

# Role of air forces in counterinsurgency

Business



This research paper discusses the role of United States air forces in Counterinsurgency and its contribution in the irregular warfare in Afghanistan.

It also enlighten the key points on air force asymmetric advantages, employing necessary air force capabilities, assisting partner nations in building their air forces which is one of the back up plans of United States to fight against its enemies. In the end, this paper includes the thesis which will give you summarized information about the U. S. air force plans, actions and their role in counterinsurgency in Afghanistan. Military forces have three dimensions, they are fundamentally known as Army, Air force and Navy.

While each of them poses there distinct advantages and shortcomings, yet the recent two decade of warfare from 1990 till date have seen a revolution in the on ground implementation of these three types of forces. A rapid revolution of technology has also played its part in changing the balance these three types of military forces hold in the battle field, along with the support that they extend to each other. In recent times Air force has stepped forward and prompted itself as a force with rapid projection of force, mobility and engagement; improved strategic, operational and tactical situational awareness; flexibility of targeting and reach. These strong points surely made Air force the most dependable military might by the dawn of the 21st century. However, the global scenario of warfare has changed rapidly after the Serbian War. The world can now again be envisioned as a bi polar force, in which on one side we have the modern regulation military forces, that may represent a nation, country or in some cases a group of countries like NATO, or a international interest custodian like the UN forces.

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However today the enemy on the other side is far different than what the world saw in the days of the red army. The enemy that the Blue force (a term that may be used for the world's conventional military forces that have the capability to combine together for warfare) faces in major parts of the world is unconventional. It has its own strengths, own shortcomings, own objectives which includes the advantage of being covertness and hidden; the advantage of unconventional tools of warfare and the motto that whoever is not supporting you is your enemy. In “ Operation Enduring Freedom” in Afghanistan United States air forces played a vital role and served as one of the most powerful irregular warfare capability of the United States in this region. Though any casual observer cannot see the abilities of the United States air forces and its effects which it brought to the American war in Afghanistan as compare to the military exercises by other ground forces but air forces remained very useful and helpful to the ground forces and their military activities in that part of the world. (1)The United States air forces continued to dominate the other nations or countries which tried or caused any threat to the national interest of America and its people, therefore, they hugely rely on their air forces to defend their country and take active part in irregular warfare.

Irregular Warfare is defined as the struggle amongst states or nations to influence or prove their legitimacy over the other nation. These types of wars and warfare require such abilities in addition to the capabilities of air forces to perform in traditional warfare or wars. United States air forces are well equipped with such tool kits to take active part in irregular warfare but at the same time it is necessary to understand its role in traditional wars which

gave America competitive advantage in other wars, which occurred in past, leading it to victory and proving it to be the foremost and most distinguished super power of the world. Analysis of Afghanistan and its LandIn Afghanistan the counterinsurgency operations require field artillery units to have mobility on the nonlinear battlefield, better armament and force protection. If we analyze a country like Afghanistan and what the international forces are actually fighting there, we need to first understand the ground realities of the place. For ages it has been a place with a historical distinction that no one in history has ever been able to capture Afghanistan.

For some predominant reason each force that was presumably a lethal military might of its time, chose to cross the land to move on. When Russia launched its own campaign to invade the country they failed miserably. The hard rocky mountain terrain, with scarce supply of inland resources of water and food, along with adverse climate prove a hell for any outside force. Based on these facts the present international forces choose to setup only Air force in Afghanistan as the main fighting weapon to country the insurgency issue. Irregular Warfare in AfghanistanThe targets for a military to overcome in war in any sphere of battle can be presented as stated by Colonel John Warden in his five ring theory.

Even if we may not accept Wardens theory in totality, one can assume the five rings as five targets that each military force has to conquer in war including the fielded military forces, the infrastructure, the population, organics/system essentials and leadership of the enemy forces. When the effectiveness of the air forces in the scenario of Afghanistan is studied baring in mind the above given five targets, any observer might get confused over <https://assignbuster.com/role-of-air-forces-in-counterinsurgency/>

the Slogan of Victory that has been heard in every street of USA and Europe. As despite all projection of technology and modernization of tactics, during last 10 years since 2001 till date the following facts still hold ground i. e. when an F-16 aircraft fires two PGMs to blow up a house of sand and rubble in which it is perceived that two or three insurgents are hiding that have AK-47, in Afghanistan, and might be able to make unconventional IEDs (Improvised explosive devices).

The economic equation seems totally out of balance. Not only this even if the insurgents are killed they are not a selected or specialist group of people whose training and deputation in the region has cost the force a handsome amount. Rather the next door neighbors who tend to lose a close one in the bombing itself, serve as fuel for the fire to continue. On the other hand, there is no definite infrastructure of military or economic significance that may have affected the insurgents in Afghanistan, in contrast to what we could see in Iraq. Even, the population of the Afghan country is a difficult phenomenon to understand, it is very hard to segregate the friend from the foe.

Therefore on ground application of force and that two a precise military like Air force seems to be an unclear and unsuccessful scenario.(2)If we look deep into this we figure out that there were no visible organic or system essentials in Afghanistan, as the country never had any system or regular force that the international forces are fighting and the leadership of Al-Qaeda and Taliban are still alive and free. Airpower's Asymmetric AdvantagesIn general terms of irregular warfare environment, it is defined as the airpower which has the ability to strike to the “ strategic center of gravity” of its enemy who has comparatively less significance because of its

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decentralization and diffuses in nature. Since no such certain relevant objects in shape of mass is being attacked by the opponents, which result in lack of command structure to make predictable action against the opponents. Although, the United States still hold the trump cards in his hand as it have many advantages such as “ Information, cyber operations, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance” which has no near combination of advantage to its challengers, opponents or enemies. Other than this there are some other competitive advantages that its enemy cannot meet it easily such as ability or capability of airpower to conduct exactness hit throughout the world.

Such activity gives a competitive asymmetric advantage to its warfare forces over its enemy in IW environment. Creativity, modernization, improvements, and its adaption or acceptability are the key stamps or attitude of airpower since it keeps asymmetric advantage over the opponents or challengers. In the cold war – era refers to the designed of the nuclear arms and can wait for hours in the battlefield and exchange predictable hits over few feet distances; whereas, the purpose of the airpower is to have the exact hits in contradict to hardened aims and targets. Fighter forces are designed in such a way that they can exact hit to the location either with the help of GPS stands for Global positioning system which itself a self explanatory term, or it can either be traced by the laser. (3)Airpower’s Contributions Today and TomorrowThe US fighter forces are in countless ways is now producing its invaluable combat whereas allows effects on concurrently basis in multiple areas. For about 15 years The US Air Force is having a wide spectrum of

combat in the South west of Asia and almost 25, 000 Air persons are reposition to the US Commands area of accountability.

The US Air Power has the ability of the essential achievement of success globally against the war on terror. When integrating other US military and civil forces in the rubric of IW, the US air fighters play an essential role in meeting the campaign and the achievement of the objectives of the Government. As of now the airpower has proven its valuable input in giving asymmetric strength of facing and ongoing operations. Developing Airmen for Irregular WarfareThe Air Force set of guidelines (doctrine) plays a vital role in training and educating the Airmen. These doctrines is based upon the US objectives fighting against active terrorist group in which helps in educating the partner nation forces to prepare war fighter to take the decisions and to come up with common objectives of the US. As of now the Air Force doctrine is being revising the current version of AFDD 2-3.

1, Foreign Internal Defense, 10 May 2004, and is creating a new “ doctrine Keystone publication: AFDD 2-3, Irregular Warfare which will codify how the Air Force approaches IW, including its capabilities and contributions to counterinsurgency operations”. The new doctrine will follow the upcoming policies related to the Air force that can rely upon. (4)Employing Airpower’s CapabilitiesThe contribution of navigation, communications and Intelligence helps in assuring the high access to space in Air Force’s war fighting contributions. At the bottom end of the spectrum, the “ space based forces multiplier” has shown its immense valued, such as the example of GPS as it does not only provide information related to the exactness of the weapons and ammunitions but also provide the geographical location of its “ friendly <https://assignbuster.com/role-of-air-forces-in-counterinsurgency/>

troops, insurgents, and civilians”. Accurate information of location supports to the rapid or urgent response to the close air supports and combat rescue setup and “ prosecution of time sensitive targets”. Assisting Partner Nations’ Air ForcesThe military program is included in the Air Force’s FID in “ Partner nation strategy”.

It helps in supporting the partner nations in its internal defense and development. This defense and development strategy helps in delaying the power of the activated terrorist activities by stepping or having a footholds in those countries. This increment of partner nation strategy has an ultimate impact of increasing the capability to fight against counter pressure of the activated terrorist activities and can upgrade the legitimacy by reducing the dependency of the US forces. (5)To have this program activated, the US as of now giving the trainings and education program to bring back to life of the air fighters of Iraq and Afghanistan to fight against the terrorist activities. Although it has been a slow start and despite of this fact the promissory Iraqi Air war fighting forces conducting basic ISR and mobility missions such as Al Muthana base an Air base of Baghdad started to move their activity to other small bases of Iraq in which the US providing such training related to be a strong force to form asymmetric strengthen in its Air Combating forces without involving its own nation forces. Thus, this Assisting Partner Nation strategy gives the US to invest onetime cost on the training and development on such countries that can help in being a strong forces fighting against the activated terrorist groups without involving its nation air forces.



The planning, assigning tasks, execution and assessing the war operations are the components of the JFACC's forte. Thus " planning and executing phase four (stabilize) and phase five (enable civil authority) operations pose unique challenges for the air component". Although it is to determine how to support in rebuilding the " partner nations air powers" that involves the funding of investments for the partner nations military forces and also the difficulties and complexities of the legislation, and to have a mutual contribution opportunities. " The Air Force's FID force structure may also need a relook with an eye towards improving the capacity to rebuild partner nations' air forces; for example, it is no coincidence that the most successful asset of the Iraqi air force, the C-130, is the only aircraft type it has in common with the US Air Force". (6)In Afghanistan, the counterinsurgency operations require field artillery units to have mobility on the nonlinear battlefield, better armament and force protection. In " Operation Enduring Freedom" in Afghanistan United States air forces played a vital role and served as one of the most powerful irregular warfare capability of the United States in this region.

United States air forces continued to dominate the other nations or countries which tried or caused any threat to the national interest of America and its people, therefore, they hugely rely on their air forces to defend their country and take active part in irregular warfare. These types of wars and warfare require such abilities in addition to the capabilities of air forces to perform in traditional warfare or wars. The United States air forces are well equipped with such tool kits to take active part in irregular warfare but at the same time it is necessary to understand its role in traditional wars which gave

America competitive advantage in other wars, which occurred in past, leading it to victory and proving it to be the foremost and most distinguished super power of the world. The US fighter forces are in countless ways is now producing its invaluable combat whereas allows effects on concurrently basis in multiple areas. For about 15 years, the US Air Force is having a wide spectrum of combat in the South west of Asia and almost 25, 000 Air persons are reposition to US Commands area of accountability.

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