

# CID Special Agents Carry Out Logistics Security

By Mr. Colby T. Hauser

*As dawn breaks over the Hindu Kush Mountains of Afghanistan, a small group of highly trained law enforcement professionals puts the finishing touches on an operation intended to represent the crescendo of combating corruption at Bagram Airfield. For months, U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Command (commonly referred to as "CID") special agents patiently investigated, planned, and prepared for the operation, which was designed to strike at the very lifeline of the insurgents—their pocket book.*

**L**ogistics security—a mission that is sometimes taken for granted and often overlooked during U.S. Department of Defense briefings—has exploded onto the national stage. Commanding the attention of the most senior military leaders, it has undergone a transformation from a routine warfighting task to a complex mission in its own right.

According to Lieutenant Colonel David E. Heath, commander of the 10th Military Police Battalion (CID) (Airborne), logistics security is a major issue in Afghanistan. A combined strike force of CID special agents, law enforcement professionals, and supporting combat units have taken the fight to the enemy, launching raids on Kabul and Bagram. Lieutenant Colonel Heath stated, "During one of my first briefings to U.S. Forces–Afghanistan, General [David H.] Petraeus stopped me and said, 'Colonel, this mission may be the most important thing you do as a battalion commander in combat.' Now with the success of the Kabul and Bagram raids, perhaps those who would think about trying to steal from us will think twice."

CID special agents are familiar with the logistics security mission. Whether conducting a crime prevention survey, gathering criminal intelligence, or recovering stolen goods, CID is a one-stop shop for forward-deployed commanders as well as those who remain in garrison.

The situation in Afghanistan is a logistician's worst nightmare. Landlocked—with no transportation infrastructure—and bordered by less-than-cooperative nation-states, the few goods that do make it into the country are instantly transformed

into targets of opportunity. From the most mundane items, such as toilet paper, to highly sensitive military equipment, such as night vision goggles, a litany of stolen goods have been recovered in storefronts, shops, and bazaars throughout Afghanistan. Some seemingly worthless items—such as cheap, two-way radios—can be used to build or detonate improvised explosive devices.

According to the assistant operations and forensic science officer of the 10th Military Police Battalion, the items that are found in some of the raids are "truly amazing." However, he added that ". . . what's more interesting is what we discover afterwards and how we can use that information to prevent this from happening again." These operations have helped uncover security procedure deficiencies, double agents, crooked government officials, and insurgent safe havens.

"We're not combat repo[session] men in tactical gear," said an agent assigned to the Bagram CID office. "After every raid, we get hit, so we know we're causing problems for the Taliban. Besides our property, we also get answers to the important questions: How did they do it, where is the money going, and who is it going to? Piece by piece, we can take those criminal cells apart." The additional intelligence exploited after each successful operation continues to assist the International Security Assistance Force.

The United States and its Afghan partners have successfully shut down some of the insurgent cells. The operations officer for the 10th Military Police Battalion is hopeful that

the problem will begin to subside, since more criminals are being locked away and more corrupt local government officials are being replaced by honest ones.

But combat operations involve calculated risks. For every mission that goes right, there are those that go wrong. The key to an effective operation is the ability to adapt and overcome obstacles as conditions on the battlefield change.

For the Bagram raid, there were initially eight known targets with three other possible targets—resulting in a potential 30- to 45-minute task force exposure to an insurgent attack. Before the onset of the operation, the local commander attended a *shura*, or council meeting of local Afghan tribal leaders. During that time, there were reports of suicide bombers in the area—and a suicide bomber had detonated his vest at a previous area *shura*, killing nearly everyone in attendance. Fortunately, in this case, the bombers did not attack. As planned, the commander gave the signal to launch the operation at the conclusion of the meeting and the elements of the task force quickly moved to their respective targets. However, Murphy's Law<sup>1</sup> took effect.

At first, the task force was informed that they would be allowed to hit only stores that were open and that had stolen U.S. government property plainly in sight; but those rules were changed during mission rehearsal. Under the new rules, if the property could be seen through the window or through a crack in the door, the task force could obtain the local magistrate's permission to cut the lock or kick in the door. Based on the new rules, once the mission was underway, the number of targets increased from eight to 18—resulting in an extended task force exposure time.

During the operation, task force members removed truckloads of stolen goods and shopkeepers' tempers flared. Some of the shopkeepers protested what they felt was the unjust theft of their freshly stolen property. Dissidents attempted to rally their fellow merchants, but to no avail. In the end, more than \$250,000 worth of U.S. government property was recovered during the Bagram raid.

According to a CID special agent assigned to the logistics security investigations mission for Afghanistan, getting equipment, supplies, and goods into Afghanistan is difficult; but keeping them is proving to be an even bigger challenge. Due to this trend, CID special agents have been working nonstop to ensure that they find and recover stolen U.S. property.

CID special agents have also recovered stolen items from organizations ranging from special operations forces,




**A CID special agent picks the lock of a store believed to be selling stolen U.S. government property.**

to conventional combat units, to the Army and Air Force Exchange Service. Logistics security affects everyone. This is everyone's problem.

For more information on the CID, visit their Web site at <http://www.cid.army.mil/>.

**Endnote:**

<sup>1</sup>Murphy's Law is an observation that if anything can go wrong, it will. 

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