

Delivering Strategic Communications and Influence in Afghanistan:

A UK Perspective



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Background

- Undertaken to inform UK modelling of stabilisation operations
 - Varying options at present across Strategic, Operational and Tactical levels
 - Study leads development work to more accurately represent the effects and dynamics of Strategic Communication and Influence
- Aspiration for a mature stabilisation wargaming suite to support
 - Policy and force structure development
 - **Validation of emerging stabilisation concepts and doctrine**
 - **Formation level Pre-Deployment Training for operations in Afghanistan**
- Not a solo project
 - Special acknowledgement due to Dr Gemma Warren, Dstl Strategic Analysis Group.

Overview

- Influence, Strategic Communication and current operations
- UK Stabilisation in Afghanistan, 2010 and beyond
- Doctrine and Definitions
- Delivering Influence and Strategic Communications in Afghanistan
 - Strategic Level
 - Operational and Tactical Levels
- Future implications
- UK modelling of Influence and Strategic Communications
- The training opportunity
- Conclusions

Stabilisation and Counterinsurgency: The role of Influence and Strategic Communication

- In Afghanistan, the beliefs, outlook and support of local nationals are the strategic *Centre of Gravity*.
- Reflected in reinvigorated western counterinsurgency doctrine:
 - US Army Field Manual 3-24: Counterinsurgency (2006)
 - UK Joint Doctrine Publication (JDP) 3-40 - Security and Stabilisation: The Military Contribution (2009)
- Winning the consent of indigenous populations is fundamental to campaign success
 - Influence and the use of Strategic Communications are key to its achievement



Battle of the Narratives...

“True conquest is the conquest of the hearts of the people, [who are] the waters that our fish inhabits.”

Atiyeh Abd Al-Rahman, December 2005



US Dept of State, Public Image

“We are way behind our opponents in understanding and exploiting the battle for people’s minds.”

**General Sir David Richards
I/SS, January 2010**



...Not a new concept!



Image: Wikimedia Commons

“The printing press is the greatest weapon in the armoury of the modern commander.”

T.E Lawrence, *Army Quarterly and Defence Journal*
October 1920

UK Stabilisation in Afghanistan: *2010 and beyond*



ENDS: The Helmand Plan

- UK plus US, Denmark, Estonia and Afghan Government
- To prepare for Afghan security lead, but not to effect it
- *Helmand population to reject insurgency and support Afghan Government*

Endstates:

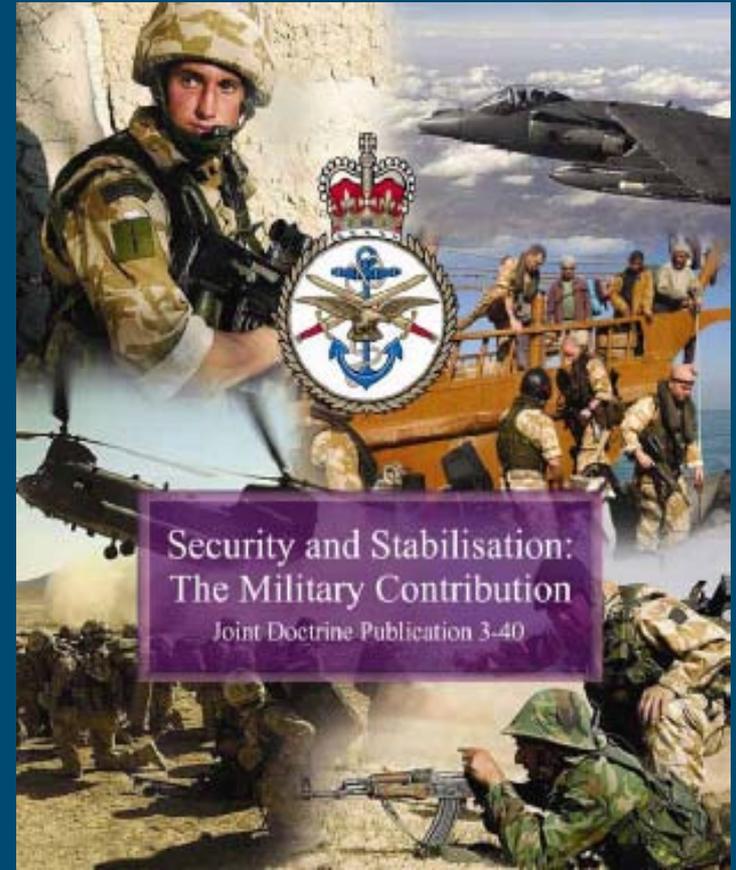
- Central districts secured for transition to Afghan Government control
- Freedom of movement within and around regional centres
- Acceptable security, insurgent basing in surrounding areas denied
- Conditions for emergence of Helmand Economic Corridor secured

MEANS

- Blend of civil and military, kinetic and non-kinetic activities in a coordinated, cross government approach
- Battle for local nationals' perceptions and support, not control of territory or defeat of enemy forces

*“Influence is the Central Idea
...the lasting and decisive element
in security and stabilisation
missions.”*

JDP 3-40 (3-2), 2009

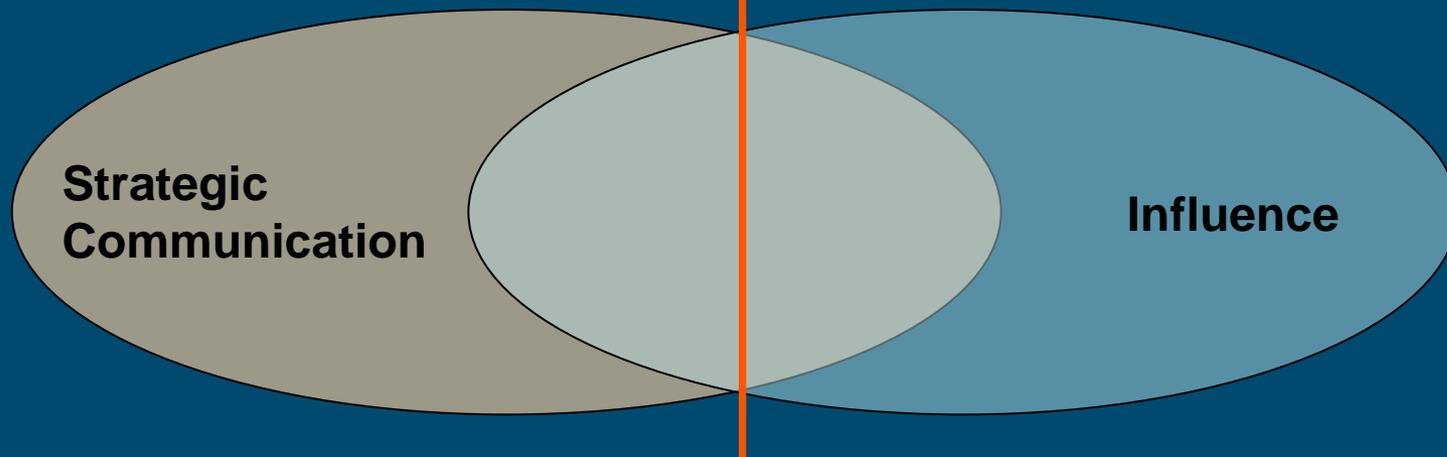


Doctrine and Definitions

- In UK doctrine, **Influence** is
 - The coordinated combination of word and deed to change the behaviour of a target audience
 - Focused on key audiences within the operational theatre
 - *NOT* the same as Influence Activities – non-kinetic approaches to achieve influence, mainly at the tactical level
- **Strategic Communication** is...
 - The top-level concept by which organisations in stabilisation missions integrate their messages at the strategic level
 - Focused primarily on regional, international and domestic audiences

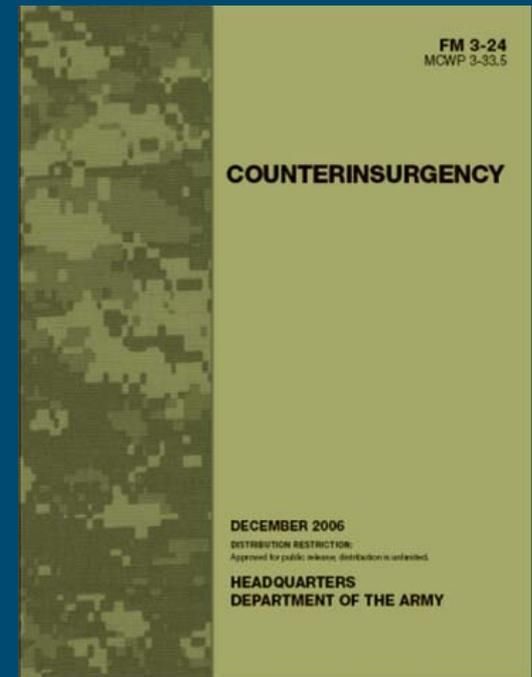
International and Regional

Operational Theatre



US COIN Doctrine:

- Information Operations (IO) are a central component, and may be decisive:
 - Aggressively targeted to influence perceptions of host nation legitimacy
 - Discredit insurgents, their propaganda and actions
 - Provide a compelling counter-narrative
- IO *may* be the decisive element in COIN
 - IO Strategy driven by 'definition of the operational environment' (IPB)
 - A separate Line of Operation and integral part of the plan
 - Delivered through strategic communication and information engagement
- Marginalising insurgents and separating them from civilian populations is the focus – not winning their consent



British Army Field Manual
Volume 1 Part 10
Countering Insurgency



Army Code 71876
October 2009



UK COIN Doctrine

- Influence is the preferred concept, driving (in theory) all planning activity from the strategic to the tactical level.
- Stratcom is *not* a well defined role, and at present there is no agreed definition.
- Doctrinal ambiguity over high level messaging has impacted delivery of a coherent Information Strategy in Afghanistan, and is only now being addressed.

Delivering Influence and Strategic Communications:

The Strategic Level



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Effective Narratives...

- Deliver the underlying story to convey meaning about specific events
- Are simple:
 - Simplicity delivers robustness and consistency, aiding credibility
 - The more complex the message, the more facets you have to coordinate and manage, and the easier it is to contradict or attack
 - Adversary messages are simple, and not bounded by our perceptions of 'truth'

The UK strategic narrative

- Owned by the Cabinet Office
- Cross Government message for Afghanistan coordinated by MoD Targeting and Information Operations
- A lack of coherency and guidance persists from the top down
 - Difficulties for deployed commanders
 - Poor messaging to domestic audiences
- Issues addressed in part by new Chief of the Defence Staff's Strategic Communication Officer
 - Benefits clearly demonstrated in Operation MOSHTARAK (ongoing)
- Unease of British military in signposting operations still very evident
- How much reaches Afghan audiences?
- In theatre delivery remains problematic:
 - High level themes tailored along cultural, religious and ethnic lines for consumption by specific elements of Afghan population
 - Flexibility - A poor substitute for simplicity?
 - No-one 'owns' the problem



Delivering Influence and Strategic Communications:

The Operational and Tactical Levels



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Case study: Op MAR KARADAD

- 52 Brigade assault on Musa Qal'eh, December 2007

Information operations



PSYOPS



Presence, Posture and Profile

Early Key Leader and CIMIC engagement



Targeted kinetic strikes



Manoeuvre

Task Force Helmand

Brigade

- 52 Brigade, October 2007, the first to utilise an Influence centric approach
- Laid foundations of structures used now:
 - SO1 Influence / Information Operations officer
 - SO3 Key Leader Engagement
 - PSE – PSYOPS Support Element
 - PIC – Press Information Centre
 - CIMIC / DIT – Development and Influence Team

Battlegroup

- SO2 Influence (artillery major)
- Influence Activity Officer (captain)
- MSST – Military Stabilisation and Support Team

Company

- NKETS – Non-Kinetic Effects Teams
- TPTs – Tactical PSYOPS Team

- Influence Activity Coordination Boards drive integration of Influence at Brigade and Battlegroup level



Brigadier Andrew Mackay, Commander 52 Brigade

External challenges

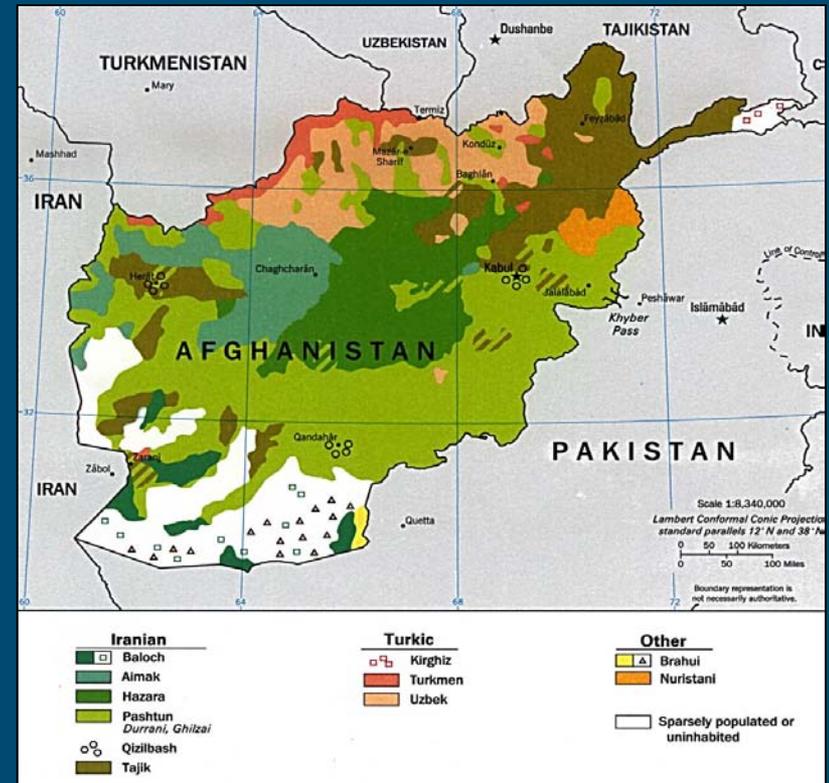
The information environment:

- Fragmented audiences...
- ...fragmented messaging

*“Treat every village as a separate
Influence campaign”*

Taliban information campaign:

- Initially disorganised, now highly sophisticated:
 - Organic media production organisation
 - Evolved from leaflets, to media embeds!
 - Effectively exploit propaganda of the deed, regionally and beyond
- Much less sophisticated at tactical level, but very effective
 - Backed with threat or use of force, and exemplary violence
 - Credibility of message is less of an issue!



Public Image: Courtesy of the University of Texas Libraries, The University of Texas at Austin

Internal failings?

- UK approach to Influence from Brigade down has varied with the rotation of formations

“We typically design physical operations first, then craft supporting information operations to explain our actions...For us, information is a supporting effort.”

Assessment of David Kilcullen, quoted in JDP 3-40 (2009)

- Care is needed in making such an assessment
 - UK formations have all sought and achieved influence, but in different ways:
 - 52 Brigade and 3 Commando Brigade – a comparison
- Mere fact that the approach differs every 6 months is however a critical area for attention:
 - Despite operational experience and endorsed best practice, variations in organisation still occurs
 - Strategic Communication (delivering the UK Information Strategy in theatre) remains the missing dimension

The impact of organisational culture

- A pragmatic ethos:
 - Operational practice leads, doctrine struggles to keep up
 - The two do not always agree!
- A persistent, individualised command culture:

‘Tactics are the opinion of the senior officer present and doctrine is something for quoting in promotion exams.’

Major-General J.P. Kiszely, Director UK Defence Academy

- Historically not unsuccessful (even in major wars)
- But lack of consistency engendered impacts long term success:
 - Personality and preference of commander drives approach, not doctrine
- Exacerbated by inconsistent 2* guidance:
 - Coordinated between national and NATO commands
 - Across multiple contingents (37 in ISAF IX under UK led ARRC)

Future Implications

- Inconsistency undermines UK credibility and contributes to a lack of campaign continuity:
 - The ‘saw tooth effect’ – a less than optimal approach
 - Greatest impact on ‘hold and build’
 - Good CIMIC initiatives do not survive transition of responsibility
 - Op MOSHTARAK is different?



- The long term really matters
 - Influence takes time
 - Enemy and local nationals take ‘the long view’

***“You have the watches...
...we have the time”***

Afghan saying

Building a coherent UK approach

- Organisation and structure are important
- Developing the correct, coherent 'corporate mindset' is key
 - 'Warfighting' ethos 'blamed' for slow progress in Helmand
 - Solution is as much about changing the use of doctrine and UK command culture as it is about shifting to a more balanced use of kinetic and non-kinetic approaches
- Better doctrine is one part of the solution
 - And has (largely) been achieved
- Training is the other
 - Stabilisation modelling presents an opportunity

Modelling Influence and Strategic Communication

The UK stabilisation model suite:

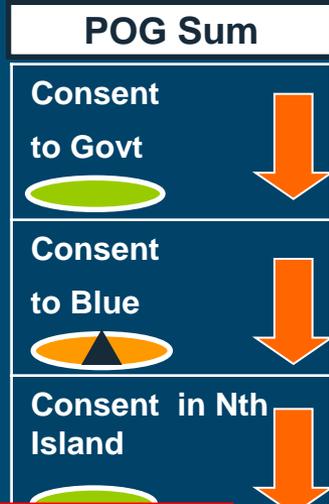
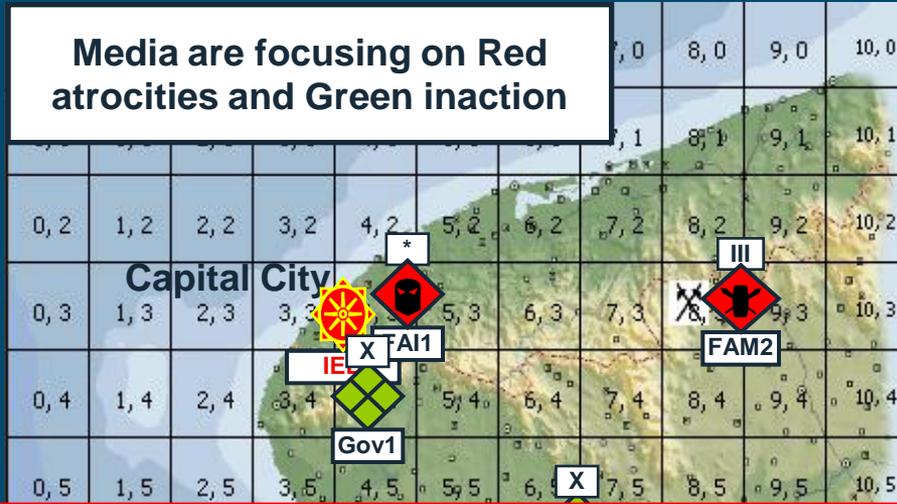
- Strategic, Operational and Tactical representations of complex stabilisation operations
- **PSOM – Peace Support Operations Model** represents a wide range of military and civilian activities in complex stabilisation operations
 - Strategic Interaction Process
 - Operational Game
- Evolving to better reflect the complexity of current operations in Afghanistan, UK stabilisation practice and doctrinal developments
- **STOAT – Stabilisation Operational Analysis Tool**
 - Battlegroup and below
 - Under development

PSOM Strategic Summary Slide - Sample

J2 Brief - Red Intent: to disrupt and undermine the government in the capital, to secure the mining region in the north, to expand southwards and force the government to agree to increased autonomy...

The President has appealed for more assistance in the threat from militias... Fact demanding the right vs Faction A mili area... Sporadic already occurred.. forces are proving

UN agencies are seeing increasing numbers of IDPs and reconstruction efforts are slowing due to the fighting

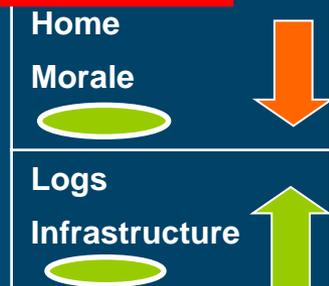


- **A semi-open, structured gaming framework**
 - Captures and records player intent and outcomes at the strategic level
 - Enables formal Key Leader Engagement through player interaction, plus informal negotiations
 - Includes a global media reporting function, enabling player Strategic Communication and messaging



Blue - 8
Green - 34
Civ - 117
Red - High

Main airfield improvements complete



<p style="text-align: center;">CNN / Fox</p> <p>Usually giving an international summary with a US perspective</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Capital City / Regional Blog</p> <p>A useful source of local opinion but the author's anonymity can be a problematic factor in planning key actor influence operations</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Associated Press</p> <p>An international summary sometimes with a US perspective</p> <p>National and regional sources can also be employed</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">BBC</p> <p>Usually giving an international summary with a UK perspective</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Local Radio</p> <p>Local radio station – likely to support the host government's view</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Time Magazine</p> <p>Post event analysis - often more informed than immediate reporting</p>
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PSOM Operational Game

- Human in the loop computer based representation at the campaign level (brigade and below)
- Models population responses to faction actions according to:
 - State Functionality
 - Security
 - Threat
 - Consent
- Consent is the primary metric for measuring Influence and the effects of non-kinetic activities
 - Information Operations
 - CIMIC
 - Posture, Presence and Profile
 - Intimidation and Reassurance stances

Operational Game Sample – Consent & Security

Client Mode Client Mode: Turn 0 (D -30) Faction - Coalition

Load/Save High Level Game Map Graphs Intelligence Headlines Campaign Progress

1) Select either Consent or Security from the list box

2) Select the faction whose Consent or contribution to Security you wish to view.

3) Select either a particular Ethnic group to display, or All.

4) Choose to either view data for the current Turn, or a comparison with previous Turns.

ID	Unit Name	X	Y	Stance
1	Div HQ /1 CAV	10	9	Logistics/HQ
2	1 Armd/1/1 CAV	10	9	Control/Stabilise
3	2 Armd/1/1 CAV	10	9	Control/Stabilise
4	3 Mech/1/1 CAV	10	9	Control/Stabilise
5	Fd Arty/1/1 CAV	10	9	Other
6	Fd Eng/1/1 CAV	10	9	Build/Humanitarian Aid
7	Spt Bn/1/1 CAV	10	9	Logistics/HQ
8	Avn (Atk) Bn/1 CAV	10	9	Control/Stabilise
9	Avn (Spt) Bn/1 CAV	10	9	Control/Stabilise
10	1 Armd/2/1 CAV	10	9	Control/Stabilise
11	1 Mech/2/1 CAV	10	9	Control/Stabilise
12	Fd Arty/2/1 CAV (-)	10	9	Other

Faction	Type	Current	Cl
Trade governing council	Power	0.07	n/a
Trade governing council	Sanitation	1.41	n/a
Trade governing council	Education	18.94	n/a
Trani governing council	Healthcare	0.5	n/a



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Work underway to...

- Enhance the role of the media in the Strategic game, and media operations in the operational game
- Represent key force elements in use in Afghanistan
 - Non-Kinetic Effects / Military Stabilisation Support Teams
- Develop Information Operations options to reflect current operational practice
 - Mass communication / Radio In A Box
- Develop target audience 'cultural proximity' as a modifier of reception and response to messaging and influence activities
- Link the effects of operational and tactical actions with strategic outcomes (long term!)

A Training Opportunity



- An immersive and challenging environment:
 - Dynamic, proactive red force(s) *contesting for consent of...*
 - Complex multifaceted human terrain *within an...*
 - Evolving information environment *in which it is suitably...*
 - Hard to 'win' !
- Command and staff training to
 - Develop understanding
 - Test and rehearse concepts, operational design and procedures according to doctrinal best practice
- A proven concept
 - 12 Brigade, 3 Division and HQ ARRC 2009
 - ARRC to use as basis for pre-Afghanistan HQ exercise, late 2010
 - Potential for US exploitation – US Army III Corps

Conclusions - 1

- Influence and Strategic Communication are key to winning local national consent in Afghanistan
 - Centre of Gravity in the UK Stabilisation campaign
 - Development of doctrine and organisation has enhanced the UK approach considerably
- Time is not however on our side
- Major challenges to long term success are posed by
 - Complex human environment
 - Sophisticated enemy information campaign
- And lack of consistency in UK message and approach to delivering it at all levels

Conclusions - 2

- Combined with the spread of endorsed doctrine, the developing Stabilisation model suite offers an opportunity to:
 - Develop understanding of Influence and Strategic Communication across UK defence
 - Validate new concepts and structures to deliver them
 - Spread a consistent approach across deploying formations
- The aim, and potential, to put Influence in its doctrinal place:
 - The driver of integrated campaign design, not a bolt on to operational planning
- Reduce variation in approach and enhance the cumulative effects of UK stabilisation operations in Afghanistan over the long term

Any questions?

