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SUBJECT: FOOD FOR THOUGHT PAPER: ROUTE CLEARANCE PACKAGE IN C-IED OPERATIONS

1. AIM.

The aim of this paper on “Route Clearance Packages in C-IED Operations” is to provide an initial overview of how route clearance packages can be more efficiently employed, to take profit of the time they spent on patrolling on the same area, to get information to be feed into the intelligence process, enabling further actions to attack the IED network operating against the routes being cleared and reducing this way its capability to re-seed the routes cleared in the short term.

2. INTRODUCTION.

The analysis of route clearance (RC) operations after action reports in the Afghanistan Theatre of Operations (ATO) shows two main gaps in this type of actions:

1. Low IED detection ratio.
2. The routes cleared do not remain clear, being re-seeded hours after the clearing operation has been performed.

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To improve the IED detection ratio, a broader array of detection techniques and equipment have to be developed and fielded, to take profit of the different sensor capabilities and to assure that all the sensors work in a complementary manner. In that way, the flaws of a particular sensor would be covered by the capabilities of the other sensor in the system¹.

Also, International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) reports state that the highest IED detection ratio is achieved by soldiers with experience and specific training to detect changes on the terrain and the environment. Thus, besides the development and improvement of new detection technologies, Ground Sign Awareness training should also be one of the main subjects in all arms training programs for all the personnel deployed in high IED threat areas of operation.

Concerning the route re-seeding problem, possibly the best way to reduce the quick IED emplacement on routes previously cleared, seems to be the reduction of the capabilities of the IED networks operating along the routes being cleared. This capability reduction has to be achieved through the actions included in the three C-IED pillars: defeat the device, attack the network and prepare the force.

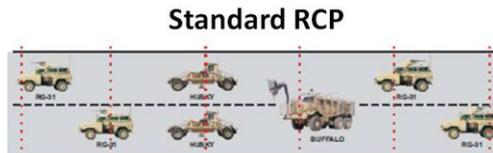
Although standard RC, as it was designed, fits in the defeat the device pillar, providing Route Clearance Packages (RCP) additional capabilities could enable these units to gather broader information that could be used to feed the intelligence cycle and thus the targeting process, enabling further actions against the IED networks, reducing their capabilities to re-seed the routes cleared in the short term after the clearing operations.

3. STANDARD RCP.

¹ A broader discussion of the different detection techniques is stated on the NATO C-IED COE Paper "Route Clearance. Current Shortfalls and Possible Way Ahead".

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The organization and concept of employment of standard RCP imply that this kind of units can be used just in a reactive way. RCP limited personnel and the specific design of its vehicles and assets, focused on detection, interrogation and neutralization of the devices found along the route, prevent RCP to take any further action.



ACTION	CAPABILITIES	OBSERVATION
1. Leaving base		
2. Movement along road	Detect ground changes Detect basic local population behavior changes	No trained personnel to question local population in depth
3. Passing through village	Detect basic local situation changes	No trained personnel to question local population in depth or to engage local leaders No CIMIC/IO trained personnel No Biometric capability
	Adopt immediate defensive reaction Call for support	No early warning assets (UAVs, Air Recce) No enough combat power to enable offensive reaction further than immediate defense No trained personnel in detainee operations No Biometrics capability
5. Detect – Confirm – neutralize IED	Destroy the IED by BIP	No technical exploitation capability Limited (level 1) tactical exploitation capability
6. Back at base	Basic debriefing to unit S-2 staff	Company S-2 limited capabilities

As a consequence of the mentioned limitations, standard RCP do not collect valuable and available information focused on the IED networks operating in the area. RCP just detect and remove the devices found, without feeding the intelligence process with useful information that could enable further offensive actions against the IED involved personnel.

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4. REINFORCED RCP.

Standard RCP reinforced with additional capabilities would be able to do something else than detect and remove IED along the route being cleared. Additional capabilities focused on information gathering, would enable RCP personnel to obtain more IED network information that would be added to the changes detected during the clearing operation due to the significant amount of time RCP are present in the same areas while performing their periodic clearing operations.

A summary of the main additional capabilities that could improve the RCP information gathering capabilities is shown on the next table:

Reinforced RCP for C-IED Operations

ACTION	RCP REINFORCED WITH	OUTPUT
1. Leaving base		
2. Movement along road	HUMINT capability HUMINT Team RCP personnel with HUMINT training	Detect ground changes Detect local population behavior changes and their causes
3. Passing through village	HUMINT capability HUMINT Team RCP personnel with HUMINT training	Detect local situation changes and their causes
	IO capability IO Team RCP personnel with IO training	Foster civilian population support
	CIMIC / KLE capability CIMIC Team RCP personnel with CIMIC training	
4. Detect enemy forward observer emplacer triggerman cameraman	Early warning assets (UAVs, Air Recce) Additional combat power Combat Tracker Dogs Detainee operations capability MP Team RCP Personnel with Detainee ops training	Capture IED related enemy personnel
	Tactical questioning capability Counter Intelligence Team RCP Personnel with Tactical Questioning training	IED network intelligence gathering
	Biometrics capability Biometrics Team RCP Personnel with Biometrics training	
5. Detect – Confirm – neutralize IED	EOD team Non-destructive neutralization devices (<i>GOLD</i>)	Technical intelligence gathering
	WIT capability WIT Team RCP personnel with WI training	Tactical intelligence gathering
6. Back at base	Company Intelligence Support Team (<i>integrated in the RCC unit staff</i>)	In depth IED threat debriefing

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The additional capabilities showed on the table will configure the ideal Reinforced RCP. The elements added to the RCP will have to be tailored to the specific situation and the threat in each area of operations.

5. MAIN ISSUES TO BE CLARIFIED.

A. Task

The aim of adding capabilities to the standard RCP is to enable it to collect available information related to the IED network operating against the route that has to be kept cleared in order to allow other organizations to implement actions against the IED network. By hindering the IED network, its ability to re-seed the route cleared will be reduced, and the route will remain clear longer².

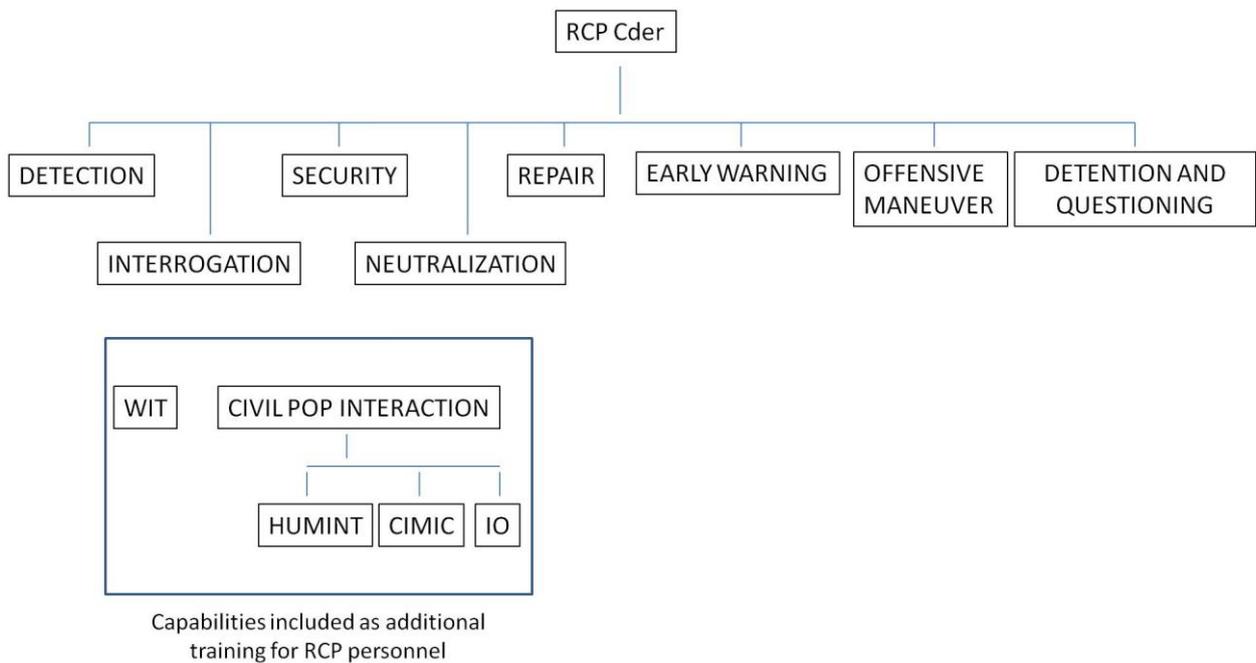
The main task of the reinforced RCP will not change and will continue being to ensure mobility and provide maneuver support, focused on the IED threat. Reinforced RCP is not meant to attack the network directly, but, while performing the clearance operation, it certainly could obtain information to develop actionable intelligence that would enable other stakeholders in the C-IED community to perform further “attack the network” actions. Reinforced RCP should be considered as one intelligence gathering asset among all the assets available. The main difference is its capability to obtain information focused on how and why the IED network is attacking the ground lines of communications in the area, and this focused information could be used as one piece to help setting the overall network picture.

B. Command and Control.

² Of course, the reduction of the IED network capabilities will have effects on the emplacement of IED along the route and against other targets in the area.

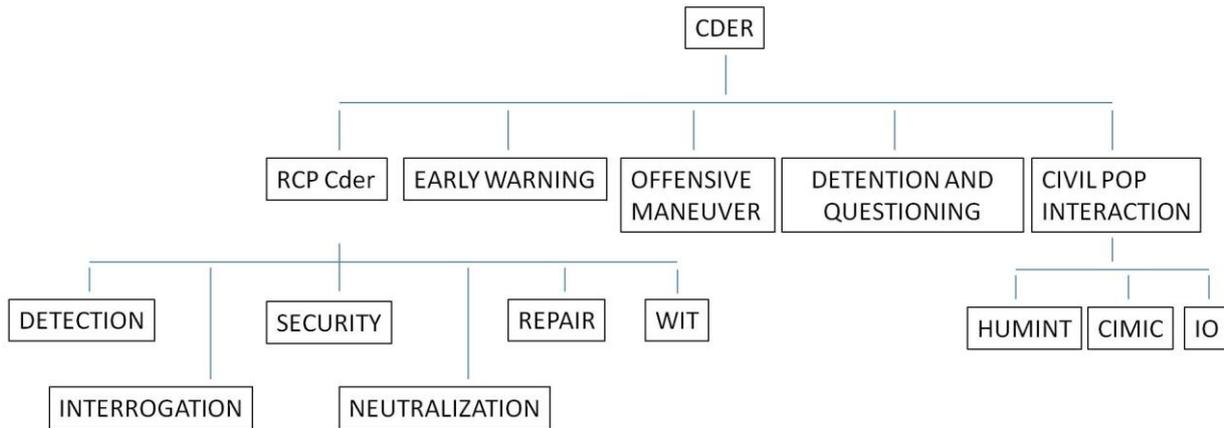
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Standard RCP are commanded by a platoon leader, who is able to command and control the elements and actions to be performed during a RC operation. The addition of even some of the capabilities listed above will increase the complexity of the operation and it should be determined whether the current RCP leader would be able to command, control and coordinate all the different actions to be carried out. In this case, RCP leader training program will have to be reviewed to include the specific areas concerning the additional capabilities of the reinforced RCP. Also the specific command and control equipment likely will have to be adapted and/or reinforced to face the challenges posed by a higher number of teams to be controlled.



Other option is to include a higher level of command to command and control all the teams involved, with the RCP as one element in the reinforced RCP. Since the main task of the RCP (reinforced or not) is to ensure mobility and provide maneuver support, focused on the IED threat, it seems more logical that all the added elements are subordinated to the core element to fulfill this task (the standard RCP).

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C. Scarce Resources

The addition of all the capabilities mentioned before by including new teams in the standard RCP would imply the use of critical and scarce resources, needed in other areas or assigned to different tasks.

A possible way to minimize the impact of the new resources requested is to prioritize the resources available depending on the importance of the routes to be kept clear, the threat level and the specific characteristics of the operational environment along the route to be cleared. As mentioned, the list of additional capabilities shown in this document have to be considered as the most complete one, and therefore the most difficult to achieve.

An alternative way to reach the additional capabilities on the reinforced RCP with a lower increase on personnel is to provide the specialized training needed to the RCP personnel. The main disadvantage of this procedure is the increased workload for RCP personnel, but it must be taken into account the fact that most of the task concerning the information gathering will not be simultaneous to the specific clearing tasks (detect-

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confirm-neutralize). Also training programs should be reviewed to ensure the goals are fulfilled without wasting of time and resources.

D. Information management

Intelligence gathering training provided to RCP personnel or the integration of specialized intelligence personnel in the RCP structure will enhance the C-IED focused information gathering during the clearing operations, to ensure that the information gathered is completely fed into the intelligence cycle and that RCP personnel is looking for the right information when on patrol, intelligence staff within the RC upper level (Route Clearance Company - RCC) should be empowered.

To achieve this capability, a Company Intelligence Support Team (COIST) or a similar organization with the same capabilities should be integrated in the RCC staff and its work should be coordinated and integrated in the overall intelligence cycle.

The coordination should include the requirements for collection of information from higher, the assignment of these requirements to the most appropriate RCP and sending the information once collected by the RCP during the RC operation.

6. Possible interferences with other attack the network actions

RC units are not stand-alone units. They are included in the command and control structure like all the other elements in the force deployed to accomplish a mission in an area of operations.

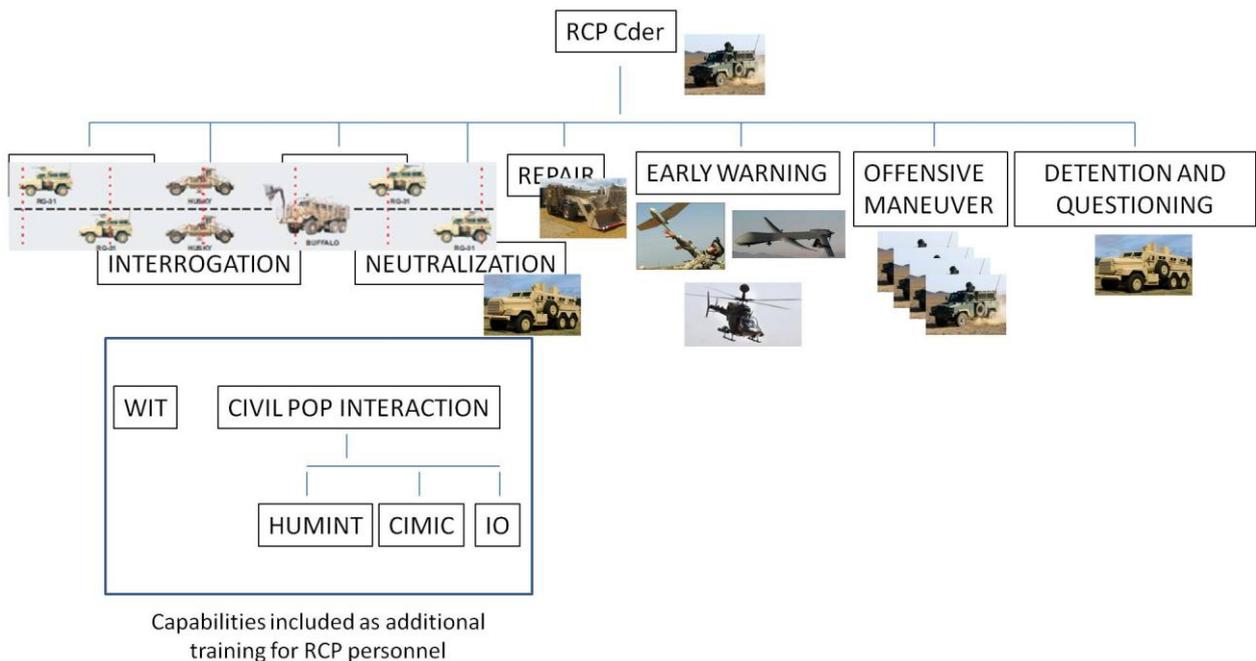
Command and control structures should issue the necessary orders and coordination procedures to ensure that interferences with other C-IED elements or activities do not happen and that there is no duplication of efforts or wasting of critical resources.

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7. Excessive unit footprint

An excessive number of vehicles will hinder the unit mobility and will increase maintenance and supply requirements, making the execution of the task assigned more difficult and increasing the risk both to personnel and to the mission accomplishment.

An option to reduce the RCP footprint is to increase the number of double-hatted personnel, providing the different tasks to be performed by the same person do not have to be carried out simultaneously, instead of increasing the number of one-task specialized teams.



8. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

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So far, the employment of RCP in a pure reactive approach has been proven not as effective as desired: the number of IED events along cleared routes is not decreasing significantly and cleared routes are being re-seeded in the very short term. Reinforcing the standard RCP with additional capabilities, focused on intelligence gathering, RC operations could be more efficient, if the same unit during the same operation could be able to remove the devices found along the route and to collect valuable and available C-IED information that would enable further actions to attack the IED networks operating against the route network in the area, reducing its capabilities to re-seed in the short term those routes .

The reinforcement of the standard RCP does not mean that the reinforced unit will shift its main task from ensuring mobility to attack the IED network. It only implies the additional employment of RCP as one more intelligence collection asset among all the assets available, whose findings will be fed to the general intelligence cycle to provide a better IED network picture.

It is recommended a further analysis have to determine the optimized organization; command, control and coordination procedures; and the integration in the overall C-IED intelligence process.

Main assumptions that could be used as starting point for the recommended analysis are:

- a. Reinforced RCP should have a footprint as reduced as possible, to avoid mobility, supply and maintenance problems and to reduce the number of resources that would have to be devoted to this unit.
- b. To reduce the unit footprint and assets and personnel requirements, inclusion of highly specialized teams for each different task should be avoided in favor of double-hating current RCP personnel providing the tasks to be performed do not have to be carried out simultaneously. As a minimum, it is considered necessary

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that the personnel assigned to the RCP should have training on Ground Sign Awareness and Human Intelligence Techniques.

- c. Added teams should also include double-trained personnel (i.e. Military Police and tactical questioning; CIMIC and basic Information Operations).
- d. To avoid the commitment of all the scarce resources aforementioned in all and every RC operation, addressing at the same time the main shortfall of the standard RCP when operating as a stand-alone asset, a compromise between the standard RCP and the fully reinforced RCP could be reached, depending on the enemy tactics, techniques and procedures to be expected:
 - RC operations with high enemy personnel encounter probability (i.e. enemy using last-minute IED arming, command-wire initiation, high percentage of IED attacks videorecording, etc.): in this situation all the additional capabilities shown for the reinforced RCP should be deployed, to increase the chances of enemy detention and questioning, feeding the intelligence channels with actionable intelligence while it is still useful.
 - Rest of RC operations: deploy the standard RCP but always with its personnel trained additionally on the capabilities depicted as add-on capabilities apart from their engineer specific training (as a minimum: human intelligence, civil-military operations, information operations, and weapons intelligence). Teams providing the remaining additional capabilities (early warning, and detention and questioning) should be on-call as part of a quick reaction force.
- e. Command and control structure of the reinforced RCP should take into account the fact that the main task is ensure mobility along the route assigned.

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- f. A capable COIST should be part of the RC unit. The main tasks of the RC COIST (RCC) would be: gather the requirements for information (RFI) from upper levels in the intelligence structure; establish the RCC own RFI; assignment of these RFI to the RCP that has to address that requirements, ensuring that every member of the RCP understands what they are looking for; carry out after action debriefings to be sure all the information collected during the RC operation is registered; and feed all the information collected into the intelligence system, according to the established procedures.

- g. Command, control and coordination procedures have to be defined to avoid duplication of effort, resources wasting or even interferences between the RCP information gathering activities and the other collection actions being performed by different intelligence elements in the same area of operations.

- h. The concept of RCP employment as an information gathering element should be considered in RC operations doctrine and other RC related publications.

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