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Human Terrain: A Strategic Imperative on the 21st Century Battlefield

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“The next phase of the campaign may then be said to have been entered... a phase in which every war, both great and small, makes a heavy call on both patience and determination, yet one which, like the pursuit after a battle, if carried out half-heartedly, is equivalent to throwing away most of the efforts that have preceded it [sic].”¹

--Sir Aylmer L. Haldane, *The Insurrection in Mesopotamia*, 1920

Introduction

Six months into a one-year deployment, my unit was shifting its area of operation from the southeastern Tigris River city of Al-Kut, to one of the main centers of adherents to the Shia sect of Islam – Karbala. The city of Karbala, and particularly the twin mosques that tower over it, is central to the Shia Islamic faith. The significance of these structures is embedded in the culture, economy and faith of the over half a million residents, as well as of the millions of people who pilgrimage every year to visit the sacred, ancient metropolis.²

However when I first arrived to the city and noticed the massive golden domes, I knew *nothing* of their significance; I knew *nothing* of the story behind the shrines and the history behind them; and I was still ignorant of the general cultural milieu. I was not at all unique – we all were mesmerized by the mosques and the culture around us, but had no clue where to begin in order to understand what they meant in the context of our presence among the people apart from: 1. do not get near the mosques; and 2. do not fire on them if fired upon from its vicinity. But more

¹Sir Haldane, Aylmer L. *The Insurrection in Mesopotamia*, 1920. William Blackwood and Sons: London. 1922.

² In 680, the Battle of Karbala erupted between forces supporting Muhammad’s grandson, Husayn ibn Ali and Yazid I, the Umayyad caliph. The twin mosques are a shrine and burial place for Husayn ibn Ali and the 72 martyrs of Karbala. As a result of not submitting allegiance to the caliph, “Husayn, his seventy-two male followers, and their women and children were surrounded and besieged for three days on the desert sands of Karbala, near the banks of the Euphrates River...Husayn and his band were attacked by at least 10,000 (and in some accounts, as many as 100,000) Umayyad soldiers. On the tenth day of the month of *Muharram* (a day now commonly referred to as *Ashura*), Husayn and the seventy-two men were dismembered and decapitated, and the women and children were taken prisoner. The battle was much more than the slaughter of a small band of pious loyalists faithful to the family of the Prophet by an overwhelming military force. It was also an ideological battle between a group of principled individuals and a militarily powerful political administration, making Husayn the ultimate tragic hero figure.” Hussain, Ali J. “The Morning of History and the History of Mourning: The Evolution of Ritual Commemoration of the Battle of Karbala.” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*. Vol. 25.1, 2005. Pgs 78-88.

importantly, the prevailing attitude at the time seemed to be that we didn't really *have to* understand anything beyond the latter. That seemed to be a reasonable tenant; after all, why would it be necessary to know such things about any given area, people or buildings? How, if at all, is it pertinent to the mission?

Well, one of the gravest shortfalls in the early years of Iraq "stabilization" was the lack of such understanding. That the tribes and religious sheiks had, in the midst of the political vacuum that developed after the fall of Saddam's regime, assumed control and influence. The majority of military and civilian leadership in Iraq did not understand these religious and ethnic nuances, which heavily contributed to the sectarian violence and militias that developed in areas like Najaf and Karbala.³ Moreover, corruption in the country ran rampant, especially through the local police, who had a long history as a force of subversion and brutality. Even the interpreters were at times influenced by their own biases; to include the fear for their own lives and those of their families. As a result, this depreciated the value of effective translation, actionable intelligence and serious engagement with the population – essential components in counterinsurgency operations.

Though many of these issues could very well have been destined to occur to one degree or another, there was a strategic failure in not preparing to deal with the situation and adequately work with, and protect, the people. Having an understanding of the culture and historical context for a social and political environment that has been impacted by decades of dictatorship, and characterized by strong religious currents for centuries, could only have been beneficial in anticipating such events.

On the more tactical end of the cultural understanding spectrum, are the junior ranking soldiers, who like me, are rarely meeting with ranking Iraqi government and police officials, or negotiating pertinent development issues in their giving area of operation (AO).⁴ Yet they are constantly patrolling in the cities, entering Iraqi homes, and detaining criminals or insurgents. These warfighters are predominantly 18 to 26 year old enlisted and junior officers, and are at the forefront of the fight. In fact, the majority of basic interaction and daily communication and relationships are forged at that level. Consequently, one can reasonably assume soldiers who are not culturally or ethnically aware in their area of operations begin at a significant, if not grave, disadvantage.⁵

³ See *Treading on Hallowed Ground: Counterinsurgency Operations in Sacred Places*. This book provides various case studies showing where the enemy has used sacred places to their advantage in order to gain sanctuary from the enemy, as well as bait that enemy in attacking such places. By doing so, the insurgents can wield such events against the counterinsurgents and, as a result, gain support and strength from the population. The author notes specifically that the "US operations on the significant holy shrines in Najaf and Karbala... outraged Muslims from all interpretive traditions from Morocco to Malaysia."

Fair, Christine C. and Ganguly, Sumit. *Treading on Hallowed Ground: Counterinsurgency Operations in Sacred Spaces*. Oxford University Press: 2008. Pg 4.

⁴ For the most part, this is a job for senior non-commissioned officers (NCOs) and officers' writ large. However, much like the kinetic battlefield has been described to be 360 degrees in unconventional warfare, so is the non-kinetic. At any given time, a warfighter may be in a situation where they have to engage the

⁵ See Kilcullen, David. *The Accidental Guerrilla*. Oxford University Press: 2009.

In his book, Kilcullen describes an enemy that is not necessarily motivated by extremist and fundamentalist views, but rather fighting to protect their local village, customs and traditions from foreign intervention. He supports this

Indeed, US military and policy makers have made strides toward implementing counterinsurgency doctrine in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as placing those in command who understand the nature of the conflict – applying the strategies on the ground. Yet, there is still a considerable lack of understanding of the human terrain in current, and prospective, conflicts.

The Need for a Cultural Awareness Curriculum

“The Answer lies not in pouring more troops into the jungle, but rests in the hearts and minds of the people.”⁶

--Sir Gerald Templar, 1953

Today, cultural ignorance has cost lives and impedes broader political gains in Iraq and Afghanistan. Many warfighters continue to lack awareness about Islam, Middle Eastern and South Asian languages, as well as ethnography writ large; this is a micro example of the broader strategic problem represented by cultures and peoples outside of the Middle East purview.⁷ There are countless anecdotes, in addition to my own, which convey this lack of combat ready capability. Such issues can only be addressed at the institutional level of doctrine and training in order to implement a structured cultural awareness curriculum, as well as field the necessary technologies to prepare for the 21st century battlefield.⁸ This is essential in winning the ‘hearts and minds’ of any population.

This has become no less apparent given that counterinsurgency (COIN) warfare has reemerged in US strategic thinking, and is being reexamined by military elites, politicians and academics alike. However, there is a major rift between the theoretical discussion at the higher echelons of strategic and operational planning, to the tactical level via the majority of junior officers, NCOs and other enlisted personnel. Trickling down the lessons and importance of such warfare to the latter is what fully encapsulates the success of a learning organization. Similarly, having the technologies in the field to push up critical intelligence and developments on the ground to higher command is just as important when planning and conducting real-time operations. In sum, without evolution throughout the entire force, change remains purely theoretical.

view with various anecdotes from his experiences as an Australian officer and special advisor to General Petraeus in both Iraq and Afghanistan.

⁶ Sir Templar, Gerald qtd. by McFate, Montgomery. “Anthropology and Counterinsurgency: The Strange Story of Their Curious Relationship.” *Military Review*. Mar-Apr 2005.

⁷On April 29, 2009 the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, Michelle Flournoy, provided testimony to congress outlining the threats, challenges and principles guiding the upcoming Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR). The five threats are especially worth noting, as they exhibit the necessity for cultural awareness in addition to current operations: globalization, combined with increasing poverty and increasing inequality; global climate change and its effects on failing states; demographic changes and the ominous “youth bulges” in the Mideast and other regions where the average age is 20 or younger; increasing competition for oil, gas and water; and finally, the continued spread of destabilizing technologies.

United States Congress, House Armed Services Committee. *Testimony of Undersecretary of Defense, Policy, Michele Flournoy*. 29 April 2009.

⁸ In an op-ed published April 2009, I defined cultural awareness as “the ability to see beyond one’s own cultural inhibitions, avoiding ethnocentrism, and having basic competence about the particular place and people within a specific area of operation.” Masellis, Nick M. “The iSoldier: How the Army can Capitalize on Technologically Savvy Troops.” *Small Wars Journal*. April 2009.

In order to gain dividends in the conflicts that the US is engaged today, as well as prepare for the future, there needs to be a formal, centralized and joint incentivized system that provides metrics for success with regard to cultural awareness and language training – the establishment of a Warfighters Cultural Awareness (WCA) Curriculum.⁹ This will address and replace the current language and cultural competency that varies from unit to unit, and service to service, where more often than not, there is no follow-up training upon return from the deployment. Contrarily, WCA will be a unified system that will have a broad and comprehensive reach across all services and personnel before, during and after a deployment.

In addition, Defense Advance Research Project Agency (DARPA) needs to field a combat ready version of the *iTouch*, which has recently been issued to various soldiers in its standard domestic form.¹⁰ The technology needed should not only be durable in arid, wet and desolate environments, but also integrate the 4G solutions to link communications and intelligence real-time between the warfighter on the ground and various chains of command for immediate analysis.

Background

David Galula stated in his 1964 piece, *Counterinsurgency Warfare, Theory and Practice*, that “The soldier must...be prepared to become a propagandist, a social worker, a civil engineer, a school teacher, a nurse, a boy scout...¹¹” in order to be fully competent in supporting a host nation achieve security and legitimacy. Even much earlier, the study of culture had been entwined with kinetic military operations: Herodotus during the Persian Wars (490-479); T.E. Lawrence during the 1916 Arab Rebellion against the Ottoman Empire; and Sir Aylmer L. Haldane during the 1920 Insurgency in Mesopotamia; all of whom noted that abhorring to understanding the enemy was an essential tool on the battlefield.¹² As with Sun Tzu’s classic dictum: “If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles.¹³”

⁹ To clarify the word “joint” in more depth, General Deptula provides a perfect definition in the May 2009 issue of *Armed Forces Journal*: “Jointness means that among the four services, a separate array of capabilities is provided to a joint force commander whose job is to assemble a plan from this “menu” of capabilities, applying the right force, at the right place and the right time for a particular contingency.” The same goes for cultural awareness. Each service will need to construct and format the curriculum based up the overall mission of their forces. Individual units within those services can compensate that education/training with supplemental materials if their proposed mission entails extra qualifications. The “menu” will clearly be different for the average combat soldier and marine, than that of the typical airman or sailor. General Deptula, David A. “Joint’s True Meaning.” *Armed Forces Journal*. May 2009 <http://www.armedforcesjournal.com/2009/04/4013296>

¹⁰ As stated on their website, “DARPA’s mission is to maintain the technological superiority of the U.S. military and prevent technological surprise from harming our national security by sponsoring revolutionary, high-payoff research bridging the gap between fundamental discoveries and their military use.” <http://www.darpa.mil/index.html>

¹¹ Galula, David. *Counterinsurgency Warfare, Theory and Practice*. Greenwood Publishing Group, 2006.

¹² Montgomery McFate alludes to this very issue depicting the history of cultural awareness on the battlefield. As a lead member of the military’s Human Terrain Teams (HHT), she shows that “our military operations and national security decision-making have consistently suffered due to lack of knowledge of foreign cultures,” and argues that “new adversaries and operational environments necessitate a sharper focus on cultural knowledge of the enemy.” McFate, Montgomery. “The Military Utility of Understanding Adversary Culture.” *Joint Forces Quarterly*. Issue 38, 2005. Pg 42-43.

¹³ Sun Tzu. *The Complete Art of War*. Wilder Publications, 2008. Pg 20.

Current operations are even more profound as globalization has fundamentally changed the world since Sun Tzu, and understanding the enemy itself is conflated; it is only a fraction of what one needs to have holistic understanding about. The communications and technological capabilities alone are not a dynamic, ongoing process connecting products and ideas instantaneously to every corner of the world. The scope of future operational environments is equally as vast. In fact cultural awareness has equal strategic value in avoiding costly mistakes in offending the population, as well as defeating the insurgents and extremists. For example, David Kilcullen does an excellent job describing the spectrum of actors who define the security situation as a result of this globalized world in his most recent book, *The Accidental Guerrilla*:

New Actors include insurgent groups operating across international boundaries like jema'ah Islamiyah (JI), Lashkar e-Tayyiba (Let), and the Afghan Taliban; global terrorist networks with unprecedented demographic depth like Hezbollah and al Qa'ida; and tribal and regional groups with postmodern capabilities but pre-modern structures and ideologies like some Iraqi insurgents... gangs in Latin America and elsewhere whose levels of lethal capability and social organization are fast approaching those traditionally seen in insurgencies... There are also armed commercial entities like security contractors and private military companies, and local and communitarian militias of various kinds. In the maritime domain, the resurgence of piracy threats in the South China Sea and off the Horn of Africa suggests the existence of new and extremely well-armed and capable threat groups.¹⁴

In the post 9/11 world, the assumption that cultural capabilities are needed should be uncontroversial—but it is yet to be so.

The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, however, have reinforced this point, reinvigorating the long-time taboo of irregular warfare. This has prompted the creation of much debated doctrine like, FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency* and FM 3-0 *Operations* (2008), which serve to guide military operational goals and vision in terms of procurement and training, by using terms like “full-spectrum operations” and “persistent conflict” in order to validate the climate of warfare that the US is most likely to confront in the future.¹⁵

As Secretary of Defense Robert Gates has continually expressed his position with regard to this type of warfare “...we must not be so preoccupied with preparing for future conventional and strategic conflicts that we neglect to provide all the capabilities necessary to fight and win conflicts such as those the United States is in today.”¹⁶ He has shown this commitment by slashing various high-tech systems out of the tentative QDR, as well as telling the troops flat out in a recent speech in Camp Leatherneck, Afghanistan, “[it is] my job to get you what you need to

¹⁴ Kilcullen, David. *The Accidental Guerrilla*. Oxford University Press: 2009. Pgs 6-7.

¹⁵ See forward written by General William Wallace, TRADOC commander, where he describes “persistent conflict” as, “a period of protracted confrontation among states, nonstate, and individual actors increasingly willing to use violence to achieve their political and ideological ends,” which “will be waged will be complex, multidimensional, and increasingly fought ‘among the people’[sic]” Department of the Army. Field Manual 3-0, *Operations. Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC)*. February 2008.

¹⁶ Gates, Robert M. “A Balanced Strategy.” *Foreign Affairs*. Jan/Feb 2009.

get the mission done successfully.” Cultural awareness *is* needed, an essential element to that success.¹⁷

The Change

In addition to the strong support from Secretary Gates, President Barack Obama has also expressed such needs for the 21st century military. During his presidential campaign, he addressed the importance regarding the future of the US military and the need for cultural awareness. As stated in a campaign publication titled, *A 21st Century Military for America*:

As we rebuild our armed forces, we must meet the full-spectrum needs of the new century... We should invest in foreign language training, ***cultural awareness***, and human intelligence and other needed counterinsurgency and stabilization skill sets...” [emphasis added].¹⁸

Now more than 100 days in office, President Obama has outlined force reductions in Iraq, as well as a new strategy in Afghanistan; this has further strengthened the need for the capabilities mentioned during the campaign.

Already there have been discussions pertaining to the transition from deploying Brigade Combat Teams (BCT) to what are now *tentatively* called as Advisory and Assistance Brigades (AAB), which are still being defined in terms of structure, command and size.¹⁹ Regardless of the decided composition of such units, a comment by General Raymond Odierno in a letter to troops on February 27, 2009 punctuates the *new* mission:

US forces will be composed of a transition force that consists of a transition headquarters, several Advisory and Assistance Brigades, and appropriate supporting forces. The mission of our transition force will be to train, equip and advise professional Iraqi Security Forces; to conduct coordinated counter-terrorism missions; and to protect our ongoing military efforts within Iraq.²⁰

Even over the past couple years on the ground, catch-phrases like “street-level diplomacy,” which refers to commanders leading their units to escort civilian personnel to engage with local

¹⁷ Gates, Robert qtd. By Thom Shanker. “Gates Plans to Shift Military Spending Faces Skepticism.” New York Times. 10 May 2009. http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/11/world/asia/11gates.html?_r=1&ref=global-home

¹⁸ Obama for America. *A 21st Century Military for America*. Press Release. 2008. http://www.barackobama.com/pdf/Defense_Fact_Sheet_FINAL.pdf

¹⁹ The Army is beginning to structure its AABs for advisory and transition missions. Dr. John Nagl has been an avid supporter of such change and has written extensively on the subject. His piece, *Institutionalizing Adaptation: It's Time for a Permanent Army Advisor Corps* expresses the overarching need for a more dynamic Army with a “standing Advisory Corps organized, designed, trained and equipped to develop professional host nation security forces that can build freedom abroad.” However, the up-and-coming AABs are not their *own* branch specialty, nor are they permanent units; therefore, soldiers will rotate in and out of such Brigades, and will have to be versed in both kinetic and non-kinetic techniques. This will require much time outside of the standard duty hours of each individual soldier. See Nagl, John A. “Institutionalizing Adaptation: It's Time for a Permanent Army Advisory Corps.” *Center for a New American Security*. June 2007.

²⁰ General Odierno, Raymond. “Letter for Multi-National Forces Iraq.” *CENTCOM*. 27 February 2009.

government and address the needs of the people, are becoming the norm for most units.²¹ Human Terrain Teams (HTT) and Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) have also become vital in both Iraq and Afghanistan, as stability operations continue to unfold. Based on these practical solutions, there is no doubt that having a better comprehension of the cultural environment is essential to the success of such missions. However, many argue that DOD should not be engaged in these types of activities; that it is the role and responsibility of the interagency (e.g. State Department, Department of Agriculture, etc); I could not agree more.

However, the military is historically the main force engaged in these missions for three major reasons: First, the military is large enough and has the logistical and expeditionary capabilities to sustain deployments and emplace people on the ground where they are needed; the civilian agencies have difficulties in these areas. David Kilcullen explains the second part quite well: "...we cannot deal with just civilians [on the ground] – the aid workers in Somalia provide the perfect example... We need troops to protect them. It takes a lot of troops, and a lot of time."²² Third, there is a large pool of deployable talent via reserve forces; especially in terms of civilian law enforcement, agricultural specialists and other critical fields. This is not the same case with other agencies like USAID and others.²³

Regardless, military transformation in any case is difficult; moreover, implementing strategic and operational changes in the midst of Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) with two active theaters and innumerable others is an extraordinary challenge. Moreover, many of the shifts have come into the equation late in the game where the enemy has had a very prominent and important vote. Therefore, continuing review and oversight of the changes pertaining to cultural awareness is instrumental to implanting a long-term strategic impetus in cultural combat readiness.

Department of Defense Adaptation

By and large, there is no question that there has been an influx in the didactic cultural and language programs over the past few years; indeed, a variety of programs and methods have dedicated toward cultural awareness training. In fact, the Department of Defense has been working on this issue long before President Obama took office.²⁴ In 2006, the Office of

²¹ Jakes, Laura. "Commanders hone battlefield Diplomacy." *The ArmyTimes*. 4 March 2009.

http://www.armytimes.com/news/2009/03/ap_iraq_battlefield_diplomacy_030309/

²² Kilcullen, David. "The Afghan Question." Interviewed on NPR. 12 May 2009.

²³ USAID, for example, is dwarfed in comparison to the US military's logistical breadth and capabilities: "In all, there are about 8,000 employees worldwide, including 1,200 Civil Service employees and 500 Foreign Service Officers based in Washington, 800 Foreign Service Officers deployed overseas, 5,000 local employees working in our overseas missions, plus about 500 others working under other hiring mechanisms." Though plans have been made to increase the size of USAID and other key agencies (like the Department of State), there is clearly a long way to go to meet mission critical needs. See website: The United States Agency for International Development. 20 May 2009. <http://www.usaid.gov/careers/applicant.html>

Another component is the relying on the civilian sector. Though this is another vast and deeply experienced sector, there are many discrepancies and problems here as well. Recent events of the past couple years with companies like KBR and (formerly) Blackwater have proven this point.

²⁴ See Montgomery McFate, *Anthropology and counterinsurgency: The Strange Story of Their Curious Relationship*. This is a great piece arguing for the need, and utility, of anthropology and cultural awareness on the battlefield.

Personnel and Readiness issued a *Strategic Plan* that outlined the need for human capital and language training, and there have been many discussions in congress about the matter as well.²⁵

During an Oversight and Investigation Subcommittee hearing on September 10, 2008, a panel of experts convened to provide testimony pertaining to language and cultural awareness capabilities in the military. One of the panel members, Gail McQuinn, currently the Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, outlined an array of programs that have served outgoing units preparing to deploy:

“Just in Time” training is getting the right information to deploying personnel in time to be useful, but not so early that it is forgotten before [the soldiers] arrive. We have significantly improved our means of providing language and regional familiarization training to units during their deployment cycles. DLIFLC’s [the Defense and Language Institute Foreign Language Center in Monterrey, CA] foreign language and cultural instruction extends beyond the classroom to service members and civilians preparing for deployment by offering Mobile Training Teams, Video Tele-Training, Language Survival Kits (LSK), and online instructional manuals... Field Support Modules outlining the geo-political situation, regional AND cultural information, and fundamental language skills, key phrases and commands are available for 34 countries in 49 languages on the DLIFLC website...²⁶

Additional data provided by McQuinn shows that, “Since 2001, the DLIFLC has dispatched more than 380 Mobile Training Teams...provided targeted training to more than 66,000 personnel. Deploying units have received over 1,000,000 LSKs (mostly, Iraqi, Dari and Pashto).”²⁷ Without question, each service has embarked on a cultural awareness ‘over-haul’ within their particular unit and branch training. Though all services are relevant to this discussion, it is the Army’s purpose is to occupy and control terrain; on an irregular and modern battlefield, the physical terrain is urban, and the people are the center of gravity.²⁸ Montgomery McFate, Senior Social

In the introduction to this piece, McFate notes instances where senior leadership began to take interest in the subject of cultural awareness as early as 2004: General Scales in 2004 who wrote for the Naval War College’s *Proceedings* magazine that, “an exceptional ability to understand people, their culture and their motivation” is extremely important; Arthur Cebrowski, then Director of Force Transformation, concluded in October 2004 that, “knowledge of one’s enemy and his culture society may be more important than knowledge of his order of battle; and in November 2004, DARPA sponsored an “Adversary Cultural Knowledge and National Security Conference” – the first major DoD conference on social sciences since 1962. McFate, Montgomery. “Anthropology and Counterinsurgency: The Strange Story of Their Curious Relationship.” *Military Review*. Mar-Apr 2005.

²⁵ See Department of Defense. *Strategic Plan 2006-2011*. Office of the Secretary of Defense, Personnel and Readiness. 18 Apr 2006. <http://www.defenselink.mil/prhome/docs/stratplan06a.pdf>

²⁶ United States Congress. Testimony of Gail H. McGinn, Deputy Undersecretary of Defense. *Language and Cultural Awareness Capabilities in the Military*. Committee House Armed Services. Subcommittee: Oversight and Investigations. 10 September 2009.

²⁷ United States Congress. Testimony of Gail H. McGinn, Deputy Undersecretary of Defense.

²⁸ Another important point is that the cultural awareness training hole has been filled in a decentralized manner based upon a commander’s discretion. Much of this discretion is to “sign-up” to have Mobile Training Teams brought in to serve soldiers; have Language Learning Kits Delivered; and depending on the mission, have access to HHT teams in a given AO. In other cases, the Marine Corps has engaged in a program that distributes’ culture smart cards, “which are pocket-sized graphical depictions of cultural intelligence that promote cultural awareness as well

Scientist for the HHTs, noted that “Cultural knowledge and warfare are inextricably bound.” These advances are proving that point across the services.²⁹

The Army

The Army is the largest service in the US military, and its primary role is to provide land force dominance essential to shaping the international security environment. Therefore, the fulcrum of change for each service should begin within its institution.³⁰

According to Brigadier General Richard Longo, Director of Training for the US Army in the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, “The Army is currently drafting an aggressive strategy to achieve [the desired] language and cultural end state, to facilitate full-spectrum operations – called “the Army’s Culture and Foreign Language Strategy.”³¹ As a part of this comprehensive approach, there is a concentration on lifelong learning, which “is based on progressive development in culture and foreign language knowledge and skills” focusing on basics first, then sticking to one region for the rest of their career. The other part is the Army Force Generation-tailored training, which is based on the preparation for current or potential operations.

Coincidentally the military and the Army specifically, have successfully moved into the information age. The good news is that there are various avenues where soldiers can take advantage of educational opportunities through the Army Knowledge Online (AKO) system in addition to the externally implemented cultural awareness training. AKO specifically has given soldiers, reserve and active alike, a medium to have email access, access to records, forums to discuss various issues and the ability to expand their own education.

Soldiers are able to take correspondences courses in order to achieve better competence regarding the tactical maneuvers and equipment relevant to their particular vocation. Having such access supplements much of the hands-on training outlined as a part of the units training cycle. A soldier can take multiple courses on their own time to become more proficient in areas of equipment, tactics, and branch related duties.

Moreover, there are programs that allow soldiers to commence their civilian education while serving, which correlates directly with the lifelong learning theme. The Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES) program serves as a means for a soldier to do just that. DANTES’ mission is to “support the off-duty, voluntary education programs of the Department of Defense and to conduct special projects and development activities in support of education-related functions of the Department.”³² As a result, soldiers can take full advantage of

as containing key phrases in relevant language; however, there appears to be no connection with AKO or a set curriculum. As mentioned before, there is almost too much information out there.

²⁹ McFate, Montgomery. “The Military Utility of Understanding Adversary Culture.” *Joint Forces Quarterly*. Issue. 38. 3rd qtr. 2005.

³⁰ The Department of the Army. Field Manual 1.0, *The Army*. 14 June 2001. Pg 21.

³¹ United States Congress. Testimony of Brigadier General Longo, Richard. Language and Cultural Awareness Capabilities In the Military. House Armed Services Committee. Subcommittee: Oversight and Investigations. 10 September 2008.

³² See DANTES website for mission statement and further details about the program: http://www.dantes.doded.mil/Dantes_web/DANTESHOME.asp

distance education through taking courses from an institution of their choice.³³ The Army E'Learning program is another that allows soldiers to engage in an array of courses and have access to Rosetta Stone language programs. The language programs in particular are a strong component to overall cultural awareness.

All of these networks are available for a soldier to enhance his or her personal and military careers; however, there is a huge gap in terms of an institutionalized cultural awareness curriculum. Though all of these programs are well developed and provide great tools for soldiers to learn about a particular culture and language, there is no comprehensive curriculum, with easy access and metrics for continued growth and success. An individual soldier's proficiency seems to be dependent upon his or hers units training, but his or her abilities may be inadequate or substandard when changing from duty station to duty station, and under strenuous training cycles.

The Disconnect

“Cultural awareness has become an increasingly important competency for small unit leaders...like all other competencies; cultural awareness requires self-awareness, self-directed learning, and adaptability.”³⁴

--FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*

The recently published FM 3-24.2, *COIN Tactics*, helps address the areas in which soldiers need to broaden their competency levels and a standard associated with that competency. The doctrine states quite clearly that, “Since all wars are fought in and amongst a population, the Army seeks to develop an ability to understand and work with a culture for its Soldiers and leaders.”³⁵ Though this doctrine provides a rubric for proficient leadership to gauge a soldier's progress in both “cross-cultural-competency” and “regional competence,” no methods are provided to the leader for how to reach such ends³⁶.

TRADOC has also published FM 3-07.1, *Security Force Assistance*, which “provides the conceptual framework for conventional forces to conduct SFA within the construct of full

³³ For example, if a soldier is from Indiana, he or she can search for colleges in the state affiliated with DANTES. Once they find that institution, they can take courses to count toward a degree. The degree can be earned over the duration of one's enlistment or completed once discharged from the military.

³⁴ There are two places in FM 3-24 where cultural awareness is cited: This quote, found on 7-16, as well as 2-25: “US military leaders require a strong cultural and political awareness of HN [host-nation] and other multinational partners;” these are the only areas within the doctrine where cultural awareness is discussed. The referenced quote specifically acknowledging the fact that such matters are self oriented, not commander initiated. This is not satisfactory given the growing demand for such skills.

Department of the Army. Field Manual 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*. University of Chicago Press: 2007.

³⁵ See Department of the Army. Field Manual 3-24.2, *COIN Tactics*. Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC). April 2009. I-18

³⁶ “This field manual establishes doctrine (fundamental principles) for tactical counterinsurgency (COIN) operations at the company, battalion, and brigade level.” Viii.

See Department of the Army. Field Manual 3-24.2, *COIN Tactics*. Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC). April 2009. 1-18.

spectrum operations, across the spectrum of conflict.”³⁷ Both this, and FM 3-24.2, are new doctrine providing valuable insights about how to engage in operations at small unit and individual levels; however, a broader metric for success is still absent (Figure 1):

Table 8-1. Cultural education recommendation

Training Recommendations	
Cultural Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comparison of cultural values and social structures (United States compared to those of the operational area). • Local customs and traditions (for example, greetings do's and don'ts). • Geopolitical history (pre-colonial to contemporary and the orientation of each faction or party). • The role of religion in daily life.
Training Tools	
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guest speakers native to the country of interest (for example, nongovernmental organization staff, foreign students, recent immigrants, or selected refugees). • Others who have worked in or studied the mission area (for example, special forces personnel, diplomats, and scholars). • Cultural familiarization handbooks.
Format	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Combination of briefings, small group discussions, and question and answer periods. • Handouts to augment—not replace—speakers. • Visual media, specifically slides and videos of the mission area.

Figure 1. This is a chart from the recently published (May 2009) FM 3-07.2, *Security Force Assistance* describing the recommendations for warfighters to prosecute cultural awareness training.³⁸

The chart provides the standard procedures for undertaking unit and individual courses of action for cultural awareness preparation, many of which described earlier. Yet, the briefings, handbooks and visual media are short-fixes and do not address the career-long progression of cultural training. This correlates with the theme of decentralized training provides that lack of accountability and growth. The focus of basic cultural awareness training needs to be further addressed to General Purpose Forces.³⁹

As it currently stands, there is no long-term accountability with such training. A commander can distribute and direct a soldier to review cultural awareness materials, but if there is no learning mechanism, and perhaps even more importantly, an incentive based attached, the results will vary across rank and individual soldier motivation. Moreover, a hand-book is not a piece of essential battledress; many soldiers lose or stow the handbook at the bottom of there rucksack, only seeing it again when they return from theater.

³⁷ United States Army. Field Manual 3-07.2, *Security Force Assistance*. May 2009. Iv.

³⁸ Ibid. 8-

5. <https://coin.harmonieweb.org/Knowledge%20Center/FM%20307.1%20Security%20Force%20Assistance.pdf>

³⁹ Richard Longo presented the Army’s objectives for General Purpose Forces as: “1) All soldiers having a balanced set of culture and foreign language competence required for successful execution of full-spectrum military operations worldwide. 2) All Army leaders possessing culture and foreign language competence that enable them to effectively employ a portfolio of other professional competencies necessary for global operations... 3) An Army with all units having the right blend of culture and foreign language capabilities to facilitate full spectrum operations anywhere at any time. United States Congress. Testimony. 10 September 2008.

Another very important point is that most of the General Purpose Forces comprising the enlisted ranks are predominantly high school graduate level. Most do not have the advanced analytical skills acquired from a four-year or professional degree, and as recruiting standards have depleted over the past few years to meet manpower requirements, there is a higher challenge in successfully imposing such curriculum. Therefore, providing a more structured pedagogy will not only provide easier access through AKO, but also develop a soldier's academic development and key analytical skills. The current correspondence courses provided through the Army in particular offer a model to how these courses should be generated, but there needs to be a push by command to not only engage in such training, but become proficient as well.

The current correspondence courses are also in a need of reconfiguring and update. Most of the courses are specific to branch training only, which is relevant to a certain degree, but not in terms of cultural awareness training. At the moment, military intelligence is the only branch to have any relative training associated with cultural awareness. One course, *Southwest Asia I: Iran, Iraq, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia* cover each country in a very broad context. Not only is this a compilation course, with no individual courses dedicated to the specific country, but this course in particular was last updated on July 1998. Needless to say, this is clearly out of date considering the role the military at large is currently playing throughout the region, and is far from adequate.⁴⁰

At the other end of the educational spectrum are the formal courses that one can take through DANTES or other smaller distant learning services found through AKO. The problem is that these are actual full-length courses that require much more of a time commitment. Taking such courses *should* be pushed by leadership and incorporated by a soldier into his daily regimen as much as possible, yet sometimes training cycles and deployments make it difficult for the soldier to take advantage of such a system. In other cases, a soldier may in fact have the time to take courses, but plan on majoring in electric engineering, and therefore cannot devote the time necessary for completing the course or take many elective courses pertaining to regional or anthropological issues.

Army e'Learning also has major shortcomings. According to the December 2008 Newsletter, the top three foreign languages downloaded by soldiers are Spanish, German and French.⁴¹ For soldiers especially, these languages are not relevant to the skills that they should be acquiring given the current operation tempo. There needs to be a shift toward critical languages (e.g. Arabic, Farsi, Urdu, Chinese, Hindi etc), in order to meet both current and future needs.

But perhaps the biggest and overarching issue affecting all of these systems is time and priorities. At the end of the day, the soldier must be competent in his or her combat skills and maneuvers more than cultural training. In other words, when a commanders drafting a training schedule,

⁴⁰ This information was gathered from a search through AKOs Army correspondence course system as of February 5, 2009.

[https://www.us.army.mil/appiansuite/login/login.fcc?TYPE=33554433&REALMOID=06-b476a858-73dc-10a1-9a8e-832f882fff3d&GUID=&SMAUTHREASON=0&METHOD=GET&SMAGENTNAME=\\$SM\\$wMjEqv5sB44%2bpUfE3qs4QL2G7Q0LjAUZ221N62Zll%2bTwHPFwKZd8Wg%3d%3d&TARGET=\\$SM\\$http%3a%2f%2fwww%2eus%2earmy%2emil%3a81%2fsuite%2fportal%2fauthenticate%2edo](https://www.us.army.mil/appiansuite/login/login.fcc?TYPE=33554433&REALMOID=06-b476a858-73dc-10a1-9a8e-832f882fff3d&GUID=&SMAUTHREASON=0&METHOD=GET&SMAGENTNAME=SMwMjEqv5sB44%2bpUfE3qs4QL2G7Q0LjAUZ221N62Zll%2bTwHPFwKZd8Wg%3d%3d&TARGET=SMhttp%3a%2f%2fwww%2eus%2earmy%2emil%3a81%2fsuite%2fportal%2fauthenticate%2edo) – User Id and Password are required.

⁴¹ *Army e'Learning Newsletter*. Issue 15, 2008.

which is limited in terms of time and dependent upon scheduling of ranges, courses, etc, the question of being able to fire a weapon downrange, quickly takes precedence over knowing how to properly engage and communicate with a local civilian. In the end, the basic top three requirements are, and always should be, to shoot, move and communicate; however, now there needs to be a means to enhance the meaning and orientation of *communicate* without afflicting improbable and unrealistic burdens to the commander.⁴²

There is also the matter of reengaging strategic focus farther down the road. The debate about military transformation continues to question the long-term relevancy of how General Purpose Forces should be operationalized. If history does indeed rhyme, then as with many times in the past when the US engaged in unconventional wars--including, for example, Indian Wars, Post-Civil War Reconstruction, Spanish American War (Philippines and Cuba), and Vietnam--the military has, for better or worse, reverted to a more conventional construct for its broader General Purpose Forces.⁴³

In the near-term, there is no question that Mobile Training Teams and other theater essential training are going to prevail as the main presence on the ground in Iraq, and in Afghanistan as time moves forward. Yet, once the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan fade more into the past, with a greatly reduced or non-existent American military presence, the potential for doctrinal and operational design to shift back toward the HIC side of the combat spectrum is likely based upon the historical lessons gained from irregular warfare. The connotations could not be more serious giving the argument that the majority of future conflicts will be hybrid in nature.⁴⁴

In the end, a gap must be filled to split the difference between purely technical correspondence courses and the more formal courses found at various colleges in the DANTES and Army E'Learning systems.

⁴² Masellis, Nick M. *The iSoldier*. April 2009.

⁴³ See Gladwell, Malcolm. "How David Beats Goliath." *The New Yorker*. 11 May 2009.

In this piece, Malcolm cites political scientist Ivan Arreguin-Toft, who reviewed "every war fought in the past two hundred years between strong and weak combatants. The Goliaths, he found, won in 71.5 percent of the cases... Arreguin-Toft was analyzing conflicts in which one side was at least ten times as powerful -- in terms of armed might and population -- as its opponent, and even in those lopsided contests the underdog won almost a third of the time."

⁴⁴ See Frank Hoffman, *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars*. Hoffman describes hybrid threats as being more likely in the future "specifically designed to target US vulnerabilities." He posits that, "Instead of separate challengers with fundamentally different approaches (conventional, irregular or terrorist), we can expect to face competitors who will employ all forms of war and tactics, perhaps simultaneously." He supports this case by using the summer 2006 battle between Israel and Hezbollah: "Hezbollah clearly demonstrated the ability of non-state actors to study and deconstruct the vulnerabilities of Western style militaries, and devise appropriate countermeasures."

Hoffman, Frank G. "Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars." *Potomac Institute for Policy Studies*. Dec. 2007.

Solution

*“Geography, tribal structure, religion, social customs, language, appetites, standards were at my fingertips. The enemy I knew almost like my own side, I risked myself among them many times to learn.”*⁴⁵

--T.E. Lawrence

At the end of the day, soldiers will have to be immersed in their AO and follow the Lawrence and Galula principles of counterinsurgency operations, which involve becoming one with the population.⁴⁶ Immersion offers the ideal learning environment, and is the extrinsic side of cultural awareness. However, it is the intrinsic competence that provides a basis for such learning, and allows one to build upon those skills far after a deployment. Such skills make a better warfighter AND a more dynamic civilian as the soldier moves back into a very competitive and global workforce.

The integration of a Warfighter Cultural Awareness (WCA) curriculum & correspondence program into military readiness training, as well as having a means to furnish technologies to assist the warfighter in the field are necessary as the US military continues to prepare for future engagement. Similar to existing correspondence courses, these would be micro courses focused on the relevant information – pertinent to the region, country, and province-- that a soldier would need to know about an area that they will be operating. The first phase is to integrate an online system that a soldier can access and take such courses to expand their cultural awareness skills.

Several courses already exist and have been compiled and made available on websites, like DLIFC’s Field Support Modules, which houses 50 languages and 42 countries to support pre-deployment mission-oriented instruction in 24 additional languages. Applying this useful information into a formalized education system will complement any decentralized training that a commander sees as necessary to get his unit ready for deployment. In other instances, the curriculum will be included with other in-processing requirements for duty stations (e.g. Japan, Korea, Germany, etc). Regardless of the purpose, these courses can serve to better prepare a service member and improve a unit’s effectiveness.⁴⁷

The Army’s AKO system and affiliated educational networks are the most effective means to reach soldiers in terms of today’s high-pace training and deployment environment. Most, if not all, soldiers have an active AKO account, and can access the system to conduct these training courses at anytime and anywhere. Therefore, program success is linked to the level of outreach the AKO can provide; the AKO provides the perfect medium to integrate cultural awareness

⁴⁵ Lawrence, T.E. qtd. In Liddell, B.H, *Lawrence of Arabia*. New York: DeCapo, 1989. Pg 399.

⁴⁶ I use Lawrence and Galula here only to reference their focus and concern for understanding the culture and protecting the population. This is not to say that other COIN theorists, like that of Calwell, do not provide models for certain situations. In fact, having a cultural understanding can be just as, or even more, important in enemy-centric or counterterrorism strategies, which have just as much or more impact on the population. Regardless of the applied model, the nature of any war is as General Van Riper described as a, “terrible, uncertain, chaotic, bloody business.” However, having a grasp on the language and culture helps mend and dress many of those attributes. See General Van Riper, Paul. Interview. “Battle Plan Under Fire.” *Public Broadcasting Service*, NOVA. April 2004. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/wartech/nature.html>

⁴⁷ See DFIFC’s website: <http://www.dliflc.edu/>

curriculum without having to develop a new program. Each service should use their AKO equivalent and ensure curriculums are compatible with the perspective system.

Providing the Tools for the Field

The second phase is to advance 4G solution technologies through DARPA to provide additional tools to warfighters and advisors in the field. As can be found in popular culture around the western world, personal PDA devices of this sort can be seen in hands of people across ages and ethnic backgrounds.⁴⁸

In particular, the millennial generation – the generation enlisting and filling the ranks of today’s General Purpose Forces, are very adept at such technology. Whether walking down the street, in a coffee shop, riding on the metro to work, or even in the gym, one can find people plugging away at such devices. The development of such a tool would be a more functional description and application of the infamous Future Combat System (FCS), and is an example of how to properly integrate technologies in an irregular warfare environment.

Short fixes, like the Army’s purchase of thousands of iTouches are not sufficient.⁴⁹ Though better than nothing at all, issuing these devices to soldiers is akin to a sprint at the beginning of a marathon. Though the runner has an amazing lead in the beginning, he or she tires quickly and becomes useless for the rest of the race. This is very similar in the sense that, yes, a tool is being added to the field, but it has no sustainability in terms of building basic and advanced comprehension in cultural and language skills. Moreover, the device is not combat ready. Though there is no empirical data that proves this comment (yet), it is safe to assume that a standard iTouch is not combatable with harsh deserts climates, wet jungles and other places around the world that forces may deploy.⁵⁰ Montgomery McFate, senior cultural expert for the US military, stated in a 2005 *Joint Forces Quarterly* piece that “the Department of Defense

⁴⁸ See Dr. Larry Williams and Allan Kupetz, *The 4G Soldier: New Developments in Military Mobile Communications*; “The key to empowering the military with tactical broadband voice, video and data is 4 communications technology that requires a minimal amount of fixed infrastructure, is small and highly portable, and inexpensive enough to be standard issue for every soldier. The Department of Defense’s Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) is concertedly working to develop a new type of device to meet these requirements.” The problem is that since this was published in 2003 -- there has been no mass issue of such a tool, and the early plans only consisted of GPS, communications and instant messaging of enemy positions for higher command analysis; nothing with reference to cultural awareness or language capability.

Kupetz, Allan and Williams, Larry. “The 4G Soldier: New Developments in Military Mobile Communications.” *Mobile Development and Design*. 1 June

2003. http://mobiledevdesign.com/hardware_news/radio_soldier_new_developments/

⁴⁹ See Sutherland, Benjamin. *Apple’s New Weapon*. Newsweek. 18 Apr 2009. <http://www.newsweek.com/id/194623>

⁵⁰ There have been a couple articles circulating recently praising the addition of iPods/Touches to the field. Again, this is a very important step, and by far soldiers are better for having these devices than not. As Lieutenant Colonel Jim Ross, the director of the US Army’s intelligence, electronic warfare and sensors operation, believes the iPod “may be all that the personnel need”. “What gives it added advantage is that a lot of them have their own personal ones so they are familiar with them,” he said. But this is not all the soldier needs the soldier needs a device that 1) is similar in function, but conducive to a combat environment (what I deemed an *iTouch* in a previous publication), and 2) a structured curriculum that brides the tool with the intrinsic knowledge. Sengupta, Kim. “iPhones in Iraq – the US Army’s New Weapon.” *The Independent*. 11 May 2009.

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/iphones-in-iraq-ndash-the-us-armys-new-weapon->

currently lacks the programs, systems, models, personnel and organizations;” the situation has hardly had a lasting impact four years later.

Surprisingly, however, DARPA *has* been working to produce such devices, with its first generation device named the *Handheld Multimedia Terminal*, and have come to include other projects including: “Warfighter Information Network,” Small Unit Operations/Situational Awareness Systems” and the “Joint Tactical Radio System.” In sum, they have been thinking about and testing concepts since around 2003, but need to get a modified system, including cultural and language capabilities, out to the field.⁵¹

Nonetheless, a combat compatible device would be an extension of this concept and be appealing to most, if not all, young soldiers. This tool would be combat efficient (durable, and have operational and communication security), and be an essential element to a soldier's battledress. Hypothetically, one could download courses on the go, such as: traditional and cultural correspondence courses, language training, podcasts etc and be able to have a frame of reference to their general WCA training.⁵²

Creating Incentives

Indeed, if learning is going to be “self-adapted,” as FM 3-24 suggests, then incentives to motivate the warfighter are needed. After all, most of these courses would be taken on the soldiers’ own time, when they would otherwise be refitting from the already strenuous training cycle. Incentives should be as follows:

- **Incentive pay:** Just as soldiers are paid for meeting a certain level of language comprehension, so should be the case once a soldier reaches a level of cultural awareness. There would be other requirements, like that of civilian education courses completed as well, and would correlate mostly with a specific concentration (e.g. a particular regional or country focus).⁵³
- **Promotion points:** For every course taken, points should be earned depending on the level and length of the course. This will encourage a soldier as they continue to seek promotion throughout their career.

⁵¹ Ibid. pg 2.

⁵² What a soldier learns comes from their immediate chain of command (their team leader, squad leader, and platoon sergeant – which is true with each service by and large). As soldiers are counseled on their overall performance and screened in areas like marksmanship and physical fitness, so should they be measured on their language and cultural awareness skills. Junior and Senior NCOs should have access to their soldiers WCA training record and maintain accountability for that training. By pushing a soldier and including the review as a part of their counseling record, while also promoting the importance associated with future promotion and career growth, a service member will be more inclined to take the initiative and apply this as a part of their overall cultural awareness training. See Masellis, Nick. *The iSoldier*.

⁵³ There should also be different proficiency requirements, depending on rank and responsibility. In other words, a private’s minimal level of completion would not be as high as a staff sergeant, and so on.

- **ARRTS Credit:** Once a certain proficiency level is reached, there could be coordination with the Army American Council on Education Registry Transcript System (ARRTS) system to transition the courses into college credit for the soldier to incorporate into their civilian education. This program is partnered with states and academic institutions across the country in order to transfer military training for college credit. For example, Military Police School can count for actual criminal justice or law enforcement courses at various universities. Therefore, a soldier can then earn credit for the schools that they have already completed as a soldier.

Metrics for Success

By no means is this a silver bullet with regard to full cultural awareness training. A soldier, whether a Private or a Captain, is not going to become an expert on a particular culture, much less be at an advanced level of comprehension on any particular matter from the courses alone. However, what will be provided is a foundation a soldier can build upon throughout their military and civilian careers supplemented by the array of programs currently being fielded.

Many of the current correspondence courses pertain to various tactics and background on weapons systems; however, effective execution in those areas can only be fomented through additional hands-on training guided by competent leadership. The correspondence course alone *does not* make a soldier proficient in those areas – but *it does* provide a framework.

Same applies to cultural awareness training. A soldier will become associated with various customs and important ethnic and religious traditions, but he or she will sharpen those skills by working with Mobile Training Teams prior to deployment, applying those skills while deployed, and then returning to a program which retains and bolsters the progress. Though the bulk of the knowledge will come to the soldier during the actual deployment, it is the cultural awareness correspondence courses that prepare them to retain and strengthen that knowledge on forward through their military careers.

That said, there are metrics toward continuing success beyond a deployment or relocation of duty station.

First, it is necessary to instill commander initiative. Commanders, particularly at the battalion level, must see this as something “important.” Otherwise, no matter what institutional push, or doctrinal specifications, the units under that command will not prosecute such training unless it is directed by that commander. As is said in many military circles: “if you want it to get done, put it up on a ‘chart.’” In order for this to work at any level, a commander must find room on their perspective ‘chart.’

Second, the Army needs to allocate money for language and cultural experts to mentor units a year out from their deployment. If this were to transpire at the brigade level, an expert could rotate among various units engaging in training that supplements and adds to the correspondence curriculum, and other training modules (to include MTTs) consumed by the unit. Such a collective approach will give soldiers at all levels of command a solid foundation to move into theater, and a level of expertise to grow on when refitting back at their garrison post.

Lastly, it is the enlisted personnel that are most, but not solely, relevant to completing these courses – just as with the current correspondence courses that are in place today. Most enlisted soldiers are high school graduates who have had little to no international exposure.

Institutionalizing a cultural awareness curriculum is essential for enlisted personnel given that they compose the bulk of those deployed to areas like Iraq and Afghanistan. At the end of the day, it is the private, sergeant, staff sergeant, platoon sergeants (sergeants first class) and junior officers who are working with and amongst the local population. Their knowledge of local customs and tribal issues is critical to the effective conduct of “street-level diplomacy.” Operating in such environments gives much credence to the importance of the ‘strategic corporal’ and the impact they have on overall operations in the field.

Yet, as Sir Haldane noted from his experiences in, then, Mesopotamia, *patience* and *determination* are the core traits affiliated with such efforts and crucial to not disposing of gains that had been acquired during previous kinetic and non-kinetic operations. Both patience and determination will be required to implement such a system throughout DoD, and engage service members in the program.

Concluding Remarks

Of course I was in one place, at one time and deployed under circumstances much different than those warfighters who proceeded me; however, the need for cultural awareness spans across my deployment as well as the thousands of others since that time. Moreover, the historical support for such readiness is unquestionable.

In 1755, the French and Indian War raged between British, French and Native Americans in Eastern Canada and Northeastern United States. Led by General Edward Braddock, the British were the dominant force on the ground in terms of professionalism and technological capabilities. However Braddock, apart from his military fortitude, mistakenly approached the Indian foe with European line tactics, failing to adjust to the forest, as well as adapting to the nature of the enemy; ultimately, resulting in the slaughter of many men.⁵⁴ An 1899 piece written by Darnell Davis describes Braddock as an “obstinacy of a general who, though personally as brave as his men could be, despised the advice of those who knew the methods of Indian warfare and insisted upon forming the line of battle in the ‘bush.’”⁵⁵

Around a century later, General George Crook, a distinguished Civil War veteran, was tasked to pacify the Indian fighters on the Western frontier. In 1871, Crook showed a knack for dealing with his unconventional enemy by interviewing numerous people throughout his area of operation to acquire intelligence: from privates to colonels, mule skinnners and bankers, as well as the Governor himself.⁵⁶ He studied his enemy, adapted tactically and used Indian scouts as guides to track down the adversary. He was not marred by the conventional warfare dogma from

⁵⁴ Captain Collier, Thomas W. “Partisans: The Forgotten Force.” *Infantry*. Aug-Sept 1960.

⁵⁵ Davis, Darnell N. “British Newspaper Accounts of Braddock’s Defeat.” *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*. Vol. 23, No. 3 (1899), p 310.

⁵⁶Lt. Col. Donald V. Rattan. “Anti-guerrilla Operations: A Case Study from History.” *Military Review*, May 1960, pp. 23-27.

that period, which could have led him down the similar path of General Braddock during the Battle of Monongahela.⁵⁷

This begs the question: will today's American civil and military leadership follow the adaptive nature of General Crook, or will they reflect the same sediments as General Braddock when dying on the battlefield – obliterated by a *lesser* enemy; “Who would have thought it? We shall better know how to deal with them another time.⁵⁸” For the United States military, the time is now.

Unfortunately, the American experience in unconventional warfare has been a long history of learn, adapt and forget; this has been the case from the Indian Wars to Vietnam. Today, there is certainly a need to adapt and general consensus that the need for cultural awareness training is fundamental to the missions undertaken. To date, much has been done to fill this gap in a broader, decentralized context which defines the status quo. Again, bridging existing programs, and strengthening the overall cultural awareness abilities for General Purpose Forces in each service through a formal, centralized and joint system. This will better prepare warfighters for the areas in which they are operating, and prime them for cultures in future operating environments.

In the end, there are broader and more policy oriented issues that must be addressed: At the forefront is redefining Professional Military Education (PME) in order to garner the leaders and force for the future. Much like many facets of our society, there is 19th century structures answering these questions that exist in a 21st century world. Cultural awareness and the fielding of better technologies are really a subset of these monolithic issues that must evolve in order for long-term productivity and strategic flexibility to prevail. Still, the proposed could certainly be a short-term solution as a part of the longer-term issues presented.

General William Tecumseh Sherman is often quoted: “Every attempt to make war easy and safe will result in humiliation and disaster” – he is correct. Though there is no room for a ‘march to the sea’ mentality, his statement holds much credence with regard to the issue of cultural awareness. There is nothing at all easy about integrating such a curriculum, but a change is imminent to not succumb to the same humiliation and disaster experienced by General Braddock in 1755.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ The Battle of Monongahela, also known as Braddock's Defeat, was a major blow to British Forces. According to the Quebec History Encyclopedia, after reconsolidating from previous assaults, “the French and Indians, who spread out on either side of the compact British column, and from the shelter of trees and rocks mowed down the defenseless red-coats. Braddock, with most of his officers, was mortally wounded, and the remnant of his veterans fled back to the river in wild disorder. Dunbar, with a few hundred men, retreated over the mountains to Fort Cumberland.” The Quebec History Encyclopedia. Lawrence J. Burpee and Arthur G. Doughty, *The Makers of Canada. Index and Dictionary of Canadian History*, Toronto, Morang & Co., Limited, 1912, 446p., p. 431 <http://faculty.marianopolis.edu/c.belanger/quebechistory/encyclopedia/BattleoftheMonongahela.htm>

⁵⁸ Collier. P. 29. The irony with this quote is that Captain Collier wrote his piece quoting General Braddock in 1960... far before the American commitment in Vietnam increased, where thousands died and the lessons of counterinsurgency were not collected within the proceeding doctrine that followed. So the question is not only relevant, but has a historical precedent and fail-rate of epic proportions in American military history.

⁵⁹ General Sherman, William T. Cont. Michael Fellman. *Memoirs of General W.T. Sherman*. Penguin Classics, 2000. Pg. 758.

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