

HUMINT Nature and the Jim Thyne Theory

Dalton Fury

For the past several months I've had the great opportunity to insert my voice into the public debate about what in the world we should do about UBL. This question arose during a 6 hour interview taping for a 13 minute 60 Minutes episode, again during a short stint on Hannity's America, some time with Brain Kilmeade and Geraldo Rivera on FOX's The Strategy Room, during The Rachel Maddow Show, and again on CNN. Moreover, in between tapings, a half dozen print media interviews, and scores of radio stations that air across the nation, most recently The Laura Ingraham Show, asked the same question. All this because I was simply the guy who couldn't get the job done back at the beginning of the GWOT. So, my opinion and analysis is as good or bad as the next guys as we are all painfully aware – UBL still thumbs his nose at us every day.

From my very far removed perspective of the battlefield where all assumptions are taken from open source developments, three key themes are at the top of my "to do list" to turn the tide on the war in Afghanistan. The first two are no-brainers and have been called for by numerous Think Tanks and dedicated analysts who are more talented and more "in the know" than I presently am. Negotiating with moderate Taliban and focusing US funding for Pakistan on the COIN fight even appears at the top of Secretary Gates' personal way ahead.

1. Negotiate w/ the Taliban: it is time to negotiate with moderate Taliban and drive a wedge between them and UBL/AQ. The Taliban did not attack America on 9/11. The last folks that successfully used a military solution in Afghanistan were Genghis Khan and his Mongol Horde. They killed everyone, and since our strict self imposed rules of land warfare prevent us from mirroring the Mongol way, we are more likely to fall under the category of those that have tried and failed in that area of the world.

2. Focus funding on COIN: Stop providing funding and equipment to the Pakistanis that are clearly redirected toward increasing their capability in a conventional war against India and refocus the funding toward prosecuting an unconventional war - counterinsurgency. Further, diplomatically commit to the Pakistanis that once a certain threshold is met, such as UBL, Hekmatyar, and Zawahiri are dead, then promised conventional funding will resume.

Readers of *SWJ* clearly know that both of these initiatives are ripe with obstacles and won't be easy to pull off – particularly when senior Taliban officials have scoffed at even Afghan President Karzai's outreach for reconciliation until all foreign forces are removed from Afghan

soil. Both, if nothing else, will be costly prohibitive in troops and treasure to prevent a train wreck-like derailing. The third pillar though, what I call the Jim Thyne Theory, can be had at a bargain price.

In the early 90's, as a ranger lieutenant, I had the distinct pleasure of supervising a young ranger whiz kid named Jim Thyne. Ranger Thyne was an Infantryman by training and was just as valuable or capable as any other ranger to assault the objective, parachute into combat, or create havoc in one of the local establishments downtown. But even as Ranger Thyne could meet the normal standards required to serve in the rangers those days, in another much more valuable way, he was the most important single ranger in the battalion.

Ranger Thyne spent his off-duty time self-sequestered in the barracks, reading those big thick computer catalogs and tinkering with anyone's broken microwave sized desk top computer. It didn't take long to recognize this unique personal drive and interest, pulling Ranger Thyne from a fighting position, and Knighting him with the dubious and not much sought after billet as Company Clerk.

In that day and age, when battalion HQs was still using monographic Harvard Graphics, MS DOS, and Word Perfect 5.1, Jim Thyne proved to be a true innovator and pioneer of the shape of things to come. Rumor of Jim's savvy for hard drives and floppy discs spread around the other companies like word of the plague. We were in an era of technological change and everyone was automating their personnel records, training records, and supply records. But only Ranger Thyne knew what to do when things like the blue screen of death reared its ugly head, or a hard drive crashed a few buildings over. When that happened, our office phone quickly rang followed by pleas for help. "Can Ranger Thyne come over to our company today? We have a computer problem?" they always said.

Overnight, Jim Thyne became a true Power Ranger. "Information is power!" he liked to tell me over and over. Often we horse traded Ranger Thyne's services: A 2 ½ ton truck here, a couple of extra crates of frag grenade there, exclusive access to the closest flat range, you get the idea.

The day for Ranger Thyne to PCS came and he brought me his orders for the 82nd Airborne Division. I thought *what a waste of raw talent*. He didn't need to be jumping out of airplanes; he needed to be developing innovative tactics, techniques, and procedures to secure our relevancy in the fledgling computer age and into the 21st century.

A few phone calls later and Ranger Thyne's orders to Ft. Bragg were rescinded. His new job – a relatively souped up clerk job officially termed *computer specialist*. Instead of just worrying about a single ranger battalion's IT needs he now was responsible for FT. Benning in general and the Infantry Center specifically. During this final assignment in uniform, Ranger Thyne continued his self study and made a lot more friends, particularly those senior officers and NCOs who wanted their computers fixed yesterday.

I visited Ranger Thyne years later just before he was to leave the service. He was working in the basement of an old WWII era brick and mortar building. The damp and stuffy old storage room was crammed to the ceiling along three walls with desk top monitors and partially opened CPUs.

Wrapped bundles of cables of all sizes and colors snaked up through the ceiling leading to every senior Infantry leader's office. During our catching up, he remarked to me, "Sir, do you know how fast I could pull the plug on this entire IT infrastructure? Who would they call? I'm the only one on post that knows what all this stuff does."

The lesson of the Jim Thyne Theory is that we have the intellectual capacity within our great nation, a treasure trove of young Americans who have come of age in the cell phone and gaming era to harness this to defeat UBL and AQ. Bin Laden sends his youngsters to sacrifice themselves on suicide missions. We send ours to Microsoft University. Moreover, this theory dovetails nicely into the third initiative – coaxing UBL to battle his own HUMINT nature.

Strategically, our flatfootedness and sometimes clumsy efforts in the war on terror begs for innovation. Our nation's senior leaders wrung their hands over UBL throughout the Clinton administration, never sure if targeting him was worth the potential political or international blowback or if the violent act really fit our own model of a free and democratic society. Since Clinton's departure, the Bush administration has shifted strategy from ignoring UBL as they took over Washington in early 2001, to a somewhat forced and politically necessary "dead or alive" route on the heels of 9/11, to once again ignoring him.

We now wake up daily to hear if the Bush administrations three month long two-minute drill, with over twenty Hail Mary Hellfire strikes into the NWFP to date, will at least even the score for President Bush and the United States of America. The kinetic method might just work assuming we are either lucky or actionable intelligence presents itself that we can quickly target. But, should the clock run out without a touchdown, President-elect Obama faces the same strategic and operational challenges that have frustrated President Bush for the better part of seven years now. It's time to persuade UBL to provide us the signature we desperately need. It's time to strip him of his credibility and status in the Muslim world.

3. Self-HUMINT bin Laden: Our country spent more time, energy, and money on digging up dirt on the Presidential candidates and quickly putting out short psychotronic movie clips than we do on targeting UBL's character. We need to YouTube the world with credibility spiders and integrity viruses that stick the UBL voodoo doll and drops his head toward the bottom of the Islamic totem pole. With the Jim Thyne theory in mind, we can easily communicate three innovative themes with campaign like videos and print publications. We can saturate the battlefields and bazaars with leaflets bearing these themes for relative pennies. We can quickly respond to Zawahiri's rhetoric with relatively cheap and short video clips. He is already relevant and the world knows we are targeting him so responding isn't going to increase his importance in the war on terror.

a. UBL is a coward and a hypocrite: at the Battle of Tora Bora he ran away and left his fighters behind to die. He ordered the women and children to arm themselves and do the fighting for him. He consistently coaxes young Muslims to strap on explosive belts or drive vehicle bombs that kill innocent Muslims, promising them martyrdom. Yet UBL had a chance to martyr himself at Tora Bora and he chose to run away. UBL is human and has no desire to reach the

afterlife sooner than anybody else. UBL does not care about Islam as a whole. It bothers him no more to kill innocent Muslims than it does Westerners.

b. Publically demote UBL: declare UBL to now be al Qaeda HVT #3 because he remains secluded while his subordinate lieutenants are forced to communicate, lead, and manage the day to day operations of the terrorist organization - which allows them to be targeted. Insult UBL by publically promoting the current #3 (whoever it is these days) to HVT #1 and place a \$50 million dollar reward on his head. Publically remove the \$25 million dollar reward for UBL. Tell the Muslim world that Abu Musab al Zarqawi, the dead al Qaeda in Iraq leader, mirrored the mythical characteristics of the Prophet Muhammad more than UBL ever could hope to because Zarqawi walked the walk.

c. Force UBL to prove he is alive and relevant: promote the idea that the US considers him dead until he can prove otherwise. Force him to defend his reputation. UBLs arrogance quite possibly may force him to take action (or any close associate). Physically moving, communicating with subordinates, or taping an audio or video tape for mass appeal, makes him vulnerable. Publicly warn all the peace loving Pashtuns inside the NWFP that the Hellfire missiles are aimed at UBL and his senior lieutenants and harboring them places them at risk as well.

Just like for Ranger Thyne many years ago, there are no guarantees. But Jim is now a senior executive with a major IT firm. He is also a family man, father of two, and is married to a wonderful wife of nearly twenty years. He is a Microsoft professional - MCT, MCSE, and CCNA – and commonly known as the “uber-geek in the Boston area”. He isn’t the only guy in the room anymore with the gold mine computer geek knowledge, but he is a prime example of how we can strategically harness our nations’ brightest and best human capital to bring justice to our most wanted enemies at bargain shopper prices.

Few can argue against the idea that sooner or later, under a President Obama administration or his successor, our nation’s leaders will find themselves huddled around a boardroom table in leather recliners crafting the message to the nation and to the world on our withdrawal from Afghanistan. It’s the same decision the Soviets were forced to make some 20 years ago and it won’t be any easier to stomach as a nation when the order comes from Washington than it was from the Kremlin. We might as well put the Jim Thyne Theory to work and practice self-HUMINT nature against UBL.

Dalton Fury retired from the Army after 20 years of service. Fifteen of those years were spent in the special operations community. He is a private citizen with a continued interest in ensuring our nation remains strong and vibrant for generations to come.

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