

COPY

Covering ~~SECRET~~



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE/NEW ZEALAND DEFENCE FORCE COVER SHEET To accompany documents to Minister of Defence



Subject: NZSAS (TF81) OPERATIONS IN BAGHLAN PROVINCE AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER 2010
MOD File No. MoD Tracking #.
NZDF File No. NZDF 3130/DSO/4
Priority: ROUTINE
Contacts: 1 PSR(sen)1, PSR(IC)3

Sheet not to exceed one page. Please complete shaded areas.

Purpose: The purpose of this note is to inform the Prime Minister of the operations conducted by the NZSAS Task Force and Crisis Response Unit (CRU) in Baghlan Province, Afghanistan on 22 August and 03 October 2010.
Recommendations: Note that the intelligence concluded that the insurgent group responsible for the ambush of the NZPRT patrol on 3 August 2010, was commanded and comprised of personnel from the village of Tigiran, located within the adjacent province of Baghlan.
MOD/NZDF Consultation: NZDF
Minister's Action: Signed / Noted / Agreed / Approved / Declined

Signature: J MATEPARAE Lieutenant General Chief of Defence Force Date 10 December 2010

DSO [3]5 CLASSIFIED DOCUMENT Received: 10 DEC 2010 File No: 3130/DSO/4 DO NOT DESTROY EXCEPT VIA COORD

Covering ~~SECRET~~





# NEW ZEALAND DEFENCE FORCE

*Te Ope Kaatua o Aotearoa*

HEADQUARTERS NEW ZEALAND DEFENCE FORCE

Private Bag, Wellington, New Zealand

Telephone: ~~PSR(sen)1, PSR(IC)3~~ Facsimile: ~~PSR(sen)1, PSR(IC)3~~ Email: ~~PSR(sen)1, PSR(IC)3~~

3130/DSO/4

10 December 2010

Minister of Defence

## NZSAS (TF81) OPERATIONS IN BAGHLAN PROVINCE AUGUST AND OCTOBER 2010

### Purpose

1. The purpose of this note is to inform the Prime Minister of the operations conducted by the NZSAS Task Force and Crisis Response Unit (CRU) in Baghlan Province, Afghanistan on 22 August and 03 October 2010.

### Background

2. On 3 August 2010, a daytime NZPRT Patrol led by Lt O'Donnell was ambushed in the North Eastern region of Bamian province by an insurgent group, which operated from the Talewa Berfak district of Baghlan province, approximately 20km away.

3. As a direct result of this insurgent activity, the NZSAS Task Force supported by ~~PSR(S)2, PSR(S)3~~ and ISAF Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) assets, commenced active intelligence gathering on this insurgent group. The intelligence gathered over a two week period established that the insurgent group's leadership and base of operations was centred on the village of Tigiran, within the Talewa Berfak district of Baghlan. Commander ISAF, General Petraeus, approved the designation of the two principal insurgent commanders of this group as "medium value targets" and their names were added to the ISAF Joint Prioritisation Effects List (JPEL)<sup>1</sup>.

4. From the intelligence provided the CRU, supported by the NZSAS, developed an operation plan targeting the insurgent leadership which was approved by the Afghan Ministry of Interior (MOI) and Commander ISAF to disrupt the insurgent operations centred on Tigiran village. The operation was conducted on the night and early morning of 21/22 August, and a follow-on operation was conducted on the night 2/3 October.

<sup>1</sup> ~~PSR(S)1~~

C

○

○



**Outcome: Operation One 21/22 August 2010**

5. The intent of the combined CRU/NZSAS Response Task Force (RTF) operation was to disrupt the Tigran based insurgent group's capacity and capability to target coalition forces, including the NZPRT within the Baghlan-Bamian border region. Prior to the launch of the operation the Ministry of Interior Criminal Investigations Division issued two Arrest Warrants for the two principal insurgent commanders and these were to be enforced by the members of the CRU participating in the operation.

6. The combined RTF comprising <sup>PSR(S)1, PSR(S)2, PSR(S)3</sup> CRU personnel, <sup>PSR(S)2, PSR(S)3</sup> NZSAS personnel, and supported by ISAF ISR assets, and coalition air support from helicopters and planes operated in the vicinity of Tigran village. The RTF landed near the village at 0030 hours on Sunday 22 August. The RTF was on the ground for approximately three hours and in that time sustained one casualty (<sup>PSR(sen)1, PSR(IC)3</sup> – please protect). Coalition air support and the RTF engaged a number of insurgents throughout the operation and it is estimated that up to nine insurgents were killed by the coalition air support. The RTF searched three buildings and destroyed a quantity of weapons, ammunition and explosives. During the operation two of the three buildings searched caught fire, the first was caused by explosives igniting the structure and the second was caused by an unattended cooking fire left burning when the inhabitants departed.

7. Following the operation Afghan citizens from the Talewa Berfak district alleged that up to twenty (20) civilians had been killed by aerial bombardment and twenty (20) houses destroyed by fire. Based on these allegations and reported in the New York Times, a joint assessment team composed of representatives from the Afghan Ministries of Interior and Defence and ISAF officials conducted a full assessment of the operation. The assessment team visited the provincial and district capitals, the hospital where the alleged casualties were receiving treatment, viewed the gun tapes from the coalition air assets and spoke to the NZSAS personnel. As a result of their investigation, the joint assessment team concluded that the allegations were baseless and categorically cleared the actions of the RTF and coalition air of all allegations. The assessment concluded that "having reviewed the evidence there is no way that civilian casualties could have occurred". The joint assessment team's report has not been released beyond Headquarters ISAF and our knowledge of the findings are based on the comments provided by the NZSAS Task Force commander, who was permitted to read the report.

8. Furthermore, Headquarters ISAF has determined that the Tigran based insurgent group's capacity and capability to conduct further operations has been severely disrupted as a result of the operation, with nine insurgents killed, a quantity of weapons, ammunition and explosives destroyed and the two insurgent commanders reported to have moved to safer areas, including Pakistan and more remote areas of Baghlan province.



**Outcome: Operation Two 2/3 October 2010**

9. Following on from the successful operation of 22 August, further intelligence reported that the principal insurgent commander had returned to Tigran village and was located at his house. The RTF then commenced planning for a follow-on operation based on this new intelligence; this was approved by the Ministry of Interior and Headquarters ISAF. The operation was conducted in a similar style to the previous mission, but utilised different landing and recovery zones. The Task Force comprised <sup>PSR(S)1, PSR(S)2, PSR(S)3</sup> CRU personnel, <sup>PSR(S)2, PSR</sup> NZSAS personnel, and was supported by ISAF ISR assets, and coalition air helicopters and planes. Upon landing the Task Force quickly secured the target building and searched the premises, but no Afghans were present and the force extracted from the area without incident.

10. Headquarters ISAF assess that this operation had a further disrupting effect on the insurgent group, notwithstanding the fact that the insurgent commander was not detained by the CRU.

---

**Recommendations**

11. It is recommended that the Minister:
- a. **Note** that the intelligence concluded that the insurgent group responsible for the ambush of the NZPRT patrol on 3 August 2010, was commanded and comprised of personnel from the village of Tigran located within the adjacent province of Baghlan.
  - b. **Note** that the Response Task Force comprising CRU and NZSAS personnel and supported by **PSR(S)2, PSR(S)3** ISAF ISR assets and coalition air targeted the insurgent group located within the village of Tigran on 22 August and 3 October 2010.
  - c. **Note** that ISAF has determined that the Tigran based insurgent group's capacity and capability to conduct further operations has been severely disrupted as a result of the operations.
  - d. **Note** that the allegations into civilian casualties and destroyed houses were investigated by a joint assessment team and they concluded that the allegations were baseless and cleared the actions of the Response Task Force and coalition air of all allegations.
  - e. **Refer** this note to the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs.

  
**J. MATEPARAE**  
Lieutenant General  
Chief of Defence Force



