SMALL WARS JOURNAL

smallwarsjournal.com

August 3, 2010

Interviewing Tactics in Counterinsurgency

by Stacy S. Lamon, Ph.D., Nahama Broner, Ph.D., John Hollywood, Ph.D., and COL Billy McFarland, USAR

There is a recent growing body of literature on strategic, operational and theoretical approaches to interacting with insurgents,[1] as well as official documentation[2] on the topic. Though there is demand for it, often from junior officers,[3] surprisingly little attention is given to the applied, boots-on-the-ground questions of *"How do I do it? Who do I ask? What do I ask them?"* and *"How do I ask it?"*

Not since Galula's 1964 manual[4] on counterinsurgency has a basic hands-on approach, written for the user, been offered. Using techniques from criminology, police investigation, military science, psychology, and social network analysis, as well as practices learned in the field, this article provides a framework for organizing tactics of how to conduct interviews in non-controlled settings with the uninvolved man or woman in the street and the bystander or victim aware of insurgent activities, as well as the non-combatant collaborator and functionary of an insurgency, and a framework for interviews in semi-controlled settings such as government or police offices[5]. In effect, this article walks the reader through the interview process step-by-step, question-by-question, from planning to execution to analysis. In doing so, it provides a basic tactical answer to the question *"How do I do it?"* – This is how it can be done.

A Framework

Beginning with a framework for interviewing and information collection, the first step in constructing the interview is to (1) define the target information sought – is it the identity of insurgency leaders, plans for the next attack, the location of weapons caches, sources of funding or recruitment, or just community atmospherics? Once the target information is defined, (2) the next step is to decide who to ask – will the average man or woman on the street have that information; is there a witness to insurgent actions who may know; have collaborators been identified who should know? When likely

---

[1] Robert M. Cassidy, Counterinsurgency Techniques Revisited Counterinsurgency and the Global War on Terror: Military Culture and Irregular War, (Westport CN: Praeger Security International, 2006); Bruce Hoffman, Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Iraq, (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2004); David Kilcullen, "Twenty-eight articles: Fundamentals of company-level counterinsurgency," (March 2006), http://usacac.army.mil/cac2/COIN/repository/28_Articles_of_COIN-Kilcullen(Mar06).pdf, retrieved 15 March 2010; David Kilcullen, "Counterinsurgency in Iraq [internet slide presentation]," (2007), http://smallwarsjournal.com/documents/kilcullencoinbrief26sep07.ppt, retrieved 15 March 2010; David Kilcullen, The Accidental Guerrilla, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); John A. Nagl, Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam, (2d ed., Chicago, IL: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2005); Bard E. O'Neill, Insurgency and Terrorism: From Revolution to Apocalypse, (Dulles VA: Potomac Books, 2005); and Robert R. Tomes, "Relearning counterinsurgency warfare," Parameters, 24 (Spring 2004), 16-28.

[2] David H. Petraeus and James N. Mattis, *Counterinsurgency,* Headquarters, Department of the Army, (December 2006), and David H. Petraeus and James F. Amos, *The U.S. Army - Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual The U.S. Army-Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual: U.S. Army Field Manual,* No. 3-24, *Marine Corps Warfighting Publication,* No. 3-33.5, (Chicago, IL: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2007); Stephen Mull, Michael G. Vickers, and Michael E. Hess, "Counterinsurgency for U.S. Government policy makers: A work in progress," *Department of State Publications 11456,* U.S. Government: Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, Interagency Counterinsurgency Initiative (2007).

[3] David R. Haines, "COIN in the real world," *Parameters*, 28 (Winter 2008-2009), 43-59; from a fictional perspective, Michael L. Burgoyne and Albert J. Marckwardt, *The Defense of Jisr al-Doreaa,* (Chicago Ill: University of Chicago Press, 2009) and from many requests from the field; from a more theoretical perspective of tactics and strategy see Gian P. Gentile, "A strategy of tactics: Population-centric COIN and the Army," *Parameters* (Autumn 2009), 5-17.

[4] David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice,* (Westport, CN: Praeger Security International, 1964, 2006).

[5] Interrogation interviews in controlled detention settings are already well defined. See the *Army Field Manual on Human Intelligence Collector Operations* (FM 2-22.3) sections on interrogation, Headquarters, Department of the Army, Washington, DC, (2006).

sources of information are identified, then (3) the setting for the interview is selected – with options including the street itself, a private residence or an official office. The setting selected will determine the tactics for questioning, as well as the safety precautions and security needed. In each setting there may be some control over (4) the level of stress – stress can be increased by conducting a formal interview in an office with others present, or decreased by meeting in a secluded location familiar to the respondent, with a goal of finding that optimal level of stress that promotes cooperation without compromising the veracity of responses.

Once preparation for the interview is complete with target information identified, respondent types selected, setting and security arranged, and stress level controlled to the extent possible, the interview is preceded with (5) screening questions to ensure that respondents are who they are thought to be, and have the information sought and the capacity to give meaningful answers. If screening is positive, (6) the interview begins with a gradual process of narrowing the focus of questioning by going from open-ended questions, to more pointed questions of choice-selection, to questions asking for "yes" or "no" answers, while always taking the opportunity to allow the respondent to shift to a narrative "story telling" format, if the situation allows. Questioning should be iterative, at each step building on information the respondent has just revealed. When the interview is complete, (7) an analysis is conducted according to the type of information collected, including (a) profiling people, places and resources, (b) the network analysis of relationships, (c) a simple quantitative statistical analysis of choice-selection and yes/no answers, and (d) a more qualitative analysis for open-ended questions and narratives.

Each of the seven steps in this framework (see Table 1) is described in detail below. Also explained are means of refining and tailoring questions, verifying responses, detecting misinformation and taking advantage of known lies.

Target Information Sought

The types of information targeted in an interview often can be categorized according to whether they relate to *insurgent activities* or *environmental factors effecting counterinsurgency*.

Insurgent activities consist of: *(a) Identifying information* which includes the names and locations of insurgent foot-soldiers and local leaders, operatives, collaborators and functionaries, the insurgent executives who make strategic decisions and issue orders, and the relationships among them, *(b) resource information* which includes locations of weapons caches, safe-houses, funding sources and money trains, and sources of recruits, and *(c) logistic information* about the routes of travel, types and times of events and meetings, and lines of communication. While this information can be used tactically to disrupt insurgent activities, it can also be used strategically to dismantle insurgent networks.

Environmental factors include: *(d) atmospheric information* about the attitudes, allegiances and beliefs of the populace toward insurgents, towards their own government and toward foreign involvement, and *(e) environmental-social* information including people's needs and desires, living conditions, concerns and issues salient to the individual, family and local community. Knowing the atmospherics of a community allows a counterinsurgency to estimate the support it will receive and the resistance it will face. Knowing the environmental-social needs of people also lets the counterinsurgency reward supportive groups in ways they identify as truly meaningful to them.

Respondent Types

There are three general types of respondents to consider when constructing an interview in a non-controlled or semi-controlled setting:

(1) The *uninvolved person*, often randomly selected on the street, may have more information than one might expect, and at times more information than he or she realizes is relevant (e.g., *"Groups of men from outside of this village come to that house every week.")* – but be sure that the uninvolved person is truly uninvolved (see Screening below). In what are termed "high-context" situations prior intelligence will tell the interviewer who is being questioned – but it is those out-of-context situations

where screening is especially important. Uninvolved respondents have the potential benefit of not having a stake in their answers; they can answer freely and should be encouraged to do so. Yet, there is always the potential of underlying motivations (e.g., resentment of insurgents or counterinsurgents, ideological beliefs, fear of reprisal) for the interviewer to consider when asking questions and analyzing answers.

(2) The case is different with *witnesses* and *victims* – they have a stake in their answers, especially victims who may be motivated either by anger at insurgents or fear of them. But, because of their encounter with insurgent activity they also have valuable information (e.g., the ability to identify insurgents and describe their tactics). The job of the interviewer is to be aware of the motivations of witnesses and victims while extracting their first-hand information. Witnesses and victims include individuals who observed insurgent events, victims of these events and their relatives, even if that victimization is limited to displacement from their homes.

(3) *Collaborators* and *functionaries* – because they are low profile they are seldom apprehended or questioned, but without them no insurgency can be sustained. They are the weapons experts, arms-runners, IT specialists and financial backers, as well as police and government officials who "look the other way." They are also in an excellent position to know vast information about insurgent networks and activities. And because their involvement with the insurgency is indirect, there is always the possibility of "turning" them to assist the counterinsurgency.

The motivations of these collaborators and functionaries differ. Motivations reported by units in the field include:

- *Causes-Ideology* – genuine belief in a religious / nationalistic / tribal / political / other cause.
- *Nationalism* – desire for vengeance against foreign forces for being "occupiers," committing atrocities against people of their ethnic or tribal group, etc.
- *Revenge* – personal desire for revenge against a counterinsurgency based on an injury done to them or their family. Here, "injury" can include both physical harm and perceived humiliation.
- *Financial* – being paid by insurgents, a powerful motivator if jobs and income are scarce and there is a family to support.
- *Fear* – belief that they must collaborate "or else . . ." (e.g., they or their family will be tortured and killed). The source of fear may be based in an assumption that something will happen or a past experience of having watched family members tortured and killed (in this case the collaborator or functionary is also a victim).

In preparing for an interview with a collaborator or functionary, the first step is to identify his or her motivation and use it to facilitate the interview: Fear and money can be overcome relatively easily by making it safe or financially beneficial to answer questions. Revenge also can be overcome if the grievance can be seen as righted through the interview. Ideology is very different; yet a skillful and resilient interviewer can overcome ideological barriers on a case-by-case basis by finding incentives for responding tailored to each individual questioned, by understanding the respondent's personality (e.g., are they narcissistic enough to respond to compliments and insults, are they so histrionic that they will blurt-out information under stress without thinking[6]), and by being very patient.

Insurgent foot-soldiers, *local leaders* and *executive insurgents* (i.e., the "master-minds" of operation and strategy) are not dealt with in this article. In effect, their interviews take the form of an *interrogation*. Procedures for interrogations are already well established.[7]

[6] Theodore Millon, Seth Grossman, Sarah Meagher, Carrie Millon, and Rowena Ramnath, *Personality Disorders in Modern Life,* (2nd ed., NY: John Wiley and Sons, 2004); Thomas A. Widiger and Robert F. Bornstein, "Histrionic, narcissistic, and dependent personality disorders," 507-529, in Henry E. Adams & Patricia B. Sutker (eds.), *Comprehensive Handbook of Psychopathology* (3rd ed., NY: Plenum, 2001).
[7] Army Field Manual on Human Intelligence Collector Operations (FM 2-22.3).

Interview Settings

To a great extent the setting for the interview depends upon the type of respondent. For the uninvolved person or even the witness or victim, the *non-controlled* setting of the street, itself, actually may be a good place for questioning. Yes, it is in public, but if the interviewer takes the person away from crowds it can be done reasonably private. And ironically, it has the gift of anonymity, as long as a number of people in the street are interviewed. That is, anyone observing the street interview will think the person questioned is one of many selected at random – which may be the case. In contrast, taking a person to an office or only questioning one person in public identifies him or her as a likely informant who may suffer consequences for answering questions – the person will know that and be reluctant to respond.

If the street interview is done in areas that are safe, the interviewer has the luxury of speaking with many people and for as long as is useful. However, if interviews are conducted in insurgent dominated locations, as is often the case, the interviewer has to take proper security precautions and keep the time for questioning limited – as a rule-of-thumb, when people not previously in the street start arriving, it's time to go, and, regardless of new arrivals, the estimated length of insurgent response times determines the length of the interview. Screening questions (see below) allow for devoting time only to people likely to have information.

Semi-controlled, unofficial settings, such as the homes or offices of those questioned, are also potential locations for interviews. Yet, while they allow for privacy and security, they risk the person interviewed being identified as an informant and therefore vulnerable to reprisal. Unannounced and random visits decrease this risk.

Developing informants. A good way to end an interview that has gone well is to give the respondent a business card with a secure phone number and e-mail address in the respondent's language. If ongoing contact can be established, telephone calls, e-mail, chat, and even messenger services can be ideal for communicating, as long as they are secure. In such cases, communications with a respondent – especially someone effectively acting as an informant – can be almost entirely hidden.

Interview Team

In effect, there are two teams needed: Those who actually conduct the questioning, and those who provide security for them. At a minimum, questioning is conducted by an interviewer and an interpreter (unless the interviewer speaks the language of the person questioned and is familiar with the culture). A third person can accompany them to take notes and later be involved in debriefing. But, more than three becomes a crowd and may unnecessarily deter a respondent from answering. Security, however, is adjusted for each setting and determined by the command providing security. In the semi-controlled setting of a government office or police station the security typically provided at the location may be sufficient. Interviews conducted in the home or office of the respondent often require a close protection detail, as well as securing the building. Close protection, as well as perimeter security, is usually necessary for interviews conducted in the street and other open places.

Stress Level - The Right Balance

The goal is for the interview to be neither comfortable nor traumatic. A respondent who is too comfortable may not take the interview seriously or may feel free to be evasive. One under too much stress may not give clear answers, or may fabricate answers to gain relief. The goal is to find that optimal level of stress that encourages responding without decreasing veracity.

There is substantial research in social science and forensic literature about the effects of stress upon questioning,[8] especially excess stress.[9] The consensus is that too much stress during an interview

[8] Richard Conti, "The psychology of false confessions," *Journal of Credibility Assessment and Witness Psychology,* 2 (1999), 14-36; John M. Darley and Russell H. Fazio, "Expectancy confirmation processes arising in the social interaction sequence," *American Psychologist,* 35 (1980), 867-81; Bella M. DePaulo, Julie I. Stone, and G. Daniel Lassiter, "Deceiving and detecting deceit," in Barry R. Schenkler (ed.), *The Self and Social Life* (NY: McGraw-Hill, 1985); Krista D. Forrest, Theresa A. Wadkins, and Richard L. Miller,

leads to distortion and lying. Though there is less research on the effect of low levels of stress, there are indications[10] that low to moderate stress promotes responding, at least in some individuals. Thus, the goal is to find an optimal level of stress that fosters veracity and encourages responding.

Two dimensions should be considered when determining the level of stress most beneficial to the interview: the *certainty* and the *immediacy* of consequences. At a *low stress level* there are no consequences, neither now nor later, for responding or not. Accordingly, low stress may result in indifference to accurate responding or to even responding at all. At a *moderate stress level* however, the respondent knows that adverse consequences are possible from the interviewer or the insurgency (or both), though they are not necessarily immediate. Thus moderate levels of stress may be desirable to motivate responding without affecting the veracity of responses. At a *high stress level* the consequences of responding are certain, but not immediate; a high stress level may motivate responding, but may decrease veracity. At a *maximum stress level* the consequences are both certain and immediate; maximum stress levels nullify the veracity of responses and are not useful in interviewing.

For uninvolved people, the interview itself usually provides that optimum level of stress. For witnesses and victims, stress elevated by first-hand knowledge of potential consequences can be reduced by interviewing in a secure setting and providing reassurance of safety. For interviews of collaborators and functionaries, who may fear the interviewer is "on to them," high stress can be decreased by meeting in their office or home (or, if needed, increased by meeting in an official setting). As always, the goal is to find the optimal stress level for getting sufficient and valid responses.

Screening

Screening is the prelude to the interview and takes place in the first few minutes of contact with the respondent.

Verification of respondent type. First, the interviewer wants to know who is being questioned – the randomly selected person on the street, in fact, may be a collaborator or even an insurgent. It is the job of the interviewer to reasonably determine who the respondent is. This is done by assessing any evasiveness while factoring-out the impact of expected stress associated with sensitive questions (e.g., *"If you were at the explosion site where many were injured, why is it that you didn't see anyone else there?"*). The interviewer may have to deviate from an anticipated line of questioning and redirect questions to determine who the respondent is – and that determination may result in a very different line of questioning to get the target information.

Affiliation. Has the person been associated with the community (or the insurgents) to the extent necessary to have the target information? The uninvolved person on the street may know only hearsay or, instead, may be well attuned to the activities of insurgents and the community. Collaborators may attend regular meetings with local leaders and be involved in planning insurgent actions, or they may only provide information to a single point-of-contact. A few screening questions to determine the extent of affiliation the respondent has with the community or insurgency are valuable: *"Do you live in this village or just shop here?" "You say you meet with Agron, how often do you meet with him? Do you also meet with his friends?"*

Temporal access. Very simply put, has the respondent been in the geographic area or affiliated

---

"The role of pre-existing stress on false confessions: An empirical study," *The Journal of Credibility Assessment and Witness Psychology,* 3 (2002), 23-45; Gisli H. Gudjonsson and Noel K. Clark, "Suggestibility in police interrogation: A social psychological model," *Social Behavior,* 1 (1986), 83-104; Gisli H. Gudjonsson, *The Psychology of Interrogation, Confessions and Testimony,* (NY: Wiley, 1992); Saul M. Kassin, "The psychology of confession evidence," *American Psychologist,* 52 (1997), 221-33; and Saul M. Kassin and Katherine L. Kiechel, "The social psychology of false confessions: Compliance, internalization, and confabulation," *Psychological Science,* 7 (1996), 125-8.

[9] John A. Wahlquist, "Enhancing interrogation: Advancing a new agenda," *Parameters,* 29 (Summer 2009), 38-51; for a review of the literature see Randy Borum, "Approaching truth: Behavioral science lessons on educing information from human sources," in *Intelligence Science Board, Educing Information: Interrogation: Science and Art, Foundations for the Future* (Washington, DC: National Defense Intelligence College Press, 2006), 17-37.

[10] Forrest, Wadkins, and Miller (2002) above.

with the insurgency long enough to have information? The nature of the target information sought should determine the duration of access needed.

Cognitive capacity.[11] Does the person have the cognitive capacity to understand questions and formulate meaningful responses? If initial answers are odd or off-track, the interviewer may want to shift to some basic questions to assess orientation: *"What is the name of this village?"* (the village name), *"Who am I?" ("a stranger asking me questions," "a foreigner,"* or even *"I don't know"), "What month is this?"* (the correct month). If the answers to these simple questions don't make sense, there may be cognitive or psychological problems that preclude a useful interview.

Overall, if the respondent is not who he or she is expected to be, or does not have sufficient affiliation, temporal access or capacity, then the interviewer will want to change the direction of the interview, or politely end the questioning and go to the next person. This is especially important when time is limited in high-risk settings.

The Interview - Question and Interview Structure

In the desert of Iraq a young U.S. Army lieutenant collecting local atmospherics began his interview of a man in the street with: *"Do you want Democracy?"* – the man answered *"naam"* (yes) and the lieutenant checked a box on his clipboard: *"Do you think Democracy is a good form of government?"* – the man answered *"naam"* and another box was checked. Similar questions and answers followed until a civilian psychologist present interrupted and asked, *"Do you like Tuesday better than you like butterscotch?"* – the man answered *"naam"*. In effect, the lieutenant was checking boxes related to a "response set" elicited from leading questions, and *"naam"* was going to be the answer to any question asked. (How "butterscotch" was translated will never be known.)

The basic structure of an interview should begin with the screening questions discussed above to determine if the interview should proceed. Those screening questions also serve the purpose of establishing rapport. Next, the interview progresses through a gradual process of narrowing the focus of questioning by going from open-ended questions, to more pointed questions of choice, and to more direct questions asking for "yes" or "no" as an answer.[12]

Open-ended questions. The way to ask the first open-ended questions of an interview (after screening) is to formulate questions so that the answer can be only the unbiased product of the respondent – that is, the question is open to any answer and can be answered impartially. As an example, if the interviewer wants to know if insurgents are active in a village or neighborhood, a way to start may be to see if insurgents have made efforts to gain the allegiance of the local people; thus a first question would be: *"Has anything changed to make your life better in the village?"* To get an answer the interviewer may have to rephrase the question and narrow its focus (see Verification and Refinement below), but eventually the person may respond, *"Yes, there was a change. I now have water I can drink."* Thus, a change has been identified – newly acquired drinking water. The next steps are to determine the source of the change, followed by the cause of the change, and eventually any relationship of the cause to an

[11] See Marshal F. Folstein, Susan E. Folstein, Paul R. McHugh, "Mini-mental state: A practical method for grading the cognitive state of patients for the clinician," *Journal of Psychiatric Research*, 12 (1975), 189-198, available in multiple languages including Arabic, through Psychological Assessment Resources, Inc. (PAR), http://www.minimental.com/, retrieved 15 March 2010.

[12] There is an important difference between the semi-structured interview described here and a structured interview or questionnaire. The questionnaire, and to some extent the structured interview, provide answers that are easily scored and analyzed, but with results less likely to be of use, unless they are standardized to ensure reliability and validity. Consequently, for use in these settings they would have to be standardized for each sub-group of respondents and re-standardized as target questions change, precluding any timely information gathering. In contrast, the semi-structured interview, though more difficult to administer and score, can get meaningful information quickly. Basic interviewing techniques, pros and cons of structured and unstructured interviewing, closed versus open-ended questions, and response bias have been extensively described in clinical psychology and survey method research. See John Sommers-Flanagan and Rita Sommers-Flanagan, *Clinical Interviewing* (4th ed., Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2009); Michel Hersen and Jay C. Thomas, *Handbook of Clinical Interviewing with Adults* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2007); Floyd J. Fowler, *Survey Research Methods* (4th ed., Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2009); and Edith D. de Leeuw, Joop J. Hox, and Don A. Dillman (eds.), *International Handbook of Survey Methodology.* (NY: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2008); and "Guidelines for best practices in cross-cultural surveys," http://ccsg.isr.umich.edu/index.cfm, retrieved 17 January 2010.

insurgency.

Gradual progression: Open-ended – choice-selection – yes/no questions. After initial answers to open-ended questions, a gradual, steady progression of questions can follow (each of which may need verification and refinement): *"Where do you get this water you can drink?"–"I get it from the faucet on the street"; "Where does the water in the faucet come from?"–"The water comes from the pump at the north of the village"; "Where does the pump get the water?"–"The pump gets the water from the well."* Now that a possible source of change (a well) has been identified, questioning can become more specific, *"When was the well dug?"–"It has been there for all time."* And a step back may be required: *"When was the pump attached to the well?"–"The pump was attached last month."* (Bingo, a lead to the cause of the change may have been found.) Now questions can be more targeted: *"Who attached the pump?"–"It was attached by people who I do not know."* The possibly evasive answer suggests that the information may be of significance. Now questions can shift to a more direct choice-selection: *"The people who attached the pump, do they live in the village or do they come from outside the village?" "Do they come from the north or the south?" "Are they from this country or another country?"* And when questions involving a choice-selection are exhausted, shift to questions that can be answered simply with a word or two, or by "yes" or "no": *"How many men installed the pump?"–"Four or five"; "Did they carry guns?"–"Some of them did"; "Do they come to check on the pump?"–"Yes"; "How often?"–"Once a week"; "When will they be back to check next?"–"Wednesday"; "When they are here where do they eat their midday meal?"–*

COUNTERINSURGENCY INTERVIEWING				
(1) TARGET INFORMATION SOUGHT				
on insurgent activities			*on environmental factors*	
Identification (individuals, locations)	Resources (caches, funding, recruiting, etc.)	Logistics (meetings, attacks, communication)	Atmospherics (attitude, allegiance of local people)	Environmental-Social (needs, concerns, conditions, issues)
(2) RESPONDENT TYPES				
Uninvolved (the average man or woman on the street)	Witness & Victim (directly & indirectly affected by insurgent activities)	Collaborator & Functionary (supportive of insurgency at many levels, but non-combatants)		
(3) SETTINGS				
non-controlled		*semi-controlled*		
Community (streets, public areas, etc.)	Private Location (home, office)	Official Location (police station, gov office)		
(4) STRESS LEVELS				
Low (no perceived risk for responding or not)	Moderate (perceived possible risks, though not immediate)	High (perceived certain risks, but not immediate)	Maximum (perceived certain & immediate risks)	
(5) SCREENING for INFORMATION AVAILABILITY				
Respondent Type (verification of type)	Affiliation (access to information)	Temporal (long enough to have information)	Capacity (cognitive ability to understand & respond)	
(6) INTERVIEW & QUESTION STRUCTURE				
Open-ended ("What do you know about…?")	Choice-Selection ("Which of these three villages…?")	Yes/No ("Did you see him there when it happened?")	Narratives (stories by the respondent that require attention & direction)	
(7) ANALYSIS				
on insurgent activities		*on environmental factors*		
Entity Profiling (people, places & resources)	Network Analysis (relationships between entities)	Quantitative Analysis (for choice-selection & Y/N questions)	Qualitative Analysis (for open-ended questions & narratives)	

Table 1. Framework for Interviewing

"That house on the corner"; "Where do they pray?"–"They do not pray." There are still many questions to be asked before it can be determined if insurgents installed the pump, but there are already enough answers to make inferences. From these answers it can be inferred that four or five men, some armed, from another location installed the pump and visit the village weekly where they have the support of a certain family who gives them food, but have no association with the local mosque, and they will return next Wednesday.

Important to this gradual progression of questioning, which goes from open-ended – to choice-selection – to simple responses, is to allow the respondent to skip-around and be evasive while the interviewer constantly returns to the topic, without ever directly asking the question: *"Is there insurgent activity in your village."* Asking that question directly would likely end the interview. Also, certain specifics such as identifying people by name *("Did Efrim install the pump?")* or referring to organizations by name (e.g., *al Qaeda, Hezbi al Islami, Taliban, FARC*) are often conversation stoppers.

The narrative. At any point in the interview when the person begins to tell a story, be ready to drop the planned line of questioning for the moment and listen to the story. Unless people are terrified or paranoid, they have one thing in common across cultures – they like an audience and once they start talking, inhibitions fail. And, in some cultures explanations can only occur in a narrative format, one which may be circular and seem disjointed. Yet, interrupting a story may be like pressing a "reset button" – each interruption re-starts the story from the beginning until it is completed without interruption. If the interviewer provides a good audience, the story may give more information than the best of questions would ever elicit. Listening to a story may be stressful in time-limited settings, but if possible it's the best use of time, and one can often return to asking gradual, progressive questions after the story ends.

Questioning to discover insurgent networks. If the respondent is someone who knows a good bit about insurgent activities, or is a collaborator or functionary, interviewers can iterate questions to "grow" a social network of local insurgents and those associated with them. Suppose, for example, that a willing respondent is a functionary for an insurgency and has a good number of interactions with insurgents on a daily basis while delivering supplies. Using this framework, the interviewer can ask who the respondent sees during each day, yielding an initial set of names. From there, the interviewer can ask about the respondent's relationship with each, what they do, where they can be found, and with whom they are seen. Figure 1. shows an example of what an iteratively growing a network might look like, from the interview of a person named "Cal".

When conducting interviews, the interviewer has a choice of how to capture information. Extracting names, locations, assets and relationships from traditional note taking is cumbersome and takes time. An alternative is for the interviewer to use a simple four-column format to capture information about names and a five-column format for relationships. The four-column format has one column each for: names, types (person, place, asset, etc.), roles and comments. A five-column format for relationships has one column each: for primary objects (person, place, thing having the relationship), primary relationship types ("works for," "house of," etc.), secondary objects, secondary relationship types, and a fifth column for the strength or importance of the relationships and comments. Another option is to attempt to draw a network diagram while the respondent is talking, although this can be difficult in practice.

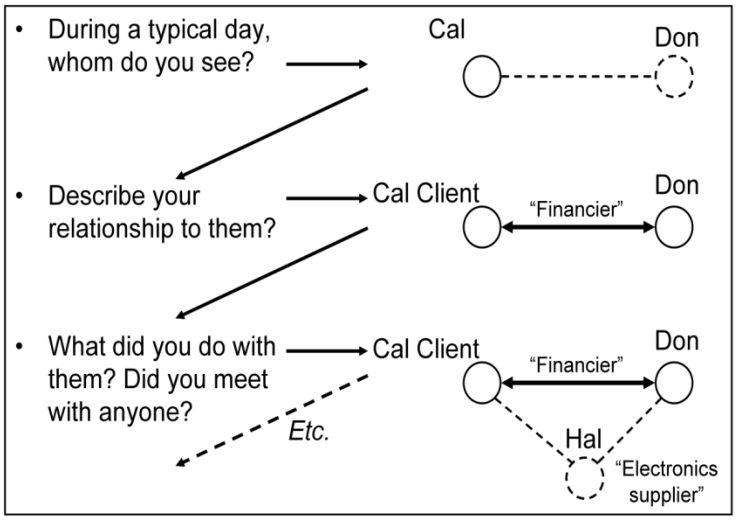

Figure 1. Social Analysis Network

Verification and Refinement

Internal and external verification. Internal verification refers to asking the same question of a person in different ways at different points in the interview, even if the first answer seemed clear. Originally, *"When was the pump attached to the well?"–"The pump was attached last month,"* later in the same interview can be followed by simply rephrasing the question, *"How long has the pump been attached to the well?"–"For years; it has been attached many times; it breaks and they come to reattach it; the last time was last month."* This can lead to discovering that employees of the Ministry of Water and their armed security guards regularly come from the capital city to service the pump, and eat lunch at the home of a relative living in the village. Key pieces of information always need internal verification. In contrast, external verification refers to getting the same answers from different people in separate interviews. Consistent responses from five or six people allow for some confidence in their validity. Yet, if one or two respondents provide different answers, additional interviews are needed. The greater the internal and external verification, the more likely it is that reasonable inferences can be made from responses.

Refining and narrowing. Often uninvolved people, witnesses and victims will give answers with the intent of either pleasing the interviewer or simply getting the interviewer to go away. And collaborators and functionaries may give intentionally evasive answers. In both cases it is the job of the interviewer to refine and narrow the questions without leading or biasing the person interviewed. For example, in response to the question *"Has anything changed in the village to make your life better?"* a general answer may be, *"The war is over, life is better."* Without negating the response and damaging rapport, the question can be narrowed to time-limited information: *"Yes, life is better now that the war is over, but has anything changed in the past month that makes your life better?"* And in response, *"The election last week put better people in charge."* With that the interviewer can refine the question to get an answer about discrete changes, *"Has any <u>one thing</u> changed here in Moffetti Village in the past month that makes your life better everyday since the change happened?"* And hopefully, *"Yes, the pump was attached to the well. I now have water I can drink"* – leading to questions about who attached the pump.

Lies

The greatest gift an interviewer can get is to be told a lie and know it's a lie. Knowing a respondent is lying has three benefits: it suggests that its inverse may be the truth, an area sensitive to the respondent has been identified for further exploration, and control is given to the interviewer as the respondent attempts evasion. In practice, prior to the interview, an interviewer usually has some basic knowledge about the target information sought. When a respondent gives answers discrepant from what the interviewer knows, there are three general reasons: (1) The interviewer's information is wrong, (2) the respondent incorrectly believes his or her information to be accurate, or (3) the respondent is lying. The first task of the interviewer is to determine which is the reason for the discrepancy. This usually can be accomplished by asking a simple question, *"Why do you think that is the case?"* For respondents who truly believe their information is accurate, the most common reaction is incredulity – *how could you, the interviewer, not accept what I say?* But when a respondent is lying, the answer often defensively attempts to justify and explain the lie, frequently using too many words and becoming emotional. If a lie is detected, the good interviewer doesn't confront it (which would relinquish control, prevent an exploration of the reasons for lying, and possibly end the interview), but instead shifts questioning to determine why the respondent is lying, which may provide important information. The reasons for lying may be more valuable than the truth.[13]

Misinformation

A tragic incident occurred in the Middle East during the Spring of 2008 in which information was planted in interviews by the insurgency so that it would be used as evidence for and collated into a U.S. attack upon them. But, it was an ambush and soldiers were killed. Interviews can backfire.

[13] Julian C. Scholl and Daniel H. O'Hair, "Uncovering beliefs about deception," *Communication Quarterly,* 53(2) (2005), 377-399; in regard to culture and lying see Frank A. Salamone, "The methodological significance of the lying informant," *Anthropological Quarterly,* 50(3) (1977), 117-124.

The safeguard against misinformation, as described above, is external validation. Can information be validated by more than one source, and what is the reliability of each source? Also, is the information from those sources solicited or volunteered? If volunteered, what are the person's motivations for doing so? Anytime people volunteer information, it's crucial to determine their motives. And, when information from interviews is used to take action that could have adverse consequences, the interviewer and those who analyze the interview should ask the questions: *"How did the respondent get this information? Why would he want to tell us? If I were an insurgent and wanted to plant information, is this the way I would do it?"* And, *"If I were planting information, who do I not want them to check with about it?"* Then go and check with those people.

Data Analysis

Social network analysis. Social network analysis (SNA), which has been described as the "visual and mathematical analysis of human relationships,"[14] is well-suited to analyzing information about insurgents. The best-known product of SNA is the network diagram or link chart, which graphically shows names (of people, places and assets) as "dots" or icons, and relationships as lines between them. One can then throw a barrage of math at the network to find all sorts of statistical facts about power relationships, subgroups, "key persons" or "nodes," and many other attributes.

But a few notes and cautions are warranted. First, the greatest value of SNA is as a knowledge management tool to graphically display what is learned about an insurgent network in an organized way; the analysis algorithms are nice but secondary to the basic diagrams. Second, much of SNA is about finding the "most important" persons in the network, which can then be oversold as, *"if we can just capture these high valued targets (HVTs), the insurgency will collapse."* As far as we are aware capturing a single, or even decent-size group of HVTs, has never caused an insurgent network to collapse, or even be degraded for long. What has worked is systematically pressuring and rolling-up networks, and that requires large amounts of intelligence. Therefore, the "most important persons" are not so much HVTs as they are people who know a great deal about the *whos, whats,* and *wheres* of an insurgent network – the "in-between" functionaries and collaborators described in this article.

In terms of SNA tools – we expect the interviewer-analyst's mileage will vary with any tool. Easily used link-chart analysis tools use a computer point-and-click interface and produce diagrams for PowerPoint presentations, while more "mathematical" SNA tools require the entry of data on names and relationships and have greater analytic capabilities. Examples of link-chart tools commonly used to build network diagrams for operational units include Analyst's Notebook[15] and AXIS Pro.[16] UCInet[17] is often used for SNA. We are partial to Carnegie Mellon's Organizational Risk Analyzer (ORA)[18] – it is comparatively easy to use, allows for building networks that account for insurgents' roles and skills, has a wide range of analysis algorithms intended for network attack purposes, and is free.

Qualitative analysis. A qualitative analysis of responses from a semi-structured interview produces rough estimates of respondents' greatest concerns when asked atmospheric or environmental questions. The simplest way to do qualitative analysis is to review notes from the interview sessions and highlight comments about particular themes and variants of those themes. Say, for example, concerns about a lack of clean water are expressed in some responses, gratitude about a newly installed pump by unnamed people is stated in others, and complaints about a perceived U.S. force failure to provide clean

[14] Valdis Krebs, "Social network analysis: A brief introduction," (2008), http://www.orgnet.com/sna.html; and Valdis Krebs, "Emergent Networks," (2008), www.orgnet.com/EmergentNetworks.pdf; both retrieved 15 March 2010.
[15] i2, Inc., "i2: Investigative analysis software," (2009), http://www.i2inc.com/, retrieved 15 March 2010.
[16] Overwatch Systems, Ltd., "AXIS Pro," (2008), http://tactical.overwatch.com/products/axis_pro.htm, retrieved 15 March 2010.
[17] Analytic Technologies, "UCInet," (2009), http://www.analytictech.com/ucinet/, retrieved 15 March 2010.
[18] Kathleen M. Carley, "Dynamic network analysis," in Ronald Breiger, Kathleen M. Carley, and Philippa Pattison (eds.), *Dynamic Social Network Modeling and Analysis: Workshop Summary and Papers,* 133–14, Washington, DC: Committee on Human Factors, National Research Council (2003); Kathleen M. Carley, "Organizational Risk Analyzer [ORA, computer software]" (Pittsburgh, PA: Carnegie Mellon University, 2008), http://www.casos.cs.cmu.edu/projects/ora/, ORA software can be downloaded from http://www.casos.cs.cmu.edu/, retrieved 17 January 2010, compatible with Windows 7, Linux 2.6, Mac OS 9 versions and earlier, but not yet compatible with Mac OS X versions running Java greater than 1.4.2.

water as promised are expressed in yet other responses. The analyst then simply counts the number of times the theme (clean water) and each of its variants (lack of water, new pump, gratitude for the pump, U.S. failure to provide) was mentioned throughout the interview. The themes mentioned most often are typically the most important (with exceptions for those rarely mentioned but of special significance). Analysts can do this calculation manually or with the help of a software tool to mark and code themes; example of tools include NVivo[19] and Qualrus.[20]

Discussion

This article addresses a gap in counterinsurgency: tactical interviewing in non-controlled and semi-controlled settings. Its goal is to provide hands-on tactics for questioning by those directly involved in counterinsurgency – tactics that can be used in the field and yet are consistent with operational, strategic and theoretical approaches to counterinsurgency. Key to the framework described in this article is the semi-structured interview and guidelines of how the interview should progress, rather than specific questions to be asked. Important to this approach is who is questioned. In addition to uninvolved persons, witnesses and victims, the article focuses on the often-ignored supporters of insurgency who are most likely to know information about insurgent activities, those in a good position to know about the *whos, whats* and *wheres* of a local insurgent network.

The article is written from an applied perspective with input from psychology, military science, criminology, policing and forensic science, as well as from practices developed in the field. The integration of these different, often segregated sciences comes at a time when the U.S. is moving in the direction of integrating military, diplomatic and development approaches to its foreign affairs.[21]

The greatest limitation of this article is its brevity. While its purpose is to establish a framework and provide a guide to interviewing, brevity prevents the greater detail that supports the tactics described – we are barely able to touch on analytic techniques; discussion of important adjuncts to interviewing, such as working with interpreters,[22] and the crucial role that customs and gestures play are omitted, as well as special approaches to interviewing women[23] and the wisdom of avoiding children.[24]

Regardless of its limitations, it presents a needed integrative framework for tactical questioning that interviewers can use in the field and to be tested in future research. In doing so, its intent also is to stimulate debate and commentary about tactics used in counterinsurgency. Hopefully that debate, commentary and research will come from the multiple disciplines responsible for the information collection framework given here. Now, a half a century after Galula gave those practicing counterinsurgency a guidebook they could take to the field in their back-pocket, this article hopes to return to that basic tactical approach to counterinsurgency with experience and scientific knowledge gained since that time.

The contents of this article are the sole responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID, the U.S. Department of State, RTI International, RAND Corporation, the United States Army or the United States Government. The article was not researched or

---

[19] QSR International, "Software for Qualitative Research," (2009), http://www.qsrinternational.com/, retrieved 15 March 2010.
[20] The Idea Works, "Qualrus – The Intelligence Qualitative Analysis Program," (2009), http://www.qualrus.com/, retrieved 15 March 2010.
[21] U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, "Development in the 21st Century," Speech delivered to the Center for Global Development. Washington, DC, (6 January 2010); see also U.S. Senators John Kerry and Richard Lugar, "Senate Bill 1524 Foreign Assistance Revitalization and Accountability Act of 2009," draft, (28 July 2009).
[22] Petraeus and Mattis, and Petraeus and Amos give a detailed description of how to work with interpreters.
[23] Kilcullen, "Twenty-eight articles: Fundamentals of company-level counterinsurgency," see Article 19 regarding the role of women in counterinsurgency. As an observation by the authors, in some Sunni desert villages of Northern Iraq the authors found what was described as "wise-women", but never more than one per village if any; these women serve as advisors to male village leaders, men who otherwise may disregard females.
[24] Kilcullen, ibid, see Article 19 regarding concerns about interacting with children; on the development of empathy in children and adolescents see Brenda K. Bryan, "An index of empathy for children and adolescents," *Child Development,* 53 (1982), 413-425; Nancy Eisenberg-Berg and Paul Mussen, "Empathy and moral development in adolescents," *Developmental Psychology,* 14 (1979), 185-186; and Paul Mussen and Nancy Eisenberg-Berg, *Roots of Caring, Sharing, and Helping: The Development of Pro-social Behavior in Children,* (San Francisco, CA: W.H. Freedman, 1977) .

written as a part of the authors' work with these organizations nor does it represent the research findings of these organizations.

Dr. Stacy S. Lamon, a clinical and forensic psychologist and research scientist, is currently a senior development advisor to the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in Iraq. Correspondence should be sent to Dr. Lamon at stacy.lamon@gmail.com.

Dr. Nahama Broner as a senior research psychologist at RTI International and adjunct Associate Professor at New York University researches violence (victimization and perpetration), public health and safety risk management interventions of offender populations, and the translation of research to practice.

Dr. John Hollywood is an operations researcher at the RAND Corporation, where he studies intelligence collection and analysis methods to preempt violent attacks in the areas of crime prevention, counterterrorism and counterinsurgency.

COL Billy McFarland, USAR, is the Assistant Chief of the U.S. Army's Foreign Area Officer Proponent, the Pentagon office responsible for the design, support and advocacy for the Army's Foreign Area Officers – the language, regional and political-military experts serving commanders, Defense agencies, and Embassy Country Teams around the globe.