

Combined Action Platoons: A Strategy for Peace Enforcement

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Title: Combined Action Platoons: A Strategy for Peace Enforcement

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Thesis: The concept of the Combined Action Platoon, as it evolved in Vietnam, has potential applications in operations other than war, particularly Chapter VII UN Peace Enforcement missions. FMFM 1-1, *Campaigning*, cites the Combined Action Program as an example of a short-lived but successful concept. If the Combined Action Platoons were successful, then how would the concept interface with today's doctrine in Peace Keeping/Enforcement missions?

Discussion: Earlier this century, the Marine Corps was often called "State Department's troops," and during the 1960's the term "Ambassadors in Green" was used. As the budget dictates a smaller force with no foreseeable respite in overseas commitments, the Marines are searching for a model to handle this challenge. Operations such as those conducted in Somalia, Haiti, and Bosnia are becoming the norm and provide an environment for a CAP-style operation to be successfully employed. Sea Dragon may be the Marine Corp's second generation of a CAP-style operation that handles the challenges of reduction in forces and commitments. The lessons learned from the CAP experience is that the use of firepower is only half of the pacification equation. The other half, as highlighted in the *Small Wars Manual*, is, in order to have long-term success, winning the trust of the indigenous population is a priority and must occur. For a short time in Vietnam, the Combined Action Program did just that by denying the enemy a safe haven in the local village and hamlets. The Marine Corp's challenge will be maintaining the balance between tactics and politics. CAP's were the village nexus for tactics and politics in Vietnam as Sea Dragon must become in future operations other than war..

Conclusions: The Combined Action Platoon's (CAP) genesis was not a deliberate plan from a higher headquarters, rather, it was a solution to one infantry battalion's problem of an expanding TAOR. The concept of combining a squad of marines with local Popular Forces (PF's) and assigning them a village to protect proved to be a force multiplier. The CAP concept was effective in denying the enemy a sanctuary at the local village level. The Pacification campaign seemed to work under the CAP concept, and the Marines fully embraced it. Objectively, there is no solid proof that the CAP concept was a resounding success; however, subjectively the evidence suggests otherwise.

Counterinsurgency operations and, in particular, the establishment of a foreign

internal defense lends itself for the greatest utility of employing a CAP-style organization. Recent operations in Somalia, Haiti, and Bosnia suggest a CAP-style organization could accomplish the assigned mission.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE COMBINED ACTION PLATOON

On January 22, 1968, General Westmoreland, head of the Military Advisory Mission to Vietnam, sent the following top-secret message to General Earle Wheeler, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

Subject: Visit to Washington by Richard E. Cabazos, LTC INE, USA.

The above-named officer will arrive in Washington on 25 January on a TDY status per my orders for several days. This officer has just finished ten months in command of the 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry Division, and in my opinion is one of the top battalion commanders in Vietnam. He is a disciplinarian, tactician, and a commander whose results have been nothing short of spectacular. During the 4th quarter of CY 1967, his battalion killed 875 of the enemy with only 19 soldiers killed within the battalion. Because of his competence, I have recently sent him to the dye marker area (DMZ) to spend ten days with the Marines to advise them on how to construct a battalion defensive position. The Marines were very receptive to his advice and reportedly respected his professionalism.

I urge that you receive Cabazos and plan on talking to him for at least an hour. The reason that I make this suggestion is because of his insight into Marine philosophy, doctrine, and leadership. As you perhaps appreciate, the military professionalism of the Marines falls short of the standards that should be demanded by our Armed Forces. Indeed, they are brave and proud but their standards, tactics, and lack of command supervision throughout their ranks require improvement in the national interest...

Having said all this, there are many things that commend the Marines, but I would be less than frank if I did not say that I feel somewhat insecure with the situation in Quang Tri Province, in view of my knowledge of their shortcomings. Without question many lives would be saved if their tactical professionalism were enhanced.¹

This quote was not the official view of the U. S. Army toward Marine involvement in Vietnam, but it underscored the Army versus Marine operational differences in

conducting the "Other War." Pacification, i.e. winning the hearts and minds of the South Vietnamese through counterinsurgency operations, was the "Other War" in Vietnam.

It has been argued that this fundamental difference in conducting the "Other War" was one of the major reasons why the U. S. lost in Vietnam. Why was the Marines' operational philosophy 180 degrees out from General Westmoreland's operational philosophy of pacification? The historical background of Army and Marine counter-insurgency operations, the perceived enemy center of gravity in Vietnam, the strategic aim, and identified critical enemy factors are key to understanding Marine versus Army operational differences on conducting the "Other War." It was these differences and past Marine experience that contributed to the creation of the U.S. Marines' Combined Action Platoon (CAP).

The Marines response from the challenges that it faced in Vietnam had its genesis from two areas: the Cold War and the Banana Wars (specifically the Nicaraguan Campaigns). Selected units were in Nicaragua for eight years, from 1925 until 1933. Their experience in Nicaragua was varied as they came to grips with fighting a local insurgent war. They gained in experience as they often found themselves as the local authority figures. Civic action, public works, health and education all came under the purview of the Marines. In order to defeat the Augusto Sandino movement in the rural areas the Marines were directed by the U.S. government to assume the role of local government institutions. The key to winning the population loyalty was to provide a better service to the community and effective protection. Roads were improved, bridges built, a health care and education system was installed. Security was provided by aggressive patrolling free of heavy logistical support. Marines were often dual-hatted as they held key positions in the local constabulary. The dual hat provided teeth to the law and order equation of providing effective protection to the people.²

As a result of the Marine experience in the Banana Wars, the *Small Wars Manual*

was written and published in 1940. The manual provided "how to" guidelines on conducting counterinsurgency operations. The manual covers everything from strategy, psychology, relationship with the State Department, and armed native organizations to supervision of elections. The manual defines small wars as "operations undertaken under executive authority, wherein military force is combined with diplomatic pressure in the internal or external affairs of another state whose government is unstable, inadequate or unsatisfactory for the preservation of life and such interests as are determined by the foreign policy of our nation."³ A major theme in the manual is the relationship between military force and the rural people. "In major warfare, hatred of the enemy is developed among troops to arouse courage. In small wars, tolerance, sympathy, and kindness should be the keynote of our relationship with the mass of the population."⁴ The manual clearly lays out the relationship of violence as a means to peace in small wars.

The difficulty is sometimes of an economical, political, or social nature and not a military problem in origin... The application of purely military measures may not, by itself restore peace and orderly government because the fundamental causes of the condition of unrest may be economic, political or social... The solution of such problems being basically a political adjustment, the military measures to be applied must be of secondary importance and should be applied only to such extent as to permit the continuation of peaceful corrective measures.⁵

The manual further states that the training and conduct of troops is paramount. "In small wars, caution must be exercised, and instead of striving to generate the maximum power with forces available, the goal is to gain decisive results with the least application of force and the consequent minimum loss of life... A force commander who gains his objective in a small war without firing a shot has attained far greater success than the one who resorted to the use of arms."⁶ The training of officers and troops is different for small wars than for world wars. The *Small Wars Manual* explains in great detail the operational art on conducting small wars/counterinsurgency operations.

After 1940, the *Small Wars Manual* was quickly overshadowed by World War II

and the Cold War. The Cold War provided the framework for American and NATO responses to Soviet Union and Marxist expansionism. George Kennan's "Mr. X" article laid out the doctrine of containment: At every major venture of communist expansionism, the U. S. will be there to stem the tide. The Soviet regime under Khrushchev made it clear they were supporting wars of national liberation. In his book *The Combined Action Platoons: The US Marines' Other War in Vietnam*, Michael Peterson makes the following observation:

If Khrushchev called for support for wars of national liberation, it was up to the United States to respond accordingly; and that response must be new and modernist. The Kennedy era immediately prior to the massive U.S. involvement in Vietnam was a particularly seminal period in the armed services' obsession with and formulation of counterinsurgency doctrine. According to Col. John E. Greenwood [Director of the 4th CAG in 1968],
'...guerrilla warfare expertise was one of the popular in topics; and that Marine officers of the day... attended Army schools and studied the doctrine developed and articulated by the British and the U.S. Army ... our insights in war of this kind came from this nearly contemporary effort, not from Marine Corps experience 30 years previous.'⁷

In 1962, the Marine Manual 8-2, *Operations Against Guerrilla Forces*, replaced the *Small Wars Manual* of 1940. Manual 8-2 was a reflection of old experience, new technology and Army experience. The Army doctrine dealing with counterinsurgency was derived from a different experience than that of the Marines. Peterson elaborates - "The Army's insights... were filtered by anti-sovietism, and were conditioned by the Army's experiences in the Greek civil war and Korea, along with British policies in the Malayan emergency. [Peterson believed] The Army's doctrine contained a dangerous conceptual pitfall in that it overlooked a vital distinction between two types of guerrilla warfare: partisan and insurgent."⁸ In Larry Cables' book, *Conflicts of Myths: The Development of American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and the Vietnam War*, he defines the distinction between the two:

(1) Partisan warfare - guerrillas operate as an auxiliary to external, regular

forces of another nation; i.e. partisan groups in Eastern Europe during World War II, Chinese guerrillas of the Malayan emergency.

- (2) Insurgency warfare - an indigenous, armed extension of a political movement within the country and is capable of being independent of external support; i.e. Kurds in Iraq / Turkey, Basques in Spain, Vietminh in Vietnam.

The point that Cable makes is that the two types of guerrilla warfare are not clearly independent of each other but require a different approach to wage a successful campaign. Army doctrine is largely a result of the partisan warfare model. Again Peterson makes the following point -

U.S. Army counterinsurgency doctrine was predicated on the partisan model and the scenario dictated that the partisan forces must be dependent on (or an extension of) the regular forces and/or base areas of support by the external supporting country. This also reinforced Cold War notions of the conspiratorial style that the communist nations and movement were known to practice. What was needed to defeat or otherwise contain the partisan threat was to cut the lines of supply and communications between the partisans and their host country, including air forces. Pacification was largely regulated to questions of population control, such as identification checks, isolation of partisan forces from the population centers, and forced resettlement.⁹

On 6 February 1962 the American Military Assistance Command (MACV) was formed in South Vietnam. By mid-1962, the American advisers increased from 700 to 12,000 and the American and the Saigon governments promoted the strategic hamlet program.¹⁰ As American advisers increased in Vietnam, the Army's pacification operations was focused towards partisan-style counterinsurgency. Colonel Harry G. Summers, U. S. Army (Ret.), compared the Marines and the Army in Vietnam in the following manner:

A major difference between the U. S. Army and the U.S. Marine Corps in Vietnam involved the use of military forces to support pacification-i.e., how to best provide local security for South Vietnamese hamlets so as to facilitate the resurrection of government control and thus permanently drive out Vietnam insurgents. . . The Army advocated search and destroy operations against larger

organized Viet Cong forces and NVA regular units. The Marines emphasized an ink-blot strategy to gradually enlarge their coastal enclaves through 'clear and hold' operations.¹¹

As the war evolved in Vietnam one could see the operational split between the Army and the Marine method of conducting the pacification war. The Army was basically fighting a search and destroy campaign against the NVA and Vietcong. The Army was in search of the decisive battle that would cause enough enemy casualties to make them quit. The Army left pacification and the protection of the people to the South Vietnamese Army. Stanley Karnow in his book, *Vietnam: A History*, brings clarity to the Army's strategy:

In Vietnam itself Westmoreland resolutely pursued his strategy of attrition, with a series of search and destroy operations code named Junction City and Francis Marion and Kingfisher; and the enemy body count mounted astronomically. By the of 1967 , the U.S. troop presence was up to nearly a half million, an increase of a hundred thousand = bringing total battlefield deaths for the past two years to more than fifteen thousand. More than a million and half of bombs had been dropped since the air strikes began, on both the north and south. But the war was deadlocked. General Fred Weyand, one of Westmoreland's field commanders, grimly measured the progress for a visiting Washington official: Before I came out here a year ago, I thought we were at zero. I was wrong. We were at minus fifty. Now we're at zero.¹²

By 1965, there were 38,000 Marines deployed to Vietnam as the III Marine Amphibious Force (III MAF) under the command of Major General Lewis A. Walt. The Commanding General of FMFPAC was Lieutenant General Victor Krulak. At this time there were several wars going on in Vietnam. The Army and the Marines had differing views on what it would take to win the war. Westmoreland's major goals included attrition through search and destroy operations thus denying the NVA and VC territory regardless of population densities (strategic hamlet concept). The Marines were fighting two wars. They agreed that Westmoreland's search and destroy had some merit, but

believed that Westmoreland's priorities were misplaced with pacifying the villages. The Marines' war of pacification grew from practical experience. The Marines struggled to convince Westmoreland that the strategy of attrition was wrong. Lieutenant General V. Krulak, CG FMFPAC argued -

It is our conviction that if we can destroy the guerrilla fabric among the people, we will automatically deny the larger units the food and the intelligence and the taxes, and the other support they need. At the same time, if the big units want to sortie out of the mountains and come down to where they can be cut up by our supporting arms, the Marines are glad to take them on, but the real war is among the people and not among the mountains.¹³

The years 1964-65 were the points in time when there was a clear distinction between the Army and Marine views on the operational level of pacification. Why is it that the Army was so critical of the Marine method? Why had the Marines' pacification methods developed this way? Necessity was the "mother of invention" for the Marine pacification efforts. During the summer of 1965, Third Battalion, Fourth Marines was running short of replacements as the ground war intensified and their TAOR was increased. With fewer Marines and an increased area of responsibility, the battalion turned to South Vietnamese Popular Forces (PF's), hoping to muster enough men from them to defend the area. What evolved from this meager beginning was combining Marines (squad size) with PF's and living in the surrounding villages. Out of this combined action of PFs and Marines living and fighting in the local villages evolved the Combined Action Platoons (CAP). The Marines expanded the battalion's concept, tested, evaluated it and found it to be effective in eliminating VC influence and control of the local village.

If the creation of combined action was the story of accident, expediency and improvisation by lieutenants and NCO's, then the program's formative years are a tale of vision and power politics. The key players were Commanding General of FMIFPAC

(Krulak), Commanding General of III MAF (Walt), the first CAP Commanding Officer (Corson), Commanding General of MACV (Westmoreland), and the civilian Deputy in Charge of Pacification (Komer). Combined Action Platoons were spreading across I Corps - there were seven CAP's by January 1966, and there would be fifty-seven a year later, but the fight to ensure their institutional survival would just begin!¹⁴

In an interview with Lieutenant Colonel W.C. Corson, the first CAP Commanding Officer, he made the following observations on Westmoreland's doubts concerning the Marine CAP program:

- That General Westmoreland and the U.S. Army Command felt that the CAP's were a diversion from the principal mission of fighting main force units and opposed expanding the CAP concept to the other Corps Zones, believing that it would drain the strength of maneuver battalions, duplicate the advisory effort and make the territories (rural populations) dependent on American support.

- That Westmoreland says that although the Marines achieved some noteworthy results with the CAP program, he simply did not have enough numbers to put a squad of Americans in every village and hamlet that would have been fragmenting resources and exposing them to defeat in detail.¹⁵

Corson believes that Westmoreland's arguments were ridiculous and quotes Andrew Krepinevich in his book *The Army in Vietnam* supporting his view that Westmoreland's arguments were not supported by the facts:

First, it was not necessary to place Army squads in every village simultaneously; indeed the oil spot principle called for a gradual expansion outward from selected areas. Westmoreland's argument is more reflective of the Army's impatience with quick results in a conflict environment that would not produce them. Second even if encadrement of every village and hamlet had been the requirement, a 1967 DOD report found that it could be met by utilizing 167,000 U.S. troops, far fewer than the 550,000 eventually assigned to South Vietnam. Within the 550,000 ceiling there could have been a CAP force together with several Army divisions to counter any moves by major Communist forces, and casualties would have been minimized and population security enhanced.¹⁶

The problem for the Marines was that they were under operational control of Westmoreland, who was commander of the U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV). The Marines were subordinate to the Army. Increasingly, Krulak, then Commanding General of FMFPAC, became aware of the active campaign by Army officials to dominate the war effort. What happens next is a series of meetings in Washington, DC, with General Krulak, Admiral Sharp, CMC General Greene, McNamara and President Johnson. The final outcome of these meetings was the Marines inability to get Westmoreland, McNamara, and President Johnson to focus on the strategic realities in Vietnam. The Marines interpretation of the strategic realities in Vietnam drove the concept for the CAP program. As the CAP program grew, so did the pressure from MACV to limit its growth. General Walt had already incurred the wrath of regular Army planners by devoting only a third of his forces to their style of air-mobile search and destroy missions against the NVA and main force VC; the rest were invested in the intensive effort to eradicate the villages from guerrilla influence. Larry Cable makes the following comments on General Walt -

After Vietnam, Walt would write books about what was wrong with America, so convinced was he of his rightness... as an officer candidate in 1936, he was in Lewis B. Puller's candidate company, and to Walt, learning from Puller was the epitome of what Marine Corps training should do.. He told us tales about fighting in Haiti and Nicaragua, of his patrols living off the land, and fighting natives- all his experiences, not just guff Every tale had some point.¹⁷

Although there was no direct linkage (that I have found) from General Walt's experience to the creation of Combined Action Platoons, his tutelage under Puller and other veterans of the Caribbean incursions guaranteed his immediate support for the CAP's. "This, and his hard driving attitude, made him appear to MACV as the same kind of paradox as General Krulak, a relentless, macho advocate of a flexible wimpy program."¹⁸ Both General Walt and General Krulak provided much needed backing for the CAP program as operational strategy for pacification.

Besides the Army, the CIA under the direction of Robert Komer was the civilian deputy in charge of pacification. Komer believed that forced urbanization of the country peasant to the city would deny peasant support to the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong and, thus, hamper their ability to live off the countryside. Westmoreland supported Komer's pacification efforts as an alternative to the Marine CAP pacification efforts. William Colby of the CIA ran the Phoenix program which was designed to eliminate suspected VC/NVA infrastructure in the villages and hamlets. Determining Phoenix's success depends upon who one talked to. Stanley Karnow interviewed several top communist officials and came to the following conclusion about Phoenix's effectiveness:

(Phoenix)...eliminated some sixty thousand authentic Vietcong agents...Col Bui-Tin, a senior officer: it had been a devious and cruel operation that cost the loss of thousands of our cadres ...Nguyen Co Thach, Vietnam's foreign minister after 1976, admitted that the Phoenix effort wiped out many of our bases in South Vietnam, compelling number of North Vietnamese and Vietcong troops to retreat to sanctuaries in Cambodia.¹⁹

The Marine CAP experience with Phoenix was somewhat different according to Lieutenant Colonel W. R. Corson:

Almost immediately in the wake of the first operations of the Phoenix hit squads in I Corps the rapport in the CAP hamlets between the Marines, the PF's and the people as well as the intelligence flow dried up. Upon examination we found out that the people and the PFs were scared shitless that the Phoenix hoodlums would come and take them away, or kill them ...The Phoenix effort was nothing more, or less than a bounty program organized and led by a Chinese ethnic Nung brigands who were paid in American dollars for killing people with little or no regard for their guilt or innocence.²⁰

FMFM 1-1 *Campaigning* spells out the art and science of designing and conducting a campaign. In the early phases of the Vietnam War, it can be argued that the Army and the Marine Corps shared a common desired end: South Vietnamese rule of their own country without North Vietnamese (communist) interference and

destabilization. The key to conducting a campaign is identifying critical enemy factors and centers of gravity. The critical step in designing the campaign depends on an accurate estimate of the situation. Pacification was one part of the equation in achieving the desired end state of South Vietnamese self-rule.

The Army and the Marine Corps disagreed on the means and priority of the pacification campaign. To the U. S. Army, the enemy center of gravity was NVA main force units. Large air mobile/assault search and destroy missions were the operational plans to achieve the desired end state. Destroy the NVA and you would have cut their access to the local peasant. With no access to the peasant, they have no influence, and you have solved the pacification problem. Under General Westmoreland's plan, the peasant had three choices: (1) Stay where he was and take his chances on the battlefield. (2) Join the VC. (3) Become a refugee and resettle to a strategic hamlet. The role of the U. S. Army was to win by conventional means, i.e., main force units conducting traditional operations. The hearts and minds campaign could be left to the Special Forces and other government agencies (CIA, the Phoenix program).

The Marines saw it differently, as they believed that the peasants had no good choices to make under the Army plan. 'Clear and Hold' or 'Ink Blot' was the Marine Corps' operational plan with 'Search and Destroy' operations providing a supporting role in combating the "Other War." Unity of effort was nonexistent in the overall pacification campaign between the Army and the Marines. As far as the U. S. Army was concerned, pacification could be handled by the South Vietnamese government.

The infighting between the Army and the Marines undermined unity of command and economy of force. Independent actors with their own separate agendas (CIA, State Department, Non-Government Organizations (NGO's)) added nothing to the focus of effort in achieving the desired end state in South Vietnam. The flaw in the Army and Marine pacification campaign was understanding centers of enemy strength. Both

services focused on the tactical ring of pacification: NVA/VC interaction with peasants

(see figure

1). The inner rings were not attacked with a unified campaign plan. There was no strategy that focused on the North Vietnamese centers of gravity: the Army, strategic leadership, their support bases or allies. FMIFM 1-1 elaborates this view:

Economy demands that we focus our efforts toward some object or factor of decisive importance in order to achieve the greatest effect at the least cost. The most effective way to defeat our enemy is destroy that which is most critical to his success in the theater. Clearly, we should focus our efforts against an object of strategic importance since this will have the greatest effect.²¹

The TET Offensive in 1968 was an "eye opener" for both the Army and the Marines. Clearly, the 'Search and Destroy' and 'Clear and Hold' operations were not having the perceived effect on the enemy, and as a result of TET, the Marines adapted or went to regular Army operations as a priority over the pacification campaign.

Image

CONCEPT OF OPERATION

The CAP concept was achieved by accident and can be characterized as a bottom-up strategy formed out of necessity. Lieutenant Paul Ek from 3d Battalion, 4th Marines had conducted an experiment of combining Marines and PFs as a force multiplier in 3/4's TAOR.²² It was not the only Marine unit conducting its own experiments. The 1st Battalion, 4th Marines had created an all volunteer unit on Ky Ha Peninsula, and the 4th and 7th Marines began training PFs in their TAOR's. The 3d and 9th Marines conducted joint operations with local forces at Da Nang.²³ After routing the VC forces at Le My, Marines stayed in the village to provide continued security and start civic action programs.²⁴

The success of these activities provided the genesis for CAP which General Walt heartily endorsed and actively encouraged its development. In the beginning, the Combined Action Platoon consisted of a squad of Marines (fifteen, including a sergeant squad leader and one Navy corpsman). The size of the CAP and rank make-up depended on many factors - troop availability, size and importance of the village, and availability of Marine support.²⁵ The Vietnamese Popular Forces provided a similar size of force to balance the CAP with a Vietnamese sergeant (Trung si) who led his squad in concert with his Marine counterparts. The mission of the CAP was to: (1) Destroy the VC infrastructure within the village or hamlet area of responsibility, (2) Protect public security and help maintain law and order, (3) Protect the friendly infrastructure, (4) Protect bases and communication axes within the villages and hamlets, (5) Organize people's intelligence nets, (6) Participate in civic action and conduct propaganda against the VC.²⁶

The long term goal for the CAP was to strive for village self-rule and protection.

A CAP's mission was complete when the villagers and PF's could operate on their own without CAP help. The theory was that as a village became self sufficient at home rule and protection then the CAP would proceed to the next village.

The CAP's were under the operational control of a Combined Action Company (CAC). A Marine captain was the company commander and was located at the District Headquarters where he had three or four Marines to assist him. His primary duties were to maintain radio contact with the CAP's, establish liaison with the District chief, and make periodic checks to each CAP site. The company commander was usually so far away that he personally could not react immediately to a CAP's call for reinforcement but rather show up the next day to assess the damage. CAP reinforcement came from other CAP's or mainline units in the area. Radio communicators were key to CAP survival in emergencies.

The Combined Action Group (CAG) was the overall senior command for CAP's and was commanded by a lieutenant colonel. The CAG was in control of several CAC's and was usually located with the Headquarters of a major Marine Corps unit. In his research paper "CAP in Vietnam," William C. Curtis states -

In practice the function of the CAG was to get qualified volunteers from the regular line units, see that they attend the two week CAP school, and forward them to the CAP's as replacements for those who had been killed, wounded, or had completed their tour of duty. Of almost equal importance was the CAG's responsibility as the source of supply for the CAP's. Providing food, ammunition, barbed wire, sandbags, weapons, medical supplies and a variety of other items, was absolutely vital to the CAP's survival.²⁷

As the CAP concept developed, several specific problems had to be overcome. Once the CA(3 had a table of organization and was a formal unit, recruitment became a priority problem. Support of personnel from parent infantry battalions left as the battalion rotated out of a CAP's village. By late 1967, interviews were conducted with a specific set of guidelines - (1) Have been in country for at least two months if on first tour or have

served a previous tour, (2) Have a minimum of six months remaining on current tour or agree to extend to meet this requirement, (3) Be a volunteer and motivated to live and work with the Vietnamese people, (4) Be a mature, motivated Marine and recommended by his commanding officer, (5) Had no non-judicial punishment and no courts-martial within the past year, (6) Have an average 4.0 mark in conduct and proficiency with last marks at least 4.0, (7) Have not received more than one purple heart award on current tour, (8) Preferably be a high school graduate.²⁸

Lieutenant Colonel William R. Corson was the first CAG commander and started the program in earnest. He started the CAP school which provided instruction on what was to be expected as a CAP Marine. Rudimentary language skills, tactics, first aid, elephant chess, and cultural awareness lessons were taught. It was not all encompassing, but it did provide a basic framework for the Marines.

In 1968, the TET Offensive brought about the introduction of the mobile concept to CAP's. Previously, CAP's had worked out of one village. After TET, CAP's abandoned the villages and were moving constantly throughout their TAOR. Eighty-nine percent of the CAP's had been switched to the mobility style within twelve months!²⁹ Why the push to a mobile-style CAP? According to some Marines, Komer's appetite for controlling anything pacification related was also responsible for the shift to mobility in the CAP program. MajGen E. E. Anderson analyzed it at the time:

The CAP program is not very popular with the people in MACV, the DepCORDS people or the MACV people. When Ambassador Komer was there, he tried his darndest to get the CAP program absorbed into the RF/PF program. Now the Army has gone to MATS (Mobile Advisory Teams) and MALTS (Mobile Advisory Logistics Teams) and they've got a considerable number now in I Corps and throughout Vietnam. So what Komer's latest ploy was to absorb the CAPs into the RF/PF structure and that would be controlled by DepCORDS . . . General Cushman resisted this, and he felt like that by coming up with some new idea, like the mobile CAP, he would get more mileage out of the CAP program and forestall any attempt on the part of Komer and other people of MACV to destroy the CAP program.³⁰

By 17 May 1971, the last CAP units had been deactivated. Was the CAP program a success? If you were to ask the Marines involved, the majority would say 'Yes, CAP was a worthwhile program, and the majority extended to stay another tour.' Looking at afteraction and command chronologies, there were success stories and failures throughout. Each CAP experience was unique and had a different set of circumstances that played to its success or failure. LCpl Paul Hernandez, a former CAP Marine, sums it up: "CAP was a short term success because the locals knew nothing of politics and just wanted to be left alone to grow their rice and live as they and their ancestors had for generations. When the CAP's pulled out in May 1971 and left their villes, they reverted back to what they had done prior to the CAP's coming in."³¹

Some of the major problems could be summed up as follows:

Language - A language school was established and language training provided, but often classes were not long enough or intense enough.

Cultural misunderstanding- An example was theft which Americans believed was wrong while PF's had no moral problems with borrowing an unused object.

Motivation in combat - A common complaint was that the PF's were lazy and could not be counted on in combat. The PF's would shoot straight up in the air to scare the VC. PF's would feign illness to avoid going on patrol. Deals would be struck between VC and PF's on patrol routes. PFs were scared of the VC and had no ambition to learn.

Cooperation - There was the possibility that PF's were VC or VC sympathizers. PFs had access to your radios, freq's, patrol routes, and rest stops. Who does one trust? Villagers were in a quandary as they often had relatives in the local VC. They did not want to see their relatives killed so cooperation on enemy intelligence was limited.

Civic action - The CAP's were charged with improving village life. In his study ""Marine Combined Action Capabilities: The Vietnam Experience," Bruce Allnutt found scarce evidence of the CAP performing Peace Corps-type civic action projects-

...as to the extent of effort involved in CAP civic action, it must be pointed out that, with the exception of medical services rendered by the corpsman daily, civic action is more easily found in reports and records than in the field. In searching for specific projects in civic action reports, CAP members were frequently vague as to the location and status of the project. In visits to 38 CAP's, many announced, only one was found to be actively conducting a civic action project other than handouts. Similarly, it is significant that a search of records at G-5, III MAF, for a one month period revealed no requests for materials from three of the four Combined Action Groups. In fact, there was little evidence of interaction between the CAP's and the G-5 which had overall responsibility for civic action in ICTZ (I Corps Tactical Zone). It appears that there was an almost total lack of communication between CAP officers and various CORDS (Civic Operations Revolutionary Development Support) representatives.³²

CAP personnel - Originally, the CAP Marines had been volunteers. This system had several drawbacks, especially the amount time a Marine would spend in the CAP. Most Marines assigned to CAP's were rotating home after spending only five or six months as a CAP member. After 1967, the selection process began to favor time left in country vice combat experience. The results of TET, i.e. increased enemy activity, MACV's pressure to conduct large operations and going with a mobile CAP concept led to drawing Marines straight from the United States. Many of the entrance requirements became even more meaningless, and prospective CAP personnel arrived much less qualified making the training program less effective.

Despite the challenge, the CAP's were having an effect. All of the CAP Marines interviewed believed the program was successful in the short term. No CAP TAOR had been taken over permanently by the VC. During the '68 TET Offensive, CAP's provided information on enemy buildup to headquarters and to adjacent units, but no one would take it seriously.³³ Despite custom and language shortcomings, the Marines believed they

interfaced successfully at the local level with the PF's and villagers. During the drawdown of CAP's, the South Vietnamese Army wanted the CAP's to stay as long as possible. Surprisingly, MACV, one of CAP's biggest critics, had the following comments:

CAP's have provided a type model for sustained integrated operations with territorial forces. This technique has proven to be effective and economical.... the Combined Action Program offered the prospect for a modest investment in U.S. forces yielding a major improvement in local security. To the extent that this was the final goal of all military operations in SVN, and the task which was proving to be the most difficult, every opportunity for achieving that goal should be pursued. CORDS, the pacification arm of MACV, reported that the tangible benefits of the CAP program have included better intelligence and increased security for the 88,000 people in the CAP hamlets. The CAP hamlets have an average security score of 2.95 on the Hamlet Evaluation System (HES) scale of 5.0...;the average security score for all I Corps hamlets is 1.60... A year later, alter evaluation by its district advisors (HES), CORDS reported that 'hamlets having U.S. Marine Corps Combined Action Platoons... nearby...outperformed other ICTZ hamlets in terms of the (HES) ratings Development scores rose .16 in CAP hamlets, but fell .13 in non-CAP hamlets.' Furthermore, this latter evaluation report demonstrated that CAP hamlets outperformed non-CAP hamlets on every LIES indicator but one. Another example of CORDS (and by extension MACV's) recognition of the program's value can be found in its analysis of CAP performance during the Tet Offensive: The HES ratings...also indicate that the CAP hamlets survived the Tet Offensive better than hamlets not protected by these units.³⁴

What is the final assessment of the CAP experiment? Did CAP's provide adequate hamlet security? Were they able to shut down VC influence in the hamlets? Did they get involved with civic action? Were the PF's self-sufficient after CAP training? The proponents of the program would give a resounding - "Yes, CAP did all that and more." They would point out that something must have been working because while the average CAP Marine had a 75 percent chance of being wounded once during his year-long tour and a 12 percent chance of dying, over 60 percent of the Marines volunteered for at least one six month extension.³⁵ They would cite the fact that in 1968, PF platoons that had been combined with Marines, although making up only 14 percent of the PF's in I Corps,

accounted for 55 percent of the enemy killed in action. The kill ratio for these CAP's was eight VC to one Marine/PF; regular PF units achieved a ratio of less than 3:1.³⁶

Despite the impressive numbers, to say that CAP Marines shared the same experience is not true. Interviews with two Marines, who had each served one year tours eighteen months apart in the same village, revealed completely different circumstances and views. The Marine who had served the first tour in the village was there at the conception of the CAP program. His experiences involved civic action and a Peace Corps-type environment. There were no VC firefights or pitched battles. Eighteen months later, the second Marine was sent to the same village. There were no civic action projects, and the PF's were reluctant to go on patrol. As a result, the Marines started their own KT patrols (Killer Teams) without PF support; however, when Headquarters learned of their existence, the KT patrols were outlawed.³⁷ There is a noticeable difference in the experiences of the stationary CAP's versus the mobile CAP's. The stationary CAP's were truly living with the people building up their rapport and trustworthiness with the village. Civic action took place, and timely intelligence was forthcoming. The mobile CAP's lost all the intimacy with the villages since they were constantly on the move. Although enemy contact was higher, what the mobile CAP's gained in body count, they lost in contact with the hamlets.

The critical questions cannot be definitively answered. Generally, the CAP's did provide a degree of security to the hamlets. All too often though, the success of the CAP seemed to be linked to the location of the village (close to VC or US influence) and the leadership ability of the sergeant.³⁸ As the corporate memory fades on the CAP experiences in Vietnam, the perceived "qualified success" of the CAP's may be the answer to a litany of challenges in future operations other than war or low intensity conflicts.

CAP FOR PEACE KEEPING/ENFORCEMENT?

It can be argued that UN Chapter VII Peace Enforcement Operations "demand the highest type of leadership directed by intelligence, resourcefulness, and ingenuity. [They] are conceived in uncertainty, and conducted often with precarious responsibility and doubtful authority, under indeterminate orders lacking specific instructions."³⁹ The quote was published in 1940, based upon Marine Corps experience in the Caribbean during the previous decade. The U.S. was conducting peace enforcement operations mid-century and before. Marines collated their experiences in peace enforcement operations and called it *The Small Wars Manual*. Operations by the Army and the Marines prior to World War II involved political stability and long term nation building. This type of conflict was well understood by all participants and recognized it in the spectrum of war.

The first article of the UN charter state that the UN's main objective is "to maintain international peace and security."⁴⁰ Chapter VI of the charter provides for the pacific settlement of disputes by a variety of peaceful measures including negotiation, inquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, and judicial settlement.⁴¹ Chapter VII, on the other hand, permits the use of political and economic pressure against sovereign states as well as armed force to "take such action by air, sea or land forces as may be necessary to maintain or restore international peace and security."⁴² Peace support operations is the term given to military operations conducted on behalf of the United Nations. It embraces all operations mandated under Chapter VI or Chapter VII of the UN Charter.

FM 100-5 defines peace enforcement as such -

Peace enforcement operations are military intervention operations in support of diplomatic efforts to restore peace or to establish the conditions for a peace keeping force between hostile factions that may not be consenting to intervention and may be engaged in combat activities. Peace enforcement implies the use of force or its threat to coerce hostile factions to cease and desist from violent

actions. Units conducting peace enforcement, therefore, cannot maintain their objective neutrality in every instance. They must be prepared to apply elements of combat power to restore order, to separate warring factions, and to return to the environment to conditions more conducive to civil order and discipline.⁴³

The U.S. Army's role in Haiti will be analyzed to see if a CAP-type organization would be the effective method of choice in a Chapter VII operation. The 2d Armored Cavalry Regiment (2d ACR) patrols the streets of greater Port-au-Prince, Haiti. The 2d ACR is augmented by two rifle companies and a detachment from an MP battalion. The mission is to place day and night patrols on the streets of Port-au-Prince, maintain fixed site security of key facilities across the city, provide a quick reaction force, protect non-governmental organization convoys, and guard the National Palace. LTC Kevin C. M. Benson, the Chief of Staff, U.S. Forces Haiti, elaborates

Patrolling is the basic mission of the regiment in Haiti. The patrols include day and night 'presence missions' and day and night 'saturation missions.' The basic unit of the presence patrol is the cavalry section - two scout HMNIW V's commanded by a SSG, SEC or Lieutenant. The day and night presence patrols cover a wider area of the city. The pattern of the patrol again harkens back to the frontier days of cavalry. The patrol rides for 45 minutes and walks for 15. The coverage of these patrols is such that the troopers range throughout the zone and maintain contact with the people, maintaining a vital link in the continuous information-gathering effort. The day and night saturation patrols mix infantry soldiers and cavalry troopers. The basic element of these patrols is a cavalry section in HMMWV's and an infantry squad aiding in a troop-carrying HMMWV. These patrols cover a smaller area of the city, but more thoroughly. These patrols go to the start point of their route mounted; then the squad dismounts, patrolling through streets too narrow for the mounted sections. The vehicles link up with the dismounted element at designated locations and then continue the patrol. The patrols perform the standard cavalry mission of reconnaissance, to confirm or deny priority information requirements, and the standing mission of maintaining a secure and stable environment through presence.⁴⁴

The Quick Reaction Force is either ground or a heliborne force complete with sling loads of HMMWV's that can react to any point on the island within 60 minutes. The similarities of the missions between the CAP's and the 2d ACR are depicted:

| CAP | 2d ACR |
|--|--|
| Protect public security and help maintain law and order | Maintaining a secure and stable environment through presence |
| Protect bases and communication axes within the villages and hamlets | Maintain fixed site security at key facilities across the city |
| Organize people's intelligence nets | Maintain a vital link in the continuous information gathering effort |
| Destroy VC infrastructure within the village and conduct propaganda against the VC | Perform the standard cavalry mission of reconnaissance, to confirm or deny priority information requirements |

One can conclude that the mission statements are virtually the same and that the 2d ACR operation is basically a mobile CAP. The 2d ACR mission of maintaining a vital link in the continuous information gathering effort misses the mark in mobile operations. That valued information is not gathered by a mobile patrol riding through the streets; human intelligence is best developed in a stationary CAP-style operation. The same concerns against adopting a mobile CAP in Vietnam apply to the 2d ACR mobile operations. If the stationary CAP's were doing their job correctly, i.e. working with the villages and gaining their trust, the CAP's would receive good intelligence, rendering the shift to mobility superfluous.⁴⁵

If the 2d ACR were to adopt a stationary, CAP-style mission, they would be more effective in staying in touch with the local populace. Maintaining a secure and stable environment through presence by living with the people sends a message of commitment to Haiti's struggle toward democracy. U.S. soldiers retiring to their compounds with air conditioning, radios, computers, and televisions lends nothing to the development of the local constabulary. Col E. F. Danowitz, Director of the CAP in 1969, describes this situation in Vietnam:

There is no longer the situation of the marine sitting in a bunker with his tape recorder or hi-fi or even his television set and on the other end of the bunker, under a tent., sits the PF [Haitian government counterpart] with none of these luxuries. Therefore, the commonality of standard had been achieved as closely as possible. The resentment is being certainly discontinued as much as possible and you have an increased cooperation through a mutual association in the same environment. I think this is vital....to the conduct of the program.⁴⁶

As Michael Herr point out in his book *Dispatches*, going "regular Army" in operations other than war does not always apply. Peace enforcement or operations other than war demand a different approach. The commonality between CAP and the 2d ACR speak for themselves. However, 2d ACR falls short operationally in truly accomplishing the mission. In order to be effective, conventional planning must allow for the incorporation of new ideas to accomplish the mission - not the standard cavalry mission of reconnaissance, to confirm or deny priority information requirements.

Peter Kiesecker, a former Royal Australian Army Medical Corps' officer, recently finished an assignment with CARE Australia in Somalia from January to June 1993. The CARE Australian mission in Somalia was to take the situation from one of emergency, to rehabilitation, and then to development. What captivated Kiesecker was the interaction between military personnel and NGO's in the field. In particular, how did the Australian, French, and American forces compare in their relations with NGO's? Kiesecker's conclusions are:

ATTITUDE - "There is an air of superiority that seems to be inherent in those who have guns, or at least the most guns. With the Americans and the French in Somalia the attitude was that 'only we understand the security situation.' As a result they were seen to adopt a dictatorial role towards the NGO's. "⁴⁷ The point is that many NGO's had been in Somalia long before the military arrived on the scene, and they had valuable information that could have been tapped. The notable exception was the Special Forces of the U.S. Army in the town of Baidoa.

MARKETING APPROACH - The Australians had taken a marketing approach as the method to best serve the needs of their customers - the NGO's and Somali people who showed an interest in improving the country. For the Australians to be successful in Kiesker's market analogy, three things must be accomplished: (1) to be consumer oriented, (2) stress long term profitability, and (3) to integrate and coordinate marketing and corporate functions. The results were that the Australians were able to instill a sense of security in the humanitarian operations. Kiesker on the French and U.S. Marines;

The interest which the U.S. Marines and the French troops displayed in their own security, by contrast, often compromised the protection provided to the NGO's in Baidoa. There were indeed enemies in the streets of Baidoa: petty criminals armed with knives, persons armed with whatever was at hand setting out for whatever reason to disrupt the rehabilitation process. You cannot stop such activity by hiding behind sandbags at a heavily protected airport as the Marines did. Nor does riding around in a jeep that heralds your coming make control possible. But if you are an Australian soldier on foot patrol you can close with the enemy and, when the situation calls for it, engage with him.⁴⁸

The Australians capitalized on flexibility by asking the Somalis and NGO's what can be done for them. Again, the results were a tailored response that solved specific problems. Weapons control was a constant problem; the French opted for the short-term effect by making a grab for the weapons of the NGO guards. The rash French move almost undermined the total security network in Baidoa. The French did not go on foot patrols, and the refusal to quarter troops in the NGO compound only added to the problems.

Kieseker points out that

The Australians also wanted guns off the streets but adopted a much more consumer-friendly approach. They analyzed the real problems as being gun control rather than gun possession and set about finding a long-term solution which all profit by. Again a consumer-focused approach proved to have the far superior result. If the French general had consulted with the NGO's he could have

made a much more informed decision on what to do about the guns' issue and would have saved himself from having to publicly reverse one of his strongest orders.⁴⁹

Customer need is what set the Australians apart from the Marines and the French.

Although the Australians were not required to conduct civic operations in Baidoa, they improved the town's water supply and built schools, jails, warehouses, and playground equipment for the orphanage. The Australians demonstrated to the community a long-term commitment to nation building. As Kieseker says

[The Australians] did not have to listen to endless elders and try to arbitrate on domestic issues. They did not have to let the elders come in close to them - they could have kept them at arm's length as the French did. But they did do all these things and more. The Australians were there to rebuild a nation and to do what you need to encourage the nation's people to take the initiative.⁵⁰

Kieseker decidedly gives the Australians a "well done" as compared to the French and U.S. Marines. The Australians' willingness to incorporate the experience from the NGO's and to listen to the village elders was the deciding factor to their success. The Civic Military Operations Team (CMOT) was crucial in establishing the rapport and trust between the Australians, NGO's, and Somalis. The Australians adopted the principles of war and applied them to peace. The CMOT embraces the CAP concept: living in the villages, establishing and maintaining rapport with the people, conducting civic action projects, fostering self-reliance, and maintaining local security. As Kieseker points out, it is far more effective to be in the village than running armed patrols from inside sandbagged citadels.

Operations other than war (OOTW) is a term that is all inclusive in an environment that may not involve combat. OOTW's continuum includes: peacekeeping, peace enforcing, arms control, noncombatant evacuation operations, support to domestic

civil authorities, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, security assistance, counter-drug operations, combating terrorism, show of force, and support for insurgencies and counterinsurgencies. The nature of OOTW-type operations is that they cannot be neatly categorized and dealt with as a separate issue. OOTW does not represent the U.S. Army's primary focus, i.e. fight and win the nation's wars. The reality is that today's armed services will operate around the world in an environment that straddles that gray area between war and OOTW.

Operations other than war may and/or follow war or occur simultaneously with war in the same theatre. They may be conducted in conjunction with a wartime operations to complement the achievement of strategic objectives. They may support a combatant commander's forward-presence operations or a U.S. ambassador's country plan.⁵¹

The nature of OOTW can have the following characteristics:

- May proceed/follow/occur simultaneously with a war
- Same theatre or different theatre
- U.S. alone, joint, multi-lateral
- Active Army, reserve, civilians
- Integration of Dept of State, DEA, CIA, DIA, AID, Dept of Justice, EPA, Dept of Agriculture, Dept of Commerce
- Specific mission, no specific mission, no clear end-state, end-state and mission could change
- No host nation support, no worldwide support, no UN support
- Military operations under political constraints

The complexities of OOTW require an imaginative approach to meet the challenge. A CAP-style operation appears tailor-made to support insurgencies and counterinsurgencies. British doctrine defines insurgency as "organized armed political struggle.. intent on political change by means of a mixture of subversion, propaganda and military pressure, aiming to persuade or intimidate the broad mass of the people to accept change."⁵²

As pointed out in the *Small Wars Manual* of 1940, insurgencies tend to evolve from states or governments that fail to provide or redress the demands of significant

social groups. The cause for discontent can range from perceived tribal injustices or the government's inability to keep pace with modern progress. An examination of the British Army's concept of counterinsurgency strategy and planning guidelines will clarify the viability of a CAP-style operation.

In British doctrine, the overall goal of the insurgent is to force political change. Any military action is secondary in the pursuit of the desired political end state. Insurgencies are likely to occur in states where there are social divisions: cultural, racial, ideological, or religious. Economically weak states or ineffective state governments are prime targets for insurgency. The key point is that there is a lack of a mold from which an insurgency springs. The recent trend of emerging insurgencies is to pick and choose strategy and tactics from past insurgencies and adapt them to their own particular needs. It is critical to understand the characteristics of insurgency to gain a sense of its strengths.

Such an examination will identify the root cause or causes of the insurgency, the extent to which it enjoys support, both motivation and depth of commitment; the likely weapons and tactics he will use and the operational environment in which he will seek to initiate, and then develop, his campaign. This approach will not only help the commander to identify the insurgent's centre of gravity and design an effective campaign plan, but should ensure that he interprets the specific cultural signals and acts accordingly.⁵³

British planning guidelines echo the *Small Wars Manual* on two points, the principles of legitimacy and minimum necessary force. Through experience, the British have learned that a few givens must occur in planning to wage a successful campaign:

- The problem is essentially political, so must the solution
- C² must be joint and politically dominated
- Intelligence gathering is critical
- Split the insurgents from political and actual supports by civil affairs programmes (hearts and minds)
- Psychological operations
- Neutralization of isolated activist by military force
- Long term political and socioeconomic reforms

The key to successful campaigning is to be flexible and adaptive to any insurgent changes. The handling of the insurgents themselves is unique in that a program exists to allow the insurgents "to surrender and, through reform, be used in government service."⁵⁴

The British operational design in insurgencies focuses on finding them, fixing them, and striking them. This sounds like General Westmoreland's strategy in Vietnam; however, the British balance conventional force operations with pacification.

At the outset of an insurgency the population will tend to hesitate before deciding whether to support the government or the insurgents. Hence, although the commander will be keen to secure his base areas (near operations) as a priority, he will also need to initiate action throughout the frame work of operations, at the earliest opportunity to seize the initiative in the 'hearts and minds' battle.⁵⁵

The importance the British place on the 'hearts and minds' battle is obvious and provides the opportunity for a CAP-type operation to win that battle.

U.S. support for insurgencies and counterinsurgencies takes the same course as the British. "The military instrument of U.S. national power predominantly supports political, economic, and informational objectives."⁵⁶ Though U.S. planning provides the framework for dealing with insurgencies, it does not specifically mention the 'hearts and minds' battle as does the British. U.S. doctrine for support of selected insurgencies recognizes that it is usually covert in nature. Ideally, Special Forces are the units that are trained and equipped for this type of mission. However, "general-purpose forces may also be called upon when the situation requires their particular specialties or when the scope of operations is so vast that conventional forces are required."⁵⁷ U.S. planning allows for conventional forces to assume the role of special units in insurgency operations. A natural extension would be a CAP-style operation providing a force multiplier to a theatre commander in rear area operations.

The greatest utility of a CAP-style organization would be in the context of foreign

internal defense.

The U.S. uses its military resources to provide support to a host nation's counterinsurgency operations in the context of foreign internal defense (FID) through logistical and training support. FID is the participation by civilian and military agencies in any of the action programs another government takes to free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, and insurgency. The U.S. ambassador, through the country team, provides the focal point for interagency coordination and supervision of FID. Military support is provided through the unified CINC.⁵⁸

Major Charles Driest, USMC, in his study "Combined Action Platoons: A Possible Role in the Low-Intensity Conflict Environment" linked a CAP-type organization with operations in a low-intensity conflict. Using *FM 100-20 Military Operations in Low-Intensity Conflict*, he interfaced the CAP's mission and the FM's internal defense and development strategy section.

| <u>Cap Mission</u> | <u>FM 100-20</u> |
|--|----------------------|
| Destroy VC infrastructure | Security force OPS* |
| Protect public security Maintain law and order | Security force OPS |
| Protect friendly infrastructure | Neutralization |
| Protect communication networks | Security force OPS |
| Organize people's intelligence nets | Mobilization |
| Participate in civic action and con- duct propaganda against VC | Balanced development |

*i.e. presence missions, patrolling establishing checkpoints, etc.

Major Driest comes to the conclusion that the CAP's missions supported the intent of FM 100-20 with the notable exception of law and order.

Part of the CAP's mission was to maintain law and order. This was not a reasonable mission and it should not have been given to the CAP's. Though the platoon was an integrated unit, the potential for U.S. forces to make mistakes was great. The law and order mission should be left to the host nation organizations. This premise is revealed in FM 100-20 where the mission is included under Security Force Operations. U.S. forces are neither equipped nor should they become involved in the legal system of local villages, towns or cities. The potential for mistakes and possible insurgent use of this situation in propaganda efforts are too great.⁵⁹

Concerning CAP's and LIC's, Driest makes the following points:

- (1) That a CAP-style organization would be successful in a LIC environment that was counterinsurgency in nature.
- (2) That a CAP organization has a role in a LIC environment as it relates to the FR) in FM 100-20.
- (3) If CAP's or similar style organization were to be successful then it would have to operate in a country similar to Vietnam's infrastructure.
- (4) That a CAP-type organization would have to be augmented with specialists (linguists, engineers) and have cultural training to be effective.
- (5) Long term success comes from the quality people assigned to CAP-type organization, especially their ability to convince the local populace of the U.S's seriousness to its commitment to their nation.

British doctrine identifies the priority of establishing the 'hearts and minds' campaign whereas U.S. doctrine does not address it. Recent events in Somalia suggest a different approach to U.S. involvement could have been more effective. The 2d ACR's mission in Haiti is similar to the CAP's mission in Vietnam; therefore, the logical conclusion is that a CAP-type organization should be included in U.S. military strategy.

AGE OF UNCERTAINTY AND RECURRING THEMES

The collapse of the Berlin Wall, signifying the end of the Cold War, places America's army in an age of uncertainty. Forced end-strength downsizings, smaller budgets, and competing interservice roles and missions place the U.S. military in a quandary. Smaller budgets challenge military leadership in prioritizing limited funds. Should money go primarily to research and development or to readiness and training? America faced the same situation in the 1920's and 1930's: the U.S. economy in the grips of a severe depression, a small military had to accomplish more with less money. The Marine Corps collated its experience in the *Small Wars Manual* as a result of its overseas involvement in the 20's and 30's. Now it is referred to as UN Chapter VII or OOTW operations.

Incorporating a total combined strategy, i.e. a strategy that wins the fight on the battlefield and also implements a long-term strategy for peace, is the challenge in past and current conflicts such as Nicaragua, the Philippines, Vietnam, Somalia, Haiti, and Bosnia. The unknown nature of future conflict poses a problem. Current military doctrine's primary focus is to fight and win the nation's wars. Conflict is divided into combat and other! The other category includes everything else which may involve combat at times. Doctrine recognizes the distinction while at the same time acknowledges overlaps between the two, such as conducting major ground operations and campaigning a counterinsurgency. President Kennedy recognized this phenomenon which provided the genesis for Special Forces development. Major ground operations were the priority in Vietnam, but the greatest challenge in America's strategy seems to be in establishing long-term goals, i.e. recognizing the importance of and waging an effective pacification campaign.

The CAP program in Vietnam was an invention of necessity. The CAP's did not start out as the Marine contribution to MAC V's pacification campaign. CAP was a force

multiplier for an infantry battalion's expanding TAOR. From that beginning, the Marines saw its real value as a means to reach a long-term goal: pacification of the hamlets and villages. "In the final analysis, the CAP program filled a void that was initially driven by a need for people. As the program grew, it filled a void in the execution of counter-insurgency operations by U.S. forces in a LIC environment."⁶⁰ There is no tangible proof that CAP's were successful, rather it is the intangibles that say it was effective and successful.

The recurring theme in Somalia and Haiti suggests that there was or is a place for a CAP-style organization to exist. Operations in Haiti, in particular the peace enforcement mission, share the same original mission statement as the Vietnam CAP's. CARE Australia personnel recognized that Marine operations were short in solving the long-term goal of stabilization. Peter Kieseker asked the Marines what was the purpose of being in Somalia to which they responded, "It is to protect convoys and NGO's such as yourself."⁶¹ The military strategy falls short in dealing with the total picture and solving the long-term goals. Just as Army doctrine recognizes the need for OOTW, they fail to integrate lessons from the past. On the other hand, British doctrine on counterinsurgency reflects the high priority the commander must assign in the 'hearts and minds' battle. What is necessary is the meshing of British and U.S. doctrine priorities in UN Chapter VII and OOTW strategy. Major Driest makes a direct connection in Foreign Internal Defense (see figure 2) for a meshing with a CAP-type organization.

The CAP's perceived success in Vietnam is double edged. Eric Liu in his paper "Speaking the Truth" explains -

There is indeed a danger of combined action becoming a 'totem and tribal memory' which Marines will revere blindly. There is the danger, too, that this historical revisionism - intensified by some of the undeniable successes of the program - will drive us like Rambo movies drove us in the 1980's, to think that we need to use CAP's again in cheap, low risk wars, because this time they will work (even better). If the Marine Corps understands its past only in terms which

inflate the CAP experience, those distortions will soon become unimpeachable dogma woven into the institutional experience - so called vital lies - and worse, hyperbole will have spawned policy. ⁶²

Image – Figure 2. CAP Command Relationship⁶³

Al Hemingway, in his book *Our War was Different* on CAP's, came to the conclusion that "the Combined Action Program was certainly the most imaginative strategy to emerge from the Vietnam conflict. And CAP-type units could indeed be used in low-intensity conflicts today, if the proper conditions were met."⁶⁴ On the other hand, Michael Peterson takes a different view. "With respect to the future, one might ask whether the Combined Action concept is applicable to any foreign wars in which America may find itself. The answer is probably not."⁶⁵ However, he goes on to say that a CAP-style response is possible if the right conditions were met in a LIC environment.

Pauline Baker and John Ausink, in their article "State Collapse and Ethnic Violence: Toward a Predictive Model," provide insight to future military involvement:

Of the 31 major armed conflicts that raged in the world in 1994, all were internal in origin (though some such as Nagorno-Karabakh and Bosnia-Herzegovina have had interstate implications). And in the five years following the end of Desert Storm, the U.S. military conducted 27 overseas operations stemming from ethnic wars or state collapse, ranging in scale from a noncombat evacuation in Sierra Leone in May 1992 to Operation Restore Democracy in Haiti in September 1994. President Clinton's decision in 1995 to send 20,000 U.S. troops to Bosnia is merely the latest such engagement. ⁶⁶

UN Chapter VI Peacekeeping Operations provide the greatest utility for a CAP-style organization to be effectively employed. If hostilities breakout and negotiations, state reforms and power sharing are leading to a peaceful partition or conflict resolution then CAP-style units are the organization of choice to be in place in that country. On the other hand, if full scale conflict, ethnic cleansing, or the disintegration of the state ensues, a CAP-style unit would be the in-country enabling force that facilitates the introduction of Chapter VII Peace Enforcement mainline units. Once the situation stabilizes and the

mainline units are no longer required the CAP-type units assume their primary role of peacekeeping. A key point is that a CAP-style unit has the ability to adapt to a changing situation or mission.

This is CAP's greatest contribution to the challenge of interfacing UN Chapter VI and VII operations that seem to dominate post-Cold War conflicts. The variations are endless as there is no specific pattern in conflict resolution. Bard E. O'Neill, in his book *Insurgency & Terrorism: Inside Modern Revolutionary Warfare*, brings out the relevancy of a CAP-type mission in an insurgency:

The key components are patrols, attacks, and ambushes by dispersed units operating day and night, supported by mobile forces. Air artillery and commando harassment of insurgents in remote areas where bases are likely to have been established may also make an important contribution to the antiguerrilla efforts. Populated areas cleared of guerrilla bands should be reorganized by military civic action teams that are prepared to play a defensive role in conjunction with forces operating in the region.⁶⁷

Currently, the Marine Corps is wrestling with what it will look like in the 21st century. One of the concepts being explored is called Sea Dragon which would employ mobile units that are smaller and more lethal. Light regiments of 400-500 personnel would be created then broken into small squads that would operate independently of each other. Fire support would come from long range weapons. One proposal would have a regiment's TAOR cover 100-200 kilometers of terrain.

Take the Sea Dragon concept and give it the mission to protect the people, establish intelligence nets, and destroy enemy infrastructure, and one would have a modern CAP-style organization. A mobile, lethal organization that carries a solid punch in weaponry is half of the equation; Sea Dragon must not stop with the purely military side. Figure 3 depicts the CAP in Vietnam as the village nexus. Figure 4 shows what an interface with a light regiment squad would be in an OOTW environment. The interface

that Sea Dragon squads would have with other government agencies ties into long range strategy. These highly mobile, lethal squads must have the training to make them an effective team.

Image – Figure 3. The CAP as the Village Nexus⁶⁸

Image – Figure 4. The Sea Dragon as the Local Nexus

Earlier this century, the Marine Corps was often called "State Department's Troops." During the 1960's, the term used was "Ambassadors in Green." The Marines must be able to field a force that can respond to riots in Los Angeles, "go regular army" in the Middle East, and handle operations in Haiti and Somalia. A CAP-style organization fits the bill for a modern military force. The military can not just chase bandits and hope to win in the long term. If required, the military must be prepared to participate in elections, civil affairs, police, and running a country to the point (stability) that a legitimate government can take over. A CAP-style organization would provide one tool in the kit bag that could accomplish that type of mission.

NOTES

¹Al Hemingway, *Our War Was Different: Marine Combined Action Platoons in Vietnam* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1994), 54-55.

²Michael E. Peterson, *The Combined Action Platoons: The U.S. Marines' Other War in Vietnam* (New York: Praeger, 1989), 15-19.

³*Small Wars Manual* (Washington, DC: Headquarters Marine Corps, 1940), 1.

⁴*Small Wars Manual*, 32.

⁵*Small Wars Manual*, 15-16.

⁶*Small Wars Manual*, 18 & 32.

⁷Peterson, 17-18.

⁸Peterson, 18.

⁹Peterson, 18.

¹⁰Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History* (New York: Viking Press, 1983), 678.

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