



SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
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WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1000

APR 28 2016

MEMORANDUM FOR SECRETARIES OF THE MILITARY DEPARTMENTS  
COMMANDERS OF THE COMBATANT COMMANDS

SUBJECT: Investigation Review – Secretary of Defense Guidance

Following the airstrike in Kunduz, Afghanistan, on October 3, 2015, that resulted in civilian casualties at the Doctors Without Borders Trauma Center, the investigation identified causal factors and specific deficiencies. I am committed to ensuring that similar incidents do not occur in the future. Therefore, after consulting with the Chairman, I am directing the Combatant Commands and the Services to take the following actions within the next 120 days to improve the Joint Force and mitigate the potential for similar incidents in the future:

- Conduct a comprehensive review of relevant policies, tactical directives, and rules of engagement (ROE) to clarify conflicting or confusing directives. Ensure they provide appropriate guidance for mission accomplishment, including the prevention of civilian casualties, in the complex, changing operational environment.
  - Identify and resolve problematic guidance to the Joint Force. Where deficiencies cannot be resolved at the Combined Task Force level, elevate concerns through the chain of command.
  - Clarify hierarchies of competing policies and authorities and ensure that all units in the area of operations understand which rule sets to apply under what circumstances. Conduct additional certification as necessary.
- Review pre-deployment training requirements to ensure Service members and their leadership are certified on the application of all policies, directives, rules, and risk management procedures, and the employment of those authorities in complex environments.
  - Incorporate the Kunduz scenario into pre-deployment training as an example of the complex mission environment into which units are deploying.
  - Assess pre-deployment certification techniques to ensure full comprehension of policies, tactical directives, ROE, and other relevant guidance to the Joint Force, and adjust if the guidance is insufficient.
- Review mission command systems – including those of our partners – to identify effective methods to maintain unified understanding of the battlespace and enhance interoperability.



- Identify incompatible technological systems and generate solutions to enhance interoperability among operational forces.
- Establish a standard operating procedure to address contingencies when systems fail.
- Construct reporting requirements and develop alternate and contingency communications plans to flag and mitigate breakdowns in equipment designed to enhance unified understanding of the battlespace.
- Identify events that decrease the effectiveness of mission command systems, including troop rotation and relief-in-place timelines, and develop processes to mitigate the impact of such events.
- Review Risk Management procedures for current operating environments.
  - Establish or refine procedures to ensure risk management is integrated into mission planning and execution by all units for all operations. These procedures should identify hazards and mitigate associated risks.
  - Assess command climates for complacency and unnecessary assumption of risk, and identify and implement specific corrective measures.
- Incorporate lessons learned from the Kunduz strike in leadership development and operational training to emphasize the role of individual judgment and accountability in the execution of mission command.
  - Emphasize the exercise of professional military judgement and ownership of the tactical fight in leadership development courses and technical specialty schools.
  - Maximize dissemination of the lessons learned from the Kunduz incident, through tools such as Army Training Network (ATN) videos.

Thank you in advance for your attention to this important matter.



cc:  
Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff  
Under Secretary of Defense for Policy  
Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness  
General Counsel of the Department of Defense