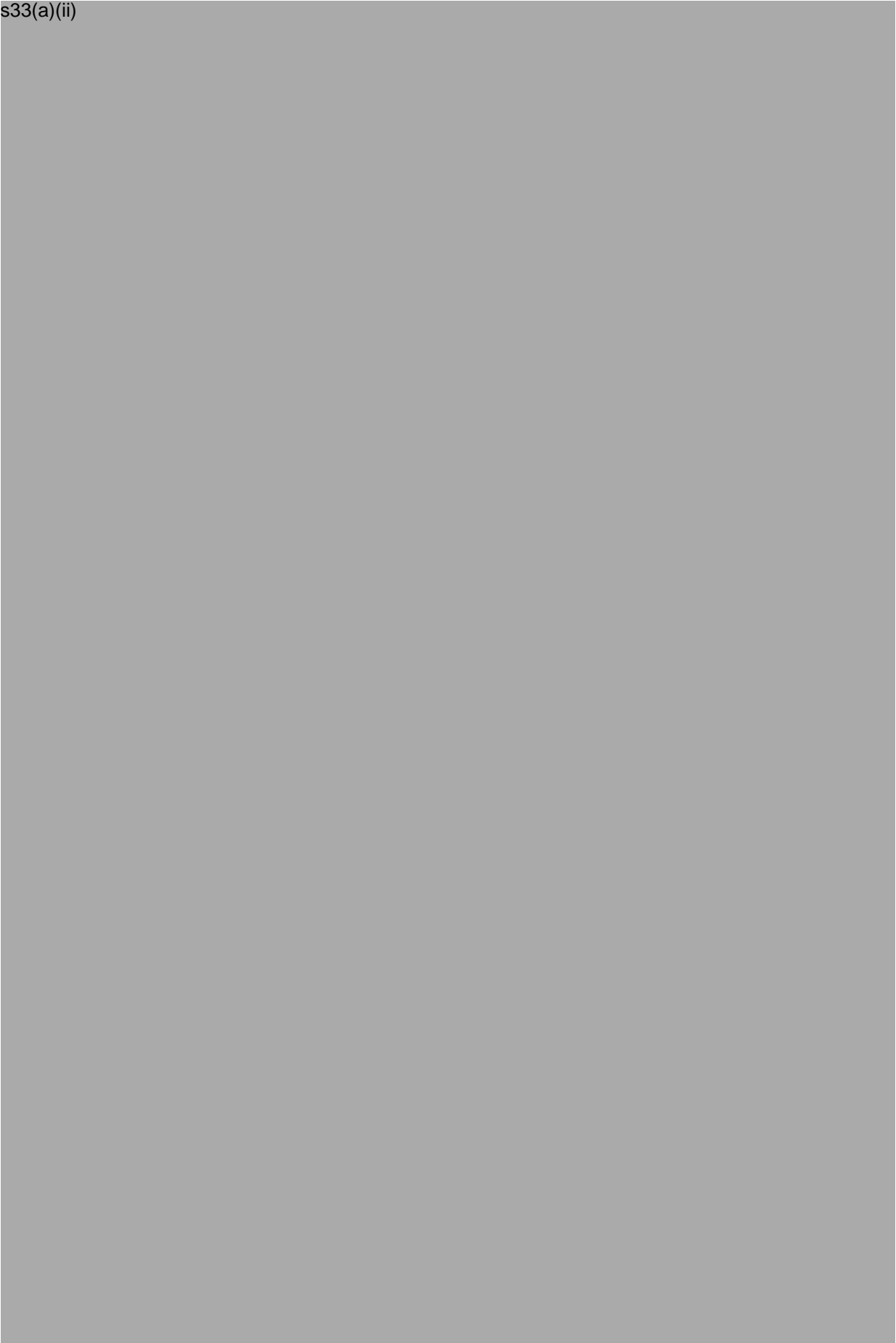


DTG	07 August to 11 September 2012
Location	Multiple
Units Involved	SOTG (FE-A & FE-B) and ANSF (NDS-W, PRC-U & NIU)
POC Name	LT s47E(d)
POC Phone Number	s47E(d)
Reference	s33(a)(ii), s47E(d)

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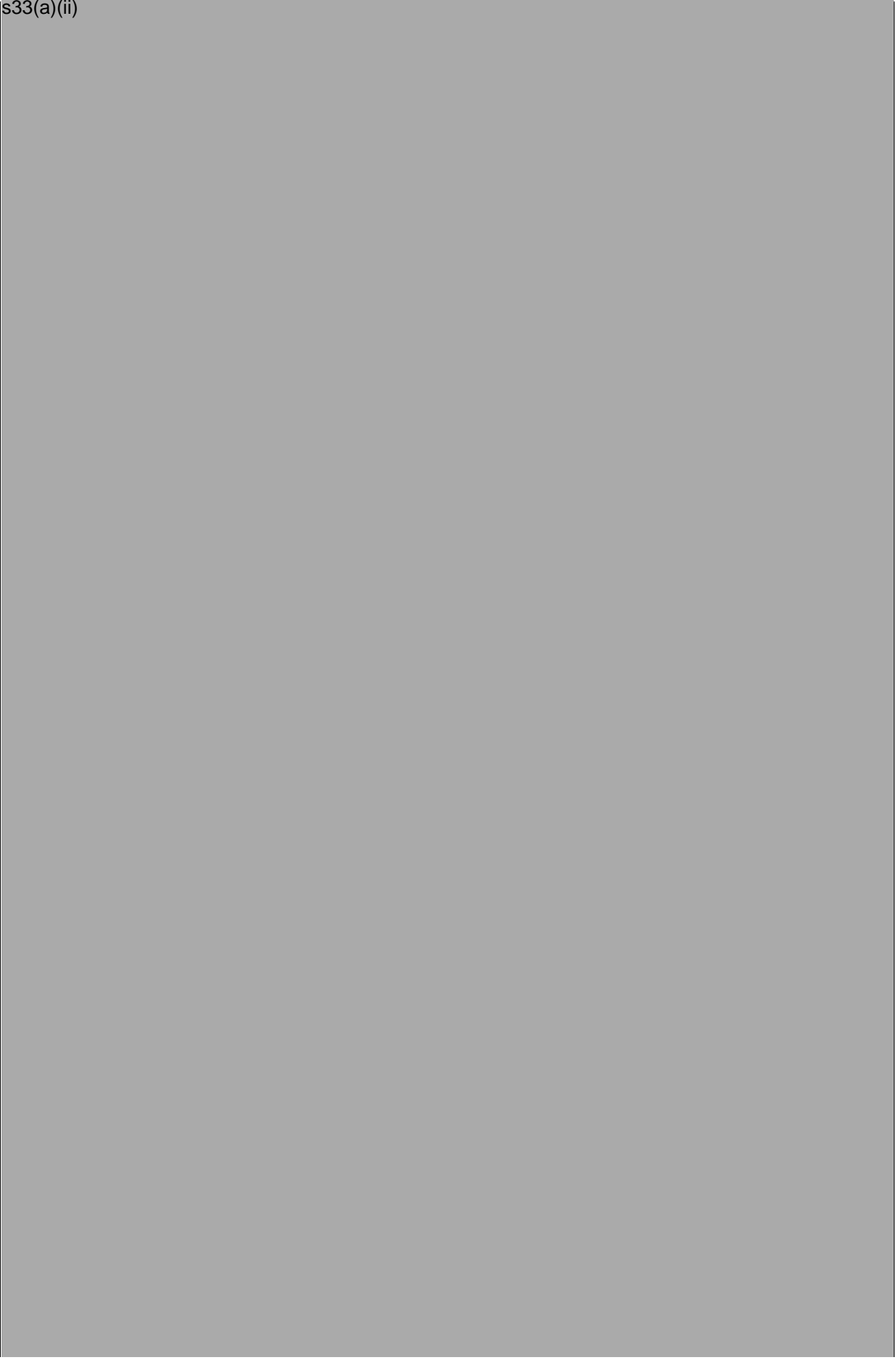


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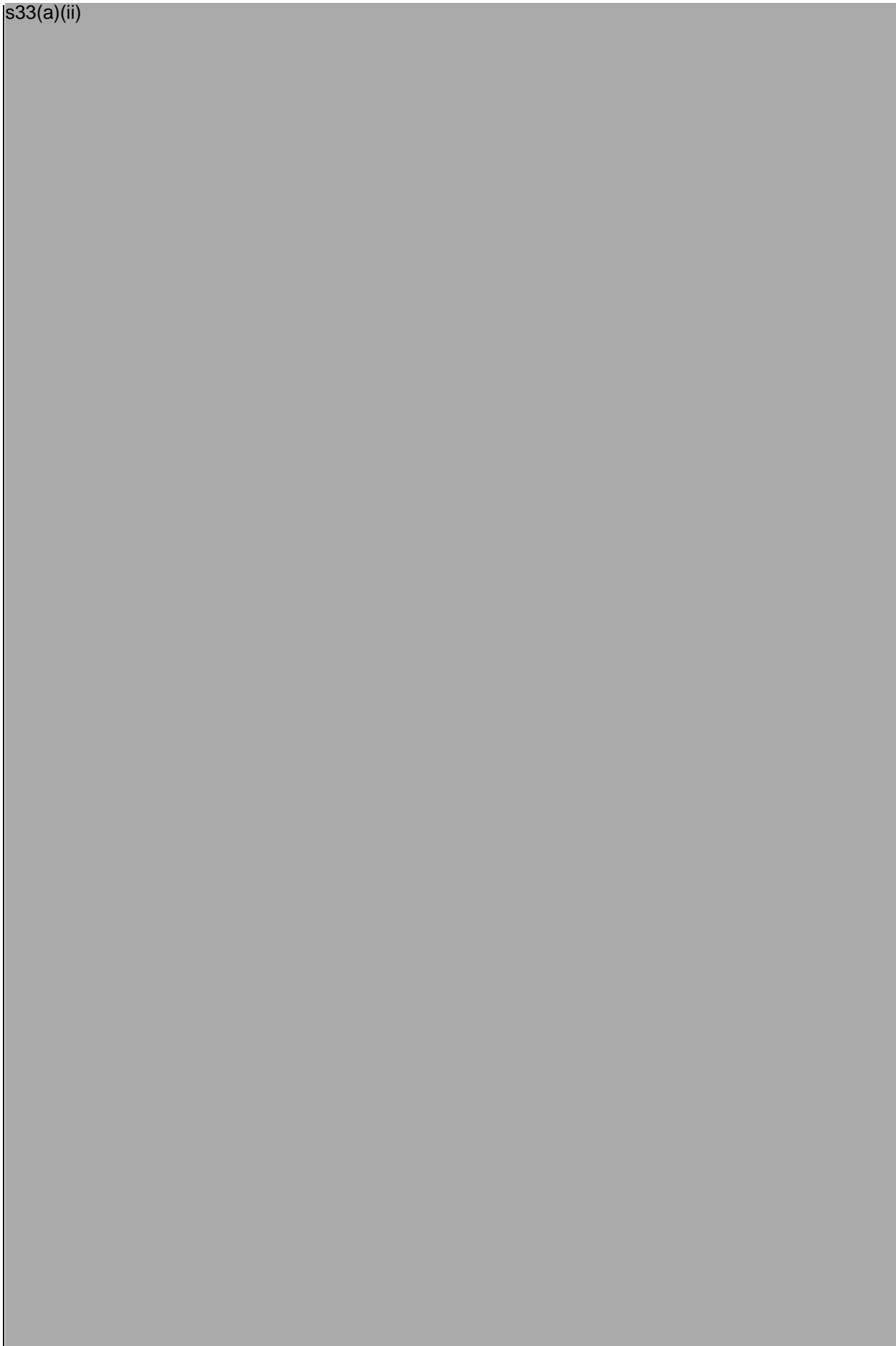
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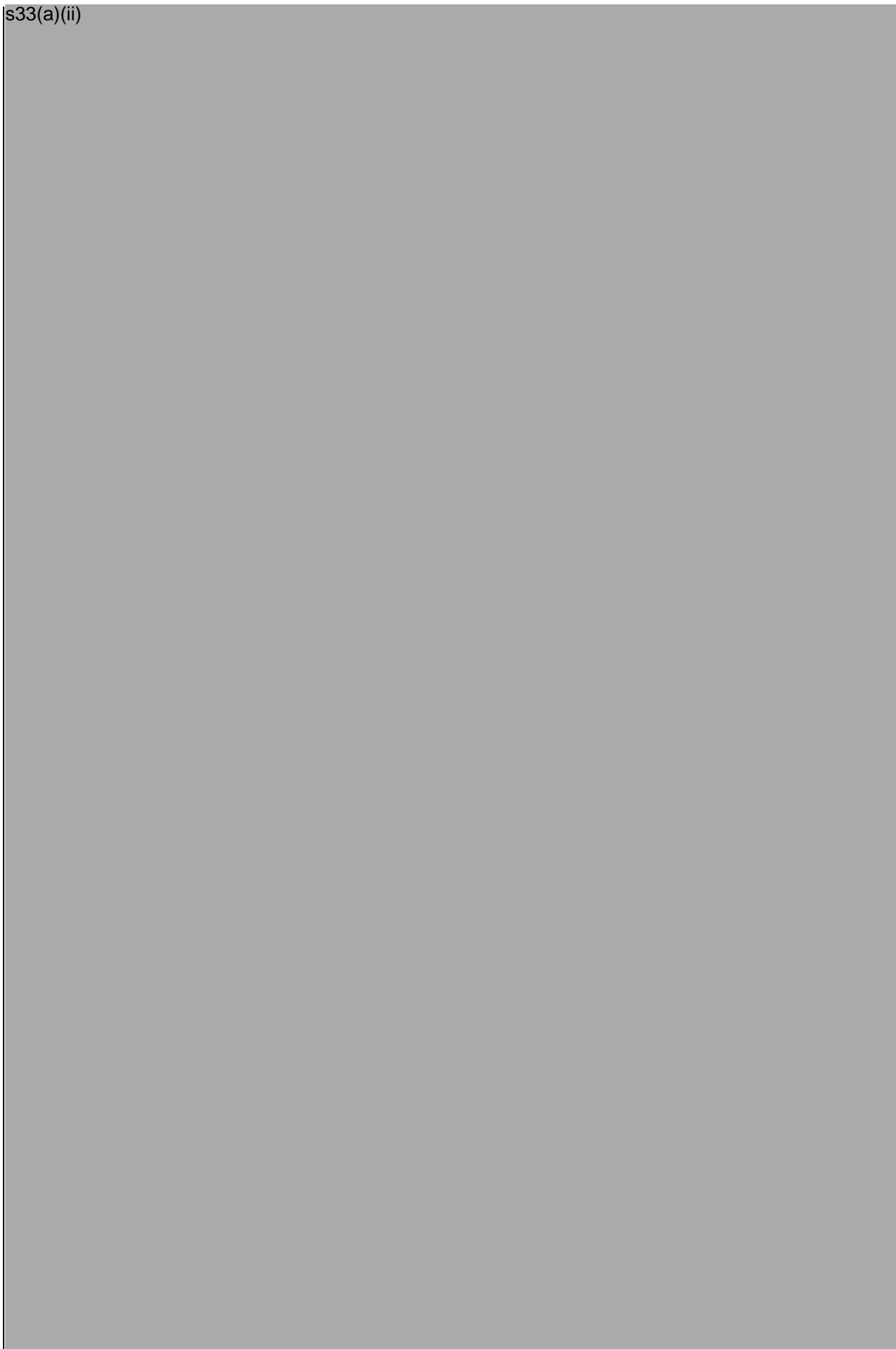
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(RESTRICTED)

External perceptions of this issue

- Insurgents could exploit these incidents and, using IO, attempt to shape the focus on the coalition's 'capture or kill policy'.
- In light of ongoing media interest in Australia's role in Afghanistan and recent criticism of SOTG operations, ADF could be further scrutinised about its rules of engagement and the mission on 31 Aug 12, in particular.
- In light of recent (unfair) criticism of an SOTG mission on 31 Aug 12 resulting in the detention of 12 persons of interest (including a woman) and death of two confirmed insurgents, ADF could be further scrutinised about its obligations relating to detainees.
- The 'risk versus reward' of Australian personnel conducting counter-narcotics missions.

(UNCLAS)

Key Messages

Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) and Special Operations Task Group (SOTG) continue to disrupt insurgent networks affecting Uruzgan province by removing key leaders from the battlefield.

ANSF and SOTG have degraded insurgent leadership lines of funding and equipment over recent months, lowering their morale and willingness to fight.

The ANSF are taking an active role in these partnered operations enhancing their capability to successfully engage with the insurgents.

These operations are always conducted in full cooperation with Afghan authorities.

The Australian Defence Force is committed to ensuring that detainees are treated humanely, with dignity and respect, and in accordance with all of Australia's obligations under domestic and international law.

Talking Points

- Over the past month (07 August to 11 September 2012), Afghan National

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Security Forces and Special Operations Task Group conducted multiple missions resulting in the capture of three insurgent commanders, seizure of 300kg of drugs and a quantity of weapons, detention of 115 persons of interest and the death of 33 insurgents.

- These missions are examples of the ANSF and SOTG ability to degrade insurgent leadership lines of funding and equipment and disrupt insurgent networks affecting Uruzgan province.
- The ANSF are taking an active role in these partnered operations, enhancing their capability to successfully engage with the insurgents.
- These operations are always conducted with the full cooperation of Afghan authorities.

DETAINEES & JACKPOTS

- Over the past month (07 August to 11 September 2012), ANSF and SOTG conducted several missions throughout Uruzgan province resulting in 115 detainees.
- Two insurgent commanders captured by ANSF and SOTG have been identified from recent operations conducted in and around Uruzgan province.
- Another Uruzgan-based insurgent commander was captured by the ANSF in Kandahar City, Kandahar province, following intelligence provided by SOTG.
- All three insurgent commanders captured are responsible for facilitating, building and/or emplacing improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in Uruzgan province.
- The first insurgent commander identified specialises in IED construction and emplacement. He conducts IED facilitation in central Uruzgan and trains other insurgents in IED methods. He has also conducted attacks on ANSF checkpoints.
- His capture is significantly degrading the insurgent IED network and will continue to do so in the medium-to-long term. His removal is mitigating the threat against ANSF, GIRoA and coalition forces, and denying the INS in central Uruzgan and Pakistan an effective IED trainer.
- The second insurgent commander identified is responsible for IED facilitation, distribution and emplacement in Deh Rafshan, Tarin Kot district, Uruzgan province. He is responsible for emplacing IEDs targeting Afghan National Security Forces and Coalition Forces.
- His capture will deny the Deh Rafshan insurgency a key IED facilitator, affecting its ability to conduct IED attacks on Afghan National Police checkpoints.
- The third insurgent commander identified provided support to SGT Hek Matullah, the Afghan National Army soldier who killed three 3rd Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment, Task Group soldiers on 29 Aug 12.

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- An insurgent commander in charge of 25–50 fighters, the third insurgent captured is responsible for emplacing IEDs and small arms attacks targeting ANA and coalition forces in the Deh Rafshan district of Uruzgan province.
- He is also responsible for kidnapping, murder and intimidating local nationals in the area.
- His detention is disorienting and suppressing the insurgents currently attempting to provide safe haven and safe passage for SGT Hek Matullah, the killer of three Australian soldiers.
- This brings to 37 the number of high-value insurgent commanders removed from the battlefield by ANSF and SOTG in 2012.
- It was assessed that based on the detainee's behaviour and all prevailing circumstances at the time that valid grounds for detention existed.
- After capture, the detainees were extracted to MNB–TK where a medical officer examined each detainee to ensure they are fit for detention.
- The Australian Defence Force is committed to ensuring that detainees are treated humanely, with dignity and respect, and in accordance with all of Australia's legal obligations under domestic and international law.
- Any allegation of detainee mistreatment or anomalies in relation to the handling of detainees by ADF personnel will be fully investigated.
- The Australian Government remains committed to ensuring that our forces manage detainees to the highest possible standards.

CACHES

- Over the past month (07 August to 11 September 2012), ANSF and SOTG conducted several missions throughout Helmand, Kandahar and Uruzgan provinces resulting in the destruction of significant quantities of narcotics and weapons.
- More than 300kg of narcotics were seized and destroyed, including 250kg of poppy seed, 30kg of opium, and a quantity of narcotics laboratory products.

ENGAGEMENTS

- The insurgents were killed after being positively identified taking a direct part in hostilities, and they were engaged in accordance with Australian rules of engagement.

(UNCLAS)

Questions and Answers

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What occurred during these operations?

Over the past month (07 August to 11 September 2012), Afghan National Security Forces and Special Operations Task Group conducted multiple missions resulting in the capture of three insurgent commanders, seizure of 300kg of drugs and a quantity of weapons, detention of 115 persons of interest and the death of 33 insurgents.

Were there any Australian casualties as a result of the operations?

Yes, two Australian commandos from the 2nd Commando Regiment, LCPL Mervyn McDonald and PTE Nathanael Galagher, were killed on 30 August 2012 in a coalition UH-1Y Super Huey helicopter crash in Helmand province.

Three other SOTG soldiers were wounded in separate incidents over the past month.

Two received gunshot wounds to the lower leg. One has already returned to full duties, while the other is recovering in Australia and is expected to make a full recovery.

The other soldier was wounded when the all-terrain vehicle he was driving rolled during a mission. He received cuts and bruising. He has already returned to full duties.

Why were the insurgents killed?

The insurgents were killed after they were positively identified taking a direct part in hostilities, and they were engaged in accordance with Australian rules of engagement.

Who makes up SOTG?

The current SOTG rotation comprises members from the Special Air Service Regiment, 2nd Commando Regiment, Special Operations Engineer Regiment and a variety of supporting units from the ADF.

JACKPOTS

What was the significance of these insurgents?

All three insurgent commanders captured are responsible for facilitating, building and/or emplacing improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in Uruzgan province.

The first insurgent commander identified specialises in IED construction and emplacement.

He conducts IED facilitation in central Uruzgan and trains other insurgents in IED methods. He has also conducted attacks on ANSF checkpoints.

His capture is significantly degrading the insurgent IED network and will continue to do so in the medium-to-long term. His removal is also mitigating the threat against ANSF, GIRoA and coalition forces, and denying the INS in central Uruzgan and Pakistan an effective IED trainer.

The second insurgent commander identified is responsible for IED facilitation, distribution and emplacement in Deh Rafshan, Tarin Kot district, Uruzgan province.

He is responsible for emplacing IEDs targeting Afghan National Security Forces and Coalition Forces.

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His capture will deny the Deh Rafshan insurgency a key IED facilitator, affecting its ability to conduct IED attacks on Afghan National Police checkpoints.

The third insurgent commander identified provided support to SGT Hek Matullah, the Afghan National Army soldier who killed three 3rd Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment, Task Group soldiers on 29 Aug 12.

An insurgent commander in charge of 25–50 fighters, the third insurgent captured is responsible for emplacing IEDs and small arms attacks targeting ANA and coalition forces in the Deh Rafshan district of Uruzgan province.

He is also responsible for kidnapping, murder and intimidating local nationals in the area.

His detention is disorienting and suppressing the insurgents currently attempting to provide safe haven and safe passage for SGT Hek Matullah, the killer of three Australian soldiers.

Why were these people detained?

It was assessed that based on the detainee's behaviour and all prevailing circumstances at the time that valid grounds for detention existed.

DETAINEES

What happens to detainees?

After detainees are captured, the Australian Defence Force holds them at the Initial Screening Area (ISA) at Multi-National Base – Tarin Kot (MNB–TK) for a limited period of time.

The ISA is under constant camera surveillance and the facility is open to regular International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) inspection.

Detainees in the ADF's custody are able to freely practice their religion, and are provided access to exercise, sustenance, suitable sleeping arrangements and other amenities.

Once initial screening by trained personnel is complete, detainees are either transferred to Afghan or US custody, or released if there is insufficient evidence to justify ongoing detention.

Those assessed as posing a less serious threat are transferred to the Afghan National Directorate of Security (NDS) in Uruzgan.

Those assessed as posing a more serious threat are transferred to the US-run Parwan Detention Facility. This provides a level of security appropriate for housing high-risk insurgents. This facility is currently run by U.S. forces; however, a timeframe for transition to Afghan control has recently been announced.

When detainees are transferred, the ADF provides evidence packs to support further investigation and possible prosecution under Afghan law.

ADF and officials from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade continue to monitor detainees' welfare and conditions while they are in U.S. or Afghan custody.

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The monitoring team visits detainees shortly after transfer and around every four weeks after the initial visits. Any allegation of mistreatment is investigated.

CACHES

What was found in the caches?

The missions resulted in a significant quantity of weapons and more than 300kg of narcotics were seized and destroyed, including 250kg of poppy seed, 30kg of opium, and a quantity of narcotics laboratory products.

(UNCLASSIFIED)

Story / Media release

Australian, Afghan, British and U.S. special forces combine in Afghanistan

Australia's Special Operations Task Group combined with Afghan, British and United States special forces this week in southern Afghanistan in one of the largest special forces operations of the 10 year campaign.

Targeting an insurgent stronghold north of Kandahar City in the country's south, the multi-day operation saw over 900 special forces personnel, supported by dozens of coalition rotary-wing and fixed-wing aircraft, clear the remote region of insurgent activity.

SOTG Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel I [*who cannot be named for operational reasons*], said the operation's aim was to improve security across the region to allow the Afghan Government to deliver services.

"The Afghan Government is building its capacity and extending its reach all the time and this operation was intended to disrupt local insurgent networks to provide the security for the government to provide vital services," said Lieutenant Colonel I.

Around 100 Uruzgan-based Afghan National Security Force personnel partnered with more than 130 SOTG soldiers from the Sydney-based 2nd Commando Regiment as part of the operation.

"Australian special forces continue to train and mentor ANSF personnel in Uruzgan," Lieutenant Colonel I said.

"Complex multi-force operations like this allow ANSF personnel to consolidate skills, gain experience operating in conjunction with other forces and also build the confidence of local Afghans who see the constantly improving capacity ANSF."

As the special forces moved through the region, personnel engaged with Afghan villagers in a series of meetings informing elders of ongoing operations to improve security in anticipation of the Afghan Government extending services to the region.

The operation was just one aspect of SOTG's ongoing training, partnering and mentoring of its ANSF partners.

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Over the past two months, ANSF personnel and their SOTG partners captured eight insurgent commanders and seized significant drug and weapons caches.

Three insurgent commanders captured recently are all responsible for facilitating, building and emplacing improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in Uruzgan province that have hurt Afghan civilians, ANSF and coalition forces.

The first commander captured is considered a key Uruzgan insurgency IED trainer. His removal is already reducing the insurgency's capacity to place IEDs in Uruzgan and making the province safer for all Afghans.

This brings to 37 the number of Taliban commanders captured in Uruzgan since January 2012.

"Our missions are designed to apply unrelenting pressure on the insurgency to degrade its leadership, lower insurgent morale and their willingness to fight," said Lieutenant Colonel I.

"By removing key leaders from their command positions we are continuing to disrupt insurgent networks and reducing their effectiveness."

The insurgent commanders will face the Afghan legal system in the coming months.

Missions over the past two months resulted in a significant quantity of weapons and more than 1000kg of narcotics being seized and destroyed, including 765kg of poppy seed, 196kg of opium, 100kg of hashish and a quantity of narcotics laboratory products.

Fifty-six insurgents were killed and 194 persons of interest were detained during operations over the past two months.

Product components: (detail relevant products)

Stills: nil

Video: nil

Other:

Release Strategy: (amend as appropriate)

- ☐ Defence web pages: Defence and Army websites
- ☐ National release: Defence Media Release
- ☐ Service newspapers: Army News
- ☐ Facebook: Army and JTF633

Release instructions:

- **Proactive**

Release priority date:

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ASAP

Drafted	Name	Appointment	Date and Time
Drafted/updated by:	LT s47E(d) CAPT s47E(d) LTCOL	SOTG S09 J095 HQTF633 J09 HQJTF633	11 Sep 12
Tactical/Operational Clearance			
OPSEC (<i>at source</i>):	LTCOL I	SOTG CO	11 Sep 12
Fact (<i>subject-matter expert</i>)	MAJ T AIRCDRE Sawade	SOTG S3 DCJTF633	11 Sep 12 11 Sep 12
HQ JOC			
Strategic Clearance			
Policy (SP/IP etc)			
MSC Branch			
DGStratCom(or delegate)			
O/CDF			
ASCAM (or delegate)			
Minister			
Ministerial Action: (To be completed by ASCAM)			
Forward to/Cleared by			

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HQ ISAF SOF Response to Query



Subject	Enquiry- ISAF SOF Hazargay District, Uruzgan Province.		
Issue	Allegations.		
Date Originated	01 September 2012		
Version Date	01 September 2012	Version	v1.0
Expiry Date	TBD		
Purpose	The purpose of this RTQ is to provide Public Affairs guidance in response to potential queries WRT a combined operation in Uruzgan on 31 August 2012.		
Effect	Correct any potential misinformation in the media space and counter-narrative.		
PA Posture	Passive. Contingency Only.		
Release Strategy and actions to date	This RTQ will be effective upon release.		
Background CLASSIFIED	s33(a)(ii)		

	s33(a)(ii)
Holding Statement	“ A media enquiry was made to ISAF asking if two civilian casualties were sustained during an ISAF Operation in southern Afghanistan. No civilian casualties were sustained during this operation; two insurgents were killed during the operation. The operation was partnered Afghan National Security Force and coalition forces”
Enduring Themes	<p>ISAF takes all allegations of civilian casualties very seriously.</p> <p>ISAF values the lives of all Afghans and avoiding civilian casualties remains a top priority.</p> <p>Allegations of civilian casualty are investigated as appropriate,</p>
Supporting Themes and Talking Points	<p>We are aware of an enquiry made to ISAF asking if two civilian casualties were sustained during an ISAF operation in Uruzgan on 31 August 2012.</p> <p>No civilian casualties were sustained during this operation.</p> <p>It has been confirmed two insurgents were killed in action during the operation.</p> <p>The killed insurgent males were believed to be 30 and 50 years old respectively.</p> <p>The operation was a vehicle interdiction and cordon and search mission conducted to interdict insurgents responsible for planning attacks against coalition forces.</p>

	<p>12 suspected insurgents were detained during the operation, including one female who was released to the Provincial Chief of Police.</p> <p>The operation was a partnered coalition and Afghan National Security Forces mission.</p> <p>The mission received approval from the Provincial Governor of Uruzgan, as well as the Provincial Chief of Police.</p> <p>ISAF endeavors to fight with great discipline and tactical patience, judiciously applying force only when it is necessary and ensuring our response is proportionate to the threat faced.</p> <p>The UNAMA Human Rights Unit notes that ISAF's high priority to protect Afghans and to minimize civilian casualties has had an increasing effect.</p> <p>All missions conducted to interdict insurgent activity are approved by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.</p> <p>ISAF is working to sustain a safe and secure environment for the people of Afghanistan and protecting the civilian population is a cornerstone of our mission.</p>
Q&A	<p>Q: Can you confirm how many civilians have been killed and injured? A: No civilian casualties have been sustained. Two insurgents were killed during an operation in southern Afghanistan.</p> <p>Q. How were the individuals killed? A. The insurgents were killed during a small arms engagement as coalition troops entered a compound.</p> <p>Q. How old were the killed insurgents? A. The two killed insurgents were believed to be in their early 30s and mid 50s.</p> <p>Q. How do you know they are definitely insurgents? A: Very reliable and accurate reporting from multiple sources. ISAF cannot provide any further detail on tactics to locate insurgents.</p> <p>Q. Was the operation unilateral? A. No, this part of the operation was partnered with the Provincial Response Company.</p> <p>Q. Was the operation approved by GIRoA A. The operation was approved by the Provincial Governor for Uruzgan.</p> <p>Q: What was the mission being conducted for? A: The operation was conducted to interdict insurgents responsible for planning attacks against coalition forces.</p> <p>Q: Was the operation being conducted to kill/capture the ANA soldier who shot three Australians on 29 August 2012?</p>

	<p>A: The operation was conducted to interdict insurgents responsible for planning attacks against coalition forces.</p> <p>Q: How many Afghans were detained and what for? A. 12 suspected insurgents suspected of planning attacks against coalition forces were detained during the operation.</p> <p>Q: Were proper procedures followed during this mission? A: All missions conducted to interdict insurgent activity are approved by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, specifically the Provincial Governor and the Provincial Chief of Police.</p>		
Key IJC Facts and Figures	N/A		
Timings	N/A.		
Drafted by:	LEUT s47E(d), ISAF SOF PAO		
Date:	01 September 2012	Approved by:	ISAF SOFCJ3, ISAF SOF Deputy Direc