later developed basing rights and other tactical, operational, and strategic support arrangements with Uzbekistan. Without basing arrangements to support a northern campaign, the capture of Mazar-e Sharif, Northern Afghanistan, and ultimately all of Afghanistan would not have happened as quickly as it did and may not have happened at all.²⁷⁴

Long-Range, Persistent Air Power

A major contributor to the outcome was the U.S. ability to project combat power through the air at long distances. Airborne tanker operations enabled the extension of air power from distant land and sea bases to the remote Mazar-e Sharif battle area in Northern Afghanistan. Adequate refueling capabilities permitted extended on-station times for fighters and bombers and resulted in responsive on-call fires against emergent targets in support of General Dostum's forces.

OEF-A saw unprecedented fighter mission lengths, with four to six aerial refuelings for Navy fighters as the norm. During the operation, positioning the refueling tracks and monitoring available fuel became a major task for the air control elements, both at the Combined Air Operations Center, where tankers and available fuel were logged on the main controller activity logs and on board the AWACS aircraft. In addition, the tankers themselves worked to consolidate fuel on the larger carriers to extend refueling potential beyond the daily tasking plan. The availability of fuel enabled dynamic re-tasking of the strike aircraft to quickly support ground forces in contact with the enemy.

Precision Munitions

Precision munitions enabled relatively few aircraft sorties to accomplish the required level of destruction in support of General Dostum's forces. The limited access for basing strike aircraft in proximity to the battle for Mazar-e Sharif meant constrained availability in the number of fighters and bombers over the battlefield. However, the precision munitions delivered by the limited numbers of available aircraft accomplished the desired effects in a way that would not have been possible with less accurate munitions.

Compared to 30 percent usage in Kosovo and 7 percent in Operation Desert Storm, precision munitions accounted for 66 percent of all munitions dropped in Afghanistan. Post-conflict reporting indicates that JDAM achieved a greater-than-expected accuracy while the Wind-Corrected Munitions Dispenser (WCMD) was impressive in its first combat test. In the Campaign for Mazar-e Sharif, the WCMD was the only munition available in an early operation, and it was employed against an advancing Taliban force of military vehicles and infantry. The result was several hundred enemy troops killed, with their vehicles destroyed. Given the known availability of precision weapons, the operators themselves imposed restraints on their use to ensure that enough were available to handle potential surge requirements.²⁷⁵

While the value of precision munitions was underlined in the Mazar-e Sharif campaign, the munitions themselves were of little value without a precise, all-weather targeting capability. In the battles for Mazar-e Sharif, there were times when SOF had obtained Taliban position coordinates because they had reconnoitered the positions ahead of time or had the coordinates from previous engagements. Additionally, the use of "kill boxes," as an example, in the Balkh Valley—authorities provided these boxes to pilots to

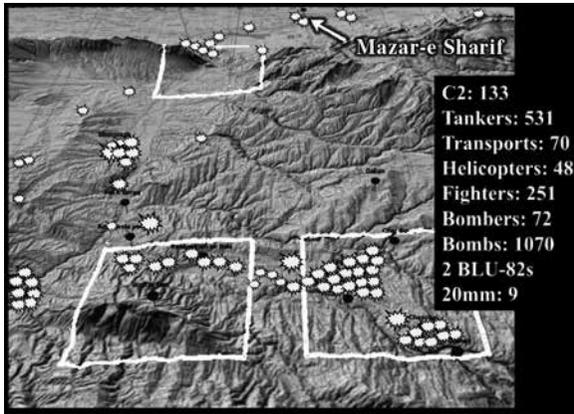


Figure 17. Number of sorties supporting the battle or Mazar from 23 October to 9 November 2001. Source: Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA)/used with permission

strike when sensors detected convoys in the area—were very helpful.²⁷⁶ In most cases, however, if they did not have real-time eyes on targets, they were not able to employ the precision weapons.

Logistics

Department of the Army suddenly got this request from some crazy captain in the field wanting American saddles and horse feed and other unique items. - Captain Mark, Commander ODA 595²⁷⁷

Of course, we didn't know at the time why they needed Western saddles or horse feed. Our job was just to get it; later, when we saw photographs of US soldiers making a charge on horseback, we said, 'Oh, that's why!'" - Major Ray Jensen, Chief OEF-A Cell²⁷⁸

During the early months of OEF-A, SOF, and CIA paramilitary forces spearheaded operations with local indigenous forces, the ground war was supplied by the OEF-A cell in Kaiserslautern, Germany. This cell comprised a dozen or so soldiers and Army civilians from the 200th Material Management Center, 21st Theater Support Command. The OEF-A cell's mission was to locate, obtain, and prepare for delivery those unique items of equipment the CIA and SOF needed to perform their missions.

The first challenge was to set up an operation to provide responsive logistical support to forces outside the conventional system. For example, the OEF-A cell had bought and shipped almost 2 million pounds of wheat and

93,000 blankets for humanitarian relief, along with the tons of equipment and supplies to keep the military operation going.²⁷⁹

Lethal aid was supplied by airdrop in limited quantity, capability, and scale that included small arms, mortars, and RPG's with ammunition to support employment. Just enough to sprinkle to different militia groups, allow their engagement and defeat of enemy units. Wherein battlefield resupply could then further boost resistance force capabilities.

Nonlethal aid was also airdropped in the form of cold weather gear including battle dress uniform pattern Gortex uniforms. These items, supplied in quantity, helped identify friendly militias from foe and greatly improved their ability to operate in the cold weather mountain environment.

Medical aid was supplied to aid the team's SF medic "Dr. Steve" with aspects of UW medicine. The priority remained to treat and stabilize any potentially wounded Americans, but additionally, worked very closely with an Afghan medical doctor and local personnel identified as a small medical unit which enhanced their ability to provide battlefield trauma care and handle the mass casualties. Medical supplies, litters, and surgical equipment were airdropped. The 595 team members were cross-trained enough to help with triage of casualties and assist with procedures. Casualties were left behind in villages under the care of a supportive local family. Later these casualties were brought to the clinics and hospitals in Mazar-e Sharif where coalition SOF partners—the French and Jordanians—would supervise those medical personnel. Wounded resistance leaders were not authorized to be evacuated out of country for additional care. This effort and capability crude by American standards was essential to boosting Afghan morale not only of the resistance but the local populace.

The second challenge was to transition this unique operation over to the conventional supply system. That challenge included sustaining the forces to ensure their continued effectiveness.²⁸⁰

Sustainment requires that a number of areas be addressed: base infrastructure support, fuel and water, precision munitions, an effective transportation system, and total asset and in-transit visibility to ensure responsiveness of the system.

Ground Forward Air Controller Equipment and Procedures

SOF Ground Forward Air Controller capabilities such as target-location devices and communications, dramatically influenced the outcome of the

initial operations. However advanced these systems may have been over conventional force capabilities, they needed improvement.

The team noted that the accuracy of GPS-based targeting devices was generally good enough in many situations. In other cases, the systems served only to get a strike aircraft's onboard sensors on the target so that those sensors could refine attack calculations. In addition, the family of smaller bombs under development will require greater target location accuracy.

In this campaign, the poor quality of encrypted communications was a significant limitation. In many cases, secure communication between pilots and ground forward air controllers was difficult or impossible to establish.

Target coordinates had to be passed by voice communications—a situation that increases the probability of error in transfer. The B-1 and B-52 currently require 51 “switch hits” per weapon for manual target entry. Direct feed-through by digitizing this process is well within the capability of current technology.

In addition, the Services use different referent/reference systems. For example, the Navy required Degrees decimal Degrees, the Air Force needed Degrees Minutes and Seconds, and the Army operates off the Military Grid Reference Systems.

Mapping programs need to support contingencies. During the battle for Mazar-e Sharif a variety of maps were used, all inadequate for targeting. Initially, Evasion Charts and 1:250K Joint Operations Graphics were used. Later, once into an urban environment and utilizing a team safe house, the 1:100K tactical map became available (even later some had the Russian 1:50K map sheet but not for Mazar-e Sharif). The 1:250K map presented some obvious problems when trying to estimate ranges and altitudes for precision strikes. The National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency and others were working diligently to overcome this shortfall and provide the needed imagery and mapping resources.

Motivated Indigenous Forces: Fire and Maneuver

In an environment where the remoteness of the country and lack of nearby staging bases combined with political imperatives to limit the number of U.S. forces introduced on the ground, the brunt of the ground fighting fell to the Northern Alliance. Air power was able to quickly eliminate fixed military infrastructure in Afghanistan, but the imperative of positive identification limited its capability in follow-on attacks against Taliban and al-Qaeda

defensive positions, many of which were underground or merged with the civilian population. In this environment, General Dostum's Northern Alliance activity to the south of Mazar-e Sharif caused the Taliban to deploy forces into the Darya Suf to block his advance but thereby concentrate in ways that could be exploited by precision air strikes directed by SOF on the ground. The synergistic effect of precision fire from the air and maneuver on the ground worked both ways, since the application of air strikes set the conditions for General Dostum to overrun the Taliban in their defensive locations. The close-in fighting that ensued at Bai Beche, Chapchal, and Baluch demonstrated that fire and maneuver are complementary and that both were required to defeat a determined adversary. In this case, General Dostum, a seasoned and experienced combat leader, provided a motivated maneuver force.

General Dostum was unique in his ability to take early aggressive action against the enemy forces, particularly when compared to other Northern Alliance commanders. The combination of fire by air power and aggressive maneuver by the Northern Alliance—and specifically the tactics, techniques, and procedures adopted by General Dostum such as bounding overwatch, or those developed and employed by his forces such as swarming—led directly to the defeat of the Taliban.

There were also benefits to being on horseback. Horseback speed and mobility gave General Dostum's forces an all-weather, day or night capability. Additionally, in that rugged terrain they had the freedom to go off-road, while the enemy was equipped with motorized, armored and mechanized vehicles mostly limited to the roads and fuel depots or self-deployed with fuel.

General Dostum's forces were greatly outnumbered and comparatively out-equipped/out-gunned, without significant numbers of military or civilian transportation available nor the fuel for sustained operations. However, horses gave them the ability to remain safely out of range of the Taliban armor and artillery. Using the terrain to conduct extended long range patrols, demonstrating employment and use of tactical formations—advanced guard, main body, flanking elements—horses provided the ability to quickly disperse and consolidate rapidly in an area to launch surprise attacks versus the enemy.

Horseback speed and mobility gave General Dostum's forces an all-weather, day or night capability.

Limitations included inadequate forage and grain to sustain the animals and the lack of veterinary care except that provided by the SF medics; in fact, they were malnourished compared to Captain Nutsch's experience with American horses.

In the absence of U.S. ground forces and leadership, effective employment of indigenous forces depends on the motivation and capabilities of their commanders. In the battle for Mazar-e Sharif, General Dostum provided the appropriate leadership, maneuvering his forces effectively and leveraging available U.S. air power to maximize combined-force effectiveness. His willingness to conduct operations against more heavily armed defenders caused the Taliban to concentrate and then yield to General Dostum's Northern Alliance as he capitalized on the effects of air power by quickly maneuvering his forces to overrun Taliban positions. The associated Northern Alliance forces and ODA 595 are largely credited with destroying the Taliban army of the north.

Boots on the Ground

Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, emphasized the extraordinary difference that "boots on the ground" contributed to the fight compared to "airpower only," which was used early in the campaign.

General Atta was more emphatic about the need for boots and eyes on the ground—not only were the bombs not hitting the right targets (without boots and eyes on the ground), not hitting the right targets was demoralizing for his troops and supported the Taliban efforts

You have been bombing for 15 days but you have not captured any significant areas yet. This would have a negative impact on the soul, the morale of my soldiers. This would have been a positive impact for the al-Qaeda and Taliban. Even at the political level, politicians from this country who were once quiet, were now against the strategy [airpower alone] used by the Americans.²⁸¹

Although the merits of boots on the ground seem obvious, the topic warrants special consideration whenever the policymakers (and airpower pundits) consider the attributes and shortcomings of trying to win with airpower alone.

The Strategy: Mazar-e Sharif

General Franks' strategy to take Mazar-e Sharif first despite conflicting suggestions by CIA, particularly the NALT who didn't recognize Mazar-e Sharif as one of the major fronts, was instrumental to success. Additionally, Franks' trust in General Dostum, despite Schroen's contention that "the key [to victory in the north] rested with General Fahim's fighters," was validated as General Dostum's forces liberated Mazar-e Sharif with General Fahim Kahn making little to no headway in the Panjshir.²⁸²

Failures

As indicated above, overall this was a major success, however, there were challenging moments. They are discussed below:

Intelligence: Outside the Intelligence Failures Cited in the 9/11 Commission Report. The CIA's failure to inform the DOD, specifically Task Force Dagger's intelligence staff, of the conditions in Northern Afghanistan and specifically for ODA 595, of General Dostum's background until the night before they inserted is clearly a failure. Having said that, the link-up and brief by the CIA to the ODA the night before was extremely beneficial.

The DOD/DIA was out of their league in making predictions on conditions for which they had no sources and no experience. As indicated by Tenet, the day before Mazar-e Sharif was liberated, DIA was predicting that it would not fall and that the forces would be spending the winter in wait for spring offensive.

There was no intelligence support forward with the ground teams. Despite Special Operations Teams Alpha in existence at the time, as was the Raven unmanned aerial system, SOF had no intelligence support located forward with the teams. Colonel Mulholland complained that he was blind on the ground except for intelligence that was provided by the ODA (mostly from General Dostum).

Trautman documents a number of intelligence issues associated with support to SOF in OEF in his *Tip of the Spear* monograph,²⁸³ but as indicated in the previous section, he also provides suggestions on how to correct those issues.

Interagency at the National Level CIA/DOD. Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld’s fixation with who was in charge and Iraq were obvious distractions for Tenet and the rest of the staff.

Intra-CIA Conflicts. The “CTC-vs-Islamabad, Northern Alliance-vs-southern strategy dynamic” was the most apparent rift in the CIA ranks and had the potential of sabotaging efforts in the south. First, Robert Grenier, chief of station in Islamabad, found it unusual that “deskbound headquarters case-officers” would take charge of contacts in the north and run the northern operation when that was normally the domain of the closest and most relevant embassy since none existed in Afghanistan (in this case it would most likely come from Tajikistan or Uzbekistan). He also found it frustrating that the CTC/SO was trying to make it appear that Karzai was part of the Northern Alliance. In a CIA report that stated that the Northern Alliance had captured Tarin Kowt, Grenier called it a “political anathema in the south if Karzai is seen as a member of the Northern Alliance.”²⁸⁴

Additionally, according to Grenier, Crumpton was trying to enforce the Jawbreaker model in the south by deploying teams into Afghanistan without SOF support, that is to bring in SOF later. He asserted that model would be acceptable in the north where the CIA teams had indigenous force protection from the Northern Alliance, but not so in the south where they had no dominant friendly indigenous force for security and no sanctuary areas—those CIA teams in the south needed the protection of the military.²⁸⁵

Implications

This is another type of war, new in its intensity, ancient in its origin—war by guerrillas, subversives, insurgents, assassins; war by ambush instead of by combat, by infiltration instead of aggression, seeking victory by eroding and exhausting the enemy instead of engaging him. - President John F. Kennedy²⁸⁶

Some previous actions such as lessons, training, and education were on target. This was not the first time (nor last) that the U.S. would conduct UW. Despite the inexperience of the Services in UW as they entered OEF, they successfully adapted. So many things worked right. It is surprising that it took until 2015 to publish joint doctrine on UW, but proponents within

DOD were the U.S. Army, and within the Army—it was the only branch qualified to conduct UW—special forces.

Although seemingly few and far between, UW operations were conducted in the past deliberately by the OSS and Allied forces in Europe and China. It was emphasized by President Kennedy in 1962 and implemented in Vietnam, Laos, South America, Afghanistan, Kurdistan, etc. Most recently these techniques have been employed against the Syrian government and as counter-ISIS efforts.

This UW response to 9/11 was a major deviation from the “American Way of War” and may not have been pursued without the excellent preparatory work and persistence of the CIA, as well as the political will demonstrated by President George W. Bush and the lack of other options.

Within the U.S. intelligence community, it reinforced the importance of HUMINT, and within the SOF community—particularly USASOC and the potential of UW as they incorporated a fourth battalion within their groups called the “Jedburghs” to focus on UW.

This monograph is not going to expound on the importance of training/educating the force on irregular warfare, it only needs to reflect on the Russian’s operations in Europe as it works towards recreating those buffer zones it knew as the Soviet Union, as an example, Georgia and Ukraine.

Although this type of warfare is not new, as indicated by President Kennedy in 1962, it has once again become “new in its intensity ... war by guerillas, subversives, insurgents, assassins; war by ambush instead of by combat, by infiltration instead of aggression, seeking victory by eroding and exhausting the enemy instead of engaging him.”²⁸⁷

Chapter 7. Summary

At 2 a.m. local time on 20 October 2001 (2130 Zulu, 19 October 2001), ODA 595 landed at helicopter landing zone Albatross in Dehi, Afghanistan, 60 miles south of Mazar-e Sharif. Their mission:

ODA 595 conducts Unconventional Warfare (UW) in support of GEN Dostum in order to render UW operational area unsafe for Taliban and terrorist organizations.²⁸⁸

As Captain Nutsch's detachment stepped off the MH-47E Chinook special operations helicopter, General Dostum's forces and CIA Team Alpha greeted them. This linkup would begin the 3-week ground and air operations to capture Mazar-e Sharif, leading to the fall of the north, and eventually Afghanistan.

The victory at Mazar-e Sharif is legendary. The CIA and special forces linked with the Northern Alliance—a 19th century indigenous force—on horseback and directed precision weapons from the air to defeat the Taliban.

The battle, hailed as transformational by Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, was key to the Coalition force victory in the north and ultimately all of Afghanistan. While many recall the image of American SOF fighting from the backs of Afghan horses, this monograph enhances our understanding of the various aspects of this novel campaign and provides important lessons.

Those lessons highlight: (1) The interdependencies among the indigenous forces, SOF, air operations, and other government agencies; (2) The power of small adaptable units integrating joint/coalition capabilities; and (3) That doctrine is about right: unique enough to be SOF, but general and flexible enough to be applicable to changing conditions and future environments.

This monograph sorts through and analyzes those contentions, finds much more success than failure as well as implications for the future, in particular how these seemingly unique innovations address larger doctrinal issues.

Although the centerpiece of this monograph is the story of ODA 595 and the fall of Mazar-e Sharif during the period 20 September to 10 November 2001, ultimate success required a much larger team effort: intra-service, joint, interagency, and multinational.²⁸⁹ As such, the story addressed the strategic

to tactical events and implications, and, to complete the discussion of UW phases, continues through June of 2002 with Hamid Karzai's selection as president of the transitional administration of Afghanistan.

The first part of this summary will provide critical events in the storyline. The second will address UW aspects of Mazar-e Sharif as well as events through June of 2002 to include the definition of UW and its phases. The last will summarize successes, failures, and their implications.

Getting the “Case” (in Case Study) Right: Critical Events in the Storyline

The following is a short review of the case in terms of the doctrinal phases of the UW. As stated before, those phases would vary depending on the unit employed. In this example, preparation, initial contact and transition were based on national events but could have easily been defined by the actions of each ODA. In fact, the other phases of infiltration, organization, buildup and employment are addressed from ODA 595's experiences. By doing that, i.e. discussing the storyline in terms of phases, the authors have also described the case in terms of the study, doctrinal application. So, there is an overlap here between “case” and “study.”

CIA's preparatory work in Pakistan and Afghanistan with the Northern Alliance, as well as Pashtun tribes in pursuit of Osama bin Laden and his al-Qaeda network for terrorist attacks directed against the United States in the 1990s, was critical to the planning efforts after 9/11. As Morell said, very detailed work had been completed under what was called the “Blue Sky” memorandum. From that, George Tenet was able, within days, to recommend a strategy of inserting CIA teams followed by SOF to generate support from indigenous forces and fight the Taliban and al-Qaeda. Despite the DOD's obsession with Iraq, the President approved the CIA plan (and MON) for Afghanistan on 17 September 2001.²⁹⁰ This was doctrinally, the start of the **Preparation Phase**.

On 26 September, a seven-man CIA team—the NALT—entered Afghanistan via a CIA-owned Russian helicopter and started working with the Northern Alliance, specifically General Fahim Khan and his people.²⁹¹ This doctrinally constituted the start of the **Initial Contact Phase**.

After giving the Taliban ample opportunity to turn over Osama bin Laden and cohorts, on 7 October 2001 President Bush announced the start of the war—the bombing of Afghanistan.

On 16 October, Team Alpha, the second CIA team, linked up with General Dostum south of Mazar-e Sharif.²⁹² Three days later, on 19/20 October, TF Dagger inserted two teams in Afghanistan: ODA 595 was inserted approximately 50 miles southeast of Mazar-e Sharif to link up with General Dostum and CIA Team Alpha, and ODA 555 was inserted into the Panjshir Valley to link up with General Fahim Khan and the NALT.²⁹³ This constituted the **Insertion Phase**. The next phases, **Organization and Buildup**, would go quickly. The most significant aspect for activities in the north was bringing the three factions of Uzbeks, Tajiks, and Hazaras, led respectively by General Dostum, Commander Atta, and Commander Mohaqeq, together to take Mazar-e Sharif.

That all came together during the **Employment Phase** starting on 5 November as troops and teams had deployed to battle positions to confront the Taliban, both Afghan and Pakistani. The most significant battle, per General Dostum, was the battle that centered on the small village of Baluch along Darya Suf.²⁹⁴

Captain Mark Nutsch described the moment of victory:

We broke through this [Taliban] defense on the morning of the 6th, and the horse race to Mazar-e Sharif was on.” On 9 and 10 November Mazar-e Sharif fell with Commander Atta, General Dostum and Commander Mohaqeq forces entering the city.²⁹⁵

Quickly, after Mazar-e Sharif fell, Bamian in the central region, Taloquan in the north and Herat in the west surrendered. On 12 and 13 November, Northern Alliance forces swept through the Panjshir and entered Kabul.²⁹⁶ Jalalabad in the east fell on 14 November.²⁹⁷ The north had been captured.

Although momentum and optimism generated by success in the north provided energy and resources to be devoted to the south, the conditions were much different. There were no overt anti-Taliban leaders and militias, as there had been in the north. But that was starting to change with the emergence of Hamid Karzai, the senior leader of the Popalzai tribe and Gul Agha Sherzai, former governor of Kandahar. Of the two, Karzai was by far the more credible and that credibility was boosted significantly after the battle for Tarin Kowt on 17 November 2001 which he called the “turning

point.”²⁹⁸ On 5 December, Karzai was selected as the chairman of the interim administration under the interim authority.²⁹⁹

Finally, on 7 December, Kandahar fell. The Taliban and al-Qaeda fled east. On 22 December, Hamid Karzai was sworn in as Afghanistan’s chairman. It wasn’t over yet, but the Taliban government was overthrown.

The complexion of the war in late November—from SOF supported to SOF supporting—started to transition when the CFLCC assumed lead responsibilities for the campaign.³⁰⁰ Then on 15 February 2002, CJTF Mountain assumed C2 of Operation Anaconda (conducted from 2-19 March).³⁰¹ Although led by a CF commander, it heavily depended on both SOF (advising and assisting Afghan Military Forces) and CF to clear Taliban and al-Qaeda forces out of eastern Afghanistan.³⁰² This was critical to the **transition**, where CF were in the lead and the SOF mission was transitioning from UW to FID and COIN.

In late March, Task Force Dagger and Task Force Kabar stood down and the CJSOTF-Afghanistan stood up at Bagram Airfield.³⁰³ Although the CJSOTF still had an UW mission, it started transitioning to FID and the CF role started to expand operationally and physically. In the spring, the CJSOTF established the Kabul Military Academy and on 1 May began to train the first battalion of recruits for the ANA.³⁰⁴ Hamid Karzai’s selection as the Interim President of a Transitional Administration by a Loya Jirga in June 2002 actually marked **the Transition**. This was the ousting of Taliban government and moving from UW to stability operations or FID/COIN to protect the newly-elected government from the insurgency.

Getting the “Study” (in Case Study) Right

This section looks at potential learning objectives and outcomes, that is: What can we learn from this event?

Doctrine: UW and its Phases

One of the monograph’s objectives was to look at today’s doctrine and assess its applicability and relevance to the early events in OEF and particularly the battle for Mazar-e Sharif. Is doctrine “right”?

Definition. The first assessment is the applicability of the definition of UW:

Activities conducted to enable a resistance movement or insurgency to coerce, disrupt, or overthrow a government or occupying power

by operating through or with an underground, auxiliary, and guerrilla force in a denied area. Also called UW.³⁰⁵

The question is, in today's terms: "Does the battle for Mazar-e Sharif, and generally the period of September 2001 to June 2002, meet the current definition?"³⁰⁶

Most of it is easily addressed. As an example, Activities (advice and assistance, firepower, logistics, etc.) were conducted to enable a resistance movement (Northern Alliance) to coerce, disrupt or overthrow a government (the Taliban) by operating through or with an underground, auxiliary, (the existence of an underground and auxiliary is discussed below) and guerrilla force (the Northern alliance) in a denied area (Afghanistan).

People don't see or hear about the underground and auxiliary and therefore question its existence.³⁰⁷ The authors first reaction is to say, "It's clandestine, you're not supposed to see it!!" But it's a fair question. CIA authors Schroen, Crumpton, and Grenier spoke of the Northern Alliance source network that extended into the Pashtu tribal areas.³⁰⁸ When the NALT arrived they worked very closely with Engineer Aref Sarwari, who was the head of the Northern Alliance Intelligence Service.³⁰⁹

General Dostum had his own source and auxiliary network located in Mazar-e Sharif, down the Balkh Valley and in Sheberghan where he lived. This network extended across the region in collaboration with other commanders fighting in these other Northern provinces, reporting enemy activity and movement in those areas. As part of his larger strategy General Dostum directed them to rise up and attack the Taliban in those areas to isolate Mazar-e Sharif. Team Alpha and ODA 595 were very aware of this network and its reliability. In addition to General Dostum's people, Commander Mohaqeq and the Hazaras provided transportation as well as intelligence. One of those sources, Habib Bullah who worked for General Dostum when he was a Taliban commander, spoke to the IDA/Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency interview team in November of 2002 and was able to map out the Taliban military organization in the north. General Dostum also developed a communications network of part- and full-timers that spotted and reported Taliban movement in Mazar-e Sharif and most importantly, their progress south in the Balkh River Valley towards the Darya Suf to fight General Dostum in early November.³¹⁰

The ODA may not have directly controlled clandestine intelligence networks and collection efforts, but by with and thru, they certainly worked with them, tasked them thru their associated Afghan commanders and counterparts, and were beneficiaries of their efforts and timely reporting. In turn, so was TF Dagger and USCENTCOM.

Phases. In addition to the definitions, the seven phases of UW operations as listed in the 2011 version of Joint Publication 3-05, *Unconventional Warfare* and in USASOC's 2016 *Unconventional Warfare Pocket Guide*, help frame the discussion. Those phases are: Preparation, Initial Contact, Infiltration, Organization, Buildup, Employment, and Transition.³¹¹ Although those phases have been addressed earlier in "Getting the Case right" it's important to note that progression through those phases is not necessarily synchronized, that is, depending on the conditions, one movement or even geographic area, might be in phase 2 and another in phase 4. A good example is that after 10 November when General Dostum, Commander Atta, and Commander Mohaqeq had liberated Mazar-e Sharif, ODA 595 and 534 were finishing up their employment phase (phase 6) and, ODA 574 had not yet infiltrated into the south (phase 3).

The phases, in this narrative that are generally defined holistically starting and/or ending times due to the definition of those phases, are phases 1, 2 and 7. As an example, phase 1—preparation, began on 17 September when President Bush approved the CIA plan to conduct UW. Phase 2—initial contact, occurred on 26 September when the seven-man NALT linked up with the Northern Alliance leader General Fahim Khan in the Panjshir Valley.

Phase 7—Transition—is arguably the most complex and doesn't happen at one magical moment, that is, it occurs over a period of time as SOF operations transition from supporting the insurgency to supporting a friendly nation state. During that timeframe CF became more active with command relationships between SOF and CF transitioning from supported to supporting and SOF activities transitioning within irregular warfare arena from UW to FID, COIN, CT and/or stability operations. Much of that started occurring during March of 2002, and as President Bush noted, "Operation Anaconda [2-19 March] marked the end of the opening phase of the battle ... we had removed the Taliban from power, destroyed the al-Qaeda training camps, liberated more than twenty-six million people from unspeakable brutality."³¹² During Operation Anaconda, the transitioning character of

the battlefield was evident with the major introduction of CF, changing C2 relationships, as well as the changing role of SOF. If challenged to provide a date representing the end of transition, this author would suggest 19 June 2002 when Karzai was sworn in.

Successes, Failures, and Implications

Although titled “Successes, Failures, and Implication”—it’s not that easy. There are limitations within successes; isolated, and in-and-of-themselves, they might be considered failures. Conversely, there are successes within, what might be considered failure. The following attempts to address most of the implications.

Successes. There were a number of successes:

1. CIA’s involvement in Afghanistan and Pakistan and being prepared for actions after 9/11;
2. The President and his war cabinet focusing the effort on Afghanistan despite DOD’s distraction with Iraq;
3. General Franks recognizing the importance of Mazar-e Sharif to the overall strategy, as a first victory;
4. “Successes of imagination”—as opposed to “failures of imagination” discussed in the 9/11 report, particularly at the small team level;
5. The criticality of interdependencies and trust among the indigenous forces, SOF, air operations, and other government agencies;
6. The power of small, adaptable units integrating joint/coalition capabilities. Embedded within that is the importance of relationships/alliances at the tactical through strategic levels.

Generally, UW was a success, but it is important to expand on a couple of the above areas, specifically, 3 and 5.

Number 3. Despite what appeared to be Schroen and the NALT’s propensity to champion support for Fahim Khan in the Panjshir, General Franks started with Mazar-e Sharif. Recall from an earlier chapter that Schroen didn’t recognize the Mazar areas as one of the major fronts. However, General Franks was adamant about the strategic value of Mazar-e Sharif and focused resources, particularly air, to General Dostum early in the campaign.

Number 5. Those interdependencies among the various groups were so critical that they became single points of failure. As an example—that is rarely, if ever, cited—aerial refueling. Adequate refueling capabilities permitted extended on-station times for fighters and bombers and resulted in responsive on-call fires against emergent targets in support of General Dostum’s forces. Operations, particularly in the north, saw unprecedented fighter mission lengths, with four to six aerial refuelings for Navy fighters as the norm. Additionally, the availability of fuel enabled dynamic re-tasking of the strike aircraft to quickly support ground forces in contact with the enemy. Incredible support, without any reported incident of fuel exhaustion.

Failures. Several failures are listed below; fortunately the successes by far outweighed them.

1. The CIA’s lack of coordination with DOD on intelligence
2. The DIA’s lack of intelligence on the status of indigenous force operations in Afghanistan
3. DOD’s lack of intelligence to support the teams on the ground
4. Attempts by DOD to focus national leadership on Iraq rather than the real issue in Afghanistan
5. DOD rice-bowl—demanding to be in charge
6. Intra-CIA rice bowl, to focus efforts on their “man” (General Fahim Khan rather than General Dostum and later a delay in supporting the Pashtuns in the south). Success could have tipped to failure had those personal interests gained traction.

Implications. As a result of the “failure of imagination” in SOF and particularly intelligence support to SOF, Trautman, former USSOCOM J2 and longest sitting J2 in the history of USSOCOM, wrote *Special Operations Intelligence: Guiding the Tip of the Spear* and revamped the training and education program for SOF intelligence to address the shortcomings he recognized, not only from OEF, but to address SOF intelligence shortcomings in Operation Iraqi Freedom and the Global War on Terrorism during the period of 9/11 through 2013.³¹³

Joint Publication 3-05.1, *Unconventional Warfare* was finally published in 2015 and included initial events in OEF as examples of UW.

The expansion of SOF and, in particular the addition of the 4th Battalion—the Jedburghs/UW—to the SFGs.

The next section, the Epilogue, takes us back to the ODA perspective. This monograph started with ODA 595, the epilogue provides them the last word, i.e., after almost 20 years, this is a moment for them to reflect on the status of their team, the much larger interservice, interagency, international and multinational team, and the results of their accomplishments.

Epilogue

ODA 595, like many of these same teams from 5th SFG (Airborne), would eventually be at the forefront of the liberation of Iraq and take part in subsequent deployments. On 12 September 2003, Sergeant First Class William “Bill” Bennett, still proudly serving on ODA 595, was killed in action at Ar Ramadi, Iraq, along with Master Sergeant Kevin Moorehead of ODA 585, another distinguished team and veteran of Afghanistan.

Bennett was one of three sergeants who comprised Tiger-02-Alpha and was the special forces medic who treated John Walker Lindh—labeled by the press as the “American Taliban.” Lindh, also known as Suleyman-al Farris or Abdul Hamid, was discovered fighting alongside al-Qaeda terrorists who killed Johnny “Mike” Spann, a paramilitary officer for the CIA Special Activities Division. Mike gave his life at Qali Jangi on 25 November 2001. He was a former captain in the U.S. Marine Corps and was the first American killed in combat during the liberation of Afghanistan. Mike had greeted ODA 595 as they stepped off that MH-47 on the night of their infiltration,



Figure 18. Mark Nutsch and Bob Pennington after taking Mazar-e Sharif. Graphic rendering of photo by Bob Pennington/used with permission

riding and fighting with them all the way to Mazar-e Sharif. He is recognized as the 79th star carved on the agency's memorial wall.

The men on these initial teams in 2001, like the SF teams who came after them, will forever be remembered in the hearts of the Afghan people with whom they shared many hardships. Having deployed repeatedly to Afghanistan over the years, many of these SF men are still welcomed guests in Afghan homes, and are treated as honored members of their families, villages, and tribes. The team continues communications among themselves, with several of the CIA counterparts, officers, and NCOs of 5th SFG(A) and Task Force Dagger, as well as General Dostum and various Afghan interpreters.

In recent years, several of the Afghan interpreters whom 595 worked closely with sought assistance in obtaining their special immigrant visa. Following two years of a long and frustrating process, their DOS applications were approved. They proudly and boldly immigrated to the United States with their families and are adapting to American culture. Employment opportunities remain a challenge to provide for their families here and those who remain in Afghanistan. Other interpreters remain in Afghanistan struggling to provide a better way of life for their families, their people, and the future of Afghanistan. These brave interpreters were among the first who stood alongside their leaders and 595 when our nation asked.

The military alliance of General Dostum, Commander Atta, and Commander Mohaqeq forged in 2001, transitioned to a political alliance representing Northern Afghanistan. Participating in politics at the local, provincial, and national levels, they have their differences but have opted to remain united on core topics that will fairly represent their peoples of Northern Afghanistan in the larger government issues and challenges. From 2004 to early 2018, Commander Atta remained the Governor of Balkh province. Commander Mohaqeq served in national level positions and is currently in the Afghanistan parliament.

In 2014, with President Ashraf Ghani, General Dostum was elected to the office of First Vice-President, even then taking to the field to direct the Afghan police and security forces operationally engaging the Taliban and Islamic State. In July of 2020 following months of political stalemate President Ashraf Ghani conferred the title of "Marshal of Afghanistan" on General Dostum for his services in resolving the political stalemates and ensuring security in the country. General Dostum has survived multiple

assassination attempts by the Taliban and ISIS. There remain immense challenges yet to be overcome in Afghanistan.

Lindh, an American found on the battlefield, was convicted in 2002 for fighting alongside the Taliban. After serving 17 years of a 20-year term, he was released from prison in 2019. He received three years off his sentence for good behavior; but there are a number of restrictions on his travelling outside the United States and activity monitoring. Additionally, some reports indicate that Lindh, while incarcerated, still supported radical Islam. Both senior Taliban commander's Mullah's Fazl and Noori detained in 2001 were released from Guantanamo in 2014 as part of the "Taliban Five" prisoner exchange for U.S. soldier Sergeant Bergdahl. They are currently members of the Taliban delegation in Qatar negotiating with U.S. Ambassador Khalizad.

All of the 595 teammates continued their service in SF with multiple deployments as team sergeants, leading their own teams into combat repeatedly in deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as more recent efforts in Iraq, Syria, and other hotspots. Most have retired, one as a captain, two as sergeant majors and two with 30 years of service to our nation.

All remain connected to the military today, with some working as contractors, instructors for SOF advanced skills, government service employees, volunteers for military non-profit organizations, and/or members of the Reserves or National Guard. The team recognizes the importance of the military, their personal contributions and sacrifices of their own families. They have been fortunate to be able to tell their story around the country through a variety of venues such as radio, television, film, print, and organized speaking events. We hope it also sheds light on the many other incredible missions and accomplishments of our special operations community, the generations who came before, and those who will make their own history in service to our nation.

The outcome of the mission inspired the "America's Response Monument" overlooking the National 9/11 Memorial at Ground Zero—a tribute to the servicemen and women of the SOF and intelligence community. The mission spawned three books, *The Hunt for Bin Laden*, *Horse Soldiers*, and *The Last Warlord*, several other publications and articles, and two films *Legion of Brothers* and *12 Strong*.

In addition to the acknowledgements earlier in this monograph, the authors would like to recognize Dr. Brian Williams, Professor of Islamic History at the University of Massachusetts. He has been very supportive and

has written a number of books on Afghanistan, as well as Iraq and Syria—the most recent being *The Last Warlord: The Life and Legend of Dostum, the Afghan Warrior who Led US Special Forces to Topple the Taliban Regime*.

Transitioning from active duty to civilian/retired status can present a challenge for some veterans who have spent the majority of their adult life in the military. Having the necessary tools, connections, and support, paired with the extensive training they received, often predicts the success and ease of the transition. In 2015, plans for a SF veteran-owned craft bourbon distillery were launched. With their military training and expertise in planning, organizing, leading, and executing, as co-owners of the distillery, Mark Nutsch and Robert (Bob) Pennington have taken pride in learning about the distilling business, travelling the world to train with master distillers, forming connections within the business community, and meeting with the public and customers who are eager to hear their story and are proud to support the team. This challenges all of these veterans' UW skills and experience.

With the success of the distillery, and in the spirit of teamwork, camaraderie and brotherhood, a 595 team member and two of the 595 CIA counterparts from the Afghanistan campaign have joined the distillery team.↑

Acronyms

ANA	Afghan National Army
AOR	area of responsibility
AWACS	Airborne Warning and Control System
C2	command and control
CF	conventional forces
CFLCC	Combined Forces Land Component Commander
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CJTF	Combined Joint Task Force
CAOC	Combined Air Operations Center
COIN	counterinsurgency
CSAR	combat search and rescue
CT	counterterrorism
CTC	Central Intelligence Agency Counterterrorism Center
DAPs	direct action penetrations
DIA	Defense Intelligence Agency
DOD	Department of Defense
DOS	Department of State
ETAC	enlisted terminal attack controller
FID	foreign internal defense
FOB	forward operating base
HUMINT	human intelligence
IDA	Institute for Defense Analyses

JDAM	Joint Direct Attack Munition
JSOTF-N	Joint Special Operations Task Force-North
JSOU	Joint Special Operations University
JTAC	joint terminal attack controller
MON	memorandum of notification
NALT	Northern Afghanistan Liaison Team
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NSC	National Security Council
ODA	Operational Detachment Alpha
ODB	Operational Detachment Bravo
ODC	Operational Detachment Charlie
OEF-A	Operation Enduring Freedom-Afghanistan
OSS	Office of Strategic Services
PK	Kalashnikov machine gun
SAD	special activities division
SATCOM	satellite communications
SF	special forces
SFG	special forces group
SO	special operations
SOAR	Special Operations Aviation Regiment
SOCCENT	Special Operations Command Central
SOCJFCOM	Special Operations Command Joint Forces Command
SOF	Special Operations Forces
SOFLAM	Special Operations Forces Laser Acquisition Marker

TF	task force
TSOC	theater special operations command
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USASOC	United States Army Special Operations Command
USCENTCOM	United States Central Command
USSOCOM	United States Special Operations Command
UW	unconventional warfare
WCMD	wind-corrected munitions dispenser

Endnotes

1. 595 (in ODA 595) stood for the 5th Special Forces Group, 9th Company, 5th Detachment.
2. Karshi Khanabad, Uzbekistan.
3. As the crow flies and approximately 80 miles via road.
4. Some might recall the acronym “JIIM”: Joint, Interagency, Intergovernmental and Multinational. The acronym was removed from the DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms (updated as of September 2018) and the term “intergovernmental organization” has been removed from Joint Publication (JP) 3-08 *Interorganizational*, 12 October 2016 (and validated on 18 October 2017). The older JP 3-08 (24 June 2011) used to refer to the United Nations and NATO as examples of intergovernmental organizations (IGO), but the newer publications refer to them as international organizations. Multinational is still in the DOD dictionary—between two or more forces or agencies of two or more nations or coalition partners. See also alliance. (JP 5-0).
5. National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States, *The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2004), 9. This term came from the 9/11 report and referred to a lack of imagination in understanding the “gravity of the threat.”
6. Konrad Trautman, *Special Operations Intelligence: Guiding the Tip of the Spear* (Tampa, FL: JSOU Press, 2014), 12.
7. According to Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld in *Known and Unknown: A Memoir* (London, England: Penguin, 2011), at a 15 September National Security Council meeting at Camp David, “The shock of 9/11 had not provided much originality or imagination from the Chairman or his staff.” Under that comment belies a significant rift between the Chairman and the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Secretary of Defense. However, the story is much more contentious than that. While the civilian DOD leadership (Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz, and Feith) pushed for an attack on Iraq, the military leadership along with the National Security Advisor, Secretary of State, and subsequently the President recognized that, while terrorism was a global threat, the enemy that committed the 9/11 atrocities was located in Afghanistan.
8. Quoted from the Joint Chiefs of Staff website, accessed 21 March 2020, <https://www.jcs.mil/Doctrine/Joint-Doctrine-Pubs/>. Furthermore: “Joint doctrine presents fundamental principles that guide the employment of US military forces in coordinated and integrated action toward a common objective. It promotes a common perspective from which to plan, train, and conduct military operations. It represents what is taught, believed, and advocated as what is right (i.e., what works best).”

9. Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Washington, D.C.: The Joint Staff, January 2019), 243. This publication also refers the reader to Joint Publication 3-05, *Special Operations*.
10. Doug Livermore, "It's Time for Special Operations to Dump 'Unconventional Warfare,'" *War on the Rocks* (October 2017): 6, <https://warontherocks.com/2017/10/its-time-for-special-operations-to-dump-unconventional-warfare/>.
11. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Special Operations*, Joint Publication 3-05 (Washington, D.C.: Joint Chiefs of Staff, April 2011), II-10. Also see U.S. Army Special Operations Command (USASOC), *Unconventional Warfare Pocket Guide* (Fort Bragg, North Carolina: USASOC, 5 April 2016), U.S. V.1, 11-16.
12. George Tenet and Bill Harlow, *At the Center of the Storm: My Years at the CIA* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2007), 207.
13. Michael Morell, *The Great War of Our Time: The CIA's Fight Against Terrorism—From al Qaeda to ISIS* (Cornwall, England: Twelve, 2015), 64.
14. Gary C. Schroen, *First In: An Insider's Account of How the CIA Spearheaded the War on Terror in Afghanistan* (Presidio Press, 2005), 197.
15. Morell, *The Great War of Our Time*, 64. Indicates that the CIA linked up with SF teams in Afghanistan on 17 October.
16. Charles H. Briscoe, et al., *Weapon of Choice, U.S. Army Special Operations Forces in Afghanistan* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2003), 98.
17. Briscoe, *Weapon of Choice*, 98.
18. Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown*; Briscoe, *Weapon of Choice*, 103; 13 November 2001 and the fall of Kabul is used as a pivot point between the successes of the Northern alliance in the north and the campaign in the south in the Pashtun areas.
19. Robert L. Grenier, *88 Days to Kandahar: A CIA Diary* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2015), 224; Briscoe, *Weapon of Choice*, 155; Richard W. Stewart, "The United States Army in Afghanistan: Operation Enduring Freedom October 2001 to March 2002," Center for Military History (CMH) Publication 70-83-1, 2003, 21; Dick Camp, *Boots on the Ground: The Fight to Liberate Afghanistan from Al-Qaeda and the Taliban, 2001-2002* (Minnesota: Zenith Press, 2012), 148. This was located on page 64, footnote 199, 218. This was actually a re-insertion for Karzai. He had initially entered Afghanistan on 8 October (Briscoe, 154) and was extracted to support a planning effort.
20. Briscoe, *Weapon of Choice*, 103.
21. Briscoe, *Weapon of Choice*, 155.
22. Camp, *Boots on the Ground*, 236.
23. Stewart, "The United States Army in Afghanistan," 19.
24. Eric Blehm, *The Only Thing Worth Dying For* (New York: Harper Collins, 2010), 175.

25. United Nations, *Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan Pending the Re-establishment of Permanent Government Institutions (Bonn Agreement)*, accessed 20 September, <https://peacemaker.un.org/afghanistan-bonnagreement2001>, [https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/AF_011205_AgreementProvisionalArrangementsinAfghanistan\(en\).pdf](https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/AF_011205_AgreementProvisionalArrangementsinAfghanistan(en).pdf).
26. Blehm, *The Only Thing Worth Dying For*.
27. Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown*.
28. Stewart, "The United States Army in Afghanistan," 20.
29. Stewart, "The United States Army in Afghanistan," 32.
30. Stewart, "The United States Army in Afghanistan," 44.
31. The Men of ODA 595 with Dr. William Knarr, "The 1st Victory of the 21st Century: Mazar-e Sharif," *The 60th Anniversary of U.S. Special Forces: 1952–2012, 2012*, 142–163.
32. Robert H. Dorff, chapter 2, "A Primer in Strategy Development," in Joseph R. Cerami and James F. Holcomb, Jr., editors, *U.S. Army War College Guide to Strategy* (Carlisle, Pennsylvania: U.S. Army War College, February 2001), 11.
33. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Operations*, Joint Publication 3-0 (Washington, D.C.: Joint Chiefs of Staff, August 2011), ix.
34. Grenier, *88 Days to Kandahar*, 42.
35. Some, such as General Franks, would question the use of the term "campaign." As far as he was concerned, there was one campaign. It is used here to emphasize the difference in the conditions in the north (including the Khalili center and Ismael Khan west) versus the Pashtun south and southeast.
36. This chapter also includes material that might be characterized as "Shaping" or Phase 0 because those events were background to preparation and happened before the President approved CIA's plan on 17 September 2001.
37. "Frontline Campaign Against Terror: A Chronology," PBS, accessed 19 February 2015, www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/campaign/etc/cron.html.
38. "NATO's Contribution to the Fight against Terrorism," NATO Fact Sheet, NATO, updated 19 October 2004, accessed 19 February 2015, www.nato.int/terrorism/factsheet.htm. NATO pledged support on 12 September and formally invoked Article 5 at a 5 October 2001 NATO meeting: "Frontline Campaign Against Terror: A Chronology," PBS.
39. U.S. Congress, *Authorization for Use of Military Force*, Joint Resolution of Congress, 23, 14 September 2001.
40. Richard A. Best, Jr., *National Security Council: An Organizational Assessment*, CRS Report No. RL30840 (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 2011), <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/RL30840.pdf>. The Secretary of Energy was added as a statutory member in 2007.
41. National Security Presidential Directives, "Organization of the National Security Council System," 13 February 2001, <https://fas.org/irp/offdocs/nspd/nspd-1.htm/>.

42. Colin Powell, *Soldier: The Life of Colin Powell* (New York, NY: Knopf, 2006). The President referred to Cheney, Powell and Rumsfeld, along with Rice, Tenet, O'Neill, Shelton, Mueller, and Ashcroft, as his "War Cabinet."
43. Morell, *The Great War of Our Time*, 62.
44. Tenet and Harlow, *At the Center of the Storm*, lists Richard Armitage, Deputy Secretary of State in attendance, but Colin Powell, *Soldier*, indicates that Armitage was in Moscow at the time.
45. Although known as the Chief Counter-terrorism Advisor to the NSC, his title was actually National Coordinator for Security, Infrastructure Protection, and Counterterrorism.
46. Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown*.
47. Morell, *The Great War of Our Time*, 64.
48. Bob Woodward, *Bush At War* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2012), 76.
49. Richard A. Clarke, *Against All Enemies: Inside America's War on Terror* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2008).
50. National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States, *The 9/11 Commission Report*, 335, 559. The 9/11 report cites DOD Memo, Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, "War on Terrorism Strategic Concept," 14 September 2001. At the time, Douglas Feith was the USD for Policy.
51. Condoleezza Rice, *No Higher Honor: A Memoir of My Years in Washington* (New York, NY: Broadway Books, 2012), 86.
52. Powell, *Soldier*; Henry A. Crumpton, *The Art of Intelligence: Lessons from a Life in the CIA's Clandestine Service* (London: Penguin, 2013), 188.
53. Rice, *No Higher Honor*, 87.
54. *Encyclopedia.com*, s.v. "National Security Council," accessed 7 April 2019, <https://www.encyclopedia.com/social-sciences/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/national-security-council>.
55. Rice, *No Higher Honor*, 80.
56. General H. Shelton, Ronald Levinson, and Malcolm McConnell, *Without Hesitation: The Odyssey of an American Warrior* (London: Macmillan, 2010). Briefly, the three options were: 1. cruise missiles, 2. cruise missiles and bombs, 3. included the first two options plus boots on the ground—both special operators and conventional forces.
57. Shelton, *Without Hesitation*.
58. Tenet and Harlow, *At the Center of the Storm*, 207.
59. Shelton, *Without Hesitation*. This discussion took place on at an NSC meeting at the White House on Wednesday, 12 September 2001.
60. "About CIA," Central Intelligence Agency, accessed 6 May 2019, <https://www.cia.gov/about/>.

61. Martin A. Bimford, "A Definition of Intelligence," CIA, SECRET document, declassified/approved for release 1994, posted 2007 last updated 2011, accessed 6 May 2019, https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/kent-csi/vol2no4/html/v02i4a08p_0001.htm.
62. William J. Daugherty, *Executive Secrets: Covert Action and the Presidency* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2006), 12.
63. Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *DOD Dictionary*, defines "Intelligence." 1. The product resulting from the collection, processing, integration, evaluation, analysis, and interpretation of available information concerning foreign nations, hostile or potentially hostile forces or elements, or areas of actual or potential operations. 2. The activities that result in the product. 3. The organizations engaged in such activities. Accessed 6 May 2019, <https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/dictionary.pdf?ver=2019-04-25-095717-503>.
64. National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States, *The 9/11 Commission Report*, 126; Tenet and Harlow, *At the Center of the Storm*, 109. Tenet explains that killing Osama bin Laden with cruise missiles was far different, and politically more acceptable, than killing him through covert action.
65. National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States, *The 9/11 Commission Report*, 133. Documents a number of MON signed by President Clinton in the hunt for Osama bin Laden. One of those authorized the development and arming of the Predator unmanned aerial vehicle.
66. Crumpton, *The Art of Intelligence*, 130–131. This is important for several reasons: 1. This was not (yet) UW as defined earlier, i.e., they were not there to "coerce, disrupt or overthrow" the government. 2. Massoud's resistance was known as the United Front and the Northern Alliance. The Pakistanis favored the name Northern Alliance because it "portrayed them as a Tajik-dominated organization isolated to the north" with little influence in the rest of the country. 3. The existence of Massoud's "source network which extended into the Pashtun areas," reflects the existence of an underground, one of the elements of an insurgency. This should be no surprise, however, a number of naysayers claim that there was no proof of a United Front/Northern Alliance underground.
67. Amrullah Saleh became the head of Afghanistan's National Directorate of Security from 2004 until 2010. I met with him in 2013 as part of a team looking at the Afghan Local Police program.
68. Crumpton, *The Art of Intelligence*, 160.
69. Kallie Szczepanski, "Ahmad Shah Massoud: Lion of the Panjshir," *ThoughtCo*, accessed 3 February 2021, <https://www.thoughtco.com/ahmad-shah-massoud-195106>.
70. Tommy Franks, *American Soldier* (New York, NY: Regan Books/Harper Collins, 2004), 260.
71. Tenet, *At the Center of the Storm*, 207.
72. Crumpton, *The Art of Intelligence*, 190.

73. Crumpton, *The Art of Intelligence*, 192, 193.
74. Grenier, *88 Days to Kandahar*, 4.
75. Grenier, *88 Days to Kandahar*, 143.
76. Grenier, *88 Days to Kandahar*, 143.
77. Grenier, *88 Days to Kandahar*, 143.
78. Powell, *Soldier*.
79. Rice, *No Higher Honor*, 112. Additionally, there is much more to legal aspects than addressed here. See National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States, *The 9/11 Commission Report*.
80. White House, *Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People* (Washington, D.C., Office of the Press Secretary, 2001), <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/print/20010920-8.html>.
81. Powell, *Soldier*.
82. Powell, *Soldier*.
83. The Northern Alliance also received support from India. Tenet and Harlow, *At the Center of the Storm*, 141.
84. Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *DOD Dictionary*, 15. An alliance is a “relationship that results from a formal agreement between two or more nations for broad, long-term objectives that further the common interests of the members.”
85. Brian Williams, *The Last Warlord: The Life and Legend of Dostum, the Afghan Warrior Who Led US Special Forces to Topple the Taliban Regime* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2013), 199–202.
86. Schroen, *First In*, 191.
87. Schroen, *First In*, 182.
88. Schroen, *First In*, 98.
89. Schroen, *First In*, 176–178, 184.
90. Franks, *American Soldier*, 302.
91. Bob Woodward, *Bush At War* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2012), 103.
92. Mark Wong and Paul Fujimura, “Talking Points,” United States Department of State, 13 September 2001, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB358a/doc04.pdf>.
93. Franks, *American Soldier*, 251.
94. Franks, *American Soldier*, 256.
95. Franks, *American Soldier*, 271.
96. General Tommy Franks interview at his office in USCENTCOM with Dr. William Knarr, IDA, on 3 February 2003.
97. Franks, *American Soldier*, 271.
98. Franks, *American Soldier*, 271.

99. Franks, *American Soldier*, 271.
100. General Franks interview, 3 February 2003. The eight lines consisted of Hunter-Killer operations, Support to Opposition Groups, Strategic Reconnaissance and Direct Action, Attack Caves and Tunnels, Humanitarian Assistance, Strike/Restrike Taliban, Information Operations, and Political/Military. For a description of each, See appendix B.
101. Franks, *American Soldier*, 266.
102. Joint Publication 3-05, *Doctrine for Joint Special Operations*, 17 April 1998, III-3. Also see Thomas Searle, *Task Force Dagger, Afghanistan: A Case Study in Unconventional Warfare* (unpublished, January 2012), 29.
103. Briscoe, *Weapon of Choice*, 58.
104. At the strategic/national level, OEF was more than Afghanistan or OEF-A and included other operations, such as OEF-Philippines and OEF-Horn of Africa. It even expanded beyond OEF to generally be known as the Global War on Terrorism.
105. Briscoe, *Weapon of Choice*, 41.
106. Briscoe, *Weapon of Choice*, 68.
107. James Brink is a pseudonym. This was the first time a JSOAC had been established under the command of an Army Aviator; but it made sense since most of the aviation assets were Army. Briscoe, *Weapon of Choice*, 67.
108. Briscoe, *Weapon of Choice*, 67.
109. George W. Bush, *Address to the Nation*, 7 October 2001, <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/10/20011007-8.html>.
110. Briscoe, *Weapon of Choice*, 74.
111. Briscoe, *Weapon of Choice*, 74.
112. Briscoe, *Weapon of Choice*, 82; Crumpton, *The Art of Intelligence*, 191.
113. J.R., "Northern Afghanistan Operations in the Fall of 2001: Continuity, Partnership and Treachery," Afghan Presentation Notes, undated, one file with the author. Also, Tenet and Harlow, *At the Center of the Storm*, 211.
114. Tenet and Harlow, *At the Center of the Storm*, 211.
115. J.R., "Northern Afghanistan Operations," 2.
116. Technically, the team was the NALT and its code name was JAWBREAKER.
117. Schroen, *First In*, 22.
118. Crumpton, *The Art of Intelligence*, 143.
119. Schroen, *First In*, 97.
120. Schroen, *First In*, 90.
121. Crumpton, *The Art of Intelligence*, 123.
122. Schroen, *First In*, 106.

123. General Habibullah, former Taliban Commander, was interviewed in Mazar-e Sharif by Dr. William Knarr, IDA, on 11 December 2002. A Taliban corps was exponentially less capable than a U.S. corps in terms of personnel, equipment (particularly quality of equipment) and capabilities. The U.S. corps could have 20,000 to 45,000 personnel and best equipment in the world. Mullah Razak's corps had approximately 10,000 soldiers assigned, most were part-timers on-call, and organized into five divisions (the 53rd, 18th, 30th, 8th and 82nd) but the quality of training was poor and the equipment poorly maintained. In many cases the equipment became part of a static defense system.
124. J.R., "Northern Afghanistan Operations," 2.
125. General Tommy Franks, Commander, USCENTCOM, interview with Dr. William Knarr, IDA, at General Franks' office in Tampa, Florida on 3 February 2003.
126. J.R., "Northern Afghanistan Operations," 2.
127. Library of Congress, Federal Research Division, "Country Profile, Afghanistan," February 2005, <https://web.archive.org/web/20050226190601/http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Afghanistan.pdf>. The figures are estimates from mid-2004.
128. The Men of ODA 595 with Dr. William Knarr, "The 1st Victory of the 21st Century," 142–163.
129. Releases are on file with the Office of Security Review, Department of Defense. Copies are on file with the author.
130. For those that might want a more complete background of General Dostum, the authors recommend they read Brian Williams' *The Last Warlord*.
131. The Men of ODA 595 with Dr. William Knarr, "The 1st Victory of the 21st Century: Mazar-e Sharif," *The 60th Anniversary of U.S. Special Forces: 1952–2012*, 2012, 142–163.
132. General Habibullah interview, 11 December 2002. Briscoe places the figures of Taliban fighters much higher—40,000.
133. Jibran Ahmad, "Taliban assign ex-Guantanamo inmates as future peace brokers," 31 October 2018, *Reuters*, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-afghanistan-taliban/taliban-assign-ex-guantanamo-inmates-as-future-peace-brokers-idUSKCN1N51L5>. Both Fazl and Noori were released from Guantanamo in 2012 as part of the prisoner exchange for U.S. soldier Berg Bergdahl. They are members of the Taliban political office in Qatar.
134. General Habibullah interview, 11 December 2002.
135. General Franks interview 3 February 2003.
136. Briscoe, *Weapon of Choice*, 94.
137. Morell, *The Great War of Our Time*, 64, indicates that the CIA linked up with the SF teams in Afghanistan on 17 October. Briscoe, *Weapon of Choice*, 97, adds that near-simultaneous with the insertion of ODA 595 was Operation RHINO, the insertion of 200 Rangers in the desert in Southern Afghanistan. Additionally, according to Franks, *American Soldier*, 30, Major General Dell Dailey's special

- mission unit, Task Force Gecko, from the *Kitty Hawk* raided Mullah Omar's compound in Kandahar.
138. William Knarr and Robert Richbourg, *Learning from the First Victory of the 21st Century: Mazar-e Sharif (Revised)*, January 2010, IDA Document D-4015.
 139. Major Joseph Garst interview with Dennis Reeder of Maguire-Reeder LTD, at Fort Campbell, Kentucky in February 2003.
 140. Knarr and Richbourg, *Learning from the First Victory*.
 141. William Knarr, *The Campaign for Mazar-e Sharif* (Alexandria, VA: Institute for Defense Analyses, 2004), film, DA Document D-3701.
 142. Knarr and Richbourg, *Learning from the First Victory*, Phase 1.
 143. Knarr and Richbourg, *Learning from the First Victory*, Phase 2.
 144. Knarr and Richbourg, *Learning from the First Victory*, Phase 2.
 145. General Franks interview, 3 February 2003.
 146. Tenet and Harlow, *At the Center of the Storm*, 215.
 147. Tenet and Harlow, *At the Center of the Storm*, 215.
 148. Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown*. Additionally, see Franks, *American Soldier*, 290, where he asserts that Rumsfeld "had arranged with George Tenet, USCENTCOM had operational control over CIA activities in the theater of war to include the armed Predator. But my lines of authority in the Agency had not yet been fully tested."
 149. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, "What Will Be the Military Role in the War on Terrorism?" 10 October 2001, declassified on 30 September 2010.
 150. Franks, *American Soldier*, 296.
 151. Franks, *American Soldier*, 300.
 152. Franks, *American Soldier*, 301.
 153. USASOC, *Unconventional Warfare Pocket Guide*, "their objective is to determine and agree upon a plan to organize the resistance for expanded operations. ... This requires a period of rapport-building to develop trust and confidence."
 154. USASOC, *Unconventional Warfare Pocket Guide*, 14. "During buildup, the resistance cadre improves the organization's clandestine supporting infrastructure to prepare for expanded offensive operations.
 155. Briscoe, *Weapon of Choice*, 93, 94.
 156. Schroen, *First In*, 234.
 157. Commander Atta interview at his office in Mazar-e Sharif on 12 December 2002 by Dr. William Knarr, IDA. This also could have been Commander Atta's dissatisfaction (sour grapes?) with the Americans for supporting General Dostum early in the campaign rather than him (Commander Atta).
 158. Donald Rumsfeld, "21st Century Transformation of U.S. Armed Forces," transcript of remarks and question and answer period National Defense University, Fort McNair, Washington, D.C., Thursday, 31 January 2002.

159. Tenet and Harlow, *At the Center of the Storm*, 216.
160. R.W. Apple, "A Nation Challenged; A Military Quagmire Remembered: Afghanistan as Vietnam," *New York Times*, 31 October 2001, <https://www.nytimes.com/2001/10/31/world/nation-challenged-analysis-military-quagmire-remembered-afghanistan-vietnam.html>. Also discussed in Crumpton, *The Art of Intelligence*, 239, that on that same day, 25 October, Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz and others had already instructed General Franks to prepare for the invasion of Iraq. In Franks, *American Soldier*, 315, Franks states that Rumsfeld asks him, "What is the status of your planning [for Iraq]?"
161. Voice of America, "Ramadan Begins—2011-11-16," Archives, 27 October 2009, <https://www.voanews.com/archive/ramadan-begins-2001-11-16>.
162. Franks, *American Soldier*, 308.
163. Franks, *American Soldier*, 309.
164. Briscoe, *Weapon of Choice*, 98.
165. Briscoe, *Weapon of Choice*, 98.
166. Blehm, *The Only Thing Worth Dying For*, 175.
167. Franks, *American Soldier*, 312, 313. Mulholland also attended the meeting. According to Crumpton, *The Art of Intelligence*, 228, 229, other meeting attendees included Calland, Bernsten and Brigadier General Jeff Kimmons.
168. The Men of ODA 595 with Dr. William Knarr, "The 1st Victory of the 21st Century."
169. Knarr and Richbourg, *Learning from the First Victory*, Phase 2.
170. Knarr and Richbourg, *Learning from the First Victory*, Phase 2.
171. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, "What Will Be the Military Role in the War on Terrorism?" 10 October 2001, declassified on 30 September 2010. On file with the author. Also see Franks, *American Soldier*, 301.
172. Kansas State Senate, Resolution 1842, "A Resolution Congratulating and Commending Captain Mark Nutsch," *Journal of the Senate*, 11 April 2002, 1647 provides extract.
173. Kansas State Senate, Resolution 1842, "A Resolution Congratulating."
174. Knarr and Richbourg, *Learning from the First Victory*, Phase 2.
175. Knarr and Richbourg, *Learning from the First Victory*, Phase 3.
176. Knarr and Richbourg, *Learning from the First Victory*, Phase 3.
177. Knarr and Richbourg, *Learning from the First Victory*, Phase 3.
178. Knarr and Richbourg, *Learning from the First Victory*, Phase 3.
179. Knarr and Richbourg, *Learning from the First Victory*, Phase 3.
180. Joseph L. Votel, Charles T. Cleveland, Charles T. Connett, and Will Irwin, "Unconventional Warfare in the Gray Zone," *Joint Forces Quarterly*, 1st Quarter 2016, 106.

181. Donald Rumsfeld, Secretary of Defense, “21st Century Transformation” of U.S. Armed Forces, transcript of remarks and question and answer period (Fort McNair, Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, 31 January 2002).
182. Commander Fakir interview standing outside the village of Baluch with Dr. William Knarr on 10 December 2002. Commander Fakir proceeded to describe the engagement to include the forces involved as well as the maneuvering on the ground.
183. Knarr and Richbourg, *Learning from the First Victory*, Phase 4.
184. Knarr and Richbourg, *Learning from the First Victory*, Phase 4.
185. Knarr and Richbourg, *Learning from the First Victory*, Phase 4.
186. Knarr and Richbourg, *Learning from the First Victory*, Phase 4, DVD Segment 10.
187. Knarr and Richbourg, *Learning from the First Victory*, Phase 4.
188. Knarr and Richbourg, *Learning from the First Victory*, Phase 4.
189. Knarr and Richbourg, *Learning from the First Victory*, Phase 4.
190. Knarr and Richbourg, *Learning from the First Victory*, Phase 4.
191. Knarr and Richbourg, *Learning from the First Victory*, Phase 4.
192. Knarr and Richbourg, *Learning from the First Victory*, Phase 5.
193. Knarr and Richbourg, *Learning from the First Victory*, Phase 5.
194. William Knarr, *Operation Enduring Freedom Battle Reconstruction: Battle Site Survey (BSS) and Ground Force Data Reconciliation (Revised)*, IDA Document D-4223, December 2010, III-32, V-32.
195. Knarr, BSS, V-30.
196. Knarr, BSS, V-32.
197. Knarr, BSS, V-34.
198. President Bush, “Video Tribute to ODA 595,” at a dinner in their honor at the Waterford Receptions, Springfield, Virginia on 5 May 2011.
199. Briscoe, *Weapon of Choice*, 103.
200. Commander Atta’s interview at his office in Mazar-e Sharif on 12 December 2002 with Dr. William Knarr, IDA.
201. Commander Atta’s interview 12 December 2002.
202. Nutsch interview, 2020.
203. Camp, *Boots on the Ground*, 148.
204. Doug Stanton, *Horse Soldiers: The Extraordinary Story of a Band of US Soldiers Who Rode to Victory in Afghanistan* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010), 260, 261.
205. Commander Haji Mohammad Mohaqeq interview with Dr. William Knarr on 13 December 2002 at his office in Mazar-e Sharif.
206. Mohaqeq, interview.
207. Williams, *The Last Warlord*, 262, 263.

208. Mohaqeq, interview.
209. Williams, *The Last Warlord*, 262, 263.
210. Camp, *Boots on the Ground*, 181, cites United Nations records.
211. John Walker Lindh interview with Captain Mark Nutsch, November 2001, Sheberghan, Afghanistan. According to Greg Myre, in his article “John Walker Lindh, The American Taliban, is Released from Prison,” *National Public Radio*, 23 May 2019, Lindh was convicted in 2002 for fighting alongside the Taliban. Released from prison on 23 May 2019 after serving 17 years of a 20-year term, he received three years off for good behavior—but there are a number of restrictions, such as no travelling outside the United States, required counseling, limited internet access, and activity monitoring. Additionally, some reports indicate that Lindh, while incarcerated, still supported radical Islam.
212. Joint Publication 3-0, *Operations*, V-14.
213. USASOC, *Unconventional Warfare Pocket Guide*, 15.
214. USASOC, *Unconventional Warfare Pocket Guide*, 15.
215. Grenier, *88 Days to Kandahar*, 66.
216. Grenier, *88 Days to Kandahar*, 66.
217. Library of Congress, Federal Research Division, “Country Profile, Afghanistan,” February 2005, <https://web.archive.org/web/20050226190601/http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Afghanistan.pdf>. The figures are estimates from mid-2004.
218. Lutz Rzehak, “Doing Pashto,” *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, 2012, accessed 28 June 2018, <http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2012/10/20110321LR-Pashtunwali-FINAL.pdf>.
219. Countries and their Cultures, “Pashtun,” accessed 27 June 2018, <http://www.everyculture.com/wc/Afghanistan-to-Bosnia-Herzegovina/Pashtun.html>. Much of this paragraph was extracted from Knarr and Nutsch, *Village Stability Operations and the Evolution of SOF Command and Control in Afghanistan: Successes, Failures and Implications* (Tampa, FL: JSOU Press, 2019).
220. Mohaqeq, interview. Also in William Knarr, *Operation Enduring Freedom Battle Reconstruction: Battle Site Survey and Ground Force Data Reconciliation (Revised)*, IDA Document D-4223, December 2010, IV-6.
221. Grenier, *88 Days to Kandahar*, 223. Karzai was being reinserted with the CIA team and elements of ODA 574, 238.
222. Grenier, *88 Days to Kandahar*, 239.
223. Grenier, *88 Days to Kandahar*, 188.
224. Grenier, *88 Days to Kandahar*, 188.
225. Grenier, *88 Days to Kandahar*, 187.
226. Briscoe, *Weapon of Choice*, 157.
227. Briscoe, *Weapon of Choice*, 155; Richard W. Stewart, “The United States Army in Afghanistan: Operation Enduring Freedom October 2001 to March 2002,”

Center for Military History (CMH) Publication 70-83-1, 2003, 21; Camp, *Boots on the Ground*, 218. This was actually a re-insertion for Karzai. He had initially entered Afghanistan on 8 October (Briscoe, *Weapon of Choice*, 154) and was extracted to support a planning effort.

228. Briscoe, *Weapon of Choice*, 155.
229. Camp, *Boots on the Ground*, 236; Stewart, "The United States Army in Afghanistan," 24.
230. Stewart, "The United States Army in Afghanistan," 19.
231. Blehm, *The Only Thing Worth Dying For*, 175.
232. Stewart, "The United States Army in Afghanistan," 23; Briscoe, *Weapon of Choice*, 107.
233. Blehm, *The Only Thing Worth Dying For*, 174, 295; Briscoe, *Weapon of Choice*, 180.
234. United Nations, *Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan Pending the Re-establishment of Permanent Government Institutions (Bonn Agreement)*, accessed 20 September, <https://peacemaker.un.org/afghanistan-bonnagreement2001>.
235. NATO webpage, ISAF's Mission in Afghanistan, updated as of 13 January 2015, www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_69366.htm on 19 February 2015. [Bonn] *Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan Pending the Re-Establishment of Permanent Government Institutions*, 5 December 2001, www.un.org/News/dh/latest/afghan/afghan-agree.htm on 20 February 2015.
236. Stewart, "The United States Army in Afghanistan," 20.
237. Stewart, "The United States Army in Afghanistan," 32.
238. Stewart, "The United States Army in Afghanistan," 30.
239. DOD Dictionary, January 2019, 243. This publication also refers the reader to Joint Publication 3-05, *Special Operations*.
240. USASOC, *Unconventional Warfare Pocket Guide*, 15.
241. JP 3-05, *Special Operations*, 16 July 2014, II-2.
242. Briscoe, *Weapon of Choice*.
243. Briscoe, *Weapon of Choice*, 203.
244. Stewart, "The United States Army in Afghanistan," 30.
245. Stewart, "The United States Army in Afghanistan," 46.
246. Stewart, "The United States Army in Afghanistan," 46. SOF participated with several task forces: Task Force Dagger, worked with the Afghan Military Forces Task Forces Hammer and Anvil.
247. Bush, *Decision Points*, 201; Grenier, *88 Days to Kandahar*.
248. Briscoe, *Weapon of Choice*, 277.
249. George W. Bush, Presidential Address to the Nation (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Press Secretary, 7 October), <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/10/20011007-8.html>.

250. Knarr and Richbourg, *Learning from the First Victory*.
251. Much of this chapter, as noted was extracted from William Knarr and Robert Richbourg, *Learning from the First Victory of the 21st Century: Mazar-e Sharif (Revised)*, January 2010, IDA Document D-4015. A-2 to A-5.
252. Joint Publication 3-05.1, *Unconventional Warfare*, 15 September 2015.
253. Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *DOD Dictionary*, January 2019, 243. This publication also refers the reader to Joint Publication 3-05, *Special Operations*.
254. Public Law 114-92 Sec. 1097, S.1356 - 114th Congress (2015–2016), National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2016, accessed 28 September 2019, <https://www.congress.gov/114/plaws/publ92/PLAW-114publ92.pdf>.
255. Nathan Bos (editor), *Human Factors Considerations of Undergrounds and Insurgencies*, second edition (Fort Bragg, NC: United States Army Special Operations Command, 2013), 35.
256. Nathan Bos, *Human Factors Considerations*, 35.
257. USASOC, *Unconventional Warfare Pocket Guide*, 12. The distinction would be that networks reflect a maturity of the organization/insurgency, but collection, in and of itself, could be a part-time service.
258. Crumpton, *The Art of Intelligence*, 131, 132.
259. Not only was this an incentive for Fahim Kahn, it was also a concern of USCENT-COM and Task Force Dagger.
260. Briscoe, *Weapon of Choice*, 103.
261. Face validity is based on subjective judgement, i.e., “Does this seem to make sense?” or “Does it appear to test what it aims to test?” *Simply Psychology*, accessed 29 September 2019, <https://www.simplypsychology.org/validity.html>.
262. Although not the originator, this was General Franks response to the question, “To what factors do you attribute General Dostum’s 5 November 2001 success in the Darya Suf?” Although not directly related to this question, “Who are the Horse Soldiers?” it has applicability. General Franks Interview, 3 February 2003.
263. Actually, “The Horse Soldiers” was a hit movie in 1959 set in the American Civil War and featuring stars such as John Wayne as Colonel John Marlowe leading a union cavalry unit behind confederate lines.
264. Stanton, *Horse Soldiers*, book jacket.
265. This topic is a good candidate for military ethics discussions.
266. Trautman, *Special Operations Intelligence*.
267. “Harlie” was a businessman who requested that his name not be used. Captain Nutsch interviewed Charlie after returning from Afghanistan.
268. This section taken verbatim from Knarr and Richbourg, *Learning from the First Victory of the 21st Century*, A-3, A-4.
269. Donald Rumsfeld, 31 January 2002, speech at National Defense University.

270. Colonel Kathryn Stone, “All Necessary Means—Employing CIA Operatives in a Warfighting Role Alongside Special Operations Forces,” U.S. Army War College Strategy Research Project, July 2003.
271. This section taken almost verbatim from Knarr and Richbourg, *Learning from the First Victory of the 21st Century*.
272. Colonel Kathryn Stone, “All Necessary Means.”
273. According to Chief Warrant Officer Bob, “UW operations in itself is very arduous. Constantly we had to request the same materials and equipment only to be second guessed on why we needed them! That just compounded all the other challenges, to include the environment we were dealing with that few have taken notice of, or care to talk about. There were many factors the team (all members of the team) had to evaluate and overcome in order to be successful.
274. William Knarr and Robert Richbourg, *Operation Enduring Freedom Battle Reconstruction: Battle Site Survey and Ground Force Data Reconciliation (Revised)*, December 2010, IDA Document D-4223. VI-1.
275. Knarr and Richbourg, *Learning from the First Victory of the 21st Century*.
276. William M. Knarr, Jr., *Mazar-e Sharif Battle Site Survey Support Documents (Revised)*, Institute for Defense Analyses, Document D-4350, 2011; General Dostum and Captain Mark Nutsch interview with Dr. Knarr, 9 December 2002.
277. Captain Nutsch, “Mazar-e Sharif,” May 2005.
278. Dennis Steele, “Unconventional Logistics,” *Army Magazine* (November 2002).
279. During an interview of Captain Mark in May 2005, he related the story of waking up early one morning, walking outside and finding an Afghan soldier sleeping uncovered on the frosted ground and the blanket that had been given to him for warmth was covering his horse.
280. Knarr and Richbourg, *First Victory*.
281. Knarr, Jr., *Mazar-e Sharif Battle Site Survey Support Documents*.
282. Schroen, *First In*, 268.
283. Trautman, *Special Operations Intelligence*.
284. Grenier, *88 Days to Kandahar*, 182.
285. Grenier, *88 Days to Kandahar*, 237.
286. President John F. Kennedy, Address to the Graduating Class, U.S. Military Academy, 6 June 1962.
287. John F. Kennedy, remarks to the graduating class of the U.S. Military Academy, West Point, New York, 6 June 1962, John F. Kennedy, Presidential Library and Museum, located in audio (08:25 to 08:48) accessed at Remarks to the Graduating Class of the U.S. Military Academy, West Point, New York, 6 June 1962, JFK Library.
288. Captain Mark, “Special Forces—Operation Enduring Freedom,” presentation to the Army Resource Management Conference, Denver, Colorado.

289. Some might recall the acronym “JIIM”: Joint, Interagency, Intergovernmental and Multinational. The acronym, JIIM was removed from the DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms (updated as of September 2018) and the term “intergovernmental organization” has been removed from Joint Publication (JP) 3-08 *Interorganizational*, 12 October 2016 (and validated on 18 October 2017). The older JP 3-08 (24 June 2011) used to refer to the United Nations and NATO as examples of intergovernmental organizations (IGO), but the newer publications refers to them as international organizations.
290. George Tenet and Bill Harlow, *At the Center of the Storm: My Years at the CIA* (New York, NY: Harper-Collins, 2007), 207.
291. Morell, *The Great War of Our Time*, 64.
292. Schroen, *First In*, 197.
293. Morell, *The Great War of Our Time*, 64, indicates that the CIA linked up with the SF teams in Afghanistan on 17 October.
294. Knarr, Jr., *Mazar-e Sharif Battle Site Survey Support Documents*.
295. William M. Knarr, Jr., *The First Victory of the 21st Century*, Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA) Document NS D-4645, July 2012, 15, 16.
296. Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown*; Briscoe, *Weapon of Choice*, 103; 13 November 2001 and the fall of Kabul is used as a pivot point between the successes of the Northern alliance in the north and the campaign in the south in the Pashtun areas.
297. Briscoe, *Weapon of Choice*, 103.
298. Briscoe, *Weapon of Choice*, 155.
299. United Nations, *Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan Pending the Re-establishment of Permanent Government Institutions (Bonn Agreement)*, accessed 20 September, <https://peacemaker.un.org/afghanistan-bonnagreement2001>, 3. “The Interim Authority consisted of the Interim Administration, a Special Independent Commission for the Convening of the Emergency Loya Jirga, and a Supreme Court of Afghanistan as well as other courts as may be established by the Interim Administration,” 3.
300. Stewart, “The United States Army in Afghanistan,” 19, 20.
301. U.S. Army in Afghanistan: Operation Enduring Freedom, 32.
302. U.S. Army in Afghanistan: Operation Enduring Freedom, 44.
303. Briscoe, *Weapon of Choice*, 276–277.
304. Briscoe, *Weapon of Choice*, 277.
305. Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *DOD Dictionary*, 243. This publication also refers the reader to Joint Publication 3-05, *Special Operations*.
306. As indicated in the last chapter, the 2016 NDAA deification of unconventional warfare exchanges that last conjunction “and” for “or” in “underground, auxiliary and guerrilla force” making this discussion a moot point.

307. This monograph uses the ARIS definition of underground and auxiliary previously discussed in the last chapter.
308. Crumpton, *The Art of Intelligence*, 131.
309. Schroen, *First In*, 87.
310. Mark on subsequent travels to Northern Afghanistan has met with General Dostum, Commander Atta, Commander Mohaqeq and other locals who proudly share their role in this underground and auxiliary network. Mark has met several businessmen instrumental in the underground who helped to finance the Northern Alliance resistance forces. They had first met in fall of 2001.
311. Joint Publication 3-05, *Unconventional Warfare*, 14 April 2011, II-10. Also see USASOC *Unconventional Warfare Pocket Guide*, V.1, 5 April 2016, 11–16.
312. Bush, *Decision Points*, 201; Grenier, *88 Days to Kandahar*.
313. Konrad Trautman, *Special Operations Intelligence*.

