



OEA Team Threat Report



Civilian Shields Effective for Taliban

23 April 2010

AFGHANS' PERCEPTION OF VIOLENT EVENTS

Type of Activity	Respondents Who Replied Yes (%)
Bombing or shelling by U.S., NATO, or ISAF forces	72
→ Civilians killed or hurt by U.S., NATO, or ISAF forces	→ 69
→ Civilians killed or hurt by ANA or ANP	→ 67
Car bombs, suicide attacks	66
Snipers, cross-fire	64
→ Civilians killed or hurt by Taliban, al-Qaeda, or foreign jihadists	→ 60
Kidnappings for ransom	59

Note: Percentage represents total "yes" replies out of 5,156 surveyed.

Source: UNDP, "Police Perception Survey 2009: The Afghan Perspective," 10/2009, p. 11.

Data shows that Afghans blame civilian deaths on Coalition forces more so than they blame the Taliban.¹

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US Army TRADOC G2
TRADOC Intelligence Support Activity (TRISA) – Threats



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Purpose

- ☐ To inform deploying units, trainers, and scenario writers of how the Taliban uses innocent civilians as shields in combat as an effective TTP against US forces in Afghanistan and Pakistan.
- ☐ To identify the Taliban tactics used which violate the rules of war, and their effect on US/ISAF operations—particularly the employment of air power.
- ☐ To discuss how the Taliban's plan functions as an effective information warfare (INFOWAR) tactic.
- ☐ To review statistics regarding civilian casualties (CIVCAS) in Afghanistan and the effect such casualties have on Afghan perceptions of Coalition forces.

Product Caveat: This presentation has been developed from multiple unclassified sources and is primarily intended for use as a training product for the Department of Army. This briefing should not be considered a finished intelligence product, nor used in such a manner.

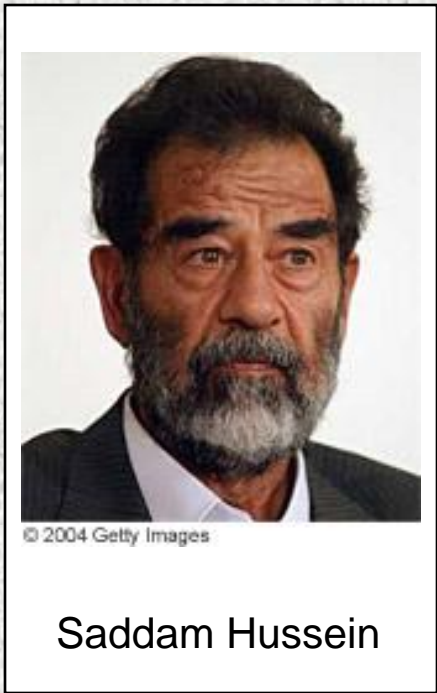


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Recent History of Civilian Shields

- ❑ **Saddam Hussein used civilians to protect targets during the Gulf Wars in the early 1990s.¹**
- ❑ **The Taliban have successfully employed the use of innocent civilians as shields, including women and children, at least since 2005 in Afghanistan and neighboring Pakistan.¹**
- ❑ **This tactic effectively uses NATO's Rules of Engagement *against* all NATO forces.**
 - **US forces must hold their fire against known Taliban and insurgents when civilians are used as shields.**
 - **Structural targets are often populated with civilians to prevent US forces from firing.**
 - **When civilian casualties occur, the Taliban exploits them by releasing video of the incident, blaming Coalition forces.**



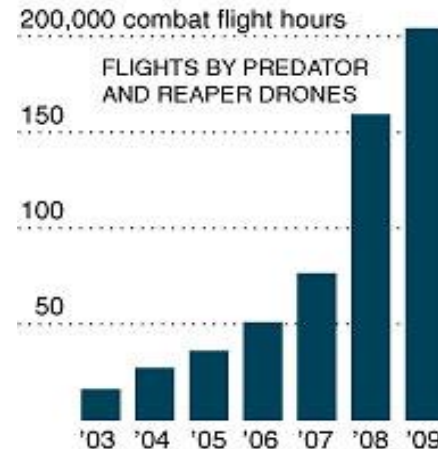


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Predator Drones: The Good and The Bad

- ❑ The US military uses unmanned aerial vehicles, or drones, in Afghanistan.
 - Predators drones, which are armed, are critical tools for both information gathering and protecting ground forces throughout Afghanistan's challenging terrain.
 - The use of drones has increased from 50,000 flight hours in 2006 to 200,000 flight hours in 2009.¹
 - Air strikes conducted by drones have caused civilian casualties when those civilians are planted in structures targeted by the Taliban.
 - The increased use of drones and air strikes resulted in the Taliban countermeasure of civilian shields, which increased CIVCAS.



Figures are for fiscal years ended Sept. 30.

Source:
Defense Department THE NEW YORK TIMES

UAVs, also called drones, are commonly used in Afghanistan^{1,2}



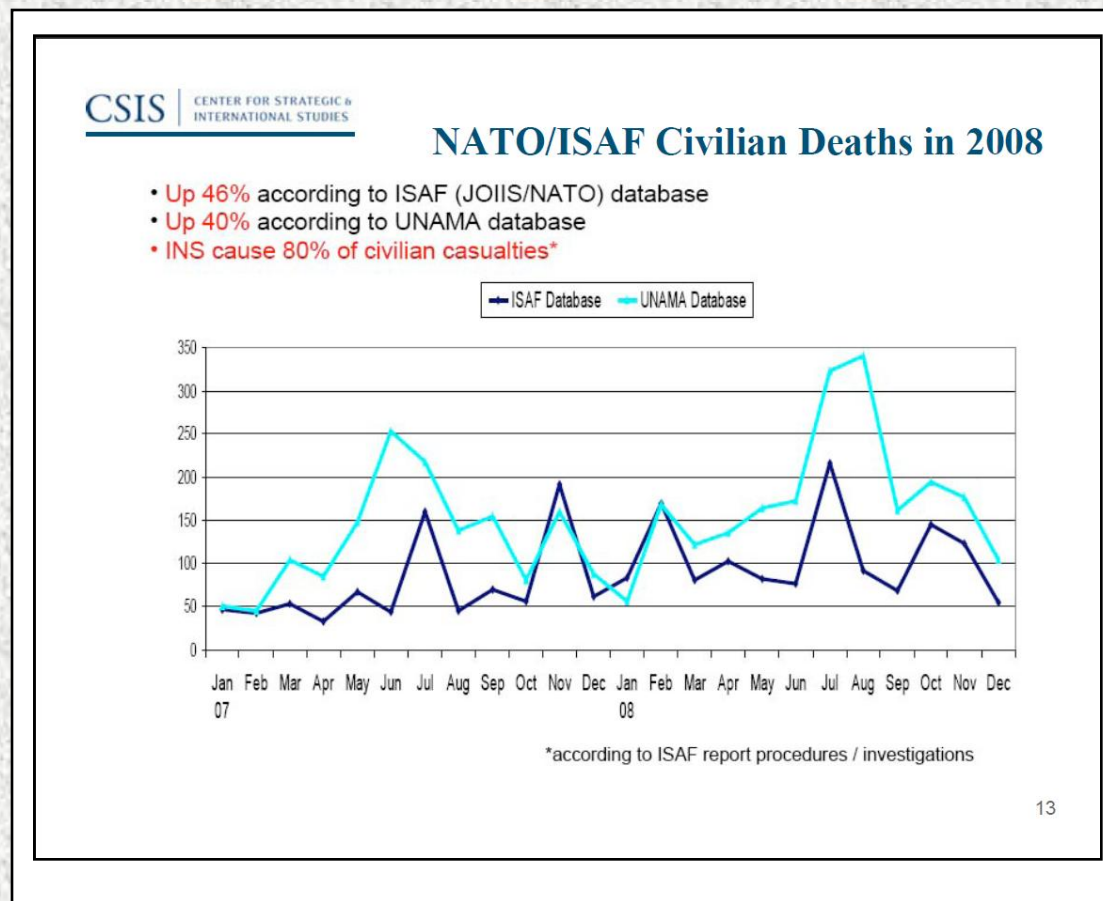
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Civilian Deaths Increase Sharply in 2008¹

❑ The significant increase in deaths in 2008 of Afghan citizens resulting from use of civilian shields primarily during air strikes caused NATO/ISAF and OEF forces to revise the rules of engagement (ROE) in an effort to reduce these casualties.

▪ ISAF directed troops to exercise extreme caution when firing at Taliban targets to avoid possible hidden civilians.



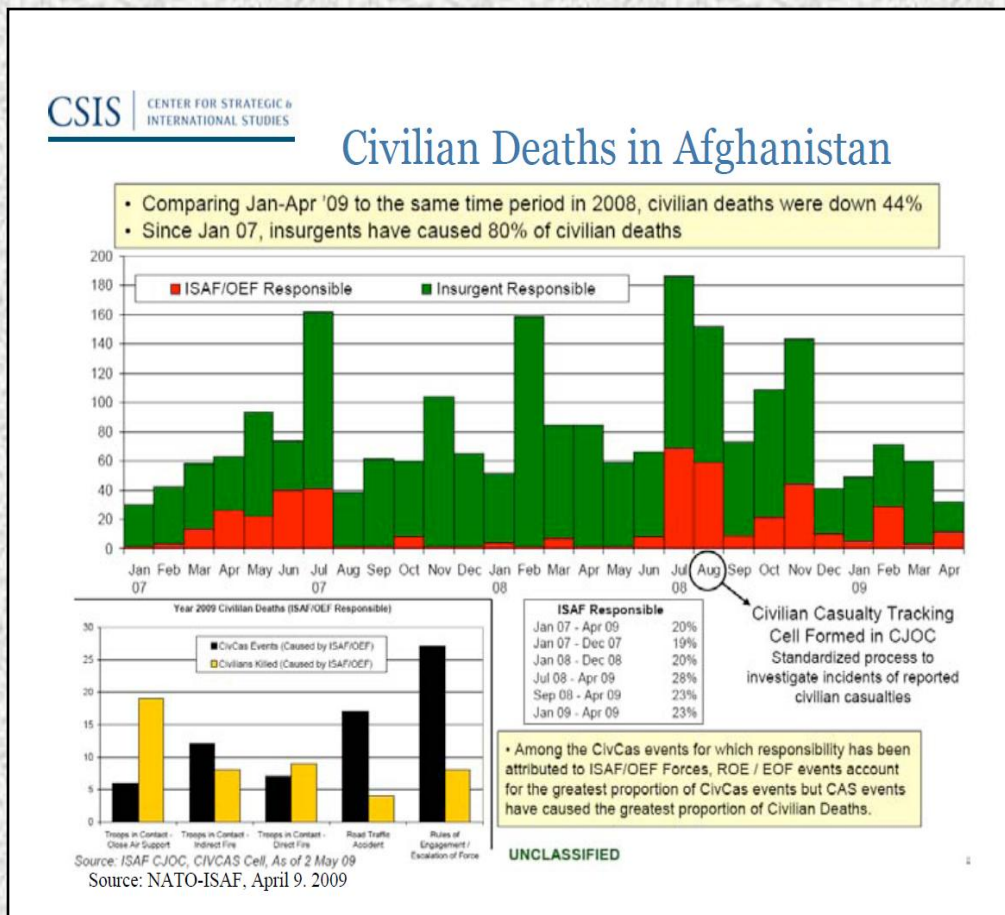


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Civilian Death Increases Lead to NATO Review of ROE

- ❑ NATO-ISAF sources indicate that “the greatest proportion” of CIVCAS result from kinetic attacks from predator drones.
- ❑ In May 2009, ISAF commander General McKiernan stated, “The way we act, the techniques we use, and the means we employ must serve to protect and defend the Afghan public and reinforce their confidence in GIRoA and the forces fighting on their behalf.”¹





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NATO Reviews ROE

- ❑ NATO issues a series of modifications of the ROE in 2007 and 2008, with an emphasis on employing more caution to avoid CIVCAS, which were on the rise beginning in 2007 resulting from increased use of UAVs and civilian shields.¹
- ❑ CIVCAS fall in 2009, but “continuing air strikes had greatly undermined local support for the efforts of international forces in the country.”²



Woman and child suffering from attack¹

- ❑ Ultimately, the nature of the OE population tends to blame OEF/ISAF regardless of attribution, primarily because of the Taliban’s ability to control the dispersion of information.

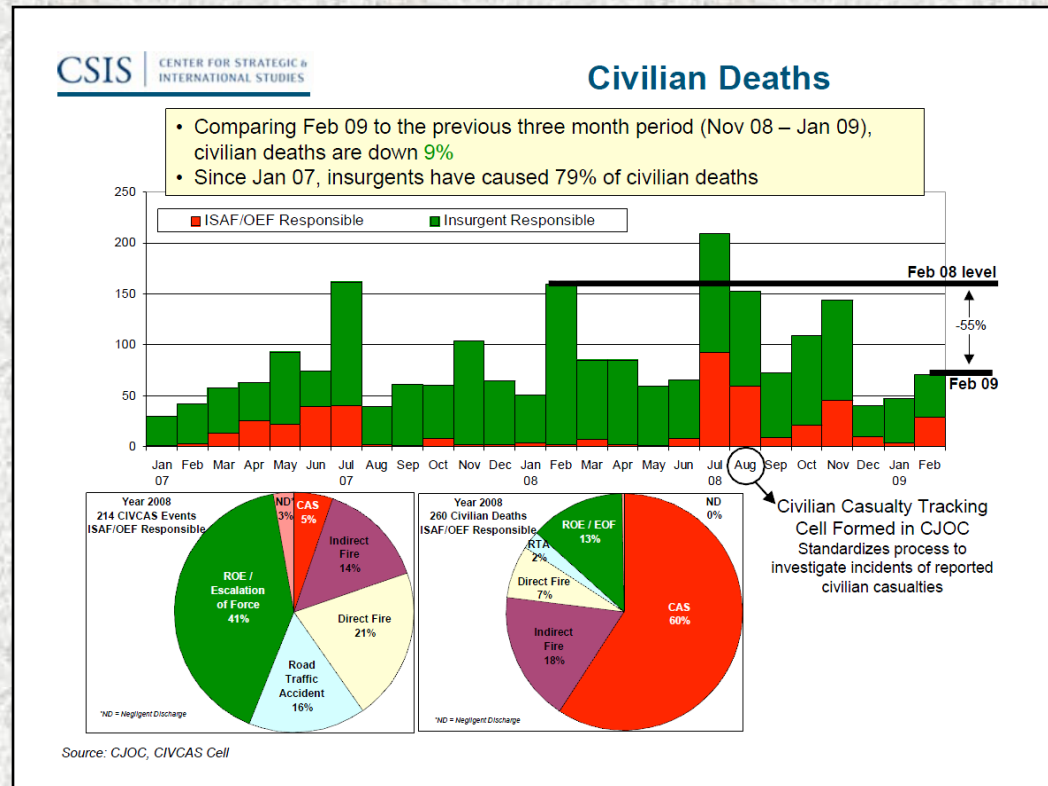
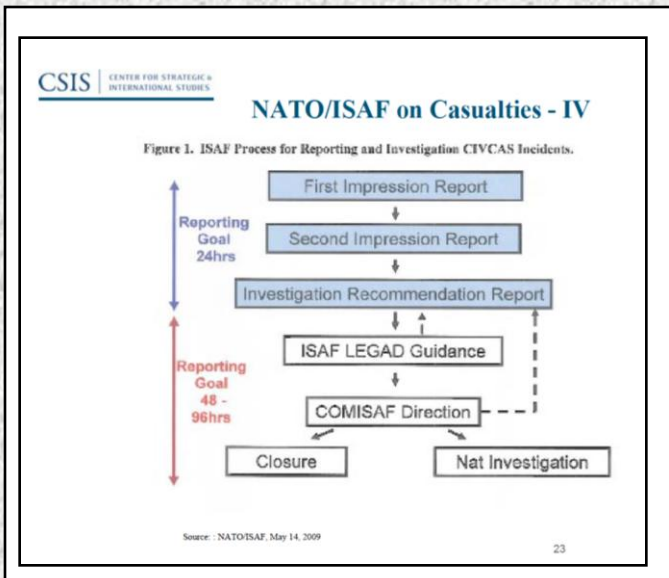


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ISAF Tracks CIVCAS Incidents

- A more stringent reporting process was developed, and ISAF began to officially track CIVCAS to better determine accountability for the deaths.¹



- This reporting allowed for detailed tracing of deaths, causes, and attribution.



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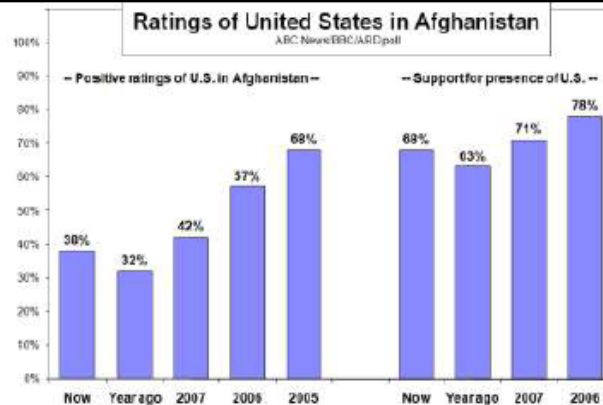
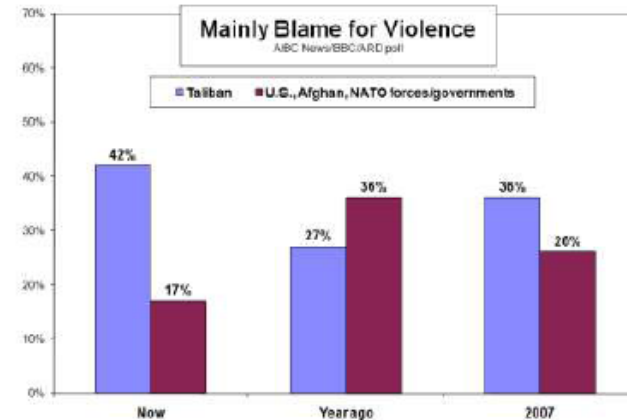


Taliban Tactics Diminish US Image

CSIS | CENTER FOR STRATEGIC & INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

The New Strategy is Having an Impact, But Afghan Support is Still Weak

This data shows that while Afghan perceptions of US activities in Afghanistan are improving as of January 2010, events in 2007-2009 negatively affected the Afghans' trust in US forces, despite most Afghans' awareness that much of the violence was attributable to the Taliban.¹



Since the data depicted on slide 1 shows more Afghans blaming the Taliban than Coalition forces, this discrepancy could indicate regional differences in perception as well as a general confusion among the Afghan people about who is responsible, or a fear within the Afghan people to admit to blaming the Taliban. Further, it could reflect the Taliban's skill at spinning information.

Source: Gary Langer, "Views Improve Sharply in Afghanistan, Though Criticisms of the U.S. Stay High," ABC Polling Unit, reporting on ABC NEWS/BBC/ARD POLL: AFGHANISTAN - WHERE THINGS STAND, Jan. 11, 2010

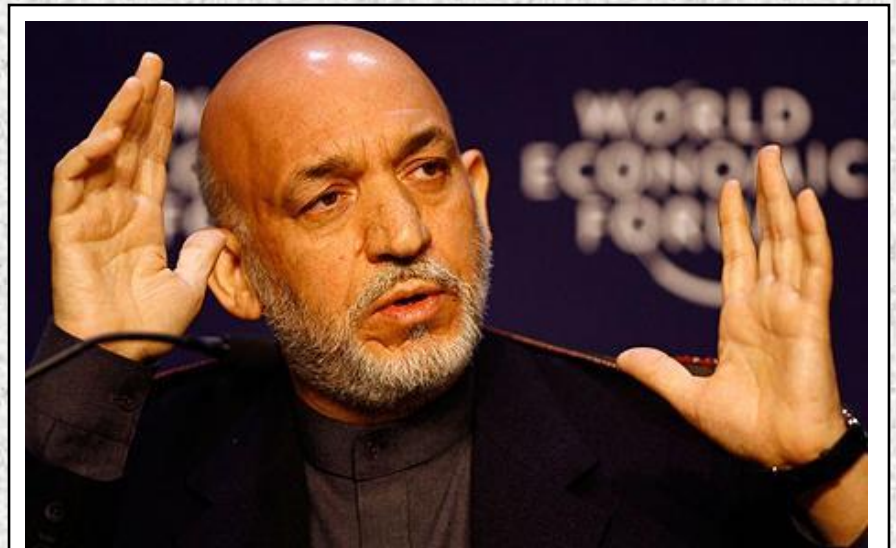
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Information Warfare

- ❑ **Afghan President Hamid Karzai states, “We cannot justify in any manner, for whatever number of Taliban, for whatever number of significantly important terrorists, the accidental or otherwise loss of civilians.”¹**
 - **Karzai’s position causes stress between the relationship of the Afghan government and US government on the best way forward.**
- ❑ **The combination of the National Afghan sentiment expressed by Karzai and the effective Taliban INFOWAR campaign puts the focus on the US to curb its activities to deflect the perception that US/ISAF forces are either purposefully or negligently targeting innocent civilians.**



Hamid Karzai



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Information Warfare

- ☐ Evidence of the successful INFOWAR aspect of the Taliban's campaign is the changing attitude of the people of Afghanistan toward the US.
 - From 2007 to 2009, most sources indicate that Afghans began to place more blame for CIVCAS on the Coalition (US, ISAF, and Afghan Government) and less on the Taliban.
 - In 2007, 26% of Afghans blamed the Coalition for local violence, and 36% of Afghans blamed the Taliban.
 - By 2009, those figures indicated the opposite: 36% blamed the Coalition and 27% blamed the Taliban.¹
 - The bottom line is that as CIVCAS incidents went up, Afghans' trust in the US went down.
- ☐ Ironically, the Taliban was responsible for most civilian deaths during that same time period.
 - Civilian deaths and their causes were tracked from January 2007 through February 2009 and showed that 79% were attributable to insurgents.
- ☐ The Taliban often shot video of civilians being killed by US air fire and published the videos to Internet sites, exploiting the casualties that were the result of Coalition fire directed at Taliban militants.



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Civilian Shield TTP and Timeline

- ❑ **Inhabiting a Building with Civilians: August 2008¹**
 - British troops identified Taliban on the roof of a building in the town of Sangin (Helmand Province), received permission to attack, and fired three missiles at the compound.
 - The Taliban had placed themselves near civilians, including women and children.
 - This attack, successfully killing many of the enemy, also killed or injured seven civilians.
 - One woman and two children were dead; four others were evacuated to hospitals for treatment.
- ❑ **NATO Reaction: September 2008**
 - Prompted by an air strike allegedly killing 60 Afghan children and 30 more adults in August in Shindad, NATO issued new guidance to tighten rules of engagement.²
- ❑ **Taking over a Town: April/May 2009 – Swat Valley, Pakistan**
 - Taliban militants hold the entire town of Sultanwas hostage.³ Up to 2,000 Pakistanis were held and used as shields in the village of Pir Baba.⁴



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Civilian Shield TTP and Timeline

- ❑ **Invading Homes and Attacking Local Afghan Security: May 2009 – Afghanistan, Farah Province**
 - **Afghan forces were attacked by Taliban militants who were sheltering throughout several homes in small villages in Farah's Bala Baluck District.**
 - **Afghan forces called in US forces for assistance, requesting air strikes.**
 - **Militants had forced villagers to stay in these homes with them, causing the air strikes to result in both Taliban and civilians killed.**
 - **An investigation team consisting of both Afghan and US personnel discovered "two mass graves and one burial site with seven individual graves" just days after the attack.**
 - **Because of the mass graves, exact numbers of CIVCAS vs. militants killed was unknown, although estimates of the total number killed were in the hundreds.¹**



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Civilian Shield TTP and Timeline

- ❑ **Training Children in Civilian Shield TTP: October 2009 – Afghanistan, Kandahar Province**
 - **Evidence that the Taliban are using children as look-outs and to plant bombs is displayed when a 12-year-old Afghan boy is sited planting a bomb in the district of Zhari.**
 - **When the boy saw he was spotted by the US helicopter, he protected himself by picking up a baby and holding the baby in front of him.¹**
 - **There were 29 documented incidents of children aiding the Taliban from March-October, and 8 of those occurred in October.**
 - **At least 12 Afghan children were killed while learning to make and place IEDs.**
 - **Taliban militants were reported by a Canadian officer to shoot at them while hiding behind children: “They actually stack them up, with eight-year-olds at the front and 15-year-olds at the back.”²**



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Civilian Shield TTP and Timeline

- ❑ **Placing Women and Children in Harm's Way: February 2010 – Afghanistan, Farah Province**
 - When Afghan and ISAF forces attempted to arrest a known Taliban commander, he emerged from a building with women and children at his side. He proceeded to hold an infant in front of his body as protection.
 - Coalition forces observed a man on top of a building speaking into a radio. When the man realized he was detected, he went inside only to re-emerge with a baby in his arms, at which point he continued speaking into the radio.
 - In Helmand Province, two men suspected to be associated with the Taliban were seen running from a car into a building which was quickly surrounded by Coalition forces. One of the men exited the building, but was holding an infant in his arms.²



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Civilian Shield TTP and Timeline

- ❑ **Placing Civilians in Known Target Areas: February 2010 – Afghanistan, Marjah Offensive (Operation Moshtarak)**
 - **NATO briefly discontinued the use of a “high-tech rocket system” after nine civilians, five to six of whom were children, were killed alongside the three Taliban who were all in a house together. The rocket hit the target, but the presence of the civilians inside the target was unknown until after the hit.**
 - **President Karzai ordered an investigation into the incident , and stated that he was “deeply grieved” by the tragedy, calling yet again for increased caution to protect against civilian deaths.¹**
 - **An Afghan commander, Gen Mohiudin Ghorl, reported several cases of Taliban positioning women and children on the roofs and in the windows of compounds where the Taliban are staying, and often firing from.²**



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Civilian Shield TTP and Timeline

- ❑ **Civilians in Suspicious Vehicles: April 2010, Afghanistan, Kandahar and Khowst Provinces**
 - **Kandahar**
 - A passenger bus advancing toward a military convoy was fired upon when troops felt they were under attack.
 - The bus contained civilians, four of whom were killed.
 - **Khowst**
 - A vehicle with four passengers approached a military convoy and was fired upon because the occupants were believed to be insurgents.
 - Local Afghan officials insisted that the members of the group, one of whom was a police officer, were civilians returning from a sporting event.¹



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Analysis of Events

- ❑ **US/Coalition forces increased the use of air strikes as an effective means to find and target the enemy in Afghanistan's difficult terrain.**
 - The Taliban developed a technology-free, cost-free countermeasure by using civilians as shields to protect their firing positions and to place in targeted buildings.
 - This caused the US to reduce the use of close air support, and to hinder the approval process for when CAS was needed.
 - The Taliban's actions, although reckless and purposeful, resulted in negative feelings toward the US from both Afghan citizens and its government, specifically President Karzai, because of the high number of CIVCAS.
- ❑ **By 2009, fighting in certain provinces, particularly Kandahar and Helmand, was on the rise and operations occurred to take back Taliban stronghold areas.**
 - Taliban militants escalated their use of civilians as shields, creating increasingly difficult situations for Coalition forces when approaching Taliban targets.



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Analysis of Events

- ❑ **A Taliban commander, Mullah Mahmoud, admitted there was some veracity to them using civilian shields, but also asked, “What should Talibs do? Should they let themselves be killed by Americans?”**
 - **Mahmoud was referencing the fact that many Taliban are from neighboring areas and must find shelter in Afghanistan, so they invade citizens’ homes.**
 - **The Taliban know that Coalition forces will not break the rules of engagement and fire if civilians are known or suspected to be present.**
 - **Additionally, if civilians are mistakenly fired upon and killed or wounded, the Taliban tells the locals that the harm was caused by OEF/ISAF/ANSF, so either way the Taliban get what they want.**
- ❑ **Ultimately, Afghans are still left unable to trust the Taliban, their own ANSF/government, or ISAF/OEF forces, because all three entities cause death of innocents.**
- ❑ **Afghan citizens are either displaced, which puts stress on the infrastructure, or they are forced into the line of fire, sometimes even in their own homes.**



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Variable Implications

(Using PMESII-PT OE Variables)

Political:

- Karzai disapproves of the US's use of air strikes, calling for more caution from ISAF/OEF forces. In Pakistan, the government tried to cooperate with the Taliban and institute *sharia*, but the Taliban did not uphold its end of the bargain, and continued to place civilians in harm's way.

Military:

- Laws of war are violated by the Taliban. Rules of engagement must change to avoid harming civilians. NATO issues several revisions calling for reduction in air strikes by 2009, which reduces CIVCAS.

Economic:

- Many Afghans resort to supporting the poppy industry, although illegal, to support their families because there is not enough work. If Taliban fighters will pay for their assistance, Afghans cannot afford not to take the offer.

Social:

- Afghan people distrust the Taliban, yet live in fear of US air strikes. They will side with whomever is in control of the area in which they live, and they do so for their own personal safety.



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Variable Implications

(Using PMESII-PT OE Variables)

Information:

- The use of videos posted to You Tube and other Internet sites is an effective tool employed by the Taliban. Taliban fighters place civilians in danger, then video the accidental harm brought to them from a US air strike, then ensure the video is viewable by as many people as possible by posting it on the Internet. Afghans and the international community see civilians being harmed and killed by the use of force from Coalition forces.
 - Use of video is one of the most productive ways the Taliban maintains “control of the narrative.”

Infrastructure:

- Taliban operatives force civilians to hide in compounds known to be inhabited by insurgents, placing them deliberately in the line of fire directed toward the target.
 - Afghan buildings and homes are destroyed, and thousands of citizens are displaced.
 - Over 500,000 Pakistanis were displaced from the Swat Valley in 2009, with no place to go that could support all their needs.¹
- Increase in CIVCAS and decrease in overall security has led to a disruption in reconstruction efforts and lessened the ability of the GIRoA to provide basic services.²



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Variable Implications

(Using PMESII-PT OE Variables)

Physical Environment:

- Afghan terrain necessitates the use of the Predator drone and similar aircraft for air strikes to protect Coalition soldiers on the ground.

Time:

- The Taliban have time on their side. Troops deployed to serve in Afghanistan rotate in and out of theater causing a disruption in the continuity of trust with the GIRoA and the local people. Conversely, the Taliban have established strongholds, particularly in the south in Kandahar and Helmand Provinces.



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POCs

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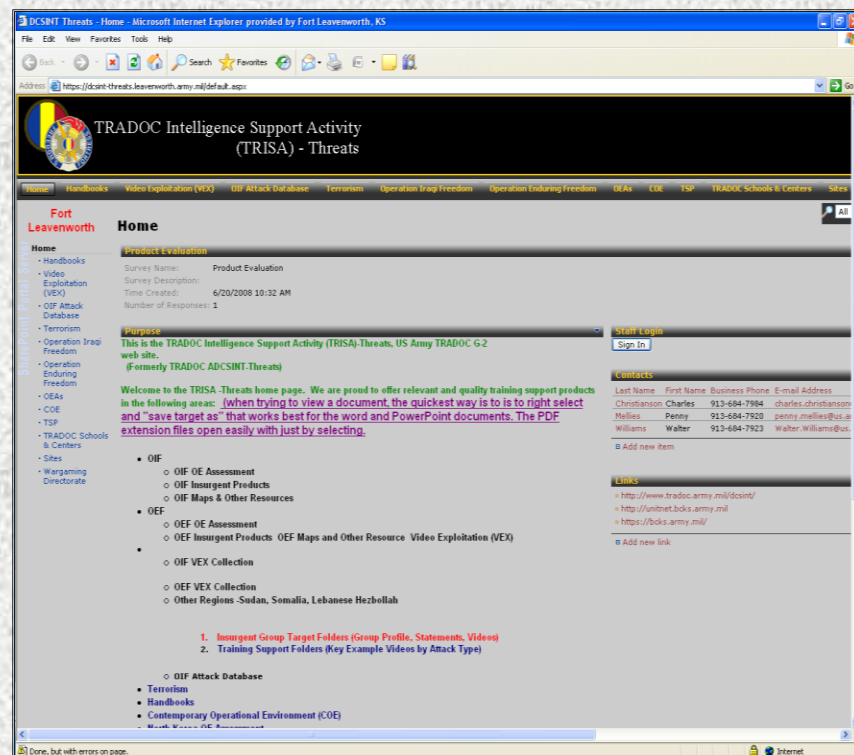


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For More Information

❑ BCKS

- Direct Link: <https://dcsint-threats.leavenworth.army.mil/default.aspx>





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Additional NIPRNet Homepages

Not all products are posted to these sites

❑ AKO:

<https://www.us.army.mil/suite/portal/index.jsp>

❑ Intelink

▪ Home:

<https://www.intelink.gov/sites/TRISA/default.aspx>

▪ Document Storage:

<https://www.intelink.gov/inteldocs/browse.php?fFolderId=21435>

Threat Products: AKO "Easy-Link"
Contemporary Operational Environment and Threat Integration Directorate

The screenshot displays the AKO 'Easy-Link' web interface. It includes a login section on the left with fields for Username and Password, and a 'Login' button circled in red. Below the login section is a 'CAC Login to AKO/DEO' section. On the right, there is a 'Favorites' section with a list of links. A red arrow points to the 'TRISA-CTID' link in the Favorites list, which is also circled in red. The interface also shows a 'Pages' section with a list of links.

1. Login
2. "Click" Files
3. Search to:
4. "Click" & Find !