

Running Head: SPECIAL FORCES SUCCESSFUL INCORPORATING —
COUNTERINSURGENCY TACTICS IN AFGHANISTAN

Special Forces Successful Incorporating Counterinsurgency Tactics in Afghanistan

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*Fairly well organized- Comparison of campaigns
not fully developed. ~~By~~ Conclusion better articulated
than the thesis and belongs at head of the paper.*

Outline

Topic #1: Compare and contrast two counterinsurgency campaigns covered in H100 and analyze the root causes of success or failure in each conflict.

1. Thesis Statement. Although a relatively small force in the onset of Operation Enduring Freedom, U.S. Special Forces succeeded in its counterinsurgency campaign against the Taliban by educating themselves; ^{by} disciplined application of force; and ^{by} collaborating with the Northern Alliance.

2. Major Points.

- a. Special Forces units avoid mistakes made in previous counterinsurgency campaigns.
- b. Special Forces units participating in OEF understood the necessity of disciplined applications of force when combating the Taliban.
- c. Special Forces units succeeded in their counterinsurgency campaign by working with the Northern Alliance, not against them.

3. Supporting Points of Evidence.

- a. The Victorio Campaign. Special Forces units learned from the mistakes made by U.S. forces in the Victorio Campaign incorporating cultural awareness, bringing the fight to the insurgents, and operating with Afghan military units to accomplish U.S. objectives in the beginnings of Operation Enduring Freedom.
- b. The Special Forces and Northern Alliance in Afghanistan. Special Forces units used disciplined applications of force, partnered effectively with the Northern Alliance and understood how best to beat the Taliban.

Abstract

The United States military, caught completely unaware by the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, needed to respond with action to appease the national will of the U.S. people. Although a relatively small force in the onset of Operation Enduring Freedom, U.S. Special Forces succeeded in its counterinsurgency campaign against the Taliban by educating themselves on lessons learned; disciplined application of force; and collaborating with the Northern Alliance. Special Forces units participating in OEF understood the necessity of disciplined applications of force when combating the Taliban. Special Forces units succeeded in their counterinsurgency campaign by working with the Northern Alliance, not against them. Special Forces units learned from the mistakes made by U.S. forces in the Victorio Campaign incorporating cultural awareness, bringing the fight to the insurgents, and operating with Afghan military units to accomplish U.S. objectives in the beginnings of OEF.

Special Forces Successful Incorporating Counterinsurgency Tactics in Afghanistan

In 2001, the United States military was largely a peacetime force experienced in peacekeeping operations and humanitarian assistance missions. The military had not fought a large-scale engagement since 1991, during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, and had undergone a drawdown of massive proportions following that conflict. Additionally, the U.S. military still trained using unrealistic scenarios facing off against a mythical superpower. Although service men and women served admirably in Somalia, Bosnia, Kosovo, and numerous other locations worldwide, they were not prepared to fight a war against terrorists. The U.S. military caught completely ^{off guard} unaware by the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 needed to respond with action to (appease) the national will of the U.S. people. *strange use of the word*

The U.S. government turned its attention to the small country of Afghanistan. The Taliban, the operating government at the time, harbored terrorists within the borders of Afghanistan. Additionally, the terrorists who attacked the U.S. on September 11, 2001 had trained in Afghanistan for their mission. The Taliban refused to meet President George Bush's demands to turn over the leader of the Al-Qaeda terrorist group, Osama Bin Laden, and Bush gave the world an ultimatum for how the U.S. would handle nation-states harboring terrorists. "The Taliban must turn over ^{the} al-Qaeda organization living within Afghanistan and must destroy the terrorist camps. And they must do so, otherwise there will be a consequence" (Asian Political News, 2001, para. 4). *awkward perhaps not accurately quoted*

Immediately after determining Al Qaeda was responsible for the terrorist attacks, the U.S. military began staging its forces in neighboring Uzbekistan for a possible invasion of Afghanistan. This was a unique force called Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force – North (CJSOTF-N). CJSOTF-N comprised of 5th Special Forces Group, 160th Special Operations

Aviation Regiment, other elements from U.S. Special Operations Command, and a battalion from the 10th Mountain Division. The CJSOTF-N commander, Col. John Mulholland, planned and executed the opening engagements in the Global War on Terrorism, thus launching a war against a terror that started over seven years ago. Mulholland pinned the success of the entire operation on counterinsurgency tactics. (These counterinsurgency tactics disrupted the Taliban's military forces and won the hearts and minds of the Afghan people.) Although a relatively small force in the onset of Operation Enduring Freedom, U.S. Special Forces succeeded in its counterinsurgency campaign against the Taliban by educating themselves; disciplined application of force; and collaborating with the Northern Alliance.

questionable

Special Forces Units Avoided Mistakes Made in Previous Counterinsurgency Campaigns

One reason for the success of the CJSOTF-N units in the early phases of Operation Enduring Freedom was they avoided mistakes made in previous counterinsurgency campaigns.

U.S. Special Forces practice counterinsurgency operations in every mission they undergo. It is part of their doctrine and the reason Special Forces units are so successful with counterinsurgency operations is due to their emphasis on understanding the history of counterinsurgency operations. The U.S. Army field manual on counterinsurgency recognizes the expertise of Special Operations forces in counterinsurgency techniques by stating they are the subject matter experts in training and advising foreign armed forces (Counterinsurgency, 2006).

double verb

Since the creation of the Office of Strategic Services, the forefathers of today's Special Operations units, one of their core tasks has been working with foreign nation militaries and populace. This is a critical component of counterinsurgency tactics and one the U.S. military recognized over 70 years ago as necessary when fighting an insurgency. The U.S. Special Forces trained and fought using counterinsurgency tactics since its inception in the early 1960s.

p 192 no.?

what happened then? 1920s?

This focus also includes learning from past mistakes the U.S. military has made during counterinsurgency operations from as early as the Indian Wars in the 1880s. For example, U.S. Special Forces troops used horses and pack mules to move themselves and their supplies through the rough Afghanistan terrain much as the U.S. troops did in the Indian Wars. U.S. Special Forces traditionally adopt unusual tactics such as pack mules to better adapt to its surroundings and to build rapport with the foreign nation militaries.

*how did
use of mules
build rapport?*

Necessity of Disciplined Applications of Force when Combating the Taliban

Additionally, CJSOTF-N understood applying appropriate force was paramount when fighting the Taliban. The U.S. military could not afford to hurt innocent Afghans when conducting combat operations in Afghanistan. Therefore, careful consideration was necessary when planning combat missions. Robert Kaplan in his article “Imperial Grunts” wrote that the U.S. military won in Afghanistan through a combination of technology and field craft. “It took fewer than 200 men on the ground from the Army’s 5th Special Forces Group, in addition to CIA troops and Air Force Special Ops embeds, helped by the Afghan Northern Alliance and friendly Pashtoons (sic) to topple the Taliban regime” (Kaplan, 2005). Additionally, Mulholland gave his troops liberal license when determining what force to use in accomplishing their mission. This lack of micromanagement from multiple layers of command above CJSOTF-N allowed the Special Forces trooper on the ground to determine how to defeat his enemy. Kaplan noted that all the guidance the Special Forces trooper received was to figure out the details on his own as he went about his mission of supporting the Northern Alliance and the friendly Afghans in their battle to defeat the Taliban (Kaplan, 2005).

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CJSOTF-N troopers needed to understand the amount of force necessary to defeat their enemy to follow counterinsurgency’s maxim of winning hearts and minds. One cannot win

hearts and minds if the counterinsurgency is killing innocent foreign nationals haphazardly during operations. *this is not an example of avoiding killings* (Kaplan wrote about how the Special Forces troopers on a combat patrol were carefully looking over intelligence papers trying not to wake up sleeping children in the same room.) The rest of the force did not retaliate to having grenades thrown at them with equal or greater harm, but instead looked for the unexploded grenades outside and gathered information peacefully from the people in the compound (Kaplan, 2005). Other conventional forces may have fought fire with fire and thrown grenades into the compound in retaliation, thus destroying the intelligence they could have collected and angering the foreign populace. Ultimately, using the appropriate disciplined action against the Taliban worked for the Special Forces troops. They were able to accomplish their mission using ~~the~~ appropriate force for each particular mission.

Working with the Northern Alliance, Not Against Them

At the onset of Operation Enduring Freedom, the counterinsurgency campaign worked well since CJSOTF-N troops understood they had to work with the Northern Alliance. Failing to work with them could have delayed combat operations for months and may have resulted in the national will of the U.S. turning against a retaliatory strike in Afghanistan. Mulholland understood the mission and knew his troops had the proper training to interact and ally with the Northern Alliance. The U.S. military originally predicted it would take two years to win the ground campaign in Afghanistan; the CJSOTF-N troops accomplished this goal in less than three months (Briscoe, 2003). *PAGES?* Key to this success was the strong relationships between the small Special Forces Operational Detachments and their Northern Alliance allies. The Northern Alliance was not an organized fighting force, but rather a group of tribes united in their efforts to drive the Taliban out of Afghanistan. “Most of those leaders were Tajik, Uzbek, or Hazara” (Briscoe, 2003, p. 154). Pairing the Operational Detachments with these leaders was a

precarious situation and it was not obviously clear how the relationships would work. However, since the Special Forces units specialize in training foreign forces this was an ideal situation for the U.S. military to exploit.

The Victorio Campaign

The Special Forces units learned from past mistakes made by the U.S. Army in counterinsurgency campaigns. The Victorio campaign in the late 19th century provided numerous lessons learned that Special Forces units adopted when they prepared for combat in Afghanistan. Specifically, Special Forces units learned from the mistakes made by U.S. forces in the Victorio campaign incorporating cultural awareness, bringing the fight to the insurgents, and operating with Afghan military units to accomplish U.S. objectives in the beginnings of OEF.

Kendall Gott, the author of In Search of an Elusive Enemy, states today's Special Forces units had much in common with the U.S. Army chasing Victorio in 1879 through 1880. Gott equates Victorio and his Indians to Bin Laden and al-Qaeda with the ease that both cross *cd* international borders to prevent U.S. military strikes (Gott, 2004). Though this comparison does exist, one can see how being culturally sensitive to the populace can assist today's Special Forces troops in the fight against terror. By co-existing with the foreign populace, today's Special Forces troops build a rapport and can use intelligence from the populace to determine if terrorists from other nations are launching strikes in Afghanistan. Additionally, today's Special Forces troops built a trust with the Northern Alliance leaders that still exists. Therefore, they have many resources to use when attempting to block insurgent activity at the borders.

Gott also writes today's terrorists in Afghanistan have the advantage of terrain. Terrorists use the harsh weather and barren, rocky terrain to their advantage when fighting the U.S. military (Gott, 2004). However, the U.S. military effectively uses its superior technology and firepower

to its advantage. This lesson learned from the Victorio campaign leveled the playing field for the U.S. military. The Special Forces units successfully brought the fight to the enemy in Afghanistan, calling in airstrikes and using precision-guided munitions to leverage their technological advantage over a larger enemy force. These small units, partnered with Northern Alliance forces, were able to ^{shift} sway the balance of the ground war in the U.S. favor in a short period.

The final comparison between the Victorio campaign and the war in Afghanistan deals with the logistics. Gott wrote of the Victorio campaign, "Soldiers were a long way from home, and supplying them with food, forage, and ammunition was a constant endeavor across the vast tracts of the frontier" (Gott, 2004). Those words could be applied just as well to the war in Afghanistan. However, again the technological superiority of the U.S. military worked in its favor. Using airborne resupply, air insertions, satellite communications, and electronic mail, the Special Forces units were able to sustain their resources to keep the pressure on the Taliban. After the Taliban was defeated in the summer of 2002, there ^{Army established} were numerous logistical support areas in Afghanistan to push supplies out to the troops on the ground.

what's the comparison here? Is it success of technological superiority in both campaigns

Special Forces units used these lessons learned from the Victorio campaign to their advantage when fighting the Taliban. Special Forces units used their superior firepower and technology to smash the Taliban quickly, without regard to the terrain. Additionally, the Special Forces units learned to embrace the culture they operated in to establish better relations with the populace. Finally, Special Forces units kept and maintained a successful logistics chain capable of reinforcing themselves and their allies anytime and anywhere.

Conclusion

The U.S. Special Forces won the first campaign in Afghanistan for the U.S. military. (At no other time in history had the efforts of so few made such a difference in a war.)

not in text

Approximately 200 U.S. military forces allied themselves with an indigenous force and in three months conquered an enemy that by some estimates should have taken two years to defeat. Special Forces troops could not have accomplished this tremendous feat without applying lessons learned from previous counterinsurgency campaigns.

CJSOTF-N troops used lessons learned from the Victorio Campaign to defeat the Taliban in rapid succession. These Special Forces troops learned from previous U.S. Army mistakes in the 1879-1880 campaign by applying appropriate force against the enemy and using the harsh terrain to their advantage denying the Taliban a safe haven to flee. Additionally, the Special Forces troopers brought a piece of history with them using pack mules and horses to move quickly through the mountainous regions just as their predecessors had done over 100 years before them. Finally, Special Forces troops used technology to their advantage ensuring their supplies could reach them no matter where they were in the world. These troops challenged the logistics system, but by using electronic mail, satellite communications and aerial resupply and insertions they always managed to get sufficient supplies for them and their allies.

The war on terror started with a monumental surprise attack against the U.S. The U.S. national will was high and retaliation against the terrorists who attacked was a must. The U.S. military could not have picked a better course of action than using the Special Forces units to win the opening salvo of the Global War on Terrorism. U.S. Special Forces units are masters of the counterinsurgency fight. These units became masters by learning from mistakes made in previous counterinsurgency campaigns and applying those lessons learned in combat. Though

the Global War on Terrorism continues to this day, the U.S. Special Forces will continue to be a factor until the war is over.

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