

COIN KNOWLEDGE ASSESSMENT

[Answers in (__) refer to the page number in FM 3-24 unless otherwise noted.]

1. What is an insurgency? ANS: An organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through the use of subversion and armed conflict. (1-1)
2. Define counterinsurgency. ANS: Military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological, and civic actions taken by a government to defeat insurgency. (1-1)
3. What are the primary objectives of a COIN operation?
 - To foster development of effective governance by a legitimate government. (1-21)
 - To convince the populace that their life will be better under the host nation government than under an insurgent regime. (1-25)
4. Although each insurgency is unique, there are several factors which are common to most insurgencies. Name two. (1-5)
 - Root cause or causes of the insurgency
 - Extent to which the insurgency enjoys internal and external support
 - Basis (including ideology and narrative) on which insurgents appeal to the target population.
 - Insurgents' motivation and depth of commitment
 - Likely insurgent weapons and tactics
 - Operational environment in which insurgents seek to initiate and develop their campaign and strategy
5. What are examples of root causes of insurgencies? ANS: Religion, economic failure, corruption, repression, identity, occupation, exploitation. (FM 3-24.2)
6. There are five means insurgents employ to mobilize popular support. Name two. (1-8)
 - Persuasion
 - Coercion
 - Reaction to abuse
 - Foreign support
 - Apolitical motivations (criminals, mercenaries)
7. Explain the roles of ideology (a manner or the content of thinking characteristic of an individual, group, or culture) and narrative in an insurgency. ANS: The movement's ideology (which could be religious or cultural) explains its followers' difficulties and provides a means to remedy those ills. The most powerful ideologies tap emotional concerns of the populace. Examples of those concerns are religion, desire for justice, ethnic goals, liberation from a foreign

power. The central mechanism through which ideologies are expressed and absorbed is the narrative expressed in a story form. (1-14)

8. According to FM 3-24, what are the components of full spectrum operations? ANS: offense, defense, stability operations. (1-19)

9. There are six possible indicators of government legitimacy. Name two. (1.21)

- Ability to provide security for the people
- Selection of leaders at a frequency and in a manner considered just and fair by a substantial majority of the populace
- A high level of popular participation in or support for political processes
- A culturally acceptable level of corruption
- A culturally acceptable level and rate of political, economic, and social development
- A high level of regime acceptance by major social institutions

10. Define “operational environment.” ANS: A composite of the conditions, circumstances, and influences that affect the employment of capabilities and bear on the decisions of the commander. (3-2)

11. ASCOPE is a means to assist in understanding the operational environment. Name two of the components of the acronym. (B-3 – B-10)

- ASCOPE: Areas, Structures, Capabilities, Organizations, People, Events

12. The Geneva Convention and Army doctrine recognize that distinguishing between civilians and combatants. Soldiers will be required to understand the Rules of Engagement and how to employ the minimum amount of force to achieve the maximum desired results. Why is it important to avoid civilian casualties? ANS: Insurgents hope we will overreact by applying inordinate firepower. Killing innocent civilians creates more enemies than our operations eliminate. Pictures of civilian casualties are a great propaganda tool for the insurgents. (1-25)

13. An Army platoon finds itself faced with immediate, ineffective fires from unknown sources within or around a civilian structure. The platoon should:

- A. employ small arms upon the civilian structure until all possible threats are eliminated.
- B. make its best effort to identify the source and react in accordance with prescribed rules of engagement.** The enemy wages a propaganda campaign to perpetuate myths regarding coalition-caused civilian casualties. We must do our best to identify civilians at risk and keep our troops safe to the greatest extent possible.
- C. call in an airstrike upon the civilian structure to be sure that the threat is neutralized.

14. There are at least nine paradoxes (a statement or sentiment that is seemingly contradictory or opposed to common sense and yet perhaps true in fact) of COIN. Name and explain two. (1-27, 28)

- **Sometimes, the more you protect your force, the less secure you may be.** Ultimate success in COIN is gained by protecting the populace, not the COIN force. If military forces remain in their compounds, they lose touch with the people, appear to be running scared, and cede the initiative to the insurgents. Aggressive saturation patrolling, ambushes, and listening post operations must be conducted, risk shared with the populace, and contact maintained. These practices ensure access to the intelligence needed to drive operations. Following them reinforces the connections with the populace that help establish real legitimacy.
- **Sometimes, the more force is used, the less effective it is.** The more force applied, the greater the chance of collateral damage and mistakes. Using substantial force also increases the opportunity for insurgent propaganda to portray lethal military activities as brutal. In contrast, using force precisely and discriminately strengthens the rule of law that needs to be established. As noted above, the key for counterinsurgents is knowing when more force is needed—and when it might be counterproductive. This judgment involves constant assessment of the security situation and a sense of timing regarding insurgents' actions.
- **The more successful the counterinsurgency is, the less force can be used and the more risk must be accepted.** As the level of insurgent violence drops, the requirements of international law and the expectations of the populace lead to a reduction in direct military actions by counterinsurgents. More reliance is placed on police work, rules of engagement may be tightened, and troops may have to exercise increased restraint. Soldiers and Marines may also have to accept more risk to maintain involvement with the people.
- **Sometimes doing nothing is the best reaction.** Often insurgents carry out a terrorist act or guerrilla raid with the primary purpose of enticing counterinsurgents to overreact, or at least to react in a way that insurgents can exploit—for example, opening fire on a crowd. Less overtly violent acts such as an open presence without inciting violence and propagandizing can also elicit overreactions. If an assessment of the effects of a course of action determines that more negative than positive effects may result, an alternative should be considered—potentially including not acting.
- **Some of the best weapons for counterinsurgents do not shoot.** Counterinsurgents often achieve the most meaningful success in garnering public support and legitimacy for the HN government with activities that do not involve killing insurgents (though, again, killing clearly will sometimes be necessary). Arguably, the decisive battle is for the people's minds; hence synchronizing IO with efforts along the other LLOs is critical. While security is essential to setting the stage for overall progress, lasting victory comes from a vibrant economy, political participation, and restored hope. Particularly after security has been achieved, dollars and ballots will have more important effects than bombs and bullets. Everyone has a role in non-military nation building missions, not just Department of State and civil affairs personnel.

- **The host nation doing something tolerably is normally better than us doing it well.** It is just as important to consider who performs an operation as to assess how well it is done. Long-term success requires establishing viable HN leaders and institutions that can carry on without significant U.S. support. The longer that process takes, the more U.S. public support will wane and the more the local populace will question the legitimacy of their own forces and government. T.E. Lawrence observed while leading the Arab Revolt against the Ottoman Empire in 1917: “Do not try to do too much with your own hands. Better the Arabs do it tolerably than that you do it perfectly. It is their war, and you are to help them, not to win it for them.” However, a key word in Lawrence’s advice is “tolerably.” If the host nation cannot perform tolerably, counterinsurgents supporting it may have to act. Experience, knowledge of the AO, and cultural sensitivity are essential to deciding when such action is necessary.
- **If a tactic works this week, it might not work next week; if it works in this province, it might not work in the next.** Competent insurgents are adaptive. Insurgents quickly adjust to successful COIN practices and rapidly disseminate information throughout the insurgency. Indeed, the more effective a COIN tactic is, the faster it may become out of date because insurgents have a greater need to counter it. Effective leaders at all levels avoid complacency and are at least as adaptive as their enemies. Constantly developing new practices is essential.
- **Tactical success guarantees nothing.** Military actions by themselves cannot achieve success in COIN. Insurgents that never defeat counterinsurgents in combat still may achieve their strategic objectives. Tactical actions thus must be linked not only to strategic and operational military objectives but also to the host nation’s essential political goals.
- **Many important decisions are not made by generals.** Successful COIN operations require competence and judgment by Soldiers and Marines at all levels. Indeed, young leaders—so-called “strategic corporals”—often make decisions at the tactical level that have strategic consequences. Senior leaders set the proper direction and climate with thorough training and clear guidance; then they trust their subordinates to do the right thing. Preparation for tactical-level leaders requires more than just mastering Service doctrine; they must also be trained and educated to adapt to their local situations, understand the legal and ethical implications of their actions, and exercise initiative and sound judgment in accordance with their senior commanders’ intent.

15. When conducting a meeting with village elders or Tribal Chiefs, which of the following would you do to establish trust and good intentions?

- A. **Remove your sunglasses.** One of the keys to gaining the trust of any Afghan is to allow them to see your eyes. They consider that a sign that you are not trying to hide something from them.
- B. Politely turn down any chai/tea or food offered because of safety concerns.

C. Monitor the time you spend in the engagement to ensure that you don't take up too much of their time.

D. Make promises so they understand that the friendly force is there to help them.

16. To be successful in Counter-Insurgency, we must understand the insurgency itself. What is the insurgent's primary goal?

A. To kill all infidels and have them leave Muslim soil.

B. Gain as much wealth as they can through the opium trade.

C. **Gain control of the populace through political mobilization.** The insurgent's primary goal is to gain political power. They can only do this by winning the support of the population.

D. Defeat the Afghan government militarily.

17. "Market metrics" is one of the indicators of our success in COIN. Which of the following is an example of this?

A. Farmers get a higher price for their poppy harvest.

B. The cost for us to ship our equipment here is less.

C. Opium prices drop because more product can get to market.

D. **The cost to hire someone to emplace an IED goes up.** A rise in the cost to hire an individual to emplace an IED is a good indicator of success because it means that the hired individual is not willing to take the risk in doing so. This is usually due to them having an alternate source of income, such as a stable job.

18. The Pashtu are the largest ethnic/tribal group in Afghanistan. As an "honor-based" society, they live their lives adhering to a traditional code of ethics known as Pashtunwali. In Pashtunwali, who determines the amount of Saz (blood money) owed a family when you have caused a death and they are demanding Badal (retaliation)?

A. The local Afghan National Police (ANP) chief.

B. **A Jirga of tribal leaders.** A Jirga of tribal leaders determine the amount of Saz necessary to appease the family dishonored. You do not negotiate with them, but rather a Consequence Management Team which has been developed to "right the things we do wrong."

C. The local mayor.

D. None of the above. We don't pay anything for mistakes.

19. As we are trying to gain the support of the people for the GIRoA, we want to do all that we can to assist the people we encounter. We are seeing an increase of refugees/displaced persons returning home (an indication of COIN effectiveness). Because of this, there are more problems arising from "squatters" occupying the returnees homes. If a person approaches us on the street asking us to get a squatter out of their home, we should assist them in evicting these other people.

A. True.

- B. **False.** The proper response is to direct the family to the local Afghan National Police (ANP) officer for adjudication by the Afghan judicial or adjudication system. That way the people see their government assisting them. Additionally, when we allow the local officials to deal with these types of problems, they tend to be familiar with the community and may already know the specifics of the issue.

20. As you are moving dismounted through a village, an old man approaches you speaking in Dari saying; “kasee meetaana ma Ra kumak kona?” Keying in on the word “kumak” and based on his demeanor, you do not feel that he is a threat. What is he asking for?

- A. He is asking you for money.
B. **He is asking for help.** As the word “kumak” is “help” or “assist” in Dari and based on his demeanor, you can figure out that this man is asking for help. If you are able to identify a few key words in the native language in your AOR, it can assist you greatly in your operations and lead to good will between us and the people.
C. He is asking if you want to buy a rug.

21. To be successful in counterinsurgency we must transition from enemy-centric warfare to population-centric practices. What is an example of these practices?

- A. Special Forces focused on raids.
B. Consolidate our forces in large bases for force protection.
C. **Isolate the insurgents from the population.** When we isolate the insurgents from the support of the population, they inevitably cannot survive. This is accomplished through us and the Afghan Government establishing trust and providing a secure environment for the people to go about their daily lives.
D. Building or training the Host Nation military in the image of U.S. forces.

22. You are planning for a mission in a Taliban controlled village within your AOR. Taking into account our counterinsurgency objectives, which of the statements below best reflects our practice of those objectives?

- A. Requesting double the basic ammunition load for your element.
B. Finalizing your vehicle load plan and checking proper equipment tie downs in case you are hit by an IED.
C. Brief your soldiers that since this is a Taliban controlled area, to be prepared to fire at anything.
D. **Coordinate with and include the local Afghan National Army unit in your planning and execution.** We must integrate the Afghan National Army in all facets of our operations. When we include them in our operations, we allow the Afghan people to “see” their government providing security with their best interests in mind which allows them to make the logical choice in favor of the government as opposed to the Taliban.

23. Afghanistan is a totally land-locked country bordered by six other countries. Which of the following is not one of them?

- A. China
- B. Turkmenistan.
- C. **Pashtunistan.** Although the establishment of Pashtunistan as an autonomous country is the desire of the Pashtu Tribes, it is not at present, an actual country.
- D. Uzbekistan

24. Just as the colors of the U.S. Flag have significance, so too does the flag of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA). These colors are black, red, white and green. Which of the following expresses what each of the colors symbolize?

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|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Black-Submission to God Red-Martyrdom White-Purity Green-Sacrifice | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> B. Black-Martyrdom Red-Sacrifice White-Purity Green-Submission to God |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> C. Black-Sacrifice Red-Sacrifice White-Light Green-Purity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> D. Black-Darkness Red-Blood White-Cleanliness Green-The earth |

25. You are in a small local village meeting with different people on the street trying to find out what their concerns and needs are. A man beckons for you to sit outside his shop and says, “hamraaym chaay beKhoreen.” What is he asking you to do?

- A. Look at all his shop has to offer you.
- B. **Sit down and take a break.** The key word here is “chaay” or “chai” which means tea. So the man is asking you to have tea with him. You will find that it is much easier to gain information if you sit down with someone in a relaxed atmosphere that they are comfortable with. Remember that you will most likely talk about simple things initially such as where you are from and family before you speak about the actual issues you wish to discuss.
- C. Have tea with him.

26. Integration of military and civilian efforts is crucial to successful COIN. Name two of the types of military and civilian participants US soldiers are likely to encounter during COIN operations. Provide examples. (2-2)

- Multinational (Italian, Germany, etc) and Host Nation (Iraq, Afghanistan) forces
- US Government agencies (Department of State, US Agency for International Development)
- Other governments’ agencies
- Nongovernmental organizations (Red Cross, Doctors Without Borders)
- Intergovernmental organizations (United Nations, North Atlantic Treaty Organization)
- Multinational corporations and contractors (Halliburton Energy, McDonald’s)

27. The US military has traditionally been charged with the mission of fighting and winning the nation's wars. In COIN, the military has an additional mission of supporting broader government efforts by conducting stability operations. Define stability operations. ANS: Stability operations encompass various military missions, tasks, and activities conducted outside the United States in coordination with other instruments of national power to maintain or reestablish a safe and secure environment, provide essential governmental services, emergency infrastructure reconstruction, and humanitarian relief. (FM 3-07)

28. COIN and -Stability operations usually consist of five lines of effort. Name two and give examples of those two. (FM 3-24, FM 3-07)

- **Establish civil security.** Prevent renewal of fighting; Protect civilians and infrastructure; Ensure freedom of movement; Develop host nation security forces; Secure borders and access.
- **Establish civil control.** Establish legal framework; Reform justice system; Ensure access to justice; Promote public access; Develop police and corrections.
- **Restore essential services.** Provide essential civil services; Build education system; Support assistance to dislocated civilians; Support public health programs; Address legacy of past abuses; Promote peaceful coexistence.
- **Support to governance.** Promote civic participation; Promote free media; Build legitimate executive institutions; Develop systems of political representation; Promote civil society.
- **Support to economic/infrastructure development.** Reconstruct infrastructure; Create viable workforce; Protect and manage natural resources; Build financial and economic institutions; Limit illicit economic activity.

29. An approach to COIN that is currently being employed is known as clear-hold-build. Explain the primary purpose of those three elements. (5-18 – 5-21)

- **Clear.** A primarily offensive tactical mission that requires the commander to remove all enemy forces and eliminate organized resistance in an assigned area. The force does this by destroying, capturing, or forcing the withdrawal of insurgent combatants. Expelled combatants must be prevented from reentering the area.
- **Hold.** Ideally, host nation forces execute this part of the mission. Offensive missions against the insurgent may continue, but the primary effort is defensive—to secure the population and key infrastructure. Operations are designed to establish a firm government presence and to recruit, organize, train, and equip local security forces.
- **Build.** Stability operations dominate the build phase. Forces carry out operations to remove the root causes of the insurgency, improve the lives of the inhabitants, and strengthen the host nation's ability to provide effective governance. Host nation forces should have the primary responsibility to protect the populace.

30. What can you do to avoid being considered as an “unwanted guest” by Afghans?

- Learn their values system and respect it!
- Learn what it means to be polite in an Afghan context and always incorporate this in your dealings with people.
- Learn how the locals greet each other and use it.
- Learn as much of the language as you can. You don't have to be conversant, but you must show that you are trying.
- Learn as much as you can about the social, economic, political, familial, and tribal background of the people you interact with. Often times just demonstrating that you're making an effort to learn will buy you a lot of credibility, and will go a long way toward building a relationship.

(CJTF 101 Warfighting Handbook, 2d Ed, JUN10, p15)

31. What are the benefits of including ANA and ANP in US military operations?

- They know more about enemy and local populace than US ever will.
- They know where the enemy moves, how he conceals himself, and how he interacts with local populace.
- Involvement in planning and debriefs improves ANSF professional competence.
- Shows populace that GIRA can provide security.

32. CERP (Commander's Emergency Relief Project) funds should be used

- to respond to urgent humanitarian relief and reconstruction requirements.
- to assist the Afghan people, not ISAF or ANSF personnel.
- to provide jobs for local people.
- To support projects suggested by local Shura.
- For projects that are simple to execute and sustain.

33. How should you respond when questioned by the media?

- Remember that the media will report what you say, but not necessarily in the context in which you said it.
- Discuss only first-hand knowledge.
- Listen, pause, think, and then answer.
- Be honest and forthright, never lie.
- Talk facts. Don't speculate.
- Do not discuss politics.

34. Name three historical principles for counterinsurgency. (1-112 – 1-136)

- Legitimacy is the main objective

- Unity of effort is essential
- Political factors are primary
- Counterinsurgents must understand the environment
- Intelligence drives operations
- Insurgents must be isolated from their cause and support
- Security under the rule of law is essential
- Counterinsurgents should prepare for a long-term commitment

35. Name two contemporary imperatives of counterinsurgency. (1-138 -1-147)

- Manage information and expectations
- Use the appropriate level of force
- Learn and adapt
- Empower the lowest levels
- Support the host nation