

### **Reviving OSS Methodology for 21st Century Military Operations**

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The endemic problem of not having enough highly skilled and capable Civil Affairs personnel in Iraq and Afghanistan has negatively affected the Post 9/11 era of US military operations. The Civil Affairs (CA) problems of post-invasion Iraq should not have led our senior defense policy makers to move CA into the Regular Army as Secretary Rumsfeld directed. Rather, CA and Psychological Operations (colloquially known as PSYOP) should have been kept in the Special Operations Community.

In the first Gulf War, Civil Affairs (CA) worked well because it was part of US Special Operations Command. CA operators, specifically men and women of the Kuwait Task Force, planned post-combat reconstitution and reconstruction of Kuwait almost 6 months prior to the allied liberation. Indeed, post-combat planning began during the pre-combat phase called Operation Desert Shield.

This advanced detailed planning was very much in keeping with the tradition of the World War II Office of Strategic Services (OSS), America's first overseas intelligence and military special operations agency. In Italy during World War II, OSS operations began with detailed plans produced beforehand at Camp Lee, Virginia.

#### **Military "Transformation" to What?**

Every military service, branch and joint Agency has been mandated to transform itself to meet the challenges of 21st-Century warfare. This is necessary and good. We should not try to fight today's enemies the way the "Greatest Generation" fought Hitler's Wehrmacht. However, we must carefully examine 20th-Century successes and failures to identify best practices for incorporation into our war doctrine and organizational structure for fighting 21st-Century asymmetrical warfare.

According to Joint Publication 1, Joint Warfare of the Armed Forces of the United States, "Asymmetric engagements are battles between dissimilar forces. These engagements can be extremely lethal, especially if the force being attacked is not ready to defend itself against the threat."

CA and PSYOP are not just tools for asymmetrical warfare. CA and PSYOP units, individual operators, and small teams respond to both man-made and natural disasters. These disaster relief

operations, known as Humanitarian Assistance (HA) are as important to US foreign policy goals and missions as combat missions. They combine CA and PSYOP.

When conducting HA missions, PSYOP is necessary for initiating and coordinating reliable communications among aid workers and with the local populace. PSYOP units send Military Information Support Teams (MIST) to the operational area for this purpose. Disaster relief missions provide overseas training and cross-cultural experience for both CA and PSYOP unit personnel.

While the public may view an HA mission environment as a relatively benign deployment experience, the CA operators know that risks abound. Every aspect of a combat- or post-combat-phase CA mission must be planned into the HA deployment, including force protection. HA missions can be targeted, even in a so-called non-hostile environment.

### **“Back to the Future” for Civil Affairs and PSYOP**

CA and PSYOP should be transformed into 21st-Century expeditionary warfare brigades borrowing proven ideas and concepts from the OSS Regiment. New brigades would be set up for modern asymmetrical expeditionary warfare. Each transformed battalion would provide CA and PSYOP support to, and be equipped and trained to work directly with, a Special Forces Operational Detachment Alpha (SFODA).

CA operations cannot succeed without winning “the hearts and minds” of the people, and PSYOP cannot succeed without CA support. Neither CA nor PSYOP can succeed without force protection.

One weakness in General William Donovan’s OSS was that it covered every facet of what is today called Special Operations -- except Civil Affairs. During WWII, Civil Affairs was called Military Government. When the OSS had its greatest problems in Italy after various provinces were liberated, it was because it did not control CA, which was at the time called American Military Government (AMGOT). AMGOT came into Italy mostly culturally and politically insensitive to the complex political, religious and social forces at work in Italy in 1945.

All facets of OSS operations were fully planned prior to the post-combat phase of the Italian Theater of Operations. The only failure was beyond Donovan’s control -- Military Government (CA). Without understanding this lesson, we are doomed to repeat it as the US considers how to pull out of Iraq and how to proceed forward in Afghanistan.

By removing CA from the Special Operational Forces community we have essentially repeated World War II-era mistakes when CA was not part of the OSS.

### **Asymmetrical Preparation for America’s Armed Forces**

Future pre-deployment preparation should include interviews and, if necessary, employment of émigrés who have fled for political or socio-economic reasons. The genius of OSS operations in

WWII was the use of foreign-born or -raised military and civilian operatives. This was done both in political/intelligence billets and in action billets.

One such example of this was the US Army's recruitment of the father of and one of the co-authors. Vincenzo Vacirca, a noted anti-communist and anti-fascist Italian editor and politician in 1942, served as the OSS Advisor to AMGOT in Sicily in 1945.

To facilitate the ready availability of civilian subject matter experts, units modeled on the OSS must be authorized and funded to recruit and retain on a nominal retainer a backup cadre of expert personnel. During pre-deployment periods the expert personnel can provide country-specific socio-political training to unit members on a per-diem basis.

It is too late to locate, recruit and perform security checks on experts a few short weeks before deployments. In the era of expeditionary asymmetrical warfare, our specialized forces must be ready to deploy with minimum notice.

We can succeed if our nation chooses her fights wisely and spends equal care preparing for the inevitability of other 21st Century asymmetrical conflicts that will require the special operational skills of Civil Affairs and PSYOP. This will only be accomplished adequately if we return the United States Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Command (USACAPOC) to the Army Reserve, and learn from the experience of the OSS during WWII.

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