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# Operation *Enduring Freedom X* CJTF-82 and the Future of COIN

By R. D. HOOKER, JR.

Marines and Afghan Uniform  
Police conduct security patrol  
through bazaar in Helmand  
Province to decrease insurgent  
activity and gain trust



U.S. Marine Corps (Joseph M. Peterson)

The 82<sup>d</sup> Airborne Division's 2009–2010 rotation as the core headquarters for Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF)–82 and Regional Command–East (RC[E]) in Afghanistan marked an innovative break with the past in evolving counterinsurgency (COIN) doctrine and practice. In four key areas—synchronized communications, unified action, combined action, and joint network targeting—CJTF–82 implemented new approaches at the CJTF level. Both structural and conceptual, these innovations marked a clear departure from past practices, refined existing procedures, and suggested new doctrinal concepts and approaches. Truly interagency as well as joint and combined, CJTF–82 evolved into a hybrid organization that may well describe the future of COIN.

At the outset, CJTF–82 was task organized with three U.S. Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs), elements of a National Guard division headquarters (led by a one-star), a Polish battle group of two battalions, a French combat battalion (later upgraded to a two-battalion formation commanded by a one-star), a combat aviation brigade with attack, utility, and cargo helicopters, an engineer brigade, a sustainment brigade, and other smaller support and enabling units totaling 24,000 U.S. and 6,000 coalition troops (the CJTF included personnel of 10 different nationalities). Fourteen Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), including Czech, New Zealand, and Turkish PRTs, also supported the Task Force. Inside RC(E), the Afghan 201<sup>st</sup> and 203<sup>d</sup> Corps were positioned as well as large Afghan National Police and Afghan Border Police formations, totaling more than 42,000.

Like its predecessors, CJTF–82 faced numerous challenges in the course of its year-long rotation. RC(E) was responsible for an area the size of Ohio, with 14 provinces, 159 districts, and approximately 10 million inhabitants, with a 930-kilometer shared border with Pakistan (the distance from New York City to Fort Bragg, North Carolina). The Hindu Kush mountain



CJTF–82 commander discusses Afghan national army living conditions with ANA commander

U.S. Air Force (Evelyn Chavez)

range, a forbidding natural barrier, bisects RC(E) from east to west. Of great importance, more than 70 percent of the RC(E) population lives within 100 kilometers of the Pakistani border, mostly concentrated along the few major highways leading to Kabul and through Jalalabad to the Khyber Pass. Slightly more than 60 percent of its inhabitants are ethnic Pashtuns, historic rivals of the Tajik (19 percent) and Hazara (10 percent) tribal groupings. A special case are the famously xenophobic and fiercely independent Nuristanis, about 5 percent of the RC(E) population, who speak an entirely distinct language and live, largely isolated,

in the high mountains of Nuristan.<sup>1</sup> Eastern Afghanistan is home to a population that is largely illiterate and has some of the highest poverty and unemployment levels on Earth. The tyranny of distance and terrain, a long history of conflict and occupation, an extraordinarily complex tribal mosaic, an adaptive and committed enemy, and primitive and often corrupt governance all posed extraordinary challenges for soldiers and diplomats alike.

Unlike other regional commands in Afghanistan, numerous insurgent groups exist in RC(E). The most significant include the Haqqanni Network (HQN), Hezb-e

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all are avid radio listeners. Accordingly, CJTF-82 handed out hundreds of thousands of handcranked AM/FM radios, mostly in rural areas. Building on an existing network of 26 radio stations, CJTF-82 expanded it to more than 55. These off-the-shelf systems or “Radios in a Box” (RIABs) employed locally recruited Afghan announcers and script writers and operated from coalition bases throughout RC(E). Using Afghan programming obtained through commercial contracts, they enabled coalition forces to reach into all but the most mountainous areas with local news, poetry, music, and religious content, as well as public service announcements crafted in accordance with our communications strategy. Units also purchased air time from commercial radio stations where available to augment their broadcasts. Whereas higher headquarters conducted broadcast messaging nationwide, CJTF-82 focused on regional and local themes of more immediate interest to the specific local population.

CJTF-82 units supplemented broadcast messaging with print products such as posters, handbills, billboards, and leaflets designed to communicate messages visually to a largely illiterate population. As with radio and TV spots, local Afghan staff was incorporated during preparation of print products to ensure coherent and culturally authentic messages, as well as pretesting in the local community. In August 2009, in the weeks preceding the national elections, CJTF-82 disseminated one million “get out the vote” print products per week—more than the Afghan government distributed across the entire country—swamping the Taliban’s effort.

While CJTF-82’s Information Operations section supervised RIAB and print operations, the Public Affairs (PA) section handled all interaction with media organizations as well as traditional command information programs. Supported by a 26-soldier Mobile PA Detachment and 6-soldier PA Detachment, the PA section supported embedded media throughout RC(E), operated a media operations center at Bagram airfield, published a monthly command information magazine, and provided daily content (both text and photos) on RC(E) to national and international news organizations. CJTF-82’s social messaging activities, which included a popular

Web site as well as Facebook and Twitter sites, proved extremely successful and experienced a five-fold growth in subscribers in the course of the rotation. Perhaps most importantly, the RC(E) PA section built up and leveraged ongoing relationships with more than 110 local press organizations in eastern Afghanistan.

Broadcast and print media proved to be powerful communications tools, but in an oral, narrative culture like Afghanistan’s, nothing can replace traditional, face-to-face communications on the ground. The CJTF Key Leader Engagement (KLE) cell focused on the Command Group<sup>4</sup> as a key messaging tool, supporting more than 490 engagements with senior Afghan, coali-

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tion, international, and U.S. Government and opinion leaders to tell the CJTF story. Subordinate commanders did the same, supported by International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), ISAF Joint Command (IJC), and CJTF communications guidance. While KLEs have been used for several years in Afghanistan, their conscious use as a messaging tool in support of a coherent communications strategy, synchronized and in concert with other complementary means, was an innovation that consistently produced great results.

Early on, CJTF-82 recognized that many of the skills associated with successful synchronized communications lie outside traditional military career fields. Accordingly, the task force entered into a partnership with The MobyGroup, a large multimedia commercial firm based in Kabul, to create a holistic media campaign to promote Afghan Security Forces and to build stronger ties between the Afghan people in RC(E) and local and national governance. The result was a print and broadcast campaign that leveraged commercial marketing, concept development, and production capabilities. Tailored with local ethnic differences in mind, the campaign featured posters, billboards, and TV and radio spots in both Dari and Pashto, with imagery geared to Pashtun, Tajik, or Hazara audiences as appropriate. The campaign, created

by Afghans for Afghans, proved strikingly successful throughout RC(E).

These principles and concepts drove the CJTF-82 information effort—a campaign every bit as real and consequential as any kinetic operation. Some operations were phased, long-duration efforts, like Operation *Jaeza* (Reward), an integrated, synchronized campaign to establish community safety tiplines. Battlespace owners used their RIABs, face-to-face engagements, and print products to inform the population about the tiplines. As awareness grew, Afghans in increasing numbers began to call in the location of improvised explosive devices and weapons caches, often for cash payments under the Department of Defense Rewards

Program. Units also handed out cell phones to trusted local leaders and personalities to facilitate call-ins. Over time, actionable calls rose exponentially, saving hundreds of lives. By integrating all messaging entities coherently, CJTF-82 dominated the information fight to a degree not seen in Afghanistan since the conflict began.

### Unified Action

Civil-military cooperation has long been recognized as essential to success in COIN, but execution on the ground has often been uneven and difficult. While agency cultures and doctrinal differences are always present, truly integrated civil-military operations are clearly the way ahead. During its Operation *Enduring Freedom X* (OEF X) rotation in 2009–2010, CJTF-82 broke new ground with unified action—the first-ever attempt to fuse military and civilian organizations into one operational headquarters.

At the transfer of authority from the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division to the 82<sup>d</sup> on June 4, 2009, there were three civilians posted to the headquarters. That began to change quickly. In July 2009, the U.S. Embassy in Kabul converted the Political Advisor position to that of Senior Civilian Representative (SCR) of the Ambassador. Empowered with Chief of Mission authority to “coordinate and direct all U.S. Mission-related civilian personnel and programs in RC(E) . . . [to]

achieve unity of civilian effort and effective implementation of an integrated civilian-military strategy,” the SCR was directed to “serve as the U.S. civilian counterpart to the military commander in the Regional Command (RC), to senior coalition civilians and to senior local Afghan officials.”

In this role, the SCR cosigned, with the commanding general, the CJTF-82 campaign plan (*Operation Champion Sahar*) on October 17, 2009. *Unified action* aimed to create synergy among related functions on the CJTF staff and with similar organizations at the IJC and ISAF levels. It leveraged resident expertise on both the civilian and military sides. It also enhanced cooperation and coordination between two different worlds and cultures: a military traditionally focused on conflict and combat, and a civilian interagency process focused on diplomacy and development. This unique organization, a true civilian/military hybrid unlike any seen before, included senior military Civil Affairs officers as well as career experts from the Departments of State and Agriculture, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and other government agencies up to Senior Executive Service rank. Drawing on the assets and capabilities of the entire CJTF staff and tying in with parallel organizations above and below, it quickly energized development and governance efforts and brought coherence and focus using resources never before available.

The civilian uplift began in earnest in early September with the arrival of eight USAID specialists in water, agriculture, governance, rule of law, program management, and economics—specialties with applications for both governance and development. At the outset, the SCR directed the staff to organize to support four major objective areas: development in selected commercially viable provinces (Nangarhar, Kunar, and Laghman); support to identified “pilot” districts (Khogyani in Nangarhar Province and Sarkani in Kunar Province); provincial transition to lead security responsibility, beginning with the stable provinces of Bamyan and Panjshir; and stabilization throughout the rest of RC(E).

While the objective teams worked to address the challenges described above, the “civilian platform” continued to grow across RC(E), expanding unified action to

brigade, battalion, and even company level.<sup>5</sup> The platform eventually grew to more than 175 personnel from the State and Agriculture Departments and USAID.<sup>6</sup> An interesting development was the Board of Directors concept, used at brigade level to coordinate and prioritize development projects. The brigade commander chaired regular working groups with his affiliated State, USAID, Agriculture, and PRT leaders to plan, coordinate, and prioritize funding and support for development projects.

PRTs continued to play a critical role as they have for most of our involvement in Afghanistan over the past decade. Manned with both civilian and military experts, they provided a primary interface and capacity-building function with provincial governors and their staffs, serving as an execution arm for development and governance in the provinces. Most were led by U.S. Air Force or Navy O-5s with U.S. Government civilian deputies, but RC(E) also fielded Czech, Turkish, and New Zealand PRTs. Each included development and governance professionals and security elements to enable freedom of movement. All U.S. PRTs were placed under the operational control of BCTs to establish a clear link to nearby supporting headquarters and to ensure close integration with all stability actors across the brigade area.<sup>7</sup>

Like everything in Afghanistan, stability operations are a hard and grinding business, fraught with setbacks and obstacles. Endemic corruption, lack of trained bureaucrats and officials, widespread illiteracy, an active insurgency, and complex coordination challenges between U.S., North Atlantic Treaty Organization, United Nations, and nongovernmental organization bodies defined the operating environment. Still, unified action enabled CJTF-82 to achieve real and sustained progress. Concrete examples include the completion of 47 schools, 206 kilometers of roads, 39 bridges, and numerous micro-hydro, generator, and solar power projects, as well as electrical



**Afghan contractor and USAID representative discuss progress at hospital construction site**

U.S. Air Force (Barry Loo)

systems projects that will provide approximately 339,000 Afghans with access to reliable power. From April 2009 through April 2010, RC(E) residents reported significant improvements in education, medical care, roads, and the availability of jobs. Additionally, an accumulated backlog of more than 1,700 unfinished Commander’s Emergency Response Program projects dating back to 2006 was reduced to 510 between July 2009 and April 2010, refocusing the program to primarily small-scale, sustainable projects providing immediate results.

Unified action also enabled clear progress on rule of law in RC(E), supporting advancements in evidence collection, the identification and removal of corrupt officials, and the establishment of sitting supreme court judges and mobile trial judges. As one example, five district governors were removed for corruption in Nangarhar Province in the spring of 2010, and in early May a judicial commission from the Afghan supreme court charged five district line managers with corruption and opened investigations on another 13 in Paktika Province. Across RC(E), 12 corrupt Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) commanders at the district and provincial levels were removed in one 5-month period. Gains on this front will be incremental and halting but are essential in combating the corrosive corruption that threatens progress in Afghanistan.

In RC(E), unified action strove for unity of effort by synchronizing, coordinating, and integrating civilian capacities

U.S., Afghan, and French officials talk during security and development shura in Kapisa Province



French Army (Sylvain Petremard)

and expertise with military operations. This approach was driven from the top, starting with the ISAF commander and the U.S. Ambassador. Unified action has been considered theoretically for years; its conceptual framework in fact is taken directly from Army Field Manual 3-0, *Operations*. But it became an operational reality for the first time in RC(E) in 2009. As a new construct, it experienced many of the birthing pains that always accompany new ideas and practices. But the return has been well worth the investment. Today, a foundation has been laid for interagency cooperation in conflict areas that offers exciting opportunities and demonstrated success.

### Combined Action

Since 9/11, U.S. and coalition forces have partnered in various ways with host nation security forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, both formally and informally. For OEF X, CJTF-82 committed to a new and different approach.<sup>8</sup> The previous model featured embedded

training teams (ETTs) and police mentor teams (PMTs), relatively small organizations that accompanied ANSF units as trainers and advisors. In a sharp break with the past, CJTF-82 moved to fuse Afghan and U.S. formations into truly combined units. *Combined action* refers to the integration of coalition and host nation forces into single organizations to conduct counterinsurgency.<sup>9</sup> It involved embedding coalition headquarters and units with Afghan counterpart organizations, both to increase operational effects and to speed the professionalization and build the capacity of ANSF.

To this end, CJTF-82 replaced ETTs and PMTs with coalition maneuver units linked directly to Afghan counterparts.<sup>10</sup> Replacing small advisory teams with full-sized combat units introduced a completely different dynamic. Afghan units and leaders showed greater willingness to conduct operations, knowing that coalition forces were there in strength and ready to bring in fire support if needed. With ETTs/PMTs,

the ratio of coalition to Afghan soldiers or police was 1:43 in many areas. Through combined action, that ratio became 1:4. In just 90 days, the percentage of Afghan-led operations increased 15 percent, the number of joint Afghan/coalition operations jumped 20 percent, and ANSF recruiting and retention showed strong improvement—a clear indication of growing confidence.<sup>11</sup>

Executing combined action also placed heavy demands on logistics and engineer support. Many Afghan troop facilities were in poor condition, which seriously affected morale. Collocating headquarters and formations provided an opportunity to construct new facilities and expand others to improve ANSF quality of life and retention. In some cases, the ANSF moved to coalition sites. In others, coalition forces moved to ANSF locations, and in still others, collocation required the construction of new facilities. The CJTF used its staff engineer section to plan and oversee construction, aided by the Regional Support Team, an embedded Combined

Security Transition Command–Afghanistan cell. Most construction was funded through the Afghan Security Forces Fund.

Given scarce resources, the CJTF placed Afghan Army units first in priority due to their greater maturity, capability, and leadership and corresponding impact on security. (Afghan National Police and Border Police units were also partnered, but at somewhat lower levels.) The single most dramatic decision was to push out 35-man tactical command posts, each led by a U.S. brigadier general, to live, work, and fight with the Afghan National Army 201<sup>st</sup> and 203<sup>d</sup> Corps. Division-level enablers such as artillery fires, close air support, medical evacuation, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) platforms, and logistics could now be incorporated into coalition/ANSF operations to a far greater degree. In the same way, coalition units benefited from Afghan cultural awareness,

information—to achieve effects against priority targets became apparent. With each operation, the CJTF adapted its processes, learning from both success and failure to improve its effects.

CJTF-82 employed two basic approaches to target anti-Afghan Forces (AAF) networks. The first called for coalition and Afghan SOF to conduct trigger-based operations against high-value individuals and key AAF leadership.<sup>14</sup> Conventional forces were then staged to exploit intelligence and interdict the enemy as he reacted. If clear indicators and triggers were not available, conventional forces conducted disruption operations to provoke trigger events and, in effect, flush out targets from hiding by forcing them to move or communicate, thus raising their signature and vulnerability. Both methods relied on painstaking intelligence work to establish “pattern of life” and to limit and prevent collateral damage during the operation.

In RC(E), the CJTF found that prolonged, focused network targeting, using theater- and CJTF-level assets tasked down to the brigade level, had the largest positive impact on defeating or disrupting the insurgency across all lines of operations. Analyzing both casualties and incidents revealed marked differences. Shorter duration operations using only brigade-level assets showed no significant decrease over time, and resulted in only limited local effects.<sup>18</sup>

CJTF-82 network targeting also incorporated nonlethal targeting, particularly to counter criminals or corrupt officials operating in RC(E). Department of Justice and Intelligence Community assistance was instrumental in helping RC(E) build actionable legal cases against corrupt officials, many of whom actively collaborated with the insurgents to target both security forces and civilians. Nonlethal targeters worked out of the fusion cell to build target folders with a menu of options, ranging from proposed legal action to requests to remove the official from office to key leader engagements intended to confront or shame negative influencers. This process has been adopted across the theater as the Joint Prioritized Shaping and Influence List and is currently a top priority for all levels of command. ISAF now tracks corrupt officials and negative influencers in all provinces and has issued guidance specifically aimed at limiting public engagements that would give the appearance of coalition support to these individuals. Working in concert with Rule of Law staff and stability operations experts, the CJTF Nonlethal Targeting Cell identified numerous corrupt officials who were later removed from government positions in RC(E), with several being charged, convicted, and sentenced. Members of the population, to include GIRoA members, are now more willing to come forward and report corruption through sworn statements because of recent success at removing prominent GIRoA members due to their corrupt, criminal, or insurgent activities. Solving corruption will be an arduous process, but efforts like this provide a way ahead to attack the problem in concert with GIRoA.

Success in COIN will not come solely from kinetic operations; much depends on successfully integrating population security with stability operations. Still, in Afghanistan, we face an implacable and deadly enemy who must be confronted when he cannot be reconciled. Joint network targeting provides

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*insurgent networks in Afghanistan are highly adaptive and quickly replace leaders and resupply captured materials*

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tactical experience, and local intelligence sources as never before. The result was a 71 percent increase in reporting and a striking 60 percent reduction in ANSF casualties after only 90 days.<sup>12</sup>

**Joint Network Targeting**

Afghanistan is home to a dangerous insurgency characterized by highly organized and effective networks made up of commanders, financiers, suppliers, intelligence operatives, propagandists, and foot soldiers. To confront and defeat them, CJTF-82 refined existing joint doctrine to fit RC(E)’s unique operational environment to target insurgent networks using a full-spectrum approach.<sup>13</sup> Called joint network targeting (JNT), this process featured both lethal and nonlethal components designed to attack systems, not just personalities, to disrupt and collapse insurgent cells throughout the battlespace.

The previous rotation, with fewer troops and heavier national support element responsibilities, had delegated most targeting functions to the brigades. With more assets flowing into Afghanistan as U.S. priorities shifted from Iraq, the need to focus resources—Special Operations Forces (SOF) and conventional units, ISR, fires, aviation,

Insurgent networks in Afghanistan are highly adaptive and quickly replace leaders and resupply captured materials: “Cellular networks are by their nature resilient to attacks that kill or capture single individuals, suggesting a different approach.”<sup>15</sup> While coalition forces are exceptionally good at deliberately targeting individuals, a focus on attacking the entire network required new organizations and techniques.<sup>16</sup> JNT looks at the problem holistically in order to conduct operations that degrade enemy effectiveness, drive down violence, and foster stability.

Attacking targets without analyzing network connections often resulted in tactical successes but no lasting operational effects. Expendable low-level leaders were quickly replaced. JNT analyzed the entire network—to include recruitment, training, logistical support, financing, command and control systems, leadership, and negative influencers.<sup>17</sup> CJTF-82 learned that “shredding” networks was possible by attacking not only key nodes in the enemy network, but also key functions simultaneously. This often took the form of major CJTF-level operations that massed ISR and other resources for extended periods to maintain continuous pressure.

one way to strike at insurgent networks with proven effect. An intercepted insurgent radio transmission put it succinctly: “They will kill us. They will kill us all.”

CJTF-82 built upon the accomplishments and lessons learned of its predecessors in RC(E) to create new structures and approaches during OEF X. Its success was made possible by many actors and agencies, both in predeployment preparation and on the ground in Afghanistan. The future of COIN clearly lies in more effective and sophisticated mastery of the information domain; in hybrid and synergistic civil-military teams; in fused and thoroughly integrated combined formations; and in precise and holistic network targeting. For the first time, CJTF-82 innovations and adaptations in the areas of synchronized communications, unified action, combined action, and joint network targeting translated these concepts into concrete action in an active counterinsurgency, with exciting and encouraging results. Building on a foundation of rediscovered theory and practice, as well as on hard-earned lessons from the post-9/11 era, they represent new thinking and a new counterinsurgency model for successor organizations. **JFQ**

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The Pashtun and Tajiks follow Sunni Islam, while the Hazaras, who may have descended from invading Mongol populations, are Shia. The Nuristanis were forcibly converted to Islam in 1895 and believe they descend from the soldiers and followers of Alexander, who campaigned there in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE.

<sup>2</sup> Hezb-e Islami Gulbuddin is led by Gulbeddin Hekmatyar, briefly prime minister in 1996 and a notorious anti-coalition warlord. Al Qaeda elements in Pakistan provided individual fighters and some training and financial support, as well as ideological inspiration, but did not conduct separate operations in Regional Command-East (RC[E]) as a tactical entity.

<sup>3</sup> The original objective to “defeat the Haqqani network” in RC(E) was later modified to “disrupt” as assets, particularly surveillance platforms, were moved to RC-South, the designated main effort.

<sup>4</sup> Consisting of the commanding general, deputy commanding generals for operations, support, and coalition affairs, the chief of staff, and command sergeant major.

<sup>5</sup> Agricultural Development Teams—manned by National Guard members with civilian backgrounds in agriculture—also played

key roles but reported to the battlespace-owning brigades. Three-person District Support Teams were also fielded in 20 selected districts on a trial basis.

<sup>6</sup> Other civilian agencies supporting the Command Joint Task Force such as the Department of Defense, Department of Justice, and intelligence activities do not operate under Chief of Mission authority.

<sup>7</sup> Coalition (vice U.S.) Provincial Reconstruction Teams reported to national authorities and coordinated with, but were not task organized under CJTF-82.

<sup>8</sup> The CJTF-82 mission statement read: “CJTF-82/RC(E), in partnership with Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and in close coordination with joint, interagency, and multinational partners, conducts combined action counterinsurgency (COIN) operations to protect the population, increase the competency, capacity, and credibility of Afghan institutions, and defeat Anti-Afghan Forces.”

<sup>9</sup> See Field Manual 3-24, *Counterinsurgency* (Washington, DC: Headquarters Department of the Army, December 2006).

<sup>10</sup> In some cases, embedded training teams/police mentor teams returned to the units from which they were drawn; in others, they were reassigned to RC-South or redeployed without replacement as their tours expired.

<sup>11</sup> Data from CJTF-82 C3J Significant Activities Reporting.

<sup>12</sup> Data from ANA 203<sup>d</sup> Corps G3.

<sup>13</sup> Targeting is “the process of selecting and prioritizing targets and matching the appropriate response to them, considering commander’s objectives, operational requirements, capabilities, and limitations.” See Joint Publication 1-02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Washington, DC: The Joint Staff, April 12, 2001, as amended through October 31, 2009), 538.

<sup>14</sup> A *trigger* is defined as a reliable intelligence event confirming the location of a target in space and time.

<sup>15</sup> Derek Jones, *Understanding the Form, Function, and Logic of Clandestine Cellular Networks: The First Step in Effective Counternetwork Operations* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: School of Advanced Military Studies, May 2009), 55.

<sup>16</sup> This approach was not invented in Afghanistan in Operation *Enduring Freedom X*, but built upon and refined earlier and evolving practices.

<sup>17</sup> Joint Publication 2-01.3, *Joint Intelligence Preparation of the Operational Environment* (Washington, DC: The Joint Staff, June 16, 2009), C-12. *Negative influencers* refers to civilian or security leadership figures who support insurgent or criminal activity for financial or ideological reasons.

<sup>18</sup> Tom Deveans, CJTF-82 C3J Assessments, email, April 23, 2010.



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### Strategic Forum 268

#### *The Evolving Threat of al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb*

The terrorist group known as al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) already poses the greatest immediate threat of transnational terrorism in northwest Africa, and is now escalating its attacks against regional and Western interests. The U.S.-led Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership has not been able to prevent further attacks. According to Andre Le Sage, this raises an important strategic question for the United States: what level of activity by AQIM would be a sufficient threat to U.S. national security to warrant a more aggressive political, intelligence, military, and law enforcement response? Dr. Le Sage points out a number of specific scenarios that would call for a stronger U.S. response. He concludes by laying out four elements that might constitute such a strategy: increased diplomatic pressure on regional states, an increased intelligence effort to better understand AQIM vulnerabilities, internationally supported military action, and a range of other diplomatic and peacebuilding activities in northwest Africa.



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