

WARD CENCY

MENTORING THE AFGHANISTAN NATIONAL ARMY

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1ST SPACE BATTALION, COMMERCIAL EXPLOITATION TEAM

The management of intelligence information has been critical to successful command and control in warfare since the dawn of civilization. During the Soviet-Afghan War, the Soviet Union military's inability to properly manage their intelligence information sabotaged its command and control of forces in the mountainous Afghanistan countryside. FM 3-0 emphasizes that successful command and control demands timely and effective management of intelligence information to make time-sensitive decisions.¹ After ten years of grueling conflict, the Soviet Union, unable to get timely intelligence information and unable to exploit the information that they did receive to counterinsurgent tactics, left Afghanistan in defeat.

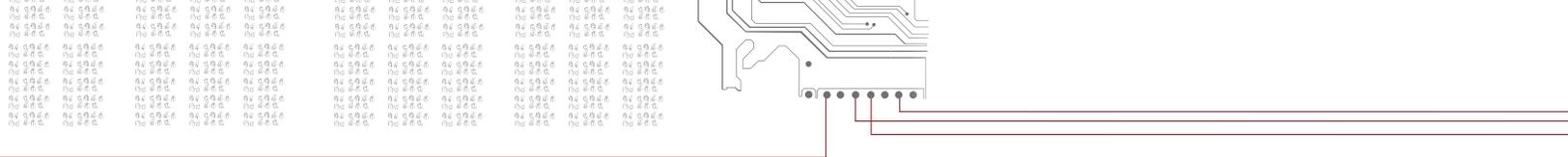
Today, insurgents fighting coalition forces use the same tactics, but the coalition is more able to counter the insurgent's tactics because it has the skills and resources to better manage its intelligence information. In Afghanistan, the mountainous terrain makes intelligence gathering, exploitation, and dissemination all the more important to effective command and control. The Afghanistan National Army currently uses paper maps with overlays and sticky notes to coordinate and apply forces. This system, while effective at a small unit tactical level, does not allow for the timely command and control that is needed to conduct war at the operational level. Giving the Afghanistan National Army the skills and the resources to manage intelligence information is critical to enabling them to move toward self sufficiency. The National Geospatial Intelligence Agency, acting as mentors to the Afghanistan National Army, identified FalconLite Compact, a powerful geospatial computer program, as a resource that the Afghanistan National Army could use to enhance its command and control by providing an effective way to manage their intelligence information. To train the Afghanistan National Army's

key intelligence and operations personnel on FalconLite Compact, the National Geospatial Agency called upon the Commercial Exploitation Team based at the Naval Support Activity Bahrain.

The Commercial Exploitation Team identified two of its members, 1LT Steven Cowan, Operations and Intelligence Officer, and SSG Jeffery Burke, Satellite Communications and Data Acquisition Noncommissioned Officer to conduct two separate week-long classes at the Ministry of Defense in Kabul.

From the beginning of the class, it was evident the students wanted to help their country become self sufficient. The translator for the class was especially skilled and had seen much despite his young age. Like other members of the class, he had been a refugee in Pakistan where they were persecuted and called "Americans." All of the students had a very positive attitude despite being from a country that has seen almost nothing but war for the past thirty years. The class consisted of Afghan officers from the Plans, Operations, Intelligence, AirCorps, Special Operations and Engineers sections. In addition, there were representatives from the National Police, Ministry of Internal Security and Liaison Officers from each of the country's five Corps. By teaching multiple echelons, any incident, unit, or plan can be reported with coordinates and entered into FalconLite Compact at the National Command Center and then disseminated to forward-deployed Corps, Divisions, Brigades and Battalions engaged in operations.

The students immediately saw the value in FalconLite Compact. The FalconLite Compact program, which is releasable to the Afghanistan National Army, can be loaded with maps and commercial imagery from the local area. It can then be used to mark up these maps and images with drawings (depicting routes, minefields), icons (showing guard locations, road blocks), and units (displaying whether they are friendly, hostile, infantry or medical).



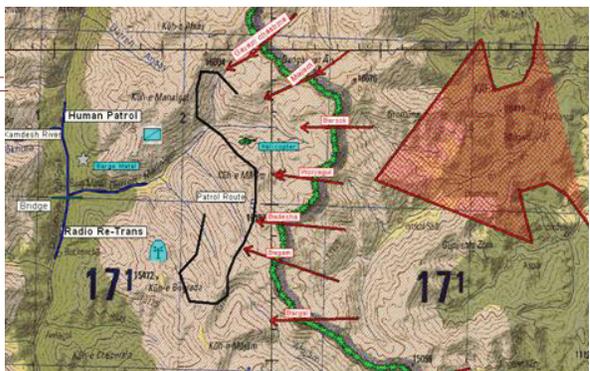
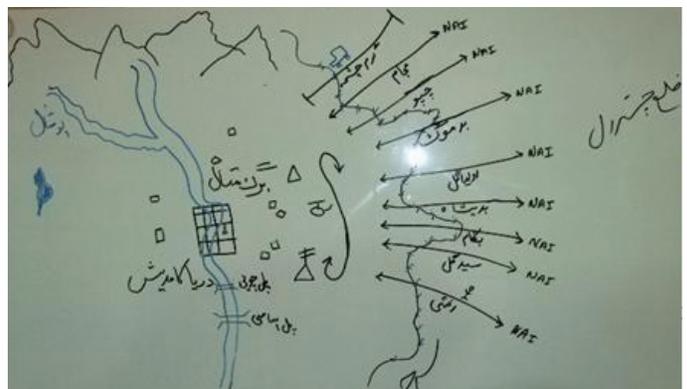
All of this mark-up data can be saved and shared via e-mail or computer networks. Therefore, one can plan an operation at the command center and send the detailed plans to someone with FalconLite Compact at a distant location. The receiver can then make changes to the plan reflecting the real situation on the ground and send that information back to the command.

We started the class with a basic introduction of FalconLite Compact. The students were amazed at the amount of maps and commercial imagery we had loaded onto a single 300GB hard drive. They used the mouse to quickly view different scales of maps for Kabul and Kandahar. Some of the students showed us their hometowns, various buildings near where we were teaching and the slopes of the Hindu Kush. We also taught the students how to open, save and close drawing and icon files, which excited them greatly, as they realized that they could save their work and share it with other subordinate commands, increasing their command and control of forces.

Next, we showed the students some of the FalconLite Compact tools. The students were particularly interested in the bullseye tool of the drawing editor. With the bullseye tool, students could determine the distance one could travel from a known location with a given rate of movement. The Afghanistan Police and Ministry of Internal Security students used the polyline tool to identify city blocks to be patrolled and security zones to be checked. Students were also interested in the point editor as it allowed them to highlight any object or location of interest. Using this

tool, the students highlighted guard locations, accidents, road signs and checkpoints. With the threat editor, the students laid out their forces and displayed the enemy units' detection and engagement ranges.

To solidify the training, we conducted a final practical exercise. In this exercise, "insurgents" occupied a town and the students liberated it with the help of allied forces. First, the students placed an icon representing insurgents in the occupied town. Next, the students placed icons of the friendly forces, consisting of an infantry and an artillery unit, at the closest major cities to the occupied town. The students then drew lines to show the route of the friendly units to the occupied town. After the route was created, we told the students that the infantry unit that was traversing the route had been ambushed by insurgents. The ambush had resulted in injured personnel requiring a medical evacuation by helicopter. To plan for the medical evacuation, students calculated the location of the closest hospital using the range bearing tool. While the evacuation was taking place, the friendly artillery unit was hit by enemy artillery fire. To defend/counter this attack, the students moved the friendly artillery unit so it could hit the enemy without being in danger of being hit itself. Finally, the friendly units liberated the town. The students then learned that insurgent reinforcements were coming. They decided to counter the invasion by conducting a movement to contact. To do this, the students used the bullseye tool to estimate how far the insurgent reinforcements and the friendly units



ABOVE LEFT: the USASMD/ARSTRAT Commercial Exploitation Team (from left to right) 1LT Steven Cowan, SPC Scott Summers, SSG Jeffery Burke, MSG Marc Acito, MAJ Rod Fischer, SPC Nicole Zamora, SPC Megan Valentin, and SSG Erik Gaines.

ABOVE RIGHT AND LOWER LEFT: Before and after maps for the Afghanistan National Army after receiving training in intelligence information management from the USASMD/ARSTRAT Commercial Exploitation Team Images courtesy MAJ Rodney Fischer.

could move in a day. They looked at where the two bullseyes overlapped and planned interception points where they would set up their own ambushes. Finally, the students used the polygon tool to set up patrol sectors so the insurgents wouldn't slip through in unexpected locations. When the exercise concluded, the students clearly had demonstrated that they had grasped the skills needed to effectively use FalconLite Compact.

Each student was excited to receive certificates upon graduation and said that they would make the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan proud. Six weeks later, the students were able to utilize their new FalconLite Compact skills in an Afghanistan National Army exercise involving multiple levels of command and control. SSG Burke and SPC Nicole Zamora, a Commercial Exploitation Team topographic analyst, returned to Afghanistan to help the Afghanistan National Army with the transition from a training environment to an operational environment. The Army's Topographic unit, which consisted of many of the students from the class, made a huge impact on the exercise. Their ability to integrate into the exercise and to provide pertinent

products was recognized by BGen Alan Howard, the Canadian general in charge of the exercise. The Afghanistan National Army plans to continue to expand the role of its topographic units and its use of FalconLite Compact. In fact to improve its command and control over its subordinate units, it is looking at creating topographic units at the each of its five corps and at utilizing FalconLite Compact as a common operation picture. The U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates recently said, "This is the Afghans' war for their own country, and we need to make sure they know we are not there to run it, we are there to help."² The Commercial Exploitation Team's introduction of FalconLite Compact to the Afghanistan National Army and its integration will help the Afghan Army to become self sufficient and may prove to revolutionize the way they engage in modern warfare. 

1. Department of the Army, FM 3-0 Operations, 14 June 2001, p 3-11

2. Gates, Robert; Afghan Conflict Must Not Be Seen As 'America's War', Agence France-Presse, 1 November 2008.



SPC Nicole Zamora, a member of the USASMDC/ARSTRAT Commercial Exploitation Team trains members of the Afghanistan National Army on intelligence information management. Photo courtesy MAJ Rodney Fischer