Multi-Layered Assessment: Lessons from Measuring Progress in Afghanistan

Dr P. Dobias, Dr. P. Eleš, Dr. K. Sprague, Maj J. Leahy

DRDC CORA

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Outline

• Background
• Topology of Assessment
• Measures of Effectiveness and Performance
• Village Assessment
• District Assessment
• From District to National Assessment
• Summary and Conclusions
Purpose

• To provide an overview of the assessment process for Afghanistan from Canadian perspective and to outline some general lessons learned
Background: Canadians and Assessment

- Canadian Assessment in Afghanistan
  - Task Force Kandahar since 2006 (TFK)
  - Strategic Advisory Team in Kabul
- CEFCOM assessment requirements 2006-2008
- OR&A support to the assessment process
- TFK 2009 – KANTOLO ➔ requirement for Village Assessment
- Current USCENTCOM work: District Assessment Model, Transition
Topology of Assessment

• Assessing at different command / geographical / organizational levels:
  – Same organizational/geographical; different command level
  – Same command level; different organizational level
  – Different command level; different organizational level

• Roll-up of the assessment: considering information at the appropriate level:
  – Include additional information if required
  – Eliminate information if not relevant
Topology of Assessment

• Option 1: Self-similar picture: Assessment of the same geographical/organizational structure by different levels of command
Topology of Assessment

• Non-self-similar picture: Assessment of different structures at the same or different command levels
Measures of Effectiveness

“Are we doing the right thing?” vs. “Are we doing things right”

- Quantitative and Qualitative measures:
  - Objective facts
  - Context to interpret facts
  - Minimize subjectivity: indicators/grading scales

- Quality of performed tasks: implicit assumption that the tasks lead to desired objectives

- Indicators independent of tasks: reevaluating assumptions

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Selections of Measures

• How many measures are too many?
  – Practical considerations:
    • Too labour intensive
    • Drain on resources
    • Too much information for a particular level
• Errors of measurement
  – Each measure carries an error: more measures → more measures means greater uncertainty
• Measures must be relevant, consistent in time, provide sufficient context
Local Assessment: Human Behaviour

- Village or community level: limited options of assessment
  - SIGACTS – too few
  - Surveys – typically inadequate representation, too infrequent

- Assessing actual behaviour vs. “stated” perceptions
Local Assessment: Human Behaviour

- The assessors living among the people
- Daily observation of POL and its changes
- How do people behave vs. what they say they think
  - Will they interact openly with ISAF?
  - Will they report INS activity?
  - Do they go to markets?
  - Are their basic needs met?
District Assessment: What We Do Not See?

- IJC developed district assessment model: only good for the districts with persistent ISAF presence
- CENTCOM AFG-PAK COE supports the assessment for non-IJC districts using alternative information sources
- The two assessments are compatible and complement each other
- COE assessment enables filling white spaces, provides country-wide information

How can the information be combined to provide a simple, strategic, country-wide assessment?
Some considerations

- Relative importance of different assessment focus areas (lines of operations)
- Capturing additional information when moving up the assessment levels, omitting information that is not relevant
Current Status

- Provincial assessment supporting TOA process
  - Starting from districts, moving up
  - Combining multi-source information
  - Considering governance, security and development
    - Many stakeholders, competing interests
- Assessing success of the current COIN strategy
  - Can we make progress in 18 months
Summary

• Assessment is a challenging area under the best of circumstances

• In Afghanistan:
  – Complex environment
  – Competing interests

• Key considerations:
  – Purpose of the assessment
  – Scope/command level
  – What information is available/relevant?

• Supporting assessment can be a stressful and yet very rewarding experience