

The Detainee Personal Identification Data Collection Process in Afghanistan

by CPT Richard J. Hughbank, 519th MP Bn, Ft Polk, LA, and
MAJ Jennifer L. Curry, Total Force Integrator, Ft Leonard Wood, MO,
members of a CALL Combined Arms Assessment Team (CAAT)

When the U.S. Army began Operation ENDURING FREEDOM and their campaign in Afghanistan, the Afghan Military Forces (AMF) were already holding up to 4,500 detainees throughout the Coalition Joint Operational Area (CJOA) Afghanistan. U.S. forces were directed to collect personal identification data (PID) on all potential Taliban and al-Qaeda members in an effort to identify America's newest enemies.

Collecting PID creates a better database for identifying potential enemy threats and to screen these individuals to determine if they meet the criteria to be treated as detainees. If an individual meets the specified criteria, he is taken into custody in a detainee status and secured for further processing. Host Nation forces would encounter pockets of resistance throughout the area of operation (AO) and secure them for U.S. forces to conduct PID collection operations. These operations were conducted in conjunction with multiple battlefield operating systems (BOSs) in a combined arms effort to properly conduct the collection of PID. PID collection packets, consisting of names, fingerprints, DNA, and digital photos, have become a key tool in America's "War On Terrorism."

Prior to the arrival of the PID team, Special Operations Forces (SOF) liaison with leaders of the local indigenous population ensuring candidates for detainee status actually exist at a prescribed location and that the area is prepared for military forces to enter and conduct PID collection operations. A PID collection operation consists of eight different teams (refer to attached schematic).

➔ **Command and Control (C²) Team.** The C² team consists of key leaders and support soldiers. Key members of this team include the battalion S3 (or similar type capability), a battle captain, a communications soldier, a driver/gunner, and a Staff Judge Advocate (SJA) officer. This team is located inside the security perimeter in a position that allows for observation of the entire operation. Members of the team maneuver throughout the PID area, ensuring a smooth transition between the various stations and positive control over the detainees until they reach the holding area. The S3 is responsible for overall mission accomplishment, proper detainee handling, and

guidance in any case not covered during the mission brief. The battle captain ensures mission success by conducting liaison operations with the SOF on the ground and ensuring the PID collection site is established and operational. The communications specialist carries FM capability for communicating with air support and other friendly forces in the AO, and as a secondary communications system for internal communications with the security forces on the perimeter for conducting detainee operations. Communications are maintained internally between the security positions and the C² communications specialist. Actions on the objective and Rules of Engagement (ROE) are discussed during mission rehearsals. The driver/gunner remains vigilant of the surroundings throughout the PID collection operation. The SJA representative provides legal assistance/guidance as needed throughout the entire operation.

➔ **Perimeter Security Team.** The perimeter security team is comprised of two military police (MP) squads and a platoon leader (security element size is based on METT-TC). Organic MP teams are placed to ensure 360-degree outward coverage of the perimeter. The perimeter size is determined by METT-TC. The number of detainees dictates the size of the holding and staging areas and the number of personnel at the mobile interrogation team (MIT) stations. The MIT stations determine the distance necessary to ensure privacy with each detainee during the screening process. The PID and medical teams need minimal space to conduct operations within the security perimeter.

➔ **Staging Area Security Team.** The staging area is a preliminary location from which to isolate and establish control over those individuals selected for processing. The staging area security team consists of two soldiers with either



Photo from website
<www.news.bbc.co.uk>

an M4/16 or an M249 in tactical overwatch positions. All detainees are bound at the feet and hands and have hoods covering their heads for disorientation. Two guards are positioned with their backs to the center of the perimeter to prevent potential fratricide if weapons fire becomes necessary.

➔ **Personal Identification Data Collection Team (PID).** MP and Criminal Investigations Division personnel are ideal for PID collection operations based on their organic functions of detaining personnel and conducting investigative operations. The PID team is the second stage in all PID collection operations. A team consists of three soldiers, with multiple teams operating simultaneously if enough security teams are available. The PID gathering builds or adds to an existing database through the collection of deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) samples by swabbing the mouth and collecting hair follicles, fingerprints, and digital photos of the upper torso area. All individuals being detained must be put through this process for data collection. Upon collecting the data and storing it in the proper containers, all information will be processed through the appropriate database.

➔ **Mobile Interrogation Team (MIT).** The MIT consists of interrogators and interpreters. The MIT determines if a detainee fits the screening criteria given by higher headquarters. The screening process takes approximately 10-15 minutes per individual. If a person does not fit the criteria, they are turned back over to the leader of the indigenous population or, in this case, the AMF. If they do meet the criteria, they are taken into U.S. forces' custody and escorted to the medical station.

➔ **Medical Team.** The medical team consists of a unit medic at a minimum, but a Physician's Assistant is preferable. The medical team conducts a cursory medical examination of the detainee for any previous injuries sustained before coming under the control of U.S. forces. Any injuries identified are noted accordingly and, if necessary, tended to at that time. The medical team also allows for prior notification at the theater collection point if more advanced medical attention is necessary upon arrival.

➔ **Holding Area Team.** The holding area is established to maintain control over those individuals who have been identified as meeting the criteria by the MIT, and who will remain in U.S. forces' custody for transport out of the AO to the theater collection point. The staging area security team consists of two soldiers with either an M4/16 or an M249 in tactical overwatch positions. All detainees are bound at the feet and hands and have hoods covering their heads for disorientation. Two guards are positioned with their backs to the center of the perimeter to prevent potential fratricide if weapons fire becomes necessary.

➔ **Detainee Security Team.** Once the detainees are brought into the PID operations security perimeter, the detainee security team will take charge of all movement and detainee control until they are either released back to the AMF or transported back to the theater collection point. Each security team consists of two soldiers that secure the detainee throughout the process. Once the detainee enters the holding area, the detainee falls under the control of the holding area security team, and the detainee security team returns to the staging area to conduct another PID escort. This process continues until all detainees have been processed through the PID and screening areas. The perimeter security teams will only assist if absolutely necessary to help maintain positive control. Overall security of the detainees while in flight is also the responsibility of the detainee security team.

To date, PID collection operations have been conducted in over five different areas throughout Afghanistan, collecting data on over 3,500 potential members of terrorist organizations.

The military police corps is playing a critical role in the PID collection process. From the collection of data, to the security of detainees during the operations, and subsequent aerial escort missions back to the collection points, the military police have proven to be a true combat multiplier in Afghanistan. ☺