



Challenges in Assessing Progress in Multifunctional Operations

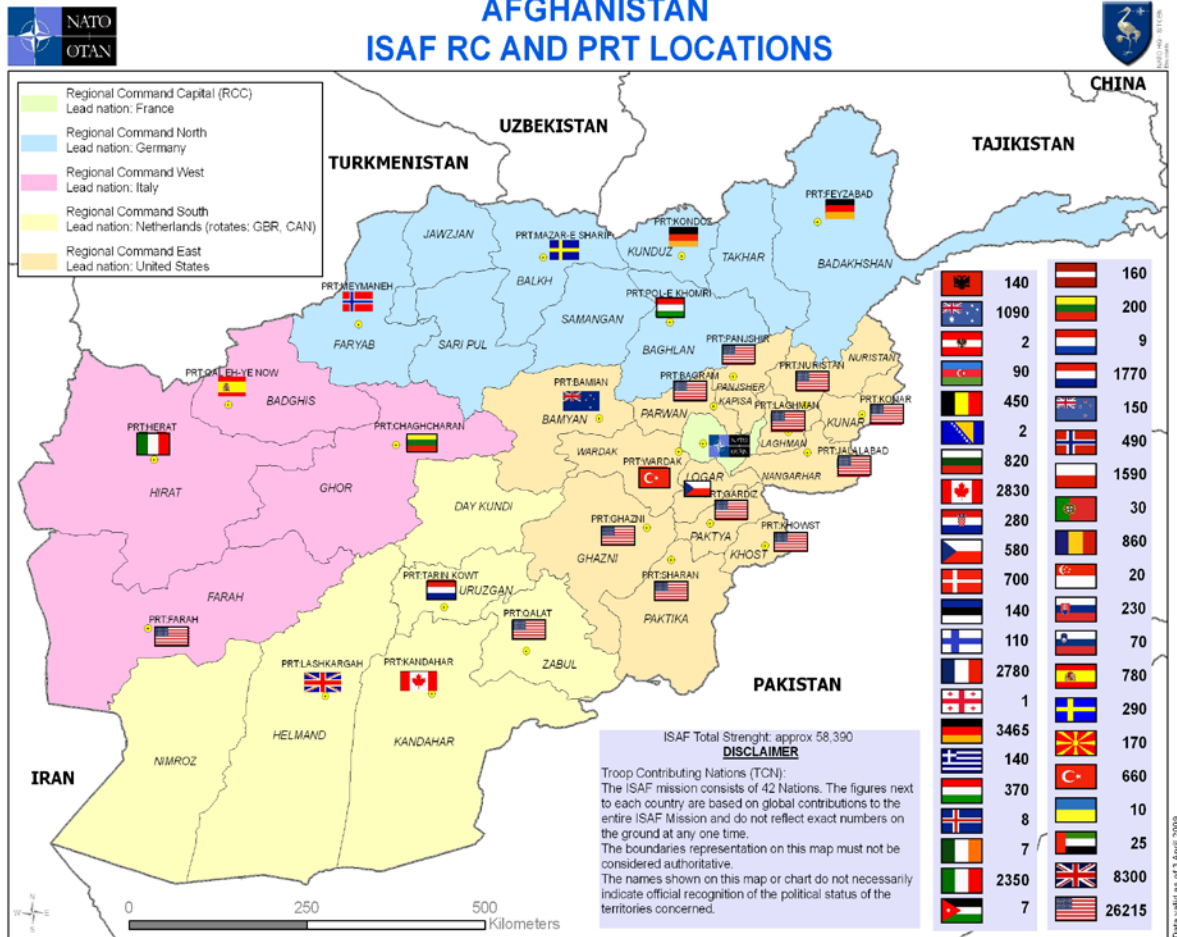
Experiences from the Swedish-led PRT in Afghanistan

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Overview

- Background to the study and the Swedish PRT
- Purpose of the study
- Method
- Main challenges
- Specific challenges
- Recommendations

The Swedish-led PRT MeS



- Tactical level command under RC North
- Swedish command from 2006
- 500 Swedish/Finnish
- small unit of civilian representatives

Purpose of the study

- Contemporary conflicts are multifaceted
 - Mission objectives abstract (democracy, development...)
 - Multitude of actors
 - Difficult to assess progress in this context
- Create a basic understanding of the challenges that exist in assessing progress within military organizations
 - Drawing from experiences of the Swedish PRT MeS
- Specifically, it seeks to find out what the main challenges are regarding:
 - guidelines and objectives (what should be assessed)
 - the assessment process in practice
 - the feedback process of assessment results to planning

Method

- Literature study
 - To gain a deeper understanding of problem area
 - Identify interview questions
- Interviews with staff at the PRT and RC North
 - 17 interviews
 - Swedish employees during 2008 – 2010
 - Both military and civilian staff

Main challenges

- Methodology to assess progress is underdeveloped
- Interaction and coordination problems
- Difficulties in measuring effects of ongoing operations and determining whether the mission is on track
 - Focus on activities – and not effects
 - No link to objectives
- Assessment was normally carried out *after* completed operations and at the end of the rotation/mission

Specific challenges: objectives and guidelines

- Objectives and decisive points were perceived as too generic and unspecific
 - Difficult to link to PRT-level activities
 - Staff not aware of objectives...
- Discrepancy between the formulation of objectives at the RC North-level, and the ability to break down and measure the achievement of them at the PRT-level
- Objectives not always shared by all relevant actors
 - civil and military organisations

Specific challenges: assessment practice

- Lack of co-ordination between the RC North and the PRT due to unclear responsibilities within the respective HQ
- Lack of assessment methods and skilled staff
 - Unstructured data collection
 - Unsystematic analysis
- Limitations in identifying relevant indicators
 - Unclear input (objectives and guidelines)
 - Lack of competence
- Problems measuring relevant indicators
 - Lack of time, skills and resources
 - Focus on measurable outputs (e.g. number of events or activities)

Specific challenges: feedback of results

- No systematic way of making use of assessment results
 - The assessment results did not lead to a review of the current plan (OPORDER)
- Decision makers had difficulties interpreting assessment results
 - Lack of credibility
 - Rotation of assessment staff
- Timing of assessment results
 - Assessments made at the end of the mission

Recommendations

- Assess all lines of operations - not only military objectives
 - Requires that all relevant actors are included in the assessment process and that co-ordination between PRT and RC North is increased
- Develop an assessment framework containing:
 - Terminology, definitions and, where applicable, suitable methods
- Consider a separate assessment function
 - Specifically trained assessment personnel?
 - Hire external consultants?
- Improve assessment training including:
 - Different assessment methods
 - Cooperation with others and contextual understanding

Recommendations contd.

- Clarify objectives in the OPLAN and OPORDER
 - Measurable
 - Both at operational and tactical levels
- Make the link between activities and objectives in the plan explicit
 - Including assumptions
- Clarify the link from activities to effects when making assessments
 - Not only general assessments of progress
- Develop a database of assessment results
 - In order to facilitate information sharing and reduce the risk for overlap



Questions?

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