

## The Myth of the Sunni “Die-Hard”

Patrick Devenny

The term “die-hard” entered overall American military and government parlance soon after the fall of Baghdad. Used widely to describe Sunni insurgents who began attacking American troops using guerilla-type tactics, American officials such as Paul Bremer and Donald Rumsfeld made frequent use of the term.<sup>1</sup> It was a useful designation for American policy makers, who sought to create a clear delineation between allied forces and insurgents using a term which carries with it connotations of fanaticism and irrationality.

It is because of these connotations that the term has been misused and is particularly inaccurate in describing the segment of the insurgency which operates in Sunni-populated areas of Iraq. To Americans and many other observers, Sunni insurgents do seem uniquely irrational. Tens of thousands of western troops are stationed around their urban centers, while their former subservient populations – Shi’a in the south and Kurds in the north – enjoy and consolidate the political power their demographic weight entitles. The vision of an Iraq again dominated by the Sunni population – which stands at 20% of Iraq’s total – seems ludicrous to any educated observer of Iraq.

While Sunni insurgents can be expected to understand that their national primacy is a

thing of the past, they also presumably fight for a self-determined future, outside of the American engineered political system they view as hopelessly weighed against them. This is not the fight of a die-hard, it is the wholly rational fight of a relatively small insurgency which sees warfare as the only way their communal rights can be respected. With little faith in the kindness of their erstwhile servile ethnicities, these insurgent groups can easily

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tap into the anxieties of the greater Sunni polity. Those Sunnis less inclined to believe the lofty promises of Shi’ite and Kurdish politicians will – and have – come to see war as their only recourse for maintaining at least their own indigenous order, while setting the stage for its possible expansion at a later date. Considering

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<sup>1</sup> Lara Marlowe, “US confirms killings of Saddam’s sons in assault...” *The Irish Times*, 23 July 2003;

the rising amount of civil violence targeting Sunnis, their fears are not without some merit.<sup>2</sup>

To better understand the durability of this population bound by mistrust, a historical precedent is needed. One uniquely prescient and immediately available example is their reaction to the dual uprisings which buffeted Iraq soon after the regime's defeat in Kuwait.

## 1991: Insurmountable Odds

Pro-Baathist Sunnis in Iraq currently find themselves in a desperate situation; they have been militarily ejected from power and face the hostility of 80 percent of the population, not to mention a sophisticated and well-trained occupation army. This is not the first time, however, that the community has faced odds that most thought untenable.

In late February 1991, a series of uprisings broke out across Iraq. In the north,

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<sup>2</sup> Stories abound of groups of Sunnis being mysteriously executed, as part of the rising sectarian strife in Iraq. For reference, see recent articles: Chris Hughes, "Iraq on brink of bloody civil war.." 30 August 2005; Agence France Presse, "Sunni party accuses Shiite-led Iraqi forces of mass-killing," 29 August 2005; James Hider "The

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*Dave Dilegge*  
*Editor in Chief*

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large groups of Kurdish rebels stormed vital cities such as Mosul and Kirkuk, participating in pitched battles with Saddam's forces. In the south, Shiite rebels controlled major cities such as Karbala, Najaf, and Basra. On top of this, a significant segment of the Iraqi armed forces had been devastated in the confrontation with coalition forces that had ended only a month before. While few thought the rebellion – lacking leadership and coordination – could successively overthrow the entire regime, many observers expected disaffected elements in the Iraqi leadership to oust their discredited leader in a palace coup.<sup>3</sup>

Sunni-Shia hate boils over," *The Australian*, 16 July 2005.

<sup>3</sup> Helen Thomas, "Bush says Saddam can't survive in power," *UPI*, 28 March 1991.

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Obviously, such a coup never came to pass. The Baathist leadership, while undoubtedly disappointed in the foolish strategic decisions made by Hussein, understood that his regime was an effective bulwark against their greatest fear; the loss of their privileged position in Iraq and the rise of Shi’a and Kurdish influence. To counter this, they were apparently willing to overlook Saddam’s own deficiencies and momentary weakness. It was this fear rather than a love of Hussein or even appreciation for his materialistic largesse that girded the apparatus together. As noted expert Amatzia Baram

noted, many in the Baathist oriented insurgency do not favor Saddam, but appreciate the unifying figure he represented in the Sunni community.<sup>4</sup>

This same fear has been heightened dramatically in regard to the current situation. While the unification figure of Hussein is now absent, the fear of the Sunnis concerning the future of their community remains, as does

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<sup>4</sup> Patrick Tyler, “Clean win in the war with Iraq...” *The New York Times*, 31 March 1991; Lee Hockstader, “Saddam: veteran survivor...” *The Washington Post*, 8 March 1991; Kim Murphy, “Hussein forces counterattack in Basra,” *The Los Angeles Times*, 6 March 1991.

their determination to reverse this trend. Such an effort is hardly nihilistic, as some in the U.S. chain of command would have us believe.

Besides the bitterness inherent in losing their privileges, many Sunni insurgents feel that they are naturally superior to the Shi'a over whom they ruled for decades. Considering the hierarchy was always in their hands under Hussein, this belief has been bolstered and reinforced for decades. This habitual hatred and disregard creates an ideology of cultural division and mistrust, leading to a palpable disregard for Shi'a leadership abilities in any new government. As the so-called rightful rulers of Iraq, many Sunnis are loath to join any government where they would be comparatively powerless, instead joining a rebellion which does have a favorable political interest, namely the defense of the Sunni community.<sup>5</sup>

## Recommendations

### ALL POLITICS IS LOCAL

Relying on your enemy's ability to see long-term benefits has never been an effective way to counter an insurgency. The Sunni insurgency's advantage lies in the fact that they address problems the Sunni community faces now, such as fear of Shi'a militias and hatred of Americans. The coalition addresses somewhat amorphous national concerns they may have in the future. The latter is simply an unsustainable position.

The United States, then, is left with little recourse but to compete with Iraqi insurgents in providing security for Sunnis. This may

<sup>5</sup> Amatzia Baram, "Who are the Insurgents? Sunni Arab Rebels in Iraq." *United States Institute of Peace*, Special Report 134, April 2005.

strike many as impossible, considering the hostility American troops face in Sunni areas around the country, but it must be attempted. Sunnis regularly witness (or hear stories/rumors) of Shi'ite police and paramilitaries – all "trained" by Americans – who target Sunni civilians. These extrajudicial executions are often carried out with the knowledge or approval of the larger Shi'ite militant groups such as the Mahdi army and the Badr militia.<sup>6</sup> The price of overlooking Shi'ite violence may be soluble in the short-term – the avoidance of an open conflict with the forces of major Shi'a groups – but will prove disastrous in the long term.

Were the killing to continue at the current rate, we will soon be faced with a growing population of Iraqis who see no benefits – especially in the realm of personal security – in siding with an outside force. Rather, they will side with an armed group that comes from their own local communities and is required, due to its need for a recruiting base, to address their specific security concerns. This rise of ethnic identification as a guarantor of security represents the virtual blueprint for a future civil war.

### DENY POLITICAL FAVOR FOR SUNNIS

In most recent discussions about raising the profile of Sunnis in the Iraqi government, the justification of "quelling the Sunni insurgency" is invariably cited. The interim government and the coalition authority have regularly made the goal of including Sunnis in

<sup>6</sup> Leila Fadel, "Sunnis are frequent targets of political violence in Basra," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 4 August, 2005; Carol J. William, "Radical Cleric Reaches Out," *Los Angeles Times*, 23 May 2005; Leila Fadel, "Assassinations bring fear to Sunni minority in Basra," *The Miami Herald*, 7 August, 2005.

the government the centerpiece of their efforts, changing the constitution and appointing Sunnis to positions others had to be elected to.

This effort is an egregious mistake. The Sunnis have won this favor directly as a result of the ferocity of their resistance. While Sunni insurgents may disregard the importance of the interim government, they have undoubtedly recognized the fact that their struggle has brought increased concessions to the Sunni community as a whole. This serves as encouragement to them and to regular Sunnis, who now see that fighting is just as effective – if not more so – as voting. While some Sunni groups have recently advocated voting, this is mostly aimed at defeating efforts their leadership views as anti-Sunni. It is simply a democratic version of the insurgency.

The concession campaign has also tied coalition hands in engaging the Sunni insurgents, so as to avoid another Falluja-type mass assault.<sup>7</sup> In summation, the insurgency has protected the Sunni community from more coalition offensives, while also bolstering their position in a government many view as illegitimate in the first place. To counter this, the coalition should directly tie increased benefits with increased voting, refusing to deliver on the former without more of the latter. The security risks of protecting voters are minute compared to fighting an emboldened rebellion which witnesses political progress as a result of their methods. While this momentary exclusion may inflame the security situation, it must be made clear to the Sunni community that power cannot be gained through violence, as it has in the past.

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<sup>7</sup> Omer Mahdi, “Under US noses...” *The Guardian*, 22 August 2005.

## Conclusion

As noted strategic expert Andrew Krepinevich suggested in his recent study of the Iraqi insurgency, “should counterinsurgent forces instead focus their principal efforts on destroying insurgent forces, as is more typical of conventional warfare, and accord population security a lower priority, they will play into the insurgents’ hands.”<sup>8</sup> This is no where more evident than in Iraq. Not only does large-scale military operations against Sunni insurgents

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heighten the level of friction between Sunnis and American forces, but also decreases their level of communal security against encroachments from other Iraqi ethnic groups.

If our understanding of our enemy’s goals is limited to words such as “die-hard,” the United States has little hope of effectively countering their tactics, both on the battlefield and in the arena of effective society administration. The Sunni insurgents are hardly just “men who know they will have no role in the future building of a new Iraq,” as General John Abizaid once suggested, but a

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<sup>8</sup> Andrew Krepinevich, “The War in Iraq: The Nature of Insurgency Warfare,” CSBA Publications, 2 July 2004.

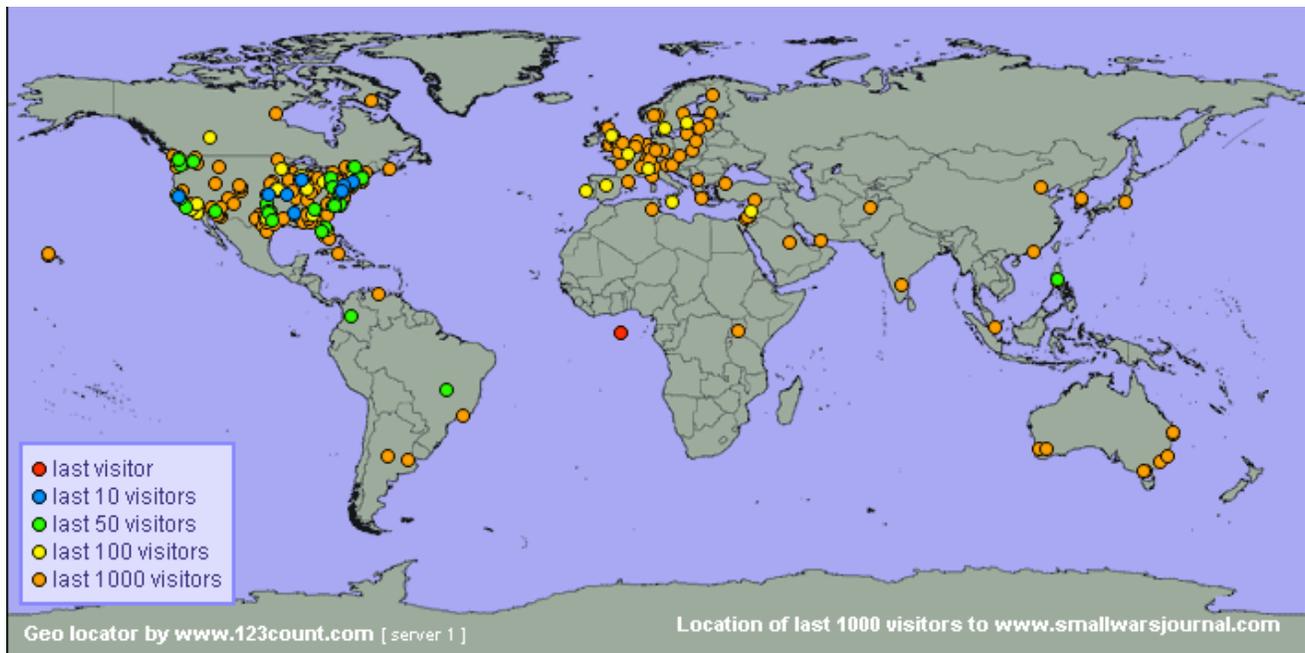
quasi-political force which understands that their base of operations, i.e. the Sunni community at large, seeks immediate safety and security above all else. To our discredit, the Sunni insurgency has done a better job delivering on this point, irregardless of the brutality level they have used to achieve it.

As a result, the insurgency can be expected to continue their struggle, no matter how desperate or wasteful it currently seems in Western eyes. As we have witnessed, the Sunni/Baathist infrastructure has withstood system shocks before, only to rise again through violence and cohesion. Thus, their ideology is not that of a “die-hard,” but one of a veteran political force which holds a radically

different view of an “inevitable future” in Iraq – one of violence and civil conflict – than our constitutional and democratic view. Only when our national leaders understand their latent strategy can we ever hope to effectively counter it.

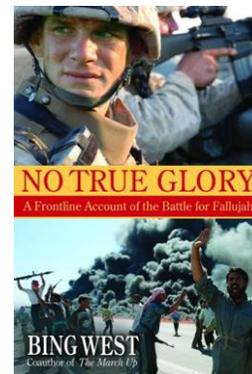
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Book Excerpt  
**No True Glory**  
 A Frontline Account of the Battle for Fallujah  
 Chapter 27 – The House from Hell  
 Bing West



On the morning of 13 November, Kilo Company set out to clear the dense blocks of houses stretching from Phase Line Henry west to the Euphrates. Captain Jent told 1/Lt Grapes that his platoon would take the lead and Grapes assigned a block to each squad. After the previous day's fight, the platoon was tired but excited, expecting immediate action, but the insurgents had retreated to the south and no contact was made in the first block.

The 3rd Squad began searching the second block by shooting and hammering at an unyielding lock on a courtyard gate. Admitting defeat, Corporal Ryan Weemer sat down to smoke a cigarette.

*Screw this one, he thought, 2nd Squad has some C-4. They can clear it later.*

Sergeant Christopher Pruitt, the Platoon Guide, ran across the street to pry open a side gate of the next house. Tough and muscular, Pruitt had a challenging nature and never relaxed.

"Hey, this gate's open," he yelled. "Let's go!"

Weemer threw down his smoke and hustled over with Sergeant James Eldrige and Lance Corporals Cory Carlisle and James Prentice.

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The five Marines slipped into the courtyard and Pruitt looked inside the outhouse. Fresh shit.

"They're inside!" Pruitt whispered.

The cement house, with a dome-shaped roof and a small upper story, looked too small to hold more than a few enemy. So rather wait for a tank, the Marines decided to assault. Weemer, who had gone through the Close Quarters Battle (CQB) special training, posted Prentice as rear security and gestured to Carlisle and Pruitt to stack behind him. He slung his M16 and took out his pistol. Drawing a deep breath, he kicked down the door and charged across the room. He was "running the rabbit", a technique where the point man rushes across the room to distract the enemy while the second man in the stack does the shooting.

As Weemer sprinted across the entryway room, he glimpsed an insurgent with an AK hiding next to the door. As he ran by, Weemer

fired three rounds into the man. Carlisle burst in after Weemer, almost bumped into the gunman and jumped back, spilling into Pruitt.

“Go!” Pruitt yelled, shoving him back into the room.

Carlisle stepped forward and fired a long burst into the insurgent, who sagged to the floor. Carlisle then fired another burst into the dead man.

“Stop shooting and get over here,” Weemer yelled.

Carlisle ran across the room and flattened himself against the wall next to Weemer.

“Ready to clear?” Weemer said, gesturing at the open doorway to his left that led to the main room.

With Carlisle on his hip, Weemer charged in and was blinded by the pulsing white flashes of an AK muzzle exploding in his face. Weemer thrust out his right arm and fired eight bullets into the insurgent. The two were standing five feet apart, looking into each other's eyes, firing furiously. Weemer could feel bullets whizzing by his face. Chips of brick and concrete were pelting him on the cheeks, his ears ringing.

Weemer was a qualified expert shot with a pistol. There was no way he had missed with a dozen bullets. He was close enough to slap the man. The man would not go down.

Weemer was running out of bullets. He shuffled towards the door, still firing, and pushed Carlisle back into the first room.

The AK rounds that missed Weemer as he made entry had passed through the door and struck Pruitt and Eldridge. Bones were shattered

in the wrist of Pruitt's firing hand and Eldridge was hit in the shoulder and chest. They staggered out of the house and Pruitt tripped and fell near the front gate. As he struggled to get up, an insurgent on the roof opened fire, the bullets kicking dirt into his face. He dove around the wall and joined Eldridge on the street.

Inside the house, Prentice, who had slid inside the doorway, saw a man wearing a green camouflage jacket and black pants rush out from a back room. Prentice fired a long burst from his SAW, hitting the man in the chest and head, killing him instantly.

Weemer turned back to Carlisle.

“Reload and we'll finish that other fucker.”

Keeping his eyes on the doorway, Weemer patted his pistol leg-holster.

*Where's my extra mag?* he thought. *Fuck.*

He dropped his pistol and unhooked the M-16 from his back. He heard someone stumbling towards them and backed up as the insurgent hobbled out from the main room. Weemer shot him in the legs and, when he fell, shot him twice in the face. The man, wearing black body armor over a blue denim shirt, was light-skinned, with a red bandana tied around his curly hair.

Hearing the firing and seeing the wounded, other Marines were rushing to the house. Lance Corporal Samuel Severtsgard burst into the entry room. As he had done in yesterday's fight, Severtsgard was holding a grenade.

He nodded at Severtsgard, who pitched the grenade into the main room. Immediately after the explosion, Weemer and Carlisle rushed in. The air was filled with black smoke and the acrid smell of gunpowder. Weemer broke right and waited a moment for the dust to settle. He saw a stairwell against the left wall and quickly raised his M-16. Above him was a dome-shaped skylight and a circular catwalk with a solid, three-foot high cement guard railing. The stairs led to the catwalk.

As Weemer brought his rifle up, he saw an insurgent leaning over the cement railing, sighting in. The M-16 and the AK began firing at the same time, the sound deafening. Weemer felt his leg buckle. A hard blow rocked back his face.

To his left, Carlisle was struck down in a fusillade of bullets, the shooters taking dead aim from the catwalk overhead. Deafened by the din, Weemer hobbled back to the entryway. In the dust-filled room, he didn't see Carlisle lying with a shattered leg and he couldn't hear his screams.

His face numb and dripping blood, Weemer limped out to the courtyard. He had flashbacks of a jihadist his team had shot in the face a few days ago. He saw Prentice squatting next to the doorway covering the roof.

"What's wrong with my face? How bad is it?"

Prentice barely glanced at him.

"You're cut above the eyebrow. Its nothing."

Weemer took off his Kevlar and found the spent bullet lodged in the webbing.

Carlisle was screaming in the main room, lying directly below the catwalk. The insurgents were using him as bait instead of killing him.

The platoon sergeant, Staff Sergeant Jon Chandler, heard the screams and ran to the house, followed by Corporals Farmer and Sanchez. They huddled with Severtsgard.

"We're gonna flood the room, OK? It's the only way," Chandler said. "Everyone point their muzzles up high and blast away until we can pull Carlisle out. All right, lets go! Sanchez, you're number one man, I'll follow."

Farmer thought it was a good plan." Let's do it," he said.

Sanchez thought, "Oh shit, here we go," and his mind went blank—just doing, not thinking.

Severtsgard thought, *Throw one grenade, then enter.* He pulled a grenade from his deuce gear and thumbed the clip. Carlisle screamed again.

*What am I thinking?* thought Severtsgard, as he pictured Carlisle lying in the middle of the room. *Hope nobody saw that.*

He slipped the grenade back into its pouch.

Chandler kned Sanchez in the buttocks to signal "GO!" and they flooded the room. Sanchez ran straight across the room. Chandler and Severtsgard broke right, aiming up at the catwalk. Farmer was the last one to the door, where he froze for a moment, trying to convince himself it wasn't fear. A second later, a grenade landed in the middle of the room and

exploded right where he would have been standing.

Farmer was blown off his feet back into the foyer. Severtsgard and Chandler disappeared in a huge swirl of dust and debris, as the deafening roar of AKs filled the main room. Chandler fell instantly, three bullets in his leg and both his shoulder and leg shredded by the grenade shrapnel. Severtsgard was also torn up, with shrapnel in his leg and foot. With one hand, he dragged Chandler from the kill zone into the kitchen.

Sanchez, who had raced across the main room, turned around and saw no one.

*What the fuck? Where did they go?* Sanchez thought.

In front of him was the door to a small room. Sure he was going to be shot, he kicked open the door and stepped in alone. The bedroom was empty. He propped his rifle against the wall and ran back into the main room. He grabbed Carlisle under his shoulders and pulled him into the shelter of the small back room.

Bullets were ricocheting off the walls and skipping across the floor. From behind the cement guard rail on the circular catwalk, the insurgents were darting back and forth. Their fires covered all angles of the main room below them.

In the kitchen, Chandler was howling in pain. Severtsgard had his rifle trained on the door so no one could enter and finish them off. After a minute or so, Chandler calmed down.

"Hey, man, the Corps will send us home now," Chandler said. "We're all messed up."

Severtsgard smiled and kept watch on the door.

Farmer was lying on his back in the foyer, his trigger finger and thumb badly shredded with shrapnel. He couldn't hold his rifle. He leaned against the wall and let loose a barrage of profanity.

"Fuck! Those motherfuckers! I'll kill 'em. Those fucks!"

More Marines rushed to the house. Private Rene Rodriguez stood in the courtyard for a minute to sort things out. He had seen Sergeant Pruitt stagger down the street with a shattered hand. He had seen Weemer limp out yelling for reinforcements. The platoon's corpsman, Doc Edora, was kneeling by the wall treating Eldridge for gunshot wounds in his chest. The word was the platoon sergeant and two or three more were down inside. And his fire team leader, Cpl. Sanchez, was in there somewhere, unaccounted for.

Rodriguez grabbed Lance Corporal Michael Vanhove and ran inside.

"Corporal Sanchez! Sanchez?" Rodriguez yelled.

"I got Carlisle," Sanchez yelled. "We're in the front room. Watch your ass. The center room's a kill zone!"

Rodriguez and Vanhove sprinted past Farmer, past the sprawled Iraqi bodies, the weapons, shell casings and blood. The insurgents above them opened up with a long burst of AK-47 fire. The rounds hit between the two Marines, forcing Vanhove to dive back into the foyer. Rodriguez plunged through the fire

and into the bedroom with Sanchez and Carlisle.

"Take security on the door!" Sanchez said.

Sanchez had taken his pressure bandage from his shoulder pocket and was straightening Carlisle's leg that had twisted backwards from the force of the bullets. As Carlisle screamed, Rodriguez's stomach turned over. Sanchez spoke jokingly to Carlisle as he tried to staunch the flow of blood.

"Clean the wound, direct pressure, bandage, more pressure...just like in Doc's classes."

There was no back door, only a small window covered with sturdy metal bars. The insurgents were steadily shooting at the doorway.

A block away, Pruitt and Eldridge were wobbling up the street toward the medevac humvees. First Sergeant Brad Kasal from Weapons Company was walking forward next to a humvee. Kasal ran to Pruitt's side and pulled him to cover. Pruitt was close to passing out.

"Bad guys in that house," he mumbled. "We got people down inside."

Kasal grabbed the three nearest Marines and ran forward to the courtyard wall, where the squad leader, Cpl. John Mitchell, was crouching with five more Marines. Mitchell led them forward and they stacked along the wall outside the door. Mitchell was in charge. Kasal considered himself just another Marine pitching in. Taking no fire, they tumbled through the doorway.

It was a new house, with clean beige dry walls and a light, brown-speckled concrete floor covered with cement dust and swaths of bright red blood. Inside the doorway, Kasal saw two dead Iraqis. Sanchez and Rodriguez were yelling for a corpsman.

"Get Doc in here!" they yelled. "Carlisle's bleeding out!"

The insurgents knew the Marines had to move across the main room to get their casualties out, and from the catwalk they had an ideal field of fire. Joining Mitchell inside the house were First Sergeant Kasal, Private First Class Nicoll and Lance Corporal Morgan McCowan. For Kasal and Nicoll, this was their second day fighting side-by-side. After four years of service, Niccol was still a Private First Class, repeatedly busted by Kasal. In a battle of wills, Kasal had called PFC Niccol into his office nine times for fighting, drinking and tardiness.

Niccol's irreverence was legendary. On the eve of the battle for Fallujah, the battalion commander, LtCol Willie Buhl, gave him the microphone to motivate 900 Marines with his "I AM PFC NICOLL!" speech, a parody of Mel Gibson's "I am William Wallace!" exhortation in the movie *Braveheart*.

"Niccol, you're with me," Kasal said. "Cover my back."

The firing had died down. Mitchell, a school-trained medic, decided not to hesitate.

"I'll go across," he said. "You all cover me."

Mitchell ran across the main room in a dead sprint to reach Sanchez, attracting only a few scattered shots. Kasal and Niccol stepped

into the main room, staying close to the wall. Kasal looked at the stairs to his right leading to the second floor. Midway up, it looked like someone had chopped a peephole a foot wide out of the cement wall. He next noticed a small room the left of the room Mitchell had entered.

"Anyone been in that room to the left?" he shouted.

When no one answered, Kasal grabbed two Marines behind him.

"Cover that mouse hole and the ladder well," he said. "Niccol, we'll clear that room to the left."

Kasal kicked open the door and thrust the barrel of his rifle forward, sweeping or "pieing" the room from right to left, ending his two-second scan with his eyes locked on the muzzle of an AK pointed at his nose. The insurgent had been hiding inside the door next to the light switch.

Instead of shooting right away, he yelled in Arabic, then fired. In that instant, the shocked first sergeant had jumped a foot back and the AK rounds streaked by, hitting the wall. Kasal stuck his rifle barrel over the top the AK barrel and pulled the trigger, sending ten bullets into the man's chest. The thickset man, dressed in a khaki shirt with a black chest rig holding a row of AK magazines, slowly slumped to the floor. Kasal pushed back the insurgent's sand-colored helmet and, not wanting to be killed by a dying man, shot him twice more in the head.

Without looking behind him, Kasal shouted over his shoulder "Cover that ladder well!" and stepped forward to look around the small bathroom a second time. As he did so,

bullets hit the wall around him and he felt like someone had hit his legs with a sledgehammer. He fell into the doorway and was hammered again. He started to crawl around the corner, then remembered Niccol was in the open behind him.

Lying on his side, Kasal looked back and saw Niccol propped against a wall. Niccol jerked and winced as the bullets hit him, shoving his hand under his armored vest. When he pulled it out, it was covered with blood. Lying on his stomach, Kasal reached up and grabbed Niccol by the sleeve, pulling him down. As he did so, he felt a baseball bat hit him across the ass and he knew he had been shot again.

The insurgents had held their fire, then sprung their ambush. The firing went on and on, Kasal estimating it continued for thirty seconds. Why did those Marines take their eyes off that damn mouse hole, he wondered.

Kasal pulled Niccol to his left into the room. He propped Niccol's shattered left leg on his stomach, trying to tie a pressure bandage as a tourniquet. His hands were sticky with blood and he kept fumbling, worrying that Niccol was going to bleed to death due to his clumsiness. He heard a thump to his right and turned his head to see a pineapple grenade laying just out reach. He rolled left on top of Niccol and bear-hugged him as the explosion went off. He felt sharp pressure in his legs and buttocks and knew he had been hit again. When his head stopped ringing, he shoved his rifle out the door so the Marines would know which room they were in. He didn't want to be hit by friendly fire and he knew they would be coming for them.

Down the hall, Mitchell heard Nicoll yell, "I'm hit!" and First Sergeant Kasal yell, "Get that goddamn cocksucker!"

"Is Nicoll OK?" Mitchell shouted. "Is he going to die?"

Sanchez felt his stomach turn over again. Nicoll was one of his best friends. He couldn't die. This was all wrong. They had to get them out of there.

Mitchell told Sanchez to take care of Carlisle. Without a word, he ran out of the room, hugging the wall as he sprinted for the bathroom. A grenade bounced and exploded behind him and several AKs started firing. One round hit Mitchell's rifle in the chamber. Another ricocheted off of his weapon and tore into his thigh—his third Purple Heart.

He skidded into the bathroom. Kasal lay on his side to let Mitchell attend to Niccol in the cramped space. As the blood dripped from him, Kasal's blood pressure fell and he drifted in and out of consciousness. Each time he jerked back, he yelled at Niccol to stay awake. Niccol was nodding off for minutes at a time, then muttering that he was OK.

"Get him out," Kasal said, "or he'll bleed to death."

Outside, Lieutenant Grapes ran up to the house as Pruitt, Eldridge, Weemer and Farmer were being helped into medevac humvees. Over a handheld radio, Grapes reached Mitchell.

"Find us another way out," Mitchell said, "or to kill those fucks so we can walk out!"

Corporal Wolf, who had bandaged Mitchell's arm in the fight the day before,

pushed into the entryway next to Grapes and started shouting to Mitchell.

"I got to get over there man! You're my boy! I've gotta come over there!"

Grapes and Wolf circled the house and found no other doors. The five windows had one-inch steel bars covering them.

"Where are they firing from?" Grapes asked Mitchell over the radio.

"There's a ladderwell, and a skylight over the living room. At least one of them is on the roof!"

"All right," Grapes told Wolf, "you get your team ready to pull them out. I'll put shooters on the roof across the street to suppress those guys. Once I give you the signal, get in there and pull them out."

Wolf agreed. While Wolf put together his rescue team, Grapes led a heavily-armed squad onto the roof.

Sgt. Byron W. Norwood, who commanded a humvee with a .50 caliber, entered the foyer with Wolf to see how he could bring the heavy gun to bear. Formerly a crewmember on Colonel Toolan's humvee, Norwood came from a small town in Texas. His sharp wit had reminded Toolan of New York City-type humor. Norwood poked his head around the doorway just as an insurgent let loose a burst. Rodriguez, guarding the door to the bedroom, saw Norwood peek into the main room and watched as his eyes suddenly grew wide. The bullet hit Norwood in the forehead, killing him instantly. Wolf was hit in the chest by the same burst and fell back unharmed, a bullet lodged in his armor vest.

Seeing the expression on Norwood's face terrified Rodriguez. *I'm gonna be the next one shot*, he thought. Rodriguez asked Sanchez to relieve him in the doorway.

The Quick Reaction Force, a squad from Lieutenant John Jacobs' 2nd Platoon, arrived on the scene. Within seconds, Jacobs had his Marines maneuvering to bring fire on the insurgents.

On the nearby roof, the Marines with Grapes poured fire toward the skylight. They were at the same height, though, and the bullets were passing over the heads of the insurgents. With the wounded inside, throwing grenades or bringing heavy weapons into play was out of the question. Wolf couldn't push across the main room without better suppression.

Chandler and Severtsgard, trapped in the kitchen, thought they could batter their way through a padlocked metal panel leading to the entryway. After shooting and hammering at the panel for several minutes, they pried it open and squeezed through. Wolf laid down suppressing fire and they staggered through the entryway and out into the courtyard.

Both were bleeding badly. Chandler was howling in pain, his leg twisted in a spiral fracture from hip to foot. Severtsgard slumped down against the courtyard wall, blood pouring from his fractured foot. Lance Corporal Stephen Tatum came to his aid. Tatum, who had the thickest pair of glasses in Kilo Company, offered to remove Severtsgard's torn boot.

"Go to hell you blind fuck! No way you are working on my foot!" Severtsgard yelled, getting to his feet and limping toward the nearest humvee.

Grapes and Jacobs knelt by the wall to plan what to do next. Five Marines were trapped inside. Rifle fire wasn't budging the insurgents hiding behind the cement wall on the catwalk above the main room and Mark 19 fire or hand grenades would injure the trapped Marines.

"Flashbangs! The insurgents will think they're grenades and duck," Grapes said.

Jacobs led his men to the entryway, flipped in two flashbangs and rushed in firing. The insurgents immediately returned fire. Stalemate.

Back outside, Grapes, Crossan and Pvt Justin Boswood crept up to a bedroom window in the back of the house. Grapes and Boswood took turns on a sledge hammer, hammering at the steel bars. Grapes could hear his wounded Marines wailing in pain inside. He could hear Mitchell yelling, "Get us the fuck out of here!" After smashing and smashing, they pried two bars slightly apart. They stripped off their armor and gear and squeezed through. Marines handed their weapons to them.

Boswood pulled a dead insurgent's body out of the doorway, the blood from his skull covering the floor. Grapes slid on his back into the main room, his sights fixed on the skylight above. Boswood knelt over Grapes chest, covering the stairs.

Grapes, Jacobs and Sanchez at last had the catwalk in a three-cornered crossfire.

"Ready?" Grapes yelled. "Fire!"

From three angles, the Marines fired up at the crosswalk, forcing the insurgents to duck behind the wall.

Lance Corporals Christopher Marquez and Jonathon Schaffer sprinted across the kill zone, grabbed Kasal and dragged him back to the entryway. Then they ran back and brought out Niccol. Then Mitchell.

That left Sanchez, Rodriguez and Carlisle in the back bedroom down the hall.

The Marines could either continue running the gauntlet across the main room or get through the bars over the bedroom window. Corporal Richard Gonzalez, a demolitions expert known as “the mad bomber,” suggested blowing the bars off the window.

“Are you fucking crazy?” Sergeant Jose Nazario yelled. “You’ll fucking kill them! Don’t blow it!”

Corporal Eric Jensen came running up with a long chain that was looped around the bars. Jensen hooked the chain to a Humvee and pulled out the bars. Sanchez and Rodriguez put Carlisle on a makeshift stretcher and passed out his limp body.

With all the wounded out of the house, Grapes linked up with Mitchell.

“Now we let Gonzalez do his work,” Grapes said.

The Marines peppered the house with fire and hooted and hollered as if they were still inside while Gonzalez prepared a 20 pound satchel charge – sufficient to blow down two houses. Gonzalez crept inside the house and placed the satchel on top of a dead insurgent’s body. A few seconds later, he ran outside.

“15 Seconds!”

They ducked for cover. The house exploded in a huge flash of red, followed by chunks of concrete thudding down as a vast cloud of dust rose. A pink mist mixed with the dust and gunpowder in the air. Grapes was happy to see it.

The Marines waited several minutes, then moved forward into the dusty rubble. They saw two bodies lying among the slabs. As they drew closer, they noticed one of them move.

“They’re still alive!”

An arm flicked limply forward and a grenade tumbled toward the Marines. They turned and ran for cover. Sanchez saw Grapes and Crossan racing by him. *I’m too slow! I’m fucked!* he thought. The grenade went off, injuring no one.

Seven Marines climbed back up the rubble and fired two hundred rounds into the two insurgents. Among the detritus, Lt. Grapes found a woolen winter skullcap with bright colors, the kind worn by fighters in Chechnya. He kicked it into the dirt.

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## Clausewitz and Summers on Vietnam: A Contemporary Analysis of *On Strategy*

Capt Matthew Collins, USMC

*“The purpose of this analysis was... to prepare today’s senior Army officers to meet the challenges that will face our country in the future.”*

– COL Harry Summers

*“To make abstractions hold in reality is to destroy reality.”*

– Hegel

*On Strategy* has been called “the most trenchant single postmortem to date of our defeat in Vietnam<sup>1</sup>”. Since its publication in 1982, it has become one of the most influential analyses of the war in Vietnam and a primer of sorts for the formal study of strategy. It began as a study for the Army’s Command and General Staff College by then LtCol Harry Summers and remains on the US Marine Corps professional reading list. The book bills itself as a critical Clausewitzian study of the conflict and has become a pedagogic tool for teaching the principles of war and introducing new students of strategy to Clausewitz. But Clausewitz is an elusive ally whose ideas often cut both ways. Some might say that the book was an exercise in quoting Clausewitz to make a Jominian argument. In order to understand the strategic problems that led to the only clear cut defeat in American history, the questions for the contemporary student of strategy become how faithful is *On Strategy* to Clausewitz’s ideas and, by extension, how relevant is *On Strategy* to today?

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<sup>1</sup> Harry Summers, *On Strategy* New York: Presidio Press, 1982.

### The Approach

*On Strategy* is loosely structured around the US Army’s Principles of War, a Jominian expression of army doctrine. The first section, The Environment, deals with the underlying political situation that brought about and influenced the execution of the war. The second, the Engagement, deals with the militaries’ actual conduct of the war. This structure choice, while elegant, is troublesome. In some ways, Summers invokes Clausewitz to back into a Jominian argument. By structuring his arguments around the immutable principles of a field manual published in 1962 and the prevailing Cold War dogma with selected quotes from the most respected strategic thinker of the modern era, Summers’ analysis weds itself to doctrine of that day, without questioning the merits of that doctrine. This reinforces both the potentially flawed doctrine of the day and an uncritical approach to the study of Clausewitz. The danger of this approach is that his argument then becomes pedagogic. As the book became more popular, it became a textbook for the study of strategy, reinforcing both that doctrine as well as

Summers' potentially flawed analysis of the war. By accepting the strategic situation of that day as a general truth and not a specific response to a discrete set of strategic circumstances, the danger becomes that the doctrine that failed becomes the doctrine that is followed later. The overall undercurrent of Summers' argument is that the problem with the war was not that the principles were wrong, but that the principles were not followed. But for analysis to be critical, principles must flow from observations, not the other way around. That is the Hegelian ideal that Clausewitz was striving for.

Summers' use of Clausewitz presents a different series of problems. As always, the danger of invoking Clausewitz in any analysis is the inherent nature of the dialectic approach. By presenting, at length, the thesis and antithesis of his argument, Clausewitz can be twisted to support any assertion the author chooses. As we shall see, the selective application of Clausewitz undercuts not only Summers' ideas but muddles Clausewitz's as well.

## The Environment

*On Strategy* begins with a discussion of the underlying political factors that created and complicated the war. This is Summers' attempt to apply Clausewitz's analytical framework to the Vietnam war. The three critical elements of this framework are Clausewitz's "remarkable trinity," "national will," and the underlying primacy of the political element in war. He rightfully gives credit to the North Vietnamese government and army's masterful understanding of the interaction of the people, the government and the army. Despite losing every major engagement with American forces

and suffering horrendous losses, the North Vietnamese managed to maintain enough national will to continue the war. This could be attributed to the harsh, repressive nature of the communist regime, but this is only part of the answer. The key to the North Vietnamese government's ability to sustain the national will was its understanding of the situation and its ability to frame the justification for the war in its terms. They were the sole national independence movement. With the help of the US, they successfully portrayed the Americans as the latest colonial power and kept that as the

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*War is a clash of wills. The communist regime of North Vietnam wanted the US out more than the US wanted to stay*

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central theme of their political message. Their stated aims were reunification, self-determination, and the end of foreign influence. These aims were consistent from the first round of peace talks in 1965 until the US withdrawal in 1975. This clear-cut political message was in sharp contrast to the American justification. The emergent, reluctant superpower attempted to justify the war in the context of the Cold War and the Domino Theory as well as falling back on Wilsonian ideas of self-determination. But this self-determination only applied to Catholic, Jeffersonian democrats, like the Diem regime. By the end of the war, neither the people of Vietnam nor America were convinced.

Summers spends the bulk of one chapter discussing the domestic political landscape as a source of friction in the war. He introduces this

chapter with a short introduction to Clausewitz's concept of friction. This egregious example of quotation without context stretches Clausewitz's semantic description of the battlefield into the world of domestic politics in a way the Prussian never intended. Domestic concerns, like those voiced by the anti-war movement and the press, have always affected the conduct of foreign policy, especially in democratic societies. Summers may rail against Johnson's Great Society programs, but he never makes a convincing case that more money, troops or time would have had any demonstrable effect on the outcome of the war. As one contemporary author has asserted<sup>2</sup>, Western thinker's cultural acceptance of internal criticism, dissent and debate, have been a source of military strength more often than not.

Another domestic criticism that Summers levels against the Johnson administration is the issue of the declaration of war. Summer's fixation on the failure of the Johnson administration to seek a declaration of war confuses correlation with causality. Despite his idealistic musings, in a modern democracy, a declaration of war is just a piece of paper. It is one of several expressions of public will. Elections, media coverage and organized movements, like the anti-war movement, are also expressions of public will. A war declaration is also one formal expression of congressional will. The Gulf of Tonkin Resolution and the defense budget are also expressions of congressional will. Public will drives public action, and congressional will drives congressional action. Ideally, the decision to go to war is made when the

executive, the legislature and public are all in agreement. The reality is that those bodies do not always act as a monolith. That is why the Roman Senate appointed their generals and left them to their wars, stepping in only when necessary. That is also why Clausewitz's flexible analytical framework has been such a durable method of understanding the dynamics of these different actors. In any political system, the polity, government and military all represent different shades of the national will. How each individual system resolves those problems is a question left for political scientists. To invoke Clausewitz's concept of friction in this circumstance does not do justice to the totality of the Prussian's ideas.

Furthermore, the Johnson administration can hardly be faulted for its failure to mobilize the national will in Vietnam.<sup>3</sup> It is one thing to say that Johnson did a poor job convincing the public of the necessity of the war, but to say that the war was a poor decision is another thing entirely. Juxtaposing both ideas confuses two valid issues. A war declaration in 1965 would have done nothing to increase domestic support for the war and would have been irrelevant to the domestic debate about the war after the Tet offensive of 1968.

The totality of Summers' arguments about the national will do little to contribute to our understanding of that or any war. By saying that war cannot be fought in cold blood, implies that America can fight only one kind of war, hemming in future leaders options in the foreign policy area. As we shall see, this lingering "all or nothing" mindset would have far reaching consequences in international relations.

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<sup>2</sup> Victor David Hanson, *Carnage and Culture* New York: Random House 2001

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<sup>3</sup> Summers, p26

## THE ENGAGEMENT

Summers analysis of the military strategy in Vietnam is clearly the strongest part of his argument. He rightfully points out how the US military was unable to translate its tactical victories into a strategic effect. The only questionable element of this section is his focus on the war as a conventional conflict and the North Vietnamese as a conventional military threat. The question of conventional war versus counterinsurgency deserves consideration. When Clausewitz wrote *On War*, he decided to frame the context of his study on war between nation-states. His decision to avoid the topic from popular war or people's war was probably a result of the considerable semantic problems with defining its nature. These semantic problems continue today as contemporary thinkers on the subject continue to change the terminology and grapple with proper doctrinal definitions. The US Naval Academy's current class on Low Intensity Conflict borrows from US Special Operations Command doctrinal definition of guerrilla warfare which is not the same as the US Military Academy's Stability and Support Operations class. Of course, both classes use the same textbook. It appears the academic world has made little progress in the formal study of war between anything but competing nation-states.

The question of the conventional or unconventional nature of the war is the central question in the analysis of the war. Summers' main critic, Andrew Krepenivich, saw the war as a failure of the army to adapt to the unconventional situation it was presented with. Both authors point out the army's institutional aversion to counter-insurgency. Summers dismisses the subject. "The Vietnam war was in the final analysis a conventional war best

understood in terms of conventional military strategy"<sup>4</sup> The Kennedy administration's focus on counter-insurgency was a distraction from the more important preparation and conduct of the conventional war. Krepenivich notes how the army paid lip service to counter-insurgency and consistently focused on the quantifiable measures of military effectiveness; namely, body counts. The fault in Summers' argument is only approaching the problem from the American perspective. While the American war in Vietnam began in 1965, the Vietnamese war for national independence had been fought since the departure of the Japanese after World War II. The war ended in 1975, with North Vietnam launching a conventional invasion and tanks rolling through the streets of Saigon. That North Vietnam was incapable of launching this invasion in 1965 does not prove that it was an entirely conventional war. Had the US been able to create an effective government in South Vietnam and the US military been able to create an effective military in the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN), in the sixties, as Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon had tried to, the conventional war that North Vietnam won in early seventies would have ended differently. While it could be argued that the nation-building side of that argument might not be an appropriate mission for the US military, the preparation and conduct of war is its exclusive duty. After fifteen years of US military training, the failure of the ARVN to prevent those tanks from driving through Saigon cannot be blamed on anyone but the ARVN and the US military.

In the end, Clausewitz was correct. War is a clash of wills. The communist regime of North Vietnam wanted the US out more than the US wanted to stay. The inability of half a million US

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<sup>4</sup> *ibid*, p112

troops with billions of dollars and ten years to alter that will show the war was fundamentally a military failure. It could be argued that the political decision to enter the war was flawed or the political leaders of the day did not do enough to energize the national will, but neither is the purview of the military. The only national will the US military needed to concern itself with was that of the Vietnamese.

By criticizing the political decisions that brought America into the war, Summers' polemics put a dangerous strain on the smooth dynamic of civil-military relations that have lasted much of American military experience. His conclusions and their pedagogic influence have the potential to hinder not only the teaching of doctrine and conduct of war, but also the formal study and semantic understanding of the nature of war. Summer's ideal war is Clausewitz in style but Jomini in substance. War is fought by nation-states, with formal declarations of war, using immutable principles with no end save victory. While providing a clear pedagogic lesson, there is a danger that this ideal becomes a dogmatic prescription for how all wars should be fought, instead of a tool for understanding how one war was fought. Clausewitz's ideal war is a study in semantics. It is a nuanced process for critical study. Critical analysis is a process and neither Clausewitz nor Jomini would ever consider their approaches to the formal study of war the last word on the subject. Despite what a legion of librarians and booksellers may think, Summers' book is an analysis, not a history.

## The Legacy

*On Strategy* continues to have an effect on American strategic thought. Summers went

on to become a celebrated writer and the voice of the Vietnam generation. It was the field grade officers that came of age as company grade officers in Vietnam that led to the defense reforms of the late seventies and early eighties. The influence of the shared Vietnam experience can be seen in the creation of the Air-Land Doctrine as well as the creation of the all-volunteer force. The book was a form of catharsis to many of those officers. It was a well reasoned and presented a piece of history that presented the failure of the army in Vietnam in the context of bumbling politicians, a disloyal press and virulent anti-war movement all in terms of hallowed Jominian principles without any serious strategic soul searching or more rigorous analytical introspection. This allowed these officers to continue the established pattern of technocracy that has characterized the American professional military ethic throughout its history<sup>5</sup>.

The clearest expressions of the influence of Vietnam and Summers' outlook comes from his most distinguished colleague. Collin Powell, Summers' classmate at Command and General Staff college, became the guiding force for what became known as the Weinberger doctrine. This doctrine and the Vietnam syndrome, as it became known, would shape the pattern of Cold War military interventions that would follow. America would avoid intervention in anything but clear, conventional conflicts like Panama, Grenada or Iraq. US participation in humanitarian interventions like the Lebanese or Somali civil war would be the exception and would be cut short after any significant action resulting in casualties. After the end of the Cold War, this mindset would linger, causing

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<sup>5</sup> Samuel P Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, Boston: Harvard, 1957

crippling indecision and risk aversion in Bosnia and reinforcing indifference in ethnic conflicts like Rwanda. This is not to say that Summers' ideas influenced the theory and practice of the Weinberger doctrine, only that the two ideas flowed from a common set of experiences. Summers was a soldier who taught soldiers, not a politician.

## The Lessons

America is now engaged in three undeclared wars. The first, the Global War on Terror, has no nation-state or regime as its target. It has become a nebulous mix of security assistance to an odious jumble of nations and murky intelligence operations. Some of these operations have resulted in detentions on questionable legal ground called renditions. In Yemen, the war has also resulted in at least one incident of the ultimate international relations taboo, assassination. The second war, against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, has settled into a long-term peacekeeping and nation building expedition with a hodgepodge of UN, NATO, and NGOs working with, or at least, adjacent to, a US-led coalition. The third, in Iraq, has become one of the largest counter-insurgencies in American history, fought by a "Coalition of the Willing." It would appear that the era of the declared war has come to an end.

All these wars have unique justifications. The global war on terror has been largely an exercise of executive power, with funding and oversight provided by Congress. There has been little public debate about its justification as much of its activities are benign military assistance missions. While there has been considerable public debate about the treatment of detainees at Guantanamo Bay, this debate

has yet to spill over into the methods with which we acquire those detainees. While the CIA's Vietnam era assassination programs like the Phoenix project led to public hearings, several executive orders and sweeping reforms of intelligence oversight and covert action laws, the assassination of a suspected Al Qaeda leader in Yemen was almost universally lauded by the American public and was a public relations coup for the CIA. In Afghanistan, Congress had the option of declaring war against the state of Afghanistan, had the US ever recognized the Taliban as its legitimate government, but that did not prevent them from authorizing and funding that war. Indeed, the US was even able to convince its NATO allies to assist them, in an interpretation of the NATO treaty that its authors could never have predicted. The war in Iraq, while ostensibly an enforcement of a UN resolution over a decade old was also justified by a congressional resolution. As war on terror and the rise of globalization and the non-state actor in international affairs continues, our justifications for armed conflicts will continue to morph. In this context, *On Strategy* becomes a more dated and less relevant analysis.

Today, the idea of fighting a declared, morally unambiguous war against a clearly defined nation-state seems like a quaint notion of a bygone era. While we can draw lessons and parallels from the conflict, the pedagogic thrust of the book, following the clearly defined principles of war, detracts from critical study of Vietnam and the study of war in general. Clausewitz's critical analytical framework remains the most relevant method of studying war, but *On Strategy* is a poor vessel for teaching it. As the world security situation become more complex, leaders will need the full gambit of critical analytical skills to

understand it. We will need to be able to understand and fight our expeditions as well as our crusades. As with Plato's allegory of the cave, only then, tracing the footsteps of Hegel and Clausewitz, can we understand the true form and shape of war and not just its shadows.

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## Timeless Theories of War in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

COL David S. Maxwell, USA

*"War is a matter of vital importance to the State; the province of life or death; the road to survival or ruin. It is mandatory that it be thoroughly studied."*

– Sun Tzu, The Art of War

Warfare must be thoroughly studied. That was as true in the day of Sun Tzu as it is today. Thorough study leads to understanding the nature of war and with that understanding comes the ability to fight a war efficiently and effectively (or sometimes to not have to fight one at all). This will lead to the survival of the nation. Many say that the world is experiencing new threats and new forms of warfare. Fourth

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*Most strategists envision operations being executed on the physical battlefield. What is lost on most is that the real fight takes place on the "battlefield of human terrain."*

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Generation Warfare, Unconventional Warfare, Insurgency/Counter Insurgency, Terrorism, and Asymmetric Warfare are some of the terminology being used to describe conflict and war in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. To many theorists they describe the way of the future of warfare and the threats and conditions for which the United States military must prepare. Two logical questions arise from thinking about these terms. First, are these conditions and threats really new and different? Second, what do

strategists need to know to be able to operate in these supposedly new conditions?

This paper argues that the nature of war has not significantly changed with the arrival of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. True, there appear to be new tactics, techniques, and procedures as evidenced by the tragedy of 9–11. The likelihood of direct nation–state to nation–state conflict *seems* to be declining with the rise of non–state actors such as transnational terrorists and due somewhat to the massive firepower and destructive capabilities available to state supported military forces. However, regardless of the threat and its tactics there remains a fundamental foundation of conflict and this is an enduring immutable truth: "War is thus an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will."<sup>1</sup> This applies across the spectrum of conflict from the lowest intensity levels through terrorism and insurgency to large scale conventional war. Clausewitz understood this fundamental principle and this maxim is as true today as it was in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

Furthermore, this paper will not focus on the traditional principles of war as outlined in U.S. joint doctrine.<sup>2</sup> While still relevant in many

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<sup>1</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, On War, Michael Howard and Peter Paret, ed. and trans., (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 75.

<sup>2</sup> Joint Pub 3-0, Joint Operations, 9 SEP 2000. Appendix A lists the 9 principles of war: objective, offensive, mass,

situations of conventional war and at the tactical and operational level, they are not as useful for leaders today as are the theories set down by the two true great masters of war: Sun Tzu and Clausewitz. In fact, the fundamental thesis of this paper is that the solution to any political–military problem can be found by *studying* the works of the great masters. Warfare today, as in the centuries past, is a complex form of human interaction that is nearly unpredictable in that there are myriad of factors that can affect the outcome. Because of this there is no prescription that can be followed that will ensure a successful outcome. Simply applying the traditional principles of war, or combinations thereof to every situation is not useful. What is required for successful military operations are leaders that possess *coup d’oeil* which Clausewitz defined as the “inward eye” and described the concept simply as the “quick recognition of a truth that the mind would ordinarily miss or would perceive only after long study and reflection.”<sup>3</sup> Strategists, whether political or military, must strive to attain this core attribute and the only way it can be attained is through thorough study of the nature of war and the theories of the great masters and with experience. With that foundation, leaders can develop and execute effective strategies to ensure the survival of the nation. Following a brief discussion of the apparent conditions of war in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, this paper will examine five enduring principles or concepts from Clausewitz and Sun Tzu and demonstrate that they remain timeless and relevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. These principles form the basis for the development of strategy regardless of the type of conflict that a nation faces. These

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economy of force, maneuver, unity of command, security, surprise, simplicity.

<sup>3</sup> Clausewitz, p. 102.

concepts themselves provide no answers. It is only through intensive and critical study that they can become ingrained into the strategist’s analytical framework so that complex political–military problems can be solved. Again, these principles provide no answers in and of themselves. The solutions are found through study and the development of Clausewitz’ *coup d’oeil*. *Who thinks wins!*<sup>4</sup>

## Present and Future Found in the Roots

Today, theorists such as COL Thomas X. Hammes and William Lind describe the apparently new way of war in terms of 4<sup>th</sup> Generation Warfare. Lind and four Marine and Army officers coined the term 4<sup>th</sup> Generation Warfare in 1989 in an article in the Marine Corps Gazette in which they defined this most succinctly as *idea based warfare*.<sup>5</sup> COL Hammes has updated the theory and described it in terms of current operations in Afghanistan and Iraq and applies it to potential future conflicts around the world in his book, *The Sling and the Stone: On War in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. The underlying premise is that the U.S. military is facing new and complex threats posed by the natural evolution of the nature of war. While many characterize this “new” form of war as heavy on psychological or information warfare they also describe it in terms of a David and

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<sup>4</sup> “Who Thinks Wins” is from GEN Wayne A. Downing’s command briefing when he was the Commander of the United States Special Operations Command. This is adapted from the British Special Air Service motto: “Who Dares Wins.”

<sup>5</sup> William S. Lind, Colonel Keith Nightengale (USA), Captain John F. Schmitt (USMC), Colonel Joseph W. Sutton (USA), and Lieutenant Colonel Gary I. Wilson (USMCR), “The Changing Face of War: Into the Fourth Generation,” *The Marine Corps Gazette*, October 1989, p. 22-26. The article can be found at [http://www.d-n-i.net/fcs/4th\\_gen\\_war\\_gazette.htm](http://www.d-n-i.net/fcs/4th_gen_war_gazette.htm).

Goliath conflict in which a weaker combatant can use unconventional or asymmetric means to defeat a technologically and numerically superior adversary. Another way to look at this form of warfare is simply that in the 4<sup>th</sup> Generation the weak adversary does not fight fair and does not conform to the traditional rules of warfare; e.g., the principles of war. According to Lind and Hammes today's warfare is networked, relies heavily on the indirect approach, is a highly evolved form of insurgency, and most important, is focused on influencing the enemy's will.<sup>6</sup> Influencing will is the essence of today's warfare. But is it really new?

Hammes rightly credits the birth of 4<sup>th</sup> Generation Warfare with Mao Tse-tung and his "People's War." He also notes that Giap and Ho took it to the next level with their version of the People's War in Vietnam.<sup>7</sup> Douglas Pike, in his seminal work on the Vietnam War details the Vietnamese strategy of Dau Tranh (the "Struggle") emphasizing that the strategy was beyond a purely military strategy but one which mobilized the entire population – a political struggle with the three now famous action programs (or "vans"): action among the enemy; action among the people, and action among the military.<sup>8</sup> This was a comprehensive political–military strategy that had as a key element the

psychological influence of its own people, its military, *and that of the enemy*. But the focus was not just on the enemy's military force; it struck right at the heart of the enemy: the will of the enemy government leadership *and its population*.

Lind and Hammes have accurately illustrated the current form of conflict in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. However, they never make the claim that this is something totally new and different. The problem is that 4<sup>th</sup> Generation Warfare and the other terms mentioned above are now in vogue and serve as the underpinnings for military transformation. What is even most interesting is that while many embrace the concepts of Sun Tzu due to his emphasis on the indirect approach and the psychological aspect of warfare, many of today's 4<sup>th</sup> Generation proponents see little value in Clausewitz because they believe that his theory of war rested on focusing on the destruction of the enemy's Army, thus the direct attack and attrition warfare seem to be the "Clausewitzian principles" many of today's strategists want to debunk.

The most significant example of the move away from Clausewitz as the conventional war proponent to the 4<sup>th</sup> Generation Warfare camp can be seen in the current discussions in the Pentagon during the development of the guidance for the upcoming Quadrennial Defense Review. Guidance is being written that will shift the focus of military operations away from conventional war and toward the current strategic problem set that faces the military forces of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: counter–insurgency; terrorism, nation building and the like.<sup>9</sup> While

<sup>6</sup> COL Thomas X. Hammes, *The Sling and the Stone: On War in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, (St. Paul, MN: Zenith Press, 2004). p. 2 and 208. Probably the best source of information on 4<sup>th</sup> Generation Warfare theory can be found on the Defense and National Interest Web Site at <http://www.d-n-i.net>. This site has numerous briefings and papers on 4<sup>th</sup> Generation Warfare. Lind and Hammes as well as a number of other authors actually credit the late Air Force Colonel John Boyd with the development of this theory.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p. 44 and 56.

<sup>8</sup> Douglas Pike, *PAVN: People's Army of Vietnam*, (New York: Da Capo Press, 1991), p. 216.

<sup>9</sup> Bradley Graham, "Pentagon Prepares to Rethink Focus on Conventional Warfare," *The Washington Post*, 26 January 2005, p. A02.

this is an important shift in thinking by the Pentagon, the only thing that is new is the Pentagon's focus on this aspect of war. Furthermore the entire spectrum of war has existed since Sun Tzu's time and will continue to exist.

The current strategic problem is that the emphasis has been on high intensity conventional maneuver warfare and not the other complex political–military problems that are being confronted in the Global War on Terrorism and in operations in Afghanistan, Iraq, the Philippines, the Horn of Africa and other lesser known conflicts around the world.

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*Napoleon's dictum needs to be modified to highlight the fundamental importance of political considerations. In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the political is to the military as ten is to one.*

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Strategy cannot be developed using only a single type of threat. Unfortunately that is how the U.S. has built its military and constructed its strategies. With the pendulum shifting to the lower intensity spectrum the U.S. may make the same mistake again if it develops capabilities with a single focus in mind. Military capabilities must be flexible and agile to deal with the entire spectrum because the nature of conflict is not static. To borrow a timeworn phrase, the only constant in warfare is change. The question then becomes, how do militaries prepare to deal with an ever evolving threat? The remainder of this paper will use key theories of Clausewitz to provide the

fundamental understanding of the nature of war and conflict and then use central concepts of Sun Tzu as the foundation for the development of strategies to operate in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century environment.

## Politics and Policy

What Clausewitz understood in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century is that all warfare has a political dimension. It is not solely about the force on force military confrontation. There must be an end state to be achieved in any conflict for there to be a successful outcome for one side. This end state has to be more than the destruction of the opposing military force because war is a continuation of policy by other means.<sup>10</sup> It is the political object that must be understood and embraced. The key is to understand the political object and “the influence it can exert upon the forces it is meant to move.”<sup>11</sup> The critical word in this construct is *influence*; every action, whether political or military must be executed with the understanding that it will influence someone, some population, some military force, or some government. This is the morale domain of war. Napoleon said it best: the moral is to the physical as three is to one. In today's networked, information age environment where every action has the potential for a strategic effect, Napoleon's dictum needs to be modified to highlight the fundamental importance of political considerations: In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century the political is to the military as ten is to one.

## War as a True Chameleon

Clausewitz said war is more than a true chameleon; it is actually a paradoxical trinity

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<sup>10</sup> Clausewitz, p. 87.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81.

that, in short, is made up of primordial violence, chance, and reason with these three variables constantly in tension with each other.<sup>12</sup> This trinity can be found in any example of state to state and non-state actor to state conflict both today and throughout history. In order to develop a strategy for dealing with the complex political-military problems in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the trinity must be understood and applied to analyze the conditions as they currently exist. Thorough study and analysis will also reveal what the correct balance should be in order to achieve the desired end state.

### Know thy Enemy, Know thy Self

Sun Tzu was the master of understating the obvious. “Know the enemy and know yourself; in a hundred battles you will never be in peril.”<sup>13</sup> This deceptively simple statement is actually very complex and critical to developing strategies that will attain the political object. Many tacticians take this statement to mean simply that one should understand the enemy’s strength and dispositions as well as ones own. However, strategists must go must deeper than that. They must delve into the culture of the opposition as well as understanding their own cultural biases and political conflicts. Again, the obvious here is that this act of gaining knowledge is the province of intelligence. However, it cannot be solely the province of intelligence personnel. The strategist must be able to synthesize the full range of information about the adversaries and his own forces. Most important is the ability to understand how adversaries are influenced and knowing how to minimize the influence of the enemy on the

strategist’s own forces, civilian leadership, and general population. Since warfare is “idea based” relying on psychological or information warfare, it is an absolute imperative to know the enemy and know yourself so that strategies can be developed that achieve the political object established at the outset. If the strategist knows the enemy he will be able to discern the enemy’s strategy and therefore has achieved the first step toward victory in that he now has the foundation to develop ways and means to attack the strategy.

### Attack Strategy Not Forces

Sun Tzu said the acme of skill is to win without fighting.<sup>14</sup> This is certainly the ideal that strategists must strive to achieve. However, since “the enemy has a vote” it may be impossible to avoid a fight. Regardless of whether a fight occurs, the solution to any complex political-military situation lies in identifying the enemy’s strategy and then attacking it. “Thus what is of supreme importance is to attack the enemy’s strategy.”<sup>15</sup> Again, this is a deceptively simple statement but a complex concept to execute. Most strategists envision operations being executed on the physical battlefield. What is lost on most is that the real fight takes place on the “battlefield of human terrain.” Warfare today is more idea based than ever before and often the key to success or failure lies in the will of the people.

One of the main reasons the U.S. was defeated in the Vietnam War because the American people lost the will to continue to fight. The successful execution of Dau Tranh, or the “struggle”, led to the famous exchange

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 89.

<sup>13</sup> Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, Samuel B. Griffith, trans., (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 84.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 77.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 77

between the late Colonel Harry Summers and North Vietnamese Colonel Tu:

“You know you never defeated us on the battlefield” said the American Colonel. To which the North Vietnamese Colonel replied, “That may be so, but it is also irrelevant.”<sup>16</sup>

The North Vietnamese, either by design or by happen stance, were able to very effectively attack the will of the American people. Ironically, the most effective attack of American will was through the stunning defeat of their forces in 1968 during the Tet Offensive. This event triggered the unraveling of American foreign and military policy in Southeast Asia and had a profound effect on the American political system to include the withdrawal of an incumbent President from seeking a second full term. While the U.S. military continued to be victorious on the physical battlefield, it was losing on the battlefield of human terrain. Had U.S. strategists understood the nature of the Dau Tranh strategy they could have taken steps to both attack it and defend the American population from its effective employment.

A form of the same strategy of “struggle” is likely being employed today in the Global War on Terrorism and by the insurgents in Iraq. While the focus is on the physical targets that are being struck by terrorists and insurgents, what is missing is the understanding by U.S. strategists that the targets are not physical but intellectual, ideological, and emotional. The tragic bombing of the mess tent in Mosul had the potential to significantly erode the already tenuous support for Operation Iraqi Freedom within the American population.

This discussion naturally leads to the question of how can such a strategy be attacked? One of the simplest ways is to understand and expose the strategy for what it is. While many people complain that the press is focused on reporting the bad and sensationalizing the actions of the terrorists and insurgents, thus seemingly aiding their cause, what is really happening is that the U.S. is ceding the initiative on the war of ideas to the enemy. The press is always going to focus on the highly visible actions of the insurgents. It is what draws viewing audiences and readers. This fact must be understood and accepted. However, what must be done to is to go public exposing the enemy’s strategy not only to the American public and international community but also to the civilian population in the conflict area. Ultimately it is the local population that will win or lose and if they are armed with the knowledge of the enemy’s strategy they have the basic ability to defend themselves in this war of ideas.

If Douglas Pike had written his book during the Vietnam War as part of the operational estimate and area assessment as opposed to a history after the fact, U.S. strategists might have been able to discern the strategy of Dau Tranh and develop ways to counter it and seize the initiative from the North Vietnamese. U.S. strategists have the opportunity to learn from the mistakes of Vietnam and prevent a similar outcome if they will truly learn the strengths and weaknesses of the enemy, the local population, the international community and the American people and develop ways and means to attack the insurgent’s strategy.

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<sup>16</sup> Harry G. Summers, On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War, (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1982), p. 1.

## Conclusion

Warfare today is not radically different than in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Although there are vast technological changes, the nature of war remains fundamentally about influencing people and organizations thus making it a complex political and military problem; not solely a correlation of military force construct. It is a test of wills; an act of forcing one's will on another. Regardless of the type of conflict, from large scale conventional war to insurgency and revolutionary war, this concept holds true. Clausewitz' trinity is the basis for understanding the relationships among the participants. Furthermore, war has always had a political dimension; however with rise of the information age; the political aspect is more important than ever particularly when the nature of the conflict involves counter-insurgency and nation-building.

Thorough study of Clausewitz provides insight into the nature of war and allows the strategist to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the problem in order to develop strategies that will satisfy the political objective.

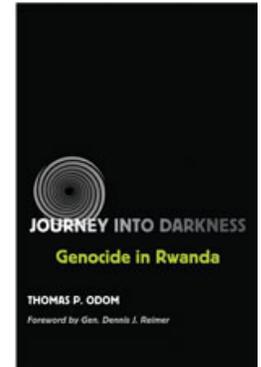


To develop effective plans the strategist must follow Sun Tzu's direction to know the enemy and know himself. However, the most vital principle of all is the proposition that what is of supreme importance in war is to attack the enemy's strategy.

No matter how the nature of conflict and war is described today, the fundamental truth is that war continues to be an act to force one's will on the enemy. Conflict remains a war of ideas. Despite the rapid technological advances and the proliferation of advanced weapons and information systems, warfare, as it always has, still takes place on the battlefield of human terrain. There is no simple list of principles that provides a prescription for success. Successful strategies can only be developed by thorough study and understanding of the nature of each unique conflict. Strategists must strive to attain Clausewitz' coup d'oeil. This can be done through the study and application of the timeless principles of the great masters. Solutions to complex political-military problems cannot be found in the works of the great masters, but their study will lead to the release of the ideas from strategists and the design of concepts that will become successful strategies. Sun Tzu and Clausewitz remain completely relevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Their theories are timeless.

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Book Excerpt  
**Journey Into Darkness**  
 Genocide in Rwanda  
 Chapter 5 – Operation Support Hope  
 LTC Tom Odom, USA (ret)



Brigadier General Nix's brief signaled the true beginning of Operation Support Hope. Stan arrived just in time to get the main body of JTF-A on the ground. To this day I am grateful I had a sergeant like Stan Reber working for me. No one knew Zaire and Zairians better. Stan just seemed to sense what they might try. Stan did not like Zairians, and he was rapidly burning out on the country. Ten years in the same place is just too long, but the knowledge he had at his fingertips worked miracles. One of his gifts

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*The operation was costing millions in landing fees, fuel, and flight time to make sure Rwandan killers did not die from lack of clean water. What was eight thousand dollars worth of beer for the French in comparison?*

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was that he could still get along with Zairians and build a sense of camaraderie. He understood how they felt toward the West in general and in particular the French. That understanding served us well. French-Zairian relations around the airfield were tense. The

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imminent arrival of U.S. forces meant Stan had his work cut out for him.

The French assumption of air traffic control had certainly made the Goma airport a safer place. The French, after all, had the only functioning radar that would allow night operations. Yet the manner in which they simply took control angered the Zairian officials nominally in charge of the field. It also reduced their access to the bribes that kept them afloat. They were rarely paid, and when they were it was in Zairian currency, hardly worth the ink it took to print it. The tension had become so bad the Zairians had threatened to go on strike—not that the tower officials did any work. But a stoppage would affect aircraft handling, and there was an unstated threat of sabotage of fuel and critically short cargo-handling equipment.

The other bit of international friction was between the United States and the French. When I had first arrived the French provided us a small area within their compound. Davis brought in nearly twenty-five planners on his

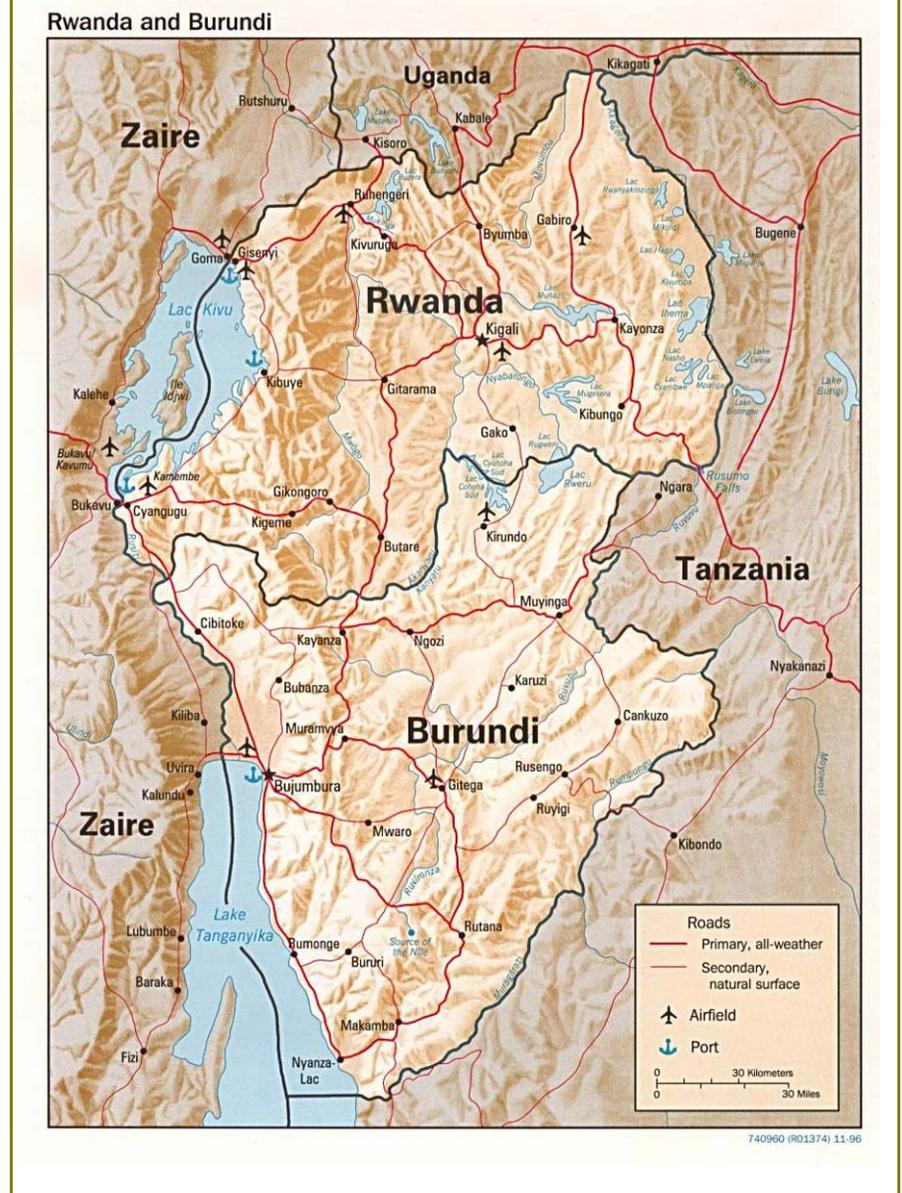
assessment team, all of whom needed a place to spread their sleeping bags. Their numbers began to creep upward, and so did French impatience. After several days we noticed a trend. Each morning the French headquarters commandant would come over and get a head count. Every time it increased, he complained we were encroaching on his limited operational space. Each time we had one of these visits, one of the Pumas would spool up on the flight line one hundred yards away. The pilot would put it in a low hover and drift over to bury us in a sandstorm of red dirt. Five to ten minutes of this and back the bird would go to the flight line to shut down. The U.S. troops learned quickly to have their breakfast eaten and their gear secured each morning before the commandant came to call.

## Cleared Hot to Land: JTF-A Comes to Goma

We knew the JTF was coming, and Nix had given us a good idea of what it was bringing. A water transport and reverse osmosis water purification unit (ROWPU) were deploying from Europe. A battalion of the 325th Airborne Infantry was coming from Italy as security, although we would only get a platoon in Goma. The USAF was deploying a full airfield command element, and there would be additional intelligence, medical, and support as well. I put Stan on getting us a place to set up. He arranged a four-way conference with the UNHCR air boss, the French, the

Zairians, and our USAF representative. Stan's first breakthrough was getting all parties to agree to a pool approach in handling aircraft. As the planes arrived, all would work under the coordination of the UNHCR air boss. That eliminated the friction between the French and the Zairians. The latter were so pleased with

*Map courtesy of the Central Intelligence Agency's Maps and Publications, Released to the Public, 740960*



Stan's mediation they offered a one- to two-acre plot immediately in front of the airport terminal for the Americans' use. The offer snubbed the French; they had wanted the area for some time. The price was a couple of hundred thousand, and the site would have to be bulldozed to clear feces and bodies off it, but space was at a premium. JTF-A now had a home courtesy of a U.S. Army sergeant first class. We could escape our daily dirt bath from the French helicopter.

Units began to flow into the airfield. TF51, the water transport company, came in via C5s, which were necessary for the five-ton tractors and five-thousand-gallon tankers. Forklifts and auxiliary power units, pumps, and tow trucks arrived as part of the USAF element. For the surge of JTF-A, I focused on helping them deal with the reality of Goma. Again Stan shone as the "can-do" sergeant. Although the SOCEUR assessment team and the JTF-A staff had excellent satellite communications equipment, it did not mesh with the local cellular system nor was it as quick. Davis asked for one shortly after his arrival, and I put Stan on it. As I noted previously, normal startup for a phone in Zaire was seven thousand dollars. That paid for the phone and acted as an initial deposit for airtime at six dollars per minute long distance. By this time we had quite a relationship with Saleem's Express Cargo, one of the larger cellular users in Goma. Stan worked through them and got the phones at five thousand dollars each. One went to the JTF public affairs officer, another to Davis transferred to Nix, and a third to the JTF signal officer. The J6 ordered two more to support the visit of Tipper Gore, Vice Pres. Al Gore's wife. We got those as well, but they were never activated. We also provided two other cellulators already paid for by the embassy. Those two

went to the airfield control and the water point down at Lake Kivu.

Some of our support was a bit more mundane. I was at the U.S. base camp when the flight surgeon approached me.

"I understand you know this area well. Is there an Ace Hardware-type store downtown?"

I couldn't help but laugh as I said, "You're looking at the hardware store."

He needed spotlights, and we got them. The troops also needed latrines. Through Stan and Saleem's Express Air, we brought in plastic buckets, lime, plywood sheeting, and toilet seats. More plywood from Kinshasa came in for tent floors, and rakes and brooms made the living areas more comfortable.

## Four Hundred Cases of Beer on the Wall

Most of our efforts were directed at operational issues, but we did try to better the troops' existence. They had been on the ground for a couple of weeks when I suggested we bring in soft drinks to break up the monotony of Goma. Bottled water and MREs get old very quickly. Nix liked the idea. Stan had gone back on mission to Kinshasa, so I rang him. Nix had agreed to several drinks per soldier so I gave Stan the numbers. The order came to some sixty-five cases of soft drinks. Stan rang off only to call back minutes later with the word the flight would be in the next day. I thought that was remarkably quick even for Stan, but he said he would call the next day once the 707 was on the way. As promised, Stan called me the next day around noon and said the soft drink bird would land around 1500 hours my time.

He warned, "Listen, Saleem said he was 'putting something extra' on the aircraft. I think it might be beer."

"I'll be planeside and see what it is when it gets here Stan," I replied before ringing off.

Three hour later the Express Air 707 cargo landed and taxied on to the main apron. I had alerted the J4, and we stood waiting for the bird. Down came the ladder and out came Saleem's main loadmaster. "Colonel Odom, all is yours!" he pronounced, waving at the aircraft, "All is yours from Saleem!" The task force logistics officer looked at me and I looked at him. We were expecting sixty-five cases of soft drinks and a "little something" from Saleem. Five hundred cases later, including at least four hundred cases of South African lager beer, I was standing just outside Brigadier General Nix's command tent.

"General, I have good news and I have bad news," I offered before delivering the good news first. "We got some extra soft drinks so we should be able to double the ration per soldier."

"What's the bad news, Tom?" he asked, looking out the tent at me.

Even as I replied, "General, we got lots of beer," one of the air force fork loaders trundled by proudly displaying a full pallet of Castle lager.

"There are two more pallets like that one, General," I said, pointing at the grinning air force sergeant. Nix did not share the sergeant's joy: the task force was under a "No Drink, Zero Tolerance Policy," set by European Command. Let me just say the general's reaction was understandably colorful before he ordered me

to give the beer away to the French. An "Airborne, Sir!" gave the tactical escape I needed. I took it. Walking away, I speed dialed the phone. I heard Major Nash's voice.

"Jean Luc, I am gonna make you a loved man. Get two trucks and some strong backs. I have some beer for you." Nash arrived with the French in less than thirty minutes. They were soon gleefully loading beer cases. I figured I had at least made Jean Luc's job a little easier.

I was wrong. The next morning the U.S. sentry at the gate sent word there was someone there to see me. As I walked down the hill, I saw Saleem's loadmaster standing there with a local. Saleem's man looked worried, and the Zairian appeared angry. I soon discovered why. Saleem's soon-to-be ex-loadmaster showed me an air bill for the previous day's flight. Apparently, he had misunderstood his boss's intentions. Saleem had told him to set aside a couple of cases of beer for Stan and me, not four hundred cases for the JTF. What made it worse was the Zairian, a local bar owner enjoying a beer sales bonanza with the explosion of expatriates in Goma, had prepaid for the shipment. Now he wanted his beer. All I could tell them was we no longer had the beer, and I would look into getting it back.

Figure four hundred cases of beer at a minimum price of twenty dollars each and you get eight thousand dollars, not something I wanted to pay. I called Stan in Kinshasa and told him what had happened. I explained that Brigadier General Nix had ordered me to get rid of the beer. In keeping with his orders, I had given it all to the French. Getting it back was not going to be easy or perhaps even desirable. I told Stan I would discuss the matter with Nix and get back to him. Meanwhile he said he

would call Saleem and let him know what was happening.

As I saw it, Nix had two choices: we could get the beer back from the French and go from there. That was at once the best legal solution and the worst political choice. I had given the beer "*dans le nom du* General Nix." Asking for it back—regardless of reasons—was not going to endear us to our French comrades. Relations were not exactly smooth. Giving them eight thousand dollars worth of beer and then taking it back was two steps forward, two miles backward. The other choice was to fess up to the JTF commander that we had acquired the beer through no fault of our own. And in keeping with CINCEUR instructions, we had given the beer away as a representational gift to the French. I decided the best solution for the overall operation was to keep the French happy. The operation was costing millions in landing fees, fuel, and flight time to make sure Rwandan killers did not die from lack of clean water. What was eight thousand dollars worth of beer for the French in comparison? That was the pitch I would make to Nix.

Remember the song lyrics, "Send lawyers, guns, and money" from Warren Zevon? Well as I soon found out, someone had sent a lawyer to Goma with the JTF to advise Brigadier General Nix. I went in to see Nix and was in briefing him when a legal beagle lieutenant colonel walked in, announcing he needed to assess the legal aspects of the situation. I ignored him and kept talking to the general. I finished with my recommendation that we leave the beer with the French and eat the costs. Immediately, the lawyer, fresh from the rarified air at U.S. European Command, started in with questions about who had "contracted" for the beer, had the French "signed" for the beer, and on whose

authority had I acted in giving the French the beer. I answered the last question, first.

"I gave the beer to the French because the general ordered me to. There was no 'contract' for four hundred cases. There was only a verbal order through a company for soft drinks. A local employee of that company made a mistake. As for the French signing for the beer, you must be kidding!"

I guess he had figured out I was not exactly awed by his presence. He began lecturing me on the task force directive prohibiting alcohol. Nix saw I was getting steamed and dismissed me, telling me he would soon make a decision.

The next day Nix directed me to recover what beer I could from the French. Jean Luc and I took a truck over to the French mess, where several glum-faced Frenchmen loaded some 250 cases on our vehicles. That left us short about three thousand dollars worth of lager, and given the JAG colonel's earlier position it was unlikely the JTF would pay for the shortage. Once again I turned to Stan. He resolved the situation with Saleem, who, since his man had made the mistake, agreed to absorb the loss, a drop in the proverbial bucket to what his company was making in support to the JTF anyway. As for the French, things remained correct but never cordial. Jean Luc took a lot of ribbing about "cheap Americans" over the next few weeks. He was up to it. The French soon asked for U.S. airlift to get home. Nash just pointed out he was the guy making those arrangements.

## Un Espion Americain

Although Jean Luc Nash was able to handle the fallout from the French beer bust,

our other counterpart from Brazzaville enjoyed less success in dealing with his Gallic counterparts. I sent him to join the French operation in Bukavu. With our office Cherokee, he flew down there on a French C160. His mission was exactly the same as Jean Luc's in Goma: fit in with the French. He was to monitor what they were doing and anticipate U.S. operational needs if the refugee situation there exploded. That was one of the most important questions facing the U.S. operation. The other part of the question was how long the French would stay. The new government in Rwanda was anything but friendly toward them. The Rwandan rebels had fought French troops in 1991. Operation Turquoise had established a protective zone across southwest Rwanda that challenged the new government's sovereignty. Getting blue berets in that area to replace the French without stampeding more refugees out of the country was UNAMIR II's first priority. That handover was, however, sometime in the not too distant future when the Brazza defense attaché headed south.

His mission was therefore very important. It lasted less than a week. Stan and I had already closed on our lake house at dusk when my cellular rang. It was Jean Luc. He told me the French had accused our liaison officer of spying and demanded his withdrawal. I was more than a little upset at the news. "Okay, I will head out to the airport to see Nix. Meet me there," I said as I hung up. I grabbed Stan, and Bill tagged along as we drove the five miles through Goma to the airfield.

I wondered what had happened. I had emphasized maintaining a low profile to the Brazza defense attaché as the best approach to his mission. For one thing, he was still the U.S. defense attaché to Congo–Brazzaville, an

often-troublesome neighbor to Zaire. So when I put him on the French transport, the Zairian authorities believed he was still in Kinshasa for consultations—with me. He was unable to call out from Bukavu as we did in Goma. We set it up with the French so he could pass information through them to Jean Luc in Goma. The French would therefore know everything being said, hence the need for a circumspect approach. We had gotten some good information already.

But we had also gotten some disturbing requests. He had passed word he wanted Stan to get Brazzaville to send out his Israeli load-bearing equipment (LBE), normally worn on field operations to carry ammo, water, and limited supplies. I nixed that request straight away and passed word if he thought he needed LBE, he was doing something wrong. Next we got a request for him to shift from Bukavu on the Zairian side of Lake Kivu to Cyangugu on the Rwandan side. That was fine with me, and I said, "Do it." But he tagged a request for an American flag he could tape or fly from his Cherokee to the request to move. I nixed that idea too as not in keeping with a low-profile approach.

All of this floated through my thoughts as I headed to see Brigadier General Nix. I met Jean Luc at the airport, and he could only repeat what I already knew. My meeting with Nix was equally short. He asked who the guy was and wanted to know if he was a spy. But mainly he wanted him gone faster than I had gotten rid of the beer. I explained—he had been told all this already but under the circumstances, I was not about to point that out—that the guy in question was our liaison to the French in the south. I said that was my understanding at present. I assured Nix we would do whatever

was necessary to reduce the fallout from the situation.

I went over to the command post to use a secure satellite phone and called Washington. I briefed the desk officer, and he called the division senior intelligence officer (SIO) to the phone. SIOs are the civilian counterparts to the uniformed regional division chiefs in the attaché system. They provide a source of long-term resident experience for the divisions where uniforms come and go every two to four years. I explained the situation to him. I said we would know more soon, but I did not expect any more changes. He asked if there was any way to replace him to keep someone down there. I responded that the French had already made this an issue, and they were unlikely to accept another American. Even if they did, they would stonewall whomever we sent.

"So he comes out?" he asked.

"Yes, sir, he comes out," I answered.

Back I went to Nix. I told him what Washington had said. Somewhat mollified, he looked up and said, "Just get him outta here, Tom. I don't want to see him. I want him gone."

Two days later a C160 landed and dumped the Brazza defense attaché and our office Cherokee on the tarmac. He handed me a one-page report concerning the activities of the U.S. defense attaché in Bukavu as proof of his innocence. My choices were limited to one.

"It doesn't matter. I have to send you out. Just let the dust settle on this because you are finished here," I said. Clearly it was not what he wanted to hear, and it was not something I enjoyed saying. But for whatever reasons, he had to go. I pointed out the Express Air jet.

"Stan has you on that bird. He has everything you brought there waiting." I shook his hand, and he walked away.

I still did not know what had happened, so I read the French report he had given me. It was a remarkable left-handed defense against sending the American out. The author went into great detail about how intrusive and arrogant their American guest had been around French headquarters. He stated that it was his inept social skills that had led several French officers to conclude he was there to spy. He was, according to the report, the epitome of the ugly American. So when he had proclaimed the report proved he had not been spying, he was more or less correct. He did not grasp, however, that he had failed miserably at building any kind of rapport with his hosts.

In his defense, there is another possibility for the Brazza defense attaché's expulsion. Once the French pulled out and U.N. soldiers entered the area, it became clear the French had allowed the former military and the Interahamwe to continue the genocide in the zone. He may have been exposed to evidence of French complicity whether he knew it or not. I know when I first met with the French, one colonel who was the equivalent of the French civil affairs and PSYOPs officer dismissed me in French as "an ignorant American who cannot possibly understand the real situation." He said it in French, assuming I did not understand. I looked at him, smiled, and kept saying, "Wee wee, Kernel," in Texan French, all the while hoping he might amplify his dismissal. He did not, and even if the defense attaché from Brazza had come too close to the truth, that did not change the situation in Goma. He had gotten crosswise with the French. He had to go.

The incident also affected our relations with Nix. He had accepted my presence around the compound and listened to what I had to say. That was especially important when it came to security. The JTF had a small element stationed down at Lake Kivu with the water purification equipment. Our old friends from the 31st Paras resented the U.S. troops. The Americans were giving away the water the 31st Paras had been selling. Occasional shots and

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*As far as the embassy in Kinshasa was concerned, Goma was just too far away to be relevant.*

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constant threats were the norm. Stan and I got involved in easing the tensions. Nix appreciated the assistance. He also learned from it. One evening, a Rwandan bus loaded with 31st troops passed the airport, and the Zairians popped off a few rounds. Nix told me about it the next day and said he had moved his defenses around to give the potential troublemakers a new look, something he did every couple of days. I was glad I had a commander on the ground that listened and learned.

Still, Nix looked on me as an apple in his orange basket. My team was not part of the JTF and not under his command. Stan and I wore civilian clothes and did our own thing. Nix had a ten-man counterintelligence and HUMINT team with the JTF to gather intelligence, especially threat-related intelligence. But to avoid any risk to them, he had restricted their activities. They could go to the water point, and they could ride the water trucks on their runs up to the camps. Otherwise they were restricted

to the base camp at the airport. The captain in charge was frustrated and asked me if his team could work with us. I told him they would be welcome, but they would have to wear civilian clothes like Stan and me. Being an enterprising young intelligence officer, he went to Nix and told the general I had asked for help.

Nix refused on the basis that soldiers in civilian clothes were spies. The irony came later when Nix first complained that intelligence support for the operation had been lacking and then told me we had been the only real help to him.

### What Crisis?

There was some truth in what Nix had to say. The embassy in Kinshasa showed little interest in the crisis beyond committing the Defense Attaché Office and Kate Crawford to dealing with it. Perhaps the embassy saw it as a distraction to the main goal of delivering Zaire from the hands of Mobutu. Certainly Mobutu saw in it an opportunity to bargain with his former Western backers. The embassy in Kinshasa was, with the departure of the last U.S. ambassador, in a holding pattern, waiting to see when Mobutu would go and what might happen. Even in my ten months in country, I had exhausted the ways to say, "The troops are restless" in describing the Zairian military. The same held true for the other sections in the embassy. The political section—prompted by the piercing wit of Peter Whaley—had started to admit the political "process" in Kinshasa was irrelevant. The econ section had tracked the crash of the New Zaire, but the econ officer had come to see western economic models were useless in understanding an economy built on theft. The CIA station seemed adrift in the 60s

and 70s when the Agency was the main player in the country.

Then the refugee crisis exploded. More than a million refugees, including a sizeable defeated army, flooded into eastern Zaire. So did international workers, international monies, and international coverage of Zaire. But despite its magnitude, the rest of the embassy acted like the Goma crisis did not exist. Their focus remained unchanged: getting rid of Mobutu by encouraging democracy in Kinshasa, the focus of all things in the country. The embassy never seemed to understand the reverse was true. When the refugee flood started in July, 1994, Kinshasa became the sideshow. The ultimate fate of Zaire would be decided in the east, not in the capital city.

As a result, Kate Crawford, Stan Reber, and I remained the core of embassy operations in eastern Zaire. We could have used help. Whaley unfortunately was leaving and was unavailable. But the embassy owed the U.S. government a political analysis of what the total disruption of eastern Zaire meant to the country's future. Economically the region was being severed from the rest of the country. The amount of hard currency being pumped into Goma was enormous. Refugees are big business. As for the CIA, they consistently ignored my calls for support. As far as the embassy in Kinshasa was concerned, Goma was just too far away to be relevant.

## Scouts Out!

So with the embassy unconcerned, the JTF on the ground with limited intelligence capabilities, and Washington ever thirsty for information, we remained busy keeping everyone happy or at least as happy as we could make them. Just as I had done in

southern Lebanon and earlier that year in Kinshasa, I established a routine that had us out looking at the camps whenever possible. We monitored them to see how they were developing and more importantly how the Rwandans were settling in. Kibumba and Katale remained the focus of the relief effort, and as those camps improved my interest declined. That was not the case for the military encampments south of Goma. We made a run through the area at least three times a week. Our observations were consistent. The former military remained encamped as an army in being. Uniforms were the norm, and we saw heavy weapons and some light arms. We also saw a lot of hostile eyes as we made the trips.

Interestingly enough, we often had dinner with the officers from these camps. Our favorite hotel restaurant was also the favored watering hole for the former military leaders. It was a sore point with me, because as an attaché there were limits on what I could do to develop information. I had already had requests from headquarters I had turned down due to risk. I could not just pop out to the former military's camp and ask to interview the bosses. The CIA folks back in Kinshasa were the ones to work this area. But I could not get them interested. Consequently, we—the intelligence community—missed an opportunity to find out what these guys had in mind.

Nevertheless, much can be gained from just watching an area. One of the first intelligence requirements came from an unexpected source. Bill and I were at the airport one morning when Brigadier General Nix walked up to us and said he was convinced there were no more than 100,000 to 150,000 refugees in the entire area. Bill and I did a double-take, and Nix repeated his statement.

When Bill and I again eyed each other, Nix announced he was putting us on a visual reconnaissance with the French the next day at 0900.

So the next morning Bill and I strapped into the rumble seats on a Gazelle and took off. True to Nix's warning the French pilots did their best to make us sick. That made the flight fun, and Bill and I only grinned. I talked to the pilots, and we headed north to Katale. Bill and I had agreed we would keep our estimates separate, though we did agree a single refugee tarp could be counted as a family. We worked Katale and then Kibumba. I asked the pilot to skirt the border to look for crossers into Rwanda. Then we went south and repeated the process over the ex-military areas. All in all we were in the air for well over an hour. The Gazelle is a lot more fun than a Puma, and I enjoyed that flight.

Once on the ground, we tallied our estimates and compared numbers. Bottom line was we came out with numbers in the realm of 800,000. Armed with a consensus, we went in to see Nix. He listened, and I could tell he did not like it one bit. I went over our methodology and our flight path. I added that we had flown the border and seen no sign of movement back into Rwanda.

"Sir, I was here for the last three days of the mass movement. They walked right down this road," I said, pointing at the airport road just a stone's throw from us. "I had the pilot fly the border. We saw no one either crossing into Rwanda or already there."

To a degree, Nix was correct in his contention: the numbers were probably overstated, but that was a question of method not intent. The difference from a miscount and

the difference he had somehow arrived at amounted to nearly 700,000. In any case he did send a message into the JTF Main saying he believed his number of 150,000 was right. No one seems to have taken that message too seriously, suggesting it did not really matter. This little vignette was the opening act of the U.S. withdrawal. The next theme would be that reduced water consumption equaled a return of the refugees to Rwanda.

In the meantime, we were still worried about another exodus down south. The French were still in southwest Rwanda, but the new government wanted them out. UNAMIR II was arriving, but full deployment was weeks away. Things were more or less under control in Goma. The JTF was operating smoothly; there were occasional problems with the Zairian military and other locals but nothing that could not be handled. I resolved to take our little show on the road.

Stan and I had already crossed into Rwanda once. It was more of a lark to keep the chargé happy. He asked us to take his wife and him across after the secretary of defense visit. We did the formalities at the Zairian side of the border but almost nothing on the Rwandan side. All we really did was drive the mile to the Hotel Meridien and turn around. The next week Stan and I headed for Kigali. We had reasons for the trip. First, I wanted a look see inside Rwanda. I needed to get a feel for how many refugees might have gone back. Second, I figured it was a good idea to take a look at the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA). We had taken fire from them in the waning days of their campaign to take Gisenyi. But the area had been quiet for sometime. Finally, there was talk of consolidating the JTF in Kigali, possibly for use in the southwestern part of Rwanda. I

wanted a good look at the main road from the border to the capital. On the map, it looked to be a four-hour drive. But maps in Africa are deceiving.

I let Brigadier General Nix and Washington know we were going, and the next morning we set out. The border crossing was not without the usual Zairian demands for bribes. But on the Rwandan side it was a bit different. The officials were all soldiers, and they acted like it. The language was notably English. A captain examined our passports and asked us where we were going. I told him we had a meeting in Kigali, and he sent us on our way. We made it through most of Gisenyi before the other shoe dropped.

We came up on a roadblock manned by four or five RPA troops. Stan stopped and I leaned out the window to talk to whomever came forward. All the troops were armed with AK47s and wore East German fatigues with black berets. There were no sunglasses, no fancy badges, and no rappel seats around these troops' waists. There was no overt threat, but all were alert. A lieutenant appeared and asked in English who we were. I explained we were American soldiers. Immediate grins appeared on their faces.

"You're not French?" the lieutenant asked in confirmation.

"No, I am an American colonel and this is my sergeant," I responded.

At that he saluted and began talking on a handheld radio. "Follow me," he said shortly afterward and headed to a Toyota pickup. We followed him back into town and arrived at what I learned later was the local brigade commander's headquarters.

I groaned inwardly at the delay. In Zaire or elsewhere in Africa, this diversion could turn into an all-day affair. Nevertheless, we were soon inside talking to a major who asked about our business. I went through the same questions and answers with him: Who are you? American soldiers. Where are you going? Kigali. Are you French? No. All of this drew the same grins and smiles. Then I got a real surprise: the major made a decision without bucking it up the chain as I feared. He told us we could go, and he ordered the lieutenant to escort us out of town toward Kigali. Thirty minutes after being stopped at the roadblock, our RPA escort pulled over, and the lieutenant flashed a salute to wave us on.

There were three salient observations on the next three hours to Kigali. First, we were in a no-man's-land. The next major town along the way was Ruhengeri. All the villages we passed getting there were deserted. Even Ruhengeri was a ghost town. The only beings we saw as we drove southeast toward Kigali were RPA soldiers. We passed through at least ten checkpoints and at each went through the same question and answer routine. The magic words were "American soldiers." They consistently drew grins from the troops, who all were uniformly well disciplined. Not once were we asked for anything. In Zaire, running ten roadblocks would have left us broke.

The second observation was that Rwanda is incredibly beautiful. It was like driving through a Hollywood set that just kept changing. In the northwest, we saw volcanoes and triple canopy jungle and could look back at the deep blue waters of Lake Kivu. As we drew closer to Ruhengeri, we were surrounded by carefully terraced hills lush with tea. From Ruhengeri, we began a series of climbs and

descents across high ridgelines and down river valleys. Saying the beauty of the tiny country was stunning might sound trite. But Stan and I were just that: stunned by its deceptive beauty.

The final major observation was that the roads, the towns, and the villages were seemingly untouched by war. The French referred to the machete as the African "neutron bomb," very effective in killing without destroying the surrounding areas. The roads were all tarmac and wide by African standards. Grades were steep, but the builders did use switchbacks to lessen their effects. We saw some small arms and mortar damage in Ruhengeri. But as I mentally compared it to what I had seen in Lebanon, it seemed minor. As we closed into Kigali, we saw more and more signs of war. Some building fronts had collapsed, and there were quite a number of burned-out vehicles. Still, I thought at the time, it looked like a minor war. I was so wrong.

We played Dorothy and "followed the yellow brick road" to the U.S. embassy. Stan had been there years before when the office in Kinshasa covered Rwanda. We stopped at each roadblock along the way and flashed our military ID cards at the troops, many who appeared less than fifteen years old. These "munchkins" all grinned and pointed us in the right direction. Our stop at the embassy was anti-climatic. Ambassador David Rawson and his acting defense attaché, Lt. Col. Tony Marley, were out. Tony was an African FAO who had been working in the Political-Military section of the State Department. He had helped Ambassador Rawson reopen the embassy. Stan and I checked in with the military guys assisting the embassy to let the JTF know we had arrived. We had MREs for lunch outside on the truck

hood and after a quick look at the airport, headed back to Goma.

The ride back was the same stunning vista as the trip into Kigali. I can honestly say I fell in love with the country that day. I just did not know how much pain it would cause me. All told the day was idyllic, a truly welcome break from the stench and dirt of Goma. I guess that is a statement in itself: go to Rwanda for a day vacation from Goma. We made it back that

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*The French referred to the machete as the African "neutron bomb," very effective in killing without destroying the surrounding areas.*

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evening just before they closed the border. Stan and I were both tired, but we chattered about the drive like two schoolgirls discussing a cute teacher. Amazing how beautiful a country can be when it does not have any people—at least living people.

Our next sojourn took us north through the camps at Kibumba and Katale. Tony Marley had joined us from Kigali for a couple of days, so Stan and I took him along. We were playing refugee tourist again to see if we could find evidence of any large-scale return to Rwanda. Our route this time ran from Katale to the border crossing with Uganda and then on to Rwanda. We would intersect with the main highway to Kigali just outside Ruhengeri. The camps passed without incident. By this time they were remarkably organized and almost docile. The one thing that had not changed was the open hostility of the refugees. Nevertheless

there was a dramatic absence of bodies compared to my trip through the area after the airdrop. But while it might get better, it would never be paradise.

One potential solution glowered and spit over our left shoulders as we drove north. Mount Nyiragongo was the most active volcano in an area infamous for volcanoes. As fate would have it, a casual remark by me in a morning telephonic update had focused scientific attention on the smoking mountain. Just after Stan had come out July 25 or so, I remember my bed marching across the room during an earthquake that lasted several minutes. I had been in California, Turkey, and Lebanon during earthquakes, so the vibrating bed was not a novelty to me. This one happened in the early morning around 0300 hours. The next morning we discovered we were suddenly out of water, a bit strange since our "well" was Lake Kivu less than one hundred yards due east of the house. The house used a lower pump and an upper pump to draw the water to the house. The upper was working, so Stan went down to the lake to check the other. He came back and told us Lake Kivu had apparently dropped, leaving the access pipe a full four feet out of the water.

I mentioned the quake and the drop in the lake level that morning when calling the Pentagon. Apparently that got someone's attention in D.C. because the next day, Rick Moore called me. "You know the report you made about the lake out there dropping? Well the lake did not drop; Goma rose." Apparently, the pressure had pushed up the rock crust Goma sits on from volcanic activity. That was the source of my earthquake.

The problem was this volcano was especially dangerous. It had last erupted in the late 1970s. It is what geologists refer to as a high-speed volcano. Erupting through vents in its side and base, the lava flows at speeds greater than thirty miles per hour. In the 1970s event, lava had caught moving cars. The specter of such an eruption into the very areas where the refugees were encamped was haunting. On the other hand, it seemed entirely appropriate. A combined U.S.–French geology team did come out and examine the volcano. Some of us were disappointed to hear there was little chance of a 1970s-type eruption. For months, we kept hoping they would be proven wrong. God missed a chance to make a statement on genocide.

So we toiled along that morning until we reached the Ugandan border. The crossing went fairly well. The Ugandans were used to the traffic, and the Zairians knew they had little hope of getting bribes from diplomats. From the extreme western tip of Uganda we arced to the southeast and reentered Rwanda. Intersecting with the main road to Gisenyi, our trip back was uneventful but enjoyable. We had just driven a circle around the area made famous in the film *Gorillas in the Mist*. We saw no gorillas, found no guerrillas, and spotted damn few potential "returned" refugees. But the scenery, as before, was stunning. If only Sigourney Weaver had been there . . .

We remained concerned about a southern refugee exodus until the Ethiopians in UNAMIR II took over from the French Operation Turquoise. Stan and I had already been to Kigali; we knew that road was fine as far as the capital city. We did not know how good it was from Kigali to the border at Cyangugu. If it matched the Gisenyi–Kigali highway, it was an

autobahn by African standards. I had already talked to Nix about a possible move south. I recommended going through Rwanda rather than trying the western side of Lake Kivu inside Zaire. He seemed to favor that route because it was outside the "war" zone, and he had been told it was less than five hours to Bukavu. My route through Rwanda was at least ten hours.

A glance at the Michelin map said Bukavu was 120 kilometers or so from Goma. And as is often the case, the Michelin map said the roads were good. They probably were good in the 1970s when the map and the roads were last updated. The western shore of Lake Kivu is a series of ridges and valleys that collapse into the lake as part of the Great Rift Valley. The ridges are all fifteen hundred to two thousand feet high and the valleys all have streams that become rivers overnight. Stan was not exactly overjoyed when I told him we were headed south.

"We going back through Kigali?" he asked.

"Nope, we are going down the western side of the lake," I responded. Mild discomfort on Stan's face turned to incredulity.

"I know, Stan, but Nix seems to think he can make that run in five hours with five-thousand-gallon tankers. We are going to drive that road and see for ourselves before the JTF gets buried out there."

The next day we set out early from the lake house at around 0600. Our path took us through the former Rwandan army to the main north-south route along the western side of Lake Kivu, which we reached at 0700. The first twenty kilometers were all on tarmac and went fairly quickly, but that speed ended when the asphalt stopped. Almost immediately the Isuzu

began to struggle with the red Zairian clay, her little diesel screaming with the effort to pull us through. By this time it was approaching 0800. We had been on the road along the lake for an hour and had covered twenty kilometers, what would be our best record for the day.

We had only gone another ten kilometers or so when we ran into the nemesis of all travelers in the Zairian bush—a Zairian military checkpoint. It was nothing spectacular, just a log laid across two fifty-five-gallon drums to block the road and a small building set back from the road, with a couple of half-dressed soldiers watching us like buzzards. Nevertheless, Stan and I both shifted into the red zone, alert to possible trouble. It took a couple of minutes for one of the Zairian military troops to break contact with the ground and stand up. As he walked toward us, his partner also stood and leveled an FN (a Belgian rifle, Fabrique Nationale) toward us. The game started as the first walked up to Stan's window.

"Who are you? And where are you going?" he began. He had been drinking; at 0830 under the muzzle of his weapon that was not a comforting thought.

Stan pointed toward the front of the vehicle. "We are diplomats from the U.S. embassy. We are headed to Bukavu to work on the refugee problem there."

The soldier attempted to open the passenger door, but Stan stopped him with, "This is a diplomatic vehicle. See the plates on the front?" The soldier stepped back and examined our CD plates and then returned.

"Come with me," he waved to Stan, who got out and followed.

"I'll be back," Stan said to me.

"I'll wait here for ten minutes and then come in if you are not back," I responded.

As those two walked off, the other Zairian military troop sauntered over and tried to open the rear door. I again used the diplomatic vehicle route, and he seemed to accept it. He too had been into the banana beer. But soon he started with the counterargument that we might be diplomats, but the vehicle was not diplomatic property. We batted this ball back and forth for the next few minutes until Stan returned, followed by his escort.

"Any problems?" I asked.

"Nope. Just a drunk lieutenant who said we could go on," Stan answered.

"But that guy doesn't like it," he added, pointing at the first soldier, who was now deep into discussion with his partner.

Rather than raise the barrier, they turned in unison and headed back toward us. Again they tried to open the doors to the truck, claiming the vehicle was subject to search. We kept the doors closed and refused. Stan reminded them their officer had already released us, but that had little effect. I was not going to consent to the search, because it would only lead to more problems. These troops knew they were crossing a line by stopping diplomats. If we allowed ourselves to be robbed, we became severe liabilities. More than one westerner had disappeared in the bush courtesy of the Zairian military.

"Do we go back?" Stan asked.

"Yeah, we will have to if they insist on a search," I answered.

Even as I said that, the first soldier moved to our rear, preventing any attempt to reverse our course. Stan and I looked at each other.

"No search, Stan," I muttered softly. We started shifting to reach our weapons.

*"Idiots! Laissez les passez!"* a drunken voice called from the side of the road.

The inebriated lieutenant waved at the barricade, and his soldiers scurried to shift the log barrier. Stan and I were both breathing deeply as we moved off, still riding a jolt of adrenalin. That little drama had cost us nearly an hour by the time we started rolling again, and we hoped it was the last checkpoint.

For the next several hours, Stan and I battled the road with our reluctant charger. The little diesel chugged through hub-deep mud fairly well. She was light enough that the spinning tires pushed along the surface of the mud when heavier vehicles with bigger engines would have just sunk. Outlined by triple-canopy jungle on both sides, the road itself was fairly well marked. In the dry season it might be fairly fast. But this was the wet season, and the road was more like a mud canal between the trees. Nevertheless we pressed on and passed some Bedford lorries buried up to their frames. I could just see one of those five-ton tractors with a five-thousand-gallon trailer trying to get through this stuff.

The little diesel handled the mud flats fairly well, but the ridgelines proved more difficult. As I said before, Lake Kivu marks the passage of the Great Rift Valley through this area of central Africa. The central plateau falls

off into the lake with fingerlike ridges spread eastward to the lakes shore. The net effect is an extreme roller coaster of ridges and valleys. What makes the ride extreme is the "engineers" who laid out the system did not use switchbacks to climb or descend the ridges. On a fifteen-hundred-foot climb, the typical road had three five-hundred-foot legs at more than a 15 percent grade. Even in dry weather, such a climb is nerve-wracking. On wet clay-based dirt roads, it got very hairy. Our diesel needed a running start to get up to a momentum to sustain the climbs. We got pretty good at it: the trick was never shifting out of first gear even when she sounded like she was going to blow. Still we had a couple of incidents when we met a descending truck, and we literally had to run backward down the mountain to get out of their way.

About 1500 hours we had some forty kilometers left when we stopped in a small village for a break. That was a mistake. Two Zairian military wives from Bukavu were apparently visiting their families, and they asked for a ride. Their two armed escorts made it difficult to say no. So we loaded the two women, each at least 250 pounds of Zairian delight, and their two escort thugs complete with automatic rifles and grenades and set off for the final leg to Bukavu. There was a positive side to having guests along. We passed through several more Zairian military roadblocks without hassle. Bukavu, and especially the junction of the tarmac road north of Bukavu, was a welcome sight. We closed with the town after spending fourteen hours on a 120-kilometer obstacle course.

Bukavu is one of the classic sad-story towns of Zaire. Built as a colonial resort when the Belgian Congo was a going concern, the

little town hugged the Lake Kivu shoreline as it stretched out along a narrow peninsula. During the troubles of the 1960s, Bukavu survived relatively unscathed because of its geography. Easily cut off from land traffic, it was easier to defend, especially with Lake Kivu as a backdoor supply route.

The little town was pretty beaten up by the time I saw it in 1994. Goma was not designed to take a large refugee influx, and Bukavu was even less capable. The refugees could not go around Bukavu or even use multiple side streets to get through it. All essentially had to pass through the center, and then once off the peninsula they could turn north or south. Only several hundred thousand had done so when Stan and I arrived; the town looked like termites had gone through it. Any source of firewood had been chopped down. The avenue of trees along the lakefront was now an avenue of freshly chopped stumps.

As Stan and I arrived, the rains greeted us. We set out to find a place to stay for the evening. Easier said than done, and we soon began to look at the Isuzu as a probable bed. I do not remember the name of the hotel we finally found, but it was really a bar. Stan struck up a conversation with the bartender, a longtime Belgian resident, as we enjoyed two very welcome Simba Lagers. He allowed he had a room not normally rented to white men he would let us have for the night. We were not choosy. He took us back past the restroom—the wall where everyone urinated—and the exterior charcoal kitchen to a small room with a single bed. We fired up some heat tabs and warmed our French combat rations. Stan got the bed. I took the floor. By 2200 hours we were sound asleep, lulled by a drumming rain on the metal roof.

The next day we ate MREs for breakfast and started toward the border crossing, the Rusizi bridge between the sister towns of Cyangugu and Bukavu. Refugees were evident in town but not in the numbers we had seen up north. At the border, we did the usual with the Zairians. That went fairly smoothly, and we eased onto the narrow bridge. At the far side, French soldiers directed us into a holding lot so we could process through the Rwandan authorities. That in itself was rather bizarre. These officials were Rwandan but who they represented was not clear. I could only assume they were holdovers from the previous regime brought back by the French to assist in running the area. Their long-term job security was doubtful.

Once outside the border port we ran into a concentration of several thousand refugees, stacked up along the border but unable to cross. The Zairians had closed the border to refugees. It was raining as we drove slowly through the crowd. Although wet and obviously displaced from their normal lives, these Rwandans looked remarkably better than their Goma counterparts. The reason was obvious enough: the French had provided them a security zone and an escape hatch into Zaire and Burundi. The Tutsis inside that zone were not so lucky.

Stan and I could not linger in Cyangugu. We had a long day ahead of us, at least a ten-hour drive to get back to Goma via Kigali. Our first leg was the longest and by far the prettiest. Once outside Cyangugu, we were back in the tea plantations and their terraced hills. The intense green of the plants and their lush growth made the area look like something out of J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*. It was just too green to be real. We soon left that

area and entered what felt like an enchanted forest.

For the next forty miles or so, Stan and I went back in time. The Nyungwe National Forest spread out on both sides of the road as we climbed into the highest area in Rwanda. Dense forest and underlying growth both beckoned and warned that this area was not man's domain. The mountains and the weather added to the feeling. At times our little truck would labor up the side of a mountain, hemmed in by low clouds and dense forest. Then we would break out into bright sunshine as we reached the peak. Though it cost us time, we stopped and marveled at the sight.

Buoyed by the beauty we had just seen, Stan and I ran into the reality of Rwanda on the far side of the forest. We turned a corner and ran into a temporary checkpoint manned by French troops. The unit was what only the French could call a CRAP and get away with it. Like our Long-Range Surveillance Detachments, CRAPs are primarily a reconnaissance element. They also have, however, a direct action role more along the line of our Ranger units. This one's position marked the edge of the French protected zone. We chatted with them about the area, and they were curious about our role. The patrol leader recommended we not go any farther. Stan stuck with the "meetings in Kigali" line we had used before. They accepted it at face value. After all, we were the ones headed into what was for them hostile territory.

Out of the forest, we were back in the heavily cultivated areas of Rwanda. Every inch of ground was either terraced for tea production or laid out for subsistence farming. Small houses and huts were scattered through the hills with a smattering of larger communes

and villages spread between them on the main *collines* or hills. But this intense evidence of human occupation was like an empty sound set. There were no actors and no signs of life. No cattle or goats moved on the hillsides or in the valleys. No smoke wafted from the huts. We stopped for a break along the main road for about fifteen minutes. There were no sounds or any other indications of humanity. It was remarkable. I had never been anywhere in the Third World where I could be alone for more than five minutes before a local showed up. Here Stan and I were in the middle of one of the most densely populated countries in the world—and no one was home.

Almost with a sense of relief, we soon ran into our first RPA checkpoint of the day. This time the body language was dramatically tenser as we approached the checkpoint. We did not wait for the question.

"We are American soldiers. *Nous sommes Américains*. We are not French. *Pas de Français*," we chorused and waved out green military IDs. It worked like a champ. As soon as the RPA soldiers heard the word "American," they relaxed. We chatted with them as we had the French. Stan lit a cigarette and smoked without offering to share. No one asked for a smoke. As we departed, Stan handed a half pack to the senior man.

"I just wanted to see if they would try and get something from us. Can you imagine smoking in front of a bunch Zairian troops like that?" Stan commented.

We saw a lot more of the RPA as we approached Kigali from the south. The no-man's-land feeling continued all the way into the city. There were more civilians in the city and even an occasional vehicle, but it too

seemed deserted. We cleared Kigali and headed north to Gisenyi around 1500 hours. Three hours later we squeezed through the border into Goma just as the Zairians were closing for the day.

It was nearing dark when we arrived at the JTF compound to check in. I went to see Brigadier General Nix. I spent about twenty minutes relating the trip and emphasized that any attempt to use the road west of Lake Kivu would be disastrous. A week later, the French proved my point. Their withdrawal was slipping behind schedule, and they decided to push a column of vehicles up that road to Goma. They had no large vehicles. Most of their wheeled transports were Mini-Mog-type 6x6s. When they finally closed into Goma after nearly eighteen hours, every windshield was broken, winch cables were too distorted to rewind, and mud spread all the way across the tops of the trucks. They had made it, but they had paid hard for the trip.

I told Nix what we had seen along the route and the conditions in Bukavu. I showed him where the French zone ended in southwestern Rwanda and talked about the absence of life. He took it all in and thanked me. Then he told me the CIA had apparently decided we needed help. The agency had sent a two-man team to provide assistance on force protection. Nix was less than thrilled and made it clear the spooks were now my problem.

I left and went to see the task force intelligence officer. He told me the same thing, but when I asked where the CIA guys were, he said, "They're in the quarantine tent."

"What quarantine?" I asked.

"Oh, the loggies bought some local beef and all the troops who ate it got sick," he answered, adding, "The last tent on the line, you can't miss it."

I headed for the sick tent thinking. Back when we were discussing the ill-fated beer mission, I had suggested the task force bring in fresh meat and food for the troops from Europe. That is what we did in Kinshasa. One thing we never did was buy local beef or any other meat in Zaire. We had been taking somewhat of a risk eating at the hotel, but they got their meats from Uganda.

True to the description, there was a medical ward established in a large tent. The flight surgeon and medics attached to the JTF had ten to twenty troops all in cots, many with IV's hanging beside them. The story was that all who had the local beef had gotten sick. All who ate T-ration lasagna instead had remained healthy. Nevertheless, the medicos had decided to quarantine the ill just in case some mystery bug was involved. It also avoided concluding they had eaten tainted meat cleared by the same medicos. At the far end of the tent, I spotted an obviously nonmilitary civilian setting up some commo gear.

I went up to him and introduced myself. As it turned out, he and his communicator had been specially dispatched to advise the JTF commander on force protection. That is to say, he was there to tell a general how to make sure his troops did not get killed. I told the guy I had been doing that since the arrival of the JTF lead elements. But this individual had not been sent until nearly thirty days into the operation. Nix understandably had not been impressed with the Agency's sense of urgency. Neither had I for that matter. Here we were, as it turned out.

almost at the end of the JTF's stay and Langley had decided we needed force protection advice. Meanwhile the station chief in Kinshasa had ignored the entire crisis. Still, this guy took his fate with a sense of humor. His residence in the quarantine tent spoke volumes about his status with Nix. He left to return to the States less than forty-eight hours after his arrival.

## Winding Down

Our return from circling Lake Kivu marked the transition of the JTF into its withdrawal stage. Brigadier General Nix and his soldiers had done well in the first part of their stated mission, really the only achievable objective at the time. Still the drawdown of the JTF was not well received in the NGOs and international agencies working in Goma. Working to offset the perception that the job was not finished, Nix and his staff pushed the issue of water consumption as an indicator the refugees were going home. That had been partially true when the cholera epidemic and a subsequent dysentery outbreak occurred. The number of refugees heading back to Rwanda did increase, although in relation to the numbers still in Zaire, the returnee population was minor. Yet even that small increase in returning Rwandans soon declined and for all practical purposes ceased. I listened as Nix and his civil affairs officer gave a briefing on the operation. The thesis of the briefing was that decreased water consumption equaled a decreasing refugee population. Not true, but it was a sellable point if you were inclined to buy. The rainy season and changes in refugee behavior accounted for much of the decline. Coupled with the fact the Rwandans did not consume as much water as suggested under international health standards, the decline did not add up to the conclusions the JTF wanted.

Still it offered an out, one happily taken by a JTF looking to leave gracefully.

The JTF had accomplished its main mission in Goma: "stop the dying." I often heard from various NGO and disaster workers that the United States did not produce as much water as the teams from the United Kingdom and elsewhere. That was true but did not go far enough. The reverse osmosis units we brought in were intended for steady production of potable water for units much smaller than the refugee population around Goma. Our water

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*The framework for the working agreement that made it all happen was worked out by one skinny, bald-headed U.S. Army sergeant first class who had ten years in the country*

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units had taken their lead from the ODA (British equivalent to USAID) and disinfected lake water rather than go through purification. It was faster. The result was that the U.S. water production effort added enough to the other water production teams to beat the cholera epidemic.

We also added dramatically to the water transport. Those ten five-ton tractors and their five-thousand-gallon trailers moved a lot of water. Taken from war reserve stocks in Germany, they were outdated but fully functional. There was criticism the United States was being cheap in handing them over; they were outdated and would soon breakdown. Therefore, the United States should have

brought in state-of-the-art trucks to leave behind. I will offer two points on that idea. First, I saw those same five-ton trucks running the roads in Rwanda eighteen months later. Second, the United States did bring in some commercially bought brand-new tractors to Rwanda. They were broken down inside three months, and they stayed broken.

The JTF briefers and its critics missed the real Goma story. Operation Support Hope achieved what it did through airlift. It is true that in Goma the United States did not produce as much water as the other donors. But for the most part, the United States flew in their equipment along with the bulk of the emergency supplies needed to stop the dying. We funneled a massive airlift through one of the most cramped airfields in Africa. We did it in concert with the French, the United Nations using largely dilapidated Russian aircraft, and a large commercial fleet. There was not a single airframe lost in that effort—though one Russian An124 almost ground looped. What had happened with the Russian copy of the C5 was a pure case of bad maintenance. Inbound to Goma, the Russians lost an outboard engine about fifty miles out. They came on, because there was no alternative. As the jumbo settled toward the runway the inboard engine on the same side flamed out. The Antonov slammed into the runway and blew most of the tires along the same side. She fishtailed down the runway, but they got her to stop without ground looping. The crew went straight to the bar, and when the French had the bird repaired, the semi-drunk Russians flew her out. Later in Kigali, I became close friends with a British couple who had survived that flight.

Managing such a polyglot air operation required some sort of agreement. The

framework for the working agreement that made it all happen was worked out by one skinny, bald-headed U.S. Army sergeant first class who had ten years in the country. Stan Reber did more than any other to untie the transport knot at Goma. He is not mentioned in the JTF After Action Report.

As for the rest of the JTF in Entebbe and Kigali, they would continue their efforts. Yet they had also already achieved a very real success. The deployment of UNAMIR II was a separate but parallel operation. The focal point for the U.N. peacekeepers in August, 1994, was southwest Rwanda and the former French protected zone. Ethiopia had agreed to send a veteran group of Ethiopian soldiers, all former fighters against Mengistu, to Rwanda. They were to replace the French, who had been ordered out by the new Rwandan government. That handoff took place in the last week of August without the feared second refugee exodus. Ultimately the scruffy Ethiopians proved themselves to be the best of the UNAMIR troops. All of this happened due to U.S. assistance in getting the Kigali airport operating and the U.S. airlift. Operation Support Hope did a lot of other things during its existence. It would do more before the final teams pulled out in late September. But the Operation had already achieved its main tasks: it had stopped the dying in Goma, and it had deployed UNAMIR II.

So as I listened to the briefing, I was not offended, outraged, or even disappointed in the premise of the message. I thought it curious we were not keying on what we had done to stop the dying. The rest of it—return refugees to Rwanda and do something about the security situation—was not on the JTF's mission list. It was on mine, however.

En route to the United States for consultations, Ambassador David Rawson had elected to stop in Goma to get a firsthand look at the refugee situation. I had heard much about David. Ambassador to Rwanda when the war broke out, David had managed to get all his staff and their families out of the explosive situation without loss. That alone made him something special. Prior to assuming the ambassadorial posting, he had been instrumental in setting up the failed Arusha Accords. At the beginning of his career, he had been the embassy consular officer who carried Dianne Fossey's mail up to Karisimbe. In his youth, David had been the son of missionaries working among the Hutu in Burundi. No U.S. official had more of a personal stake in achieving a negotiated peace at Arusha. When the accords failed and the genocide began, no U.S. official suffered more than David Rawson.

It was the measure of the man that he had gone back in to reopen the embassy. Now he was headed back to the States to update Washington on the situation. Tony Marley, as his acting defense attaché, had suggested to David I come over when finished in Zaire. I had agreed on what was supposed to be a ninety-day temporary duty. At the time I still expected my next official posting would be to Haiti. So as I met David for the first time I never expected we would serve together over the next sixteen months. We drove north into the camps, and I could see he was disturbed. Refugee camps are hardly news in Africa. David had seen them before. But as he looked out at Kibumba he said, "This is not going to go away. This is long term. The war is not over."

That simple assessment marked the beginning of our partnership. I told him I would join him in Rwanda by mid-September. We

shook hands, and he boarded the plane and left.

If there is one thing U.S. troops do faster than anything else, it is redeploy. Called "smelling the barn," U.S. soldiers lose all pretense of GI grumbling when told they are going home, especially when they are going home from a place like Goma. Once it was apparent that was happening, Stan and I shifted to the same mode. We had already put Nash on a flight to Chad. The Jeep was back in Kinshasa, and we were down to just Stan and I along with Kate. She was staying as the DART representative. DIA had approved State and Rawson's request for me to go to Rwanda as a temporary military representative. They had stepped up my replacement's arrival, the defense attaché in Liberia. We had been in correspondence for several months.

After forty days I was ready for a change, even if it meant Kinshasa. The JTF was all but gone. The focus of U.S. operations was on Kigali. The quicker I got back, the quicker I would be in Rwanda. We had loaded the Isuzu with supplies and, with Saleem's approval, parked her in the garage at the lake house until Stan and I returned to drive her to Kigali. Stan and I made a 5 P.M. flight to Kinshasa. Finally we could say, "Goodbye, Goma!"

## Transitions and Goodbyes

Our deluxe flight to Kinshasa was on one of Saleem's 707s. We had seats, but two Zairian military officers had shown up with female companions, so we surrendered our seats. We did not care. We went into the 707's cargo hold and stretched out on a pallet of beans. Soon asleep, we woke briefly at the interim stop at Kisangani. Neither of us got up. We lay there like two cats, each with an open eye watching

our kit bags until we resumed flight. When we sensed we were descending into Kinshasa, we roused ourselves and got ready to debark.

Not a passenger flight, the 707 halted on the apron far from the main terminal. It was night, and there were no lights around us. We saw our Cherokee approach and headed toward it. A self-declared customs inspector stepped in our way and stated we had to go through customs and immigration. Stan and I looked at each other and then at this guy. He now had several assistants, all eager to get in on the action. They were all baggage handlers looking to score. We pulled our diplomatic passports, and Stan, in Lingala, told them to get lost. They knew they had been made and stepped aside. Life in Kinshasa had not changed.

The next two weeks were a period of transitions and good byes. Some things bear telling as they relate to the rest of my story. First I got to finally meet the rest of my Goma team. The air force sergeant who met us at the airport had done great work handling the Kinshasa end of our airlift. He soon returned to Cameroon. I also got to meet Commander Grant and her husband. She and I had talked on the cellular many times. Grant had done an equally fine job getting the details right in messages back to Washington. She told me the stay at my house had been a sort of honeymoon for her and her husband. They too were soon headed back to their post in South Africa.

I also had the opportunity to meet a new team member. Lt. Col. Jim Cobb flew in from Youandé. He had just arrived in Cameroon when the Goma refugee crisis had exploded. His predecessor had been Lt. Col. Charles Vukovic. Chuck Vukovic and I had as FAO

trainees in 1984 made a six-thousand-mile road trip through most of southern Africa. Since USDAO Youandé had responsibility for Rwanda, Chuck had been in Kigali when the war resumed. He had since gone on to a new assignment, and Jim Cobb was his replacement. Cobb and I agreed he should go on to Rwanda until I could get there. We were both under the assumption I would only be there ninety days. Then as the regional defense attaché responsible for the country, Jim would continue to cover Rwanda with periodic visits from Cameroon.

Part of the period was taken up by folding back into the embassy. The second day after I got back was the day for the embassy staff meeting. These were held in the large conference room rather than in the plastic bubble reserved for the inner policy makers. The chargé looked at me and said, "Tell us about Goma, Tom."

I led with, "The Rwandan Civil War is not over. It has merely shifted to the refugee camps outside the country." The chargé made faces for the rest of my talk. I clearly did not convince him. Then as we were leaving, the station chief turned to me and whispered that he knew there were no Dragons in Goma. Stan and I had seen the Dragons in Goma. Based on those two

comments, I realized the U.S. embassy in Kinshasa remained unchanged.

Meanwhile the replacements for Stan and me arrived. The new defense attaché moved into my house, and Stan's took over the sergeant's quarters. Stan and I shifted to an empty apartment. My final comment on Zaire deals with one of the hardest things I had to do: say goodbye to Stan. Family health problems forced him to withdraw from the mission to Rwanda. I was not happy to be leaving him behind. He had another couple of months to go on his tour. I sensed my replacement would never allow him to operate as I had done. The new defense attaché felt operations coordinators were best used behind a desk. That was not Stan's style. An officer had never had a better sergeant than Stan Reber nor a more trusted friend and comrade. I boarded another Saleem special to Goma wondering what I would do without him.

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## Comic Book Warning: An Unlikely Insight Into Warfare's 5<sup>th</sup> Generation

Myke Cole

*"Anything one man can imagine, other men can make real,"*

– Jules Verne

Jules Verne's 19th century fictional ponderings anticipated, among other things, space travel and submarines. H.G Wells wrote about atomic bombs in 1914. Science fiction author Edward Everett Hale's story dealt with artificial satellites in 1869. Aldous Huxley's "Brave New World" imagined a society hooked on drugs like Ritalin and Prozac while the major players of World War II were still beginning to get their footing.

Fiction and particularly science fiction writers are used to thinking about the future in an unrestrained manner that can lead to some incredibly prescient insights.

As we face the challenges of confronting the non-state actors of Fourth Generation Wars (4GW) and try to foresee the challenges of the Fifth Generation (5GW) that is even now evolving, it is precisely such unrestrained thinking and downright prediction that is called for as we attempt to anticipate the enemy.

An eye-opening lesson can be found in the pages of, of all things, a comic book, soon to be adapted to a major motion picture by Warner Brothers studios. The film stars such luminaries as Natalie Portman and Hugo Weaving and is produced by the creators of "The Matrix".

Alan Moore's "V for Vendetta,"<sup>1</sup> depicts a post-apocalyptic Britain under the thrall of a fascist government the likes of which would make Hitler tremble. Like all good "social" science fiction, the story deals with many issues; freedom of expression, the importance

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*States ultimately command the loyalty of their citizenry in proportion to their ability to defend them from harm.*

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of art and literature and what happens when a society gives into fear en masse.

But what is of interest to students of 4GW is the depiction of "V", the cloaked protagonist of the story, systematically destabilizing the state by attacking the symbols of authority. Government ministers, leading members of clergy and law enforcement personnel are methodically assassinated in the most public and dramatic manner possible. Simultaneously, state apparatus such as communications towers, monuments and the government's central computer system are disabled (mostly

<sup>1</sup> Moore, Alan and Lloyd, David., *V For Vendetta*, DC Comics, New York, 1988.

through the use of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) until the public, convinced that the state cannot protect itself, much less them, utterly loses faith and revolts.

Written in 1988, “V” proves chillingly prescient in light of the strategies 4GW actors are enacting as they maneuver to defeat large states that they cannot hope to defeat on conventional grounds. Historian and 4GW guru William Lind notes “Police departments in some large American cities would be quick to note that they are already facing Fourth Generation opponents on the streets.”<sup>2</sup> In another article, Lind points out that “it is happening in some American cities. Police officers are being killed — assassinated, really — not because they get in the way of some bank robber but because they are symbols of the state. A Fourth Generation fighter, usually a gang member, simply walks up to a police cruiser and shoots a cop.”<sup>3</sup>

Lind’s estimation of gangland conflict in the US echoes with the experiences of the nascent police and security services in Iraq, hunted and targeted by insurgents who are bent on bringing down the symbols of authority and exposing the inability of the state to stand on its own. Indeed, Professor Max Manwaring makes little distinction between “3<sup>rd</sup> generation



gangs” and subnational 4GW actors who employ terrorism.<sup>4</sup> Over 1,500 Iraqi Police and National Guardsmen have been targeted and killed by insurgents this year alone<sup>5</sup>, even as US casualties decline.

This tactic of 4GW actors, targeting the symbols of state authority, gives the lie to Max Weber’s historic axiom; “a state is a human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory”<sup>6</sup>. Martin Van

Creveld puts it better, “Once the legal monopoly of armed force, long claimed by the state, is wrested out of its hands, existing distinctions between war and crime will break down. . .”<sup>7</sup> And when this happens, says Lind, we’ve already lost. “Why? Because troops, who are

trained for combat, not police work, usually act in ways that alienate the population they are supposed to protect. That in turn further undermines the legitimacy of the state, . . . This dynamic is one of the principal reasons why the legitimacy of Iraq’s American-installed government remains tenuous at best. It continues to depend on troops, many of them foreign, rather than being able to rely on police

<sup>2</sup> Lind, William. “Strategic Defense Initiative: Distance from is the key to winning the terror war”, *The American Conservative*, Nov. 22, 2004.

<sup>3</sup> Lind, William. “On War #125: Hunting Cops”, *Defense and The National Interest* (d-n-i.net), Jun. 14, 2005.

<sup>4</sup> Manwaring, Max. *Street Gangs: The New Urban Insurgency*, Strategic Studies Institute of the US Army War College, Carlisle, 2005. p. 10.

<sup>5</sup> “Iraq Coalition Casualty Count – Iraqi Police/Military”. (<http://icasualties.org/oif/IraqiDeaths.aspx>).

<sup>6</sup> Weber, Max. *The Vocation Lectures: Science As a Vocation, Politics As a Vocation*, Hackett, Indianapolis, 2004.

<sup>7</sup> Van Creveld, Martin. *The Transformation of War*, Free Press, New York, 1991. p. 204

to create and maintain order.”<sup>8</sup> The second of two sets of coordinated bombings in London in as many weeks didn’t cause a single casualty. But Lind, Weber and Creveld might well argue that it didn’t need to. The damage to the confidence of the British citizenry, indeed of 1<sup>st</sup> world citizens the world over, by the ability of 4GW actors to strike with impunity, even when the security services of a country as powerful as Britain were on full alert, was significant.

Creveld’s point dovetails nicely with Weber’s. States ultimately command the loyalty of their citizenry in proportion to their ability to defend them from harm. As the comic book “V” brings home with a bang, the state that cannot project the basic symbol of its authority, seen as vulnerable to weak, rag-tag bands of subnational actors, loses the faith of its population almost instantly. “Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law,” V pronounces as he destroys the central government’s core surveillance system with an IED<sup>9</sup>, and what the populace “wilt” is anarchy.

As military and intelligence thinkers struggle to come to grips with the new challenges of 4GW, intellectuals like Thomas Hammes are already looking to the future. “Each new generation of war has developed and been disseminated in less time than the previous generation. . . . We have to assume

fifth-generation warfare is out there.”<sup>10</sup> In our struggle to stay ahead of our opponents, we must think outside the box, and that means taking note of any source of possible information, including science fiction and comic books. The precedent is already set, with the Pentagon screening films such as *The Battle of Algiers*,<sup>11</sup> which while based on real events, is a work of fiction. Strategypage.com, a top

military community website, maintains a section for the discussion of military science fiction and the lessons for the military that can be gleaned from the thinking of fiction writers.<sup>12</sup>

Intelligence services caution newly minted analysts to consider the full spectrum of sources for ideas, encouraging

“imaginative thinking techniques” and warning to never discount any ideas “no matter how unconventional they might sound.”<sup>13</sup>

Moore’s “V” gives a glimpse of a subnational enemy who has realized that his power rises and falls in direct proportion to the



<sup>8</sup> Lind. “On War #125: Hunting Cops”.

<sup>9</sup> More and Lloyd. *V For Vendetta*. p. 187.

<sup>10</sup> Hammes, Thomas. *The Sling and The Stone: On War In The 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Zenith Press, St. Paul, 2004. p. 275.

<sup>11</sup> Ignatius, David. “Think Strategy, Not Numbers”, *The Washington Post*, Aug. 26, 2003. p. A13.

<sup>12</sup> See Strategypage.com’s military SF discussion forums at <http://www.strategypage.com/messageboards/board390.asp>

<sup>13</sup> “A Tradecraft Primer: Structured Analytic Techniques for Improving Intelligence Analysis”, *Tradecraft Review*, Sherman Kent School, Kent Center for Analytic Tradecraft, CIA, Directorate of Intelligence. Jun. 2005. p. 29.

cohesion of state authority. In realizing this, he understands that the destruction of the state altogether creates the kind of power vacuum where his sort can thrive. “V for Vendetta” warns that perhaps it is not a change of tactics, but of the scope of the enemy objective that defines the fifth generation war evolving around us. It suggests a generation of enemies dedicated to the ultimate destruction of the state in totality, not just as means for seizing power in Iraq or driving US forces from Afghanistan, but for inaugurating a new world order where the cohesive, central power of the state fails in the face of an enemy it cannot define, cordon off and defeat on its own terms, until its citizenry loses patience and withdraws its collective allegiance.

Far-fetched? Possibly. But too much other science fictional thinking has come to bear some historical fruit to dismiss it totally. Some signs are visible. The New York City Police Department’s (NYPD) Counterterrorism squad already functions fairly autonomously, disregarding directives from Washington and moving “. . .into territory normally occupied by the FBI and CIA. And yet few objections were raised. It was if the Feds, reeling from September 11<sup>th</sup>, silently acknowledged New York’s right to take extraordinary defensive measures.”<sup>14</sup> NYPD’s local law enforcement branch has lost faith in the central government’s ability to protect the city. “. . .there was a strong feeling that federal agencies had let down New York City, and that the city should no longer count on the Feds for its protection.”<sup>15</sup> An anecdote, but in light of Lind’s warnings, a significant one.

<sup>14</sup> Finnegan, William. “The Terrorism Beat”, *The New Yorker*, Jul. 27, 2005. p. 61.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

“The state. . .,” warns Van Creveld, “is dying.”<sup>16</sup> Moore’s “V” paints a grim picture of one way its enemies will seek to usher it to its grave. In less than a year, Warner Brothers Studios will carry the same message on movie screens to millions of viewers world wide. Comic book or no, the military and intelligence communities would do well to pay attention.

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<sup>16</sup> Van Creveld, Martin. “The Fate of The State”, *Parameters: US Army War College Quarterly*, Spring, 1996. p. 4.

## Small Wars Events Calendar

To see the complete listings, or have your Small Wars related event listed with Small Wars Journal online and in SWJ Magazine, visit [www.smallwarsjournal.com](http://www.smallwarsjournal.com). Listings are free for official government events.

### October 2005

**26 – 27 October** – Combat Casualty Care (Conference); London, UK. Hosted by SMI. SMI's Combat Casualty Care conference will present current and future concepts and knowledge of battlefield casualty management.

### November – December 2005

**2 November** – U.S. Military Operations in Iraq: Planning, Combat and Occupation (Invitation Only Conference); Baltimore, MD. Sponsored by the Merrill Center for Strategic Studies, The Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University. This conference will examine the planning for and conduct of operations in Iraq and the subsequent occupation of that country by American and coalition forces.

**7 – 8 November** – Counterinsurgency in Iraq: Historical Perspective and Future Implications (Invitation Only Conference); Washington D.C. This conference will convene key actor within the U.S. Government including representatives from the State Department, USAID, Dept. of Justice, National Security Council, OSD and the uniform Military to discuss the Iraq counterinsurgency effort.

**29 November – 1 December** – Applying Information Operations to Winning the Peace: An Information Operations Workshop (Workshop); Carlisle Barracks, PA. Sponsored by the US Army War College. The event will bring together an international audience of military, national security community and intelligence community leaders as well as experts from academia to question and define the conditions that allow IO to influence both an adversary and external and uncommitted actors during the S&R phase of operations in order to significantly enable a positive end state.

### January 2006

**24 – 26 January** – Urban Operations Summit V (Conference); Portsmouth, VA. Sponsored by the Army Training and Doctrine Command Analysis Center (TRAC), US Joint Forces Command (USJFCOM), and the Army Materiel Systems Analysis Activity (AMSAA). 24 – 25 January includes Keynote and Technical Presentations, the 26th is reserved for small working group break-out sessions.

### February 2006

**1 – 3 February** – Assessing Non-Traditional Security Issues in the Americas: Threats and Opportunities (Conference); Miami, FL. Sponsored by the U.S. Army War College, Florida International University and U.S. Southern Command. This year's conference addresses non-traditional threats throughout the Hemisphere and ways to deal with them. This conference series brings together civilian, military and academic security specialists from the entire Hemisphere in the premier Western Hemisphere security forum.