

Ready! Fire! Aim! – The Problem of Stability Operations Information in Afghanistan
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In this paper, the authors present a short history of stability operations training, information analysis and dissemination in Afghanistan from 2009 to the present, with a critique and suggestions on how to apply lessons learned from success and failure of current and future Stability Operations to increase effectiveness and decrease costs in both lives and treasure.

The presented paper will contain suggestions for incorporating lessons learned from Stability Operations downrange into training and exercises for the leaders and personnel engaged in stability operations.

The effectiveness of stability operations in Afghanistan has been reduced by short term rotations, paternalistic information reporting, stove-piping of information flows, endless editing of information and analysis, and reporting of information that is both selective and politically biased. These problems are caused in part by poor training and preparation of individuals and organizations as to how they are to share information, to include how they are to document their operations so mistakes are not repeated and so best practices are passed on.

The result has been waste and ineffective stability operations in Afghanistan. These problems are compounded by a general lack of information sharing within and between organizations. There is also a failure on the part of inadequately trained leaders to efficiently distinguish the difference between relevant and irrelevant data, to organize available data in a manner that is logical and concise and to consistently share information.

The paper's authors will show how the incorporation of a Protected Internet Exchange will remove paternalistic leader bias and flatten the information flow/cycle, while simultaneously providing an easily accessible "lessons learned" repository in narrative form, which could be used for operational handover of areas of responsibility, individual self-education and institutional training and exercises.

In this paper, the authors will make the following recommendations:

1. Stability operations should, from the planning phase, include the mandatory referral of a copy of raw and processed data by all government agencies to a Protected Internet Exchange. NGOs and Host Nation organizations should be encouraged to share data via this mechanism as well.
2. Information development and analysis and should be focused on the smallest political level practical, through the review of available data. Effective stability operations are starved for granular, relevant information as most conflict areas consist of very diverse populations and situations.

3. Leader development should include the training and incentivized encouragement of leaders to foster the active gathering, analysis and dissemination of data across organizations.

Sources: Primary: Authors' experiences, Stability Operations reporting from Afghanistan, to include CERP fund applications, Atmospheric Reporting, IPA Daily, ADT reporting, VSO and NGO reports. Secondary: Media reports

Drew is a Lieutenant Colonel in the Army Reserve, with 30+ years of military, research and teaching experience, and a Master's in International Relations from Boston University. He was a "plank owner" for GEN McChrystal's Stability Operations Information Center/Consolidated Stability Operations Center concept, and is currently an analyst for Tesla Government's Protected Internet Exchange (PiX). He lived and worked in Afghanistan from 2009 to 2012 with the Department of State Poppy Eradication Force and the DoD's Atmospheric Program – Afghanistan. He is a former Dean of Military Intelligence at the Iraqi Military Intelligence School, Associate Professor at Illinois State University, Adjunct Instructor at Des Moines Area Community College and an Instructor at the US Army Command and General Staff College. He presented at Combat Studies Institute 2006 on innovations in security assistance to Romania and has authored numerous staff studies for COMISAF during his three years working there. Drew also wrote interactive Training Scripts for the Joint Multinational Readiness Center in Hohenfels, Germany.

Janiece is a former US Army HUMINT Collector with extensive experience in Afghanistan as a reports officer, information gatherer, analyst, and cultural advisor to Coalition Forces. She is fluent in Pashto and has extensive experience working on Special Operations Forces teams in austere environments in rural Afghanistan, engaging Afghan men, women, and children. She deployed to Kunar Province, Afghanistan, to support Stability Operations for an Operational Detachment Alpha (ODA) as a Cultural Support Team member and Pashto linguist. Upon redeployment from Afghanistan, she returned to the Defense Language Institute as a Pashto Cadre member and instructor. She is currently working for Tesla Government on the Protected Internet Exchange project.