Countering Criminal Street Gangs: Lessons from the Counterinsurgent Battlespace

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A Shared Culture of Criminal Behavior

Criminal street gang members are not insurgents, and street gangs are not insurgencies. Law enforcement agencies are not the military, and our cities are not legitimate battlefields. However, insurgent fighters operating in countries around the globe and domestic street gang members engaged in criminal behavior share more in common than we often care to openly admit. The most obvious similarities between the two groups can be described based upon what we overtly note:

• Ability to easily blend into the population, making initial detection and apprehension difficult

• Activities that hold the population they operate within “hostage”

• Furtherance of activities based upon population response, be that response supportive, coercion through fear or reprisal, or acquiescence

• Attempt to expand operations through recruitment of local population

• Operations executed under no legitimate “Rules of Engagement”—that is, open hostilities and use of force against any other person within the population

The similarities, however, extend much deeper than just the above surface treatment. According to the U.S. Army’s (2006) publication, FM 3-24 Counterinsurgency, an insurgency is “an organized, protracted politico-military struggle designed to weaken the control and legitimacy of an established government, occupying power, or other political authority while increasing insurgent control” (p. 1.1). The manual goes on to define counterinsurgency as “military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological, and civic actions taken by a government to defeat insurgency” (p. 1.1). These definitions can easily be rephrased to apply to criminal street gang activity: “an organized, protracted criminal endeavor that weakens the control and legitimacy of government and civic authority while increasing gang control over the community”; and law enforcement efforts against the criminal street gang: “legal, procedural, economic, psychological, and civic actions taken by a government to defeat the criminal street gang.”

Several studies have specifically addressed the concept of legitimacy in law enforcement (Kelling & Coles, 1996; Sampson, Raudenbush, & Earls, 1997; Sunshine & Tyler, 2003; Tyler & Huo, 2002). Sunshine and Tyler (2003) examined perceptions regarding police legitimacy in New York residents and
found that citizens are more apt to openly and actively support the police when they perceive the police to be a legitimate authority, and the perception of the police as a legitimate authority is dependant upon the fairness of the procedures applied by the police.

The perception of legitimacy places the population on a tipping point and makes the struggle, as David Kilcullen (2010) writes in his book Counterinsurgency, one of “contested governance” (p. 1). For the criminal street gang, the struggle for control is de facto; they have no legitimate governance, but their criminal actions, intimidation, and use of violence have allowed them to gain a margin of control over the local community. It may also be argued that their willful disregard for the law is itself a manner of contested governance; they categorically reject the legitimate authority through their criminal actions.

The military and law enforcement communities have recognized the similarities between insurgent fighters and street gang members for some time. In preparing for counterinsurgency operations, the military has trained directly with domestic law enforcement agencies (Calese, 2005; Musa, Morgan, & Keegan, 2011; Watson, 2010). Calese (2005) examined the similarities between insurgent organizations and criminal street gangs and determined five shared characteristics: (1) leadership within the organization, (2) organizational structure, (3) culture within the organization, (4) recruitment, and (5) finances. He concludes by suggesting five concepts that the Army should adopt from law enforcement for use against insurgent organizations: (1) a “cultural shift” from killing the enemy to winning popular support in the local population; (2) the need to accurately determine the identity of members within the population; (3) a use of intelligence software to track insurgents and manage crime data; (4) a “community policing” style of operations aimed at working with local civic leaders; and (5) the development of “street knowledge,” learning the motivators and cultural mores for the local population. These suggestions are included within the Army’s (2006) FM 3-24 Counterinsurgency and are distilled succinctly early on in the manual’s 13 principles for counterinsurgency:

1. Legitimacy is the main objective.
2. Unity of effort is essential.
3. Political factors are primary.
4. Counterinsurgents must understand the environment.
5. Intelligence drives operations.
6. Insurgents must be isolated from their cause and support.
7. Security under the rule of law is essential.
8. Counterinsurgents must prepare for a long-term commitment.
9. Manage information and expectations.
10. Use the appropriate level of force.
11. Learn and adapt.
12. Empower the lowest levels.
13. Support the host nation. (pp. 1.20-1.26)

Major Michael L. Burgoyne (2011), U.S. Army, examined how each of these principles might be applied to law enforcement operations against criminal street gangs in his study “The Right Tool for the Job: An Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Counterinsurgency Principles Against Criminal Insurgency.” Burgoyne
examined the favela gangs of Rio de Janeiro and the Medellin and Cali Cartels of Colombia, comparing each of the 13 principles outlined in FM 3-24 (U.S. Army, 2006) against the law enforcement operations utilized against them. Burgoyne (2011) found that both efforts used several of the 13 principles with differing rates of success. In Rio’s operations against the favela gangs, 11 of the 13 principles were used successfully, and the overall operations against the favela gangs were vital in breaking apart the criminal organizations. In Colombia, six of the 13 principles were used successfully, with three specifically noted as not achieved or failed. These three principles were (1) Government Legitimacy, (2) Rule of Law, and (3) Information Operations (p. 33). Burgoyne reasons that because narcotrafficking organizations have as a center of gravity financing operations and do not rely on local popular support in order to be effective, counterinsurgency principles that focus on establishing government legitimacy (population-centric strategy) are not effective. Rather, a focus on high-ranking individuals within the organizations and the appropriate financing centers of gravity (enemy-centric strategy) is more successful (pp. 33-34). Burgoyne notes that the counterinsurgency strategy is not simply “plug-and-play” but that the principles of counterinsurgency as described in FM 3-24 (U.S. Army, 2006) should be included as part of operational analysis and planning:

The development of a more comprehensive analysis framework that integrates tools used for gangs, organized crime, terrorism, and insurgency would be a valuable tool for policymakers and practitioners. An insurgency framework alone is insufficient. (Insurgency and COIN (counterinsurgency) insights should remain part of threat analysis and campaign design. (Burgoyne, 2011, p. 55)

A Manner of Strategy

Within the counterinsurgency debate, there are two commonly contested strategies: (1) enemy-centric and (2) population-centric. Enemy-centric strategies focus on direct action against insurgent fighters, using raids and sweeps to actively seek out and eliminate enemy combatants. Proponents argue that it is through the elimination of these malefactors in the population that the insurgency is brought to a close. Detractors argue that direct action and raids threaten the local population through collateral damage and the alienation of local people. Population-centric strategies put the bulk of the operating energy toward establishing host nation government legitimacy, working to bring the local population onto their side through increased security and service restoration, thereby cutting off the insurgents from access to support. Proponents argue that this approach is more effective because it cuts insurgents off from needed resources, prevents new insurgents from being created, and allows the counterinsurgency to establish legitimacy in the eyes of the local population. Detractors argue that the strategy is wholly ineffective; local residents are not “fence-sitters” trying to decide with which group they will side.

Another counterinsurgency strategy that continues to draw traction is leadership-centric strategy, which asserts that the outcome between insurgents and counterinsurgents is wholly dependant upon which side has better leaders. In A Question of Command, Dr. Mark Moyar (2009) describes these leaders as not only being strategically and tactically proficient but as being charismatically superior to their enemies. The side that has the strongest leadership personalities and can rally its fighters and the population around them will be the victor.

FM 3-24 (U.S. Army, 2006) is written with a population-centric strategy. The effectiveness of this strategy in counterinsurgency warfare is an active subject for debate within the military, but for policing, it
provides a thoroughly tested application of community policing against aggressive and armed groups who would actively seek to do violence against authority. As violence perpetrated by criminal street gang members against each other and the police continues to intensify, law enforcement has more than a passing interest in examining the lessons learned through the application of population-centric counterinsurgency strategy as described in FM 3-24.

**The 19 Articles of Policing Criminal Street Gangs**

The creation of guiding principles in counterinsurgency warfare is not a new one. T. E. Lawrence wrote his Twenty-Seven Articles in 1917, describing what he believed were the necessary requirements for any counterinsurgency leader or advisor operating in an Arab-populated region. The most recent doctrinal principles were written into the FM 3-24 (U.S. Army, 2006) and listed earlier in this document. Dr. David Kilcullen (2006) provided his own, modern rendition of Lawrence when he wrote “Twenty-Eight Articles: Fundamentals of Company-Level Counterinsurgency.” Like Lawrence, these articles were based upon his own observations of what worked in counterinsurgency operations. Unlike Lawrence, however, these Articles had the benefit of being field-tested and compared to an established counterinsurgency doctrine.

By using what has been written into population-centric counterinsurgency theory and strategy and combining it with both the lessons learned through their application and with lessons learned through years of community policing in urban locations with entrenched criminal street gang problems, it is possible to create a similar list of field-tested “Articles” for policing street gangs. Utilizing the structural format offered most recently by Kilcullen (2006), what follows are those principles. These principles are described individually, but experience indicates that their application as a well-integrated whole offers the best chance of success. As principles, they serve to create a firm foundation upon which specific strategies and operations should be built.

**First Do No Harm.** Do nothing to tarnish your integrity, your agency’s integrity, or your profession’s integrity. Your primary purpose is to protect the residents of your area and to impartially enforce the law. A reputation as a fair and just officer will increase your public legitimacy. Citizens are more likely to actively assist you by providing information if they know you will treat them and others fairly.

**Know Your Turf.** Know the streets, the alleys, and the parking lots. Know which streets dead-end and which alleys end in “T” intersections. Know how to get from one place to another in multiple ways. Know the gangsters and the dealers. Know the drug corners, the gang hangouts, and the location where gangs recruit new members—including the schools. Know the gang members by name and by face; recognize them at each contact you have so you know with whom you are speaking. Know which gangs operate in your area and what their territorial boundaries are. You should know where you are at all times and what gang territory you are in at all times. When conducting a vehicle stop, you should instantly know if the occupants are gang members and if they are in a rival’s territory. Learn the gang identifiers: the graffiti, the colors, the manner of dress, and the hand signs. Know the individual members and what they do in the gang: you should recognize enforcers, dealers, and higher-ranking members by name and sight. Know who the “good guys” are: the businesspeople, the families, and the kids. Be able to identify when they might need your help and be able to call them by name. If you don’t know the turf, you can’t effectively police it.

**Diagnose the Problem.** How widespread is the gang problem? How many members are in the gang(s)? What is their purpose? Are they concerned only with territory, or are they invested in illegal narcotics trade? Who is in competition or conflict with whom? Why? How aggressive are they with recruitment? Once these questions are answered, you begin to get an accurate picture of the problem. If you are in command, sit with your field supervisors and field commanders. Ask them what they see or
how they have been dealing with the problems. Solicit opinions, find out what has worked, and design new operations. Work the problem as often as is necessary.

**Organize for Intelligence.** Create methods of intelligence gathering within your own command. Ask your field supervisors to bring in information from the street. Encourage the collection of intelligence from your officers on the street—they have the direct contact with the community and the gang members. If your command has units designated for street-level anti-gang, anti-narcotics, or plainclothes operations, ensure that the information they gather is shared with patrol officers and vice versa. Task someone in your command or a small group in your command to collect, maintain, and disseminate the intelligence. Intelligence must be useful and it must be timely, so encourage the regular updating and dissemination of it. Set aside a regular time to meet with your field supervisors and ensure that operations are driven by the most recent and relevant intelligence. Resist the temptation to leave intelligence gathering and distribution to units outside your command that have those functions as their primary purpose. No one knows your streets like your own people, and they will know it better when you put a premium on their own intelligence-gathering efforts. Remember that you are responsible for your own area of operations, so gather your own intelligence and design your operations around it.

**Organize for Intra- and, When Possible, Inter-Agency Operations.** You are not the only law enforcement unit in your region and, if your agency is large enough, you may not be the only unit from your own agency operating in the area. Be sure that your command is speaking with other commands about operations in your area. If they are working on something in your area, you have a stake in the outcome. You should at least be aware of the basics of those operations. Whenever possible, seek direct input in these operations or be included in the planning and execution. Understand that at certain times your inclusion may not be warranted or complete. Nevertheless, be sure that your command continues to speak across open lines of communication with your own agency’s assets. Do not neglect agencies outside your own, including other municipal agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and local civic or business agencies. If they are in your area, they have a stake in your area. Meet regularly to share information and pool resources. The eradication of criminal street gangs is not just a law enforcement problem, it is a civic problem and it is a community problem. A holistic approach that coordinates law enforcement operations with civic needs is required. Clean, well-lit neighborhoods with basic civic services, well-populated with local residents and shoppers, is as much a part of the solution as search warrant service and open-air drug market closures.

**Find and Build Trust with Local Community Advisors.** These advisors may be clergy, business owners, or vocal community residents. They may be several of each. Find these local people and include them in your operations. Give them a forum in which to speak, and include as many of their suggestions as possible. Understand that it may not be possible to accomplish all that they want, and that the wants of certain people may be contrary to the wants of others in the group. Seek the common ground and work to resolve those issues. For your operations to be successful, you need to win the trust of these people. They, in turn, will go out into the community and win you the trust of those who trust them. This will affirm your legitimacy as the authority in the area, and intelligence will begin to make its way back to you. Remember that the first Article is “First, do no harm.” Your officers must consistently behave in a manner that is fair and respectful to local residents. Any inappropriate actions will undermine your efforts to build trust with your community advisor(s).

**Develop Your Field Supervisors—Then Trust Them.** If you are in a position of command, the development and training of your supervisors rests on your shoulders. Set a standard, train to that standard, and hold your supervisors accountable to that standard. If you have successfully developed your supervisors, you must then give them the room to operate. If their strategic vision is aligned with your
own, you must empower them with the authority to make the critical, minute-by-minute tactical decisions. A constant command oversight—micromanaging—signals that you do not trust them. If you must micromanage your supervisors, you have not adequately developed them. Step back. Their success is a product of your successful development of them.

**Push Operational Decisionmaking Down the Chain.** At first glance, this sounds very much like “Develop your field supervisors—then trust them,” but it is much more. The nature of all bureaucratic organizations with a defined rank structure is to centralize approval authority. As accountability rises through the chain of command, so does operational control. This is a mistake. Requiring field commanders and supervisors to constantly seek approval up through the chain of command takes time, stifles creativity, and kills initiative. Developing field supervisors and granting them the authority to act is part of the solution. You must organize for intelligence and plan for operations at this level. Many law enforcement agencies centralize this as well, holding monthly accountability and intelligence-sharing briefings at the upper-most command levels. While this may be beneficial in understanding the overall picture and ensuring that the mission of the agency as a whole is being maintained, it offers little help to field commanders and field supervisors who are confronted with daily operational needs. Organize your intelligence and operational efforts around these field units and allow them to make the operational decisions they need to make on a daily basis.

**Rank Is Important—Talent Is More Important.** Respect for rank must remain, but the simple fact of the matter is that some people are better at policing than others. Certain officers have a “nose” for certain aspects of policing. These people should be actively sought out in your command and moved into positions in which their talents can be fully developed and utilized. If this means that a police officer reports directly to a commander, so be it. The goal is to develop strategies and operations that significantly impact crime in your area and eliminate criminal street gangs and the violence associated with them. Do not let rank prevent you from putting the best people in the best spots.

**Stability in Strategy; Agility in Operations.** Too many agencies vest their interests in a single theory of policing: Broken Windows, Community Policing, Pulling Levers, Intelligence Led, etc. For a strategy to have the best chance at success, it must be implemented for a long enough period of time to deliver demonstrable results, and it must be designed to allow for adaptation as the environment adapts around it. This means that, at any time, elements from one or more of the policing theories may need to be utilized. Do not let any theory or doctrine lock you into a singular course of action. Have the built-in ability to evolve in strategic design as the operational environment requires. Use adaptive strategies—strategies that have at their core a cycle of understanding the environment as it currently exists, designing strategies to affect relationships in the environment, influencing those relationships to change the environment in an intended manner, and evaluating the environmental response. Strategies that adapt to the environment by design are stable; the desired end state remains the same throughout, but the tactics used to reach that end state are as fluid as the situation on the ground dictates. It is this fluidity that necessitates agility in operations. The area you operate within is a complex environment. It is affected by relationships within it. These relationships include those that exist between members of any one gang, between different gangs, and between your operations against them. The complexity added by how your actions and the actions of the criminal street gangs affect local residents and businesses also cannot be ignored. What results is a complex web of relationships in which actions by any one player affect the others in the web. Because of this complexity, operations must be tailored to fit the environment as it exists at that time. When any operation is concluded, the environment within which it has been executed changes. This change may necessitate new types of operations to be successful. Use your intelligence gathering to assess your impact on the environment after each operation. Ask, “Based upon what we have done, how have things now changed? What must we now do to keep pressure on the gang?” Your strategy has a determined goal; your
operations must remain agile enough to constantly evolve but must always drive you toward the determined strategic conclusion.

**Avoid the Vacuum.** In traditional Maneuver Warfare theory, it is advised to locate and eliminate an enemy’s center of gravity. Doing so eliminates leadership or command and control, throwing the opposing force into confusion and collapse. For policing, however, this approach is problematic. The apprehension of gang leaders often results in a power vacuum within the gang that leads to internal violence for control of the organization and/or external violence from rivals who recognize vulnerability. In counterinsurgency operations, there is a similar difficulty in destroying the insurgent center of gravity, though for differing reasons. To combat insurgent groups, special operations forces have created joint special operations task forces (JSOTF) that combine multidisciplinary intelligence, surveillance, and operations (Faint & Harris, 2012; Flynn, Juergens, & Cantrell, 2008). Working in concert, the JSOTF uses a targeting model known as Find, Fix, Finish, Exploit, and Analyze (F3EA). Utilizing a decentralized, mass intelligence-gathering capability, operators are able to find the enemy, fix their location, and quickly move in to finish that enemy off. Information gathered on-scene is exploited for new intelligence and then analyzed to drive the next operation. This cyclical pattern has proven tremendously effective in dismantling insurgent networks by targeting and eliminating mid-level planners and operators. This type of counternetwork operations is ideal for combating criminal street gangs because it prevents a power vacuum and the resultant violence created when an organizational center of gravity is removed. Granted, the most ideal operations result in the simultaneous apprehension of gang leaders and mid-level operators, but such large-scale sweeps are difficult to accomplish and take time to execute. The F3EA model allows for immediate operations against the street gang, resulting in immediate results. Once the mid-level operators and rivals for power within the gang are removed, the leader(s) may be apprehended with decreased opportunity for either increased violence or overall gang resurgence.

**Be There.** There is no substitute for physical presence. Get out and be seen. Meet with your local advisors at their locations. Be seen by the population. Make sure your officers are seen. Encourage them to get out of the car and talk with people. Information is gathered when questions are asked, so encourage officers to speak with people. Let everyone know you are there and are interested. Don’t expect arrests alone to raise your public profile. You must show the local residents that you are there for them, too—that you are interested in their well-being. As your public profile rises and people begin to know and trust you, information will begin to flow in.

**Prepare for Your Handover from Day One.** No command lasts indefinitely. Ensure that the strategies you have in place, the organizational culture, and the operational practices you have implemented last longer than you do. Lead by example, cultivate buy-in, and ensure that any transition in command is as seamless as possible.

**Maintain Proactive Patrolling.** Be sure your officers are not static. Constant movement raises perceptions of officer presence and keeps officers alert. Utilize tactics that supplement regular patrol presence with periods of heightened presence, or double up cars into tandem patrol units. Do not wait for spikes in criminal activity to do this. Rather, do it on a regular basis on an irregular schedule. Remain unpredictable and keep the initiative.

**Be Prepared for Setbacks.** Crime will still occur on your watch, people will still be shot, and the public’s confidence in your efforts may become strained. These are realities in law enforcement. Do not let these things convince you that your strategic plan has failed or that your supervisors and officers are not worthy of the strategic plan. Organize your intelligence, debrief your people, adapt the strategic plan, and carry on your operations.
Develop Meaningful Metrics and Evaluate Them Regularly. Quantitative data is most often preferred because the figures are often unambiguous. As a result, the common belief is “the more quantitative data the better.” The result is that success is measured by a large number of easy-to-collect data. Progress is measured in number of traffic citations issued, arrests made, street stops conducted, etc. The problem with these types of measurements, however, is that they encourage the type of increased activity that can lead to rights abuses and detract from your legitimacy. As your legitimacy is compromised, so are your intelligence-gathering capabilities and your operational efficacy. Develop more useful metrics, such as the number of successful tips voluntarily reported to police or rates of gang-upon-gang violence. Develop qualitative metrics with your trusted community advisors and rate public perception of safety and law enforcement efficacy. It is counterintuitive that the common goal of almost all community policing-styled theories is to focus officer activity toward enforcing “quality of life” offenses yet utilize no qualitative data to measure success. Law enforcement agencies are naturally averse toward using qualitative data because the belief is that they are difficult to accurately measure; opinions vary on this. The problem, however, is not one of accuracy but one of perspective. When the opinion of your officers and your trusted community advisors are aligned, then your qualitative data is meaningful and useful. This alignment is a direct result of building your relationships with your trusted community advisors and designing a strategy that addresses their concerns in a manner that both fulfills their needs and accomplishes your law enforcement goals. Develop these metrics and measure your progress against them regularly to ensure you are moving toward the strategic goal.

Keep Local Initiatives Small. Part of your strategy should include programs that directly connect your officers with the community. These efforts should seek to establish rapport, build trust, and create understanding between your officers and local residents. Programs may also be developed that encourage local youth to work with police, be these programs law enforcement related or be they agency participation in community-sponsored sports programs or similar activities. Keep these programs or your involvement in them small, inexpensive, and highly sustainable. It erodes public confidence when police participation is missing or subtracted due to time or budgetary constraints. Create positive engagement with the community in a manner that is built to last.

Put a Premium on Leadership. Develop your own leadership capabilities and the leadership capabilities of all of your field commanders, supervisors, and officers. Leadership development should be an organizational imperative, and agencies should create internal leadership development programs. If such programs simply are not a reality in your agency, encourage your people to develop their own leadership capabilities by offering whatever support and developmental programs you can. Lead by example, mentor subordinates, and encourage participation in outside programs. Create a leadership and command “library,” and encourage your people to read the materials. Moyar (2009) argues that leadership is not only the single greatest determining factor in success between combating groups, he offers ten leadership attributes that he believes history has consistently shown to be most important for leadership success:

1. Initiative – The ability to act without specific guidance from above and the propensity to act energetically and aggressively
2. Flexibility – The ability to switch rapidly from one thought or action to another
3. Creativity – The ability to solve new problems or the ability to create new solutions to existing problems
4. Judgment – The use of logic and intuition to evaluate information and make sound decisions
5. Empathy – The ability to appreciate the feelings and opinions of others
6. Charisma – The collection of personal factors that draws others to you
7. Sociability – The ability to connect with others in a one-on-one interaction

8. Dedication – The wherewithal to put in hard work and remain consistent and focused in any endeavor

9. Integrity – Acting in accordance to what is right, even at personal cost; maintaining ethics and principle

10. Organization – The ability to maintain personal discipline, coordinate people and actions, and accurately account for resources (pp. 8-11)

Maintain the Initiative. We use phrases like proactive patrolling and visible deterrence to imply that we maintain the initiative, but the reality is that much of what we do in regard to criminal street gangs is reactionary. Operations targeting drug sales and investigations following shootings are reactionary measures to what the gangs are doing. We must do a better job at grabbing the true initiative. To do this, we must develop adaptive strategies that evolve as the environment in which we operate does, we must use our intelligence to drive our operations, and we must put a constant pressure on the criminal street gang that disrupts, destabilizes, and dismantles their organization. As organizations, gangs are adept at adapting to law enforcement efforts. Our strategy and our operations must not allow for any adaptation to occur. A constant, destabilizing series of law enforcement operations puts the street gang in a reactive posture and, thus, directly affects their ability to coordinate their criminal endeavors and to conceal those endeavors from law enforcement. Inefficiency leads to chaos; chaos leads to collapse. The successful employment of each of the above Articles creates and allows for the continuation of the initiative.

A Strategy Already at Work

The adaptation of counterinsurgency strategy to policing criminal street gangs has already taken place. In 2009, Massachusetts State Police troopers Michael Cutone and Thomas Sarrouf, two Green Berets and Iraq War veterans, initiated what would become Counter Criminal Continuum (C3) Policing in Springfield, Massachusetts (Hibbard, Barbieri, Domnarski, & Cutone, 2011). Using lessons learned from time spent working with residents in Iraq and their knowledge of counterinsurgency strategy, the troopers created a set of eight guiding principles and focused their community-collaborative efforts on an eight-block section of gang-infested neighborhood in northern Springfield (Goode, 2012). Nearly three years into the strategy, results show decreases in violent crimes, property crimes, and weapons offenses (Massachusetts State Police, 2012). The program has expanded in scope from its initial eight blocks to 30 blocks. Calls for police service have risen in the area where the strategy has been implemented, something proponents say indicates increased community involvement, a greater willingness to report crime, and stronger perceptions of police legitimacy (Goode, 2012). Most interestingly, Cutone and Sarrouf provide a direct comparison between C3 Policing principles and those of traditional community policing. They note that community policing is a “philosophy and organizational strategy” that requires the inclusion of additional resources to put into operation. By comparison, C3 Policing is an operational strategy that uses existing resources to “work smarter” (Massachusetts State Police, 2012). C3 Policing and the results observed thus far show that the principles inherent to successful counterinsurgency strategy can be implemented in domestic municipal law enforcement efforts with success.

Conclusion

The similarities between criminal street gangs and insurgent fighters are recognized by both military and law enforcement. For law enforcement agencies, the need to create and maintain legitimacy in procedural justice is backed by a growing body of study and underpins the need to maintain crime control strategies that include the local community. The current population-centric approach to counterinsurgency warfare closely resembles contemporary community policing efforts and provides law enforcement with the opportunity to look to counterinsurgency operations for lessons learned. The adaptation and application of
these lessons learned, combined with what law enforcement already knows about policing criminal street gangs, allows for the creation of general principles, or “Articles,” used for guiding operations against criminal street gangs. Intelligence must drive operations and operations must develop intelligence. These operations must be executed by highly agile teams whose decisionmaking capabilities have been pushed down to a command immediately above their operational level. This does not preclude the need for strategic oversight by higher command or for passing all intelligence up the chain for further analysis. However, tactical operations must be fused directly to intelligence gathering and analysis at the team level in order to yield the most robust results. When taken in summation, these articles provide for the creation of strategic planning and tactical operations that are capable of effectively disrupting, destabilizing, and dismantling criminal street gangs.

References


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