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 \textit{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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