

Insurgency, Counterinsurgency, And The Marines In Vietnam

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The war in Vietnam continues to be hotly debated. Why the United States lost the war has been a key question surrounding the debate over its involvement. One of the most important points to recognize is that it was an insurgency. My purpose is to evaluate what an insurgency is, what is required to defeat it, and what the Marine Corps' concepts and actions were to counter the insurgency in Vietnam. The Marine strategy for Vietnam contained many of the important elements necessary to effectively conduct a counterinsurgency war.

Mao is considered to be the primary influence in guerrilla warfare. He recognizes the importance of the people in the success of the war. Well-organized guerrilla units are encouraged by him to take the initiative, applying hit-and-run tactics, fighting in the enemy rear and establishing bases for popular support and for spreading their influence. He warned that guerrilla warfare is protracted and becomes conventional only as it approaches success.

General Giap parrots much of Mao's philosophy. His war with the Japanese and French was an ideal test for the precepts of Mao and as result Giap reinforces much of what Mao offers in terms of guerrilla tactics. Giap's sound defeat of the French provides a clear illustration of an efficacious insurgency.

Not every insurgency has been a success, however. The counterinsurgency conducted by the Malayans and the British in Malaya is an excellent example from which to draw lessons for success. The security of the people is essential. Once this is provided the police, who provide the intelligence on the enemy, and the military, who engage the guerrillas in small-unit combat, can join with the government to develop a strategy and operational plan to defeat the guerrillas and their infrastructure (the link to the people).

Throughout its history the Marine Corps has learned to defeat guerrillas. They applied their knowledge in Vietnam with a strategy and tactics that parallel the Malaya counterinsurgency. They focused on the people and the link between the peasant and the guerrilla. Several effective programs, i.e. Combined Action Platoons, COUNTY FAIR

operations and GOLDEN FLEECE operations, were conducted in I Corps in Vietnam. I believe that the Marines had the right formula to defeat the Viet Cong but for victory all of Vietnam needed to its application.

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INSURGENCY, COUNTERINSURGENCY, AND THE MARINES IN VIETNAM

The war in Vietnam has been debated and discussed in scores of books and articles from the 1960's until today. Questions about the morality of the United States presence there, whether it could have ever succeeded, and if the strategy was right will probably continue to be answered in a number of ways for many years to come. Probably the most basic question is why did the U.S. lose? Was it a loss of national will, a failure to enter the war with the intent of winning, or did the Nation just fail to recognize the type of war it was and apply its might accordingly?

Andrew F. Krepinivich, Jr. in *The Army and Vietnam*

writes a scathing indictment of the U.S. Army for failing to fight the Vietnam war as the situation dictated. Throughout his book he accuses Army leaders of failing to properly apply the strategy and tactics of counterinsurgency. "Deeply imbedded in the service's psyche, conventional operations held sway over the Army... "(5:164) He maintains that the Army intended to fight an attrition war and "...gambled that it could attrite insurgent forces faster than the enemy could replace them..."(5:177) The Marine Corps on the other hand, conducted a war based upon its previous experience in fighting insurgents.(5:172)

Two of the key Marine Corps leaders, Major General Lewis W. Walt and Lieutenant General Victor H. Krulak, did have a clear view of how to conduct a counterinsurgency war. Krulak, as Commanding General, Fleet Marine Force Pacific, wrote several letters to senior administration officials outlining Marine programs and emphasizing the necessity of conducting counterinsurgency operations. He also was a staunch supporter of Gen Walt, then Commanding General Of the Third Marine Division and III Marine Amphibious Force (III MAF) in Vietnam, when he was conducting a number of programs to defeat the Viet Cong (VC) in I Corps in northern South Vietnam. It is impossible to determine if the strategy of the Marines could have won the war. Certainly, without similar efforts by the Army in the rest of Vietnam, I Corps would have been an oasis of counterinsurgency in a desert of attrition warfare. This does not negate the Marine strategy. The Marine strategy for Vietnam contained many of the important elements necessary to effectively conduct a counterinsurgency war.

INSURGENCY ACCORDING TO MAO

Mao Tse-tung is often viewed as the father of modern insurgency. His treatise, *Guerrilla Warfare*, provides detailed philosophy and principles for the conduct of war by the people for reasons of nationalism and ideology. To come to an understanding of guerrilla warfare in general and the war in Vietnam specifically, it is important to review the principles that Mao advocates. These principles are the key to guerrilla strategy and can serve as a basis for highlighting the strategy of counterinsurgency.

Guerrilla Warfare was written in 1937 as a guide for the communists in China to wage a war against the Japanese. Mao considers this to be a war of national liberation from the oppression of the Japanese and generally avoids the usual communist rhetoric. He does, however, emphasize that a guerrilla war cannot be prosecuted separately from politics. Everyone must understand that the goal is political-freedom for the Chinese people. This is important because the guerrillas come from the people and are supported by the people. To gain their support and active participation they must see and accept the political goal for which they are fighting.

In his introduction to Mao Tse-tung on Guerrilla Warfare, S.B. Griffith provides some of his own insights into Mao's guerrilla philosophy. Griffith says that there are three phases in a guerrilla war, phases which are which are fairly indistinct, flowing and intermingling among one another. Phase one is a period of establishing the movement and developing its viability. It seeks to develop the support of the people who can provide it with men, intelligence and logistical support. Phase two is more military oriented, with guerrillas seeking to covertly eliminate opposition, spread the movement's influence and attack government outposts for arms, ammunition, and other military necessities. Local militia units are also organized to eliminate resisters at the local level. In phase three the guerrillas begin to band into more conventional military units to attack and destroy the enemy and achieve victory for the movement. (13:20-23)

Mao says that the guerrillas are formed into two basic units: combatant and self-defense units. Combatant units are organized from platoons up to regiments. At the company level and above each has a military and political hierarchy. The units are located within military areas that are divided into districts which are further divided into counties. Several platoons or companies exist within each county. Additionally a battalion is also formed at the county level. These units generally function and are controlled at the county level but may be tasked to assist in operations in other counties. Regiments are formed from these county battalions and brigades are occasionally formed from these regiments. Although Mao does not address it, one can assume that the regimental hierarchy exists at the district level and brigade hierarchies at the area level. The second type of unit is formed for self-defense. They operate at the local level for defense, local intelligence collection, and police, and they may occasionally provide combat service support for the combatant units.

Emphasizing decentralization of control, Mao states that guerrilla units should be allowed to operate on their own. There should not be an attempt to coordinate the efforts of the individual units. However, their efforts should be coordinated with forces conducting conventional war, specifically of a mobile type. The guerrilla must maintain the initiative. Mao says, "Dispersion, concentration, constant change of position-it is in these that guerrillas employ their strength." (13:102) To apply these situationally the guerrilla must have freedom of action. He must choose when to attack and should defend only as a precursor to attack. Only in this way can he avoid defeat Mao says.

Building on the need for initiative, Mao calls for guerrilla forces to surround the enemy, concentrating on weak enemy forces, and destroy them. He also requires them to operate on exterior lines of communication (because they are encircling). As Griffith offers, "The enemy's rear is the guerrilla's front; they themselves have no rear...The enemy

is the principal source of weapons, equipment, and ammunition,"(13:24) (Certainly one can see that operating on exterior lines can be effective when relying on the enemy's rear for support!) Mao emphasizes the importance of small

bands who can operate everywhere but remain unseen in the enemy's rear. Griffith says that the guerrilla remains dispersed which gives him strength because it appears that he is everywhere.(13:25) Griffith goes on, "Guerrilla tactical doctrine may be summarized in...`Uproar (in the East; Strike (in the) West.'...to fix the enemy's attention and to strike where and when he least anticipates the blow."(13:26) With dispersion Mao calls for guerrillas to harass main forces and destroy small units when the opportunity arises but only when success is assured. Further, this prevents the enemy from concentrating his forces which prevents him from taking advantage of his strength.

Mao sees guerrilla war as a protracted effort, a long duration war. Guerrilla operations cannot bring about victory by themselves. Ultimately, the third phase of guerrilla war must be reached, the war of conventional forces. Conventional forces must be established to conduct war along conventional lines, using both mobile and position tactics. Conventional war is conducted alongside small-unit guerrilla efforts, Both types are essential. Mao says that guerrillas have specific roles in assisting conventional forces. They provide intelligence and security to the main forces and harass the enemy's rear. By disrupting his rear "... the enemy will never stop fighting. In order to subdue the occupied territory, the enemy will have to become increasingly severe and oppressive."(13:107) (Obviously this would play into the hands of the guerrilla because the people would then see him as their savior.)

While Mao calls for the guerrilla to function without a rear, he does recognize that they must have a base from which to operate. (One can only assume that he does not view these bases as a true rear area because of their location in the enemy's rear and their individual lack of permanence and importance.) He provides a detailed explanation of bases and guerrilla areas. Areas exist only when guerrillas are located within them and he stresses the need to either control these areas or keep them contested and not allow them to remain solely in enemy hands. (This obviously ties in with the need to keep small units operating everywhere.) He goes on to discuss bases in the mountains, plains and waterways.

Bases provide essential support functions and Mao highlights two key issues concerning them. First is the importance the people in these areas play. These bases serve as a means to politically convert the people to the movement and to arm and train them for self-defense and guerrilla units. Secondly, the local economy at these bases provide food and money from the people to the guerrillas. These

bases serve a tactical function as well. When the enemy attempts to surround them the guerrillas attack individual units and defeat them one at a time. These occur in consort with attacks on the enemy's rear and with harassment forays. He again warns that these should be on a small scale and only when success is assured. Mao sees these successes as garnering the support of new people who, in turn, would join the cause. This allows the guerrillas to expand into the cities, further encroaching on weak enemy lines of communication.

Here, then, are some of the basics of guerrilla warfare from Mao Tse-tung. Vo Nguyen Giap, another practitioner of guerrilla warfare, provides reinforcement for Mao's basic concepts.

GIAP'S GUERRILLA WARFARE

General Vo Nguyen Giap in *People's War People's Army* presents a detailed account of the philosophy and strategy of the Vietnamese in their war against the Japanese and French. This account of the Vietnamese victory and strategy and Mao's concepts serve as a reasonable foundation to explore the Marine response to the guerrilla war conducted by the Viet Cong (VC) against the Government of Vietnam (GVN) and the United States in the late 1960's. Giap obviously learned much from the writings of Mao and applied them accordingly. His writing helps to clarify and enhance many of the points Mao addresses in *Guerrilla Warfare*.

Giap views guerrilla war as a protracted effort and cites the wars against the Japanese and French as examples. He calls for patience and the realization that success is not rapid. He says that they slowly "nibbled" away at the Japanese and French strength while the Vietnamese slowly gained strength. He offers, "... our strategy and tactics had to be those of a people's war and of a long-term resistance." (4:29)

Referring to the defeat of the French, Giap says, "People's war, long-term war, guerilla (sic) warfare developing step-by-step into mobile warfare, such are the most valuable lessons of the war of liberation in Vietnam." (4:49) Giap breaks guerrilla warfare into three phases: defense, equilibrium, and offense. Initially, the guerrillas are involved at a low level struggle with the enemy. As the guerrillas rise in strength a level of balance between forces is reached. Finally, when the guerrillas have reached a level of superiority in forces, they go on the offensive in a conventional, mobile scenario of ever increasing proportions. While there is a slow evolution from guerrilla activity to mobile, large-unit operations, Giap contends that guerrilla activity is still useful to support conventional operations in this last phase. However, he, like Mao, recognizes that only through mobile conventional warfare can the enemy be destroyed.

Giap presents only subtle differences from Mao in the organization of forces, basically dividing them into guerrilla forces, regional forces, and conventional forces. He advises that under certain circumstances conventional forces can be used to conduct guerrilla operations. The guerrilla defends and polices his local village, operates in the enemy's rear, provides logistical and intelligence support to main forces. He also establishes new bases to expand the support from the people and provide fresh recruits for the main forces. Here lies another important point for Giap; he says, "... our Resistance War must be the work of the entire people. Therein lies the key to victory." (4:43) Emphasizing the close relationship of the army with the people, he goes so far as to use Mao's analogy of the fish and water, the fish being the army and the water being the people.

Like Mao, Giap emphasizes the importance of establishing bases for support from the people and bringing the people together under a common (political) cause. These bases are established in both "free" areas and in the enemy's rear. He calls for the initial development of guerrilla bases in rural areas and for their use as springboards for attacks into more populated areas. Remaining in rural areas allows guerrillas to preserve their strength and to slowly wear down the enemy. Giap sees the slow encroachment of guerrilla control over the people and land as small, individual pockets which slowly increases in number and gradually unite. He also emphasizes the importance of what he calls "self-reliance", i.e. small units supplying themselves locally and from what they can capture from the enemy on the battlefield and in the his rear.

From the political standpoint of pushing the cause of communism Giap sees the initial need to emphasize the eradication of the foreign oppression, i.e. the Japanese and French. For the local peasant this meant land redistribution, reduction of taxes etc. Both Mao and Giap used the defeat of the oppressor as the first goal and rallying point for the people- the establishment of communism would come later one can assume.

Giap (and Mao) believes in the importance of allowing local initiative under the umbrella of centralized control. He says that the guerrilla must operate at the small unit level, being both elusive and ubiquitous. The guerrilla fights small battles when success is guaranteed and so slowly attrites the enemy. He never allows the enemy to mass his forces against a lucrative guerrilla target. The guerrilla, however, should mass into conventional forces when the situation presents an assured destruction of the enemy. Giap's focus is on the enemy; the destruction of his forces is paramount.

When fighting the French Giap says that he sought to force them to disperse their forces into small units. He accomplished this by creating the appearance that Vietnamese

guerrillas were everywhere. These small French units then became ideal targets for the guerrillas to mass against and destroy. With ever increasing success at this level Giap says he was then able to expand the guerrillas into conventional mobile forces. So while the French were forced to slowly disperse into smaller, relatively weak units, the Vietnamese were able to build their strength. One can see that Giap had the initiative; he was in control of the French and had placed them in a no-win situation. Giap says that if the French massed themselves many areas were left open to free movement and action by the Vietnamese and this left small outposts vulnerable. If they dispersed this left insufficient troops to create a mobile force to meet conventional communist forces, according to Giap. Giap's eventual strategy: "Our position was...to pin down the enemy's main forces in the fortified camps, while choosing more favorable directions for our attack."(4:167)

Having considered the principles and strategy of guerrilla warfare provided by two successful guerrilla commanders and theoreticians, one is now faced with the dilemma of how to defeat an insurgency. While history is replete with insurgency success stories, there have also been counterinsurgency victories as well; Malaya is an excellent example.

LESSONS FROM MALAYA

Brigadier Richard L. Clutterbuck in *The Long Long War* provides a detailed account of the insurgency in Malaya and the actions taken by the British and Malayan governments to counter this insurgency. There are certain key points that Clutterbuck emphasizes in the British strategy to defeat the communists. Protection of the people and the government structure is essential. An extensive police force at the village level is also required, he says. The police are necessary to control the population and to gain intelligence. Throughout his book Clutterbuck clearly shows the necessity of having detailed information concerning the enemy. For the military their responsibility rests on providing security to the police and attacking guerrilla combatants. Finally, he emphasizes the development of a close working counsel, consisting of civil government, police and military leaders operating in a coordinated manner to defeat the insurgents.

Clutterbuck states that the initial effort in Malaya was to reestablish local government control in the villages. This was accomplished by substantially increasing the number of police and instituting strict controls over the population. Controls included registration of the people and issue of identity cards, curfews, food rationing, etc. He says that the population was to be convinced that strict constraints would remain in effect until their support of the insurgency ceased. Concomitant with these restraints is the need to provide security to the people, the government, and the police in an insurgency. Support provided by the peasants through guerrilla coercion continues until the

people feel safe from the guerrillas. Popular confidence in the government comes from this security as well. Clutterbuck also states that the police must be protected from assassination and coercion in order to effectively do their jobs.

The communist insurgency in Malaya consisted of basically a two-pronged establishment according to Clutterbuck. There were combatant guerrillas and a guerrilla infrastructure. This political infrastructure provided intelligence and logistic support to the combatants and also served to control the local population. The logistics support actually came from the people through this political arm of the guerrilla movement. It was up to the local police force to counter this political arm. Clutterbuck is emphatic in his discussion of the importance of the police. They are the ones who live in the village, know the people and can control them. It is up to them to enforce the controls established by the government. The police in Malaya conducted daily searches of the people looking for rice being smuggled out to the guerrillas and made identity card checks which could indicate who were strangers to a village. Also, they would be tasked with enforcing curfews to prevent night forays into the jungle by guerrilla supporters attempting to make contact with the political and combatant guerrillas.

Clutterbuck makes it quite evident that the police had the primary role in ferreting out the political arm of the guerrilla movement. At the lowest level the police were in an ideal position to locate the communist political cells (masses executives) in the village. By developing intelligence through interrogation and investigation they were able to identify the members of these cells, couriers for the guerrillas, suppliers, etc. By turning these people into what Clutterbuck calls "police agents", the local police were able to gather significant information about the location of Malayan Communist Party branches which controlled guerrilla activities around and within several villages. These branches, says Clutterbuck, provided detailed information and logistical support to the combatants as well as providing political insurgency within the villages.

According to Clutterbuck, probably the most important role for the police was the responsibility for intelligence gathering. This was not nor should it be a task assigned to the military, he says. Because of their continuous presence in the village, their search of the populace prior to daily departures to the fields or jungles, their identity card checks, etc., the police were ideally suited to gain intelligence. When they identified suspicious people, they could be interrogated, followed, etc. Once the police had reasonable assurance that these individuals were guilty of supporting the guerrillas, intense but humane interrogation followed. Clutterbuck says that most of these people would provide important information when assured of government protection and rewards. Many of these people continued to provide information out of fear of reprisals by the

guerrillas. His chief hope would be that his continued information would result in the guerrillas being captured, destroyed or driven off. Even captured guerrillas provided significant information because of generous rewards, disillusionment with the communist movement, and/or recognition that the government was winning the counterinsurgency.

The government's role in the conduct of the counterinsurgency was significant. Clutterbuck identifies the Emergency Regulations that it instituted to maintain control over the population. The counterinsurgency was not purely a military operation. Controls such as identity cards, food rationing, etc. all contributed to the coordinated effort of the government, police and military. The government participation in and chairmanship of the War Executive Councils for the conduct of the counterinsurgency assured their control over all operations. These councils, consisting of government, military, and police representatives, were the controlling bodies for combating the guerrillas at the state and district levels. Also, monetary and land rewards provided by the government for surrendering guerrillas and collaborating supporters of guerrillas greatly aided in the intelligence effort by the police.

Brigadier Clutterbuck provides superb documentation of the military effort in defeating the insurgents. The information he provides concerning the tactical and operational facets of the counterinsurgency are invaluable. From the foregoing, one can obviously see that Clutterbuck sees the military as playing only a portion of the role in the counterinsurgency. This portion, however, is significant. It is the military that provides the security for the village police. The military accomplishes this and the destruction of the guerrillas by small unit patrolling and ambushes. Clutterbuck says that the military learned that large unit operations simply will not work against small units of guerrillas in jungle environments. Large units are far too slow to react to guerrilla attacks and "broadcast" their movements as they break through the jungle. By utilizing police intelligence, small units of platoon size can quietly move to guerrilla camps forcing the guerrillas to quickly move and become ambushed along trails as they withdrew from these camps. Clutterbuck notes Mao's principle that guerrillas should not allow themselves to be attacked-they should withdraw. This type of action lends itself to ambush, he says.

By making use of intelligence concerning the location of guerrilla camps and attacking them and by intensive patrolling, Clutterbuck says the British forced the guerrillas to stay on the move. At the same time this was happening the police were putting pressure on the political infrastructure which provided logistic support, intelligence, and recruits to the guerrillas. This pressure reduced the support capability of the infrastructure. This

is the first element for defeating the guerrilla—deny him food, according to Clutterbuck. He sees the result of this

movement and loss of logistics as resulting in the breakup of guerrilla units into smaller organizations for survival. He argues that constant patrolling and ambushes by small military units are the key. British infantry companies used the village as their patrol base, not turning it into an armed fortress but simply using it as a rest area. The result was constant pressure on the Malay guerrilla and the breakdown of his forces into small platoon size units.

The closely coordinated effort by the police, military and government at the local level as Clutterbuck describes it brought about a successful counterinsurgency in Malaya. Sir Robert Thompson, a renowned counterinsurgency expert, has also used the Malaya war as a backdrop for discussing counterinsurgency with a somewhat different approach.

SIR ROBERT THOMPSON'S COUNTERINSURGENCY CONCEPTS

Defeating Communist Insurgency by Sir Robert Thompson presents a broader perspective on counterinsurgency. Of particular interest are three of the six principles he offers as essential for defeating the guerrilla. He says the government must develop a plan that covers all facets of the insurgency, i.e. social, political, administrative, police, and economic. He stresses the importance of addressing all of these facets in a mutually supporting way. Of particular note is his emphasis on the need to ensure that after military operations have been conducted in a specific area, civic action programs are initiated. If they do not, he warns, the military action will be of little value. Another important principle is the need for the focus of effort to be on the political subversion. He emphasizes the need to isolate the entire insurgent organization (political and guerrilla) from the population. Also, the guerrillas must be separated from their own political infrastructure. The political infrastructure, he says, must maintain contact with the people in order to secure supplies, intelligence and new recruits. Once separated the political insurgents will be forced to expose themselves in an effort to reestablish contact with the population. When this occurs the police should be prepared to arrest or kill those insurgents they can identify. In turn, the guerrillas must be separated from the political infrastructure. This is where they get their support. Also, as the infrastructure begins to lose personnel the guerrillas will be forced to provide replacements within the infrastructure. Guerrillas will also be forced to attempt to make contact with the population for support. So, they too will be forced to expose themselves to make contact, resulting in open combat with government forces. Once contact is prevented, Thompson explains, the guerrillas will be forced away from populated areas and will break down into smaller units in order to survive because of the paucity of support.

The last principle of Thompson's to be addressed is the establishment of base areas for the government. These base areas must be secure areas from which the government can branch out. This process begins in the more populated and developed areas. These areas are of the most importance to the government and Thompson says these are much easier to control. Because these areas are relatively easy to secure, the initial efforts will be successful, which develops confidence in the counterinsurgency from the people and the government. The rural areas which are less populated and developed cannot be addressed initially. He warns that the government may have to accept guerrilla control in these areas. The government's influence and counterinsurgency efforts can then slowly spread in small increments from these base areas. The insurgents begin to lose areas of influence and are slowly pushed away from their life's blood, the people, into less and less populated areas.

Thompson, like Clutterbuck, calls for the police to serve as the primary intelligence agency. He notes their proximity to the people and the pervasiveness of the police throughout a nation. He also believes that their focus should be where the local infrastructure among the people meets the combatant guerrillas. In terms of the military his thinking mirrors Clutterbuck's. The military provides security and attempts to keep the guerrillas on the move and organized only in small groups. He calls for company and platoon operations as opposed to grand scale operations. The military's place is in the field engaging guerrillas, not in the populated areas. Thompson describes several points concerning counterinsurgency operations. He says, "...there will be four definite stages...clearing, holding, winning and won." (18:111) In clearing, the military and police force the guerrillas out of the area to be secured. Next, hold operations are conducted to eliminate the political infrastructure and to keep the guerrillas from the people. Imposition of population and movement controls occur at this point. Once the government has reestablished itself, the winning phase begins. At this point, Thompson says, the government must begin strong efforts to provide an improved social and economic environment, i.e. schools, agricultural improvement, clinics, etc. The won phase occurs when the support of the people for the government is instated and the guerrillas have been pushed well away from the area.

Thompson, a recognized expert on counterinsurgency, had marked impact on one senior Marine, Lieutenant General Krulak and Marine activities gear this out

MARINES AND COUNTERINSURGENCY IN VIETNAM

Neil Sheehan in his book, *A Bright Shining Lie*, shows the Marine predisposition for fighting an insurgency war when he says:

There was a school of pacification strategists within the upper ranks of the Marine Corps

because of its institutional history. The decades of pre-World War II pacifying in Central America and the Caribbean, codified in the Corps' Small Wars Manual, were a strategic precedent which ruled that wars like Vietnam were wars of pacification. The Marines had adopted an approach that emphasized pacification over big unit battles... (15:632)

The Marine Corps defined pacification as "...the military, political, economic and social process of establishing or reestablishing local government responsive to and involving the participation of the people." It provided security, destruction of the guerrilla infrastructure, popular involvement in government and self-sustainment. (20:195-196) Clearly, the Marine Corps understood the war it was fighting and the manner in which it needed to be prosecuted. Lt. Gen. Krulak readily admits that Sir Robert Thompson's concepts had a significant impact on his thinking and believed that every Marine needed to understand them. (6:180) In a 1965 letter to Secretary of Defense McNamara, he told of Thompson advising President Diem to conduct a counterinsurgency war in the Delta region, and Krulak goes on to advise McNamara that the U.S. must do the same to the guerrilla: "...root him out, and separate him from the people...clean the area up a bit at a time." (8)

Krulak preached counterinsurgency to the highest levels of the U.S. Government. In a 1966 letter to McNamara, he told him that the Marines had 4 tasks in I Corps. The first task was to defend the air bases at Da Nang and Chu Lai. Second, Marines must attack communist main forces in order to take pressure off South Vietnam's army, protect populated areas and attrite Viet Cong men and material. The third was an almost text book description for counterinsurgency measures. He calls for the eradication of the political infrastructure and the isolation of the guerrillas from the people. This, he says, would prevent them from gaining supplies and recruits which were essential to the guerrillas and Main Force Viet Cong. The fourth task provided for pacification, creating a viable social climate and a local self-defense force where the Viet Cong had been eliminated. (9)

By 1966 the Marine Corps had a detailed plan for the conduct of the war in I Corps. It was divided into three main areas: counter the guerrillas by destroying them, conduct large unit operations to destroy both the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army main forces, and conduct pacification to rebuild South Vietnam. To specifically counter the guerrillas they would kill them and destroy their infrastructure by ambushes, patrolling, conducting COUNTY FAIR operations and collecting intelligence from civilians. Additionally, they would train local security forces for defense of the villages. The conduct of large unit operations were predicated on reconnaissance to locate main

enemy units and then conduct search and destroy missions.

Pacification had five important programs. The first was to develop village security by training local forces, establishing a local intelligence net and providing information to the people. Next was the establishment of village government with Marine assistance in the conduct of a census, establishment of local officials, providing security to those officials and keeping close relations with them. Third was the improvement of the local economy by creating local markets, improving lines of communication and protecting crops during harvests. Improvement of public health was the fourth program; this was accomplished by direct medical treatment and training, feeding those in need and evacuating the seriously ill. Finally, improvement in public education through Marine efforts to provide support to students, teach English, assist in school construction and provide vocational training.(11)

Krulak knew that much in the realm of pacification should have been accomplished by the South Vietnamese through the rural construction program, but he says, "They do not have the resources, nor do they yet have the integrity or the compassion to administer what resources they have."(11:4) William R. Carson, throughout his book, *The Betrayal*, reinforces Krulak's perception. Corson holds nothing back in his derision of the Vietnamese government concerning their inability and lack of real desire to effectively conduct pacification. He says, "...the United States has chosen to support the GVN's grotesque pacification efforts through a massive outpouring of material assistance while ignoring the graft and corruption this assistance has produced."(3:155)

He later says that United States programs designed to improve the lot of the people "... were clearly opposed to the interests of the very officials... we asked to conduct and support these programs."(3:159) Even commanders in the field recognized the inefficiency of the GVN efforts in rural development and saw these efforts as denigrating the success achieved by combat action.(11:43)

In 1965 Operation STARLITE and other such operations were conducted to attack VC main force units. The success of these operations caused the guerrillas to return to small unit actions. The Marines responded in kind, conducting significant numbers of ambushes and patrols. In October of 1965 over 5000 of these operations were conducted, and by December the total had risen to over 7000.(17:42) For all of 1965, it was estimated that there were 2500 VC killed through patrolling and ambush by Marines.(14:572) This coincides with Clutterbuck's experience and recommendations as a result of the Malaya war. Large unit actions force the guerrillas to break up; they will not fight unless assured of victory. They cannot keep themselves supplied and protected when constantly on the move in relatively large units. Therefore, they break down into small units to maintain viability.

Pacification and countering the guerrilla go hand in hand. The Marines recognized the importance of providing security to the villagers in order to gain their support and stop them from supplying the VC. Corson says, "Krulak and Walt knew that military-civic action was the direct key to the whole pacification effort." (3:176) Civic action was a specific means for the Marines of I Corps to relate military force to the support of the "...political, social, and economic reconstruction of the GVN." (17:13) It obviously played a key role in pacification. As CG, III MAF, Gen Walt also served as the Special Area Coordinator of Da Nang which made him "... responsible for liaison with local military and civilian leaders concerning matters involving U.S. military personnel." (17:20) He created an I Corps Joint Coordinating Council with representatives from the GVN and U.S. military and civilian agencies. (17:20-21) The intent was to coordinate Marine civic action efforts with those of the GVN because Gen Walt recognized that to be successful in defeating the VC the local GVN must be firmly in control and the people must see the efforts of the government to improve their lives through rural construction. This council does in some ways reflect similarities with the War Executive Council that the British used in Malaya. There was an attempt by Gen Walt to coordinate the efforts of the military and civilian agencies in behalf of the people and the counterinsurgency. Civic action by the Marines of I Corps was conducted in a variety of ways, some of which will be addressed here.

GOLDEN FLEECE operations were first conducted in the fall of 1965 at the request of the peasants (17:38) This first effort resulted in 870,000 pounds of rice beginning harvested and denied to the 3500 VC it could have fed. (6:191) It was estimated that this prevented the VC from gaining some 90% of the rice they would have normally acquired. (17:38) Obviously, such a denial would have a significant effect on the guerrillas. As previously discussed, the guerrillas must rely on the peasants for food. By denying this support to them, the Marines could force them out of the area. One can certainly expect that such efforts at protection would certainly enhance the peasants' views of the Marines and the GVN which they were there to support.

Another important counterinsurgency operation that was conducted was COUNTY FAIR. Gen Krulak explained the concept of COUNTY FAIR in a letter to Mr. Robert Komer, Special Assistant to the President. The idea was to focus on one village, a village that still contained some VC. He warns that the surrounding villages must be under government control to preclude the guerrillas from entering a nearby village. The intent was to clear all of the VC from the village and to begin a pacification program and conduct civic action. South Vietnamese civilian and military personnel would conduct the activities in the village. Popular Forces (Vietnamese self-defense units), Combined Action Platoons, Marine units, or Army of Vietnam (ARVN) forces would remain behind after the actual operation to provide security to the village until all of the VC had been killed or driven

off. (11)

COUNTY FAIR operations aimed at both the guerrilla and his supporting infrastructure in the selected village. The technique consisted of Marines rapidly forming a wide cordon around the village. This was to prevent any VC from escaping. Subsequently, GVN personnel would enter the village to check the identity of the villagers and to interrogate them. Searches were conducted for arms, VC, food caches, tunnels, etc. While this was occurring entertainment and lectures were also provided. (17:74-75) The 9th Marines Command Chronology provides some amplification on COUNTY FAIR operations. These operations were normally of approximately two days duration. During this time the Marines maintained the cordon while the GVN personnel interacted with the villagers. This government interaction was a key point because an important purpose in these operations was developing the confidence and a positive attitude in the people towards the government and local officials. (20)

In his book, U.S. Marine Corps Civic Action Efforts in Vietnam, Capt Russel Stolfi emphasizes the importance of security in civic action. He says that civic action played a significant role in efforts to destroy the VC; it brought important intelligence information about enemy activities from the peasant. But, he goes on, this results not so much from humanitarian civic action as from the security Marine presence provided. Stolfi is adamant that without security Marines could not expect to get assistance from the peasants. According to him, while Marines and ARVN units were conducting large unit operations against VC units and civic actions and rural construction were occurring, there was a marked lack of security at the village level. The establishment of the Combined Action Platoon (CAP), he says, filled this gap.

Sir Robert Thompson had high praise for the CAP and its effectiveness. (5:174) Basically, the CAP consisted of a Marine rifle squad combined with a platoon of Popular Forces (PF), a local self-defense force. The PF came from the village in which the Marine squad operated. This Marine/PF unit, lived, trained, patrolled, and defended the village, together. The mission of the CAP was:

- (1) Destroy the Viet Cong infrastructure within the village or hamlet area of responsibility.
- (2) Protect public security and help maintain law and order.
- (3) Protect the friendly infrastructure.
- (4) Protect bases and communications axes within the villages and hamlets.
- (5) Organize people's intelligence nets.
- (6) Participate in civic action and conduct pro-paganda against th Viet Cong. (3:184)

If one can assume that the results of the Malaya counterinsurgency contained the recipe for success, then certainly the CAP had most of the ingredients. Because of their proximity to the people and the security they provided, the units were ideal for attaining intelligence on the enemy from the people. Also, their frequent small-unit patrols met the requirement of Brigadier Clutterbuck. Thompson's call for civic action was one of the missions of the CAP. Isolating the guerrilla from the people and infrastructure was attainable by the mere presence of the CAP. The hold phase of Thompson's counterinsurgency concepts were surely accomplished by this combined force as well.

Gen Krulak was especially concerned with the PF units and the need to properly train them. He considered them to be the key to pacification and "...the most important force in the rural construction effort."(8) The CAP was continually conducting training with the PF units. While the CAP program may not have been the sole solution to the counterinsurgency, it obviously was an important facet in the counterinsurgency war. It is important to note that CAP units accounted for 7.6% of enemy killed while representing only 1.5% of the Marines in Vietnam.(14:602) Certainly, the effectiveness of the CAP Marines and their PF allies was a potent force and one can only guess at the results if these forces had been expanded in numbers and used throughout Vietnam.

Whether the Marine Corps concept for winning the war in Vietnam would have resulted in victory can only be left to conjecture. Gen Walt believed that the lessons he learned in his early career from the veterans of the "Banana Wars" were still applicable to this modern insurgency in Vietnam.(19:29) Surely, there are parallels in its concepts and the concepts applied in the counterinsurgency in Malaya. In his paper on the strategic concepts for Vietnam, which he wrote in 1965, Gen Krulak says "...it being counterinsurgency war, control of the population and control of the great resources are cardinal."(7) Mao and Giap both understood that the people and the supplies they can provide are essential for an insurgency. Thompson and Clutterbuck understood as well, recognizing the need to isolate the guerrilla from the people and their resources. Hanoi also realized where their greatest concern should rest. In a 1966 letter to Mr. McNamara Gen Krulak refers to a DIA report which stated that North Vietnam's greatest concern was that the guerrilla infrastructure not be lost.(9) He told McNamara in 1967 that he believed that the guerrillas were attempting to give the appearance that they were shifting to large unit operations in order to disguise their efforts to get back to the people.(12)

The Marine Corps, too, understood what needed to be done: "Put the primary emphasis on pacifying the highly populated South Vietnamese coastal plain...protect the people from the guerrillas so that they will not be forced to provide the enemy with rice, intelligence, and sanctuary."(6:197) While statistics can tell as many lies as truths,

one statistic bears consideration. At the end of 1969 the Marines of I Corps reported that 93.6% of the population was considered secure. (16:294) Had the war in the remainder of Vietnam been conducted as the Marines envisioned for I Corps the result of the conflict may very well have been decidedly different.

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