Operation Moshtarak:

Counter-Insurgent Command in Kandahar, 2009-10

Abstract

There has been much controversy about the effectiveness of military command in in Iraq and Afghanistan. Contributing to these debates, this article examines the changing character of twenty-first century command through example of Operation Moshtarak. Mostharak was a major operation conducted to secure Kandahar City in 2009-10 by Combined Joint Task Force-6, commanded by Major-General Nick Carter, that acted as the International Security Assistant Force's Regional Command (South) in this period. The paper explores Carter's distinctive decision-making method during this campaign to argue that Carter exemplifies a more collective method of command than typically adopted in the twentieth century.

Key words:

Command; Decision-Making; Afghanistan; Counter-insurgency

Introduction

As a result of the Iraq and Afghanistan campaigns, the question of military command has become a focus of interest public concern – even disquiet. Indeed, in both America and the United Kingdom, it would not be an exaggeration to say that in the last decade

command has suffered a crisis of legitimacy.[1] Indeed, this special section has explicitly sought to contribute to these discussions about the predicament of command.[2] Military, scholarly and media commentators have been overtly concerned about the difficulties of effective command today; they have been interested in highlighting the special historic conditions in which military and political leaders now operate. Yet, their work implies a potentially more profound point about military command today. It is not simply that the problems which confront political and military leaders are distinctive but that the practice of command itself may be in transition. Strategic, operational and tactical decision-making may itself be changing, as a result of the globalization of international relations, conflict and the armed forces themselves.

Indeed, in addition to the voluminous writings on command failure, a notable feature of the last decade has been a growing professional military literature about the transformation of command. This literature describes how the special operational problems, which generals confront in the twenty-first century, have impelled a revision of

[1] A selection of this large, predominantly Anglophone literature includes: Seymour Hersch *Chain of Command: the road from 9/11 to Abu Ghraib* (London: HarperCollins 2009); Tom Ricks *The Gamble* (London: Penguin 2009); Dan Bolger *Why We Lost: a general's inside account of Iraq and Afghanistan* (New York: First Mariner Books, 2015); Andrew Bacevich *The New American Militarism: how Americans are seduced by war* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Andrew Bacevich *Washington Rules: American's path to power* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2010); Tom Ricks *The Generals: American military command from World II to today* (London: Penguin, 2012); Paul Cornish and Andrew Dorman, 'Blair's wars and Brown's budgets: from Strategic Defence Review to strategic decay in less than a decade', *International Affairs* 85 (2) March 2009, 247–61; Paul Cornish and Andrew Dorman, 'National defence in the age of austerity', *International Affairs* 85(4) July 2009, 733–5; Hew Strachan, *The Direction of War: contemporary strategy in historical perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); David Betz and Anthony Cormack 'Iraq, Afghanistan and British strategy' *Orbis* Spring 2009, 319-36; Theo Farrell and Stuart Gordon 'COIN Machine: the British military in Afghanistan' *RUSI Journal* 154(3),18-25;Tim Bird and Alex Marshall *Afghanistan: how the west lost its way* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011); Robert Egnell and David Ucko *Counter-Insurgency in Crisis* (Columbia University Press, 2015); Christopher Elliott *High Command: British military leadership in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars* (London Hurst, 2015). In the UK, the discourse probably reached its apogee with the Chilcot Inquiry.

[2] Hew Strachan 'Strategy and Democracy' *Journal of Strategic Studies*; Lawrence Freedman 'Political Impatience and Military Caution' *Journal of Strategic Studies* ; Rob Johnson 'Re-defining Command in the Operational Dimension: challenges in the information age' *Journal of Strategic Studies*

the executive function of command itself. Tony Zinni's book, *Leading the Charge*, published in 2009, is a highly pertinent example of this emergent genre.[3] His work is piece of advocacy rather than analysis but, as such, it is enlightening. For Zinni, political and military leadership is in crisis. Radical reform is required. In particular, because of the increasing complexity of operations, commanders must change the way they coordinate their forces. In the twentieth century, a dirigist, vertical system of command was dominant, in which generals normally monopolized decision-making and supervised their subordinates closely. This has to change, according to Zinni: 'Leaders who are organizing combat commands, like leaders of organizations everywhere, have realized that our fast-charging world requires new approaches and new thinking'.[4] Zinni advocates a collaborative, participatory leadership as essential.

Stanley McChrysal has affirmed Zinni's argument, based on his experiences as Commander Joint Special Operations Command in Baghdad between 2003 and 2008. In his 2013 best-seller, *Team of Teams*, McChrystal claims that the hierarchies which were developed in the twentieth century for industrial warfare have become obsolete in the face of hybrid, globalized opponents. In place of a traditional hierarchy, McChrystal sought to build a command network in Iraq to defeat one. In place of an imperious individual commander directing operations from above, decision-making had to be devolved outwards and downwards. For McChrystal, traditional models of leadership had become obsolete and obstructive: 'The heroic "hands-on" leader whose personal competence and force of will dominated battlefields and boardrooms for generations had

[3] Tom Clancy with Anthony Zinni *Battle Ready* (London: Pan 2005).
[4] Ibid, 132.

been overwhelmed by accelerating speed, swelling complexity, and interdependence'.[5] McChrystal empowered commanders at the local level to prosecute missions on the basis of shared understanding and collective initiative. Although less prominent, a similar literature is emergent in Britain.[6] In each case, these generals suggest that an individualist method of command, appropriate to the twentieth century, is being displaced by a practice of collaborative command in which decision-making is shared, distributed but also aligned across echelons and functions.[7]

Clearly, some caution is required when taking the statements of generals as evidence. Commanders have every interest in representing themselves in the best possible light, exaggerating the importance and novelty of the innovations they claimed to introduce. Yet, significant changes seem to be evident, as the JSOC example shows. Moreover, they are corroborated by elsewhere. For instance, organizational studies scholars have plotted the transformation of corporate hierarchies. Michael Hammer and James Champy have demanded that American companies re-organise existing divisions of labour into flatter, more flexible and responsive networks: 'The reality that organizations have to confront, however, is that the old ways of doing business – the division of labour around which companies have been organised since Adam Smith first

[5] Ibid, 225.
[6] General Sir David Richards 'The Art of Command in the Twenty-First Century: reflections of three commands' in Julian Lindlay-French and Yves Boyer *The Oxford Handbook of War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 346, 356; General Sir Richard Shirreff 'Conducting Joint Operations' Julian Lindlay-French and Yves Boyer *The Oxford Handbook of War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) 382, 383.
[7] Ryan Grauer recent work on command is relevant here, although he focuses on historical examples: *Commanding Military Power; organizing victory and defeat on the battlefield* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016). Grauer explores the way the organizational differentiation and centralization has determined the system of command in any army.

articulated the principle – simply don't work any more'.[8] They claim that this organizational transformation has been accompanied by a move to more participatory, collaborative management. Similarly, Rosabeth Moss Kanter has also recommended radical corporate re-structuring to facilitate a more participatory model of governance.[9] More recently, Keith Grint has promoted the 'arts of leadership' in business over obsolete, dirigist twentieth century models of management.[10] He recommends a collegial, inclusive style of leadership as a means of overcoming wicked problems.

This article follows this emergent literature about the reformation of command. It examines whether a transformation of military command, of a kind which Zinni and McChrystal describe and which is alluded to in the previous papers, is more widely detectable in the twenty-first century. Like [name removed], this article does not engage in a general survey of command today. Rather, it focuses on the practice of military decision-making through the analysis of a single case study. It examines the case of Major-General Nick Carter and his command of ISAF's Regional Command-South, Combined Joint Task Force-6, in Kandahar, southern Afghanistan from October 2009 to November 2010. It concentrate specifically on Operation Moshtarak which Carter executed during that period. Through a detailed dissection of Carter's decision-making process, the paper seeks to explore the practice of command in the twenty-first century.

The Research

[8] Michael Hammer and James Champy *Re-Engineering the Corporation: a manifesto for business revolution* (London: Nicholas Brealey, 1995), 19.
[9] Rosabeth Moss Kanter *The Change Masters: corporate entrepreneurs at work* (London: Unwin, 1987); *When Giants Learn to Dance: mastering the challenges of strategy, management and careers in the 1990s* (London: Unwin, 1990).
[10] Keith Grint *The Arts of Leadership* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

In his article, [name removed] analysed the example of Basra because it was an important and interesting recent campaign. A similar rationale recommends the selection of CJTF-6 and Operation Mostharak. In and of itself, it is a pertinent and illuminating example of contemporary command. A short background about the origins of CJTF-6 is necessary here. In April 2006, NATO began to assume responsibility for southern Afghanistan, establishing a new Regional Command (South) at Kandahar Airfield to direct operations in Kandahar, Uruzgan, Zabul, Nimroz, Daykundi and Helmand. At that point, the command was only a one-star or brigade level command shared by the three main contributing nations to the south, Canada, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom; it was primarily responsible for operations in Helmand, Kandahar and Uruzgan. From April 2006 and October 2009, Regional Command South rotated unsatisfactorily on a six-monthly basis. Although eventually designated a two-star, divisional level of command in 2008, the headquarters was still under-resourced and lacked authority. It was incapable of coordinating or supporting operations of the Provincial Task Forces and lacked the authority to do so. The disappointments of the campaigns in Helmand, Kandahar and Oruzgan in this three year period was substantially due to the fact that they were commanded at the inadequately resourced Provincial Task Force level.

In response to these difficulties, NATO began to re-organise its command structures in 2009. Regional Command South was re-constituted as a 'Combined Joint Task Force' in October of that year. This change of title denoted an increase of command authority and resources. Regional Command South no longer merely coordinated the operations of the Provincial Task Forces in Helmand, Kandahar and Uruzgan but actually commanded them. To reflect this increased authority, command and staff tours were

lengthened to a year to ensure continuity. Having committed most heavily to the south and being the only force capable of expansion, the United Kingdom was awarded the first command of the newly empowered Regional Command South. Since, its standing divisions, 1 and 3 UK Divisions, had already been heavily committed to Basra, the UK was nominated 6 UK Division as Nick Carter's headquarters. Traditionally, 6 UK Division was a static territorial headquarters based in York, not an operational one. However, despite this status, 6 UK Division was re-constituted to provide the core staff for Regional Command South in 2009-10. Because it was based on 6 UK Division, Regional Command South was given the title Combined Joint Task Force-6 or CJTF-6, where the 6 referred to its divisional designation: subsequent rotations included CJTF-10 (10th Mountain Division) and CJTF-82 (82nd Airborne Division).

Of course, Regional Command South was re-constituted as a Combined Joint Task Force in 2009 not only because of existing problems in the south but also, specifically, to facilitate the anticipated US-led surge. Following the draw-down in Iraq, Barack Obama announced his surge strategy in Afghanistan in 2009. In June 2009, he replaced the incumbent ISAF commander, General David Mackiernan, with General Stanley McChrystal who was to preside over the US surge. McChrystal's surge plan, Operation Omid, sought to implement a population-centric counter-insurgency strategy across Afghanistan of the type which had been successful in Iraq in 2007. Although the surge involved an increase in approximately 40,000 US troops, McChrystal sought to concentrate his efforts on eighty key terrain districts. The sough was critical to the entire plan. Indeed, McChrystal specifically designated CJTF-6 as the NATO Main Effort for his whole campaign. At this point, between the autumn of 2009 and November 2010,

with a high point in the summer of 2010, CJTF-6 was the focus of all NATO efforts in Afghanistan. At this point, CJTF-6 was responsible for themost important province at the most critical time in the entire Afghan campaign, after the initial elimination of the Taliban regime in late 2001. As a central element of the surge, the headquarters commanded an operation in 2010, Operation Moshtarak III (Hamkari), whose purpose was to secure Kandahar City and its environs.[11] The historical importance of CJTF-6 in the Afghan campaign recommends, even demands, some scholarly attention.

Not only was Operation Moshtarak and Kandahar operationally important but it demonstrated some extremely interesting features, highly relevant to the twenty-first century operating environment. CJTF-6's area of responsibility covered approximately to 78,000 square miles[12] of complex terrain, including numerous towns and cities. The total population of southern Afghanistan was approximately 4.2 million; over 1 million Afghans lived in Kandahar city and its environs alone. In addition, CJTF-6 was a very large formation, consisting of some 60,000 soldier in eight brigade combat teams. The formation was also a diverse multinational force, including American, Canadian, British, Australian, Dutch, Estonian, Danish, Czech, Lithuanian and, of course, Afghan troops with all the political sensitivities which this involved. The radical multinationality of Carter's force has to be fully recognized and plays a very significant role in explaining the collective model of command which he subsequently adopted. Multinationality – and especially Carter's close mentoring of his Afghan subordinates - put many demands on

[11] Operation Moshtarak, which means 'co-operation' in Dari, consisted of three phases; the first involved the re-organisation of Regional Command South, the second the securing of Central Helmand, and the third, the securing of Kandahar City. Phase III became known as Hamkari (together) which referred to a broader civil and political development programme.
[12] Lieutenant General Nick Carter 'The Divisional Level of Command' *British Army Review* 157 Summer 2013.

him as a commander, forcing him to delegate to his deputies in areas which might have been reserved for himself in a more nationally unified force. The unusual diversity of CJTF-6 may then, partly explain, why such a collective model of decision-making was adopted.

Yet, there were many other equally significant factors in complicating command. These operational factors were in no way unique to Kandahar but, on the contrary, have become quite general problems for military commanders at the divisional level and above. CJTF-6 was provided with prodigious air assets, including surveillance platforms, support, attack and medical helicopters, drones and fixed wing planes, all provided by a diversity of coalition partners, in a very crowded airspace. Adding to his suite of responsibilities, CJTF-6 also coordinated Special Operations Force operations with their evident delicacies.

Moreover, it was not simply that CJTF-6 commanded a large, multinational military force. It was involved in media, information, psychological operations, development and civil projects and political engagement. Officers were well aware of the challenge. For instance, although he had served in Afghanistan twice before including a tour in ISAF Headquarters in 2006, the British Chief of Staff of CJTF-6 observed: 'We had to think upwards and above in a way I had not seen'.[13] He continued: 'There was, for instance, a vast increase in the flow of information, including classified national intelligence, that the headquarters had to collate, analyse and fuse. As a result, in CJTF-6, the intelligence cell (J2) comprised some twenty-five per cent of the entire headquarters: 'the volume, the level of information and the information technology allowed a divisional

[13] OF-6, Brigadier (now Major-General retired) Dickie Davis, Chief of staff, interviewee 049, personal interview, 2 December 2014.

headquarters to fuse information to a level that has never been seen before'.[14] In addition, CJTF-6 also had to negotiate with non-governmental and international organizations to coordinate governance, aid and development projects.

Finally, NATO had to exercise extreme discretion in the use of force. Precision was absolutely critical to political legitimacy, exerting very considerable pressure on Nick Carter as a commander. Throughout his command, Carter was extremely careful about the use of force, not least because ISAF Commander, General McChrystal, had identified it as one of his priorities. The principle of 'Courageous Restraint' was central to McChrystal's strategy of gaining the support of the Afghan people, many of whom had been casualties of NATO strikes. Consequently, CJTF-6 represents a potentially perspicuous example of command in the twenty-first century.

The peculiar conditions of Kandahar have to be recognized; the fact that Mostharak was a coalition operation involving so forces from so many different nations represented an almost unique challenge. However, on historical grounds, the case of Nick Carter and CJTF-6 has much to recommend it. The campaign which Carter fought in 2009 and 2010 demonstrated all the complexities of contemporary, coalition and, indeed, inter-agency counter-insurgency operations. CJTF-6 coordinated civil, governmental, informational and military efforts. There are further reasons to study CJTF-6. Despite its significance, Operation Moshtarak is a relatively un-investigated example. Nick Carter published a short account of his experiences in Kandahar in the British Army Review in 2015.[15] There are accounts of its second phase in Helmand when Nad-e-Ali and Marjah

[14] Ibid.

[15] Lieutenant General Nick Carter 'The Divisional Level of Command' *British Army Review* 157 Summer 2013.

were secured.[16] However, unlike Fallujah, Ramadi, Sadr City or Basra, there has been no dedicated public account of it.[17] CJTF-6 and Moshtarak, therefore, recommends – even demands – some attention.

In addition to its historical relevance, there are also significant methodological advantages to studying CJTF-6. Command is usually understood to consist in decision-making. Commanders are given decision-making authority in order that they can coordinate their forces for maximum effect. In order to appreciate the practice of command, it is imperative that the research reaches an adequate level of detail. It is necessary to understand the context and, where possible, the precise mechanism of decision-making itself. A 'thick' description, as Clifford Geertz called it, is necessary. It is important to acknowledge how the commander and staff themselves understood the mission and what they were trying to achieve in their own terms. Generalizations are not helpful here; ethnographic detail, which acknowledges the understandings of the participants themselves, is required and from which broader conclusions can be drawn.

It was possible to gather particularly good data about CJTF-6 and Major General Nick Carter's command of this operation. I was a member of the headquarters in 2009-10. Consequently, I was exposed to the working of the headquarters and had developed

[16] Theo Farrell 'Appraising Moshtarak: the campaign in Nad-e-Ali, Helmand' RUSI briefing note June 2010, 1-13.
[17] Gian Gentile et al. *Re-Imagining the Character of Urban Operations for the US Army* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Arroyo Centre, 2017); Bing West etc. Richard Iron 'Operation Charge of the Knights' in Bailey, Jonathan, Richard Iron and Hew Strachan (eds.) *British Generals in Blair's Wars* (Farnham: Ashgate 2013), 187-200; Jonathan Shaw Basra 2007: the requirements of a modern major general' in Iron in Bailey, Jonathan, Richard Iron and Hew Strachan (eds.) *British Generals in Blair's Wars* (Farnham: Ashgate 2013), 175-80; Justin Maciejewski '"Best effort": Operation Sinbad and the Iraq Campaign' in Bailey, Jonathan, Richard Iron and Hew Strachan (eds.) *British Generals in Blair's Wars* (Farnham: Ashgate 2013), 157-174; Dick Camp *Operation Phantom Fury: the assault and capture of Fallujah, Iraq* (Minneapolis, MN: Zenith, 2009); Bing West *No True Glory: a frontline account of the Battle for Fallujah* (New York: Bantam, 2005).

personal relationship with the commander and some important staff members who were willing to give testimonies about their experiences. In addition to documentary material (including my own notes), the analysis is based on interviews with the commander, Major Genearl Nick Carter, the Chief of Staff (Brigadier Dickie Davis), the Deputy Chief of Staff Operations (Brigadier Ben Hodges), the Head of the Prism Cell (a Colonel), the SO1 of the Joint Planning Branch (J5), a British SO2 in the Joint Future Operations Branch (J3/5), and one of the official historians. In short, the research is based on excellent access to the core command group of the headquarters. While the interlocutors in the research did not agree with every interpretation which follows and have suggested that some processes were, perhaps, more complex and nuanced that described, they have endorsed the broad findings. They accept the central argument about the transformation of command and the move to a more distributed and collective method of managing this operation. They believe that the interpretation is consistent with the realities of CJTF-6.

The advantages of examining a single case study in the context of a short article are clear, then. However, the disadvantages are also obvious. It is difficult to claim that a single example can be representative of a more general trend. Clearly, it is impossible to overcome the problem of representativeness in this article. The detail described here is intended to allude to wider changes but this article cannot discuss this wider validity, still less prove it here. However, while this article concentrates on Kandahar, it is possible to highlight the wider significance of CJTF-6 albeit briefly. In his preface to this special issue, General David Petraeus has noted some parallels between the way Carter commanded CTFF-6 and the practices he adopted when commanded of the 101st Airborne in Mosul in 2003. The article, therefore, implies – but does not discuss - that

while conditions in Afghanistan were particular, the command strategies which Carter implemented in Kandahar bore some family resemblance to those in Iraq. The findings from Kandahar are not totally idiosyncratic but might point to a more general reformation of counter-insurgent command.

The Mission

From the moment of his appointment as commander, the first major task for Carter was to establish the mission. He identified the city of Kandahar and its environs as critical to his campaign since this was the economic, political and, indeed, cultural hub of the south; Kandahar City was a Pashtun capital of Afghanistan and, therefore, held huge symbolic significance for the Taliban. Indeed, Zhari and Panjwai districts were considered to be the heartland of the Taliban. Mullah Omar had been born in Zhari, a district some ten miles south west of Kandahar City along the Arghandab River and had paraded in the cloak of Mohammed in Kandahar when he came to power in 1996. A Taliban reversal here would represent a major advance for NATO and Hamid Karzai, the President of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. Especially for a British officer, the selection of Kandahar as the focus of effort was a bold decision because generally as a result of their operations in Helmand, British personnel viewed southern Afghanistan and, indeed, the entire NATO campaign through the provincial prism of Helmand. Carter inverted this perspective and recognized that his centre of gravity was Kandahar City and its surrounding districts along the Arghandab valley.

Carter was appointed General Officer Commanding 6 Division in late 2008 and his deputies and core staff were assembled for Afghanistan in April 2009. Typically, in a

military operation, a two-star divisional commander would receive his mission from his superior at this point. However, as he was preparing for the deployment, ISAF was in some disarray. Having been appointed in June, McChrystal was pre-occupied with re-structuring command in ISAF and with writing his own campaign plan. Consequently, Carter was given a rare latitude for a relatively junior command to develop his own mission. Indeed, rather than being given a mission by his superior in a formal order, he identified the CJTF-6 mission in close collaboration with McChrystal, at the same time as the latter developed his own campaign plan.

Carter, of course, did not invent a mission autonomously. On the contrary, he took great care to consider a diversity of stakeholders before committing himself to a concept of operations. For instance, in early 2009, Carter, who already had some operational experience in Afghanistan, consulted closely with military interlocutors both in the UK and in Afghanistan in order to formulate a mission for CJFT-6.

> I was fortunate to be very well prepared. I assumed my role as GOC 6 (UK) Div in early 2009 and I had responsibility for training the task forces for Helmand. This gave me the chance to travel regularly with my COS [chief of staff], Colonel Bob Bruce to Afghanistan and engage with the Afghans. Thus I was able to test my emerging operational design on the Commander of 205 Corps, General Zazai who encouraged me to focus on the population centres of Central Helmand, Kandahar and Tarin Kot in Uruzgan. I began to understand the importance of freedom of movement for the Afghans, the need to connect the population to

> governance, and the complex political dynamics that required analysis before one blundered into kinetic clearing operations.[18]

As a result of these interactions with a diversity of partners, Carter was able to develop a concept of his mission.

By the summer of 2009, Carter had identified a clear mission for southern Afghanistan which embodied the principle of population-centric counter-insurgency but adapted them for the specific challenge of Kandahar. Carter identified three critical tasks of which the mission comprised. Firstly, as the main effort, Nick Carter's aim was to control Kandahar City by the end of Operation Moshtarak in late 2010, securing it from the Taliban and improving governance and development in it. Secondly, as a subordinate effort, Central Helmand had to be protected; a degree of security and control was required in and around Lashkar Gar, the provincial capital, but at a lower level than Kandahar City itself. Although Carter was a British general, this conflicted with the general consensus of opinion in the UK at the time. As the previous article has discussed, disillusioned with Basra, the British government and MOD decided to concentrate on Helmand from 2006, hoping it would prove a more popular and productive campaign and that it would repair much of the damage which had been inflicted on the Transatlantic Alliance by Operation Telic. Consequently, the British became fixated on Sangin, because of the heavy losses they had suffered there. By contrast, Carter regarded the town as peripheral in operational terms. Finally, in order to improve conditions in Kandahar and sensitive to the influence of his Afghan interlocutors, Carter identified freedom of movement on the roads and highways as critical. In the south, insurgents and local

[18] OF-7, Major-General (now General Sir) Nick Carter, interviewee 080, personal interview, 29 September 2015.

militias targeted the roads for attack and illegal taxation, alienating the population and impeding business and trade. At the same time, major routes had to be secured so that the Taliban could not use them to move fighters and materiel around the south. Although its implementation proved to be extremely complex, requiring extensive coordination between NATO forces, the Afghan Army and the Afghan Police, as well as many other agencies, Nick Carter's Schematic was simple and clear. From July 2010, US troops and Afghan soldiers and police were deployed in rings around the city, almost exactly in line with his concept.

Carter depicted this mission on an important Schematic, which, in fact, would represent the basic design for Operation Moshtarak very accurately.[19] This Schematic became a basic reference point for the headquarters in Kandahar throughout the operation and it provided the framework for all the planning and the subsequent execution of Operation Moshtarak. The Schematic depicted the main 'effects' – the outcomes – which Carter identified as central to his mission. It was a constitutive act of mission definition, which would play a hugely important role as a reference point throughout the campaign.

About Here

Figure 1: Campaign Schematic CJTF-6 Kandahar.

It was noticeable that Carter invested considerable efforts in communicating his Schematic to his subordinates in order to impress his concept of the mission on them.

[19] Ibid.

Nick Carter first exposed his concept of operations with its Schematic at Westdown Camp on Salisbury Plain to his deputy commanders soon after their appointment to Combined Joint Task Force-6 in July 2009.

> I assembled all of my one stars at Westdown Camp on Salisbury Plain with Buck Bedard, my USMC mentor in late June. We did this on the back of training we were delivering for the next Task Force Helmand. It provided the ideal opportunity to bond as a command team and to expose my emerging operational design – a simple Effects Schematic that designated where force would be concentrated and economy of effort would be applied. It became the basis of Operation MOSHTARAK which endured throughout my tour, that of 10 Mountain Division, 82 Airborne Division and is still recognised by the Afghan 205 Corps today.[20]

The Campaign Schematic was, then, a decisive moment of mission definition for Carter. Specifically, he was able to unite his deputies – and, subsequently, his entire staff – around this concept. Indeed, his staff emphasized the importance of Carter's role in impressing the mission on his headquarters. Nick Carter defined an ambitious and comprehensive mission for his command. The operation was projected to take place over months, across a very wide area, involving a large, multinational force and requiring the support of governmental and non-governmental organizations.

Of course, as a Regional Commander, Carter was subordinate to ISAF Headquarters and, specifically, to General McChrystal who had been appointing in June

[20] Ibid.

2009; the ISAF Joint Command was not operational until December 2009. However, although Carter was subordinate to McChrystal, he seems to have influenced General McChrystal and the ISAF campaign plan; 'I spent time with McChrystal in August'.[21] At this point, with the ISAF plan still in genesis, Carter came to an agreement with McChrystal that Kandahar – and its population - should be NATO's main effort and that a concentration of forces was required in southern Afghanistan as a result. This was a major change for US forces which had always focused Regional Command East and the anti-terrorist mission there. In addition, a central element of McChrystal's campaign plan was the identification of eighty Key Terrain Districts. The Alliance did not have the troops to secure every district and, consequently, NATO security efforts were focused on the most important districts. Carter's discussions with McChrystal and his campaign schematic seems to have played some role in the development of the idea of the Key Terrain District:

> In a multi-national command you are far more likely to develop your mission statement iteratively. My RC (South) mission statement was the product of a discussion, indeed a negotiation with General McChrystal. I was fortunate to have served with him in Afghanistan before and we trusted each other completely. He wanted me to provide my assessment of the problem and then recommend the scheme of manoeuvre to him. He recognised that concentration of force and economy of effort would be key principles in our operational design, and that we would need to sequence tactical battles in distinct phases as resources became

[21] Ibid.

> available. Hence we decided to deal with Central Helmand first followed by Kandahar.[22]

It is, of course, important not to overstate Carter's role. He was but one of many individuals from whom McChrystal took advice as he developed his plan and, certainly, Carter himself made no suggestion that he exerted the only, still less the decisive influence. However, there was a distinctive level of negotiation and flexibility; Carter's schematic played a significant role here in persuading McChrystal to invest in Kandahar. With a still solidifying chain of command above him, Carter, only a divisional commander, exercised an unusual level of responsibility in defining Regional Command South's mission, then.[23]

The pre-deployment preparations of Combined Joint Task Force-6 to Kandahar illustrate some important features of contemporary command, then. In terms of mission definition, Nick Carter exercised an unusual level of responsibility for a divisional commander. The ISAF surge campaign plan was crystallizing, as he was preparing for the deployment of CJTF-6 and he was identified as the Main Effort of the plan. He was commanding a very large multinational force, including two critical Afghan corps. Moreover, as a British officer, who had worked extensively with the US before, Carter enjoyed enhanced access to senior American commanders. As a result, he did not just identify particular missions or operations but was genuinely responsible for the design of the campaign in southern Afghanistan in this period; he seems to have influenced

[22] Ibid. The United States Marine Corps decided to invest in Helmand and eventually created their own Regional Command South-West in July 2010.
[23] Theoretically, ISAF HQ was under the operational command of NATO Joint Forces Command, Brunssum. In reality Brunssum exerted no influence on operations in Afghanistan and, at most, provided a reserve staff capacity for ISAF, coordinating with the Troop Contributing Nations in Europe. General Carter and CJTF-6 had minimal communications with Brunssum throughout its tour.

McChrystal's overarching campaign plan for the surge, Operation Omid (hope). In order to define this mission, Carter interacted widely with an international cast of political and military actors in order to gain some understanding of the balance of preferences and interests. His most important contacts were, of course, Generals McChrystal, as his NATO superior, and General Zazai, his local Afghan ally, but he established collaborative relations with a diversity of other political and military actors in NATO and Afghanistan. Carter retained sole responsibility for mission definition but in order to develop a coherent operation, he had to form partnerships with a diversity of other actors. His Schematic reflected the interests of a network of allies and supporters. The origins of Operation Moshtarak were not a simple order from Carter's corps commander, then, or from McChrystal but resided in a complex network of actors, who exerted influence on Carter.

Managing Moshtarak

In a famous passage in *On War*, Clausewitz identified the most important function of command: 'The first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgment that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish by that test the kind of war on which they are embarking; neither masking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature'.[24] Mission definition is the prime executive act of the military commander, then. It has a unique status. However, this act of definition presumes and will eventually demand a prodigious investment of time and effort. Once a mission has been defined, a commander has to identify, sequence, prioritise and assign all the tasks it

[24] Clausewitz *On War*, 88

involves. In a force of any size, this is an onerous burden. As the celebrated organizational scholar, Peter Drucker has observed, while defining a mission 'is the most difficult step in decision making, converting the decision into effective action is usually the most time-consuming one'.[25] Nick Carter was evidently diligent in his definition of the CJTF-6 mission and invested great effort in communicating it to his allies and subordinates. However, the majority of his time in command was spent supervising the operation and managing the myriad activities of which it comprised.

There were a number of special factors which complicated the management of Moshtarak. From the outset, the structure of CJTF-6 was not by any means optimal. One of the problems for Nick Carter was that despite having a headquarters of 800 personnel, the utility staff was severely limited. His staff sometimes played an important role in 'speeding things up'. They had a 'short-cutting effect' providing information, evidence, metrics and details. However, in Kandahar, because of the lack of helicopters and the concerns about protection, the staff often struggled to leave the headquarters. Consequently, their understanding – and, even more, their judgement - was very limited. The staff sometimes provided crucial supporting information and analysis but they could not recommend actions in the conventional manner or do any significant liaising work. Carter, consequently, had to conduct much of the reconnaissance work which might in other circumstances have been completed by his staff:

> I was able to get out and about. In many ways I was our best ISR [intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance] sensor. I could see much more easily than anyone in the HQ that some courses of action would be unworkable. That's why it

[25] Ibid 114.

> is often said that the commander has a monopoly on good ideas; it's easy for him because he has access to everything, he has aviation and security.[26]

Because of the constraints which operated on his staff, Carter was forced engage directly with his subordinates and a series of partners to an unusual degree.

Managing operations in southern Afghanistan, involving a multinational force of 60,000 troops, was very complex. This put significant pressure on Nick Carter, not least because every commander, and especially Afghan officers, required substantial attention. Carter had to explain his operation to them, enjoining and maintaining their comprehension and support for it. At the same time because of the political complexity and multinationality of the campaign, Nick Carter had to invest significant amounts of time negotiating with his immediate superiors and with political and military leaders in the broader NATO hierarchy. Consequently, Nick Carter 'did an enormous amount of stuff upwards'.[27]

> Nick Carter spent a vast amount of time dealing with the Afghans, with the Governors of Kandahar and Helmand, with the Corps Commander - in February 2010, General Zazai and then with Zazai's replacements and then the police chiefs. And then every single country wanted to see the Commander. For instance, Lithuania had 90 SOF soldiers in the south; so Nick Carter was 90 per cent up and out with Afghans, Coalition Senior Representatives and so on.[28]

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[26] Ibid.
[27] OF-6, Brigadier (now Major-General retired) Dickie Davis, Chief of staff, interviewee 049, personal interview, 2 December 2014.
[28] OF-6, Brigadier-General (now Lieutenant-General) Ben Hodges US Army, Deputy Chief of Staff Operations, interviewee 058, personal interview 7 April 2015; OF-3, SO2 J3/5, British Army, interviewee 046, personal interview, 11 December 2014

Other officers confirmed the point: 'Why was he out on the ground? He needed to get to know the commanders, especially the ANA partnered Corps which was another part of the dynamic. He got to know the Afghan corps commander and all his brigade commanders and knew them all well'.[29]

Yet, Carter's command responsibilities were not limited to his military subordinates, which would have been difficult enough. Rather than a purely military commander, he also assumed the role of a pro-consul, influencing military, political and civil domains. Indeed, many of his decisions were purely political. Strikingly, he defined his most important decision not as a military one at all, but rather as, 'which Afghan to make district governor in the Arghandab with the support the elders and Wesa [the Governor of Kandahar]'. The identity of the district governor was likely to be far more significant in terms of suppressing the Taliban than any specific military decision. However, persuading Afghans to make these decisions was not easy: 'We wanted Afghans to own the decision-making and that required political engagement to encourage the right Afghan to say the right things'. Carter could not order Afghan political leaders to act, he had to encourage their cooperation:

> I would look for opportunities, I didn't know precisely how things were going to play out, but if I was on the ground providing encouragement there was a reasonable chance the Afghans would take the lead. In this case, I took Governor Wesa to western Zhari at a critical moment for the Afghan population and the media. He needed to be demonstrating leadership as the Provincial Governor. That was decisive. But he would not have taken the risk if I had not travelled with

[29] OF-6, Brigadier (now Major-General retired) Dickie Davis, Chief of staff, interviewee 049, personal interview, 2 December 2014.

him in his car that day.[30]

Clearly, this negotiation was a prodigious managerial load for Carter.

Carter's method of command was distinctive. Rather than defining objectives and assigning forces to achieve them in standard military fashion, Carter had to be more subtle in his approach. In place of a clear objective which is attained by rational means, Carter observed: 'You have to know what success looks like'. He continued: 'Decision-making requires much more shaping. You need to understand where the blockers might be. The good old days of End-State, ways/means and ends, they are gone'.[31] Consequently, in place of instrumentalism, Carter engaged in conditional, cooperative and experimental management: 'I think strategy has evolved with the pervasiveness of information, you know broadly the next step to take, and as you do, you build alliances and hedge your opponents'. In Kandahar, Carter discovered that in order to execute his mission and implement his concept, he required the support of numerous agencies and actors who were not always in his chain of command. They were not under his control. Accordingly, in order to achieve success, he could not simply develop and implement a plan and order his forces to execute it. He had to manipulate the situation and align important actors at each point to accomplish his ends, even though he could not compel anyone to perform them.

There are some instructive examples of Carter's oblique method of management. For instance, in order to conduct the operation and secure Kandahar City, Carter needed an Afghan Army Kandak (battalion) from Uruzgan to be redeployed from the Dutch Task Force. Nick Carter knew that T=the Dutch would resist such an order from him through

[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid.

the NATO chain of command. Accordingly, Nick Carter enrolled the Afghan 205 Corps Commanders to give the order for this re-deployment. Since ISAF were there to support the Afghans, the Dutch could not reasonably object to this order, coming from an Afghan general. Carter subtly defused the issue. Similarly, in response to a crisis in the Argandab in August 2010 when the Taliban deposed a district governor, rather than using western troops, Carter brokered an intervention by Colonel Abdul Razziq, the Chief of Police in Spin Boldak, with the assistance of Ahmed Wali Karzai, the President's half-brother and the Chair of the Provincial Council in Kandahar. The situation was resolved with only minimal violence, in which two Afghan policemen were wounded. However, this oblique method of decision-making was hugely time-consuming. Carter had to manipulate, negotiate and enjoin. He had act as a diplomat and an ambassador, asking for support, rather than simply commanding in traditional military fashion. He became extremely adept at these skills but it absorbed his time as a commander.

The Disciples

Carter was forced to engage in an indirect form of management in Kandahar. Because they could rarely travel, he was not always supported by his staff in this. The structure of CJTF-6 was initially unhelpful too. The command structure of Carter's headquarters in Kandahar was distinctive. Indeed, even by contemporary military standards, it was unusual, even bizarre. According to contemporary doctrine, in a US Army divisional headquarters, a commander is supported by two one-star assistant commanders. In a British divisional headquarters, by contrast, the Chief of Staff, a colonel, typically acted as the commander's executive deputy.

Combined Joint Task Force-6 was a quite different construct. Above all, it was significantly over-represented at the senior level. Because it was a NATO headquarters, troop-contributing nations expected to have command representation at the senior level if they had forces on operations: 'The top structure of the headquarters was built around the NATO flags to post process that created rather more one star positions than function required'.[32] Remarkably, the headquarters, therefore, had six flag officers at one star-brigadier rank. 'a USMC deputy (Brigadier General Tom Murray), a British Chief of Staff (Brigadier Dickie Davis), a US Army Deputy Chief of Staff-operations (Brigadier General Ben Hodges), a Dutch Deputy Chief of Staff-support (Air Commodore Emile van Duren), a Canadian Deputy Chief of Staff-ANSF (Afghan National Security Forces) development (Brigadier Craig King) and a British Deputy Chief of Staff-Stability (Richard Berthen, civilian)'.[33] At the beginning of the operation, it was, not unreasonably, widely believed that there were too many senior officers.[34]

The command structure in Kandahar was top-heavy, then. There were initial concerns that this would create problems during the campaign. Rather than helping Nick Carter to manage the mission, it was feared that the excess of deputy commanders would potentially impede coherent command. The danger was that there were too many senior officers with inadequate work to do. This would inevitably generate tensions and frictions. Indeed, predictably, the flag to post policy did generate friction, at least initially. 'We had a crowded one star space' as a result of which 'there were many low

[32] Carter 'The Divisional Level of Command', 8.
[33] Ibid.
[34] OF-6 US Army, DCOS Operations, personal interview 7 April 2015.

level dramas, mainly Dutch, and one officer did not fit'[35]; it 'took a while to work out how to use all the one stars'. The deployment of so many senior officers was clearly not optimal. An illustrative stress point here was the relationship between Brigadier Dickie Davis, the Chief of Staff, and Brigadier-General (now Lieutenant General) Hodges, the Deputy Chief of Staff Operations. Davis and Hodges developed very good personal and professional relations during the course of this operation. However, there were some initial misunderstandings in Kandahar. In a US Army divisional construct, the commander is supported by a Deputy Commanding General-Operations and a Deputy Commander-Support, both one-star posts. They hold genuine command authority in these respective areas, supporting and acting for the commander. The Chief of Staff is a colonel, who, while occupying a critical staff post, does not enjoy the same executive powers as the Deputy Commanding Generals; the Chief of Staff post is primarily an administrative and organizational one involved in directing and coordinating the staff work of the Headquarters. By contrast, as already noted, in the British divisional construct, where there were traditionally no Deputy Commanding Generals, the Chief of Staff assumed far greater authority. In a British Headquarters, the Chief of Staff not only coordinates the staff but also exercises significant command authority, playing an important role as an adviser and executive deputy to the commander. The doctrinal difference between the US and UK divisional headquarters about the relative role and authority of particular posts generated some confusion in Regional Command (South) between Ben Hodges and Dickie Davies.[36]

[35] OF-6, Brigadier (now Major-General retired) Dickie Davis, Chief of staff, interviewee 049, personal interview, 2 December 2014.
[36] OF-5, British Army, Prism Cell, interviewee 054, personal interview, 12 March 2015.

There were further institutional tensions between the US Army and the US Marine Corps. Indeed, Nick Carter was warned of the possible difficulties before he deployed by one of his mentors: 'You are in a fight between the USMC and the US Army'.[37] The issue generated frictions in the headquarters. As CJTF-6 deployed, the US Marine Corps were seeking to take on a major mission in Afghanistan after the draw-down from Iraq. Eventually, in August 2010, they established their own divisional area of operations, Regional Command South-West, with responsibility for Helmand, Farah and Nimroz, dividing themselves from Regional Command South. However, until that time, the US Marines in Helmand were under the command of Carter. Consequently, Hodges and Murray became the representatives of this institutional struggle. Once again, they eventually developed a close and effective working relationship. Yet, the initial problems were real.

The structure of CJTF-6 was not auspicious. However, as the operation developed in late 2009 and early 2010, the over-representation of flag officers actually became extremely useful: 'we worked it to our advantage'.[38] Indeed, Carter's deputies began to be indispensible. It has been noted that, as a result of the scale of the operation and the complex diplomacy in which he had to engage, Carter quickly found himself over-committed to specific areas: above all, mentoring Afghan Army commanders. He was, therefore, incapable of monitoring and supervising important parts of the campaign. Consequently, he required additional command and decision-making capacity to manage the mission.

[37] OF-7, Major-General (now General Sir) Nick Carter, interviewee 080, personal interview, 29 September 2015.
[38] OF-6, Brigadier (now Major-General retired) Dickie Davis, Chief of staff, interviewee 049, personal interview, 2 December 2014

It was here that the over-appointment of one-star generals to his headquarters suddenly became serendipitous; a NATO necessity became an operational virtue. Gradually, over the first months of the deployment, the one-star officers in the headquarters improvised a division of labour between themselves. Accordingly, the Headquarters took on a distinctive structure. It consisted of 800 personnel but within it, there was a core command group, at the centre of which were the six one-star officers: 'There was a HQ within the HQ. The core was less than 15 people. David Orr Ewing [SO1 J5 Plans] was the secretary of that group. There was a super-tanker approach to all the other stuff; routine business, planning and executing Moshtarak and Hamkari but inside that were about 10-15 people: Dickie Davis, myself, Bob [Bruce], Tom [Murray], Ben Hodges and David Orr Ewing. It was UK-US-centric'.[39] The flag officers formed themselves into a command team around Nick Carter, assisting him with the day-to-day management of Moshtarak.

It is possible to delineate the responsibilities of the flag officers more precisely here. Brigadier Dickie Davis, the Chief of Staff, ran the headquarters; Brigadier General Tom Murray was the official deputy commander. Brigadier General Ben Hodges became Deputy Chief of Staff-Operations, responsible for current and future operations (CJ3/5 and CJ3), Brigadier Craig King (Canadian Army) commanded Plans and Policy (CJ5) and Air Commodore Emile van Duren, a Dutch air force officer, was responsible for the logistics of national support elements (CJ1 and 4). Each of these deputies had a very large staff, for whom they were responsible. However, the Deputies were not primarily engaged with organizing their respective staffs as branch chiefs. In each branch, full

[39] OF-5, British Army, Prism Cell, interviewee 054, personal interview, 12 March 2015.

colonels fulfilled that function. Rather, the deputies pointedly acted as proxies for Nick Carter himself. Having been inducted into the planning process early, through the dissemination of the Schematic, Carter's deputies understood intimately what their commander wanted. They understood the mission thoroughly. Consequently, they did not simply support Nick Carter, relieving him of administrative burden. They assumed significant executive authority in specified areas to ensure that the operation progressed. They acted for him – or rather *as* him - when he was not present: 'Nick Carter spent loads of time on the ground. But when you added up where Nick Carter was to be on any day, he could have reasonably been in four of five places. When Nick Carter was struggling for time, he would use Tom [Murray] and Ben [Hodges] so that he could turn into three people'.[40] While Carter was pre-occupied with oblique form diplomatic management, his deputies increased his capacity to make decision in a timely fashion: 'There was no doubt about it: Nick Carter was the boss. We were his disciples'.[41] The Biblical reference to the role of the deputies was somewhat ironic but it also usefully highlighted the significance of the deputies. The point was that while subordinate to Carter, as disciples, the deputies played a crucial role in disseminating and enacting Carter's will and in establishing the mission.

Ben Hodges and Tom Murray, in particular, played an important role in multiplying Nick Carter's authority, acting as substitutes for him. It is worth exploring how they did this in greater detail. Tom Murray, the deputy commander, for instance, stood in regularly for Carter in meetings in the headquarters and often represented Carter

[40] Ibid.
[41] OF-6, Brigadier (now Major-General retired) Dickie Davis, Chief of staff, interviewee 049, personal interview, 2 December 2014.

on Video-tele conferences to subordinate and superior headquarters; 'if Nick Carter needed to be in ISAF, Tom Murray would do that'.[42] However, Murray played a more important role than simply sitting in for Carter in meetings: 'The Deputy Commander, Tom Murray was the stay at home guy. He had decision authority. For instance, SOF hit targets every night and that would require approval. He would approve at 0100am. Having a US doing this was helpful because it would mainly be US SOF'.[43] This is a significant observation in understanding how Moshtarak was managed. SOF raids were a very important and highly sensitive part of the campaign and the decision to launch one was, perhaps, the most tactically significant decision a commander could make. It required the highest level of authority not least because the intelligence on which they were based was always classified at the highest level. A Special Operations raid would, therefore, normally be the sole responsibility of the commander. However, had Carter monopolized this decision, as he might have done, he would have had to have been awake until one or two o'clock almost every single night. Such a regime would have exhausted him and jeopardized his ability to command. Consequently, it was imperative that a trusted and empowered deputy stood in for him at this point to take on this duty. As an American flag officer, Murray was empowered with the legal authority not merely to oversee this decision but actually to make it. At the same time, Murray ran a number of other projects including Courageous Restraint and he was often in the field, too. In short, 'he deputized for Nick Carter across all functions'.[44]

[42] Ibid.
[43] OF-6, Brigadier-General (now Lieutenant-General) Ben Hodges US Army, Deputy Chief of Staff Operations, interviewee 058, personal interview 7 April 2015.
[44] OF-6, Brigadier (now Major-General retired) Dickie Davis, Chief of staff, interviewee 049, personal interview, 2 December 2014.

Ben Hodges took on a very interesting and, perhaps, the most important role as Carter's disciple. He was the leading US Army officer in the South with command authority over American troops there. As one officer noted: 'I would not overplay the role of all the one stars in the HQ. The key was Ben Hodges'.[45]

> He was not just one other one star with no influence and no resources. Access to Ben Hodges was crucial because he had resources. He had the ear of COMISAF [Commander ISAF] and COMIJC [Commander ISAF Joint Command]. Whether he had a formal role as a Senior National Representative, I do not know but he felt personally responsible for Nick Carter's decisions for his troops. Effectively, Regional Command South was a US Division, entrusted to Nick Carter with Hodges as the control measure'.[46]

Hodges was Deputy Chief of Staff-Operations and, therefore, doctrinally, it might have been expected that he would position himself in the Operations Centre in the Headquarters able to observe and make decisions about current operations, organizing and controlling his staff. In fact, this role was principally taken by the Chief of Staff and by the staff officers in the Operations Centre.

During Moshtarak, Ben Hodges was frequently located with United States troops and their commanders in the Arghandhab. His presence there was important. Although CJTF-6 was based on a British Divisional Headquarters and was commanded by a British general, the vast majority of troops under it were American. A brigade combat team from the 101st Airborne Division were engaged in the most dangerous and difficult operations, clearing and securing the Arghandab Valley in Panjwai and Zhari. They were the decisive

[45] OF-5, British Army, Prism Cell, interviewee 054, personal interview, 12 March 2015.
[46] Ibid.

force. As a well-known and respected American officer, who had commanded a brigade from 101st Airborne Division during the Iraq invasion under General David Petraeus, Hodges was ideally positioned to communicate with and coordinate these American ground troops: 'As director of operations, I dealt with the brigades and a fair amount with the Afghans. I would not approve a CONOPS [Concept of Operations] without the Afghans. I would distribute ISTAR and work out how to allocate that. Most of the force was US and I was dealing back to the US and incoming Aviation and US rotations'.[47] However, while Hodges enjoyed a high level of autonomy, he 'was brilliant at supporting him [Nick Carter]'[48]; he was able to 'talk in American but he realised what Nick Carter wanted; he was the national support bloke with Title 10 Authority. He knew what Nick Carter wanted'.[49]

An unusual division of labour emerged in Carter's headquarters during Moshtarak, then; command began to be shared and distributed to deputies, although decision-making was always integrated around Nick Carter's intent. Hodges himself highlighted the distinctiveness of command arrangement in CJTF-6: 'Kandahar has something which approach a command board. The span of control and the area of command dwarfed World War II or Korea. The types of thing going on were utterly different. It was not a case of two regiments up and one back. The brigades were in different areas. It was not just kinetic stuff. There was partner activity: a whole range of things'.[50] Because of the diversification of functions and the complexities of

[47] OF-6, Brigadier-General (now Lieutenant-General) Ben Hodges US Army, Deputy Chief of Staff Operations, interviewee 058, personal interview 7 April 2015.
[48] OF-4, SO 1 J5, British Army, interviewee 046, personal interview 11 October 2014.
[49] OF-6, Brigadier (now Major-General retired) Dickie Davis, Chief of staff, interviewee 049, personal interview, 2 December 2014.
[50] OF-6, Brigadier-General (now Lieutenant-General) Ben Hodges US Army, Deputy Chief of Staff Operations, interviewee 058, personal interview 7 April 2015.

management, Carter required far more assistance than a conventional military commander. In Kandahar, Nick Carter consciously shared authority with his deputies, whom he empowered to make decisions for him. They assisted him in the critical role of managing the campaign.

> RC(South) showed me the value of deputy commanders. Given the span of command, the need to designate main effort and lead it, it is obvious that the commander has to have his back properly covered. I was fortunate to have a real deputy, USMC Brigadier General Tom Murray, who shared the load and freed me to focus on what really mattered.[51]

After the first few months, this command team worked effectively to support and represent Nick Carter.

There seem to have been two critical factors in the generation of an effective command team in CJTF-6. Firstly, Nick Carter created close relations between himself and deputies. He drew his deputies into his command process early and they remained central to it throughout. He brought them together for a Command Group meeting on Salisbury Plain, early in 2009. Although the outlines had already been developed and socialized, he provided them with detailed Operating Instructions as guidance and used to Campaign Schematic to communicate to them what he intended.[52] He, therefore, united his deputies around his definition of the mission. They thoroughly understood the mission. This vertical cohesion from commander to subordinate was plainly important. Moreover, in theatre, Carter actively maintained the unity of this group. For instance, one

[51] OF-7, Major-General (now General Sir) Nick Carter, interviewee 080, personal interview, 29 September 2015.
[52] Carter 'The Divisional Level of Command', 9.

of the official historians in the headquarters observed the formation of a cohesive command team around Nick Carter: 'When I would go past his office, I would see Dickie Davies chatting in there; they used to talk a lot'. Tom Murray was also in his office frequently. 'Nick Carter would discuss his Intent striding around the room with people taking notes. David Orr Ewing captured what he said and would write 1-2 pages'.[53] The command of Moshtarak, consequently, involved 'a small band of determined people'.[54] There were no obviously favoured advisers but his deputies consolidated into command collective, each of whose members supported Carter in his designated area.

Secondly, it is noticeable that very close relations developed between the deputies themselves. Given their equal rank, the potential for discord and friction was very high. Disputes were highly likely and could have been disastrous. However, after initial uncertainties, the deputies formed themselves into a cohesive unit: 'you need the command team being tight. There was lots of friction early in the year. However, we became very tight. Even now, we are tight. I am very close to Ben Hodges now. The commander relies on everyone and you respect and emphasise competence'.[55] In Kandahar, Carter certainly dominated the campaign but he commanded through a more collaborative and highly professionalized team of deputies. Once unified around his mission definition, they were able to manage important elements of Moshtarak while Carter was committed to the complex work of negotiating and sustaining partnerships and alliances.

[53] OF-5, British Army, Prism Cell, interviewee 054, personal interview, 12 March 2015.
[54] Ibid.
[55] OF-6, Brigadier (now Major-General retired) Dickie Davis, Chief of staff, interviewee 049, personal interview, 2 December 2014.

Conclusion

Focusing on the example of Kandahar, this article has explored command on a stabilization operation in the twenty-first century. It has claimed decision-making became more complex as a result of the expansion of military and non-military functions of a division, the vast increase in divisional areas of responsibility, and the imperative of precision and proportionality. Carter could not be concerned only with military affairs. He conducted complex and heterogeneous operations over great distances and long periods. CJTF-6 had to synchronise a diversity of simultaneous short- and long-term decisions. Many of these cycles referred to highly specialized spheres of activity, of which no single commander could possibly be the master. At the same time, Nick Carter manipulated and negotiated with partners and allies. Consequently, in order to manage Moshtarak, Carter had to distribute decision-making authority to nominated deputies who were empowered to act as his agent in their designated areas. He enacted a collective practice of command.

Operational Moshtarak is an interesting and valid example of contemporary command in its own right. In the context of a single article, it is impossible to prove definitively that the collective command practiced by CJTF-6 was indicative of wider changes, not least because the conditions in Kandahar was so distinctive. Carter commanded a multinational force on a complex counter-insurgency operation, in a unique social and political context. However, even though the distinctiveness of the southern Afghan theatre has to be recognized, there is some evidence that while particular, Carter's command practices were not utterly idiosyncratic.

American divisions in Iraq are highly pertinent here because, especially in the early years of the campaign, they were homogenous standing formations. Many of the multinational issues, which distinguished Carter's command and demanded a collective, distribution of decision-making authority, were absent from them. It is, therefore, conceivable that command in these American divisions assumed a quite different form. As an illustration, it is worth considering one of the most well-known examples: David Petraeus and the 101st Airborne Division in Mosul in 2003. After the invasion, 101st Airborne Division was re-deployed north to Mosul, a city of two million, where they engaged in stabilization operations. While the issue of security remained critical, Petreaus sought to engage in a political and civil reconstruction; he prioritized governance and development projects. In Mosul, Petraeus became known as 'Malik Daoud', King David. Like Carter, he dominated the operation and was instrumental in defining his division's mission and ensuring it was executed. In the first phase in Mosul, Petraeus commanded operations through the established architecture of divisional command, a main headquarters and a small deployed Assault Command Post with which he deployed.

Nevertheless, once the final elements of the Saddam regime had been eliminated, the character of the operation began to change fundamentally. At this point, the existing structure of command in 101st became inappropriate to the challenges of stabilization. Petreaus, consequently, had to reorganize his division and its headquarters to meet the new operational requirements. Specifically, the division was no longer engaged merely in combat; it had to take responsibility for a multiplicity of functions, many of which were not genuinely military concerns at all. A new distribution of responsibilities was

required.[56] While Petraeus maintained his main headquarters in Tikrit, he established as series of subordinate commanders for his deputies around the region. Petraeus devolved command responsibility to his Assistant Divisional Commanders. His Assistant Divisional Commanders became quasi-autonomous governors in their respective areas in Mosul and Baqubah, operating under Petraeus's direction but independent of him.

At the same time, subordinates were assigned specific areas of specialist responsibility in this new division of labour. For instance, in Mosul, Petreaus assigned subordinate commanders to each of the decisive functions in the city.

> When the 101st was in Mosul, I assigned a unit to every single ministry to help re-establish the ministry office in Mosul. The divisional signal battalion was the partner for the Department of Telecommunications. It was the first that had an international phone system in Baghdad. We had two aviation brigades; the assault Brigade HQs helped to re-establish the university. The Divisional artillery headquarters ended up running the veterans employment centre. I mentored the Governor and established a cell at the Provincial HQs. The engineer brigade re-established the Ministry of Public Works. It also rebuilt the police academy. The medical battalion rebuilt the medical hospital. And so on. The divisional HQ was responsible for overseeing all these initiatives. [57]

The result was that in Mosul, and despite commanding a homogeneous, standing American division, Petraeus developed a command system which was not completely dis-similar to Carter's in Kandahar. As his span of command expanded geographically and functionally, Petraeus devolved command authority to his deputies and subordinates,

[56] General David Petraeus, interviewee 096, personal interview, 7 January 2016.
[57] Ibid.

assigning them decision-making powers over designated areas or specialisms. At this point, Petraeus began to revise his initial method of command.[58] Although it is necessary to be cautious, the emergence of a command collective, exemplified by CJTF-6, itself echoing Zinni and McChrystal's experiences of contemporary command, seems to represent a wider transformation of command.[59]

It is important to stress a final point. The distribution of decision-making authority which seems to have been evident in Kandahar does not imply that somehow commanders have become mere bureaucrats who make decisions by the consent of a command board in the twenty-first century. On the contrary, while responsibility for the management of military missions may have be increasingly share, commanders remain solely responsible for mission definition. As one member of CJTF-6 observed: 'General Carter's personality and intellect seemed to dominate the whole show'.[60] Indeed, the case of CJTF-6 shows that a commander's responsibilities for mission definition has increased. Without close superior direction, still less a set of orders, Carter exercised an unusual level of responsibility for mission definition. The increasing complexity of the operational environment has accentuated the importance of this command role, not diminished it. Nick Carter, for instance, was no longer simply in a *singular* position in a military hierarchy as his predecessors had been; he occupied a *unique* location where civil, political and military networks converged. He was at the centre of a politico-military nexus. David Petraeus has himself emphasized the point: 'Contemporary operations are commander centric, network-enabled. The network is not the centre. The

[58] Ibid.
[59] See Anthony King *Command: the twenty-first century general* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018) for a full account of this argument.
[60] Official historian, CJTF-6, interviewee 48, email communication, 14 November 2014.

commander is'.[61] On recent counter-insurgent operations, the military chain of command has been superseded by an operational politico-military orrery. As a result, the role of the commander in mission definition has become far more pronounced and portentous.

Through the example of Nick Carter, this article has argued for the appearance of a system of collaborative decision-making which might be termed a command collective. Without defining the mission personally, Nick Carter could not have hoped unite his deputies, who were imperative to his successful management of the mission. In order to create a command team, it was necessary for Carter to assume a level of individual responsibility and accountability which exceeded equivalent divisional commanders in the twentieth century. Yet, despite his evident talents, Carter also needed this team of capable deputies in order to execute it. When counter-posed against classic counter-insurgency operations, Kandahar seems to show that an evident transformation in the practice of command has occurred. It seems to suggest that the command dirigism, favoured in the twentieth century, may be in the process of being displaced by more collective and cooperative practices of the type which Zinni and McChrystal have described. It might be possible to suggest that, in the twenty-first century, the heroic commander is being replaced by a professional, command team.

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[61] General David Petraeus, interviewee 096, personal interview, 7 January 2016.

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