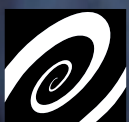


June 2016

The Strategic Costs of Civilian Harm

Applying Lessons from Afghanistan to Current and Future Conflicts



OPEN SOCIETY
FOUNDATIONS

Authors

Christopher D. Kolenda

Senior Military Fellow at King's College London, and President and CEO, Kolenda Strategic Leadership LLC. Chris was recently Senior Advisor on Afghanistan and Pakistan to the Department of Defense senior leadership, and served four tours in Afghanistan. From 2009 he was selected by the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy to develop a new U.S. strategy for the conflict; he drafted the groundbreaking McChrystal assessment and counterinsurgency guidance. He since served as senior advisor to three ISAF Commanders.

Rachel Reid

Policy and Advocacy Manager, Middle East, North Africa, Southwest Asia, Open Society Foundations. Reid was previously at Human Rights Watch, where she was based in Afghanistan from 2007-10, with a strong focus on civilian casualties. Prior to her move into human rights work, Reid spent more than a decade in foreign affairs with the BBC.

Chris Rogers

Senior Policy Analyst, Middle East, North Africa, Southwest Asia, Open Society Foundations. Rogers was previously a researcher with the Center for Civilians in Conflict (CIVIC) in Afghanistan and Pakistan, investigating and reporting on civilian harm from military and counter-terrorism operations in the region.

Marte Retzius

Research Assistant. Retzius worked as a research assistant for Kolenda Strategic Leadership. She has a Master's in Conflict, Security and Development from King's College London and a bachelor's degree in Social and Political Sciences from the University of York.

Copyright © 2016 Open Society Foundations.

This publication is available as a pdf on the Open Society Foundations website under a Creative Commons license that allows copying and distributing the publication, only in its entirety, as long as it is attributed to the Open Society Foundations and used for noncommercial educational or public policy purposes. Photographs may not be used separately from the publication.

I.

Foreword

I.

Foreword

8755. That is the address. I know the way by heart. The number and name is etched into the light gray granite, Thomas Gordon Bostick, Jr.

Staring at Tom's name, my mind races to the mountains of Afghanistan on July 27, 2007. Bulldog—B Troop—as Tom's unit was called, was outnumbered three-to-one by an enemy that knew every rock and cave. I was at my tactical command post, set on a mountain ridgeline six miles away, to coordinate airstrikes, artillery, and attack helicopters. The hammering of large caliber weapons, the crash of grenades, and the thunder from airstrikes pummeling enemy positions marked the battle's intensity. Apache Attack helicopters swooped in with deadly rockets and machine guns.

The battle raged for several hours. Then it stopped. The insurgents broke contact.

After several hours, the raging battle suddenly stopped. Tom gave me an update over the radio. His platoons were consolidating their positions, all casualties evacuated, and preparing to continue the mission. Tom was a masterful tactician and an extraordinary leader. At 37 years old, he was nearer in age to me than his peers. We were close friends.

Then I heard it.

A single explosion shattered the calm. The fight erupted with renewed intensity. The Bulldogs fought bravely. Their skill and the weight of airstrikes forced the enemy to break contact a few hours later. But we had two men killed, and a dozen wounded. The explosion I heard was a rocket propelled grenade that killed Tom.

8755, Section 60, Arlington National Cemetery. That is where he rests in peace.

That firefight and others before it made me question every assumption. In time I realized that the character of the conflict was far different than what we had been told and believed.

The Law of Armed Conflict is thoroughly ingrained in U.S. military training and education. Like most of my fellow warriors I regarded civilian casualties as a deeply saddening but inevitable consequence of war—we did all we could to avoid them, striking valid military targets with discrimination and proportionality.

But seeing the war from the eyes of local civilians helped me understand why that view was inadequate. In wars among the people, where the real battles are for legitimacy, civilian harm can have significant tactical and strategic impact.

After Tom's death, his replacement, Joey Hutto, intensified our outreach to the elders. The elders spoke candidly, telling us that they had welcomed the Americans in the hope of developing their economically poor district. What they got instead was fighting, dead and wounded family members, house and mosque searches, and a corrupt government.

The whole ecology of civilian life was shattered—instability increased the prices of food and goods. When civilian men were badly wounded or killed, families lost their breadwinners. When women and children were wounded and killed or their houses searched, the men were ashamed and honor-bound to avenge them. Men carried away to detention facilities could languish for months and were assumed to have been tortured, many of them guilty of no crime. Corrupt officials pilfered economic and humanitarian assistance.

The elders were particularly upset at how some rivals had ingratiated themselves with U.S. forces years earlier. These people fed Americans “bad intelligence,” duping them into killing or capturing community leaders to settle old scores and amass power.

The most significant example was the targeting of a local elder who was a famous *mujahideen* leader in the Afghan-Soviet war. In the beginning he had been a strong advocate for American presence in the district. After being hunted by U.S. forces, he began a deadly insurrection. That summer was our turn to fight it.

Such manipulation was widespread and had a disproportionately large effects. U.S. civilian and military leaders began to recognize that civilian casualties were undermining the mission. In 2008 ISAF caused 39% of civilian casualties.

General Stanley A. McChrystal, who took command in June 2009 drove the importance of civilian protection across ISAF. I stressed the importance of this issue to him before he took command and he asked me to explore it further when we got to Kabul. I was fortunate there to meet with Rachel Reid (this report's co-author, then with Human Rights Watch), Erica Gaston from CIVIC, and many other advocates from the UN and NGOs. Together with then-Colonel Rich Gross, McChrystal's Staff Judge Advocate, and others, we put together recommendations for reform.

These reforms improved over time and reduced ISAF-caused civilian deaths from 39% in 2008 to 9% by 2012, while advancing the mission and sustaining force protection and confidence. Leader emphasis, training, and data analysis and feedback were the most important factors. Generals McChrystal, Petraeus, Allen, and Dunford made civilian protection central to their campaigns.

Reflecting on the years I have been involved in Afghanistan, to include including four combat tours, I am struck by the strategic penalties the United States paid for civilian harm. It was a key factor in the growth and sustainability of the Taliban, it sorely damaged US-Afghan relations, undermined legitimacy of both parties, and alienated the Afghan people.

Studies show that counter-insurgencies fail when an insurgency has sustainable internal and external support, or a host nation government loses legitimacy. Civilian harm tends to accelerate both problems—it is like burning a candle at both ends with a blowtorch .

Remarkably, the vast majority of ISAF-caused civilian harm occurred *while operating in accordance with the Law of Armed Conflict*. We would expect penalties for violations of LOAC. But those that occur within LOAC are damaging, too—and far more frequent.

Civilian harm inflicted by local partners with “Made in the USA” weapons, training, equipment, and support can also damage to U.S. strategic interests while undermining host nation legitimacy. Sectarian, kleptocratic, racist, and ethno-centric governments are at highest risk of using military forces in predatory ways. U.S. skill at training and equipping security forces have outpaced our ability to hold governments accountable.

At some level of accumulation, unique to each conflict, civilian harm inflicts irreversible damage to the prospects of success. I use the imprecise “at some level of accumulation” deliberately. The United States has no institutionalized method to collect, measure, and analyze the strategic impact of civilian harm and the effects of amends. We could be repeating errors, imposing unnecessary restrictions, and losing critical opportunities.

Has civilian harm by partners done irreversible damage to our aims in Pakistan, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and elsewhere? Are U.S. restrictions strategically beneficial? We have no systematic way to answer those questions.

This is not a question of whether to “take the gloves off” against an adversary—it is a more fundamental question of when do we wear gloves and which ones are best?

The U.S. government takes great efforts to avoid civilian harm in its military operations, and has made important strides to improve doctrine, tactics, and procedures. The findings in this report suggest that the U.S. should address the strategic implications, too. Our recommendations are low cost and high payoff.

Even better civilian protection, however, will not overcome an absent or bankrupt strategy. Why did the U.S. take so long to recognize that protection of Afghan civilians mattered? Failure to understand the nature of the conflict and to devise a credible strategy to succeed prolonged the conflict and the human suffering.

What happened to the insurgent leader mentioned earlier? Due to the efforts of B Troop with local elders, the insurgent leader and his group stopped fighting about 6 months later and eventually made peace with the Afghan government. I have since met with my former adversary eight times.

At a strategic level, success in Afghanistan should not have been a close call—civilian harm is a key reason why it still hangs in the balance 15 years later.

Christopher D. Kolenda

II.

Executive Summary

“Civilian casualties were threatening the entire relationship between Karzai and the coalition... and undermining the perception of the coalition’s commitment [to] secure and serve the people... If you are killing civilians, then you are obviously not protecting them.”

— General David Petraeus, Former Commander ISAF

II.

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to improve understanding of civilian harm in Afghanistan and its strategic impact, to examine the efficacy of International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) reforms to reduce civilian harm, and to offer lessons on civilian protection for current and future conflicts.

The U.S. military is committed to upholding the Law of Armed Conflict (LOAC) and makes great efforts to protect civilians. The United States' experience in Afghanistan demonstrated how civilian harm, even *in accordance with LOAC*, can cause irreversible damage to a U.S. mission—a serious risk that also applies to U.S. counter-terrorism operations and partnerships with foreign security forces.

We assess with high confidence that civilian harm by U.S., international, and Afghan forces contributed significantly to the growth of the Taliban, particularly during the crucial periods 2002-04, and 2006-08, and undermined the war effort by straining U.S.-Afghan relations and weakening the legitimacy of the U.S. mission and the Afghan government.

We also assess with high confidence that the reforms made by ISAF were successful in reducing civilian harm, while not impeding strategic aims and not undermining force protection. The most important factors in reducing harm were leader emphasis, training, and data collection-analysis-feedback loops. The reforms, however, were too late to reverse the strategic damage.

Third, we take a preliminary look at conflicts in Yemen, Iraq, Syria, and Pakistan. We find that the U.S. military is taking considerable steps to protect civilians, but there remains significant potential for improvement based on several lessons from Afghanistan. In particular, civilian harm by partners risks undermining U.S. credibility and interests.

Finally, we find that the United States has made significant strides to institutionalize civilian protection in military doctrine and tactics, but shortfalls remain that heighten the risk of errors, unnecessary restrictions, and harm to U.S. strategic objectives, now and in the future. “I’m a believer in American exceptionalism but only if you keep proving it,” said David Sedney, former deputy assistant secretary of defense.

The United States should develop a uniform policy on civilian protection, create standing data collection and analysis capabilities, sharpen learning and accountability, improve decision-making tools, enhance training and leader development, and strengthen partner accountability.

In this report we define *civilian casualties* as physical injury or death from military operations. We define *civilian harm* as damage from military operations to personal or community well-being. This may include wrongful targeting of key leaders through malign information, damage and destruction of personal property and civilian infrastructure, long-term health consequences, loss of livelihoods and other economic impacts, and offenses to dignity. Viewing civilian harm in this way is necessary to appreciate the full impact of military operations on civilian life and the choices people make. We concur with the U.S. Army definition of civilian protection as “efforts that reduce civilian risks from physical violence, secure their rights to access essential services and resources, and contribute to a secure, stable, and just environment for civilians over the long-term,” and its stated importance in contemporary war.

This report is based on interviews with over 60 experts, including current and former senior U.S. and Afghan government and military officials as well as UN officials and civil society experts—individuals who have been directly responsible for strategy, operations, and decision-making in Afghanistan. In addition, the report combines an analysis of UN and ISAF data and recent academic studies to assess the tactical and strategic impact of civilian harm and evaluate reforms.

FINDINGS

Civilian harm can be fatal to counterinsurgency and counter-terrorism strategies

- Civilian harm contributed significantly to the growth of the Taliban and undermined the war effort by weakening the legitimacy of the U.S. mission and the Afghan government and straining U.S.-Afghan relations.
- The U.S. military is committed to upholding the Law of Armed Conflict and has undertaken significant efforts to improve the protection of civilians; despite this, civilian harm can still undermine strategic interests.
- U.S. strategic interests were severely damaged by civilian harm caused by ISAF operations, predatory partners, and wrongful or overbroad targeting and detentions, often driven by intelligence failures and manipulation by local elites.
- Focus on “enemy-centric” intelligence leaves U.S. forces vulnerable to manipulation and less attuned to drivers of conflict.
- Harm inflicted by U.S. partners using “made in the U.S.A.” weapons, equipment, training or support undermines U.S. credibility.
- Afghan National Security Forces caused civilian harm is on the rise, and risks hardening support for the Taliban in contested areas while reducing cooperation with the Afghan government.

- In Iraq, Pakistan, Syria, and Yemen, civilian harm caused by U.S. operations and by partner forces pose strategic risks analogous to those confronted by the United States in Afghanistan. Gaps in institutionalization and knowledge are exacerbating these risks.
- Increased collection and analysis of data on civilian harm can help guard against unnecessary restrictions on U.S. forces that create lost opportunities and fail to improve overall civilian protection.

Addressing civilian harm is relatively low-cost, high-payoff for U.S. and its partners. However, many of these positive lessons have not been fully institutionalized

- ISAF reforms significantly reduced civilian harm in Afghanistan; they did not undermine force protection or give the Taliban a significant military advantage.
- Reforms succeeded by combining tactical directives with leadership, training, and systematic data collection and analysis, and greater openness to civil society inputs.
- U.S. forces have not sufficiently prioritized civilian protection in ANSF development and strategic planning.
- Without consistent leadership attention, education, resources, and training, hard-learned lessons can be lost relatively rapidly.
- Sufficient data and academic research exist to develop much better decision-making tools and intelligence for commanders planning and directing military operations among civilian populations.
- Security sector reform and security force assistance efforts can be improved to address the impact of civilian harm caused by partner forces, lowering the risks to U.S. credibility and helping advance strategic interests.
- Institutionalization can help ensure lessons are not lost, and are effectively adapted to new operational contexts and transferred to partners.
- These lessons also apply to U.S. counter-terrorism operations, which are usually performed in a context within which U.S. partners are also engaged in counterinsurgency and stability operations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Our research demonstrates that significant damage to U.S. strategic interests can be caused by civilian harm, broadly defined to include major disruption of local political, social, and economic stability, as well as civilian casualties. These broader impacts also apply to counter-terrorism operations where they undermine the wider counterinsurgency efforts of partners, and therefore U.S. strategic objectives.

A . To the Department of Defense

1. **Create a Uniform Policy on Civilian Protection** to establish institutional authorities and responsibilities; develop standards and methodology for tracking and monitoring civilian harm (as defined in the ATP 3-07.6 on Protection of Civilians), mitigation efforts, and post incident response, including amends; incorporate civilian protection into strategy and operational planning considerations; and outline expectations for partner support and accountability.
2. **Create Civilian Protection Cells in J3 or J5 of Joint Staff, Combatant Commands, and Operational Headquarters modeled after ISAF's Civilian Casualty Tracking Cell.** These cells should:
 - a) Monitor civilian harm and assess causes and strategic effects;
 - b) Help commanders improve battlefield decision making;
 - c) Communicate regularly with the State Department and relevant international organizations and civil society organizations;
 - d) Consider using the Joint Staff cell to collect and analyze data from all Civilian Protection Cells, and ensuring ongoing lessons learned;
 - e) Strengthen decision-making tools by complementing Collateral Damage Estimation with data and analysis of civilian harm and assessments of strategic impact.
3. As part of a **consistent post incident response policy and practice:**
 - a) Respond to civilian harm in ways that avoid premature denials, provide timely and clear communication of the outcomes of investigations and accountability measures to host nations, victims, and the public.
 - b) Create permanent policies and mechanisms for reporting, verification, and provision of amends to civilian victims of U.S. operations, including civilians harmed in operations outside of areas of active hostilities and in areas inaccessible to U.S. ground forces.

- c) Reflect in this policy the lesson learned in Afghanistan that a lower evidentiary bar for amends and ex gratia payments is more time efficient and cost effective long term.
 - d) Ensure that there is a robust and transparent investigation policy that incorporates civilian, NGO, and open source inputs, as well as a public, transparent means of communicating accountability.
 - e) While there will be some region-specific aspects to this policy, there should be openness to working through or with local government offices for information and delivery, and with international organizations and NGOs for information on harms caused.
4. In addition to threat reporting, **develop intelligence priorities to collect and analyze the political, economic, social, and cultural dynamics of host nations in conflict zones and their effects on U.S. policy and strategic aims.** Collection and analysis should include assessing the risk of U.S. military forces and resources being manipulated by local officials and elites and the strategic impact of civilian harm.
5. **Incorporate tactical and strategic effects of civilian harm and protection into all levels of professional military education.** Incorporate simulations and appropriate books and journals to give leaders intellectual experiences they can draw from before deploying to combat. Increase/target funding for combat training centers to improve pre-deployment training on civilian protection, including scenario realism and tactical judgment.
6. **Develop a strategic plan for strengthening civilian protection and harm mitigation in U.S. partner forces, in conjunction with the State Department.** Condition training, funding, and transfer of arms on clear benchmarks on partner forces' commitment and performance on civilian protection. Indicators should include host nation policy guidance, demonstrated political and military leadership commitment, professional military education and training, and accountability.

B. To the State Department

1. **Work with the Department of Defense (DoD) in creating a standing, uniform U.S. government policy on civilian protection** including standard methodology, tracking, a centralized database and analysis unit, post-incident response, and civilian harm mitigation policy for partner forces.
2. **Develop, with the DoD, standard operating procedures for requesting, assessing, and sharing information on civilian harm from international organizations, NGOs, and other civil society**

sources. Work with the DoD to ensure effective implementation of a consistent post-incident response policy, including amends.

- 3. Support priorities for the intelligence community to collect and analyze the political, economic, social, and cultural dynamics of host nations** in conflict zones and effects on U.S. policy and strategic aims. Collection and analysis should include assessing the risk of U.S. military forces and resources being manipulated by local officials and elites, and the strategic impact of civilian harm.
- 4. Refine existing security sector reform policies to ensure that work with partner forces reflects best practice on civilian harm assessment, mitigation, and response;** include civilian protection and civilian harm lessons learned into capacity building and senior leader development efforts.
- 5. Develop metrics and information channels to independently assess civilian harm, and its strategic impact, including harm caused by and information received from partner forces.** Increase capacity within embassies in conflict zones to monitor and report on the political and social impact of U.S. and partner-caused civilian harm, consistent with the Leahy Law.
- 6. Improve coordination with DOD and conditionality on foreign military assistance, including military sales,** in order to enhance the willingness and capacity of partner forces to protect civilians and mitigate risks that civilian harm undermines long-term stability.

To the Intelligence Community

- 1. Collect and analyze information and intelligence about the impact of U.S. military engagement on a host nation's political, economic, social, and cultural dynamics;** collection and analysis should include assessing the risk of U.S. military forces and resources being manipulated by local officials and elites, and the strategic impact of civilian harm.

To the U.S. Congress

1. Support these recommendations with the necessary resources and accountability procedures.

III.

Causes and Strategic Consequences of Civilian Harm

*“We were losing the moral high ground.
It started undermining support for or
creating intolerance of the international
military presence.”*

— former Under-Secretary of Defense for Policy, Michèle A. Flournoy

III.

Causes and Strategic Consequences of Civilian Harm

U.S. forces took great precautions throughout the conflict in Afghanistan to protect civilians. U.S. and ISAF forces were well-versed in the Law of Armed Conflict (LOAC) and, with rare exceptions, applied military force in ways consistent with it. The Taliban have been and continue to be responsible for the majority of civilian casualties. Nonetheless, as the conflict escalated, international forces were killing Afghan civilians at alarming rates. In 2008, the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) attributed 39 percent of civilian deaths to pro-government (mostly international) forces.¹ The wider harm to civilians was not measured.

In this report we define *civilian casualties* as physical injury or death from military operations. We define civilian *harm* as damage from military operations to personal or community well-being. This may include wrongful targeting of key leaders through malign information, damage and destruction of personal property and civilian infrastructure, long-term health consequences, loss of livelihoods and other economic impacts, and offenses to dignity. Viewing civilian harm in this way is necessary to appreciate the full impact of military operations on civilian life and the choices people make.

How were international forces, as careful as they aimed to be, causing so much harm by 2008? Unplanned airstrikes from troops in contact caused the majority of civilian casualties. Civilians were also harmed during night raids and detentions, from misidentification, accidents, and unexploded ordnance. It is important to note that the vast majority of civilian casualty incidents occurred as international forces operated or intended to operate within the LOAC. We also acknowledge civil society has expressed concerns about discrimination and proportionality.

Predatory local actors inflicted significant amounts of civilian harm, many of them became super-empowered individuals who manipulated international forces into targeting their personal and political rivals. Poor understanding of the political, social, and economic context made such partnerships seem expedient and increased the risk of being duped.

Why does this matter? Longitudinal studies of insurgencies and counterinsurgencies suggest that counterinsurgents fail when an insurgency gains tangible and durable local and international support, or when the host nation government loses legitimacy.² Civilian harm was exacerbating both problems. By 2009, U.S. political and military leaders recognized that civilian harm was having strategic consequences, helping fuel Taliban growth and sapping the legitimacy of ISAF and the Afghan government.

Primary Causes of Civilian Harm

Airstrikes

As the international military effort stepped up, airstrikes were the single biggest cause of U.S. and ISAF inflicted civilian casualties. In 2008, airstrikes accounted for 64 percent of the 828 non-combatant deaths attributed to pro-government forces and 26 percent of those killed overall.³ The frequency of collateral damage from air delivered ordnance made this highly effective capability very controversial (as ISAF itself has noted).⁴ In particular, the use of unplanned airstrikes responding to “troops in contact” was the primary driver of civilian harm by international forces, largely because such operations lacked the mitigation procedures and protocols present in planned strikes.⁵ Nonetheless, the political and strategic fall out from major civilian casualty incidents resulting from air strikes eventually forced major changes in ISAF tactics and engagement protocols, and policies meant to address civilian harm.⁶ Signature strikes, when an individual or group of military-aged males is tracked over time and targeted for engaging in behavior that is deemed to be suspicious, are a particular concern.⁷

Airstrikes in Azizabad, Shindand District, Herat, 22 August 2008

Many experts interviewed for this report cited the August 2008 Azizabad incident as pivotal.

International and Afghan forces were on patrol in the village of Azizabad in the Shindand district of Herat province, where a Taliban commander was reportedly located. In fact, according to an investigation of the incident, one local contractor for U.S. forces was in a dispute with another local contractor. The former reported that the latter was Taliban, in an effort to use U.S. forces to eliminate his rival. The patrol was ambushed by armed militia (from the latter contractor), and after a 20-30 minute engagement, requested air support. According to different reports from the UN and Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, the ensuing U.S. airstrikes killed between 78 and 92 civilians, mostly women and children.

Despite public outcry, for weeks, U.S. officials dismissed villagers’ claims of civilian casualties as Taliban

propaganda, and insisted that no more than five civilians had been killed. However, after video was released clearly showing large numbers of dead women and children, the U.S. military ordered a more extensive investigation.

President Karzai had been outspoken in his criticism of international forces for civilian casualties for many years. But the Azizabad incident marked a turning point, according to his then chief of staff Mahmood Daudzai. The U.S. investigation concluded that the airstrikes had resulted in 33 civilian casualties, a higher amount of civilian casualties than it initially claimed, but well short of other credible reports; sparking further criticism. U.S. officials eventually apologized. Anger remained, largely because of initial refusals to acknowledge Afghans’ claims of civilian casualties, and subsequent reluctance to investigate and respond to victims’ losses.

[For further information see Senate Armed Services Committee, “Inquiry Into The Role And Oversight Of Private Security Contractors In Afghanistan,” September 28, 2010; see also Bob Dreyfuss, “Mass-Casualty Attacks in the Afghan War,” *The Nation* (September 19, 2013), <http://www.thenation.com/article/mass-casualty-attacks-afghan-war/>]

Misidentification of Civilians

Civilian casualties regularly occurred due to misidentification of civilians as combatants. Dr. Larry Lewis analyzed hundreds of incidents of civilian casualties between 2007 to 2009 and 2010 to 2011, and found that 50 percent of incidents were cases of misidentification; the other 50 percent involved “collateral damage.”⁸ A 2010 Department of Defense Study found misidentification was the primary cause of civilian harm.⁹ According to former ISAF Commander General Allen, erroneous determinations were at times driven by faulty assumptions about civilian behavior by U.S. forces. “When we investigated the incidents, we found that civilians were often doing normal things that our targeteers [observers] assumed were hostile. I wanted commanders to presume people were civilians unless the individuals in question proved otherwise. In the vast majority of cases, unless in self-defense, we could use tactical patience and persistent ISR to confirm whether they were hostile.”¹⁰

These positive identification (PID) errors occurred most often in situations of self-defense, where rapid judgments are made about hostile intent, frequently in close quarters (immediate threat). This can involve escalation of force incidents (EOF), detention operations, and close air support (troops in contact). It can also involve more considered assessments of emerging threat posed by individuals and groups.¹¹ Positive identification challenges are naturally much higher in irregular wars where the enemy does not wear uniform or distinctive insignia.

There is a persistent discrepancy between military and civilian organizations’ civilian casualty estimates in Afghanistan and other conflicts. Determinations of civilian or combatant status are an underlying factor. Sometimes this relates to different interpretations of the law around “direct participation in hostilities,” where civilians temporarily participate in hostilities and lose their protected status.¹² A taxi driver, for instance, who made a journey with a combatant in his vehicle, was determined by the military to be a combatant but a civilian by UNAMA.¹³

Night raids (as discussed above) often involved misidentification, particularly where civilians felt “under attack” and took up arms to defend themselves. Later reforms such as “call outs” or “soft knocks” had some impact on reducing these incidents.¹⁴ The use of signature strikes has reduced significantly, in part because of concerns about misidentification.

UNAMA reported that at least 205 civilians died and many more were injured in EOF incidents in Afghanistan from January 2008 (when UNAMA first began tracking these incidents) to December 2013.¹⁵ These deaths represented 7 percent of the total 2,931 caused by pro-government forces during that time period.¹⁶ For several years, the annual number of EOF deaths generally hovered around 40, and then dropped to 14 by 2012. This welcome improvement was attributed to “increased efforts by pro-government forces to distinguish civilians from genuine threats at security force checkpoints and convoys, as well as to ensure the use of non-lethal alternatives.”¹⁷ Those efforts also included new standard operating procedures on EOF issued in 2012.¹⁸

Night Raids and Detentions

Night raids were largely intended to capture specified insurgent and terrorist leaders, often in populated areas. Night operations maximized U.S. technological advantages while minimizing the risks of firefights that could result in civilian harm. Civilian harm from night raids and detention operations included collateral damage in the operations themselves (injury, death, and property destruction), allegations of CIA torture in 2002-4, and the broader harm of wrongful targeting and detentions based on malign information.

According to UNAMA, search and seizure operations, especially night raids, caused more than 11 percent of civilian deaths attributable to pro-government forces from January 2009 to December 2013.¹⁹ UNAMA documented 332 civilian deaths, although it noted that the deaths were likely underreported due to the difficulty of obtaining information about night raid casualties. The annual deaths from search, seizure, and detention operations decreased from 98 in 2009 to 54 in 2012 and 37 in 2013, due largely to improved guidance and procedures discussed in the next section.

In the early years of U.S. engagement there were serious allegations of abuse, torture, wrongful detention, and a number of deaths in custody in both U.S. military and CIA detention sites.²⁰ Detainees, some of whom were wrongfully detained, reportedly died after suffering beatings, ceiling handcuffing, sleep deprivation, and strip humiliation. The case of Dilawar, a 22-year-old taxi driver, became notorious because it seemed a clear case of wrongful arrest.²¹ Many of the CIA abuses took place at the “Salt Pit,” a CIA detention facility north of Kabul, including the death of Gul Rahman, who was tortured and died of hypothermia after being chained semi-naked in a cold concrete cell.²²

Such cases were often portrayed as isolated incidents by the U.S. government, and they pale in comparison to the scale of abuse in Iraq. However, over time, evidence emerged that torture was more commonplace. The Senate Select Committee Study of the Central Intelligence Agency Detention and Interrogation Program Intelligence Committee report, released in 2012, also revealed evidence of more cases of abuse in Afghanistan than had previously been known, including the presence of “well worn” waterboarding equipment in the Salt Pit (a practice never officially admitted to at the site).²³ With over 20 military detention facilities, CIA “black sites,” and poor record keeping, the real scale of abuse is hard to determine. Abuse in Afghan government detention facilities, meanwhile, has been widespread and persistent throughout the conflict, and generally resistant to international efforts at reform. (See Section V). The full effect of these abuses on support for the U.S. and Afghan governments is difficult to calculate. As discussed in relation to civilian casualty incidents, the greatest impact may have been caused by the targeting of important community leaders, such as Haji Rohullah (see boxed insert below). While safeguards were improved, there was enduring damage and mistrust.²⁴

Civilian harm from night raids and detentions, including wrongful detention and detainee abuse, were a major source of grievances. Afghans complained frequently, with some justification

according to journalist reporting and academic research, that civilians had been targeted and that pro-government forces were acting in an abusive manner.²⁵

Accidents and Unexploded Ordnance

Additional civilian casualties were caused by episodes like road traffic accidents and unexploded ordnance (UXO). Military convoys would drive aggressively through crowded streets and traffic, often causing damage to civilian vehicles, goods, livestock, and small businesses—and injuring or killing people.²⁶ International military convoys became so problematic that ISAF issued a driving directive in 2009.²⁷ After over 30 years of war in the country, unexploded ordnance was a persistent threat to civilians. Much of the UXO was left over from the Soviet war or the civil war, but some was due to international military forces since 2001.

Predatory Partners

The U.S. military contributed to the entrenchment of a layer of “super-empowered” individuals and factions who were often violent and predatory, but were able to operate with near impunity due to their close and highly visible relationship to the U.S. military.

Successive waves of disarmament and rearmament programs, for instance, were frequently exploited by the strongest or best connected power brokers, exacerbating the sense of exclusion and resentment among multiple factions.²⁸ When international forces began various counter-narcotics drives, some of their Afghan allies were running lucrative opium businesses, plundering stockpiles of opium or seizing opium rich land while performing the periodic theater of a drugs burn. In other cases, they directed international poppy eradication efforts toward their rivals, which eliminated competition, drove up prices and often motivated farmers to seek Taliban protection.²⁹

The creation of multiple community-based militia or defense forces contributed to this pattern of empowering local strongmen, which had a destabilizing effect in some areas, particularly those that were ethnically and politically diverse. As a recent, detailed study by the Centre for Security and Governance found, international support since 2001 has allowed “the most powerful non-state security actors in Afghanistan to operate without the consent of communities... accountable to foreign donors or political patrons in Kabul.”³⁰

Other reports have exposed the extent to which predatory partners benefitted from the U.S. military contracts and development aid, heightening entrenchment of corruption and the war economy.³¹

Intelligence Failures and Manipulation

The causes of civilian casualties described above were exacerbated by intelligence shortfalls that left international forces and officials vulnerable to manipulation. Local and national elites exploited the latter’s naiveté and aggressiveness by fingering their personal and political rivals as al Qaeda or Taliban in the hope of duping international forces into military action.

It is difficult to quantify the frequency and scale of operations that were based on flawed intelligence. Those flaws include misidentification of targets; deliberate misinformation from Afghan intelligence sources; and poor understanding of the political economy and conflict drivers. These factors left international forces vulnerable to being duped by local partners into targeting the latter's personal and political rivals.

Almost all those we interviewed for this report agreed that such intelligence failure contributed significantly to civilian harm. The near-exclusive focus on enemy-centric information often blinded international forces to the political, social, and economic issues that were critical to understanding the nature of the conflict and to avoid manipulation.³² By being used in such ways, particularly in the formative 2002-5 years, the United States was unintentionally exacerbating pre-existing conflicts and helping to alienate communities from the new government.³³

Many of these concerns were captured in an unprecedented report in 2010 by ISAF's director of intelligence, then Major General Michael Flynn, who expressed alarm at the inadequacy of U.S. intelligence efforts. "Because the United States has focused the overwhelming majority of collection efforts and analytical brainpower on insurgent groups, our intelligence apparatus still finds itself unable to answer fundamental questions about the environment in which we operate and the people we are trying to protect and persuade," the report concluded.³⁴ He made key changes to the ISAF intelligence staff and recommended sweeping reforms in the intelligence community. The enemy-centric focus marginalized social, political, and cultural understanding—and led to costly mistakes.³⁵

These intelligence deficits were compounded by divisions between military and civilian leadership, different ISAF partners, as well as between U.S. conventional forces, special operations forces, and the CIA. The proliferation of inconsistent databases prevented cross-fertilization of data. "At one point there were 39 different databases scattered throughout the DoD and the intelligence agencies," said former journalist and analyst Candace Rondeaux.³⁶

"There's always the fog of war," according to Ambassador Doug Lute, a retired lieutenant general, but "a persistent pattern that eroded confidence. This wasn't just 'stuff happens,' but that maybe our intelligence wasn't as good as advertised...our ability to strike surpassed our ability to target accurately."³⁷

The lack of ground forces increased reliance on aerial assessments of civilian harm, which masked its scale. In a study by Dr. Larry Lewis, air-video BDAs (Battle Damage Assessments) had missed civilian casualties later discovered during ground-led investigations in 19 out of 21 cases.³⁸ "Assessing battle damage post an air strike is less than satisfying—in fact, it is imperfect, other than knowing a building has been destroyed or a new hole in the ground created," according to former DIA director Lieutenant General Michael Flynn. "In the military, we have had very technical requirements assessing battle damage. It's for effects, technical effects and feedback. What we need, and have done very poorly, is recognizing and institutionalizing assessment of battle damage to the [local] eco-system...or the ecology of civilian life."³⁹

Impact of Civilian Harm

We assess with high confidence that civilian harm by U.S., international, and Afghan forces contributed significantly to the growth of the Taliban, weakened the legitimacy of the U.S. mission and the Afghan government, and undermined the war effort by straining U.S.-Afghan relations.

Contributing to the Growth of the Taliban while Forfeiting Public Support

The academic evidence surveyed for this report, as well as the views of experienced military commanders, diplomats and regional experts interviewed support the conclusion that civilian harm by international forces and Afghan partners contributed significantly to the growth and resilience of the insurgency. Civilian harm by international forces and Afghan partners eliminated avenues for reconciliation, convinced targeted community leaders to fight back, reinforced the Taliban’s “occupation” narrative, and provided incentives to seek protection and retaliation.

The question of scale is harder to answer, given the host of methodological challenges. To be sure, civilian harm was not the only factor, and probably not the most significant one. Most interviewees for this report pointed to the failure to create an inclusive transitional government and Pakistani foreign policy as more critical. Further research would be needed to determine the salience of civilian harm relative to other factors.

In the years immediately following the U.S. invasion, many former Taliban remained in Afghanistan hoping to live peacefully in their home villages or to reconcile and work with the new government.⁴⁰ Al Qaeda operatives were soon killed or had quickly fled. But U.S. forces continued to target members and supporters of the former Taliban regime, often at the behest of former Northern Alliance allies, while rebuffing efforts at surrender or reconciliation.⁴¹ “The strategic impact is that when you’re slow to adapt, you turn lots of people against you because of the lack of restraint on the use of force,” argues a former senior U.S. military official. “In the early days that’s when you have the best opportunity to bring people to your side—that’s the risk in that transitional phase, it’s a lost opportunity.” Rejecting purported peace offers was an early but significant mistake, based in part on the belief that the Taliban and al Qaeda were largely co-belligerents in a global jihad.⁴²

Michael Semple, who spent many years studying and interviewing the Taliban, contends many of them were prevented or dissuaded from joining the new government in 2002-04 because of this pattern of U.S. forces “working with militias under newly re-installed power brokers, going after their rivals, or former Taliban officials, harassing them, attacking their houses, stealing their motorbikes and cows... creating the impression that there was no room for them in the new order.”⁴³ The political and military impact of Afghan elites using of American forces as hit-men to target rivals has never been calculated, but as one senior U.S. official said: “You have to consider the strategic effects of being used by one or more faction in a civil war against one or more other factions in a civil war. The impact of this kind of thing on elite politics was enormous.” The U.S. official went on to name a senior Afghan government official, famously anti-Taliban, who he said is “still afraid he’s on our hit list.”⁴⁴

Overall, the assessment of scholars and experts on the Taliban suggests that the direct impact of individual *civilian harm* on Taliban recruitment has been most significant when it involved the targeting of significant community leaders, often as a result of manipulation and intelligence failures. Such events tended to trigger individual and community backlash against international forces, which could range from loss of public support to local retaliation to tangible support for the insurgency, particularly as the number of mistakes mounted. “High profile incidents drove it, in particular the killing of key individuals... You kill people in this society of elevated social status, and you’ll live with that for the rest of your life.”⁴⁵

It’s not necessarily the scale of civilian harm that does most damage, as Ambassador Ronald Neumann put it, “[Civilian casualties], that’s not the problem for Afghans—they understand people get killed in a fight. When you get the big burn is when you bomb a target and you get it wrong. Particularly with misinformation... We got lots more blowback for these mistaken targets.”⁴⁶ In a context of increasing insecurity and predatory actors, sometimes backed by the United States, individual and community self-protection and survival also became powerful motivations.

Taliban recruitment efforts clearly benefitted from civilian harm, and capitalized on local Afghans’ desire for vengeance or retribution for losses suffered. “Why were there so many so-called successful CT raids in the early years but every year the problem got worse?” challenges David Sedney, former deputy assistant secretary of defense. “To me the threat we face from extremist sub-groups comes from a complex of factors—revenge is one—personal revenge from people whose direct family members or close associates are killed, but also societal revenge—people who feel their societies, families, and coreligionists have been targeted.”⁴⁷

Manipulation in Kunar

Kunar province has been the scene of some of the most intensive fighting between international forces and antigovernment forces for many years: arguably this most bitter fight was also one of the most futile, born out of bad intelligence and detention mistakes.

After the fall of the Taliban, the most prominent leaders in Kunar appeared to be in favor of the emerging new government, including Haji Rohullah Wakil, an important tribal and spiritual leader. Rohullah was a Salafist— a deeply religiously conservative—but also notoriously anti-Taliban, and seen by many as a strong contender for the governorship of Kunar. In late 2002, he was accused by local rivals of being in league with Al Qaeda, and detained by U.S. Special Forces, and spent six years in Guantanamo.

His connection with Al Qaeda is contested; instead the accusation against him was likely connected to the intense competition over lucrative counter-narcotics contracts, timber smuggling, and contracts for building U.S. bases.

His detention is widely seen as a tipping point in turning the province against the new government and the United States. As one analyst told us, the imprisonment of Rohullah “was more damaging than all the civilian casualty cases that came after.”⁴⁸ It was compounded by other factors, including the unexplained death of a man in the custody of coalition forces in June 2003, and the appointment of a number of Karzai aligned “outsiders” to key provincial and district government positions.

Empirical studies suggest strong correlations between civilian harm and detrimental effects on public support and levels of violence in Afghanistan.⁴⁹ Such studies in conflict zones are methodologically challenging and their findings of causality vary. One study involving over 200 Afghan villages in conflict areas showed “harm inflicted by ISAF was met with reduced support for ISAF and increased support for the Taliban, but Taliban-inflicted harm does not translate into greater ISAF support.” Although the Taliban were causing far higher levels of civilian harm, the study found strong evidence that in the eyes of the civilian population, ISAF carried a heavier burden. This “asymmetry” indicates that ISAF (and ANSF in contested and Taliban influenced areas), perceived as an “outsider group,” may be judged more harshly for harm inflicted than the Taliban, perceived more as an “in-group.”⁵⁰

Other empirical studies showed that civilian harm and the liberal use of airstrikes led to increases in insurgent violence. Two studies identified statistically significant correlations between civilian casualties and insurgent violence.⁵¹ A different study argues, “Evidence consistently indicates that airstrikes markedly increase insurgent attacks relative to non-bombed locations for at least 90 days after a strike.” Interestingly, the report notes that “the Taliban respond in equal measure to airstrikes that do, and do not, kill civilians.” It suggests that insurgent retaliation was motivated more by a desire to “maintain their reputations for resolve in the eyes of local populations,” than to avenge civilian casualties.⁵²

Civilian harm was easily exploited by the Taliban. Taliban publications, public communications, and propaganda routinely made use of incidents of civilian harm to paint U.S. forces as an indiscriminate, anti-Muslim occupation force.⁵³ Although their accusations were often exaggerated or manufactured, and despite the fact that the Taliban bore some responsibility where they had engaged in civilian shielding, civilian casualty incidents were sufficiently frequent and widespread to lend credibility to Taliban propaganda.

Undermining the Legitimacy of the Afghan Government and the U.S. Mission

Civilian harm posed twin challenges for legitimacy. It severely undermined the legitimacy of the international mission and as its partner and ally, the legitimacy of the Afghan government. “We were losing the moral high ground. It starts undermining support for or creating intolerance of the international military presence,” was how former under-secretary of defense for policy Michèle A. Flournoy described the political cost.⁵⁴ “If you’re there ostensibly to support a government that’s meant to be legitimate, but lots of civilians are dying on the government’s behalf you start undermining the government’s effectiveness.”

Lieutenant General Dave Barno, commander of 2003 Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan (predecessor command to ISAF), reflected that the United States was “really alienating the population” with its use of airpower. Recalling one incident while he was in command, Barno compared American and Afghan perspectives. From the American view, “We conducted a raid to seize a compound, and after receiving enemy fire and taking casualties, we used precision bombs to destroy the corner of

the compound that killed the enemy and inadvertently killed one, two, or three civilians.” An Afghan view: “Americans bombed a village, burned our crops, and bombed and destroyed cars and set them on fire.” Both views are accurate, Barno noted, but from a different lens.⁵⁵

According to an ABC News/BBC/ARD/Washington Post poll, opposition to U.S. military presence increased from 21 percent in 2006 to 36 percent by January 2009. Lack of confidence in foreign forces rose from 31 percent to 56 percent. Support in communities for foreign forces dropped from 67 percent in 2006 to 37 percent by January 2009. A full 77 percent of respondents to the poll reported opposition to airstrikes due to civilian harm concerns. Unfavorable views of the United States more than doubled from 25 percent to 52 percent.⁵⁶ A majority of respondents (56 percent) said they have some level of sympathy with the motivations of armed opposition groups; a belief that attacks on foreign forces was justified climbed from 13 percent in 2006 to 25 percent in January 2009.⁵⁷

The cost to U.S. and Afghan government legitimacy was exacerbated by abusive, U.S.-backed, Afghan actors in the security forces and militias that preyed upon and harmed civilians. The harm caused by predatory militias in the early years damaged Afghan support for the government and for the international mission.⁵⁸

By 2005, predatory behavior by Afghan officials had already become entrenched, creating “a reinforcing dynamic between human rights abuses visited on population, and the insurgency... it became apparent to everyone that the behavior pattern of NDS and local police cruelty became too much for the people,” recalled a long-serving senior UN official deeply involved in Afghanistan. “The Afghan people saw that it wasn’t a necessary evil to tolerate for initial period. They had elections in 2004, and then asked why are people still doing that? It delegitimized the system a great deal.”⁵⁹

As discussed above, anecdotal evidence and academic studies have indicated that as perceived outsiders, U.S. and international forces were more likely to bear greater responsibility for civilian harm in the eyes of local Afghans. “Propaganda that the United States was killing civilians, doing night raids—that became a big issue regarding who is [seen to be] on the legitimate side of the war,” said Minister of Defense Masoom Stanekzai.⁶⁰ General Petraeus underscored the point, “[civilian casualties were] undermining the perception of the coalition’s commitment [to] secure and serve the people... If you are killing civilians, then you are obviously not protecting them.”⁶¹

When confronted with allegations of civilian harm, U.S. officials would often point to the far higher rate of civilian casualties caused by the Taliban and wonder why Afghans were holding international forces to a higher standard. Anecdotal evidence suggests that many Afghans assumed American technology was capable of extraordinary precision, so for many the explanations of civilian harm lacked credibility. This lent further power to Taliban propaganda, bolstered conspiracy theories, and sewed suspicion of international forces.⁶² “You can tell the color of the head of a

pin from a satellite,” remarked one Afghan elder who was present at a wedding party bombing that was brought about by manipulated intelligence, “Why can’t you tell the difference between a woman or child and a Taliban?”⁶³

Civilian harm also cost existing or potential sources of intelligence, information, and local cooperation—all critical to counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency.⁶⁴ As analyst Matt Waldman described, “People were unwilling to side with the government and Americans. So they won’t inform, or warn the coalition of Taliban presence.”⁶⁵

Intelligence and aid efforts could also send mixed messages. “You have USAID trying to do economic development and governance work in an area and establish legitimacy, meanwhile you have intelligence paying off really corrupt and nasty people for information,” as former under-secretary of defense Michèle Flournoy put it. “We separate it but the population doesn’t. It’s all the United States to them. It certainly undermined aspects of our development and governance efforts.”⁶⁶

Damage to U.S.-Afghan Relations

Civilian casualties were a significant reason U.S.-Afghan government relations soured.⁶⁷ Later, General Petraeus claimed that civilian harm was a strategic issue precisely because of its impact on the relationship with the Afghan government.⁶⁸ These frictions impeded the ability of the United States, the coalition, and the Afghan government to advance their strategic objectives.⁶⁹

Many interviewees acknowledged that civilian harm became a central issue for President Karzai, an issue on which he felt substantial personal and political pressure, and which he used as a cudgel against the United States. President Karzai was especially critical of what he saw as a failure by the United States to take seriously claims of civilian harm, and to respond appropriately.⁷⁰

According to General Petraeus:

These events had accumulated for President Karzai... A succession of commanders—sometimes even extending to the Secretary of Defense or other senior officials—would apologize and profess that it would never happen again. But then another tragic incident would take place. The presumption on the U.S. side, at least initially in many cases, was that those killed were bad guys. Thus the commanders pushed back, sometimes quite vigorously, sometimes publicly. And probably in a majority of cases, after a few days, it started to emerge that that this was yet another civilian casualty incident... Those [commanders] who had not been there from the start like [President Karzai] probably did not appreciate, to the extent necessary, just how much this enormous frustration and very damaging accumulation had affected him.⁷¹

David Sedney explains that the United States’ reluctance to address civilian harm undermined trust with President Karzai. “When he came to us and asked why, we said our intelligence was excellent

and actions irreproachable. Then when information came out calling that into question, we'd dig our heels in even more. This didn't just happen once or twice it happened repeatedly. He was right—there was a gap between what we said and what we did. We talked about human rights but in that first year of his presidency we killed more and more Afghans.”⁷²

For President Karzai, personal trust and honesty was paramount. “General McChrystal was very cooperative when an incident took place. He would call and let me know and be honest about that. That reduced the hurt, the pain to people. It doesn't relieve the pain of the people, and it's not as if they don't hurt, but where you admit the mistake, I respect that... It wasn't that it didn't happen anymore but he was honest and admitted it.”⁷³

Mutual suspicions between President Karzai and the Obama Administration grew substantially worse over time. By late 2010, crisis management was perpetual, from civilian harm incidents to major disagreements over issues such as detentions, corruption, reconciliation, and the bi-lateral security agreement. Although the Obama administration began with the intent to put the war on a proper footing, the United States and the Afghan government never managed to develop a common strategy for the war, an amazing failure over the course of 15 years. This major omission undermined the prospects of success against a determined insurgency.

IV.

Reforms: Adoption, Implementation, and Impact

*“We’re going to lose this fucking war
if we don’t stop killing civilians.”*

— General Stanley A. McChrystal, Former Commander ISAF

IV.

Reforms: Adoption, Implementation, and Impact

ISAF Leaders Take Action

From 2007 onwards, ISAF began to take steps to reduce civilian casualties. A series of important tactical directives were adopted from 2007 to 2011 by ISAF commanders in an attempt to prevent and reduce civilian harm. In 2007 and 2008, tactical directives from Generals McNeill and McKiernan, respectively, introduced more stringent rules for airstrikes and for entering Afghan homes and mosques (for a list of key directives, see Annex). In 2008, a civilian tracking cell was introduced, which gradually improved the visibility of civilian harm. ISAF started to be more open to hearing civil society concerns on civilian harm.

By mid-2009, however, none of these changes appeared to be making an appreciable impact in reducing civilian harm. The new ISAF commander General Stanley A. McChrystal recognized the strategic impact outlined above. Civilian harm, he concluded, had “severely damaged ISAF’s legitimacy in the eyes of the Afghan people” and was undermining the mission.⁷⁴ ISAF and U.S. forces adopted a series of important reforms that led to significant improvements in civilian protection.⁷⁵

McChrystal’s 2009 tactical directive went a little further, restricting the use of airstrikes and indirect fires on residential compounds except in self-defense or under limited and prescribed conditions.⁷⁶ McChrystal’s tactical directive also added emphasis on thinking through the wider tactical picture. Critically, he reinforced the message in trainings, guidance, and a series of “town hall” meetings where he met with soldiers across ISAF. General McChrystal also made this issue a top priority in building his relationship with Afghan President Hamid Karzai. General Petraeus’s 2010 directive placed greater emphasis on self-defense, while also raising the standards of civilian protection (see more below), and in 2011, issued a tactical directive expanding the CCTC into the Civilian Casualty Mitigation Team (CCMT) to better analyze data, make recommendations to ISAF, and liaise with civil society.⁷⁷ Both generals’ reforms and tactical directives on night raids and special operations, which were major sources of grievances, as discussed above, encouraged the use of “soft knocks,” or call-outs and joint operations with Afghan forces and authorities to reduce the risk to civilians. These directives were further strengthened by General Allen. The last ISAF commander, General Dunford, sustained these procedures (see Annex A for full list of key tactical directives).

The tactical directives were important, necessary reforms, but not sufficient. *Leadership* and *training*, supported by systematic *data collection and analysis*, together with greater *openness to*

civil society inputs improved battlefield performance and reduced civilian harm while sustaining force protection. *Post-harm response* helped ameliorate the consequences of incidents. We assess with high confidence that the combination of these reforms with the tactical directives led to significant reductions in civilian harm while not undermining force protection or offering the Taliban a systematic advantage.

Leadership: ISAF senior leadership was cited by multiple interviewees as the most critical factor. Generals McChrystal and Petraeus recognized the need to change the operating culture of the command. They reinforced the message continuously in command briefings, counterinsurgency guidance, and discussions across the force. Civilian harm was added to morning briefings. After action reviews following incidents reinforced learning and accountability. Generals John Allen and Joseph Dunford improved upon these changes through the end of the ISAF mission.⁷⁸

ISAF commanders also requested that troop contributing nations *improve pre-deployment training*.⁷⁹ These measures included incorporating the new tactical directive and counterinsurgency guidance into training events, improving scenario-based training to hone the judgment of commanders and soldiers, and enhancing escalation of force procedures that relied less on written warnings (which many Afghans could not read) and more on commonly understood visual signals. As a result, even as troop numbers and operational tempo increased, civilian casualties declined.

Systematic analysis and feedback helped commanders better isolate and address persistent problems. The Civilian Casualty Tracking Cell (CCTC) in 2008 and later the Civilian Casualty Mitigation Team (CCMT) teamed with the Afghan Assessment Group at ISAF HQ and the Joint Incident Assessment Team (2009) to provide consistent data tracking and analysis.⁸⁰ The data collection supported a series of in-depth studies, several of which were conducted by the Joint and Coalition Operational Analysis (JCOA) division of the Joint Staff J7.⁸¹ This process helped commanders understand the root causes of civilian harm and quickly adapt tactics and procedures.⁸² Improvements in intelligence collection also aided targeting and detention operations, including through a surge in intelligence analysts and ISR capabilities (though significant gaps remained with respect to intelligence collection and analysis of wider civilian harm and social-political dynamics).⁸³

A new openness to external information was an important part of this expanded monitoring and analytical capacity. This included greater transparency and pro-active engagement with the UN and ICRC, as well as a number of other credible NGOs that were documenting civilian casualties and making concrete policy recommendations.⁸⁴ President Karzai remained relentless in calling attention to civilian casualties.

Improving *post-incident harm response*, specifically through improvements in investigations, greater transparency, and the provision of amends reduced the penalties in public support when incidents did occur. ISAF developed common guidance for compensation and harm mitigation designed to

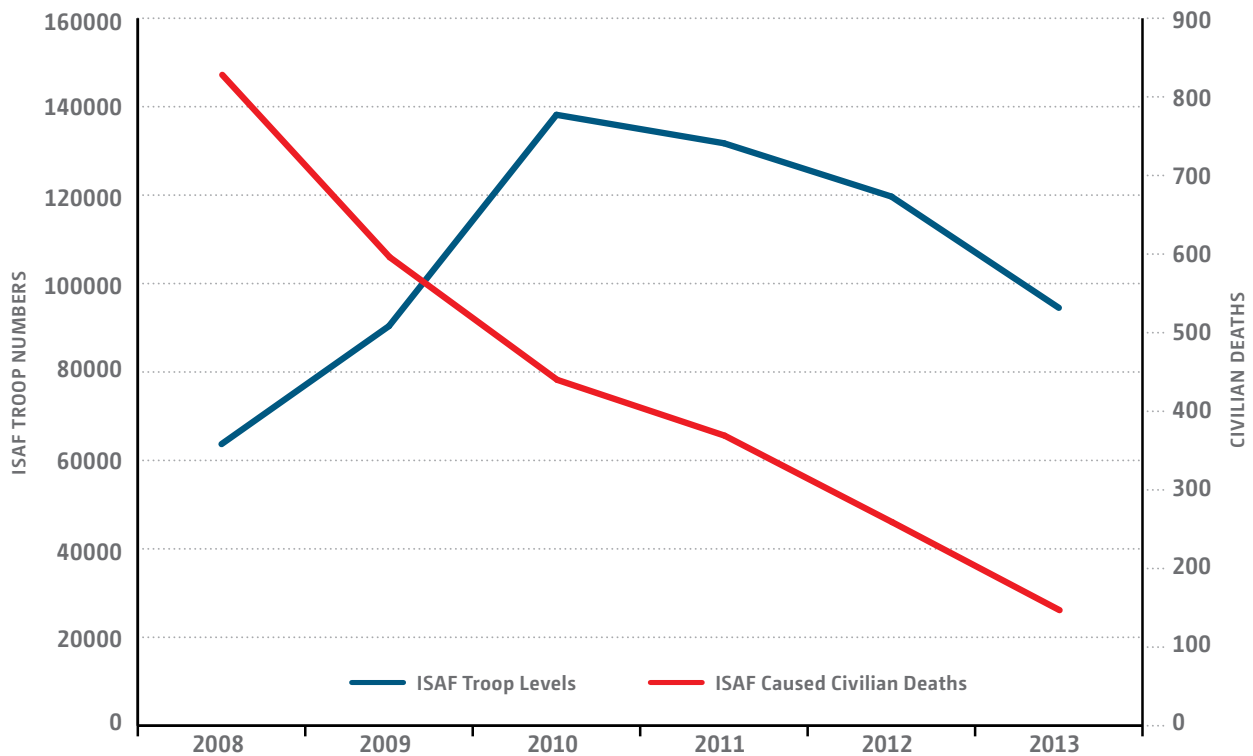
acknowledge the incident and to provide common standards for ameliorating the suffering of those affected.⁸⁵ “It’s not just the willingness to acknowledge and apologize, but the speed in doing so” as former AIHRC commissioner Nader Nadery put it. Acknowledging and making amends for civilian harm was appreciated by those affected, and has been shown to mitigate the normal penalties in local support.⁸⁶ Unfortunately, post-harm amends efforts still did not occur in many cases, often due to inaccessibility, while some assistance channeled through Afghan officials reportedly never reached the victims.⁸⁷

Impact of Reforms

These reforms significantly reduced ISAF-caused civilian harm. This drop came despite the intensifying nature of the conflict over the same period. UNAMA data reveals the significant impact of ISAF reforms, as do two separate reports by ISAF and NATO.⁸⁸

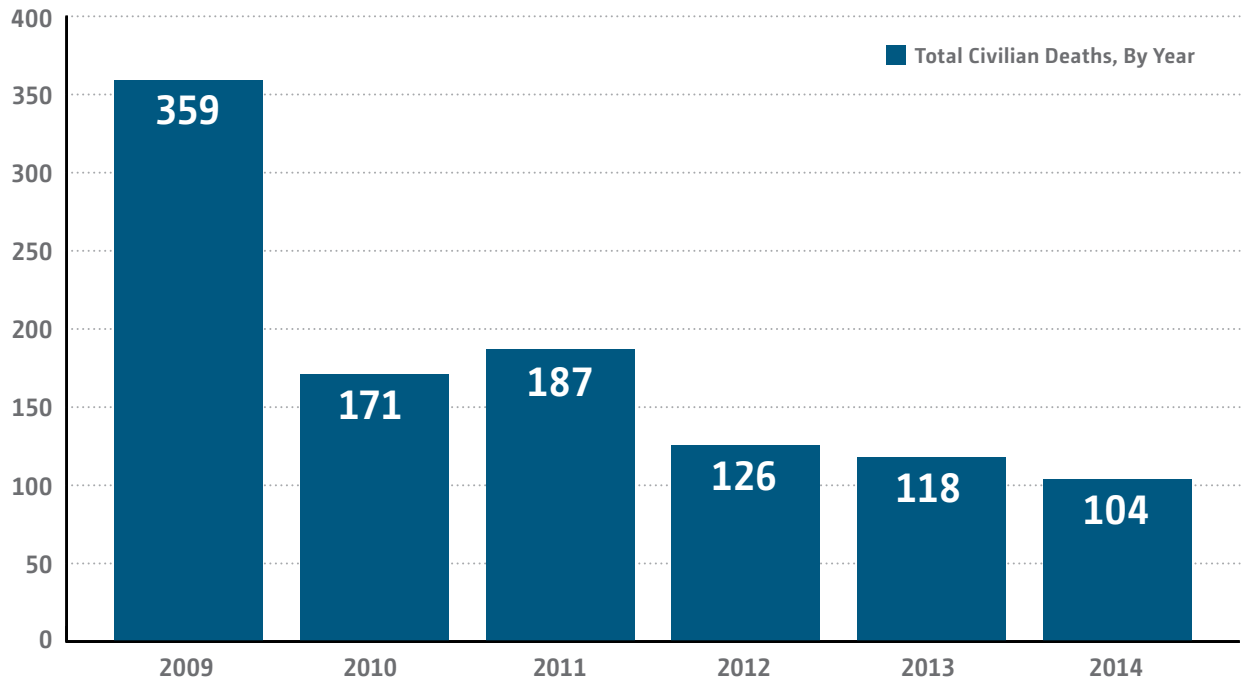
ISAF-caused civilian casualties decreased significantly. From 2008 to 2013, UNAMA registered a roughly 60 percent decrease attributable to all pro-government forces (including ANSF).⁸⁹ Whereas ISAF and pro-government forces were responsible for 39 percent of civilian deaths in 2008, by 2012 that figure had shrunk to 9 percent.⁹⁰ NATO’s analysis of ISAF and UNAMA data from 2008 to 2014 suggests that the probability of an ISAF-caused civilian casualty incident occurring during a ground engagement when ISAF was present was reduced by approximately 80 percent.⁹¹

ISAF Troop Levels and Civilian Deaths⁹²



Reduction in civilian harm from aerial operations was significant. Year-to-year progress has been steady, with fatalities dropping from 552 in 2008 to 104 in 2014 based on UNAMA data (see graph below). From 2008-2014, civilian deaths from aerial operations were reduced by roughly 80 percent (based on ISAF data).⁹³

Civilian Deaths From Aerial Operations by ISAF 2009-2014



The rate of civilian casualties per airstrike decreased nearly three-fold from 2009-2010, and remained steady throughout the height of ISAF operations. Civilian fatalities per incident, according to UNAMA data, declined from 5.52 to 2.19 from 2009-2013.

Number of Strikes per One Civilian Death⁹⁴

Year	Sorties with at least one weapon	Civilian Deaths	Strikes/ One Civilian Death
2009	2050	359	5.71
2010	2517	171	14.72
2011	2678	187	14.32
2012	1975	126	15.67
2013	1407	118	11.92
2014	1136	104	10.92

We assess with low confidence that the focus of ISAF and many other actors on civilian protection affected Taliban statements and behavior. Antigovernment elements, of which the Taliban are the most significant, have caused the vast majority of civilian harm. They have employed and continue to use attacks designed to maximize human suffering. Nonetheless, the Taliban began to issue directives and make public statements about avoiding civilian casualties, to include their Eid messages since 2009 and Code of Conduct.⁹⁵ Some experts interviewed for this report stated that the Taliban enacted measures to reduce civilian harm.⁹⁶ More rigorous research is needed. Although the Taliban repeatedly deny, and even condemn, suicide bombings that target civilians, their conduct in the field does not match their messaging on civilian protection.⁹⁷

Did ISAF Reforms Increase the Risk to Troops or Give Advantage to the Taliban?

ISAF's reforms and emphasis on civilian protection meant a shift in the operating culture of a military force in the midst of combat. Such an adjustment naturally had its detractors as well as advocates. ISAF efforts on civilian protection triggered two main criticisms. First, was that troops were being placed at greater risk. Second, critics charged that the measures "handcuffed" the military and gave the Taliban a free pass to escape to villages to avoid targeting.

After reviewing the available information, we assess with high confidence that the reforms *did not undermine force protection or give the Taliban a significant military advantage*.

Case Study: Ganjgal 2009

The first major incident to trigger these criticisms and complaints occurred on September 8, 2009, when a patrol of U.S. troops mentoring Afghan Border Patrol forces was ambushed near Ganjgal in Kunar Province, along the Pakistani border. Over two hours, repeated calls by U.S. forces for support went unheeded. Five U.S. service members, eight Afghan troops, and an interpreter were killed. Members of the patrol calling for fire believed their requests were denied, in part, because of the new rules of engagement.⁹⁸

However, the U.S. Army's official investigation cited poor planning and coordination, inadequate leadership in the command post, and confusion and bad reporting as among the primary reasons for failure to provide

timely support to the patrol. In planning, the Ganjgal operation was given a lower priority, and air support was assigned to another, higher priority operation. When the call for air support was received, the leaders in the Tactical Operations Center did not reassign those assets to forces in Ganjgal, failing to recognize the changing tactical situation.

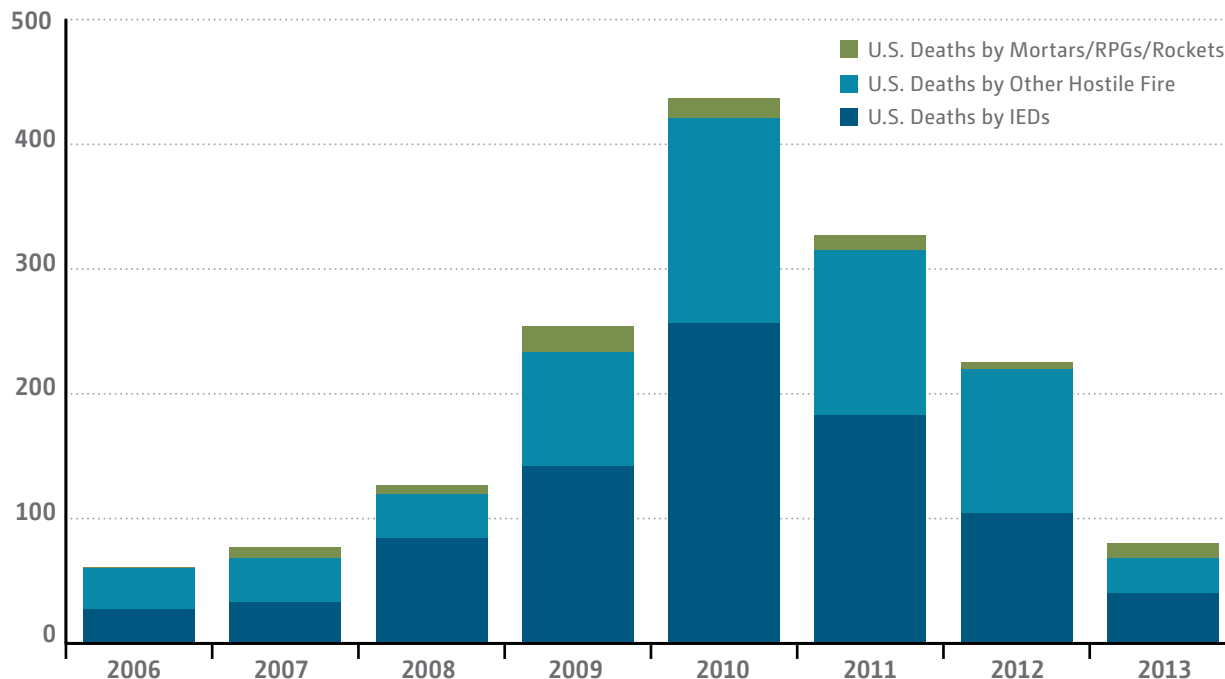
The Army investigation clearly showed that U.S. losses were not due to restrictive ROEs or new tactical directives. Yet the incident fueled accusations that the tactical directives were placing troops at greater risk. The incident highlights the importance of addressing such perceptions among U.S. troops who must implement and adapt to new guidance.⁹⁹

Did the reforms increase U.S. fatalities? Some critics and analysts have argued that the tactical directives and McChrystal’s well-intentioned call for “courageous restraint” were responsible for increases in U.S. battlefield fatalities.¹⁰⁰ The data tells a different story.

U.S. hostile fire fatalities rose significantly over the period the reforms were implemented, but U.S. troop levels in Afghanistan roughly tripled 2008-2010.¹⁰¹ Determining causality in such a complex environment is difficult, but U.S. casualty data shows that the spike in U.S. deaths was driven by a significant increase in improvised explosive device (IED) attacks. By 2010, 265 (60 percent) of American hostile fire fatalities were caused by IEDs or suicide bombings.¹⁰² This grim total was nearly the amount for the previous three years combined.¹⁰³ The data shows that the normalized rate of non-IED fatalities actually *declined from 2008 onwards*, while fatalities during ground engagements remained consistent.¹⁰⁴ We assess with high confidence that the Taliban’s increased use of IEDs was the primary cause of the increase in U.S. fatalities during this period.¹⁰⁵

The data on U.S. fatalities from *direct fire engagements*—engagements in which U.S. troops would be most likely to use airstrikes and artillery in self-defense—do not support the claims that reforms undermined force protection. The proportion of overall U.S. fatalities due to direct fire engagements actually declined between 2006/2007 and 2011 (see graph below).¹⁰⁶

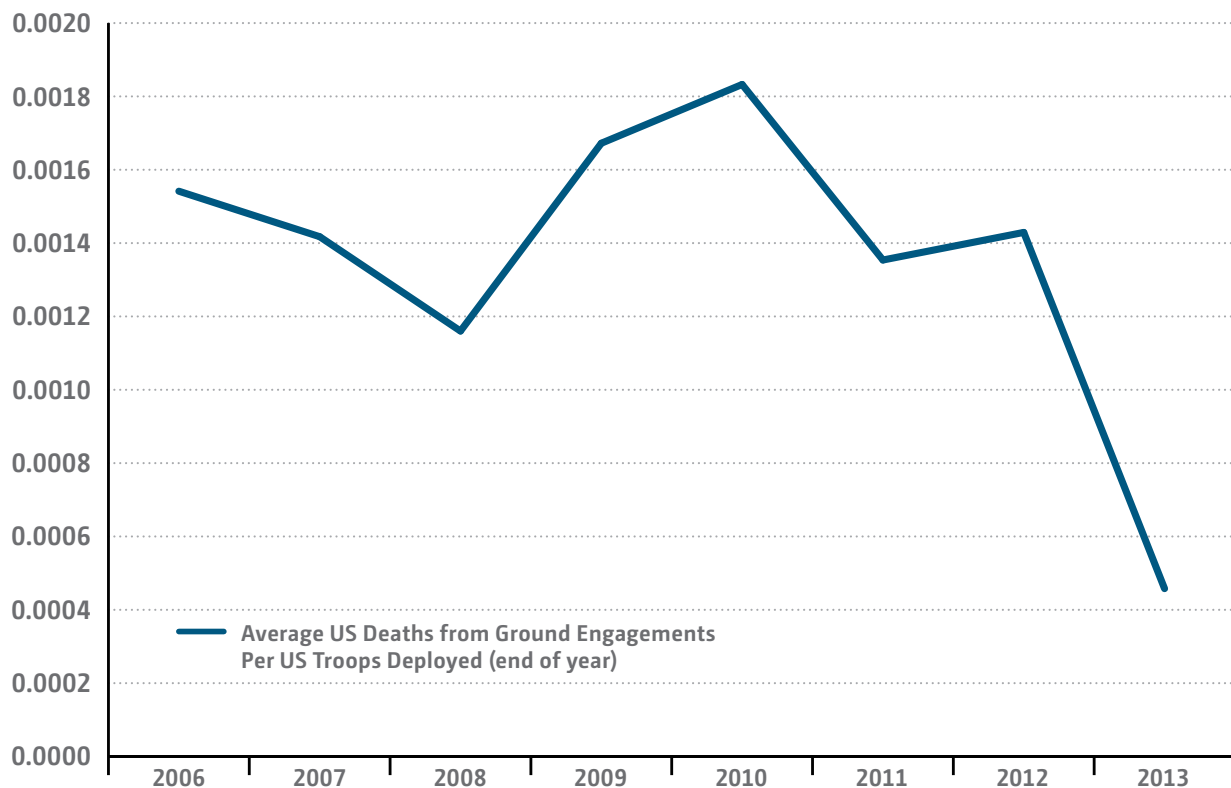
U.S. Troop Fatalities, Afghanistan, 2006-2013



The normalized rate of troop fatalities during ground engagements actually *decreased* seven percent when comparing 2006 (before the first tactical directive in 2007) to 2012 (the last full year of ISAF-led combat operations).

As each tactical directive made clear, troops always had the right of self-defense. Sadly, fatality rates during ground engagements rose 19 percent from 2006 to their peak in 2010. These fatality rates increased in the 2009-10 surge as newly arrived U.S. forces fought their way into Taliban strongholds of Wardak, Helmand, and Kandahar (see graph below).¹⁰⁷ U.S. military fatalities during ground engagements *declined* 22 percent from 2010-2012. Civilian fatalities dropped 41 percent even as military operations intensified. The data suggests that U.S. forces were not suffering increased casualties from the kind of firefights where the use of airpower in self-defense would have played a role in force protection.

Average US Deaths from Ground Engagements Per US Troops Deployed (end of year)



However, some troops, commanders, and analysts perceived that the right of self-defense was being compromised, and General Petraeus was grilled on the issue during his confirmation hearings in July 2010.¹⁰⁸ When he assumed command in July 2010, Petraeus conducted a review of the tactical directive and found that some subordinate commanders had been adding their own restrictions. These frustrated commanders on the ground, and particularly during dynamic targeting events when precious time elapsed as required approvals went up the chain of command and opportunities to strike were lost. In response, Petraeus issued a clarifying directive, which placed more explicit emphasis on the right to self-defense and forbade commanders from adding their own restrictions on top of the existing tactical directives.

Petraeus outlined his thought-process during an interview:

The layers of approval and second-guessing in some tactical units were excessive... This, of course, filtered back to Washington and I was questioned about it during my confirmation hearing [to be the ISAF commander]... What I sought to do [in revising the tactical directive] was to provide direction that would achieve a balance; a balance between the keen awareness of the need to avoid civilian casualties and an equally keen awareness of the imperative to do everything possible to take care of our troopers if they got in a tough spot. We had to aggressively pursue the enemy, but we also had to do it in a way that avoided death or serious injury to those we were seeking to safeguard.¹⁰⁹

While removing restrictions, Petraeus actually raised the standards for civilian protection in his tactical directive, requiring verification of “no civilians present” to approve strikes outside of self-defense or pre-planned strikes.¹¹⁰

The new directive was effective, said Petraeus. “It reassured our troopers that we would have their back, and it reassured the American people that we would do everything necessary to protect their sons and daughters in harm’s way, all while also reassuring the Afghan President and people that we were keenly aware of our responsibility to reduce civilian casualties to the absolute minimum.”¹¹¹

General Allen also acknowledged concerns from some commanders: “Some commanders raised concerns that the directive I was considering might tie their hands. I used data to show that the vast majority of ordnance we fired were in open areas away from the population—that was where the fighting was occurring. We were making mistakes in the far fewer cases in which we used ordnance in populated areas—and these incidents cost us support. In most circumstances, we had other tactical options to deal with the threat. As commanders understood the data and the analysis, they supported the change.”¹¹²

Finally, to fully assess the impact of reforms on force protection, it may be worth considering the impact on the mental health of soldiers. “Moral injury” is an emerging field that examines the effects on individuals who have witnessed or participated in acts of perceived moral transgression. According to psychologists who have worked closely with and analyzed veterans, soldiers who witnessed or participated in civilian casualty incidents, including unintentional civilian harm, may suffer from moral injury. As a result, they can be at a higher risk of post-traumatic stress and actions of self-harm, including suicide and substance abuse.¹¹³ The relationship between civilian harm and moral injury deserves more study and attention.

This moral dimension is important to bear in mind at a time when some would argue that violations by an enemy force justify the United States abandoning its own legal and moral commitments. As Lieutenant Gen H.R. McMaster has argued; “[b]ecause our enemy is

unscrupulous, some argue for a relaxation of ethical and moral standards and the use of force with less discrimination, because the ends—the defeat of the enemy—justify the means employed. To think this way would be a grave mistake. The war in which we are engaged demands that we retain the moral high ground despite the depravity of our enemies.”¹¹⁴

*A second criticism argues that U.S. forces were “handcuffed” by these reforms and gave the Taliban a significant military advantage. Several military experts and commentators voiced concern that ISAF reforms were hamstringing U.S. forces’ ability to conduct offensive operations against the Taliban. As retired air force lieutenant general Thomas McInerney complained, “We handcuffed our troops in combat needlessly. This was very harmful to our men and has never been done in U.S. combat operations that I know of.”*¹¹⁵

Overall, the data tells a different story. During the implementation of the McChrystal and Petraeus tactical directives, U.S. and ISAF operations against the Taliban were increasing dramatically. The number of night raids, in particular, increased five-fold from February 2009 to December 2010. Close air support sorties grew by 114 percent from 2007-2010.¹¹⁶ According to one Taliban expert, the night raids took a significant toll and forced Taliban leaders to take onerous force protection measures.¹¹⁷

The pace and scale of the night raid effort remained intense, even as it outpaced the number of available important targets. Increasingly, the raids seemed to target lower level individuals. According to four former senior DoD officials, the percentage of night raids that resulted in the capture or kill of a district level commander or Taliban official (so-called mid-level leadership) or above was insignificant.¹¹⁸ The strategic cost of casting this wide of a net has not yet been assessed. Even some members of the Special Operations community began to wonder why the world’s most highly trained raiding forces were putting their lives on the line to go after “street thugs.”¹¹⁹

With respect to civilian harm beyond casualties, the picture is mixed. Fear of encountering international forces registered at 76 percent and 78 percent respectively for 2011 and 2012. On the more positive side of the ledger, reports of being victims of violence by foreign forces rose from 5 percent in 2007 to 9 percent in 2009, then down to 6 percent in 2010, despite the threefold increase in foreign forces since 2008.¹²⁰ Overall, the Afghan perceptions of security and protection moved in a positive direction, despite major increases in violence.

A related criticism is that the Taliban gained increased tactical advantage by fighting in populated areas, or civilian shielding.¹²¹ No doubt such examples exist. But according to ISAF, the number of enemy initiated attacks taking place within 1km of populated areas actually decreased significantly from January 2010 to October 2012.¹²² Despite restrictions on U.S. airpower in populated areas, other strategic and tactical considerations seem to have led local Taliban commanders to increasingly choose to fight ISAF in rural areas.

Recalling an example from 2001, Lieutenant General David A. Deptula, former director of the Combined Air Operations Center for Afghanistan, says an opportunity to “eliminate” Mullah Omar and other senior Taliban leaders was passed up: “We had it within our power but the commander elected not to because of a legal fear of collateral damage. This is a risk aversion driven by the excess concern of the commander.”¹²³ Later, there were reportedly a number of real or perceived lost opportunities to strike Taliban leaders and fighters due to the additional restrictions some commanders put in place prior to Petraeus forbidding them. Such restrictions may have been counterproductive, especially as intelligence capabilities increased and pre-deployment training improved tactics and battlefield judgment. After Petraeus lifted restrictions, civilian casualties by ISAF continued to decline. Overall, ISAF experienced security gains while improving civilian protection and protecting the force.

V.

Transferring Lessons to ANSF

V.

Transferring Lessons to ANSF

U.S. and ISAF efforts to introduce civilian protection to the ANSF were undertaken too late and were not prioritized, which has led to insufficient emphasis and a heightened risk of strategic penalties. At this point in the conflict, where the Afghan security forces are under immense pressure, inculcating protection of civilians will be difficult.

The U.S. has largely taken a “train and equip” approach to ANSF development, with comparably less focus on developing soldier and leader tactical judgment, or on educating leaders about why civilian protection is important for military success. Military lawyers and human rights advocates have provided important training and guidance to rank and file ANSF on law of armed conflict and human rights. But without ownership and emphasis by ANSF leaders, including emphasis of the strategic value of civilian protection, it is unlikely that such training will have much impact.¹²⁴

Senior Afghan officials have made encouraging statements about the need to protect civilians, and a national policy on protection of civilians is in the pipeline for 2016 (as well as a revised policy for the Ministry of Defense). However, it’s not clear that ANSF leadership is making the connection between civilian protection and success in war, observed a former deputy commander of ISAF.¹²⁵ “At the leadership level it’s taken seriously, but it’s not been absorbed or understood at the tactical level as much as we’d like just yet,” said Carlo Salter, CIVCAS Mitigation staff officer for NATO/Resolute Support HQ. “Changing the mindset is the key, and that’s going to take a long time. Maybe in five years it will start to show.”¹²⁶

As had been the case for ISAF, ANSF-caused civilian harm risks hardening support for the Taliban in contested areas and reducing cooperation with the Afghan government.¹²⁷ As the conflict has intensified, civilian casualties have reached unprecedented levels with over 10,000 civilian deaths and injuries in 2015. While antigovernment elements continue to be responsible for causing the most harm, there was a 51 percent increase in the number of pro-government caused civilian casualties between 2013 and 2014,¹²⁸ and a further 28 percent increase in 2015.¹²⁹ The biggest increase in civilian casualties occurred during ground engagements, primarily from ANSF use of explosive weapons such as mortars, rockets, and grenades, particularly in or around populated areas.¹³⁰ Afghanistan Air Force (AAF) airstrikes, however, have been a fast growing concern. Civilian casualties from AAF strikes increased almost eightfold in the first half of 2015, and threefold in the second half.¹³¹

The scale and impact of civilian harm is not being tracked by the Afghan government. It established a Civilian Casualties Tracking Team in the Presidential Information Coordination Center (PICC), in May 2012, which has had close mentoring and advice from Resolute Support. However, there are significant gaps with the CCTT. Its assessment of civilian casualties caused by ANSF in 2015 was around 2,000, as opposed to around 12,000 documented by the UN.¹³²

This enormous discrepancy has multiple causes. First and foremost, it relies on reports of civilian harm from security bodies and has no mechanism to receive complaints from individuals or organizations.¹³³ The CCTT has a tendency to assume that the responsibility for civilian harm lies with the Taliban when there's cross-fire in ground engagements, or when the ANSF engage in defensive operations. Reluctance to report ANSF-caused harm may lead to under-reporting and compromise the system's integrity. In addition, while Resolute Support's training and mentoring is welcome, Resolute Support has no independent capability to assess the accuracy of the CCTT's data.

Also missing from the CCTT is a capability to analyze and learn from civilian harm incidents.¹³⁴ As Georgette Gagnon, former director of UNAMA Human Rights has stressed, "Tracking and mitigation are not the same thing. [ANSF] are not doing mitigation, they're not trying to prevent."¹³⁵ On the positive side of the ledger, the Afghan National Security Council held the first Afghan-led Civilian Casualty Avoidance and Mitigation Board meeting in January 2016, involving all government stakeholders. These forums are an essential part of the accountability and learning feedback loop, both for the CCTT, and for responsible ministries.

Major incidents of potential violations of international humanitarian law (IHL) also remain unaddressed. For instance, a 2014 rocket attack by the ANA on a wedding party in Sangin, Helmand, resulted in 83 civilian casualties, including the deaths of 29 women and children. The incident was investigated, but an earlier admission of responsibility was reneged upon, and there were no prosecutions.¹³⁶ Incidents such as a recent ANSF raid on a hospital in Wardak, and the reported execution of captured insurgents, highlights the serious challenges in ensuring ANSF compliance with IHL.¹³⁷ While there have been several instances of accountability after Afghan National Army gross violations of human rights (which can trigger Leahy funding suspension if there is no remedy by the host nation), allegations of gross violations by the Afghan Police have not led to similar actions.¹³⁸

While the Afghan Local Police (ALP) has improved security in some areas, it has also been associated with harm to civilians, from physical abuse to extortion.¹³⁹ Officials report some cases of accountability, mostly where a crime has been committed (such as murder resulting from a personal dispute), perhaps because of the financial support and training involvement of U.S. forces with the ALP.¹⁴⁰ However, many serious allegations have not resulted in independent investigations or prosecutions. In late 2015 the "People's Uprising Program" or "People's Support Program" was created by the Afghan government, with an ambitious *tashkeel* of 10,000, and at this writing, unclear rules of engagement and oversight.¹⁴¹

Detainee abuse in Afghan facilities has been persistent as well.¹⁴² U.S. and ISAF forces transferred thousands of detainees to ANSF custody. In order to meet their international non-refoulement obligations, the U.S. and ISAF adopted “remedial measures,” which included a monitoring and certification regime, periodic suspension of transfers to problematic ANSF facilities, and training.¹⁴³ Many Afghans who were themselves detained, or whose family members or community leaders were picked up by U.S. forces and handed over to ANSF, held the United States partially responsible for the abuses and extortion they subsequently suffered, eroding trust and U.S. legitimacy.¹⁴⁴ Despite continued documentation of the widespread use of torture, there have been almost no instance of accountability.¹⁴⁵

The U.S. military retains important influence where close relationships exist to enhance ANSF performance, learning and accountability. U.S. officials we interviewed noted the differences with Afghan National Army (ANA), where the U.S. has close working relationships, and strong influence owing to direct financial support, and the police, where it generally does not. U.S. forces seem to have had some success in noting that the Leahy Law can trigger halts in funding to Afghan security force units accused of grave human rights violations.¹⁴⁶ It is notable that there is a Resolute Support mentor working full time on protection of civilians with the Ministry of Defense but no equivalent in the Ministry of Interior.

The deadly October 3, 2015, attack on the Médecins Sans Frontières hospital in Kunduz, however, is an alarming reminder that without consistent leadership attention and training, hard-learned lessons can be lost relatively rapidly.¹⁴⁷ Now that U.S. forces rely so heavily on less reliable ANSF intelligence and information, there is even greater need for rigorous systems and procedures for verifying targets, ensuring proper precautions, and minimizing civilian harm.

President Obama and RS Commander General John Campbell issued apologies for the attack and loss of life. A subsequent U.S. military investigation found that the attack was “a direct result of avoidable human error compounded by process and equipment failures,” and that U.S. personnel failed to follow the rules of engagement. Sixteen U.S. military personnel received punishments included suspension and removal from command, letters of reprimand, formal counseling, and extensive retraining, though no criminal charges were filed.¹⁴⁸

The U.S. military investigation found that the special operations forces commander on the ground “lacked the authority to direct the aircrew to engage the facility,” and it was found that “the U.S. commander relied primarily upon information provided by Afghan partners and was unable to adequately distinguish between the NDS headquarters building at the MSF Trauma Center.”¹⁴⁹

The string of individual and systematic mistakes and the breakdown of checks identified by the U.S. military’s investigation suggest that employing force in ways that accomplish the mission while protecting the force and civilians is a perishable skill-set. With fewer U.S. forces on the ground and airpower being used less frequently, the risk of U.S. strikes causing civilian harm may increase, particularly in densely populated urban environments such as Kunduz City.

The same major factors that helped ISAF reduce civilian harm without compromising force protection can help the ANSF: leadership, training, better data collection and analysis, and post-harm response. Both the United Nations and the Center for Civilians in Conflict (CIVIC) have developed useful recommendations to improve the ANSF's ability to protect civilians.¹⁵⁰ Persistent engagement at senior levels on these reforms can help improve ANSF battlefield performance. Only when ANSF front-line commanders genuinely appreciate and communicate the link between civilian protection, force protection and local stability, are soldiers likely to respond.

VI.

U.S. Civilian Protection Practices in Other Conflicts: Yemen, Iraq, Syria, and Pakistan

*“How we treat civilians is a force multiplier
for us and a force-detractor for the enemy.”¹⁵¹*

— General John R. Allen, Former ISAF Commander

VI.

U.S. Civilian Protection Practices in Other Conflicts: Yemen, Iraq, Syria, and Pakistan

The Department of Defense has demonstrated a deep commitment to civilian protection, even at times going further than the requirements of LOAC. In Yemen, Iraq, Syria, and Pakistan, U.S. forces are confronted with incredibly challenging targeting and operational environments, and have been taking considerable steps to protect civilians, while other parties to the conflict have at times displayed a callous disregard for civilian life, including egregious war crimes in Syria, in particular. By contrast, the United States has demonstrated a degree of restraint in its use of airpower that suggests sensitivity to the challenge of civilian protection, some of which reflects a mixed record on learning from Afghanistan. At the same time, U.S. forces are increasingly reliant on partner forces on the ground, whose performance on civilian harm also poses strategic risks to U.S. objectives. Despite undeniable U.S. progress, there remains significant potential for improvement in several strategic areas: working with partner forces, civilian casualty tracking, analysis, investigation, and amends.

Yemen

Recent developments in Yemen provide a stark example of the risks that the behavior and actions of U.S.-supported partner forces pose to America's reputation and strategic objectives, as well as the potential for improvement in tracking and responding to U.S.-caused civilian harm.

The air campaign by the Saudi led coalition, supported by U.S. intelligence, logistics, and arms, has bombarded targets with no apparent military value, including hospitals, clinics, schools, and wedding parties, raising serious questions about violations of international humanitarian law.¹⁵² Between March 2015 and March 2016, the UN recorded almost 9,000 civilian casualties, with 1 in 10 Yemenis forced to flee their homes after a year of escalating conflict. The UN estimates that the Saudi led coalition is responsible for twice as many casualties as all other warring parties, almost entirely a result of airstrikes.¹⁵³

Throughout the Saudi campaign in Yemen, the United States has provided intelligence support, air-to-air refueling, and facilitated \$33 billion worth of weapons sales to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), the bulk of which has gone to Saudi Arabia. In addition to the arms sales, the United States has provided hundreds of air-to-air refueling sorties.¹⁵⁴ Members of Congress have voiced concern that U.S. support for Saudi actions that constitute gross human rights violations may contravene U.S. law, and that continued U.S. arms sales are fueling conflict, and undermining U.S. strategic interests.¹⁵⁵ As the Saudi led campaign has focused the war effort on pushing Houthis out of the

capital and territory in the north, Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) has seized territory in the south, seeking to expand support by leveraging new customs revenue and re-branding itself as a nationalist, pro-poor populist movement.¹⁵⁶

Meanwhile, the United States has continued its own air campaign against Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) in Yemen, which began in 2009.¹⁵⁷ In May 2013, the administration issued the Presidential Policy Guidance (PPG) on counter-terrorism operations outside areas of active hostilities, which raised the bar for the use of lethal force, including a “near-zero” standard for civilian harm.¹⁵⁸ The PPG did not apply in Pakistan, but did apply in Yemen, where its impact is hard to measure because of the transparency obstacles, but it clearly did not result in near-zero casualties.

However, the United States has failed to publicly acknowledge a single instance of civilian casualties over 120 strikes.¹⁵⁹ Several human rights and media organizations have documented credible claims of civilian harm.¹⁶⁰ Reported civilian casualties from U.S. strikes declined 2011-2012, though the reported rate of civilian casualties *per operation* actually rose 5 percent in 2013-2014.¹⁶¹ U.S. officials have reportedly provided compensation to civilian victims, though not publicly.¹⁶²

Victims and experts have questioned whether U.S. drone strikes, and subsequently its seemingly uncritical support to Saudi Arabia have also strengthened the hand of al-Qaeda, ISIL, and other militant groups, while undermining the credibility and interests of the United States.¹⁶³

Iraq and Syria: Operation Inherent Resolve

In Iraq and Syria, the United States has faced unenviable options in choosing allies and partners on the ground, where other opposing armed actors including the Syrian regime, Russia, and ISIS have been responsible for significant numbers of civilian casualties and egregious LOAC violations. The Russian intervention in Syria has already reportedly killed an estimated 1,982 civilians from September 2015 to March 2016, including attacks that reportedly may constitute war crimes.¹⁶⁴ This is a far higher rate than reports of civilian harm by U.S. forces and its partners. The United States is also clearly paying attention to the need to prevent, mitigate, and track civilian casualties from its own operations, though challenges remain. The United States moved with some speed toward setting up a civilian casualty tracking effort once Operation Inherent Resolve got underway. However, there is reason to believe it is still significantly underestimating the scale of harm, in part because of resource constraints and inaccurate or misleading partner reports, while further improvements in data and analysis of civilian harm would guard against the adoption of unnecessary restrictions.

Difficult Partners

Civilian harm caused by partner forces poses strategic risks analogous to those confronted by the United States in Afghanistan. As Fred Kagan, resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute

describes, “Civilian harm mitigation is not just a matter of controlling what we bomb and whom we shoot—it is a matter that must shape our entire approach to conflict. This issue requires particularly careful thought—strategic thought—in contexts in which we do not control the actions of other key actors with whom we are associated.”

Given its limited ground presence, the United States at times relies on observations and reporting from the Kurdish People’s Protection Units (YPG) and Peshmerga forces to assess potential and actual civilian harm.¹⁶⁵ The U.S. military experience in Afghanistan shows how dependency on intelligence from partners, particularly in unfamiliar social and political contexts, leaves U.S. forces vulnerable to misinformation, faulty intelligence, and manipulation by local actors. The United States is not insensitive to this: indeed, one interviewee ascribed caution about the reliability of partners’ intelligence or requests for air strikes as a primary reason for relative restraint in the use of airpower.¹⁶⁶ That necessary caution has come at a cost politically, particularly through the election campaign season, with some arguing that the United States should be using more air power.¹⁶⁷

In Iraq and Syria, the historical conflict between Kurdish and Arab communities and political parties should raise questions about the reliability of YPG and Peshmerga forces’ reporting of civilian harm, particularly in Arab communities. As forces fighting ISIL on the ground and advancing into Arab-majority areas, YPG and Peshmerga forces could have strong incentives to maximize the capacity of U.S. airpower for their own force protection and, potentially, to motivate Arabs to move away. They may have relatively few incentives to investigate and assess claims of civilian harm, particularly when their forces were involved in providing intelligence or coordinates to U.S. forces. Some Shi’a militias in Iraq may operate under similar incentives when fighting in Sunni areas.

A recent investigation by Amnesty International suggested that Kurdish YPG fighters engage in collective punishment when “clearing” villages of ISIL suspects, including “deliberate displacement of thousands of civilians and the razing of entire villages... often in retaliation for residents’ perceived sympathies with, or ties to, members of IS or other armed groups.”¹⁶⁸ The lead investigator for the report said there is a tendency for YPG fighters to “conflate the male Arab population with ISIL.”¹⁶⁹ Similarly, an investigation by Human Rights Watch suggests that Peshmerga forces have discriminated against Arab civilians, imposing harsher treatment on them than Kurds.¹⁷⁰ These kinds of reports at least warrant extra scrutiny on information from partner forces, given the potential impact on U.S. strategic objectives.¹⁷¹ In addition, a lack of uniform, interagency standards for credibility assessments, inadequate means of incorporating external NGO sources into assessments, and disparate access to intelligence and information are undermining the efficacy of the Leahy Law and other mechanisms that prevent U.S. security assistance to actors that commit gross violations of human rights.

A lack of local knowledge and short-sightedness about partnerships with abusive actors contributed to the erosion of U.S. strategic interests in Afghanistan. There’s a risk that similar dynamics could damage long-term objectives of U.S. operations in Iraq and Syria. Anand Gopal,

who has reported extensively in Afghanistan and Iraq, cited the example of the ISIS takeover of Hit, as exemplifying this problem. A key military center in Anbar Province, Hit has been riven by tribal feuds that were exacerbated by U.S. forces backing the Abu Nimr tribe to the exclusion of other groups.¹⁷²

There's a lot that's very similar [to Afghanistan], especially when you look at what happened during the Iraq war and occupation period... the United States allied itself with the Abu Nimr tribe to the exclusion of other tribes... By the time they left, they left a complicated situation, put one tribe on top. The tribes that lost out saw them as oppressors, and bore all the police abuse. And then there was a tribal war, those excluded tribes allied with each other. The tribes were rising up at the same time as ISIS attacked, and so they didn't conquer it, but the town didn't as much fall as there was an uprising and the Abu Nimr had to flee.¹⁷³

In addition, as Fred Kagan observes, without an understanding of the local context and political perceptions, the United States risks association with Syrian and Russian government actions:

The fact that the United States seems to many of Iraq's and Syria's Sunni to be bombing on behalf of 'Alawite and Shi'ite regimes into Sunni areas is much more damaging to our cause—even if we only ever hit real fighters—than the relatively small numbers (by any estimates) of civilian casualties we are causing. That is particularly true in an environment where regimes or affiliated militias and allies are causing many orders-of-magnitude more civilian casualties, including, in the Syrian case, through the use of chemical weapons, area bombardment, and starvation-as-a-weapon-of-war. We could actually get to totally precise, no-casualty attacks, and we would still be blamed for civilian deaths because we are seen to be allied with those causing them.¹⁷⁴

Civilian Casualty Tracking and Response

To date, CENTCOM has acknowledged 41 civilian deaths, plus 17 caused by coalition strikes,¹⁷⁵ out of 9,309 air strikes from the beginning of operations in August 2014 through May 10, 2016. That would mean a rate of 1 death for every 227 airstrikes.¹⁷⁶ By comparison, the rate in Afghanistan at the height of the surge in 2011 was 1 death for every 14 airstrikes.¹⁷⁷ Such a dramatic improvement is doubtful, particularly given U.S. forces' limited intelligence and forward observer capabilities in Iraq and Syria as compared to Afghanistan. As Ambassador Doug Lute points out:

Our experience in Iraq and Afghanistan should tell us that if there [in Afghanistan], with that density of troops, and a cooperative government, some media and civil society activity... and there we've had such problems with civilian harm, then in a setting like Syria, where there's no ground presence, an uncooperative government, very limited civil society and media presence, and we're doing it all from the air... our experience should tell us that we will cause civilian casualties, with unknown impact on the political and economic situation.

The impact of U.S.-caused civilian harm in Iraq and Syria is unlikely to have the same degree of negative consequences as in Afghanistan—it is a more complex conflict, with egregious violations and potential war crimes being committed by several actors, including ISIL, the Syrian government, Russia, and the Iraqi government and militias. The egregious levels of harm caused by Syrian barrel bombs and Russian airstrikes heightens the need for the U.S. and coalition operations to be transparent and easily distinguished from the tactics and scale of Russian and Syrian caused harm.¹⁷⁹ Civilians on the ground often cannot tell whose bombs were responsible. Poor tracking and response increases the risk the United States will be blamed for Russian and Syrian regime—inflicted harm.

In addition, as with Afghanistan, there are risks in the limitations of U.S. intelligence, and of an overly enemy-centric focus. “In Iraq and Syria, we’re repeating the same mistakes as in Afghanistan on intelligence,” as one senior UN official put it. “It’s a deeply flawed intel picture...combined with not understanding the local context.”¹⁸⁰

The deaths so far acknowledged result from 16 out of 27 cases that have been investigated. As of April 14, 2016, CENTCOM had received 159 allegations, 112 of which were deemed not to have involved coalition-caused civilian casualties, with 20 allegations remaining open (first a credibility assessment is carried out, to determine if an investigation is required).¹⁸¹ Asked about how well its policies and procedures for tracking civilian harm are working, CENTCOM itself acknowledges these challenges in Iraq and Syria, and the difficulties it faces verifying information: “It’s important to note that the current environment on the ground in Iraq and Syria makes investigating allegations extremely challenging. Traditional investigation methods, such as interviewing witnesses and examining the site, are not typically available. In some cases, no assessment is made until additional information can be obtained; however, such allegations continue to be tracked.”¹⁸²

Civil society accounts raise questions about the accuracy of U.S. estimates. Airwars, an NGO focused on coalition airstrikes in Iraq and Syria, reports that as of April 2016 open source data suggests civilian deaths from U.S. and coalition strikes in Iraq and Syria are over 1,000.¹⁸³ The organization acknowledges the challenge of verifying civilian harm, and draws this number from public sources on over 150 incidents with a minimum of two sources and where there are confirmed coalition strikes in the area.¹⁸⁴ National and regional NGOs also put civilian harm estimates in the hundreds.¹⁸⁵

Challenges in verifying information and differences in methodology and definitions of non-combatant inevitably will account for some discrepancies between sources, and delays in reporting. But the wide gap between U.S. and civil society estimates of civilian harm in Iraq and Syria should raise concerns that the U.S. military is likely underestimating civilian harm. As long as this is the case, the United States will be missing opportunities to reduce and mitigate civilian casualties, and to better understand the longer-term, strategic impact of civilian harm in Syria and Iraq. At the same time, improving data and analysis of civilian harm will help guard against the imposition of unnecessary restrictions on U.S. forces.

Several factors could be contributing to underestimation of civilian harm.

Reliance on Air Video/ISR: With minimal ground presence, U.S. and coalition forces are heavily reliant on air video for Battle Damage Assessments (BDAs) in their investigations into claims of civilian harm. Air BDAs are certainly capable of identifying civilian harm, and have identified incidents of civilian casualties that were previously unknown to NGOs tracking civilian casualties in Iraq and Syria.¹⁸⁶ But experience in Afghanistan suggests that air BDAs can have substantial blind spots, particularly in the absence of other sources of intelligence and on-the-ground information, and may not be reliable on their own as a means of assessing civilian harm. According to one study in Afghanistan, initial air BDAs failed to identify civilian casualties in *19 out of 21 cases* subsequently confirmed by ground force investigations.¹⁸⁷ More systematic investigation is required to better assess the accuracy and vulnerabilities of air BDA-based civilian harm assessments, and determine how other sources of information can be better utilized to prevent the overreliance on air BDAs, and improve the overall accuracy of assessments. (For instance, it does not appear to be routine to compare estimates of collateral damage pre-incident with post incident assessments, in order to constantly hone such estimates).

This problem is exacerbated by the fact that current resourcing of aerial intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) is at a relatively low level compared to Afghanistan.¹⁸⁸ In February 2016, the number of ISR missions conducted in Afghanistan was twice that conducted in Iraq/Syria.¹⁸⁹ As Lieutenant General John Hesterman commander of Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve acknowledged, Iraq is “the most complex area of battle that I’ve seen in 32 years. [It’s] never been more difficult to identify friend or foe as it is right now in Iraq.”¹⁹⁰

Limited utilization of open source data: Research for this report suggests that there are limits to the capacity of CENTCOM and State to absorb and analyze open source data. Open source data from Iraq and Syria contains significant information about conditions on the battlefield including the impact and aftermath of attacks, as well as broader political and social conflict related harm. While methodological challenges exist, such information can be invaluable in identifying previously unknown cases of civilian casualties and assessing existing claims. It can also help the United States better understand the tactical and strategic impact of broader harms to which it may be contributing. The State Department gathers some open source data of possible civilian casualty incidents, which it relays to CENTCOM, but State’s capacity is limited, with no capacity to monitor open sources in Arabic.¹⁹¹ Arabic sources are particularly important in Iraq, where English language reporting and sources are very limited.

The State Department monitors open source and civilian data on potential civilian casualty incidents, and shares the information with CENTCOM, though its policy is still in development, and capacity within State remains very limited. In addition, lack of uniform, inter-agency standards for credibility assessments, inadequate means of incorporating external NGO sources into assessments and disparate access to intelligence and information are undermining accuracy, preventing timely follow-up, and frustrating strategic communications.

Recognizing the significant challenges on the ground, CENTCOM maintains that it does its best to use all available data to assess allegations of civilian harm: “Every allegation—ranging from those referenced on Twitter to those which are self-reported—is looked into. While it is difficult to perform battle damage assessment without a presence on the battlefield, we do make full use of all available assets to review and report as accurately as possible the effects of air strikes. This does include reviewing open source information in numerous languages, employing the regional language skills resident within our command.”¹⁹²

However, signs of weaknesses in the CENTCOM CIVCAS Tracking Cell’s methodology were exposed in a recently declassified CENTCOM document concerning preliminary inquiries of civilian harm. The document shows that the Coalition conducted preliminary inquiries into 45 allegations of civilian harm between September 14 and April 30, 2015. Of these, most were dismissed as “not credible” within 48 hours. Analysis of the tracking cell document suggests that preliminary inquiries appeared somewhat cursory, often dismissing claims due to “insufficient information to determine CIVCAS.”¹⁹³ This raises concerns that important, corroborating information was either never identified or discounted with little justification, a concern confirmed by a comparison to an investigation by Airwars into one of the strikes involved, which demonstrates that open source data was overlooked.¹⁹⁴

As a result of these apparent shortcomings, it is highly likely that there is a significant amount of information regarding civilian harm and its strategic impact that the United States simply does not know. As in Afghanistan, improving data collection could provide U.S. policymakers and commanders with better tools for analysis and more informed decision-making. Over time, learning and positive feedback loops can enhance the accuracy of assessments, and provide responsive, data-based recommendations to improve civilian protection going forward and mitigate strategic effects. In this regard, such efforts could also help U.S. forces do more to respond to civilian victims of U.S. operations. Though CENTCOM has indicated that “under the appropriate circumstances” the United States could provide condolence payments to victims, it has not done so to date, adding that “there have been no requests from family members of the deceased resulting from these incidents.”¹⁹⁵

Pakistan

In Pakistan, despite conducting over 400 strikes, the United States has not acknowledged a single, specific case of Pakistani civilian death or injury. Thus far it has publicly acknowledged only the deaths of one American and one Italian hostage in a drone strike in 2015. Human rights and media organizations have documented a significant number of credible claims of civilian harm, corroborated by leaked internal Pakistani government documents.¹⁹⁶

U.S. policies and practice in Pakistan stand in stark contrast to its efforts to improve transparency and accountability for civilian harm across the border in Afghanistan. Drone strikes in Pakistan are conducted by the CIA and are classified as Title 50 covert actions, which legally restricts the

government from providing information. By contrast, DoD operations, including drone strikes conducted in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan and Yemen are guided by Title 10 "armed forces" operations and subject to publicly available military doctrine.¹⁹⁷ This split in authority, and the constraints on CIA operations, is a significant obstacle to achieving the same kind of improved transparency and accountability that U.S. and ISAF forces provided in Afghanistan.

The secrecy associated with CIA control has been compounded by the complicated U.S.-Pakistan bilateral relationship. "Core" al Qaeda leadership may have been severely diminished, but the United States has paid a high political price as a result, arguably undermining its longer-term interests and strategic objectives in Pakistan. Domestic observers have raised concerns that the space for rational domestic debate around counter-terrorism and conflict resolution has shrunk beneath the dominant anti-U.S., anti-drone narrative, which has been capitalized on by religious conservatives.¹⁹⁸

Even where the United States is engaged in direct action to meet our counterterrorism objectives, we're often also engaged in indirect action to support a partner government's counterinsurgency objectives," as former deputy assistant secretary of defense for special operations and combating terrorism William F. Wechsler explains: "In these cases, we need to remember that while our direct actions are typically a necessary line of operation, our indirect actions to support our partner are typically the decisive line of operation. Therefore, in designing our campaigns, we always need to balance the short-term gains we receive from disruptive counterterrorism strikes with the risk that those direct actions might undermine the wider counterinsurgency efforts of our partners, and therefore our own strategic objectives."¹⁹⁹

Even without this secrecy, there are huge challenges to accurate assessments and reporting, to include a lack of ground forces, which inhibits the ability to conduct investigations.

In terms of civilian casualty mitigation, there is evidence that the United States was able to reduce the incidence of civilian casualties in Pakistan. The campaign in Pakistan peaked in 2010 with 122 strikes, killing an estimated five civilians per incident 2009-2011. Civilian harm per strike decreased significantly, down to one per incident in 2012, and less than one per incident in 2013-15.²⁰⁰

Without additional public information, it is difficult to identify what caused those declines in Pakistan. However, statements by U.S. officials and media reports indicate that stricter targeting rules and a reduction in the use of signature strikes likely contributed to this reduction.²⁰¹ Evidence from Yemen paints a more mixed picture.

In Afghanistan, the U.S. military recognized that pro-active tracking, investigations, analysis, and amends were critical to understanding and mitigating the harmful strategic effects of civilian casualties. By contrast, our preliminary look at the experience in Pakistan, Syria, Iraq, and Yemen suggest weaknesses in U.S. civilian harm tracking and analysis, and limited ability to evaluate broader potential strategic costs, particularly where there is a reliance on partner forces.

However, after years of public pressure, on March 7, 2016, the Obama Administration announced that it will finally provide public figures on noncombatant deaths from drone strikes outside zones of active hostilities.²⁰² A welcome development, this policy shift demonstrates that much greater transparency is indeed possible, and underscores the need for uniform policies and dedicated resources for civilian harm mitigation going forward.

VII.

Institutionalizing Lessons Learned

VII.

Institutionalizing Lessons Learned

The U.S. government has taken great strides to institutionalize civilian protection. After over 10 years of war in Afghanistan, the United States and NATO allies have learned invaluable lessons about the strategic cost of civilian harm in contemporary conflicts, and how military forces can better protect civilians without undermining force protection. The findings from this report suggest that the United States can take steps that are relatively low cost but high potential payoff to advance both civilian protection and strategic interests. These steps include:

- Develop a policy on civilian protection;
- Resource staff to provide oversight, planning, collection, and analysis capabilities;
- Sharpen learning and accountability;
- Improve decision-making tools;
- Enhance leader education and training at tactical and strategic levels; and
- Strengthen partner accountability.

The United States and NATO allies made significant reforms in the protection of civilians, which reduced the strategic and tactical penalties in Afghanistan. Many of these lessons are reflected in U.S. military reports, doctrine, and training materials.²⁰³

ATP (Army Techniques Publication) 3-7.06 Protection of Civilians defines protection of civilians as “efforts that reduce civilian risks from physical violence, secure their rights to access essential services and resources, and contribute to a secure, stable, and just environment for civilians over the long term. Protection of civilians is important for moral, political, legal, and military reasons and must be addressed during unified land operations regardless of the primary mission.” The guide recognizes the complexity of working with host nation actors where there is a record of abuses against civilians.²⁰⁴ It offers three reasons to support the protection of civilians, beyond moral and legal ones:

First, counterinsurgency and stabilization experiences highlight that the population is often the center of gravity for military operations, and the population’s support is partly related to providing protection from perpetrators or, in some cases, from rival identity

groups. Second, harming civilians undermines military efforts and becomes a divisive issue between multinational partners. Finally, during most operations, army units are concerned with civilian welfare while achieving the desired outcomes to a conflict or crisis... it may be unlikely that a peaceful political settlement can be achieved unless the protection of civilians is adequately addressed.²⁰⁵

This publication is an important step, but there are a number of obstacles to further institutionalizing lessons from Afghanistan. This army techniques publication (ATP) risks getting lost among hundreds of other publications because civilian protection lacks clear institutional ownership. Some officials raised concerns over limited resources. Others suggest civilian protection was an issue unique to Afghanistan. Fears around legal repercussions must be addressed. However, utilizing the institutional knowledge, policies, and methodologies honed in Afghanistan, creating the needed policy and institutional reforms will likely be less costly and easier to implement than many U.S. officials currently expect.

The most logical next step is to create a *DOD-wide Uniform Policy on Civilian Protection*. Such a policy should, at a minimum, establish institutional authorities and responsibilities; articulate staff requirements and resources; develop standards for civilian harm monitoring and mitigation efforts, and post incident response (including compensation); incorporate civilian protection into strategy and operational planning considerations; develop standards and expectations for training and education; and outline expectations for partner support and accountability.

Drawing on the success of the ISAF's CCTM in Afghanistan, the DoD should develop a *standing capability within the joint staff and theater commands* to support strategic and operational planning, and monitor, track, and analyze battlefield information on civilian harm. Such capabilities are probably best positioned in the J3 or J5. To ensure long-term learning, the staff should manage a central database which collects information about civilian protection, and have the analytic capacity to help commanders make decisions and improve battlefield performance. The joint staff cell could advance the findings in this report by drawing on battlefield reporting since 2001.

Better analytic capability will help *sharpen learning and accountability*. Retired lieutenant general Doug Lute noted that the U.S. military holds itself accountable in many areas, but has tended to fall short regarding civilian protection and battlefield performance.²⁰⁶ ISAF was successful in using constructive forms of learning and accountability such as command-directed after action reviews, re-training, and lessons learned studies once it had a systematic analytic capability in place. Reports of a two-star general being reprimanded for the Kunduz airstrike may point to greater emphasis on senior leader accountability.

This analytic capability can also *improve decision-making tools*. The United States relies on Collateral Damage Estimates (CDE) to make determinations on discrimination and proportionality.²⁰⁷ Within CDE, the United States normally establishes a non-combatant casualty cutoff value (NCV) to set

approval levels for strikes. The experience in Afghanistan and more recent conflicts suggests that these tools are necessary but not sufficient for sound decision-making. The CDE algorithms can benefit from a wider range of inputs, especially if civilian harm data is managed in a central database. The role of NCV is obscured by the classified ROEs it is embedded in, but the recent experience in Iraq and Syria suggests it can potentially be too absolute as a decision criterion. A tool that complements these factors with a wider strategic lens can reduce the probability of errors and lost opportunities.

Civilian protection should be incorporated into *leader education and training* at the tactical and strategic levels. Tactics that mitigate risk to civilians while protecting the force and accomplishing the mission are practiced and perishable. Realistic training that credibly replicates the penalties military forces would likely suffer for inflicting civilian harm remains a significant challenge. The challenge has only increased as training scenarios have returned to greater emphasis on force-on-force engagements. War colleges and staff colleges should include leader education and training that advances tactical judgment by utilizing the modeling of conflict zones, artificial intelligence, and books or articles that provide thoughtful scenarios and examples.²⁰⁸

Finally, *strengthening partner accountability* is critical. Civilian harm caused by U.S.-backed host nation security forces using “Made in the U.S.A.” weapons, equipment, and support can damage U.S. and partner credibility, frustrating U.S. strategic objectives. The United States is currently scaling back combat operations, and engaging in more train, advise and assist missions with foreign governments and security forces, particularly as part of expanding counterterrorism operations. Integrating and institutionalizing lessons on civilian harm mitigation into U.S. partnership efforts is urgently needed.

VIII.

Recommendations

VIII. Recommendations

Our research demonstrates that significant damage to U.S. strategic interests can be caused by civilian harm, broadly defined to include major disruption of local political, social, and economic stability, as well as civilian casualties. These broader impacts also apply to counter-terrorism operations where they undermine the wider counterinsurgency efforts of partners, and therefore U.S. strategic objectives.

A . To the Department of Defense

1. **Create a Uniform Policy on Civilian Protection** to establish institutional authorities and responsibilities; develop standards and methodology for tracking and monitoring civilian harm (as defined in the ATP 3-07.6 on Protection of Civilians), mitigation efforts, and post incident response, including amends; incorporate civilian protection into strategy and operational planning considerations; and outline expectations for partner support and accountability.
2. **Create Civilian Protection Cells in J3 or J5 of Joint Staff, Combatant Commands, and Operational Headquarters modeled after ISAF's Civilian Casualty Tracking Cell.** These cells should:
 - a) Monitor civilian harm and assess causes and strategic effects;
 - b) Help commanders improve battlefield decision making;
 - c) Communicate regularly with the State Department and relevant international organizations and civil society organizations;
 - d) Consider using the Joint Staff cell to collect and analyze data from all Civilian Protection Cells, and ensuring ongoing lessons learned;
 - e) Strengthen decision-making tools by complementing Collateral Damage Estimation with data and analysis of civilian harm and assessments of strategic impact.
3. As part of a **consistent post incident response policy and practice:**
 - a) Respond to civilian harm in ways that avoid premature denials, provide timely and clear communication of the outcomes of investigations and accountability measures to host nations, victims, and the public.

- b) Create permanent policies and mechanisms for reporting, verification, and provision of amends to civilian victims of U.S. operations, including civilians harmed in operations outside of areas of active hostilities and in areas inaccessible to U.S. ground forces.
 - c) Reflect in this policy the lesson learned in Afghanistan that a lower evidentiary bar for amends and ex gratia payments is more time efficient and cost effective long term.
 - d) Ensure that there is a robust and transparent investigation policy that incorporates civilian, NGO, and open source inputs, as well as a public, transparent means of communicating accountability.
 - e) While there will be some region-specific aspects to this policy, there should be openness to working through or with local government offices for information and delivery, and with international organizations and NGOs for information on harms caused.
4. In addition to threat reporting, **develop intelligence priorities to collect and analyze the political, economic, social, and cultural dynamics of host nations in conflict zones and their effects on U.S. policy and strategic aims.** Collection and analysis should include assessing the risk of U.S. military forces and resources being manipulated by local officials and elites and the strategic impact of civilian harm.
5. **Incorporate tactical and strategic effects of civilian harm and protection into all levels of professional military education.** Incorporate simulations and appropriate books and journals to give leaders intellectual experiences they can draw from before deploying to combat. Increase/target funding for combat training centers to improve pre-deployment training on civilian protection, including scenario realism and tactical judgment.
6. **Develop a strategic plan for strengthening civilian protection and harm mitigation in U.S. partner forces, in conjunction with the State Department.** Condition training, funding, and transfer of arms on clear benchmarks on partner forces' commitment and performance on civilian protection. Indicators should include host nation policy guidance, demonstrated political and military leadership commitment, professional military education and training, and accountability.

B. To the State Department

1. **Work with the Department of Defense (DoD) in creating a standing, uniform U.S. government policy on civilian protection** including standard methodology, tracking, a centralized database and analysis unit, post-incident response, and civilian harm mitigation policy for partner forces.

2. **Develop, with the DoD, standard operating procedures for requesting, assessing, and sharing information on civilian harm from international organizations, NGOs, and other civil society sources.** Work with the DoD to ensure effective implementation of a consistent post-incident response policy, including amends.
3. **Support priorities for the intelligence community to collect and analyze the political, economic, social, and cultural dynamics of host nations** in conflict zones and effects on U.S. policy and strategic aims. Collection and analysis should include assessing the risk of U.S. military forces and resources being manipulated by local officials and elites, and the strategic impact of civilian harm.
4. **Refine existing security sector reform policies to ensure that work with partner forces reflects best practice on civilian harm assessment, mitigation, and response;** include civilian protection and civilian harm lessons learned into capacity building and senior leader development efforts.
5. **Develop metrics and information channels to independently assess civilian harm, and its strategic impact, including harm caused by and information received from partner forces.** Increase capacity within embassies in conflict zones to monitor and report on the political and social impact of U.S. and partner-caused civilian harm, consistent with the Leahy Law.
6. **Improve coordination with DOD and conditionality on foreign military assistance, including military sales,** in order to enhance the willingness and capacity of partner forces to protect civilians and mitigate risks that civilian harm undermines long-term stability.

To the Intelligence Community

1. **Collect and analyze information and intelligence about the impact of U.S. military engagement on a host nation's political, economic, social, and cultural dynamics;** collection and analysis should include assessing the risk of U.S. military forces and resources being manipulated by local officials and elites, and the strategic impact of civilian harm.

To the U.S. Congress

1. Support these recommendations with the necessary resources and accountability procedures.

ANNEX 1

Key ISAF Policy Reforms

Tactical Directives to Reduce Civilian Harm

2003 Tactical Directive (Lieutenant General Barno): Guidance on conduct during night raids.

2007 Tactical Directive (General McNeill): Focused on reducing harm by clarifying guidance on night raids, requiring formal collateral damage assessments (CDE) and pre-approval for preparatory fires, and discouraging use of *airstrikes* and *indirect fire* on civilian structures unless no other option available to *accomplish mission*.²⁰⁹

December 2008 (General McKiernan): Emphasized strategic importance of *reducing civilian harm*, prohibited airstrikes on homes, mosques, and sensitive sites unless necessary to protect the force; and emphasized the need for improved post incident reporting; to be *“first with the truth.”*²¹⁰

December 2008 (General McKiernan): *New EOF procedures* and guidance to reduce civilian harm.²¹¹

July 2009 (General McChrystal): *Prohibited airstrikes and indirect fire on residential compounds* except in self-defense or prescribed conditions.²¹²

June 2010 (General Petraeus): Clarified July 2009 directive, *prohibited additional restrictions*, required commanders to ensure no civilians present prior to strike approval.²¹³

January/December 2010 (Generals McChrystal/ Petraeus): Guidance on *conduct of night raids*, requiring partnered operations with ANSF in the lead and respect for Afghan cultural norms.²¹⁴

November 2011 (General Allen): Directs commanders to investigate all possible civilian casualty incidents, including ground BDAs where possible, manage consequences and express condolences, conduct regular reinforcement training on procedures to avoid civilian harm.²¹⁵

December 2011 (General Allen): *Additional guidance on night raids*, encourage Afghan forces in the lead, use of “soft-knock” and coordination with civilian authorities.²¹⁶

ANNEX 1 *continued*

Monitoring, Tracking and Analysis

August 2008 (General McKiernan): Creation of Civilian Casualty Tracking Cell (CCTC) to collect and monitor data on ISAF-caused civilian casualties.²¹⁷

Mid-2011 (General Petraeus): Expansion of CCTC into Civilian Casualty Mitigation Team (CCMT) to analyze data and make recommendations to COMISAF, *liaise with IOs, NGOs, and ANSF.*

Independent assessments in support of international forces (for example, Sarah Sewall and Lawrence Lewis’s “Joint Civilian Casualty Study,” August 2010) and related studies from the Joint and Coalition Operational Analysis (JCOA), Joint Staff J7.

Investigations and Post-Incident Response

October 2005: U.S. forces authorized to provide amends for civilian harm through solatia and condolence payments, primarily through CERP funds.²¹⁸

2009: Creation of Joint Incident Assessment Teams (JIATs) to conduct Afghan-ISAF investigations of alleged civilian casualty incidents.²¹⁹

August 2010: NATO/ISAF common guidelines to reduce and respond to civilian harm.²²⁰

December 2014: ISAF/RSM establishes Civilian Casualty Credibility Review Board (CCARB). Made up of military and civilian subject matter experts that convenes within two hours of any alleged civilian casualty incident involving international forces.

ENDNOTES

- 1 UNAMA, *Afghanistan—Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2008*, page ii, released January 2009. <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/ProtectionCivilians2008.pdf>. The 2008 report recorded civilian fatalities. Subsequent reports included civilians injured or wounded in the overall civilian casualty total.
- 2 Christopher Paul, Colin P. Clarke, Beth Grill and Molly Dunigan, *Paths to Victory: Lessons from Modern Insurgencies*, Washington DC: RAND Corporation, 2013, p. xxii, xxiv, 130-132, http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR291z1.html; Martin C. Libicki, “Eighty-Nine Insurgencies: Outcomes and Endings,” in David C. Gompert, John Gordon IV, Adam Grissom, David R. Frelinger, Seth G. Jones, Martin C. Libicki, Edward O’Connell, Brooke K. Stearns, and Robert E. Hunter, *War by Other Means: Building Complete and Balanced Capabilities for Counterinsurgency*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, 2008, pp. 373–396, <http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG595z2.html>; Jason Lyall, “Do Democracies Make Inferior Counterinsurgents? Reassessing Democracy’s Impact on War Outcomes and Duration,” *International Organization*, Vol. 64, No. 1, 2010, pp. 188-190; David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009. These studies consider international support to be more important than local support in sustaining the insurgency.
- 3 Ibid. UNAMA, *Annual Report 2008*, p. 16.
- 4 International Security Assistance Force (ISAF): *The ISAF Civilian Casualty Avoidance and Mitigation Framework: Sustaining Best Practices*, May 30, 2014, p. 38. On file with OSF.
- 5 Several military officials argue that the limited ground forces prior to the 2009–2010 surge may have increased reliance on airpower, while inadequate airborne surveillance and local intelligence might have led to more unexpected ground engagements. Interviews with David Richards, September 1, 2015, London; Nick Carter, September 21, 2015, London; Former Deputy Commander ISAF, August 25, 2015, London.
- 6 Human Rights Watch, *Troops in Contact: Airstrikes and Civilian Deaths in Afghanistan*, September 8, 2008, https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/afghanistan0908web_0.pdf. See also CIVIC, *Losing the People: The Costs and Consequences of Civilian Suffering in Afghanistan*, February 18, 2009, p. 11-12; Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), *From Hope to Fear: An Afghan Perspective on Operations of Pro-Government Forces in Afghanistan*, December 2008, p. 8-19, http://www.aihrc.org.af/media/files/Research%20Reports/english/Eng_Pro_G_2.pdf.
- 7 There are multiple examples of civilian casualties from signature strikes; perhaps the most well know is that which killed aid worker and hostage Warren Weinstein and Giovanni Lo Porto in Pakistan in April 2015. See David Rhodes, “What the United States Owes Warren Weinstein—The American hostage died in a ‘signature’ Drone Strike. Those Strikes Should End,” *The Atlantic*, April 28, 2015, <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/04/warren-weinstein-drones/391655/>.
- 8 Interviews with Dr. Larry Lewis, July 15, 2016, September 30, 2015. The study is classified.
- 9 This finding is referenced in the 2013 JCOA study referenced above, citing the classified *Joint Civilian Casualty Study*, JCOA, August 2010.
- 10 Interview with General John Allen, May 10, 2016, Washington, D.C.
- 11 See Harvard Human Rights Program, *Tackling Tough Calls: Lessons from Recent Conflicts on Hostile Intent and Civilian Protection*, March 2016, <https://www.justsecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Tackling-Tough-Choices-Hostile-Intent-HLSIHRC-2016.pdf>. See also Dr. Larry Lewis, *Reducing and Mitigating Civilian Casualties: Enduring Lessons*, Joint and Coalition Operational Analysis (JCOA), April 12, 2013, p.10, <https://info.publicintelligence.net/JCOA-ReducingCIVCAS.pdf>
- 12 There are ongoing debates about the precise definition of the direct participation in hostilities by a civilian (DPH), however, the International Committee for the Red Cross and other international legal authorities have concluded that DPH requires acts that directly cause adverse military affects such as death, injury, or property destruction. “Interpretive Guidance on the Notion of Direct Participation in Hostilities under International Humanitarian Law (Adopted by the Assembly of the International Committee of the Red Cross on 26 February 2009),” *International Review of the Red Cross* No. 872. See also under Article 51(3) of Additional Protocol I, “Civilians shall enjoy the protection afforded by this Section unless and for such time as they take a direct part in hostilities.” Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I), 8 June 1977, 51(3); Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of Non- International Armed Conflicts, 8 June 1977, Art. 13(3), <http://www.icrc.org/ihl.nsf/FULL/475>;
- 13 A recent difference between Resolute Support and UNAMA reflected just such a difference in determination.
- 14 Ibid. Open Society Foundations and The Liaison Office, *The Cost of Kill/Capture: Impact of Night Raids Surge on*

- Afghan Civilians*, September 19, 2011, <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/publications/cost-killcapture-impact-night-raid-surge-afghan-civilians>; Open Society Foundations, *Strangers at the Door: Night Raids by International Forces Lose Afghan Hearts and Minds*, February 23, 2010, <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/reports/strangers-door-night-raids-international-forces-lose-hearts-and-minds-afghans>.
- 15 Ibid. UNAMA, *Annual Report 2008*, pp. 16-18 (Force Protection: 41 deaths); UNAMA, *Annual Report 2009*, pp. 16-22 (Force Protection: 36 deaths); UNAMA, *Annual Report 2010*, pp. 21-28 (Force Protection: 45 deaths); UNAMA, *Annual Report 2011*, pp. 22-26 (Force Protection: 38 deaths); UNAMA, *Annual Report 2012*, p. 36 (Force Protection: 14 deaths); UNAMA, *Annual Report 2013*, p. 48 (Force Protection: 31 deaths). UNAMA defines force protection incidents as “situations where civilians do not pay attention to warnings from military personnel when in the proximity of, approaching or overtaking military convoys or do not follow instructions at check points.” UNAMA, *Annual Report 2013*, p. v. All UNAMA Protection of Civilian reports can be found here: <https://unama.unmissions.org/protection-of-civilians-reports>.
- 16 Ibid. UNAMA, *Annual Report 2008*, p. 16 (total civilian deaths caused by pro-government forces: 828); UNAMA, *Annual Report 2009*, p. 16 (Total civilian deaths caused by pro-government forces: 596); UNAMA, *Annual Report 2010*, p. 21 (Total civilian deaths caused by pro-government forces: 440); UNAMA, *Annual Report 2011*, p. 22 (Total civilian deaths caused by pro-government forces: 410); UNAMA, *Annual Report 2012*, p. 30 (Total civilian deaths caused by pro-government forces: 316); UNAMA, *Annual Report 2013*, p. 7 (Total civilian deaths caused by pro-government forces: 341).
- 17 UNAMA, *Annual Report 2012*, p. 36.
- 18 Ibid, p. 38. UNAMA, *Annual Report 2012*, p. 38.
- 19 See UNAMA, *Annual Report 2009*, p. 16 (Raids: 98 deaths); UNAMA, *Annual Report 2010*, p. 21 (Raids: 80 deaths); UNAMA, *Annual Report 2011*, p. 25 (Raids: 63 deaths); UNAMA, *Annual Report 2012*, p. 35 (Raids: 54 deaths); UNAMA, *Annual Report 2013*, p. 49 (Raids: 37 deaths). UNAMA notes that “accurate data on numbers of search operations and civilian casualties from search operations is difficult to obtain due to the multiple security bodies conducting joint and independent operations, as well as military classification of such information.” UNAMA, *Annual Report 2012*, p. 36. UNAMA expressed “concern” about night raids in 2008, but did not provide specific data. UNAMA, *Annual Report 2008*, p. iii; AIHRC: “From Hope to Fear: An Afghan Perspective on Operations of Pro-Government Forces in Afghanistan,” December 2008, p. 20.
- 20 See Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, *Committee Study of the Central Intelligence Agency’s Detention and Interrogation Program*, December 3, 2014, http://www.feinstein.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/files/serve?File_id=7c85429a-ec38-4bb5-968f-289799bf6d0e&SK=D500C4EBC500E1D256BA519211895909; The Constitution Project, *Report on The Constitution Project’s Task Force on Detainee Treatment*, 2013, <http://detaineeataskforce.org/read/files/assets/common/downloads/The%20Report%20of%20The%20Constitution%20Project.pdf>; Amnesty International USA, *Out of Sight, Out of Mind, Out of Court? The Right of Bagram Detainees to Judicial Review*, February 18, 2009, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/AMR51/021/2009/en/>; Human Rights Watch, *Afghanistan: Killing and Torture by U.S. Forces Predate Abu Ghraib*, May 20, 2005, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2005/05/20/afghanistan-killing-and-torture-us-predate-abu-ghraib>. The ACLU released autopsy reports for Afghans who died in U.S. custody in 2002 and 2003, including Dilawar, Mullah Habilullah and Abdul Wahid. “The Torture Database,” The American Civil Liberties Union. https://www.thetorturedatabase.org/search/apachesolr_search. Human Rights Watch reported on four or five deaths in 2002 and 2003 in its June 2004 report, *The Road to Abu Ghraib*, <https://www.hrw.org/reports/2004/usa0604/4.htm>. See also Human Rights Watch, *Enduring Freedom: Abuses by U.S. Forces in Afghanistan*, March 2004, https://www.hrw.org/reports/2004/afghanistan0304/1.htm#_Toc64778166.
- 21 Tim Golden, “In U.S. Report, Brutal Details of 2 Afghan Inmates’ Deaths,” *New York Times*, May 20, 2005. http://www.nytimes.com/2005/05/20/world/asia/in-us-report-brutal-details-of-2-afghan-inmates-deaths.html?_r=0. See also Alex Gibney, *Taxi to the Dark Side*, <http://www.hbo.com/documentaries/taxi-to-the-dark-side/synopsis.html>.
- 22 Gul Rehman was the driver of Ghairat Bahir, the son-in-law of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, commander of an armed group which was at the time connected to Al Qaeda; see Adam Goldman and Kathy Gannon, “Death Shed Light on CIA Salt Pit Near Kabul,” *The Associated Press*, March 28, 2010, http://www.nbcnews.com/id/36071994/ns/us_news-security/#.VxFLCPrJiw.
- 23 Tim Golden, “In U.S. Report, Brutal Details of 2 Afghan Inmates’ Deaths,” *New York Times*, May 20, 2005. http://www.nytimes.com/2005/05/20/world/asia/in-us-report-brutal-details-of-2-afghan-inmates-deaths.html?_r=0 Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, *Committee Study of the Central Intelligence Agency Detention and Interrogation Program*, December 2012. http://gia.guim.co.uk/2014/12/torture-report-doc/torture_report.pdf. See also “How the CIA Tried to ‘Break’ Prisoners in ‘The Salt Pit,’” *NBC News*, December 9, 2014, <http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/cia-torture-report/how-cia-tried-break-prisoners-salt-pit-n264951>.
- 24 See Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, *Committee Study of the Central Intelligence Agency’s Detention and Interrogation Program*, December 3, 2014, http://www.feinstein.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/files/serve?File_id=7c85429a-ec38-4bb5-968f-289799bf6d0e&SK=D500C4EBC500E1D256BA519211895909; The Constitution Project, *Report on The Constitution Project’s Task Force on Detainee Treatment*, 2013, <http://detaineeataskforce.org/read/files/assets/common/downloads/The%20Report%20of%20The%20Constitution%20Project.pdf>; Amnesty International USA, *Out of Sight, Out of Mind, Out of Court? The Right of Bagram Detainees to Judicial Review*, February 18, 2009, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/AMR51/021/2009/en/>; Human Rights Watch, *Afghanistan: Killing and Torture by U.S. Forces Predate Abu Ghraib*, May 20, 2005, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2005/05/20/afghanistan-killing-and-torture-us-predate-abu-ghraib>.
- 25 Open Society Foundations and The Liaison Office: *The Cost of Kill/Capture: Impact of Night Raids Surge on Afghan Civilians*, September 19, 2011, <https://www>.

- opensocietyfoundations.org/publications/cost-killcapture-impact-night-raid-surge-afghan-civilians; Open Society Foundations, *Strangers at the Door: Night Raids by International Forces Lose Afghan Hearts and Minds*, February 23, 2010, <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/reports/strangers-door-night-raids-international-forces-lose-hearts-and-minds-afghans>. See also Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC): *From Hope to Fear: An Afghan Perspective on Operations of Pro-Government Forces in Afghanistan*, December 2008, p. 21, http://www.aihrc.org.af/media/files/Research%20Reports/english/Eng_Pro_G_2.pdf; UNAMA, *Annual Report 2008*, p. 18-20; Open Society Foundations and the Liaison Office: “The Cost of Kill/Capture: Impact of Night Raids Surge on Afghan Civilians”; Open Society Foundations: *Strangers at the Door: Night Raids by International Forces Lose Afghan Hearts and Minds*; *Center for Civilians in Conflict (CIVIC)*, *Losing the People: The Costs and Consequences of Civilian Suffering in Afghanistan*, February 18, 2009, p. 12, <http://civiliansinconflict.org/resources/pub/losing-the-people>; Nicolas Kulish, Christopher Drew, and Matthew Rosenberg, “Navy SEALs, A Beating Death, and Claims of a Cover Up,” *New York Times*, 17 December 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/17/world/asia/navy-seal-team-2-afghanistan-beating-death.html?action=click&pgtype=Homepage&clickSource=story-heading&module=span-ab-top-region®ion=top-news&WT.nav=topnews&utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=New%20Campaign&utm_term=%2ASituation%20Report&r=0.
- 26 In May 2006, one such accident in Kabul kicked off riots with “death to America” among the many slogans. See Elizabeth Rubin, “Karzai in His Labyrinth,” *New York Times Magazine*, August 4, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/09/magazine/09Karzai-t.html?r=0>.
- 27 NATO, “ISAF Commander Issues Driving Directive and Theatre Driving Principles” August 31, 2009, <http://www.nato.int/isaf/docu/pressreleases/2009/08/pr090831-651.html>.
- 28 Mark Sedra, et al, “Confronting Afghanistan’s Security Dilemma: Reforming the Security Sector,” Bonn International Center for Conversion, Brief 28, Kabul, 2003, p. 8-44; Human Rights Watch, *All Our Hopes Are Crushed: Violence and Repression in Western Afghanistan*, November 2002. For more on the demobilization efforts, see Deedee Derksen: “The Politics of Disarmament and Rearmament in Afghanistan,” *United States Institute of Peace*, May 20, 2015, <http://www.usip.org/publications/2015/05/20/the-politics-of-disarmament-and-rearmament-in-afghanistan>.
- 29 Interview with former UN official, January 13, 2016. Interview with Anand Gopal February 19, 2016, New York.
- 30 Deedee Dirksen, *Non-State Security Providers and State Formation in Afghanistan*, Centre for Security and Governance, March 2016, http://www.secgovcentre.org/files/www/CSG_Paper_3_-_NSSPs_in_Afghanistan.pdf.
- 31 Mattieu Aikins, “The Bidding War—How a Young Contractor Became Spectacularly Rich,” March 6, 2016, *The New Yorker*. <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/03/07/the-man-who-made-millions-off-the-afghan-war>. See also “Warlord, Inc. Extortion and Corruption Along the U.S. Supply Chain in Afghanistan,” Report of the Majority Staff Rep. John F. Tierney, Chair Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs Committee on Oversight and Government Reform U.S. House of Representatives, June 2010, http://www.cbsnews.com/htdocs/pdf/HNT_Report.pdf. Sarah Chayes, *Thieves of State: Why Corruption Threatens Global Security*, New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2015. See also Mattieu Aikins, “Contracting the Commanders: Transition and the Political Economy of Afghanistan’s Private Security Industry,” October 2012, Center of International Cooperation. <https://www.ciaonet.org/attachments/21916/uploads>.
- 32 U.S. Department of Defense, “General McChrystal’s Initial Assessment Report of the Situation in Afghanistan,” August 2009, p. 2-3 – 2-11, <http://www.cfr.org/afghanistan/mcchrystals-initial-assessment-report-situation-afghanistan-august-2009/p20241>.
- 33 This includes but is not exclusive to former Taliban who returned to the insurgency, see Anand Gopal’s list of former Talibs citing the behavior of U.S. or Afghan forces as a reason to rejoin, in *The Battle for Afghanistan—Militancy and Conflict in Kandahar*, page 10, New America Foundation, 2010. Ibid; Interview with Anand Gopal February 19, 2016; Interview with Michael Semple via Skype, September 23, 2015; phone interviews with Matthew Waldman, October 10, 2015, Beirut; Bette Dam, September 11, 2015, New York.
- 34 Matt Pottinger, Michael T. Flynn, and Paul D. Batchelor: *Fixing Intel: A Blueprint for Making Intelligence Relevant in Afghanistan*, Center for a New American Security, January 4, 2010, <http://www.cnas.org/publications/working-papers/fixing-intel-a-blueprint-for-making-intelligence-relevant-in-afghanistan#.Vqt2LMeJqhg>.
- 35 As Jonathan Shroden points out in a critique of operations assessments in Afghanistan, there was a failure to gather, analyze, and fuse information “on the activities of enemy (“red”), civilian (“white”), and friendly (“blue”) forces..” with intelligence agencies focused on red, and operations analysts focused on blue forces: “There is no entity that currently specializes in fusing and analyzing information across the red, white, and blue spectrum.” Jonathan Schroden: “Why Operations Assessments Fail—It’s Not Just the Metrics,” Autumn 2011, *Naval War College Review*, p. 98, <https://www.usnwc.edu/getattachment/6ed0e5cd-621f-44c3-b40d-913cad7e8c48/Why-Operations-Assessments-Fail--It-s-Not-Just-the.aspx>.
- 36 Interview with Candace Rondeaux, July 13, 2015, Washington, D.C.
- 37 Interview with Ambassador Doug Lute, July 20, 2015, Brussels.
- 38 Interview with Dr. Larry Lewis, July 15, 2015, Washington, D.C.
- 39 Interview with Lt Gen Michael Flynn, October 29, 2015, Washington, D.C.
- 40 Interview with former Taliban representative to the United Nation, Abdul Hakim Mujahid, June 6, 2015, Kabul; interview with Michael Semple, September 23, 2015, London; interview with Anand Gopal, February 19, 2016. Gopal gives the example of Haji Burget Khan, a respected elder of the Ishaqzai tribe, whom Gopal describes as a pragmatist, who was targeted by the United States due to encouragement from Gul Agha Sherzai. See Anand Gopal: *No Good Men Among the Living: America, the Taliban, and*

- the War through Afghan Eyes*, New York: Metropolitan Books, 2014, chapter V for Haji Burget Khan; Sarah Chayes: *The Punishment of Virtue: Inside Afghanistan After the Taliban*, New York: Penguin Press, 2006; Human Rights Watch, "Today We Shall All Die" *Afghanistan's Strongmen and the Legacy of Impunity*, March 3, 2015, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2015/03/03/today-we-shall-all-die/afghanistans-strongmen-and-legacy-impunity>; Deedee Derksen: *The Politics of Disarmament and Rearmament in Afghanistan*, United States Institute of Peace, May 20, 2015, pp. 29-31, <http://www.usip.org/publications/2015/05/20/the-politics-of-disarmament-and-rearmament-in-afghanistan>. Interviews with Matthew Waldman, October 10, 2015, Beirut; Bette Dam, September 11, 2015, New York; Antonio Giustozzi, May 18, 2015, London; Michael Semple via Skype, September 23, 2015; David Sedney, July 15, 2015; Washington DC. James Dobbins and Carter Malkasian, "Time to Negotiate in Afghanistan: How to Talk to the Taliban," *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2015.
- 41 James Dobbins and Carter Malkasian, "Time to Negotiate in Afghanistan: How to Talk to the Taliban," *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2015; Interview with Bette Dam, September 11, 2015, New York.
- 42 Robert L. Grenier, *88 Days to Kandahar: A CIA Diary*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 2015.
- 43 Interview with Michael Semple, September, 23, 2015, London.
- 44 Interviews with former senior U.S. government official working on Afghanistan, July 13, 2015, Washington, D.C., Michael Flynn, October 29, 2015, Washington, D.C., Michele Flournoy, July 14, 2015. See also Anand Gopal: *No Good Men Among the Living: America, the Taliban, and the War through Afghan Eyes*, New York: Metropolitan Books, 2014.
- 45 Interviews with senior UN Official, July 13, 2015, and former senior U.S. government official working on Afghanistan, July 13, 2015, Washington, D.C.
- 46 Interview with Ambassador Ronald Neumann, July 13, 2015, Washington, D.C.
- 47 Interview with David Sedney, July 15, 2015, Washington, D.C.; see also interview with former Deputy Commander ISAF, August 25, 2015, London.
- 48 Interview with analyst, January 13, 2016. Interview with Anand Gopal, New York, February 19, 2016. See also Brian Glyn Williams: "Afghanistan's Heart of Darkness-Fighting the Taliban in Kunar Province" *Combating Terrorism Center*, West Point, November 15, 2008. <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/afghanistan%E2%80%99s-heart-of-darkness-fighting-the-taliban-in-kunar-province>. Antonio Giustozzi: *Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop: The Neo-Taliban Insurgency in Afghanistan*, Columbia University Press, 2008, pp. 71-72. See also Nancy Youssef, "Where's Pentagon 'terrorism suspect'? Talking to Karzai," McClatchy, July 7 2009. <http://www.mcclatchydc.com/news/politics-government/article24545041.html>.
- 49 Jason Lyall, Graeme Blair, Kosuke Imai, "Explaining Support for Combatants during Wartime: A Survey Experiment in Afghanistan," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 107, No. 4, November 2013. Sebastian Schutte, "Violence and Civilian Loyalties: Evidence from Afghanistan," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, January 2016, pp. 1-31. See also Jason Lyall, *Bombing to Lose? Airpower, Civilian Casualties, and the Dynamics of Violence in Counterinsurgency Wars*, Yale University, March 27, 2015, pp. 23-28, http://www.du.edu/korbel/sie/media/documents/research_seminar_papers/lyall-airstrikes-apr2015.pdf. Luke N. Condra, Joseph H. Felter, Radha K. Iyengar, and Jacob N. Shapiro, *The Effect of Civilian Casualties in Afghanistan and Iraq*, NBER Working Paper, July 2010, <http://www.nber.org/papers/w16152>.
- 50 Jason Lyall, Graeme Blair, Kosuke Imai, "Explaining Support for Combatants during Wartime: A Survey Experiment in Afghanistan." *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 107, No. 4, November 2013, pp. 679-705.
- 51 Luke N. Condra, Joseph H. Felter, Radha K. Iyengar, and Jacob N. Shapiro, "The Effect of Civilian Casualties in Afghanistan and Iraq," NBER Working Paper, July 2010. See also Sebastian Schutte, "Violence and Civilian Loyalties: Evidence from Afghanistan," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, January 2016.
- 52 Jason Lyall, *Bombing to Lose? Airpower, Civilian Casualties, and the Dynamics of Violence in Counterinsurgency Wars*, Yale University, March 27, 2015, pp. 1, 2, 23-28. For a broader survey of 45 cases in which a state's use of indiscriminate violence provoked greater insurgent violence, see Stathis Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006. Alexander Downes, on the other hand, cites the Boer War 1899-1902 as an example that indiscriminate violence can be successful against a small, geographically isolated insurgent group (Alexander Downes, *Targeting Civilians in War*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008). An earlier study by Lyall of indiscriminate state bombing in Chechnya has the opposite finding, though the context is quite different; where indiscriminate state violence causes mass displacement or the destruction of property which in turn destroys an insurgency's financial base, or disrupts insurgent logistical ability, and loses public support for the insurgency which is blamed for the state excess. Lyall also notes that his findings are contingent on the nature of the insurgent organization (p. 338) See Lyall, "Does Indiscriminate Violence Incite Insurgent Attacks? Evidence from Chechnya" *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 53, No. 3, June 2009, pp. 331-362. Article on file, available at JSTOR. Schutte (above, p. 2) argues that a wider temporal and geographic scope in the Chechnya case lend more support to the alienation rather than suppressive effect of indiscriminate violence.
- 53 International Crisis Group, *Taliban Propaganda: Winning the War of Words?*, July, 24, 2008, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/asia/south-asia/afghanistan/158-taliban-propaganda-winning-the-war-of-words.aspx>. See also Taliban website, "Shahamat-english," <http://shahamat-english.com>.
- 54 Interview with Michelè A. Flournoy, former undersecretary of defense for policy (2009-2011), July 14, 2015, Washington, D.C.
- 55 Interview with Lieutenant General David Barno, in Christopher N. Koontz, ed., *Enduring Voices: Oral Histories of the U.S. Army Experience in Afghanistan, 2003-2005*, Washington, D.C.: Center for Military History, 2009, pp. 89-90, http://www.history.army.mil/html/books/enduring-voices/CMH_70-112-1.pdf.

- 56 *Afghanistan in 2009: A Survey of the Afghan People*, The Asia Foundation, p. 20; see also ABC News/BBC/ARD/ Washington Post poll, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/06_12_10_afghanpoll.pdf.
- 57 Ibid.
- 58 See Mark Sedra, et al, "Confronting Afghanistan's Security Dilemma," Bonn International Center for Conversion. Brief 28. Kabul, 2003; Human Rights Watch, *All Our Hopes Are Crushed: Violence and Repression in Western Afghanistan*, November 2002, <https://www.hrw.org/reports/2002/afghan3/>. Anand Gopal, *No Good Men Among the Living*, 2014; Sarah Chayes, *The Punishment of Virtue: Inside Afghanistan After the Taliban*, 2006. See also Anand Gopal's list of former Talibs citing the behavior of U.S. or Afghan forces as a reason to rejoin, in *The Battle for Afghanistan— Militancy and Conflict in Kandahar*, page 10, New America Foundation, 2010. Interview with Michael Semple, September, 23, 2015, London. Interviews with Matthew Waldman, October 10, 2015, Beirut; Bette Dam, September 11, 2015, New York. Ibid Derksen 2016.
- 59 Interview with analyst, January 13, 2016
- 60 Interview with Masoom Stanekzai, June 7, 2015, Kabul.
- 61 Interview with General Petraeus, July 31, 2015, Washington, D.C.
- 62 Stanley A. McChrystal, *My Share of the Task: A Memoir*, New York: Penguin Books, 2013, p. 311; interview with former deputy commander ISAF, August 25, 2015, London.
- 63 Interview with Afghan elder, August 2009, Afghanistan.
- 64 Sebastian Schutte, "Violence and Civilian Loyalties: Evidence from Afghanistan," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, January 2016, pp. 18-19.
- 65 Interview with Matt Waldman, October 10, 2015, Beirut.
- 66 Interview with Michèle Flournoy, July 14, 2015, Washington, D.C.
- 67 Elizabeth Rubin, "Karzai in His Labyrinth," *New York Times Magazine*, 4 August 2009, http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/09/magazine/09Karzai-t.html?_r=0; Congress, Senate, Committee on Armed Services, *Hearing to Receive Testimony on the Challenges Facing the Department of Defense*, 111th Cong., 1st sess., 27 January 2009, p. 21; *General McChrystal's Initial Assessment of the Situation in Afghanistan*, August 2009, p. 2-10; Gates, *Duty*, p. 201-2.
- 68 Interview with General Petraeus, July 31, 2015, Washington, D.C.
- 69 Interview with Mohammad Omar Daudzai, June 6, 2015, Kabul. Interview with Ambassador Lute, Ibid. Interview with Michèle Flournoy, Ibid. Interview with Ambassador Ronald Neumann, July 13, 2015, Washington, D.C. Interview with Georgette Gagnon, February 23, 2016, New York.
- 70 Interview with Hamid Karzai, Kabul, June 8, 2015. Interview with Mohammad Omar Daudzai, June 6, 2015, Kabul; interview with Ambassador Lute, Ibid; interview with Michèle Flournoy, Ibid; interview with Ambassador Ronald Neumann, July 13, 2015, Washington, D.C.
- 71 Interview with General Petraeus, July 31, 2015, Washington, D.C.
- 72 Interview with David Sedney, Washington, D.C., July 15, 2015.
- 73 Interview with former president of Afghanistan, Hamid Karzai, June 8, 2015, Kabul.
- 74 *General McChrystal's Initial Assessment of the Situation in Afghanistan*, August 2009, pp. 2-10.
- 75 External and internal reports including 2010 Joint Civilian Casualty Study by Sarah Sewall and Larry Lewis were critical to improvements in U.S. and ISAF reforms. See also Dr. Larry Lewis, *Improving Lethal Action: Learning and Adapting in U.S. Counter-Terrorism Operations*, Center for Naval Analysis, September 2014, https://www.cna.org/CNA_files/PDF/COP-2014-U-008746-Final.pdf.
- 76 ISAF, "Tactical Directive," July 6, 2009, http://www.nato.int/isaf/docu/official_texts/Tactical_Directive_090706.pdf.
- 77 CIVIC, "Civilian Harm Tracking: Analysis of ISAF Efforts in Afghanistan," May 19, 2014, p. 6, <http://civiliansinconflict.org/resources/pub/ISAF-civilian-harm-tracking>.
- 78 ISAF, "Tactical Directive," November 30, 2011 [http://www.rs.nato.int/images/docs/20111105%20nuc%20tactical%20directive%20revision%204%20\(releaseable%20version\)%20r.pdf](http://www.rs.nato.int/images/docs/20111105%20nuc%20tactical%20directive%20revision%204%20(releaseable%20version)%20r.pdf); ISAF, "Tactical Directive," December 1, 2011, [http://www.rs.nato.int/images/docs/20111105%20nuc%20night%20operations%20tactical%20directive%20\(releaseable%20version\)%20r.pdf](http://www.rs.nato.int/images/docs/20111105%20nuc%20night%20operations%20tactical%20directive%20(releaseable%20version)%20r.pdf); see also Travis J. Tritten, "Dunford: Engagement Rules Not Threatening Troops in Afghanistan," *Stars and Stripes*, February 25, 2016.
- 79 *General McChrystal's Initial Assessment of the Situation in Afghanistan*, August 2009, E-1.
- 80 See CIVIC, "Civilian Harm Tracking: Analysis of ISAF Efforts in Afghanistan," May 19, 2014, pp. 3-8.
- 81 Interviews with Dr. Larry Lewis, Ibid.
- 82 Dr. Larry Lewis, "Reducing and Mitigating Civilian Casualties: Enduring Lessons," April 12, 2013, JCOA, www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA579024.
- 83 Matt Pottinger, Michael T. Flynn, and Paul D. Batchelor, *Fixing Intel: A Blueprint for Making Intelligence Relevant in Afghanistan*, Center for a New American Security, January 4, 2010, <http://www.cnas.org/publications/working-papers/fixing-intel-a-blueprint-for-making-intelligence-relevant-in-afghanistan#.Vqt2LMeJqhg>.
- 84 The UN's civilian casualty monitoring and advocacy was key, as well as work by CIVIC, Human Rights Watch, and others. See for example Human Rights Watch, *Troops in Contact: Airstrikes and Civilian Deaths in Afghanistan*, September 2008, <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2008/09/08/troops-contact-0>; CIVIC, *Losing the People: The Costs and Consequences of Civilian Suffering in Afghanistan*, February 2009, <http://civiliansinconflict.org/resources/pub/losing-the-people>; CIVIC, *Addressing Civilian Harm in Afghanistan*, June 2010, <http://civiliansinconflict.org/resources/pub/addressing-civilian-harm-in-afghanistan>; Oxfam, *Caught in the Conflict: Civilians and the International Security Strategy in Afghanistan*, April 2009, <https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/bn-nowhere-to-turn-afghanistan-191110-en.pdf>; Oxfam, *Nowhere to Turn: Failure to Protect Civilians in Afghanistan*, November 2010, <https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/bn-nowhere-to-turn-afghanistan-191110-en.pdf>;

- 85 NATO, "NATO Nations Approve Civilian Casualty Guidelines," August 2010, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_65114.htm?selectedLocale=en; CIVIC, *Addressing Civilian Harm in Afghanistan: Policies & Practices of International Forces*, June 15, 2010; See also International Security Assistance Force, *The ISAF Civilian Casualty Avoidance and Mitigation Framework: Sustaining Best Practices*, May 30, 2014, and NATO, *Protection of Civilians: How ISAF Reduced Civilian Casualties*, NATO Joint Analysis & Lessons Learned Centre, June 1, 2015, http://www.jallc.nato.int/products/docs/factsheet_Protection_of_Civilians_CIVCAS.pdf. Center for Civilians in Conflict: *Civilian Harm Tracking: Analysis of ISAF Efforts in Afghanistan*, May 19, 2014.
- 86 Interview with former President Hamid Karzai, June 8, 2015, Kabul; see also Jason Lyall, Graeme Blair and Kosuke Imai, "Explaining Support for Combatants during Wartime: A Survey Experiment in Afghanistan," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 107, No. 4, November 2013, 693-4; Office of the Inspector General, *Audit of USAID/Afghanistan's Afghan Civilian Assistance Program II*, June 2014, http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PBAAA475.pdf.
- 87 Lyall, et al, *Explaining Support for Combatants*, 693-4. Interview with May Jeong, Kabul, December 2015.
- 88 NATO, *Protection of Civilians: How ISAF Reduced Civilian Casualties*, NATO Joint Analysis & Lessons Learned Centre, June 1, 2015. UNAMA and ISAF data on civilian casualties often differs. Because UNAMA is a third-party and have access to a wider array of local sources, this report will use their data, except where noted. UNAMA data for a specific year sometimes changes on subsequent reports. We will use the numbers from the reporting year, except where noted. UNAMA began to track civilian deaths attributed to Afghan Forces in 2011; UNAMA notes in the 2011 Annual Report, "With the transition of security responsibility from international military forces to ANSF, UNAMA's monitoring of civilian casualties caused by Pro-Government Forces, particularly in the second half of 2011, included an enhanced focus on actions by ANSF." Although this also highlights the challenge distinguishing harm caused by international and Afghan forces.
- 89 UNAMA, *Annual Report 2009*; UNAMA, *Annual Report, 2013*; ISAF White Paper: *The ISAF Civilian Casualty Avoidance and Mitigation Framework: Sustaining Best Practices*, May 30, 2014.
- 90 Ibid, UNAMA, *Annual Report 2009* and *Annual Report 2013*.
- 91 Ibid, NATO, *Protection of Civilians: How ISAF Reduced Civilian Casualties*, 2015.
- 92 Data on ISAF troop levels from ISAF placemats. Data on civilian deaths from UNAMA Annual Reports. Note: UNAMA Annual Report 2011 attributes total of 410 civilian deaths to Pro-Government Forces (including international military forces and Afghanistan forces, as well as Afghan Local Police), however 41 civilian deaths were attributed to operations and activities by Afghan Forces, thus the graph demonstrates 369 civilian deaths by ISAF. In 2012, UNAMA attributed 316 civilian deaths to Pro-Government Forces, whereas 33 civilian deaths were attributed to Afghan forces and 24 civilian deaths to the ALP. The graph thus shows 259 civilian deaths attributed to international forces.
- 93 NATO, *Protection of Civilians: How ISAF Reduced Civilian Casualties*, NATO Joint Analysis & Lessons Learned Centre, June 1, 2015.
- 94 Data from UNAMA annual reports. See also Micah Zenko, "The Increasing Prevalence of Civilian Casualties From Air Strikes in Afghanistan," Council on Foreign Relations, October 5, 2015, <http://blogs.cfr.org/zenko/2015/10/05/the-increasing-prevalence-of-civilian-casualties-from-air-strikes-in-afghanistan/>.
- 95 Eid statements from 2009 include language on protecting civilians. See Taliban website <http://shahamat-english.com/category/statements/>. The UNAMA 2013 and 2014 annual reports note regular statements from the Taliban regarding civilian protection. See also Alex Strick van Linschoten Felix Kuehn, "Lessons Learnt Islamic, Independent, Perfect and Strong;" "Parsing the Taliban's Strategic Intentions, 2001-2011," Arts and Humanities Research Council, Public Policy Series No 3, January 2012; Timothy D. Soper, "A Message of Felicitation from the Esteemed Amir-Ul-Momineen on the Occasion of Eid: An Analysis of Taliban Eid al-Adha and Eid al-Fitr Statements from 2006 to 2012," *Small Wars Journal*, June 13, 2013; Stanley A. McChrystal: *My Share of the Task: A Memoir*, New York: Penguin Books, 2013, pp. 313-315; "Taliban Issues Code of Conduct," Al Jazeera, July 28, 2009, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/asia/2009/07/20097278348124813.html>; *Understanding Afghan Culture*, Department of National Security Affairs, Naval Postgraduate School, August 6, 2009, <https://info.publicintelligence.net/Layeha.pdf>; Dean Nelson, "Taliban Issues 'Code of Conduct' to Fighters in Afghanistan," *The Telegraph*, July 30, 2009, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/afghanistan/5932290/Taliban-issues-Code-of-Conduct-to-fighters-in-Afghanistan.html>.
- 96 Interviews with Michael Semple via Skype, September 23, 2015, and Antonio Giustozzi, May 18, 2014, London. Civilian deaths attributed to antigovernment forces doubled from 2008 to 2011, while enemy initiated attacks increased five-fold. This could reflect efforts to avoid civilian harm, in response to community pressure, or pressure from the Afghan media or government, or long-term advocacy by the UN and others. It could also relate to a shift in military priorities and targets caused by the influx of international military during the "surge" period.
- 97 Interview with Georgette Gagnon, February 23, 2016, New York.; Interview with Eckart Schiewek, July 13, 2015, Washington, D.C.
- 98 Dan Lamothe, "Abandoned: Report Blames Army Leaders for Denying Aid to Training Team," *Marine Corps Times*, March 1, 2010, <http://archive.marinecorpstimes.com/article/20100303/NEWS/3030313/Report-Army-denied-aid-to-team-under-fire>. See also Executive Summary of the 15-6 Investigation, 2009, <https://archive.org/details/GanjgallInvestigation-15Sep11>.
- 99 Rowan Scarborough wrote in the *Washington Times* that "The September 2009 battle also stands as a stark example of the effects the restrictive rules of engagement had on troops under fire, fighting for their lives." Rowan Scarborough, "Shades of Vietnam: Spike in U.S. Troop Deaths Tied to Stricter Rules of Engagement," *Washington Times*, December 5, 2013, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2013/dec/5/increase-in-battlefield-deaths-linked-to-new-rules/?page=all>. See also David Zucchino,

- "As U.S. Deaths in Afghanistan Rise, Military Families Grow Critical," *LA Times*, September 2, 2010, <http://articles.latimes.com/2010/sep/02/nation/la-na-casualties-20100902>.
- 100 C. J. Chivers, "General Faces Unease Among His Own Troops, Too," *New York Times*, June 22, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/23/world/asia/23troops.html>. Rowan Scarborough, "Shades of Vietnam: Spike in U.S. Troop Deaths Tied to Stricter Rules of Engagement," *Washington Times*, December 5, 2013, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2013/dec/5/increase-in-battlefield-deaths-linked-to-new-rules/?page=all>; see also Charles J. Dunlap, "Could Airstrikes Save Lives in Afghanistan?" *Washington Post*, October 22, 2010, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/10/21/AR2010102105936.html>. Thomas Harding, "'Courageous Restraint' Putting Troops Lives at Risk," *The Telegraph*, July 6, 2010, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/afghanistan/7874950/Courageous-restraint-putting-troops-lives-at-risk.htm>; Lt. Gen. Thomas McInerney, "Everyone Must Go, If We Want to Win In Afghanistan," *Fox News Opinion*, June 29, 2010 <http://www.foxnews.com/opinion/2010/06/29/lt-gen-tom-mcinerney-gen-petraeus-afghanistan-obama-eikenberry-holbrooke-rules.html>.
- 101 Numbers grew from 135 in 2008 to 277 in 2009 and 465 in 2010, before declining to 371 in 2011. Ian S. Livingston and Michael O'Hanlon: "Afghanistan Index," Brookings Institute, May 16, 2012, <http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Programs/foreign-policy/afghanistan-index/index20120516.pdf>;
- 102 See chart borrowed from Ian S. Livingston and Michael O'Hanlon, "Afghanistan Index," Brookings Institution, May 16, 2012, p. 10. [icasualties.org](http://icasualties.org/OEF/Fatalities.aspx), <http://icasualties.org/OEF/Fatalities.aspx>. Tom Vanden Brook, "Afghan Insurgents Match Surge with More IEDs," *USA Today*, January 10, 2011, http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/military/2011-01-10-ieds10_ST_N.htm; Craig Whitlock, "Number of U.S. Casualties from Roadside Bombs in Afghanistan Skyrocketed from 2009 to 2010," *Washington Post*, January 25, 2011, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2011/01/25/AR2011012506691.html>.
- 103 In 2011 IED fatalities declined slightly, totaling 192 of 367 U.S. hostile fire fatalities (51.75%), see <http://www.icasualties.org/OEF/ByMonth.aspx>; Ian S. Livingston and Michael O'Hanlon, "Afghanistan Index", Brookings Institution, May 16, 2012.
- 104 Chart courtesy of Dr. Larry Lewis. U.S. casualty data from the Defense Manpower Data Center; U.S. force levels in Afghanistan from Brookings Afghanistan Index, Ian S. Livingston and Michael O'Hanlon, Brookings Institute, August 27 2013.
- 105 The effect of the variation can be accounted for by normalizing the number of non-IED related deaths for the size of the force in Afghanistan, providing a rate of U.S. deaths per thousand troops deployed.
- 106 U.S. casualty data from the Defense Manpower Data Center; U.S. force levels in Afghanistan from Ian S. Livingston and Michael O'Hanlon, "Afghanistan Index," Brookings Institute, August 27, 2013, <http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Programs/foreign-policy/afghanistan-index/index20130827.pdf?la=en>. "Other hostile fire" primarily denotes ground engagements. According to Brookings, hostile fire engagements (not including aircraft fatalities) accounted for 33 (50.7%) killed in action in 2006, 35 (42%) in 2007, 36 (27%) in 2008, 91 (34%) in 2009, 164 (37.3%) in 2010, and 132 (36%) of 367 killed in action in 2011.
- 107 Taking total fatalities in ground engagements per average number of soldiers deployed per year, the numbers are .0015 (2006), .0014 (2007), .0012 (2008), .0017 (2009), .0015 (2010), and .0014 in 2011. Data is from Brookings *Afghanistan Index*, Ian S. Livingston and Michael O'Hanlon, Brookings Institute, August 27 2013.
- 108 Gates, *Duty*, 491. Elisabeth Bumiller, "Petraeus Pledges Look at Strikes in Afghanistan," *New York Times*, June 29, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/30/world/asia/30petraeus.html>. David Zucchino, "As U.S. Deaths in Afghanistan Rise, Military Families Grow Critical," *Los Angeles Times*, September 2, 2010; interview with General Petraeus, July 31, 2015, Washington, D.C. Thomas Harding, "Britain's Top General in Afghanistan Admits 'Courageous Restraint' Must Change," *The Telegraph*, July 11, 2010. This statement was made after General Petraeus promised, upon assuming command of ISAF, to review the Tactical Directive.
- 109 Interview with General Petraeus, July 31, 2015, Washington, D.C.
- 110 Interview with General Petraeus, July 31, 2015, Washington, D.C. See also ISAF, "Tactical Directive," August 4, 2010, <http://www.rs.nato.int/article/isaf-releases/general-petraeus-issues-updated-tactical-directive-emphasizes-disciplined-use-of-force.html>; and http://www.nato.int/isaf/docu/official_texts/Tactical_Directive_090706.pdf. See also Christopher D. Amore, "Rules of Engagement: Balancing the (Inherent) Right and Obligation of Self-Defense with the Prevention of Civilian Casualties," *National Security Law Journal* 1.1 (2013): 39-76, https://www.nslj.org/pdfs/NSLJ_Vol1_Iss1_Spring2013_Amore_39-76.pdf.
- 111 Interview with General Petraeus, July 31, 2015, Washington, D.C.; Gates, *Duty*, 491.
- 112 Interview with General John Allen, May 10, 2016, Washington, D.C.
- 113 For more on moral injury see Nancy Sherman, *Afterwar: Healing the Moral Wounds of Our Soldiers*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2015; Shira Maguen and Brett Litz, "Moral Injury in the Context of War", National Center for PTSD, Department of Veterans Affairs, http://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/co-occurring/moral_injury_at_war.asp; Jonathan Shay: *Odysseus in America: Combat Trauma and the Trials of Homecoming*, New York: Scribner, 2010; Camillo Mac Bica and Claude AnShin Thomas, *Beyond PTSD: The Moral Casualties of War*, Gnosis Press, 2016.
- 114 H.R. McMaster, "Moral, Ethical, and Psychological Preparation of Soldiers and Units for Combat," *Naval War College Review* (64:1) Winter 2011 pp. 7-19, <http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a536633.pdf>.
- 115 Rowan Scarborough, "Shades of Vietnam: Spike in U.S. Troop Deaths Tied to Stricter Rules of Engagement," *Washington Times*, December 5, 2013. See also Daniel P. Bolger, *Why We Lost: A General's Inside Account of the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars*, New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2014, p. 308; Bing West, *One Million Steps: A Marine Platoon at War*, New York: Random House, pp. 28-29.

- 116 Ian S. Livingston and Michael O'Hanlon, "Afghanistan Index," Brookings Institute, May 16, 2012; Open Society Foundations and The Liaison Office: *The Cost of Kill/Capture: Impact of Night Raids Surge on Afghan Civilians*, September 19, 2011.
- 117 Interview with Michael Semple, September 23, 2015, London.
- 118 Interviews with David Sedney, Vikram Singh, Terry Wolff. One former DoD official estimated raids that killed or captured district level leaders or higher at well below 5 percent. See also Felix Kuehn and Alex Strick van Linschoten, *A Knock at the Door: 22 Months of ISAF Press Releases*, October 12, 2011, <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/publication/aan-papers/a-knock-on-the-door-22-months-of-isaf-press-releases/>.
- 119 Mark Mazzetti, Nicholas Kulish, Christopher Drew, Serge F. Kovaleski, Sean D. Naylor, and John Ismay, "SEAL Team 6: A Secret History of Quiet Killings and Blurred Lines," *New York Times*, June 6, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/07/world/asia/the-secret-history-of-seal-team-6.html>. See also Sean Naylor, *Relentless Strike: The Secret History of Joint Special Operations Command*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 2015, pp 351-376. Naylor notes "How much of that operational tempo was driven by military necessity, and how much by a desire just to post numbers for the sake of statistics, became 'a very controversial question across the [JSOC] Task Force,'" [noted a source in the Rangers] [some in JSOC believed the Rangers lacked tactical patience and hit questionable targets for the sake of generating high optempo]. "Others in the JSOC community were convinced that this approach created more enemies than it removed from the battlefield. 'We will lose because of it' [said a senior member of the Task Force's Team 6]." pp. 361-2.
- 120 *Afghanistan in 2011: A Survey of the Afghan People*, The Asia Foundation, October 2011, <https://asiafoundation.org/resources/pdfs/TAF2011AGSurvey.pdf>; *Afghanistan in 2012: A Survey of the Afghan People*, The Asia Foundation, October 2012, <https://asiafoundation.org/resources/pdfs/Surveybook2012web1.pdf>.
- 121 Charles J. Dunlap, Jr., "Lawfare Today...and Tomorrow," *International Law Studies*, U.S. Naval War College, 2011, p. 318, http://scholarship.law.duke.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3090&context=faculty_scholarship
- 122 *Report on Progress of Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan*, Report to Congress, Department of Defense, December 2012, p. 164, http://www.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/1230_Report_final.pdf.
- 123 Phone interview with Lieutenant General David A. Deptula, February 22, 2016. Deptula was the principal attack planner for the Desert Storm coalition air campaign in 1991, served as director of the Combined Air Operations Center in Afghanistan and served as the first deputy chief of staff for the Air Force Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance Headquarters. See also Richard Whittle, "How We Missed Mullah Omar," *Politico*, <http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2014/09/how-we-missed-mullah-omar-111026?paginate=false>; High Level Military Group, *Our Military Forces' Struggle Against Lawless, Media Savvy Terrorist Adversaries: A Comparative Study*, February 2016, <http://www.high-level-military-group.org/pdf/hlmg-lawless-media-savvy-terrorist-adversaries.pdf>. Christopher D. Amore "Rules of Engagement: Balancing the (Inherent Right and Obligation of Self-Defense with the Prevention of Civilian Casualties," *National Security Law Journal* 1.1 (2013): 39-76, https://www.nslj.org/pdfs/NSLJ_Vol1_Iss1_Spring2013_Amore_39-76.pdf.
- 124 Interview with Bill Monahan, July 29, 2015, Washington, D.C.
- 125 Interview with Former Deputy Commander ISAF, August 25, 2015, London.
- 126 Interview with Carlo Salter, CIVCAS Mitigation staff officer for NATO/Resolute Support HQ, December 12, 2015, Kabul.
- 127 Likewise, Taliban-inflicted civilian harm in government strongholds or areas where the government has greater local affinity is likely to strengthen local support for the Afghan government. See Lyall et al, "Explaining Support for Combatants during Wartime: A Survey Experiment in Afghanistan," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 107, No. 4, November 2013.
- 128 UNAMA, *Annual Report 2014*, p. 78.
- 129 UNAMA, *Annual Report on the Protection of Civilians 2015*, February 2016, p. 16, https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/poc_annual_report_2015_final_14_feb_2016.pdf.
- 130 "Pro-government forces caused 30 percent of all civilian casualties from ground engagements. Antigovernment elements caused 25 percent, while 44 percent resulted from ground engagements in which UNAMA could not determine the perpetrator... In addition, Pro-government forces caused 60 percent of all civilian casualties from the use of artillery, mortars, rockets, and grenades during ground engagements in 2015, compared to 32 percent by antigovernment elements and 6 percent in crossfire incidents. Cross-border shelling caused the remaining 2 percent." UNAMA, *Annual Report 2015*, p. 26, http://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/poc_annual_report_2015_final_14_feb_2016.pdf.
- 131 Dan Lamothe, "The U.S. Funded Afghan Air Force Is Growing. So Are the Civilian Casualties It Causes," *The Washington Post*, February 17, 2016, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2016/02/17/the-u-s-funded-afghan-air-force-is-growing-so-are-civilian-casualties-it-causes/>.
- 132 Preliminary figures by the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) are much closer to those of the United Nations than Resolute Support and the government. At this writing AIHRC annual report for 1394 (March 2015-March 2016) was pending.
- 133 UNAMA, *Annual Report 2013*, p. 8.
- 134 CIVIC, *Caring for their Own: A Stronger Response to Civilian Harm*, 2013, pp. 13-16, http://civiliansinconflict.org/uploads/files/publications/Afghan_Report_2013_smaller_final.pdf.
- 135 Interview with Georgette Gagnon, February 23, 2016, New York.
- 136 ANA initially admitted they had fired the rockets, but an inter-ministerial investigation team later concluded it was an IED blast (though they also rotated ANA

- personnel). UNAMA, *Annual Report 2015*, p. 36, http://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/poc_annual_report_2015_final_14_feb_2016.pdf.
- 137 Mujib Mashal, "Hospital Raid by Afghan Forces Said to Kill 3," *New York Times*, February 18, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/19/world/asia/hospital-raid-afghan-forces-nato-wardak-province.html?ref=asia&r=0&utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=New%20Campaign&utm_term=%2AAfPak%20Daily%20Brief
- 138 Conversations with Department of Defense officials, Washington, D.C., April 2016, and UN and former UN officials, March and April 2016. UNAMA notes the lack of ANSF accountability for incidents where civilians were harmed by an indiscriminate attack or forces failed to take sufficient precautions to prevent harm by the use of explosive weapons or indirect fire. UNAMA, *Annual Report 2015*.
- 139 On improved security see International Crisis Group, *The Future of the Afghan Local Police*, June 4, 2015, p. 9, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-asia/pakistan/268-the-future-of-the-afghan-local-police.pdf>. On harms see Human Rights Watch, *Just Don't Call It a Militia: Impunity, Militias, and the Afghan Local Police*, September 12, 2011, pp. 5-8, https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/afghanistan0911webwcover_0.pdf; UNAMA, *Annual Report 2014*, pp. 80-81; UNAMA, *Annual Report 2013*, pp. 51-53. An ICG report suggested that "an ALP member was statistically about as likely as an average ANSF member to kill or injure a civilian, though acknowledged that reporting is patchier in rural outposts, and the reduced international oversight may result in lower standards of accountability. International Crisis Group, *The Future of the Afghan Local Police*, 2015, i-ii, 8. Incidents of civilian casualties by ALP are around the same rate as regular forces.
- 140 Interviews with DoD officials, as above.
- 141 Interviews with UN and Resolute Support officials, April 2016, Kabul.
- 142 See Open Society Foundations, *Torture, Transfers, and Denial of Due Process: The Treatment of Conflict-Related Detainees in Afghanistan*, March 2012, <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/reports/torture-transfers-and-denial-due-process-treatment-conflict-related-detainees-afghanistan>; UNAMA, *Treatment of Conflict Related Detainees in Afghanistan*, October 2011, [https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/old_dnn/UNAMA/Documents/October10_%202011%20UNAMA Detention Full-Report ENG.pdf](https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/old_dnn/UNAMA/Documents/October10_%202011%20UNAMA%20Detention%20Full-Report%20ENG.pdf).
- 143 Ibid.
- 144 The U.S. State Department has noted the persistence of such human rights problems in Afghan security forces in its 2015 report, *Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2015: Afghanistan*, <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2015&dliid=252957>
- 145 One expert interviewed was aware of only one instance of a prosecution for abuse in custody. Interview with expert, Kabul, March 8, 2016. See also UNAMA, *Update on the Treatment of Conflict-Related Detainees in Afghan Custody: Accountability and Implementation of Presidential Decree* 129, February 2015, http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/AF/UNAMA_OHCHR_Detention_Report_Feb2015.pdf; Open Society Foundations, *Torture, Transfers, and Denial of Due Process: The Treatment of Conflict-Related Detainees in Afghanistan*, March 2012, <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/reports/torture-transfers-and-denial-due-process-treatment-conflict-related-detainees-afghanistan>; UNAMA, *Treatment of Conflict Related Detainees in Afghanistan*, October 2011, [https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/old_dnn/UNAMA/Documents/October10_%202011%20UNAMA Detention Full-Report ENG.pdf](https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/old_dnn/UNAMA/Documents/October10_%202011%20UNAMA%20Detention%20Full-Report%20ENG.pdf); Human Rights Watch, *Today We Shall Die*, February 2015, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2015/03/03/today-we-shall-all-die/afghanistans-strongmen-and-legacy-impunity>; Matthieu Aikins, "Our Man in Kandahar," *The Atlantic*, November 2011, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2011/11/our-man-in-kandahar/308653/>;
- 146 Interview with Georgette Gagnon, February 23, 2016, New York.
- 147 May Jeong, "Death from the Sky: Searching for Ground Truth in the Kunduz Hospital Bombing," *The Intercept*, April 28, 2016. On October 3, 2015, between approximately 2:00am and 3:00am, a U.S. military AC-130 gunship conducted a series of strikes on a Medicine Sans Frontier (MSF) hospital compound as part of joint U.S.-ANSF operations against Taliban forces in Kunduz city. UNAMA and MSF reported that at least 30 individuals were killed and 37 injured, all of whom should have been protected persons under international humanitarian law. The U.S. military's and UNAMA's investigation both found no evidence of fighting in the vicinity of the hospital compound at the time of the attack.
- 148 Tara Copp and Chard Garland, "16 Military Personnel Punished for Deadly Hospital Airstrike in Afghanistan," *Stars and Stripes*, April 29, 2016, <http://www.stripes.com/news/16-military-personnel-punished-for-deadly-hospital-airstrike-in-afghanistan-1.406788>. Ryan Devereaux and Cora Currier, "Pentagon Denies War Crimes Allegations in Kunduz Hospital Bombing," *The Intercept*, April 29, 2016, <https://theintercept.com/2016/04/29/pentagon-denies-war-crimes-allegations-in-kunduz-hospital-killings/>.
- 149 Rod Nordland, "U.S. General Says Kunduz Hospital Strike Was 'Avoidable,'" *New York Times*, November 25, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/26/world/asia/afghanistan-kunduz-hospital-airstrike.html>; "Department of Defense Press Briefing by General Campbell via Teleconference From Afghanistan," U.S. Department of Defense, November 25, 2015, <http://www.defense.gov/News/News-Transcripts/Transcript-View/Article/631359/department-of-defense-press-briefing-by-general-campbell-via-teleconference-fro>. According to U.S. military officials, the string of failures included: The aircrew lacked no-strike designations, which included the location of the MSF hospital, because it was deployed an hour earlier than planned in response to a reported troops-in-contact situation; electronic systems malfunction prevented sending/receiving email, electronic messages and transmission of video; degradation of sensors after aircrew diverted from normal orbit believing aircraft was targeted by a missile; coordinates entered into fire control system correlated to an open field, not NDS headquarters building, the intended target; aircrew visually identified largest, nearby building and failed to identify any signs of hospital's protected status; mid-attack, the aircraft grid

- location system correctly aligned with intended target NDS headquarters, yet aircrew continued to attack the visually identified compound.
- 150 CIVIC, *Addressing Civilian Casualties: An Implementation Plan for a Civilian Casualty Mitigation Team and Recommendations for the Government of Afghanistan*, October 2015, <http://civiliansinconflict.org/uploads/files/publications/ANDSFCCMTEExecSumm2015.pdf>.
- 151 Interview with General John Allen, May 10, 2016, Washington, D.C.
- 152 See Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, “Zeid Condemns Repeated Killing of Civilians in Yemen Airstrikes,” March 18, 2016. <http://ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=17251&LangID=E#sthash.n3ffrar5.dpuf>. Interview with Joana Cook, Yemen expert and PhD candidate at King’s College, London, March 27, 2016, “Saudi Arabia has inflicted widespread civilian harm in Yemen using American weapons, training, and support. This association, combined with what is perceived to be a myopic counterterrorism focus, has badly damaged U.S. credibility in the country. In the eyes of many Yemenis these problems have overshadowed the historical breadth and significance of U.S. government development aid, assistance and funding in Yemen.” See also Sarah Leah Whitson, “The US Is Quietly Helping Saudi Arabia Wage Devastating Aerial Campaign in Yemen,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 30, 2016, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/03/30/us-quietly-helping-saudi-arabia-wage-devastating-aerial-campaign-yemen>.
- 153 *Ibid.* For IDPs see Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Yemen Humanitarian Bulletin Issue 10*, April 2016. <http://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/yemen-humanitarian-bulletin-issue-10-issued-4-april-2016>.
- 154 Andrew Tligham, “U.S. Launches Aerial Refueling Mission in Yemen,” *Military Times*, April 8, 2015, <http://www.militarytimes.com/story/military/pentagon/2015/04/08/refueling-mission/25461213/>; Oriana Palwykm, “Remember the War in Yemen? The U.S. Air Force Is There,” *Airforce Times*, February 25, 2016. <http://www.airforcetimes.com/story/military/2016/02/25/remember-war-yemen-us-air-force-still-there/80935524/>. The United Kingdom’s Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) has also been involved in the U.S. engagement in Yemen. See “Britain’s Covert War in Yemen,” *Vice News*, April 6, 2016. <https://news.vice.com/article/britains-covert-war-in-yemen-a-vice-news-investigation>
- 155 U.S. Senator Chris Murphy (D-Conn.), ranking member of the Foreign Relations Subcommittee on the Near East, South Asia, Central Asia and Counterterrorism and Senator Rand Paul (R-Ky.), member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, have introduced legislation to try to halt sales. Senator Murphy argues “The more it drags on, the clearer it becomes that our military involvement on behalf of the Saudi-led coalition is prolonging human suffering in Yemen and aiding the very groups that are intent on attacking us.” at <http://www.murphy.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/murphy-paul-introduce-legislation-to-set-new-conditions-for-us-military-support-to-saudi-arabia->. See also Colum Lynch, “U.S. Support for Saudi Strikes in Yemen Raises War Crime Concerns,” *Foreign Policy*, October 15, 2015. http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/10/15/u-s-support-for-saudi-strikes-in-yemen-raises-war-crime-concerns/?wp_login_redirect=0.
- 156 Thomas Joscelyn, “AQAP Provides Social Services, Implements Sharia While Advancing in Southern Yemen,” *Long War Journal*, February 3, 2016. <http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2016/02/aqap-provides-social-services-implements-sharia-while-advancing-in-southern-yemen.php>; See Yara Bayoumy, Noah Browning and Mohammed Ghobari, “How Saudi Arabia’s War in Yemen Has Made al Qaeda Stronger—And Richer,” *Reuters*, April 7, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/yemen-aqap/>.
- 157 Bill Roggio, “US Military Strikes AQAP Training Camp in Yemen,” *Long War Journal*, March 23, 2016. <http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2016/03/us-military-strikes-aqap-training-camp-in-yemen.php>
- 158 “U.S. Policy Standards and Procedures for the Use of Force in Counterterrorism Operations outside the United States and Areas of Active Hostilities,” White House, May 2013, https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/uploads/2013.05.23_fact_sheet_on_ppg.pdf.
- 159 Open Society Foundations, *After the Dead Are Counted: U.S. and Pakistani Responsibilities to Victims of Drone Strikes*, November 2014, <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/reports/after-dead-are-counted-us-and-pakistani-responsibilities-victims-drone-strikes>; see also Mark Mazzetti and Mark Landler, “Despite Administration Promises, Few Signs of Change in Drone Wars,” *New York Times*, August 2, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/03/us/politics/drone-war-rages-on-even-as-administration-talks-about-ending-it.html>.
- 160 Open Society Foundations, *Death by Drone: Civilian Harm Caused by U.S. Targeted Killings in Yemen*, April 2015, <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/reports/death-drone>; Human Rights Watch, *Between a Drone and Al-Qaeda: The Civilian Cost of U.S. Targeted Killings in Yemen*, October 22, 2015, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2013/10/22/between-drone-and-al-qaeda/civilian-cost-us-targeted-killings-yemen>.
- 161 *Ibid.*
- 162 Gregory D. Johnson, “Nothing Says ‘Sorry Our Drones Hit Your Wedding Party’ Like \$800,000 And Some Guns,” *BuzzFeed News*, August 8, 2014, <http://www.buzzfeed.com/gregoryjohnsen/wedding-party-drone-strike>.
- 163 Open Society Foundations, *Death by Drone: Civilian Harm Caused by U.S. Targeted Killings in Yemen*, April 2015; Human Rights Watch, *Between a Drone and Al-Qaeda: The Civilian Cost of U.S. Targeted Killings in Yemen*, October 22, 2015. See also Shuaib Almosawa, Kareem Fahim and Eric Schmitt, “Islamic State Gains Strength in Yemen, Challenging Al Qaeda,” *New York Times*, December 14, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/15/world/middleeast/islamic-state-gains-strength-in-yemen-rivaling-al-qaeda.html>; Jillian Schwedler, “Is the U.S. Drone Program in Yemen Working?” *Law Warfare Blog*, September 27, 2015, <https://www.lawfareblog.com/us-drone-program-yemen-working>; Sarah Phillips, “Assisting Al Qaeda: How U.S. Strategy Could Empower AQAP in Yemen,” *Foreign Affairs*, August 30, 2015, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/yemen/2015-08-30/assisting-al-qaeda>.
- 164 See Airwars, “Alleged Civilian Casualties from Russian Airstrikes in Syria,” average estimated minimum number of civilian deaths (based on reporting from three independent

- groups), <http://airwars.org/russian-civcas/> (last accessed April 12, 2016). See also Amnesty International, *Civilian Objects Were Not Damaged: Russia's Statements on its Attacks in Syria Unmasked*, December 23, 2015, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde24/3113/2015/en/>. Airwars keeps a running table of civilian harm on its website at <http://airwars.org/civilian-casualty-claims/>. Airwars is a not-for-profit UK-based organization which tracks and archives international military operations against Islamic State in both Iraq and Syria. It was established by Christopher Woods, former journalist for the BBC and Bureau of Investigative Journalism, and author of *Sudden Justice: America's Secret Drone Wars*, Oxford University Press, May 2015.
- 165 Patrick Martin, "The Pitfalls of Relying on Kurdish Forces to Counter ISIS," Institute for the Study of War, February 3, 2016, http://post.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/pitfalls-relying-kurdish-forces-counter-isis?utm_source=%22The+Pitfalls+of+Relying+on+Kurdish+Forces+to+Counter+ISIS%22&utm_campaign=The+Pitfalls+of+Relying+on+Kurdish+Forces+to+Counter+ISIS&utm_medium=email.
- 166 Interview with Douglas A. Ollivant, New America Foundation, April 27, 2016.
- 167 David Deptula, "Lead, Follow, Or Get Out of the Way," *Washington Times*, April 26, 2016, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2016/apr/26/david-deptula-obama-has-no-intention-of-defeating-/#.VyEK9saBWhU.twitter>; Jeff Schogol, "Most Combat Sorties in Iraq End Without Striking ISIS," *Airforce Times*, July 8, 2015, <http://www.airforcetimes.com/story/military/capitol-hill/2015/07/07/martin-dempsey-testifies-isis-strategy/29827593/>
- 168 Amnesty International, "Syria: U.S. Ally's Razing of Villages Amounts to War Crimes," Press Release, October 2015, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/press-releases/2015/10/syria-us-allys-razing-of-villages-amounts-to-war-crimes/>.
- 169 Interview with Lama Fakish, senior crisis advisor, Amnesty International, September 29, 2015.
- 170 Human Rights Watch, "Iraqi Kurdistan: Arabs Displaced, Cordoned Off, Detained—Harsh Restrictions in Northern Iraq While Kurds Move Freely," February 25, 2015, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/02/25/iraqi-kurdistan-arabs-displaced-cordoned-detained>.
- 171 See also Patrick Martin, "The Pitfalls of Relying on Kurdish Forces to Counter ISIS," Institute for the Study of War, February 3, 2016, http://post.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/pitfalls-relying-kurdish-forces-counter-isis?utm_source=%22The+Pitfalls+of+Relying+on+Kurdish+Forces+to+Counter+ISIS%22&utm_campaign=The+Pitfalls+of+Relying+on+Kurdish+Forces+to+Counter+ISIS&utm_medium=email.
- 172 Sam Dagher, "Tribal Rivalries Persist as Iraqis Seek Local Posts," *The New York Times*, January 19, 2009, http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/20/world/middleeast/20anbar.html?_r=0
- 173 Interview with Anand Gopal, February 19, 2016, New York. See also Anand Gopal, "The Hell After ISIS," *The Atlantic*, May 2016, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/05/the-hell-after-isis/476391/>.
- 174 Email correspondence with Fred Kagan, April 27, 2016.
- 175 Email with CENTCOM, April 15, 2016. Since April 15, 2016, CENTCOM released another civilian casualty assessment that found credible evidence of 20 civilian deaths from U.S. strikes. See U.S. Central Command, "U.S. Central Command Releases Results of Iraq and Syria Civilian Casualty Assessments," April 22, 2016, <http://www.centcom.mil/news/press-release/april-22-u.s.-central-command-releases-iraq-and-syria-civilian-casualty>.
- 176 Nancy Youseff, "U.S. Admits to Bombing 29 Civilians in ISIS War," *The Daily Beast*, January 21, 2016, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2016/01/21/exclusive-u-s-admits-to-bombing-29-civilians-in-isis-war.html>; U.S. Central Command, "Jan. 15: U.S. Central Command Releases Results of Iraq and Syria Civilian Casualty Assessments," January 15, 2016, <http://www.centcom.mil/news/press-release/jan.-15-u.s.-central-command-releases-results-of-iraq-and-syria-civilian-ca>; Thomas Gibbons-Neff, "For Third Time in War against the Islamic State, Pentagon Admits to Killing Civilians," *Washington Post*, January 15, 2016, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2016/01/15/for-third-time-in-war-against-the-islamic-state-pentagon-admits-to-killing-civilians/>; for total number of U.S. strikes in Iraq and Syria see U.S. Department of Defense, *Special Reports: Operation Inherent Resolve*, <http://www.defense.gov/News/Special-Reports/0814-Inherent-Resolve>.
- 177 If U.S. estimates of civilian casualties in Iraq and Syria are true, that would mean it had achieved a roughly 94 percent reduction in its rate of civilian deaths per airstrike over its air operations in Afghanistan—or in other words, U.S. estimates suggest that it is *16 times less likely* to cause civilian death in Iraq/Syria than in Afghanistan.
- AFCENT reported 1,136 strikes with at least one weapon released in Afghanistan for 2014. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan tracked 104 fatalities from these events. See UNAMA, "UNAMA Reports on the Protection of Civilians," at <http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=13941&language=en-US>.
- 178 Interview with Lt. Gen (Ret.) Doug Lute, 20 July 2015, Brussels.
- 179 Amnesty International, *Syria: 'Civilian Objects Were Not Damaged': Russia's Statements on Its Attacks in Syria Unmasked*, December 23, 2015, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde24/3113/2015/en/%20/>; Basile Simon and Chris Woods, "International Airstrikes and Civilian Casualty Claims in Iraq and Syria: November 2015," *Airwars*, December 21, 2015, <http://airwars.org/tag/russia/>; "Russian Air Strikes 'Killed Over 400 Syrian Civilians,'" *Al Jazeera*, November 23, 2015, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/11/syria-monitoring-groups-russian-air-strikes-kill-400-civilians-151122063024984.html>.
- 180 Interview with Eckart Schiewek, July 13, 2015, Washington, D.C.
- 181 CENTCOM email correspondence, April 15, 2016.
- 182 Email response to questions posed to CENTCOM, January 15, 2016.
- 183 Airwars keeps a running table of civilian harm on its website at <http://airwars.org/civilian-casualty-claims/>. Airwars

- is a not-for-profit UK-based organization which tracks and archives international military operations against Islamic State in both Iraq and Syria. It was established by Christopher Woods, former journalist for the BBC and Bureau of Investigative Journalism, and author of *Sudden Justice: America's Secret Drone Wars*, Oxford University Press, May 2015.
- 184 135 incidents out of a total of 305 reported incidents from August 2014 to January 2016. They also report over 20 friendly-fire incidents.
- 185 The Syrian Network for Human Rights estimates 267 civilian deaths from U.S. and coalition strikes in Syria. See Syrian Network for Human Rights, "New Attacks by International Coalition Forces Result in Losses and Civilian Victims," February 13, 2016, http://sn4hr.org/wp-content/pdf/english/68_civilians_killed_in_new_attacks_by_international_coalition_forces_en.pdf. The Syrian Network for Human Rights estimates 267 civilian deaths from U.S. and coalition strikes in Syria. Iraq Body Count, a UK based NGO, estimates 911 civilians killed in Iraq by U.S.-led coalition operations from September 2014 to December 2015. See Iraq Body Count: "War's Moral Chaos—Iraq in 2015," July 6, 2015. IBC has documented civilian deaths by all perpetrators since 2003. Its data is based on "crosschecked media reports of violence leading to deaths, or of bodies being found, and is supplemented by the careful review and integration of hospital, morgue, NGO and official figures or records," Iraq Body Count, <https://www.iraqbodycount.org/database/>.
- 186 Comments via email from Chris Woods, executive director, Airwars, March 10, 2015.
- 187 Unpublished study carried out by Dr. Larry Lewis, formerly Center for Naval Analyses, now State Department. Interview, July 15, 2015 and September 30, 2015.
- 188 For example, according to Air Force Central Command, in the month of August 2015 there were 2,003 ISR missions in Afghanistan, as opposed to 1,088 in Iraq, <http://www.afcent.af.mil/AboutUs/AirpowerSummaries.aspx>
- 189 Airwars data based on AFCENT reporting, available at <http://airwars.org/data/>; see also U.S. Air Force Central Command, Airpower Summaries, <http://www.afcent.af.mil/AboutUs/AirpowerSummaries.aspx>.
- 190 Andrew Tilghman, "Commander Defends ISIS Air War's Effectiveness," *Military Times*, June 5, 2015, <http://www.militarytimes.com/story/military/pentagon/2015/06/05/air-war-hesterman-effective-iraq/28550273/>.
- 191 Interview with State Department official, November 23, 2015, Washington, D.C. Interview with Chris Woods, August 19, 2015, London.
- 192 CENTCOM response to questions via email, January 15, 2016.
- 193 The document was released as a result of a Freedom of Information Act by journalist Joseph Trevithick for the website War Is Boring. <http://warisboring.com/> See also "Canadian, Australian, Dutch and French Aircraft Linked to Possible Civilian Casualties, CENTCOM File Reveals," *Airwars*, September 3, 2015, <http://airwars.org/news/internal-coalition-report-shows-45-alleged-civilian-fatality-events-investigated-in-iraq-and-syria/>.
- 194 The case involves a U.S. cruise missile strike on September 23, 2014, in Kafr Daryan, which was followed by reports from the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights that up to 13 civilians were killed. CENTCOM's CIVCAS Tracking Cell concluded that BDA imagery "did not credibly establish that civilians were present at the site," and that "Open source images presented as casualties from the strikes actually came from previous GoS [Government of Syria] strikes." However, Airwars found multiple photographs and videos on open sources relating to the incident that showed civilian casualties, except for one image which was incorrectly labeled. This raises concerns that corroborative information was dismissed or not found.
- 195 CENTCOM response to questions via email, January 15, 2016.
- 196 Open Society Foundations, *After the Dead Are Counted: U.S. and Pakistan Responsibilities to Victims of Drone Strikes*, November 2014, <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/reports/after-dead-are-counted-us-and-pakistani-responsibilities-victims-drone-strikes>; Amnesty International, *Will I Be Next? U.S. Drone Strikes in Pakistan*, October 22, 2013, <http://www.amnestyusa.org/research/reports/will-i-be-next-us-drone-strikes-in-pakistan>; Chris Woods, "Leaked Pakistani Report Confirms High Civilian Death Toll in CIA Drone Strikes," *The Bureau of Investigative Journalism*, July 22, 2013, <https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/2013/07/22/exclusive-leaked-pakistani-report-confirms-high-civilian-death-toll-in-cia-drone-strikes/>; "Naming the Dead," *The Bureau of Investigative Journalism*, <https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/namingthedead/?lang=en>.
- 197 See Micah Zenko, *Transferring CIA Drone Strikes to the Pentagon*, Policy Innovation Memo No 31, Council on Foreign Relations, April 2013, <http://www.cfr.org/drones/transferring-cia-drone-strikes-pentagon/p30434>; Human Rights Watch: "US: Move Drone Strike Program to the Military," March 21, 2013, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2012/04/20/us-transfer-cia-drone-strikes-military>.
- 198 Saba Imtiaz, "What Do Pakistanis Really Think about Drones," in *Drone Wars*, edited by Peter Bergen and Daniel Rothenberg, Cambridge University Press, p. 104.
- 199 Interview and email with Will Wechsler, April 6 and 7, 2016.
- 200 See Dr. Larry Lewis, "Improving Lethal Action—Learning and Adapting in US Counter Terrorism Operations," *Center for Naval Analysis*, 2014, pp. 30-34, which draws on data from the Bureau of Investigative Journalism (BIJ) and the New America Foundation. At this writing, numbers for 2015 are imprecise, with New America reporting 24 strikes and 1 possible civilian casualty, while BIJ reports 1-7 civilian casualties, from 21-22 strikes, as of January 13, 2016.
- 201 Adam Entous, "Obama Kept Looser Rules for Drones in Pakistan," *Wall Street Journal*, April 26, 2015, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/obama-kept-looser-rules-for-drones-in-pakistan-1430092626>.
- 202 Loloita C. Baldor and Josh Lederman, "U.S. Strikes Hit Somalia Training Camp, Drone Report Previewed," *Associated Press*, March 7, 2016, <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/e97b775be3e0455589740a9264139664/us-disclose-casualty-count-counterterrorism-strikes>.

- 203 Efforts to establish and fund a standing policy on amends, for example, have made progress in Congress, but require implementation by DoD. See Sahr Muhammedally, "Civilian Victims Receive Recognition in U.S. Law," *Just Security*, April 3, 2014, <https://www.justsecurity.org/8882/civilian-war-victims-receive-recognition-law/>. As one analyst with long experience in civilian protection lamented, the reforms from ISAF were "amazing" but "nothing for the institution [DoD] was done. It was a jarring disconnect." Interview with Dr. Larry Lewis, September 30, 2015, discussing the response to a 2013 report, *Reducing and Mitigating Civilian Casualties: Enduring Lessons* by Dr. Lewis and Sarah Sewell. Dr. Lewis was then CNA Representative, Joint Staff J7, JCOA, and is now with the State Department.
- 204 Department of the Army, *Protection of Civilians*, Army Techniques Publication (ATP) 3-07.6, October 29, 2015, <http://fas.org/irp/doddir/army/atp3-07-6.pdf>. ATP 3-07.6 *Protection of Civilians* is the "primary doctrinal publication for the protection of civilians during unified land operations, including the mitigation of civilian casualties and mass atrocity response operations," which is aimed at commanders and staffs at the tactical to operational levels of war.
- 205 Ibid, 1.6 and 1.7
- 206 Interview with Lt. Gen (Ret.) Doug Lute, 20 July 2015, Brussels.
- 207 U.S. Department of Defense, *Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction: No-Strike and the Collateral Damage Estimation Methodology*, CJCSI 3160.01A, October 12, 2012, especially Enclosure D, <https://publicintelligence.net/cjcs-collateral-damage/>.
- 208 The University of Southern California's Institute for Creative Technologies, for instance, is developing virtual reality conflict scenarios.
- 209 The 2007 Tactical Directive is classified, This is drawn from reporting based on a leaked copy of a 2010 Joint Civilian Casualty Study by Sarah Sewall and Larry Lewis. Emphasis added.
- 210 COMISAF, "Tactical Directive," December 30, 2008 http://www.nato.int/isaf/docu/official_texts/Tactical_Directive_090114.pdf.
- 211 ISAF, "Tactical Directive," December 30, 2008, http://www.nato.int/isaf/docu/official_texts/Tactical_Directive_090114.pdf.
- 212 ISAF, "Tactical Directive," July 6, 2009, http://www.nato.int/isaf/docu/official_texts/Tactical_Directive_090706.pdf.
- 213 ISAF, "Tactical Directive," August 1, 2010, <http://www.rs.nato.int/article/isaf-releases/general-petraeus-issues-updated-tactical-directive-emphasizes-disciplined-use-of-force.html>.
- 214 NATO, "ISAF Issues Guidance on Night Raids in Afghanistan," March 5, 2010. <http://www.rs.nato.int/article/isaf-releases/isaf-issues-guidance-on-night-raids-in-afghanistan.html>; Open Society Foundations and The Liaison Office, *The Cost of Kill/Capture: Impact of Night Raids Surge on Afghan Civilians*, September 19, 2011.
- 215 ISAF, "Tactical Directive," November 30, 2011, [http://www.rs.nato.int/images/docs/20111105%20nuc%20tactical%20directive%20revision%204%20\(releaseable%20version\)%20r.pdf](http://www.rs.nato.int/images/docs/20111105%20nuc%20tactical%20directive%20revision%204%20(releaseable%20version)%20r.pdf).
- 216 ISAF, "Tactical Directive," December 1, 2011, [http://www.rs.nato.int/images/docs/20111105%20nuc%20night%20operations%20tactical%20directive%20\(releaseable%20version\)%20r.pdf](http://www.rs.nato.int/images/docs/20111105%20nuc%20night%20operations%20tactical%20directive%20(releaseable%20version)%20r.pdf).
- 217 CIVIC, "Civilian Harm Tracking: Analysis of ISAF Efforts in Afghanistan," May 19, 2014, p. 6, <http://civiliansinconflict.org/resources/pub/ISAF-civilian-harm-tracking>.
- 218 United States Government Accountability Office, "The Department of Defense's Use of Solatia and Condolence Payments in Iraq and Afghanistan," May 2007, <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d07699.pdf>; CIVIC, *Addressing Civilian Harm in Afghanistan: Policies & Practices of International Forces*, June 15, 2010, <http://civiliansinconflict.org/resources/pub/addressing-civilian-harm-in-afghanistan>.
- 219 CIVIC, "Civilian Harm Tracking: Analysis of ISAF Efforts in Afghanistan," May 19, 2014.
- 220 "NATO Nations Approve Civilian Casualty Guidelines," NATO, August 6, 2010, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_65114.htm?selectedLocale=en.

Front cover: United States Special Forces soldier with Afghan civilians and militia members standing behind him, Kwaja Bahuddine, Afghanistan, November 15, 2001. ©*Brennan Linsley/AFP/Getty Images*

A new report by the Open Society Foundations and Christopher D. Kolenda, a former advisor to three ISAF commanders, details how the U.S. military dramatically reduced civilian harm in Afghanistan, and how the U.S. military can ensure those lessons are transferred to current and future operations and to partner forces.

The report details the near-fatal strategic impact of civilian harm in Afghanistan, worsened by intelligence failures and abusive partners. It demonstrates how senior U.S. military leaders succeeded in improving civilian protection, without sacrificing force protection.

But a close look at U.S. operations and partner forces in Iraq, Syria, Yemen, and Pakistan reveals a failure to fully institutionalize these lessons, putting the U.S. military at risk of repeating costly mistakes made in Afghanistan.

The Open Society Foundations work to build vibrant and tolerant democracies whose governments are accountable to their citizens. Working with local communities in more than 100 countries, the Open Society Foundations support justice and human rights, freedom of expression, and access to public health and education.