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The Dutch COIN approach: three years in Uruzgan, 2006–2009

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Rarely has a military commitment led to such intense discussion in the Netherlands as the Task Force Uruzgan (TFU) mission in Afghanistan. In February 2010, the Netherlands' coalition government even collapsed after the two largest parties failed to agree on the withdrawal of Dutch troops from Afghanistan later this year. This article deals first of all with the difficult discussion over the Afghanistan mission of the TFU. The authors then subject three ISAF operations to close scrutiny. The authors provide some suggestions to help understand better this pivotal point in the execution of the whole operation and thus give a fuller picture of the Dutch counterinsurgency approach in Uruzgan.

Keywords: Uruzgan; The Netherlands; ISAF/Task Force Uruzgan; COIN; NATO; Afghanistan

1. Introduction

The Netherlands were the lead nation in the Afghan province of Uruzgan for four years from 2006 to 2010. During that period, the Netherlands made a huge contribution to the *International Security Assistance Force* (ISAF) with thousands of military and scores of civilian personnel. Initially, a force of 1200 to 1400 was to be sent to South Afghanistan, a figure that has since grown to almost 2000.¹ The first period, which was due to expire in the year 2008, was extended to 2010.² However, on 20 February 2010, the Dutch coalition government headed by Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende collapsed after a conflict over extension of the Dutch mission in Afghanistan. Balkenende's center-right Christian Democrats wanted to agree to a NATO request to extend the Dutch presence in Afghanistan, whereas the Labour Party bitterly opposed it.³

How was the mission initially proposed and what discussion was there over its definition and the terminology employed? And what happened during the last three years? The mission Task Force Uruzgan has led to much discussion, both in the media and in political circles. What can be said in any case is that the Netherlands has made a strong investment in this military operation: many more soldiers have been sent than in previous years, and the Dutch military has not been called on to fight so hard since the Korean War.⁴

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In this article, we stop to take a close look at the most recent history of the Dutch mission in Uruzgan, both in its political-strategic and tactical aspects. It is, of course, still too soon to draw up a balance sheet for such a complex mission as the present one in Afghanistan; that will only be possible some years afterwards. It is not easy to identify progress in any concrete way during the mission itself, or even to specify parameters. Conquered territory or neutralized opponents, after all, are hardly reliable indicators of success.

We shall therefore be very cautious with any pronouncement over the results of the mission. We shall dwell primarily on the process – the decision-making and the learning experiences during operations. We first give consideration to the political discussions and the mission's assignment, after which we turn our attention to a few TFU-operations. Specifically, we look at three military ISAF operations: operation 'Perth'⁵ in July 2006; 'Spin Ghar' (White Mountain) in October 2007; and 'Tura Ghar' (Sable Mountain) in January 2009, all three of which were conducted in the Baluchi valley in Uruzgan (Figure 1).

We ask what has been learned during these operations and we emphasize a crucial link in the execution of such missions: the consolidation of territory taken from the insurgents. The fact that we emphasize this phase of consolidation does not mean that we ignore or underestimate the importance of reconstruction,

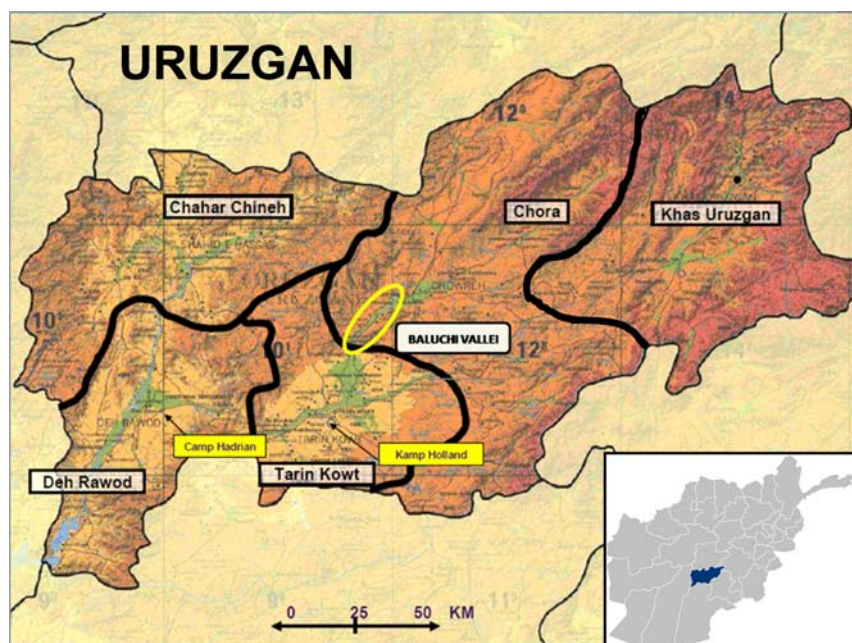


Figure 1. The Afghan province of Uruzgan. Source: 'Tussentijdse evaluatie ISAF – 2009-09-11' supplement to Minutes of the Second Chamber of the Dutch Parliament 2008–2009, 27925, no. 357.

but rather that stability and security are the pre-conditions for any successful reconstruction.

2. The mission: the political debate

The first thing that must be apparent when contemplating the sort of action which government facing insurgency should take, is that there can be no such thing as a purely military solution because insurgency is not primarily a military activity.

General Sir Frank Kitson⁶

On 22 December 2005, in an article-100 declaration,⁷ the Dutch government ministers Henk Kamp (Defense), Ben Bot (Foreign Affairs) and Agnes van Ardenne (Development Cooperation) informed the lower house of the mission in Uruzgan. In accordance with the ISAF mandate, the aim of the mission would be to promote stability and security by increasing the support of the local population for the Afghan authorities and eroding the support for the Taliban and related groups.⁸

The Netherlands were thus not officially at war; Article 96 of the Constitution did not come into effect. It was in the first place a question of promoting good governance, setting up efficient police and armed forces and assisting in the building of a constitutional state, as well as carrying out CIMIC and reconstruction activities.

Acceptable risks

The linkage between bringing stability, security, and reconstruction were recognized early by the then ministers Henk Kamp, Ben Bot, and Agnes van Ardenne. In a letter sent to the Second Chamber (the Dutch House of Representatives) on 22 December 2005, they wrote: 'The stabilization and reconstruction of Afghanistan, especially in the south, where the Taliban has its origin, is of the greatest importance for the promotion of international order and the fight against international terrorism which also threatens Europe. In view of that importance the government considers the risks [of the mission] acceptable.'⁹ This observation was in line with the prevailing views on crisis management that security and stability are the pre-conditions for lasting development.¹⁰

In February 2006 the Second Chamber decided that Dutch soldiers should be sent under the flag of the TFU to Uruzgan province in the south of Afghanistan, a rather isolated area, with a population of 395,000 (mainly Pashtun tribes), which mainly earned its significance through the fact that it produced many Taliban leaders and that President Karzai chose to start his quest for power there in late 2001.¹¹

That same month, the first troops of the Deployment Task Force (DTF) were dispatched and in August the TFU started its campaign in Tarin Kowt and Deh Rawod, in the center of Uruzgan, with the aim of creating and expanding an 'ink spot' of stability and security. The plan was that the Dutch troops would take over two bases in Uruzgan. From there they would gradually extend their

influence and in so doing promote security and stability in the province. This would consequently facilitate the reconstruction to be carried out preferably in collaboration with Afghan and international organizations.¹² After a few months, the Task Force Uruzgan created a third ink spot in and around Chora, which is northeast of the Baluchi valley. Currently the Dutch still have their main focus on these three urban areas.

‘A reconstruction mission rather than a combat mission’

Immediately after the February decision a discussion about the nature of the mission took off, which was adopted and dramatized in the media. In the course of a general consultation in the Second Chamber on 22 February 2006, member Farah Karimi (*Groenlinks*; Green Party), for example, defined the Dutch deployment as a ‘combat mission’,¹³ even before the first TFU rotation became operational. The term ‘combat mission’ was then taken up by other opposition parties (the SP and later also by D66 and the PVV),¹⁴ heralding the beginning of a long discussion over the mission – a discussion which centered on the (supposed) opposition between the terms ‘reconstruction mission’ and a ‘combat mission’.

The progressive parties mainly feared a ‘mission creep’ and overlap with the American military Operation Enduring Freedom, something that in their view could impinge on the Dutch reconstruction activities. Minister Ben Bot (Foreign Affairs) and Minister Eimert van Middelkoop (Defense) tried to turn the tide by pointing out that the government had never alleged that it was a matter of such a simplistic opposition.¹⁵ But the harm was already done. Not only in public debate but also in the media the TFU was increasingly discussed in terms of this opposition.¹⁶

‘Do what is necessary’

The armed forces themselves tried to avoid this narrowing of vision by making it clear that many options were open at the same time. On the question of whether it should be a combat mission or a reconstruction mission the commander of TFU-1, Colonel Theo Vleugels, replied: ‘We are going to do what is necessary and possible.’¹⁷ Major-General Ton van Loon, commander of Regional Command – South (RC-South) from 1 November 2006 to 1 May 2007, also avoided getting dragged into the discussion then being conducted in the Netherlands: ‘We must also be prepared, in certain places where we cannot construct, to fight in order to achieve that security.’¹⁸ The commander of TFU-2, Colonel Hans van Griensven, commented: ‘The words “reconstruction mission” and “combat mission”, and their interpretation do not exist in our Defense Doctrine.’¹⁹ In the years immediately following, Defense tried to break out of this polarized discussion. On 5 October 2007 General Dick Berlijn, then Commander of the Armed Forces, let it be known that he was not at all happy with the term ‘reconstruction mission’. Minister Eimert

van Middelkoop stressed that the mission in South Afghanistan should be characterized neither as a 'reconstruction mission' nor as a 'combat mission'.²⁰

Missed opportunity

Major-General Ton van Loon remarked during at a counterinsurgency symposium in The Hague (November 2007) that more political and public understanding for the mission could be fostered by the use of the correct terminology from the outset.²¹ In that sense, the Dutch body politic as a whole missed an opportunity when they failed to adopt the term that embraces the military, policing, and administrative as well as the developmental aspect of the operation: 'counterinsurgency' (COIN). Although earlier in 2007 the Dutch military historian Thijs Brocades Zaalberg wrote that the Dutch operation in Uruzgan conforms to the definition of this term in every way.²²

In their article-100 declaration, the ministers concerned had indeed identified a range of typically COIN aspects (without using this term), such as the importance of gaining the support of the population, enhancing the legitimacy of the Afghan authority and supporting the Afghan government, and the importance of training local security troops as an essential part of Security Sector Reform (SSR).²³ From its inception in 2006, therefore, the Dutch political definition of the mission's approach would appear to correspond closely to existing COIN doctrines.

The Dutch officers in Afghanistan were also aware early on that they were dealing with counterinsurgency.²⁴ When he stepped down on 8 April 2008, General Dick Berlijn was asked whether the Netherlands were embroiled in a counterinsurgency operation. His answer was a categorical 'Yes'.²⁵ And yet the term was carefully avoided by both the ministers of Defense and Foreign Affairs and seldom used in discussions in the Dutch lower house. A reason for this omission is that, in the Netherlands – unlike Britain, France, and the United States – the concept of COIN still seems to have a negative connotation, mainly inspired by common feelings of uneasiness about the Dutch colonial past.²⁶

However, the lack of a clear definition was not a problem confined to the Dutch government alone; within NATO itself there was for a long time no consensus over the nature of the mission, since historically, NATO never had a primary COIN function and still has problems in adapting to this new kind of warfare.²⁷ In July 2006, when ISAF assumed command in RC-South, the limitations of NATO to connect its members and ability to synchronize their way of thinking about its commitment created the biggest challenge for NATO in years.²⁸ In Bucharest in April 2008, at the NATO summit where the new ISAF strategy was announced, the term 'counterinsurgency' was categorically avoided in the official press statement. Yet despite this, the former commander of ISAF, General Stanley McChrystal, and his predecessor, Lieutenant-General David McKiernan, both used precisely this term to describe the conflict in Afghanistan in their *tactical directive* for the ISAF mission.²⁹

But while military and civilian defense leaders from the US, UK, and Canada easily identify the mission in Afghanistan as a COIN effort,³⁰ most of the European contributors keep viewing the NATO mission in peacekeeping terms.³¹ Not least place because they are pressed to do so by a reluctant public that does not want to support 'fighting missions', a circumstance that constitutes a liability to conducting a persistent COIN approach.³² The conceptual divide between allied countries, and within these countries, on the very nature of the ISAF operation prevents the formulation and execution of a homogeneous counterinsurgency strategy and probably will produce more friction and misunderstanding in the future.³³

Wrong expectations

This lack of clarity in the debate is a serious political-strategic weakness.³⁴ Certainly, it is understandable, particularly in the Dutch context. With the exception of a few military experts, there was insufficient knowledge of the history and the phenomenon of counterinsurgency. This was apparent from the simplistic opposition between 'reconstruction' and 'combat' missions which dominated the debates. Evidently, any lessons that may have been learned in the Dutch East Indies had long since been consigned to oblivion.

Yet it is essential that the mission be politically and unequivocally defined as a counterinsurgency,³⁵ since other designations merely generate false expectations. COIN indicates that as well as all the civic and administrative activities there will have to be tough action. Reconstruction suggests, on the contrary, that the foreign soldiers will be met with a warm welcome. Expectations in the Netherlands and the practical realities in Afghanistan therefore widened considerably – a divide further enhanced by the growing number of casualties (21 soldiers by January 2010).

Since 2006, opposition to the mission has increased. In 2006, around 36% of the population supported the mission, only 26% opposed it, and 55% believed that the mission at least contributed to Afghanistan's reconstruction.³⁶ Three years later, the number of opponents had increased to almost 40%.³⁷ In Germany public support for the Afghan mission has also steadily declined,³⁸ a decrease some observers attribute to Chancellor Angela Merkel's failure to lay out the importance of the Afghan mission to the German people,³⁹ although unlike the Dutch government, she succeeded in gaining parliamentary approval for an extension of the German mission in Afghanistan in February 2010.⁴⁰ In the Netherlands, in February 2010, 9% of the public believed that the mission in Afghanistan helped to reduce the risk of terrorist attacks, whereas this was exactly the argument President Obama used to gain international support for it,⁴¹ and which was adopted by Defense Secretary Eimert van Middelkoop as well.⁴²

The consequences of such confusion became clear again only recently, when Wim van den Burg, the chair of the military trade union in the Netherlands, publicly objected against prolongation of the mission with the argument that Dutch soldiers could not be asked to give their lives for a corrupt government – signaling that

he measured success of the mission against the level of democratization in Afghanistan.⁴³ If even a chairman of a military trade union is unable to get the nature of the mission right, this does say something about the way it was and is communicated. The *Adviesraad Internationale Vraagstukken* (AIV; Advisory Council on International Affairs) concluded in April 2009 that better communication was essential.⁴⁴ The government, it said, was at present actually misleading the public. Instead of COIN the so-called '3D-concept' was introduced, a focus on Development, Diplomacy and Defense, which Dutch politicians mistakenly consider to differ significantly from a Counterinsurgency strategy'.⁴⁵ However, the 3D-approach only serves to increase the confusion, since it is not backed by any doctrine and can be interpreted at liberty.⁴⁶ Therefore, in the words of the AIV, maintaining such broad and vague concepts would not only keep the confusion in place, but would also stimulate polarized discussion at a time when democratic legitimacy and public-political support for a military mission was crucial.

The Dutch military historian Christ Klep has convincingly argued that whenever a peace mission fails to turn out as outlined in advance, such a gulf between image and reality (which is ultimately the result of unclear conceptual thinking and decision-making) can lead to enormous tensions and dramatic consequences. Dutch history teaches us that governments can stumble over this and the military forces can suffer a severe setback in public legitimacy.⁴⁷ The collapse of the Dutch government in February 2010, over a lack of support for a prolongation for the TFU only serves to illustrate Klep's point.

3. The mission as a counterinsurgency

The best way to attain peace is to combine force with politics. [...] Each time an officer is required to act against a village in a war, he needs to remember that his first duty, after securing submission of the local population, is to rebuild the village, reorganize the local market and establish a school.

General Joseph Gallieni (1898)⁴⁸

The reality of the mission's engagement in Uruzgan is thus not entirely compatible with the terms of the political–public discussion. That engagement can in our view best be described as a counterinsurgency operation. It is clear when COIN doctrine is compared with the principles described in the *Afghanistan National Development Strategy* (ANDS), the strategy that served as a guide for the mission,⁴⁹ and as already pointed out, this is evident from the parts of the mission that were referred to in the official article-100 statement.

The 'ink spot method'

At the very inception of the mission the government spoke of an 'oil-stain approach',⁵⁰ or, as it was called in later debates and to the media, the 'ink spot method' (Figure 2). This is typically a term taken from the COIN literature.⁵¹ Partly through the agency of the British General Sir David Richards, commander

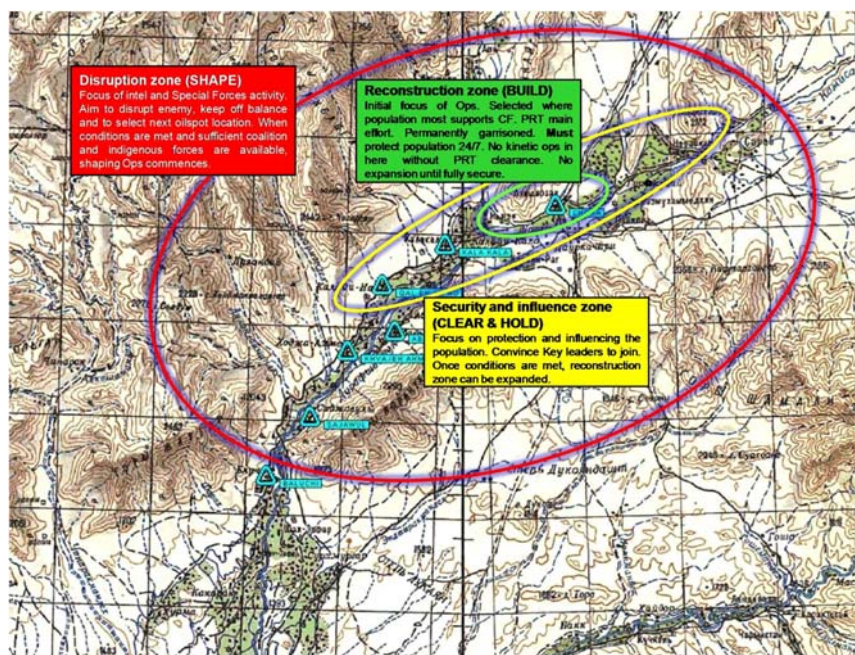


Figure 2. Example of the ink spot approach. Source: This map is partly inspired by a PowerPoint presentation of David Kilcullen: 'Counterinsurgency in Iraq: Theory and Practice', 26 September 2007, <http://www.smallwarsjournal.com>.

of ISAF from July 2006 to February 2007, this method was introduced and applied in South Afghanistan.⁵² The TFU has thus already implicitly been engaged in counterinsurgency for three years.

What does this COIN approach actually amount to in operational practice? The recently published *US Government Counterinsurgency Guide* defines counterinsurgency as the 'blend of comprehensive civilian and military efforts designed to simultaneously contain insurgency and address its root causes'.⁵³ The military doctrine often uses the definition of the United States Joint Publication 1-02: 'counterinsurgency is military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological, and civic actions taken by a government to defeat insurgency'.⁵⁴ The definition currently in use with the Dutch armed forces is in keeping with this: COIN is 'the totality of military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological and civil activities undertaken to combat an insurgency'.⁵⁵ – a definition in line with the NATO wordings.⁵⁶

Counterinsurgency is thus directed not primarily at the elimination of insurgents themselves (an *enemy-centric* approach), but at the security of the population (a *population-centric* approach). As Major-General Mart de Kruif, the Dutch commander of RC-South from November 2008 until November 2009, put it: 'Yes, we shall kill evil-doers, but the centre of gravity [of our mission] lies

in protecting the population.’⁵⁷ The population is central to the outcome of the campaign, therefore security has to be restored to allow normal civic and civil life to continue.⁵⁸ The support of the population is the key to success for both the insurgents as the counterinsurgents. To quote General Sir Richard Dannatt, the British Chief of the General Staff: ‘we are engaged not just in a war among the people but fundamentally in war about the people. People are no longer just the environment, they are the object.’⁵⁹ The final outcome of a successful counterinsurgency campaign is a legitimate, sovereign Afghan government in the eyes of the population, that can ensure effective administration and can independently reduce the insurgency to – or maintain it at – an acceptable level.⁶⁰

Hierarchy

In operations like the current mission in Afghanistan, there is a clear hierarchy of aims: the political goal stands first and foremost, while the approach, the way in which the diplomatic, military, and development means are deployed, is secondary to this primary goal.⁶¹

In view of these remarks, this concept seems to us a logical point of departure for further evaluation and analysis of the mission in Uruzgan. What follows below should be seen as an opening move in such an evaluative process, based on recent Dutch experience in Uruzgan, toward the further development of a modern COIN doctrine. The approach of the Dutch military, according to Major-General de Kruif, is no different from that of the other troops in RC-South, such as the British, the Americans, and the Canadians.⁶² In line with the approach of the RC-South the TFU employed the concept of ‘shape-clear-hold-build’.⁶³

In our consideration of operations, although the Netherlands only started to use this terminology at a later stage of the mission, we apply the terminology here. In fact, in present-day practice the method of ‘shape-clear-hold-build’ is essentially no different from the ink spot method.⁶⁴

In the ‘shaping stage’, the military conditions are created for the actual operation. An example of this would be the sending in of Special Forces. During the ‘clear-hold-build’ stages, an area is freed of insurgents, after which it is brought under control and the delivery or improvement of infrastructure and public services can begin. This idea is derived from the method developed by Sir Robert Thompson of ‘clear-hold-winning-won’, which he describes in his standard work *Defeating Communist Insurgency*, published in 1965.⁶⁵ Both principles include the full range of offensive, defensive, and stabilizing operations carried out from area to area.⁶⁶

On the basis of the ‘shape-clear-hold-build’ concept, we shall try to explain how successful the operations conducted in Uruzgan have been. In doing so, we concentrate on the execution and therefore do not deal with the all the preparations incurred by the ‘shaping’ stage. For reasons of space, it is simply not feasible to deal with all the operations of the TFU. We have decided rather to look

closely at those TFU operations carried out over the past three years in just one area: in the Baluchi valley, some 20 kilometers north of Tarin Kowt.

Operation Perth

We attack an enemy who is invisible, fluid, uncatchable.
Roger Trinquier⁶⁷

The Baluchi valley was already a stronghold of the Taliban before the arrival of the Dutch and Australian military. In July 2006 the Dutch commandos took part in Operation Perth (Figure 3), a CJSOTF⁶⁸ operation led by the Australian Special Operations Task Group. The main aim of Operation Perth was to reduce the threat for Tarin Kowt and its surrounding area by driving Taliban fighters out of the Baluchi valley. This was to prevent any threat arising to the construction of the Dutch camp in Tarin Kowt.⁶⁹ The operation was successful, with 200 to 300 enemy combatants being killed and the rest of the enemy fleeing the area. As a result of the operation the Baluchi pass was for the first time accessible for ISAF troops and freedom of movement was created in the valley around Chora, Surkh Murgab, and Khurma.⁷⁰

However, after a brief period following this operation the valley was once again full of insurgents. As Major Joris correctly observed, ‘the enemy is fluid’.⁷¹

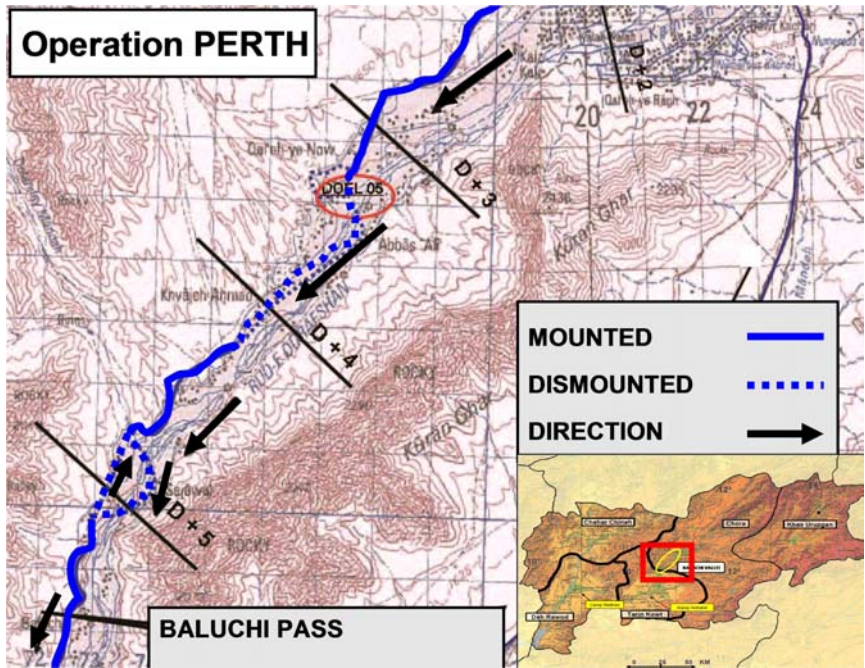


Figure 3. Operation Perth. Source: Original Picture in ‘DTF-acties, Nederlandse Special Forces in de Chora-vallei’, 32.

Without a follow-up (hold), a *sweep* (clearing) operation has only a short-term effect. Driving out insurgents without the sufficient capacity – either on our part or that of the Afghan forces – to hold the area only leads to the territory falling into the hands of the enemy once more.⁷² It is then no more than a superficial *area sweep*.⁷³ In the words of an Afghan villager: ‘You will come down and fight, and you will win. But you will win only for one hour. Then you will go back to your base [and] the Taliban will return.’⁷⁴ Colonel Theo Vleugels, the commander of TFU-1 said: ‘It’s like water: if you don’t stay it streams back.’⁷⁵

Clearing operations, according to the doctrine, are the prelude to a long-lasting presence in the area. As a rule, these are the most offensive operations in which the desired area is ‘cleansed’ of insurgents.⁷⁶ Rebels are eliminated, taken prisoner, or forced to withdraw. Or they make themselves invisible by melting into the local population.⁷⁷ Since the Dutch forces are fully trained for this kind of kinetic operation, it is no surprise that Operation Perth was so successful.⁷⁸ As already said, however, ‘clearing’ is only effective if a ‘holding’ stage follows; and this second stage is far more important and more complex.⁷⁹ ‘It has always been the case in Afghanistan that it is not so difficult to defeat the Taliban, but the real issue is to retain that security’, in the words of a Defense spokesperson in 2008.⁸⁰

During Operation Perth the units did not get round to the second stage, in which the emphasis falls on various non-kinetic efforts to win over the population. That was not their objective, as explained earlier. However, as a direct consequence of the operation ceasing after the ‘clear’ stage, the ISAF troops, and therefore also the TFU, had to take control of the region all over again a year after the initiation of Operation Perth.

Operation Spin Ghar

What is the crux of the problem for the counter-insurgent? It is not how to clean an area. [...] The problem is, how to keep an area clean so that the counter-insurgent forces will be free to operate elsewhere.

David Galula⁸¹

On 25 October 2007, led by the TFU, the second major operation in the Baluchi valley got under way: Spin Ghar (Figure 4). This operation was more extensive than Operation Perth. As well as 1500 soldiers of the Afghan National Army (the ANA), Australian troops, and a British reserve unit (including Gurkhas) of the RC-South also participated. The Taliban had in the meantime regained far too much freedom of movement in this region.

Goal of the operation

The operation’s objective was to disrupt the Taliban to the north of Tarin Kowt, thus reducing the pressure on the Chora and Deh Rahshan regions and preventing the Taliban from carrying out any further major operations from the Baluchi valley.⁸² It was not the intention to occupy the valley permanently.⁸³ As expected, the first phase of the operation was again successful, the phase characterized

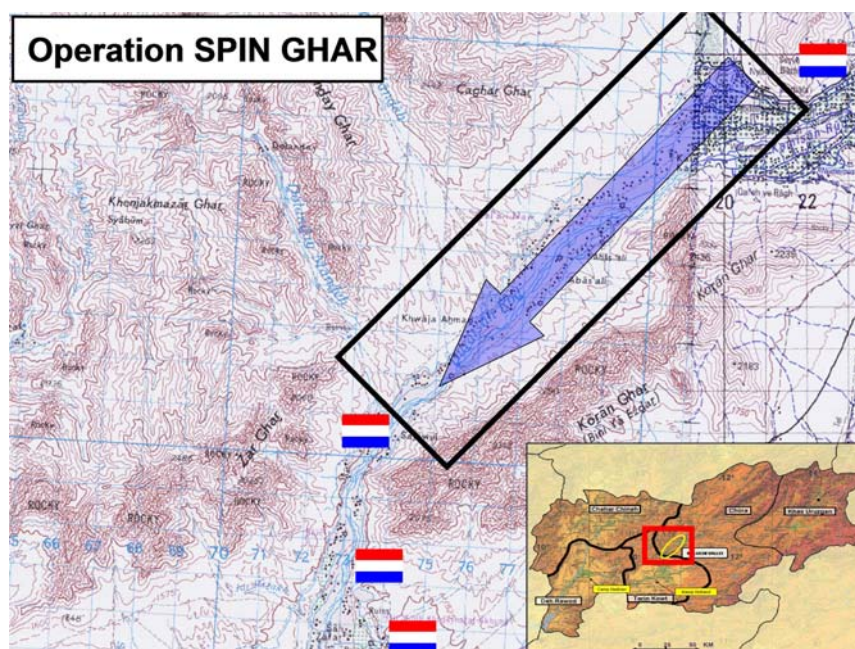


Figure 4. Operation Spin Ghar.

by offensive operations. The coalition troops once again managed to ‘cleanse’ a large part of the Baluchi valley without encountering too much opposition.

During the operation various checkpoints were set up round Chora, demonstrating that the TFU had at least learned from the earlier operation. On 2 November the first checkpoint, near Nyazi, was provided. Patrol base Khyber was established at the southern entrance to the Baluchi valley to prevent the Taliban being able to return. According to a spokesperson for the Ministry of Defense, ‘We have plugged it [the valley]’.⁸⁴ And as Lieutenant Colonel Wilfred Rietdijk, commander of the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT), explained: ‘We are not going to risk Dutch lives [only] to have to start all over again two months later’.⁸⁵

Attention was also given to the protection of the local population. Thus, messages were broadcast via loudspeakers and pamphlets dropped from aircraft. The TFU also kept the governor of Uruzgan, Assadullah Hamdam, informed of the operation in advance. The latter in turn informed the tribal elders about the ongoing military operation during a *shura* – a tribal consultation – and thus ensured that the population knew what to expect.

Sustainable results?

Minister Eimert van Middelkoop was fully aware that the result of the operation had to be sustainable and hoped that the new posts would ensure this: ‘If it goes

well [...] the Taliban will not return there and perhaps in the course of time we will be able to count the Baluchi valley as the ink spot', according to Van Middelkoop on 17 December 2007 in the Second Chamber.⁸⁶ Although Operation Spin Ghar did indeed bring a certain stability to Chora, and to a lesser extent also to Deh Rahshan, the operation had little effect on the Baluchi valley itself. The patrol bases that had been established in the months following the operation turned out to have been located too far outside the heart of the valley. The pattern simply repeated itself: after a while, the insurgents streamed back into the valley. It was not long before the first reports came in that the Taliban had returned.⁸⁷ In the subsequent months, TFU patrols in the valley were regularly engaged in exchanges of fire, and by the end of 2007 the Baluchi valley was once again completely in the hands of the insurgents.⁸⁸

Lack of troops

During Operation Spin Ghar, after penetrating into the valley and searching for insurgents and their arms depots ('clear'), the Dutch military had not stayed to make the area and the population secure ('hold'). The reasons for this were not so much a lack of insight into the COIN strategy, but more particularly the fact that the Dutch Task Force simply did not have the necessary manpower at its disposal.⁸⁹ Prior to the mission it was indeed calculated that the troop strength was sufficient to occupy two bases in the southern part of Uruzgan and to conduct operations around those locations,⁹⁰ but this calculation proved to be too optimistic.

Specifically, the task force sent by the Netherlands consisted of only 400 to 500 infantry. Given all their other tasks – patrolling, securing PRTs, and the Quick Reaction Force (QRF) – the Dutch presence in the Afghan Development Zones (ADZ, the ink spots) round Tarin Kowt, Deh Rawod, and Chora was thus sometimes extremely thinly stretched.⁹¹ In most of the areas there was no continuous presence and especially during nights the insurgents could easily infiltrate into the ADZs.

Adverse effects

As a result of this undermanning, the effect of Operation Spin Ghar was that the local population concluded that the Dutch presence in the valley was not a lasting presence and could therefore not protect them. Moreover, the inhabitants even held ISAF responsible for bringing additional insecurity to their village. Therefore, and according to the COIN doctrine, permanent presence is an important condition for being able to win the *hearts and minds* of that population.⁹² That is, they have first to be convinced that 'we' are fighting for 'their' interests and security, regardless of the time and effort that this may cost (the 'hearts' element). Without that security, the population will not choose the side of the counterinsurgency, out of fear of reprisals from the insurgents.⁹³

Further, the population must be able to see that the Afghan government, supported by the international coalition, will eventually prove to be the stronger party, and that on their own they will protect the inhabitants permanently (the 'minds' element). Sir Robert Thompson said that 'What the peasant wants to know is: Does the government mean to win the war? Because if not, he will have to support the insurgent.'⁹⁴ Only if the Afghan government can convince the population will they abandon their (passive or active) support for the insurgency.⁹⁵

But this shortage of boots on the ground was not just a problem for the Dutch troops only. In 2009 General Stanley McChrystal asked President Barack Obama for more troops as the current number was insufficient to bring the ISAF mission to a successful end.⁹⁶ Already in the spring of 2007 the British Lieutenant General Sir David Richards (temporary promoted to General) had declared that it was exceptionally difficult to maintain security because of the limited number of troops.⁹⁷ In the words of the (retired) Canadian Major-General Lewis MacKenzie: 'Battles are won by our counterinsurgency forces, but 24/7 security of the liberated areas is impossible'⁹⁸ Major-General de Kruif stated the same problem as follows: 'We were able to clear parts of [...] central Uruzgan. But to be able to extend these focus areas, we definitely need more troops.'⁹⁹ A way of dealing with this problem successfully is to make up for our own shortage by training and leading indigenous police and army units. In fact this has been one of the spearhead policies of the TFU since 2006.¹⁰⁰

The Second Chamber had already decided in the article 100 statement of December 2005 that *Operational Monitoring and Liaison Teams* (OMLT) would be deployed to train local security forces.¹⁰¹ Cooperation with local security forces is thus *the* key to being able to hold the 'cleared' ink spot area and perhaps even extend it.¹⁰² But Operation Spin Ghar never got this far. It would require a third operation in the Baluchi valley to produce the desired result.

Operation Tura Ghar

Big-units sweeps did not promote pacification unless U.S. Forces stayed in the area.
Andrew F. Krepnevich¹⁰³

In the course of 2008 it was decided to launch a third offensive in the Baluchi valley (Figure 5). Patrol bases had been established on the southern side of the valley, named Buman, Khyber, and Qudus, from which the valley could be reached, but 'we could not reach the northern side of the valley because the Taliban were established there', according to the commander of the TFU, Colonel Kees Matthijsen, and 'patrol base Qudus [...] offers insufficient possibilities to keep the whole valley under control'.¹⁰⁴ In addition, many improvised explosive devices (IEDs) had been laid in this area. This was where Sergeant (first-class) Mark Weijdt was killed on 19 December 2008.

Prior to this third operation, Defense let it be known that this operation would be different: 'this time we are staying.'¹⁰⁵ Matthijsen confirmed this: 'This time is different', he said. 'In the previous offensives we thought that the Taliban could

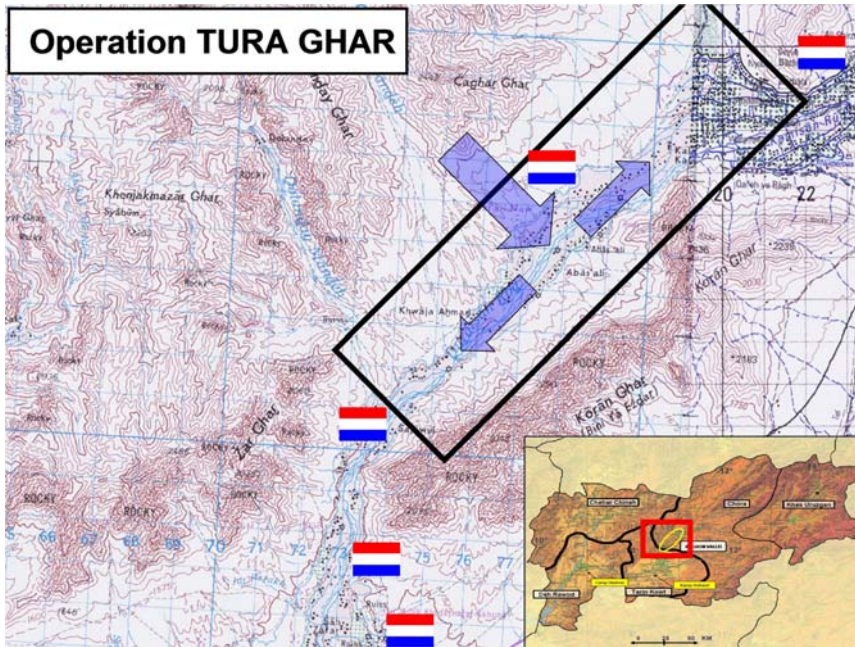


Figure 5. Operation Tura Ghar.

be stopped by building bases round the valley. That has not happened. Now we are going to build a base in the valley so that we can really be among the population'.¹⁰⁶ The TFU had drawn the conclusion that it is important after an initial operation to remain present in an area and immediately to roll out follow-up activities.¹⁰⁷

In order to be optimally prepared, Tura Ghar was preceded by an intelligence operation, Operation 'Salakar'. In mid-January 2009, 800 (Dutch, Australian, and Afghan) soldiers entered the valley. They took a few Taliban fighters prisoner and dismantled weapon storage sites. 'We [...] cleared the Baluchi valley and searched 400 to 500 *qalas* – Afghan walled dwellings – as a result of which we found many weapons and IEDs', reported Lieutenant Colonel Jan Renger Swillens, the commander of the Battlegroup.¹⁰⁸

Minimal resistance

Once again there was minimal resistance. According to the local inhabitants, most insurgents had fled the valley in burkas via 'rat lines' (escape routes).¹⁰⁹ But this time the TFU went further. To hold the conquered territory, the TFU built a *Forward Operating Base* (FOB), Mashal, in the heart of the valley, creating a more effective presence of government troops in the area with both Afghan soldiers and police. This was a sensitive blow for the Taliban commanders in the

area.¹¹⁰ '[Mashal] must become an icon for the population', according to a Defense spokesperson. 'We tell everybody that this time we are staying.'¹¹¹

Immediately after the end of the military actions, moreover, the TFU sent a PRT unit into the area, which, together with the village elders, established where the greatest needs lay. The activities of the Battlegroup and the PRT were complementary: the armed forces tried to improve security with intensive patrolling and the searching of *qalas* for weapons and munitions. After all, if the people felt more secure they would more readily accept the legitimacy of the authority of government troops and ISAF and provide them with valuable information about the insurgents. PRT efforts such as the construction of roads and building schools and hospitals would then also convince the people of their shared interests. The civil representative of the TFU, Peter Mollema, announced on 20 January that the operation was the overture to further economic and infrastructural development of the valley and a strengthening of the position of the Afghan authorities in the area. The aspirations of the population were more modest: they simply hoped that calm would now return to the valley.¹¹²

On 28 January Governor Hamdam put his seal on the positive results with a gathering of 100 local leaders. He listed their needs and adopted a conciliatory stance toward those who had ever been involved with the Taliban but who now wanted to lend their support to the Afghan government – a political and pragmatic attitude that was entirely in line with the COIN doctrine: 'the enemy of today may be part of tomorrow's solution.'¹¹³

4. Lessons learned

This is a game of wits and will. You've got to be constantly learning and adapting to survive.

General Peter J. Schoomaker¹¹⁴

According to various reports, the situation in Afghanistan since 2001 appears only to have deteriorated. In 2008, some 2118 Afghan civilians lost their lives – the highest number for years. The same year also saw the number of IED attacks reach a high point and the highest number of deaths sustained by the coalition. This picture is confirmed by different sources and statistics and according to the latest charts, 2009 has seen no improvement.¹¹⁵ In March 2009, however, there was one ray of light amidst this regrettable state of affairs. According to *The Economist*, against the general trend elsewhere, solid successes were chalked up in one province: in Uruzgan.¹¹⁶

Indeed, the three operations in the Baluchi valley demonstrated that the TFU learned from each previous operation and recognized that liberating an area without following up by establishing a permanent presence delivered only short-term results. At this point, in fact, a permanent presence in an area became the basis of the planning and execution of operations.¹¹⁷ This is a reassuring observation, since counterinsurgency can also be seen as a competition in adaptation. The party that learns and adapts fastest wins the conflict.¹¹⁸ The disadvantage of a small troop

force, however, is that it is very difficult to follow up the 'clear' phase with a 'hold' phase. Given the current capacity of the TFU, the permanent protection of the local population in the three ADZs is a complete assignment in itself. This is not to say that no successes were registered in the ADZs. On the contrary, security and development in Tarin Kowt, Chora, and Deh Rawod have significantly improved since 2006.¹¹⁹ For example, in 2006 only five NGOs were operating in the province; in 2009, over 50 national and international organizations were active.

On the other hand, the insurgents have not been completely cut off from the population, for they are still able to move into the ADZs, and to exert influence on the local administration and the local population through intimidation and violence and to carry out attacks in the heart of the 'ink spots'.¹²⁰ The incident on 2 February 2009 in which a suicide bomber blew himself up a few kilometers from the base with the loss of 20 lives is a clear example of this.¹²¹ To be able to follow successful 'clear' operations by equally successful 'hold' activities, one must first satisfy a number of pre-conditions and take a number of lessons to heart:

First of all, the political leadership and the public at home should be made aware of the real and arduous implications of carrying out counterinsurgency missions, an awareness that should include information on the clear, hold, and build activities. In particular, the 'holding' of an area is time-consuming and can, even when well executed, lead to more victims in the short term.¹²² The insurgent will do all in his power to thwart rapprochement between the counterinsurgents and the local population. Like his adversary, he too needs the people. From them the insurgent gains his information, shelter, and food, and at the same time he merges with the local population and uses them as his cover. Historical experiences in counterinsurgency, however, suggest that accepting risks by operating among the population will ultimately save lives on the long run.¹²³ In the long term this will provide the best chance of stability and sustainable development. This message could have been better communicated to the Dutch public and political parties.

But it was not only the Dutch government that failed to convince its population of the necessity of the mission in Uruzgan. Lord Robertson, NATO Secretary General from 1999 to 2004, signalled during a speech in March 2010 that the Alliance was 'on the edge of a precipice': 'If these two robust allies [meaning The Netherlands and Canada] and those who may be thinking of doing the same, and additionally those who contribute less than they should, can all shy away from their obligation stemming from the decision taken unanimously in 1993, what is it other than a crisis?' According to Robertson, public opinion is 'all swinging to troop withdrawal and the raising of hands'. NATO and its member states were to blame for that, since they 'do not explain with sufficient force and passionate conviction why being in Afghanistan, and winning there, matters to the peace and security and safety of people a continent and a half away.'¹²⁴

Secondly, the troops themselves should turn the principles of counterinsurgency (to protect the local population) into the cornerstone of their strategy.¹²⁵ It is a permanent task that has to be guaranteed 24 hours a day, seven

days a week.¹²⁶ Without permanent control there is no way of distinguishing the insurgent from the local population.¹²⁷ In the words of General Stanley McChrystal and Sergeant-Major Hall, 'Protecting the people is the mission'. According to Major-General Mart de Kruif, 'it's no use of getting into a village at 8:00 in the morning and then leave that village at 5:00 in the evening.'¹²⁸ Unfortunately most Dutch patrol bases are still almost all situated on the high ground, relatively remote from the population. According to COIN doctrine, however, it is not a matter of controlling the high ground but of establishing a presence among the population.¹²⁹ Protect the people where they gather and protect the people where they live. Only by living among the population, does one gain their confidence. A 'multifunctional qala', such as was realized in 2007 in Deh Rawod, in which both coalition and host nation forces can interact with the local population, tends to be far more effective and is much more in line with the COIN principles.¹³⁰ Bringing the villages and their access routes under control is more important than controlling the high ground,¹³¹ for in this way the population becomes used to the presence of coalition troops and Dutch soldiers can make the area their own. With the building of a permanent location, the troops convey the message that they are there for the long haul. Units should live in their area of operations rather than merely visiting it.¹³² They are sooner perceived by the local population to be reliable and as a result they more quickly gain legitimacy. 'We want to be present in more areas, among the Afghan population. At present they complain that the Dutch troops come only occasionally, and as a result the enemy has a free hand for much of the time', according to the (then) Lieutenant Colonel Rob Querido, commander of the Battlegroup during TFU-3 in 2007.¹³³

A further indispensable key to success is the building up and training of local security troops. In order to hold an area successfully and keep the necessary presence, building indigenous forces is paramount for such a small unit as the Task Force Uruzgan. Without local troops, the ink spot is worryingly thin, certainly for a country like the Netherlands, which can put in only relatively few troops. Without them, an area can be cleared, but holding it will become impossible. Besides, in the eyes of the Afghans, the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) – the ANA in particular – are far more popular than the coalition forces.¹³⁴ The TFU therefore rightly invests many personnel, and much money and resources, in the construction of the ANA and an Afghan National Police (ANP) and supports the NATO Training mission for Afghanistan.¹³⁵ From 2006 to 2010 the training provided by the TFU grew from 160 to 3000 ANA troops.¹³⁶

However, the building of Afghan national security assets in the province of Uruzgan is a very difficult and lengthy process. The ANP in particular, which received no systematic training for decades, faces corruption, a lack of sufficient recruits, equipment and supplies and is hampered by a relatively large drop-out rate.¹³⁷ In addition to that, unlike the ANP, one of the main benefits of the ANA in Uruzgan is that the soldiers are not tribally bound to the local population. They originate from all over the country, which makes them more trustworthy

and less corrupt in the eyes of the population. According to President Karzai, the handover of security responsibilities to Afghan forces in more peaceful provinces could begin by late 2010/early 2011 although the whole training and equipping of the ANSF needs an additional five to ten years.¹³⁸ Given this estimate, the fall of the Dutch cabinet in February 2010, which makes a prolongation even in the form of a training mission highly unlikely, comes as an additional setback.

In the fourth place, it is essential to cooperate intensively with local leaders. Martijn Kitzen, a military researcher allied as lecturer to the NLDA, was involved in 2008 in setting up the Key Leader Engagement program of the TFU. He states that the Dutch forces together with the Afghan government must do everything to convince the local heads of populations that the Afghan government's way is the best way. In this connection, one has to think not only of formal or appointed leaders, but also of tribal heads, village elders, informal and religious leaders. In Uruzgan, illiteracy and lack of access to modern telecommunications means like the Internet, television, and even radio makes it difficult to reach the bulk of the population. Key Leader Engagement therefore is the most viable way to reach a larger audience, especially in Uruzgan, where word of mouth reaches far and the leader usually decides for a whole community. 'In this way, you automatically reach the rest of the population.'¹³⁹ Especially for Uruzgan, Key Leader Engagement on a strategic level is essential as well. Many prominent figures who fled the province or left it due to assignments in Kabul still wield influence through their tight tribal connections in Uruzgan.

Finally, it is crucially important that the principles of counterinsurgency are acknowledged at all levels of the Dutch armed forces, not just at the top. The COIN doctrine should play a greater role in the training of the lower military levels.¹⁴⁰ After all, the hard work of counterinsurgency – and especially the 'hold' phase – is mainly executed by the lowest level, platoon-sized or even smaller units.¹⁴¹ The platoon commanders of the infantry play a central and decisive role in the current mission.¹⁴² To these lowest levels, counterinsurgency is still quite an unknown phenomenon. It is advisable that theoretical knowledge and practical skills in this field should be spread as widely as possible within the armed forces.¹⁴³ A positive step in this direction is the distribution of David Kilcullen's 'Twenty Eight Articles' among troops in Uruzgan. 'Important inspiration is gained from this at all levels', according to Lieutenant Colonel Piet van der Sar, commander of the Battlegroup during TFU-1.¹⁴⁴ But in order to give the principles of counterinsurgency the attention they deserve, radical new steps need to be taken in the training of young soldiers. In addition, in the interests of optimal cooperation it would seem both logical and necessary for civil and military partners to exercise together regularly.¹⁴⁵

Acknowledgements

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Notes

1. Minutes of the Second Chamber of the Dutch Parliament 2008–2009, 27925, no. 330.
2. Minutes of the Second Chamber of the Dutch Parliament 2008–2009, 27925, no. 328.
3. ‘Dutch government falls over Afghan troop mission’.
4. Cf. ‘Slag bij Chora roept trauma Srebrenica in herinnering’; see also Frans van Deijl, ‘Henk Kamp, “we moeten slagen. Er is geen alternatief”’.
5. When operation Perth took place, Uruzgan formally still belonged to the area of operations of CJSOTF. A few weeks later, when the TFU settled in the province, this changed to ISAF. Operation Perth was a CJSOTF operation to create conditions in favor of the upcoming ISAF-campaign.
6. General Sir Frank Kitson, *Bunch of Five*, 283.
7. Article 100 of the constitution states that the government must actively inform parliament in advance in any case where troops are to be deployed to promote or maintain international law and in which the troops must use violence or run the risk of encountering violence. From: ‘De weg naar Uruzgan, een reconstructie’, 7.
8. Minutes of the Second Chamber of the Dutch Parliament 2005–2006, 27925, no. 193.
9. Ibid.; also ‘Brief van de ministers van Buitenlandse Zaken, van Defensie en voor Ontwikkelingssamenwerking aan de voorzitter van de Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal’.
10. Adviesraad Internationale Vraagstukken (AIV), ‘Crisisbeheersingsoperaties in fragiele staten, de noodzaak van een samenhangende aanpak’, 27; see also: ‘Lichtpunten in de Afghaanse woestijn, twee jaar Task Force Uruzgan’ and ‘Taliban tactics: the secret of their success’.
11. Martine van Bijlert, ‘Unruly Commanders and Violent Power Struggles: Taliban Networks in Uruzgan’, 155.
12. Minutes of the Second Chamber of the Dutch Parliament 2005–2006, 27925, no. 201, pp. 4, 15.
13. Minutes of the Second Chamber of the Dutch Parliament 2005–2006, 27925, no. 207, p. 19.
14. Minutes of the Second Chamber of the Dutch Parliament 2005–2006, 27925, no. 222, cf also Minutes 2006–2007, no. 79, pp. 4195–4199.
15. Minutes of the Second Chamber of the Dutch Parliament 2005–2006, 27925, no. 222.
16. See also Marines Major-General (retired) J.A. van Reijn, ‘De missie Uruzgan: politieke besluitvorming’, 23.
17. Theo Koelé, ‘We gaan doen wat nodig en mogelijk is’.
18. Bette Dam and Hans de Vreij, ‘Nederlands NAVO-commando Zuid-Afghanistan, “geen schoolplein waar je vervelende kinderen wegjaagt”’.
19. Hans van Griensven, “‘It’s all about the Afghan people’”, Eén jaar 1(NLD/AUS) Task Force Uruzgan’, 4.
20. ‘Voordracht van de minister van Defensie, Eimert van Middelkoop, voor het Reformatorisch Dagblad’ and Koninklijke Landmacht, *Beslissen in het gevecht, bouwen aan veiligheid, de ontwikkeling van het landoptreden*, 19.
21. ‘Paneldiscussie counterinsurgency symposium’, 167.
22. T.W. Brocades Zaalberg, ‘Hearts and minds of search and destroy? Leren van klassieke counter-insurgency’, 290; See also Ralph Coenen, ‘Counterinsurgency operaties, geen succesvol optreden zonder gedegen kennis’, 18.
23. Minutes of the Second Chamber of the Dutch Parliament 2005–2006, 27925, no. 193.

24. In particular, Lieutenant-Colonel Piet van de Sar and Captain Ralph Coenen have urged since the beginning of TFU-1 (and even earlier) that knowledge of the concept of counterinsurgency must be extended; see also Coenen, 'Counterinsurgency operaties'; Piet van der Sar, 'Kick the enemy where it hurts most, de steun van de lokale bevolking, daar gaat het om,' 10–17; George Marlet, 'Nederlandse militairen gaan vaker in gevecht met de Taliban'; and van Griensven, 'It's all about the Afghan people'.
25. Steven Derix, 'We wisten niet dat we zo vaak moesten knokken'.
26. Cf. Minutes of the Second Chamber, Questions and answers 2006–2007, no. 30, and Brocades Zaalberg, 'Hearts and minds of search and destroy? Leren van klassieke counter-insurgency', 291.
27. Sean Kay and Sahar Khan, 'NATO and Counter-insurgency: Strategic Liability or Tactical Asset?', 163–81 and Allan Orr, 'Recasting Afghan Strategy', 88.
28. Jonathan Marcus, 'NATO's Afghan Mission Under Pressure' quoted in Sean Kay and Sahar Khan, 'NATO and Counter-insurgency', 172.
29. General David McKiernan, 'Tactical Directive' and General Stanley McChrystal, 'Tactical Directive'; see also Frederick Barton et al., *Afghanistan and Pakistan on the Brink*, 15.
30. Christopher M. Schnaubelt, 'The Counterinsurgency Challenge for NATO', 8 and Seth Jones, 'Afghanistan Redux, Countering the Taliban-led Insurgency', 70–71.
31. Sean Kay and Sahar Khan, 'NATO and Counter-insurgency', 172.
32. Timo Noetzel and Martin Zapfe, 'NATO and Counterinsurgency: The Case of Germany', 133. See also Timo Noetzel and Benjamin Schreer, 'Missing Links: The Evolution of German Counter-Insurgency Thinking', 16–22.
33. James Dobbins, *Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan*, 3 and Jens Ringsmose and Peter Dahl Thruelsen, 'NATO's counterinsurgency campaign in Afghanistan: are classical doctrines suitable for alliances?', 56–77.
34. For a discussion of the necessity of clear concepts and a corresponding unitary strategy, see Carl von Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, boek 1, hoofdstuk 1; Barry Posen, 'The Struggle against Terrorism: Grand Strategy, Strategy and Tactics'; Daniel Gouré, 'Homeland Security', 262–264.
35. Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force, the Art of War in the Modern World*, 306 and Prof. Conrad Crane, during a panel discussion on counter-insurgency, in 'Paneldiscussie counter-insurgency symposium', 167.
36. Ministry of Defense, 'Monitor Steun en Draagvlak. Publieke Opinie Missie Uruzgan, August 2006'.
37. Ministry of Defense, 'Monitor Steun en Draagvlak. Publieke Opinie Missie Uruzgan, November 2009'.
38. Vincent Morelli and Paul Belkin, 'NATO in Afghanistan: A test of the Transatlantic Alliance', 23.
39. Jude Dempsey, 'Merkel aloof as public wavers on Afghanistan', 2.
40. 'German Parliament Votes To Extend, Boost Afghan Mission'.
41. 'Obama's Address on the War in Afghanistan'.
42. Minister Eimert van Middelkoop in a speech during a medal parade on 4 December in The Hague.
43. Alex Groothedde, 'Middelkoop en De Vries geven verkeerde voorstelling van zaken'.
44. Adviesraad Internationale Vraagstukken, 'Crisisbeheersingsoperaties in fragiele staten, de noodzaak van een samenhangende aanpak', 53; see also: Professor Dr. Jan van der Meulen, 'Beperkt publiek draagvlak voor Uruzgan zorgelijk'.

45. See, for example, Minutes of the Second Chamber of the Dutch Parliament 2007–2008, 27925, no. 298 and Minutes of the Second Chamber of the Dutch Parliament 2007–2008, 27925, no. 287.
46. Adviesraad Internationale Vraagstukken, 'Crisisbeheersingsoperaties in fragiele staten, de noodzaak van een samenhangende aanpak', 17.
47. For an analysis of the relation between political transparency, decision-making, and subsequent responsibility, see Christ Klep, *Somalië, Rwanda, Srebrenica. De nasleep van drie ontspoorde vredesmissies*.
48. Joseph Gallieni, *Fundamental Instructions*.
49. Adviesraad Internationale Vraagstukken (AIV), 'Crisisbeheersingsoperaties in fragiele staten', 14.
50. Minutes of the Second Chamber of the Dutch Parliament 2005–2006, 27925, no. 226. As early as 2004 the Dutch government was using the term 'olievlekbenadering' ['oil-spot approach']; see Minutes of the Second Chamber of the Dutch Parliament 2003–2004, 27925, no. 117.
51. The principles of counterinsurgency are dealt with extensively in the above-mentioned (and many other) documents. It seems to the authors unnecessary to treat these in detail yet again. For a detailed account of the ink spot method, see P.B. Soldaat et al., 'Observaties rond operaties in Afghanistan (I)', 265–6.
52. Cyrus Hodes and Mark Sedra, *The Search for Security in post-Taliban Afghanistan*, 46.
53. United States Interagency Counterinsurgency Initiative, 'U.S. Government Counterinsurgency Guide', 2.
54. Joint Publication 1-02, Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms.
55. Informatiebulletin 07/02 van het Opleidings- en Trainingscentrum Operatiën (OTCOPN) Koninklijke Landmacht (2007).
56. North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, *Allied Joint Doctrine for Counterinsurgency (COIN)*, 20.
57. Noël van Bommel, 'Blijf kalm & houd vol'.
58. United Kingdom Army, *British Army Field Manual, Countering Insurgency*, volume 1, part 10, 14.
59. Generaal Sir Richard Dannat, 'A Perspective on the Nature of Future Conflict'.
60. Headquarters Department of the Army, *Tactics in Counterinsurgency*, FM 3-24.2; 'U.S. Government counterinsurgency guide', 12; David Galula, *Counter-Insurgency Warfare, Theory and Practice*, 4–5; Brocades Zaalberg, 'Hearts and minds of search and destroy?', 293; 'The U.S. Army & Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual', FM 3-24, 120–7.
61. Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force*, 210–17 and AIV, 'Crisisbeheersingsoperaties in fragiele staten', 18.
62. Noël van Bommel, 'Dutch approach is helemaal niet zo Dutch' and P.Mollema and Colonel C.J. Matthijssen, 'Uruzgan: op de goede weg, civiel-militaire samenwerking in een complexe counter-insurgency operatie', 400.
63. Major-General Mart de Kruif in conversation with the American Colonel Gary Keck van of the Department of Defense Press Office, 20 March 2009, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/news/2009/03/mil-090320-dod02.htm> and Hans de Vreij, 'Interview Major General Mart de Kruif', 34. A number of international doctrines, such as the FM 3-24, make no mention of the 'shape' aspect, but only 'clear', 'hold', and 'build'.
64. Headquarters Department of the Army, *Tactics in Counterinsurgency*, 86.
65. Sir Robert Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency*, 111–15.
66. Headquarters Department of the Army, *Tactics in Counterinsurgency*, 85.

67. Roger Trinquier, *Modern Warfare: A French view of Counterinsurgency*.
68. CJSOTF: Command Joint Special Operations Task Force.
69. Kamervragen met antwoord 2008–2009, no. 2028.
70. Ministry of Defense, 'Operatie Chitag', http://www.defensie.nl/onderwerpen/personeel/onder-scheidingen/militaire_willems-orde/operatie_chitag.
71. Deedee Derksen, 'De Taliban? Alles wat op ons schiet'.
72. 'Tussentijdse evaluatie ISAF – 2009–09–11' supplement to: Minutes of the Second Chamber of the Dutch Parliament 2008–2009, 27925, no 357.
73. Sir Robert Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency*, 111–12.
74. Aryn Baker, 'Afghanistan: A War That's Still not Won'.
75. Raymond van den Boogaard, 'We gaan gevechten niet uit de weg. Commandant Vleugels over de inktvlekstrategie in Uruzgan'.
76. 'The U.S. Army & Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual', 121.
77. *Ibid.*, 122.
78. John Barry and Evan Thomas, 'Obama's Vietnam', 32. For more on Western military culture and its influence on the execution of counterinsurgency, see M.W.M. Kitzen, 'Westerse militaire cultuur en counterinsurgency', 123–134.
79. Sir Robert Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency*, 121.
80. Hans de Vreij, 'Nieuw NAVO-offensief in Uruzgan'.
81. David Galula, *Counterinsurgency warfare*, 52.
82. Minutes of the Second Chamber, Questions and answers 2007–2008, no. 584.
83. Noel van Bommel, 'Witte berg vol met hinderlagen'.
84. Noel van Bommel, 'Grote schoonveegactie Baluchivallei'.
85. Joeri Boom, 'Er zit veel denkwerk achter elke kogel die wordt afgeschoten'.
86. Minutes of the Second Chamber of the Dutch Parliament 2007–2008, 27925, no. 294.
87. Peter ter Velde, 'Operatie in Uruzgan verloopt moeizaam'.
88. 'Tussentijdse evaluatie ISAF – 2009-09-11', supplement to: Minutes of the Second Chamber of the Dutch Parliament 2008–2009, 27925, no. 357.
89. Van Bommel, 'Witte berg vol met hinderlagen.'; 'Navo: te weinig troepen', *Elsevier*, 6 February 2008; van Bommel, 'Denktank: Irak-aanpak nodig in Afghanistan'; and Ralph Coenen, 'De Taliban in Uruzgan, het karakter van de vijand en een aantal heroverwegingen om hem effectiever te bestrijden', 175.
90. Minutes of the Second Chamber of the Dutch Parliament 2005–2006, 27925, no. 201.
91. Sar, 'Kick the enemy where it hurts most', 12 and van Bommel, 'Denktank: Irak-aanpak nodig in Afghanistan'.
92. David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla, Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One*, 94.
93. AIV, 'Crisisbeheersingsoperaties in fragiele staten', 25; Sir Robert Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency*, 34.
94. Sir Robert Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency*.
95. Douglas A. Oliviant and Eric D. Chewing, 'Producing Victory: Rethinking Conventional Forces in COIN Operations', 54.
96. General Stanley McChrystal, *Commander ISAF's Initial Assessment*, 28.
97. Daniel Marston, 'Lessons in 21st-century counterinsurgency, Afghanistan 2001–2007', 219–240, esp. 233.
98. 'Harper's right: we won't win just by staying; there is no conventional victory in non-conventional warfare. Our task is to make the insurgents' influence irrelevant'.
99. Major-General Mart de Kruif in conversation with the American Colonel Gary Keck of the Department of Defense Press Office, 20 March 2009.

100. For example, 'Met kleine stapjes vooruit, Nederlandse militairen leiden Afghaans leger op in Uruzgan', 74–77.
101. Minutes of the Second Chamber of the Dutch Parliament 2005–2006, 27925, no. 193.
102. Cf. Kilcullen, *Accidental guerrilla*, 278–9.
103. Andrew Krepnevich quoted in Seth G. Jones, *Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan*, 126.
104. Colonel Kees Matthijsen quoted in First Lieutenant René Bouwhuis, 'Balluchivallei terug naar bevolking, veilige haven vervuult van eigenaar'.
105. 'Grote schoonveegactie Baluchivallei'.
106. 'Grote operatie in Uruzgan'.
107. 'Tussentijdse evaluatie ISAF – 2009-09-11'.
108. 'Commandant Battlegroup: we hebben overal gedomineerd'.
109. 'Grote operatie in Uruzgan'.
110. See, for example, Ralph Coenen, 'De Taliban in Uruzgan', 173.
111. 'Grote schoonveegactie Baluchivallei'.
112. 'Bevolking positief over operatie Tura Ghar'.
113. Marston, 'Lessons in 21st-century counterinsurgency', 240.
114. The U.S. Army Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual', 11.
115. 'The Taliban are Back: situation update December 2008'; United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan, Human Rights Unit, 'Afghanistan, annual report on protection of civilians in armed conflict', 2008; Barnaby Cook et al., *The Size of the Fight in the Dog, an assessment of the security situation in Afghanistan*; 'Number of Afghan civilian deaths in 2008 highest since Taliban ouster, says UN'; 'Deaths from IED attacks up in Afghanistan'; Thomas H. Johnson en M. Chris Mason, 'All Counterinsurgency is local'; and United Nations General Assembly Security Council, 'The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security'.
116. 'The Dutch model; Afghanistan's Uruzgan province'.
117. 'Tussentijdse evaluatie ISAF – 2009-09-11'.
118. 'The U.S. Army & Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual', FM 3-24, 46; Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla*, 294; see also Steven Metz, *Iraq and the Evolution of American Strategy*, 163.
119. 'Tussentijdse evaluatie ISAF – 2009-09-11'; see also: 'Toespraak uitgesproken door de minister van Defensie, E. van Middelkoop, bij gelegenheid van zijn werkbezoek aan Tarin Kowt, woensdag 22 April 2009'; and The Liaison Office, 'Three Years Later, A socia-political assessment of Uruzgan Province from 2006 to 2009', 2.
120. Tussentijdse evaluatie ISAF – 2009-09-11'.
121. Minutes of the Second Chamber of the Dutch Parliament 2008–2009, 27925, no. 330.
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123. McChrystal, *Commander ISAF's Initial Assessment*, 21.
124. James Joyner, 'Lord Robertson: NATO on Edge of a Precipice'.
125. Kalev I. Sepp, 'Best Practices in Counterinsurgency', 8–12; Kilcullen, *Accidental guerrilla*, 266; Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency*, 68; Bruce R. Pirnie and Edward O'Connell, *Counterinsurgency in Iraq (2003–2006)*, 95; Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, viii; Jones, *Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan*, 93–5; John Nagl in 'The U.S. Army Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual', 'The U.S. Army & Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual', FM 3-24, xix and McChrystal, *Commander ISAF's Initial Assessment*.

126. See, for example, Major-General Mart de Kruif in conversation with the American Colonel Gary Keck of the Department of Defense Press Office, 20 March 2009; Kilcullen, *Accidental guerrilla*, 94, 97, 111–112; 'The U.S. Army & Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual', FM 3-24, 122; Trent Scott and John Agoglia, 'Getting the basics right: a discussion on tactical actions for strategic impact in Afghanistan'.
127. Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force*, 176, 284.
128. Major-General Mart de Kruif in conversation with the American Colonel Gary Keck of the Department of Defense Press Office, 20 March 2009. See also North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, *Allied Joint Doctrine for Counterinsurgency (COIN)*, 130.
129. Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla*, 7; Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 78.
130. Ralph Coenen, 'Platoonhouse in Uruzgan als middel in counterinsurgency aanpak'; United Kingdom Army, *British Army Field Manual, Countering Insurgency*, volume 1, part 10, 178.
131. Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla*, 73–74.
132. David J. Kilcullen, *Measuring Progress in Afghanistan*, 15.
133. George Marlet, 'Nederlandse militairen gaan vaker in gevecht met de Taliban'.
134. The Asia Foundation, 'Afghanistan in 2009, A Survey of the Afghan People'; 'BBC/ABC/ARD Poll about Afghanistan'.
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137. Seth G. Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires, America's War in Afghanistan*, 164–5; Piet van der Sar, 'Wederopbouw van Afghanistan vanuit het Afgaanse perspectief', 14–15.
138. 'Afghan withdrawal could take 15 years'.
139. Martijn Kitzen, 'Samenwerking met lokale leiders essentieel voor Uruzgan'. See also Captain Joe Curtis, 'The Key Leader's Engagement, an important weapon in COIN operations', 35–42.
140. Brocades Zaalberg, 'Hearts and Minds of Search and destroy?', footnote 8.
141. Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 78; U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, 'Operation Enduring Freedom', 22–3. Quoted in Jones, *Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan*, 126, 'The U.S. Army & Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual', FM 3-24, 239; Brocades Zaalberg, 'Hearts and minds of search and destroy?', 296. For a good example of company-led COIN operations and the importance of the platoon leader, see Jim Keirse, 'Reflections of a Counterinsurgency Company Commander (Part 1 and 2)', 79–85 and 67–74.
142. Sar, 'Kick the enemy where it hurts most', 10. 'De luit in charge in Uruzgan', 11–12.
143. See also Coenen, 'Counterinsurgency operaties, geen succesvol optreden zonder gedegen kennis', 19 and 'Op weg naar een nieuwe generatie manoeuvreofficieren', 360–7.
144. David Kilcullen, 'Twenty Eight Articles'; Sar, 'Kick the enemy where it hurts most'.
145. AIV, 'Crisisbeheersingsoperaties in fragiele staten'; 'U.S. Counterinsurgency Guide', 50. See also Kees Homan, 'De militair en wederopbouw, zo civiel als mogelijk en zo militair als nodig', 66.

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