

Challenges in Utilising Key Leader Engagement in Civil-Military Operations

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Outline

- Aim and scope
- The notion of Key Leader Engagement
- Previous experiences
- Method
- Results
- Conclusions



Aim and Scope

- Description of what KLE is and how it can be used by commanders in civil-military operations
- KLE in current literature and experiences from the field
- Main challenges and pitfalls and how these pitfalls can be avoided



The notion of Key Leader Engagement (1)

- Challenging complexity of contemporary conflicts
- New approaches and mindsets
- KLE is a way to influence a population by ways of important formal or informal leaders



The notion of Key Leader Engagement (2)

- KLE is not a new phenomenon but little literature available
- No well recognised definition of *Key Leader Engagement*.
- NATO specifies KLE activities to include:
 - a) Bilateral talks;
 - b) Speeches;
 - c) Featured interviews;
 - d) Conferences.

The notion of Key Leader Engagement (3)

- ‘[..]commanders and leaders at all levels are encouraged to conduct “engagements” with decision makers at their respective level (strategic, operational, tactical) and create an influence that will be beneficial for the NATO goals and objectives [NATO Bi-SC (2009), *Information Operations Reference Book (2009)*. p. 55].
- ‘KLE is a method whereby the commitment of our own commanders is applied in a systematic and organised way to affect key persons with influence in an area of operations’.

The notion of Key Leader Engagement (4)

Who is the Key Leader?

Our representative,
e.g. commander?



The key actor in the
mission area with
whom we want to
interact?

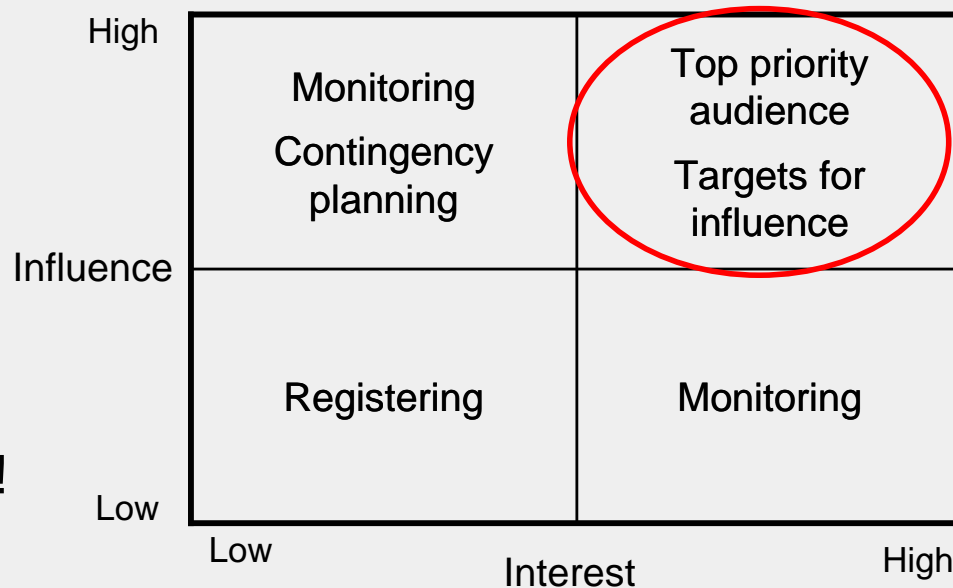
Or maybe both?

Opinions seem to diverge

We refer to the formal or informal leaders that are powerful in a society and can influence a target audience in a way that is beneficial for our operation.

Preparing and conducting KLE

- Identify who to target
- Gather information
- Create a KLEP, IBP and talking notes
- 'We cannot not communicate'
 - Words and behaviour
 - Convey the right message!
- Debriefing



KLE as part of the targeting process

- The US targeting process consists of four continuous steps – *decide*, *detect*, *deliver* and *assess*.
 1. Decide: who should be targeted (which leader)?
 2. Detect: locate the target (locate the leader)
 3. Deliver: assigns assets to action (engage with the leader)
 4. Assess: assess the effect (assess effect of KLE)

KLE challenges and pitfalls from Iraq

- Synchronise KLE efforts
- Lack of continuity
- Lack of capability
- Dimension of time and expectations
- Legitimacy



Method

- Eight semi-structured interviews with Swedish civil and military personnel
- Extensive experience from several missions, focus on Afghanistan
- Organisations: SwAF, Sida, SAK and UD
- Role in Afghanistan: POLAD; DEVAD; Chief TPT; SG SAK; Chief PO Sar-e-Pol
- Head of Operations EUMM Georgia
- Two participants from Info Ops in NBG11: one Dep Joint Effects Director, one SO PSYOPS

Results (1)

- Interacted with different Key Leaders – both official and unofficial – depended on purpose of interaction
 - Government officials always important targets
- More difficult to identify the appropriate KL to interact with than conducting the actual KLE?

'The difficulty lay in identifying the leaders that have the populations' support. Once you have managed to do that, the rest is quite easy. If you know the Afghan culture a KLE is not very different from any other type of meeting'. [SG SAK]

- The Chief TPT and the Head of Provincial Office Sar-e-Pol found it easy to identify key leaders
 - Different access to information could explain the difference?

Results (2) – Benefits of KLE

- KLE should be a vital part of every operation
- A way of creating trust
- Or the other way around
- A non-violent way of building peace

'KLE is a means to receive information, spread a message and a way of building peace' [SG SAK]

'It is a way of influencing the Afghans without having to use weapons, which is the effect we are hoping to achieve'
[C PO Sar-e-Pol]

'It is a way to reach target audiences that you otherwise would not reach and also a way of preventing problems before they arise' [C TPT]

'The better the relations, the lower the risk of having one's own forces attacked' [POLAD]

'It depends on what message you want to send and what you wish to achieve. Sometimes it can even be the very opposite – that you want to show force and distance yourself from certain individuals.' [SO PSYOPS]

Results (3) – Preparing KLE

- Go through protocols from previous meetings
- Know as much as possible about the key leader - profile and background information
- Knowing the agenda beforehand
- Rehearse meeting, include advisors
- Know what can be promised and what can not be promised



Results (4) – Conducting the KLE

- Good relationship – allow time for small talk
- Be culturally sensitive
- Prepare a list of statements and arguments that can be used to respond to expected demands – focus on what we *can* do

‘By giving the key leader something positive a good relationship and a good climate for continued negotiations can be created’.

[Head of OP EUMM]



Results (5) – Common pitfalls

Cultural Sensitivity

- Do not let an Afghan lose face
- Social skills are highly valued in Afghanistan. Be polite, respectful, do not interrupt and do not lose your temper
- Show respect for their religion

Language

- In the hands of the interpreter

Promises

- Only give promises that will be kept

'Even though you may know that a person is lying you must never accuse him of doing so openly in the meeting. Instead you should show him in a subtle way that you know that he is not speaking the truth but in a way so that he will not lose his face' [SG SAK]

'It is not uncommon that a key leader puts you under pressure and wants you to make promises; however, you must never give false expectations or promise things that you can not keep because then you will lose your credibility'
[Head of OP EUMM]

Conclusions

- A way of influencing in a soft way
- Integrate KLE into targeting process? KLE needs to be carefully defined
- Building relationships critical
- Preparations important but time consuming



Rightfully used KLE is a valuable component of C2 that the commander can use in multifunctional operations.

Questions?

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