



Headquarters
International Security Assistance Force
Kabul, Afghanistan



HQ ISAF/COM/08

SUBJECT: Tactical Directive

DATE: 30 December 2008

1. We are here to win and that victory is an Afghan victory; a victory which creates a secure population which enjoys freedom of movement, effective governance, viable institutions, and economic progress. We must always keep in mind that what we do and how we do it must support the Afghan people and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA). We must continue to take the fight to the enemy in partnership with the ANSF to defeat the insurgency and provide security to the population. 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. We will take a comprehensive approach wherein ISAF operates in a complementary way with GIROA and the ANSF. With that as background, I direct as follows:
2. The support of the Afghan people for the GIROA and their collective support for ISAF are critical to defeating the insurgency we are fighting. We have that public support at the national level. We cannot take it for granted and must strive to deepen and broaden it.
3. We must partner and conduct combined operations with Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) in support of Afghan objectives to the maximum extent possible. ISAF independent operations must be the exception.
4. Our actions both on and off the battlefield are important to our success. We must maintain our professionalism at all times, and always keep in mind the consequences of our actions. Respect for the Afghan people, their culture, their religion, and their customs is essential:
 - a. Unless there is a clear and identified danger emanating from a building and to do otherwise would threaten our ANSF partners and ourselves, all searches and entries of Afghan homes, mosques, religious sites or places of cultural significance will be led by ANSF. All responses must be proportionate and the utmost of care should be taken to minimize any damage.
 - b. All personnel will demonstrate respect for Afghans, Afghan culture, Afghan customs, and Islam in their actions and words. On the road and in vehicles, ISAF personnel will demonstrate respect and consideration for Afghan traffic and pedestrians.

c. In order to minimize death or injury of innocent civilians in escalation of force engagements, Commanders are to set conditions through the employment of techniques and procedures and, most importantly, the training of forces to minimize the need to resort to deadly force. Signals, signs, general and specific warnings (visual and audible) must be unambiguous and repeated to ensure the safety of innocent civilians.

5. We are engaged in a counterinsurgency in an extremely demanding environment. We are fighting an enemy that often cannot be identified before he has struck and then once he has, he hides among the civilian population. The battle is often waged among civilians and their property. We must clearly apply and demonstrate proportionality, requisite restraint, and the utmost discrimination in our application of firepower. No one seeks or intends to constrain the inherent right of self defense of every member of the ISAF force. However, Commanders must focus upon the principles which attach to every use of force – be that self defense or offensive fires. Good tactical judgment, necessity, and proportionality are to drive every action and engagement; minimizing civilian casualties is of paramount importance.

6. Whenever we believe we may have caused civilian casualties or civilian property damage we will immediately investigate the incident. If it is determined ISAF caused those casualties or that damage, ISAF will immediately acknowledge that fact. Acknowledgement by media, key leader engagement, by shura or other means, must happen at each level of command as appropriate. There must be a battle drill in place at each tactical level of the organization, and all investigations will be in cooperation with our Afghan partners.

7. We presently have the momentum on the battlefield and should endeavor to maintain it. In equal measure we must maintain the support of the Afghan people. We must remember that ultimately the solution in this war will be political, not military action. As such, we must always be cognizant of the consequences of our actions and public perceptions. I have every confidence in the dedication and competence of the members of our force to operate effectively within this challenging environment. Do not hesitate to pursue the enemy, but stay true to the values of integrity and respect for human life. Living these values distinguishes us from our enemies. There is no tougher endeavor than the one in which we are engaged. I direct this guidance to be briefed and explained to every Soldier, Sailor, Airman, Marine, and Civilian (including contractors) of the force as soon as practical.



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