In-Theatre OA Support to ISAF

Lessons from Recent Deployments
Outline

- Motivation & Background
- Deployment Details
- Who is the Afghan Assessment Group (AAG)?
- Main OA Support Efforts
- Observations & Challenges
- Lessons Learned
Background

• Evolved out of an NC3A project administered by SHAPE conducting a quarterly strategic assessment of the ISAF mission (ISAC)
  – Includes the use of operational analysts and subject matter experts in Security, Governance, and Development
  – Customer was SACEUR (GEN Craddock) to inform him of the strategic issues facing ISAF, Afghanistan and the surrounding region
  – Purview was wider than just Afghanistan to include wider geo-political influences (India, China, Iran, ...)
• After Q4 2009, made trip into ISAF to share experiences and data
• Similar experiences and skillsets resulted in a natural partnership to leverage resources back in Europe

Goal: Demonstrate that JAB/NC3A can provide competent in-theatre and reach-back strategic assessment support
Deployment Details

• Deployed to HQ ISAF to the Afghan Assessment Group (AAG)
  – Located in the Combined Joint Operations Center (CJOC)
  – Now part of the Strategic Transition & Assessments Group (STAG)
• 10 deployments so far from 2009 - 2011
  – Average time spent in theatre: ~4 weeks per deployment
• Full-time Operational Analysis (OA) support both in-theatre and via reach-back
  – At least one analyst present in-theatre
  – Full-time Coordinator to perform analysis, coordinate reach-back resources
  – Additional leveraging of analysts from JFCBS
• Primary objective is to support the requirements of the AAG:
  1. Analysis & Assessments
  2. Reporting
  3. Data Management & Tool Development
AAG Background

• ISAF Afghan Assessment Group (AAG)
  – Analytics + Reporting
  – Authoritative source for all analytical and assessment products produced by ISAF
  – Approx 15 staff
    • 12 rotational military
    • 3 civilian analysts

• Broken into 3 focus areas
  1. Campaign Assessment (ISAF OPLAN)
  2. Analytics
  3. Transition Assessment in support of Inteqal and JANIB
AAG IT Infrastructure

• Network Infrastructure
  – 80% ISAF Secret (IS)
  – 10% US SIPR
  – 10% Other (NS / NU)

• Primary Data Sources
  – CIDNE, JOCWatch: Kinetics analysis (violence, casualties, IED trends)
  – IJC’s Afghan Wiki & AAG: Transition reports, Monthly/Quarterly Reports
  – NTM-A: ANSF updates
  – Surveys: supplement analyses
  – National intelligence sources

• Software
  – Microsoft, Microsoft, Microsoft (Excel, PowerPoint, Word)
Full-time Operational Analysis (OA) support both in-theatre and via reach-back
- At least one analyst present in-theatre
- At least one analyst on-call via reach-back
- Additional leveraging of analysts from JFCBS

Two primary areas of support
1. Analysis & Analytics
   - Provide targeted OA capabilities and products
   - Leverage existing NC3A analytical resources (SMEs, Wikis, TOPFAS)
2. Reporting support
   - Help satisfy the reporting requirements of COMISAF
   - Tie-in to strategic HQ (SHAPE, JFCBS)
NC3A Support to AAG: Analysis

• Represents a bulk of the support provided by NC3A
• Involves analyzing and cross-correlating data to present fact summaries, narratives, and presentations
• Focus areas
  – Security incident analysis – where security is high, where it is low, and causal factors for why
  – Casualties – Civilian and Coalition casualty analysis
  – Exploratory analysis – using the numbers to extract telling trends and patterns
• Telling the story of the campaign
Types of Analysis at AAG

- Basic descriptive analyses
  - Systemic/holistic analysis
    - System-of-systems
    - Influence / causal loop diagrams
    - Effects-based assessment
  - Data analysis
    - Data mining
    - Regression analysis
    - Statistical modeling
- Emphasis in theatre is on trending
  - More useful than absolute numbers (more on this later)
- Questions to ask
  1. Is the data measurable?
  2. Is the data relevant?
  3. Is the data credible?
  4. Is the data persistent?
NC3A Support to AAG: Reporting

• Assist with both NATO and National Reporting Requirements
  – Quarterly Strategic Assessment Report (QSAR)
  – Transition Provincial Outlook Report (TPOR)
  – Joint Afghan-NATO Inteqal Board (JANIB) Report
  – National reporting

• Current Focus: Transition
  – The transition of Provinces away from ISAF and over to Afghan control
  – JANIB Report – bi-annual report discussing Provincial candidates for Transition to Afghan control
  – Provide the factual evidence to support the transition of certain Provinces
  – Used by SCR, Dr. Ghani
OA Products Delivered for ISAF / GIRoA

• Monthly and Quarterly Violence Summaries to COMISAF
• Transition Reports to SCR, Dr. Ashraf Ghani (Pres Karzai’s Transition Director)
• Training of Afghan Analysts: Office of the National Security Council (ONSC)
• ISAF Representative at Press Conference on civilian casualties
• Special Topics
  – Pitfalls of Data Aggregation: DCOS OPS
  – CIVCAS: COS (LTG Fugier)
  – Kabul Violence: SCR, BBC, POTUS
  – Reporting: Lisbon Summit, US Congressional

Compared the chances a Kabuli is involved in a violent incident vs. US violent crime rates.
Data Management & Tool Development

- ISAF AAG is the authoritative entity for managing and coordinating all data pertaining to security metrics in Afghanistan.
  - This includes:
    - Security incidents (i.e. violence)
    - Casualties (civilian and ISAF)
    - Nationwide Survey
- NC3A assists with tools and methods for managing and using the data more effectively.
- Goal: streamline the processes and procedures within the AAG for generating periodic products
  - Weekly COMISAF Violence Update
  - Survey Analysis
  - Quarterly Reporting

"How is the security situation in your mantaqa?"

“Good” – Sep 10
Observations & Challenges
Data Representation

• Two reporting tools/databases exist for different purposes:
  • **JOCWatch** exists for **reporting**
    – ISAF’s and IJC’s tracking and reporting tool
    – Comprises primarily SIGACTs
    – Valid reporting/analysis within a 24-hour period
  • **CIDNE** exists for **analysis**
    – Most comprehensive database
    – Comprises more than SIGACTs
    – CIDNE data should be used for historical comparisons, trending and analysis; all data beyond the immediate 24-hour period
Data Representation (cont’d)

• Data is rarely well-formed
  – Raw data formats are ambiguous and inconsistent
  – Tremendous amount of pre-processing is required
  – Ultimately it all ends up in Excel because people know it
• Data is not well-tagged
  – Meta-tagging in DHS is not always helpful
  – Arduous searching
• Sharing of data is marginalized
  – Everyone has their own way of doing things
  – Poses problems during staff rotations, TDY, and leave
• Most used resource for locating things when you don’t know where to go = ISAF Search
Data Analysis

• COIN is complex – understanding what constitutes “progress” can be vague and ambiguous
• Back to issues regarding data – Relevance, measurability, credibility, persistence
• Interpretation, like the analysis, is very subjective
Lessons Learned

- Must quickly and demonstrably add value
  - Output is a key indicator of success
  - Presentation is as important as the analysis
  - Constrain (or guide) interpretation of the analysis

- Know your environment
  - Your customer
  - Your customer’s customer
  - Operational environment and current optempo
Questions??