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- **The Canadians in Afghanistan** Yesterday's Washington Post had a very badly written story on a Canadian raid in Afghanistan, but the more we read, the more we shook our head in disbelief. To capture an insurgent compound some miles from a forward base in Kandahar, the Canadians used: 230 infantry, two companies, and a mechanized battlegroup of company size including tanks, and two helicopters. 420 troops were involved in all.
- The raid appears to have taken days - if not weeks - of careful planning. The article does not make it clear, but it looks like the last 3-4 miles were covered on foot because of concern that the approach road to the insurgent compound might be mined. The last two miles were covered in three hours to avoid alerting the insurgents. The Canadians reached their target at dawn. There was a firefight lasting a few minutes, the Taliban managed to escape, every last one, and indeed the compound was stuffed with material to make IEDs. The compound was blown up. No Canadian casualties; the lieutenant colonel commanding the operation was pleased at the outcome.
- It's possible the insurgents were alerted when a dog attacked some Canadian troops and they shot the dog
- Now lets suppose this was Kashmir and not Afghanistan. An Indian battalion receives intelligence of insurgents using a compound nearby. As soon as night falls, a major takes an infantry platoon and traveling light - on foot - reaches the compound in 3-4 hours. The platoon immediately sets up its attack. Every effort is made to cover the last couple of hundred meters stealthily, but a dog attacks the troops on one flank. Shots are fired.
- What happens next is very simple. Since they are now discovered, the platoon charges the insurgent house. There is no question but that the major leads. If there is a small number of insurgents in the house - as there appear to have been in the Canadian case - the whole show is over very shortly. If any insurgents are seen to escape, a rifle section chases after them and does its best to bring down as many as possible. Time being of the essence, no one wastes time planning, calling battalion, or any of that nonsense. At some point the section heads back, usually if it is out of ammunition. Meanwhile, reinforcements may or may not come up from battalion.
- Everyone goes back to base to eat and to catch up on sleep.
- That's it: another night in Kashmir.
- Now, of course it isn't all that simple as we've made it out, but Indian company commanders have a great deal of latitude to display initiative. The Indians don't have 20, 30, 50 communications channels going all the way all the way to battalion, brigade, division, corps, and so on. So they don't waste time talking to anyone, beyond the company commander (the major) informing his CO.
- They don't waste time doing complex reconnaissances because in the time that takes, the enemy might depart. There are no helicopters, no attack aircraft circling overhead, no drones. The platoon may not even have night vision gear. They rely on their eyes and their ears. Though this is changing, India has been spending a lot of money on upgrading infantry battalion equipment. There is no artillery support; because of the need to move fast and light, no mortars will be tasked. The heaviest weapons available will be a couple of Carl Gustavs and an automatic grenade launcher or two.
- The Post article makes clear the Canadians are frustrated by the enemy's ability to move rapidly. The Canadians need only read the article on their own operation to see what is the problem. If you're going to plan a raid against a single compound with greater care and in greater detail than you did for the Dieppe raid, and use three companies, and each of your men is humping 70-100 pounds of gear, then you are going to be moving at a tenth of the enemy's speed, and that's all there is to it. We wonder what the Canadians were expecting by way of opposition? A hundred Taliban? They knew they were targeting a compound, and its likely they had information so detailed they knew the brand of toilet paper the insurgents use. (This is sarcasm, the Taliban doesn't use toilet paper.) We venture to guess they knew they were facing just a handful of men.
- Now, any Indian familiar with the Indian Army will tell you the catch in our scenario. It is more than likely 2-5 Indian troops will get killed, and as many wounded, and there is a high probability the major will be killed if not seriously wounded.
- But this brings us to the crux of the matter. You either believe in your cause or you don't. If your first, second, and last priority is force protection and not fighting the enemy, you honestly, seriously, really need to go home.
- And our readers will know we are addressing the Americans and not the Canadians. And it goes without saying, given this was a carefully preplanned operation, once the insurgents fired shots, if it had been the Americans, you would have seen air artillery and helicopter strikes even if it was just one

would have seen an, artillery, and helicopter strikes even if it was just one compound.

- We invite our Indian readers to tell us in more detail how the Indian Army would have done the compound operation.