



CENTER FOR
ADVANCED
OPERATIONAL
CULTURE
LEARNING

Points of Interest:

- From the Director
- Operational Culture Regional Topics: Iraq, Afghanistan, Latin America, and Somalia.
- Operational Culture Analysis: How It Works
- What can CAOCL do for YOU?

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CAOCL'S MISSION

CAOCL, as the central Marine Corps agency for Operational Culture, will provide regional, operational culture and language knowledge through training and education, in order to plan and operate in the joint expeditionary environment.



OPERATIONAL CULTURE

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From the Director

Welcome to the inaugural issue of *Operational Culture*, the newsletter of the Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning (CAOCL)—an easy-to-read synopsis of the latest trends in Marine Corps cultural learning and language familiarization. This is also a forum for discussion and debate about these important issues.

As you may know, Training and Education Command (TECOM) stood up CAOCL in the spring of 2005. We were created to help Marines plan and operate successfully in a joint expeditionary environment.

Equipping Marines with the essential regional, cultural, and language skills that enable them to effectively operate in any region of the world has been re-validated by the just-released "Marine Corps Vision and Strategy 2025."

The Commandant's new vision statement calls upon all Marines to acquire all the necessary cultural and communications skills to enable them to effectively navigate the "cultural terrain." This means giving Marines the skills they need to operate in any current and potential operating conditions in order to effectively target persistent and emerging irregular, traditional, catastrophic, and disruptive threats.

Complementary to the Commandant's vision and strategy is the Long War operational employment concept that makes the awareness of regional and cultural issues into the foundation of future Marine Corps operations. In particular, cultural awareness and language skills are now key tasks associated with building partnership capacity.

To that end, CAOCL's three primary lines of operations – education, pre-deployment training, and regional studies – are connected by a language familiarization program that blends instructor-facilitated classes with self-paced, computer-based training.

To date, CAOCL has supported OIF and OEF. This focused effort will not waver. We are broadening our culture and language capacity to include the development of other regional and country specific packages that support security force activities and unit deployments to Africa, South America, and other global locations.

Your access to Rosetta Stone, CL-150, and other language training programs are part of our effort to develop and sustain individual language skills within the Corps. These courses can be taken via MarineNet or at any of our newly-opened Language Learning Resource Centers.

Additionally, we are expanding our education programs to include a more dynamic Enlisted and Officer PME. We are also creating a Culture and Strategic Studies program: a confederation of organizations that will provide research, seminars, and symposia. And, lastly, in the spring of 2009, we will release the Career Marine Regional Studies (CMRS) program.

Good things are happening here at CAOCL. However, we believe that our goal of constantly striving to improve service to the Marine Corps is enhanced by active communications with the people we train and educate. So let's hear from you and start a dialogue!

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Corporal Randolph Ramirez of 1st Battalion, 6th Marines congratulates Iraqi Security Force (ISF) soldiers after graduating a combat leaders course.

Finishing the Job in Iraq

Controversial news reports from the London *Times* in early November indicate that an Iraqi soldier in Mosul opened fire on his American fellow patrolmembers. These reports indicate the incident took place following an American publically slapping (and thus dishonored) him.

This incident highlights the importance of understanding culture and building personal relationships in the Iraq advising mission. Feedback from Marines indicates that advisors cannot treat Iraqis like inferiors, nor employ harsh or demeaning criticism without alienating their counterparts. Instead, they must empower Iraqi Security Forces by transitioning from

mentors to partners.

While everyone agrees that the mission in Iraq must be finished, what that means is often undefined. Finishing the job in Iraq means continuing to commit the time and resources necessary to ensure Iraq is a stable state before departing. That means continuing the transition from a counterinsurgency mission to one focused on advising and security cooperation, allowing Iraq to become a stable ally instead of an occupied state.

Understanding aspects of Iraqi culture, including honor, shame,

their work ethic and approach to timelines, is only a starting point for advising Iraqis. Building rapport and establishing trust will allow Marines to influence Iraqis to adopt positive aspects of Marine professionalism and culture. Ultimately, the Marine Corps maxim of 'leading by example' will encourage Iraqis to take more responsibility for their own nation's security.

Building relationships and trust takes time, and so will finishing the job in Iraq.

DID YOU KNOW?
...BUILDING A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH AN IRAQI CAN DIRECTLY IMPROVE YOUR PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM, TOO.

“ALLOWING AN AFGHAN TO SAVE FACE IN A SITUATION THAT COULD MAKE HIM LOOK WEAK OR FOOLISH CAN PREVENT HIM FROM BEING DISHONORED. MAKING THIS EFFORT SHOWS RESPECT AND BUILDS RAPPORT.”

Pashtoonwali, the Afghan Code of Honor

Pashtoonwali, the Afghan code of honor, predates any official written law in Afghanistan. For thousands of years, it has maintained a stable society and offered protection for everyone. There are no schools where people learn this law, but it is part of day-to-day life.

Each Pashtoon learns about *Pashtoonwali* from their elders. Some of the common elements of *Pashtoonwali* are: hospitality (*milmastia*), asylum or protection (*panah*), forgiveness

(*nanawati*), and revenge (*badal*). Afghan honor is closely tied to their public image. What an Afghan's peers think of him speaks to his honor, and something that dishonors him must be avenged—it will never just expire.

For a Marine, this means that it is important to allow Afghans to be hospitable (and to return the favor, showing in Afghan terms that Marines, too, are honorable.)

A Marine may be able to request *panah* from an Afghan

man. If granted, this can create a valuable ally. Conversely, an Afghan who has granted *panah* to an enemy of the Coalition is equally honor-bound to defend them. Pressing the attack will dishonor the host and can create another enemy.

Allowing an Afghan to save face in a situation that could make him look weak or foolish can keep him from being dishonored. Making this effort shows respect and builds rapport.

Marines who display savvy regarding elements of *Pashtoonwali* may find it easier to build rapport with Afghans.

DID YOU KNOW?
...FOR MOST AFGHANS, MAINTAINING THEIR PUBLIC HONOR IS THEIR TOP PRIORITY, ABOVE EVEN THEIR LIFE?



The Somali pirates holding the merchant vessel *Faina* stand on the deck of the ship after a US Navy request to check the health of the crew. The cargo ship was seized 25 Sept 2008 and forced to anchor off the Somali coast. The ship carried a cargo of Ukrainian T-72 tanks and related military equipment.

Piracy in the Horn of Africa: A Culture of Business

Like their forefathers of the 19th century, gangs of 21st century pirates are prowling the waters again, waiting to capture their next prey. Off the coast of Somalia, in the international waters of the Gulf of Aden, pirates are back again!

So what? Marines may think that piracy is a new activity in the Horn of Africa. However, piracy in Somalia is a long-standing cultural practice. For centuries, multi-clan groups of Somali and Yemeni have been in the business of hijacking boats

DID YOU KNOW?
...SOMALIA HAS EXISTED IN A STATE OF TOTAL ANARCHY SINCE 1991.

and ocean liners passing through the Gulf, and holding them for ransom, paid in cash by the shipping companies.

Further Operational Culture knowledge of the region shows us that people in the Horn of Africa are first and foremost business-oriented; ideology, religion, and extremism often come second to practical dealings. From a cultural perspec-

tive, this is both a strength and weakness that Marine commanders can use to their advantage to complete any type of mission in the region.

Understanding the business culture of Somali people, pirates as well as Islamic fighters, is paramount. A study on 200 years of cultural practices in the area reminds us that a Marine, under certain circumstances, could be more strategically effective if he negotiates a deal with an enemy instead of fighting him.

Latin America: A Land of Diversity

Your Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) is on its way to Afghanistan, and your Marines have completed all their pre-deployment training, including their region-specific operational language and culture training. Ten days into the deployment, the MEU is diverted to a new region to provide humanitarian assistance: Uruguay, in South America. This is a common situation for Marines and highlights the need to be expeditionary and flexible.

If you were in that situation, you would need to ask yourself what you knew about Latin America. Are Latinos a race or a culture? Do Latinos share a common culture, race, or values? What do you have in common with people in Latin America, and how can you operate in this area and work with Latin Americans? Do you think that the problem is solved because you have a Latino Marine from Mexico who can serve as an interpreter for the unit? Not so fast.

Latin America is not a single country or culture. It is 21 countries and a conglomerate of diverse cultures that speak Spanish, Portuguese,

French, and indigenous languages such as Maya.

Latin America extends from Mexico in North America, Central America and the Caribbean, and all of South America. Each country within this vast area called Latin America has its own history and culture. Your Marine from Mexico—or any other Latin American country—will not be enough to deal with the new environment where you and your troops will operate. The level of specificity required is simply too great to apply Mexican culture to Uruguay. Knowing this will help you seek the support and training needed for this mission.

Latin America includes many ethnic groups and races, and is one of the most diverse areas in the world. The specific composition varies: some areas are mostly indigenous people, others are mostly European-descent, others are primarily African-descent, and many have a broad mix of peoples.

You and your Marines should understand that our neighbors to the South are not a single group, but a conglomerate of different cultures and languages, each with its own challenges.

DID YOU KNOW?
 ...30% OF OUR OIL IMPORTS COME FROM LATIN AMERICA, AND BRAZIL IS THE 3RD FASTEST GROWING SUPPLIER?

Operational Culture: Lessons Learned from the Field

The situation in the remote Afghan village seemed stable. Bids had been submitted for the new construction project and the CO had approved a builder from a town fifty miles away in the valley below. Because of the poor road conditions, it was agreed that the workers would stay in temporary housing near the village.

The first week went well. The workers were diligent and the contractor seemed eager to please. Then strange incidents began to occur. At first they were minor: tools stolen off the job site, a scuffle between one of the workers and the villagers. At the same time, the relationship between the Marine unit and the villagers seemed to sour. The village elders, who had cooperated with the Marines so far, no longer had time to meet with the CO or his XO.

One afternoon as the workers were headed back to their housing, violence suddenly erupted between the villagers and the workers, leaving several men injured and one man close to death. What went wrong?

In today's military operating environments, Marines frequently work with and among local people. As the above case on Afghanistan illustrates, however, understanding and effectively working with people from another culture can be difficult. Often, local people act in seemingly irrational and unpredictable ways.

Today, Marines can use the principles of Operational Culture to evaluate the cultural situation on the ground. Operational Culture does not simply provide a cultural "do's and don'ts" list. It gives Marines a framework to analyze the

cultural factors that will affect operations and choose a wise course of action. Let's look at the Afghanistan example above using an Operational Culture approach.

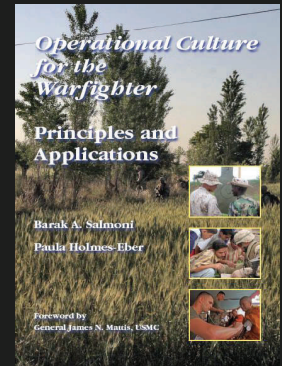
What went wrong? The Operational Culture approach is based on using five key Dimensions to evaluate the cultural situation. One of these Dimensions is Social Structure. Using this Dimension, Marines look for the ways that power, status, resources, and roles are connected to people's position in society. One of the ways that power and status are apportioned is according to ethnic identity. Depending on the local culture, certain ethnic groups may have greater power and status in the community than others. In Afghanistan, Pashtuns wield considerable power and authority, particularly along the border with Pakistan. In contrast, Hazaras have a history of low status and oppression.

In the case described above, the mountain villagers were Pashtun. The contractor and his men were Hazara. Conflict erupted because the Pashtun villagers, who had few employment opportunities in the village, resented that the contract had been awarded to the low status Hazara who had now come to live among them.

The lesson to learn: If an Operational Culture assessment had been conducted before the contract was awarded, the violence between these two ethnic groups could have been avoided by awarding the contract to a more local—Pashtun—contractor.



"[LATIN AMERICA IS] NOT A SINGLE GROUP, BUT A CONGLOMERATE OF DIFFERENT CULTURES AND LANGUAGES, EACH WITH ITS OWN CHALLENGES."



To learn more about Operational Culture, Marines can contact CAOCL and request a free copy of the book *Operational Culture for the Warfighter: Principles and Applications* (MCU Press, 2008).

ONE AFTERNOON AS THE WORKERS WERE HEADED BACK TO THEIR HOUSING, VIOLENCE SUDDENLY ERUPTED BETWEEN THE VILLAGERS AND THE WORKERS, LEAVING SEVERAL MEN HURT AND ONE MAN CLOSE TO DEATH. WHAT WENT WRONG?



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Anyone with a CAC has access to resources for Persian Farsi Language Familiarization, Modern Standard Arabic Familiarization, Tactical Iraqi Culture, and many others.

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Points to Ponder: “Baghrām, not Baghdad”

The reduction of violence in Iraq – especially in Al Anbar Province – has produced a series of “lessons learned” on working and succeeding in that operational environment.

But, as Marine operations now transition to Afghanistan, it seems logical to apply those lessons in Afghanistan. After all, both countries have porous borders with Iraq, both are majority-Muslim, and both have young, burgeoning democracies supported by the US.. and its allies.

Such superficial similarities, however, mask profound differences. Trying to transfer wholesale many strategic, operational, tactical, and even cultural lessons learned in Iraq could be ill-advised.

Geographically, over 80% of Afghanistan is covered by mountains; Iraq is mostly flat desert. Mountainous regions create isolated communities with limited outside communication. Such remote villages develop their own cultures, dialects and political and tribal structures often

independent of, or in competition with each other; complicating central leadership.

Today in Iraq, there are two predominant ethnic groups, Arabs and Kurds, divided by – among other things – two distinctly different languages. In Afghanistan, there are at least 20 significant languages and as many ethnic groups, each with their own power base. This diversity of cultures means the U.S. military cannot apply one unified operational plan in Afghanistan; we must deal with each ethnic group differently.

In Iraq, a great source of tension is the Sunni/Shi’ite conflict. In Afghanistan, Shi’ites are less than 20% of the population, so that conflict is absent. Instead, the Sufi tradition, small in Iraq, is widespread in Afghanistan.

Iraqi people are mostly urban, while Afghanistan is a rural society. 80% of Afghans live in remote, low-tech areas while Iraq was a modern, literate society before the U.S. invasion.

Rural Afghanistan remains iso-

lated, with low literacy rates, and with a society based on oral tradition. This situation makes most information operations in Afghanistan based on Western definitions of history unsuitable.

Ethnic differences and the nature of tribal society in southern and eastern Afghanistan are profoundly different than in Iraq. In Afghanistan, tribal leadership is less centralized and spread among ethnic groups. Important tribal decisions depend on unanimous adult male agreement. Engaging the tribes of south and east Afghanistan must be more personal, intensive, and sustained than in Iraq.

The implication is obvious: What was successful in Iraq cannot just be transferred as a strategy for Afghanistan.

Bottom Line: Pre-deployment culture training for Afghanistan cannot be skipped by assuming this new operational setting is similar to what Marines face in Iraq. This means that continual Operational Culture training is critical to your success.

What Can CAOCL Do For You?

CAOCL is **your** resource for Operational Culture and language familiarization. For small-unit commanders, contacting your battalion operations or training officer is the first step to receive this vital training for you and your Marines. Those officers can contact the CAOCL Liaison Officers (LNOs), who have the tools to help identify and satisfy culture and language requirements. With LNO guidance, Marines can leverage resources not only from CAOCL, but from across the DoD.

The LNOs have several training models to incorporate language and culture into the pre-deployment training (PTP) continuum based on needs and time available, most involving CAOCL mobile training teams.

CAOCL sponsors three computer-based training programs for individualized Marine language training covering national security interest languages.

The “CL-150” program uses a variety of learning regimens including immersion simulations and Tactical Language Kits (TLKs) designed to rapidly bring a novice to basic-level proficiency. Marines can register for CL-150 with the Training Coordinator (email below).

The second program, “Rosetta Stone,” is available on MarineNet as explained in Maradmin 661/08.

CAOCL’s Language Learning Resource Centers (LLRCs), currently in K-Bay, Hawaii as well as Camps Schwab and Foster in Okinawa, offer a “language lab” setting that includes the third training program: “Tactical Language Training Simulation” (TLTS), a series of tactical simulations requiring applied culture and language knowledge.

CAOCL also offers cultural knowledge as part of PME, providing culture-specific training to fit Marine needs. Additionally,

CAOCL offers PME on Operational Culture principles that teach Marines how to apply cultural understanding to military operations. More advanced Operational Culture education is available through Marine Corps University.

CAOCL is always working to create new operationally-focused curriculum. Subscribing to *Operational Culture*—this monthly newsletter—at the CAOCL public web page will help you stay current on the latest developments in Marine Corps culture and language training.

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DID YOU KNOW?

...CAOCL IS HERE TO SERVE YOU, THE MARINE.