Is There a Deep Fight in a Counterinsurgency?

Major Lee K. Grubbs, U.S. Army, and Major Michael J. Forsyth, U.S. Army

IS THERE a deep fight in counterinsurgency operations? Based on our experience as planners in Combined Joint Task Force 180 during Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) IV in Afghanistan, we say, "Yes." Our previous military education and training taught us that depth on the battlefield was physical in nature. Field Manual 3-0, *Operations*, states that "depth is the extension of operations in time, space, and resources."[1] This is a decidedly linear construction of the battlefield based on industrialized warfare between conventional enemies. Because little has been written about the deep battle in an insurgency environment, this article examines depth in the nonlinear battlefield and how planners might develop operational effects to defeat insurgencies.

A New Environment

The Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) operating environment is both nonlinear and noncontiguous. The enemy has no national borders or traditional infrastructure. Doctrine concerning the concept of deep battle describes "areas used to shape enemy forces before they enter the close area."[2] Doctrinal writers envisioned a hierarchically structured enemy system with a conventional force that predominately defined success as defeat of its opponent on the battlefield. Application of military force in depth against a conventional enemy creates physical and electronic isolation and removes flexibility from the enemy's command structure. Also, depth has a predictable relationship to time. Hierarchical enemy forces defined distance between echelonments and maintained military systems with known capabilities. Thus, the doctrinally defined deep area of the battlefield constitutes a location and predictable time structure that enable a commander to develop the close fight to his advantage by attacking high-payoff targets.

High-payoff targets are critical nodes in the deep area that if attacked successfully will paralyze the enemy and set him up for a knockout blow in the close battle. Critical nodes in conventional warfare that provide this paralyzing effect (operational shock) include logistics depots, transportation nodes such as railyards, and command and control centers.[3] But the enemy in the GWOT does not have a traditional infrastructure to support his forces and, therefore, no deep areas that fit the traditional understanding of the term. This leads to two questions: Does the contemporary enemy have a deep area? and how do U.S. forces achieve the paralyzing effect of operational shock in this environment? Without a clear conception of deep operations in an insurgency, military planners might attempt to defeat it using tactical solutions where operational-level answers are required.

The Insurgency Deep Area

The classic insurgency has a deep area in the traditional physical sense as well as in the psychological or cognitive sense. Physical depth in an insurgency plays an important role in providing logistics and refuge to insurgents within a contested population or space. These physical deep areas are also the support zones that insurgents use to recruit, plan, train, and conduct psychological operations. Denying such areas to insurgents can produce an operational effect reducing the insurgents' future capabilities and options.

The characteristics of the enemy system's depth are substantially different from a nation-state's conventional force. Traditional targets that might create an operational effect in an insurgent's physical deep area are usually dual-use. Insurgents use the same communication nodes, avenues of approach, and shelter used by the population that friendly forces are trying to positively influence. Traditional

targeting with remote sensors and joint fires typically does not meet the basic cost-benefit analysis test, so ground forces capable of discerning the enemy from the population must do the targeting.

Deep areas can also be contiguous to the contested area or hundreds or thousands of miles away. The irrelevance of political boundaries to an insurgent becomes a strength, while a nation-state's strict adherence to them becomes a constant tactical vulnerability. For example, the Kosovar Albanians conducted their most effective fundraising and information operations against the Serbian Army through an active diaspora in Switzerland.[4] During OEF IV, planners faced a similar problem. Most of the enemy systems' critical functions took place in the provinces of Waziristan, Baluchistan, and other areas in Pakistan and in difficult-to-reach areas in Afghanistan. Creating effects in these areas often required intra-agency support primarily found at combatant command headquarters.

History provides several examples of how to approach an insurgent's physical deep area. Government forces, from U.S. Army General George Armstrong Custer's Seventh Cavalry to French colonial forces in Africa, have used the flying column to conduct raids against food stores and massed insurgents. This primarily tactical approach to the insurgent's deep area relies only on military force and attempts to bring decisive firepower against an enemy, but it denies prolonged contact to government forces. Such an approach to an insurgent's deep area has little long-term effect because government forces do not create a permanent presence or influence with the population.

By the late 19th century, French colonial forces in Africa began to understand the requirement to gradually and permanently remove the insurgent's deep area. French colonial forces introduced the concept of progressive occupation and economic penetration combined with the use of military force and political and economic instruments to permanently change the condition of the insurgent's deep area.[5] U.S. Army forces used a similar approach at the turn of the 20th century during the guerrilla war in the Philippines. The Army used "attraction" and "chastisement" in the insurgent deep areas by combining deliberate civic action such as road construction, education, and improvement of local security forces with the occupation of villages and raids against key leaders.[6]

While the concept of physical depth in an insurgent system has been clearly articulated during past military campaigns, the understanding and targeting of cognitive depth is rarely found. Cognitive depth is not defined in terms of space, but in terms of extended time and how insurgents adapt to friendly forces. Understanding how insurgents adapt in time is necessary to properly link friendly force tactical actions to operational effects and the strategic end state.

Cognitive depth has its theoretical foundation in the concept of spatial depth and the area of influence. When spatial depth and time had a predictable relationship, an area of influence provided commanders and planners with the critical tool of anticipation, which played an irreplaceable role in the science of decide, detect, deliver, and assess against conventional enemy forces.[7] However, insurgent forces are more complex than conventional forces, so anticipation has lost much of its usefulness.

Attacking an Insurgency

Insurgent forces usually do not present the immediate, observable reaction to a stimulus or tactical effect that friendly forces like to create. So how does a friendly force produce a desired effect on an insurgency's psychological or cognitive depth if insurgent forces do not present an immediate, observable reaction? Insurgent forces do what complex biological systems do to survive—they adapt. Friendly forces should focus less on the enemy's immediate physical reaction and more on how insurgents adapt in order to seek a new advantage or repair damage to their critical leadership, population, or logistics assets.

In Afghanistan, planners attempted to identify second-tier insurgent leaders so that in the event friendly forces successfully removed key insurgent leaders in an area, they could immediately increase the priority of effort against second-tier leaders before the insurgents could solidify their command and control. Anticipating the insurgents' adaptation to the loss of key leaders and then acting immediately created a greater effect on the insurgency in the area. We also identified villages that provided support along critical avenues of approach. If we denied the enemy a set of infiltration avenues, how would the insurgency react? Which villages and tribes would become of greater importance? Affecting cognitive depth does not produce a reaction, but it mitigates insurgent leaders' options before they are presented with the need to adapt.

If we understand cognitive depth, we can develop ways to paralyze the insurgent system or produce operational shock. Colonel John A. Warden III, an architect of the Persian Gulf War air campaign, introduced his Five Rings Model

as a methodology for successfully attacking and paralyzing a conventional enemy system in depth (figure 1).[8] An adaptation of this model depicts tangible targets that together constitute depth in the insurgent battlespace (figure 2).

Leadership is central to both conventional and insurgent forces because it provides direction for continued resistance. An insurgency is a contest for the sympathy of a population because the population provides logistics support, intelligence on government targets, and protection within which to hide or disperse when necessary. The insurgency requires energy in the form of resources, and the insurgent generates resources through fundraising and other financial activities to purchase materiel, information, and manpower. The outer ring of the model contains fielded forces of insurgent fighters and terrorists. These rings represent the insurgency's depth and provide a path to defeating it.

Using Joe Strange's U.S. Marine Corps University model for developing an operational center of gravity (figure 3), we can determine tangible targets and create lines of operation through which friendly forces can paralyze the insurgency.[9] The critical vulnerabilities (CVs) represent the entry point or targets along the line of operation. At-tacking each CV simultaneously in an unrelenting fashion denies the enemy the critical requirements (CRs) and critical capabilities (CCs) he needs to sustain the fight, thus shocking the system and collapsing his operational center of gravity. For example, an operational center of gravity in a hypothetical insurgency might be a sanctuary within a sympathetic population. Denial of sanctuary would theoretically cause the insurgency to wither because of an inability to establish a safe base of operations. But, how do we develop a way to deny that sanctuary? The answer lies in identifying the enemy's depth using the models in figures 2 and 3.

Sanctuary to move weapons, personnel, and ammunition unhindered is contingent on the critical requirement of having freedom of movement within the sanctuary. Insurgent leaders facilitate freedom of movement by using multiple communication devices, the combination of which constitutes a linked network. Also, the network operates within a sympathetic population that enables it to establish the critical capability and requirement. The leaders, communication network, and population represent critical vulnerabilities. Targeting them for destruction, disruption, and influence forms a line of operation that can produce shock in
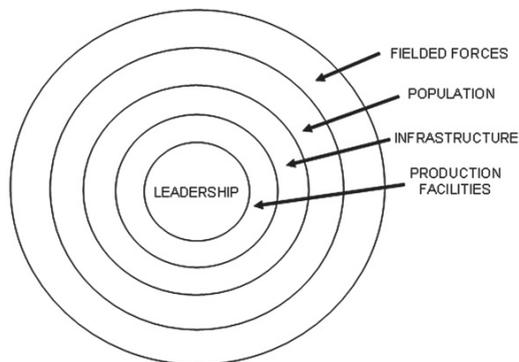

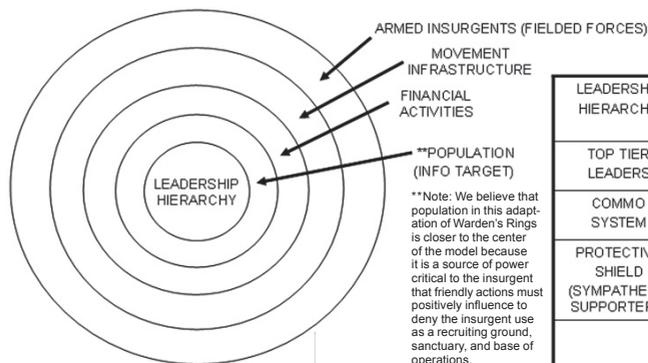| LEADERSHIP	PRODUCTION FACILITIES	INFRA-STRUCTURE	POPULATION	FIELDED FORCES
GOVERNMENT	ELECTRICITY	RAIL BRIDGES	MILITARY ELITES	STRATEGIC AIR DEFENSES
NATIONAL COMMO NETWORK	RETAIL PETROLEUM		POLITICAL ELITES	STRATEGIC OFFENSIVE SYSTEMS
INTERNAL SECURITY FORCES	WEAPON PRODUCTION FACILITIES		MIDDLE CLASS	

Figure 1. Warden's rings in conventional warfare.

**Note: We believe that population in this adaptation of Warden's Rings is closer to the center of the model because it is a source of power critical to the insurgent that friendly actions must positively influence to deny the insurgent use as a recruiting ground, sanctuary, and base of operations.

LEADERSHIP HIERARCHY	FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES	MOVEMENT INFRA-STRUCTURE	POPULATION	ARMED INSURGENTS
TOP TIER LEADERS	PURCHASING AGENTS	INFIL ROUTES	ELITES	ARMED BANDS
COMMO SYSTEM	DONORS	TRANSIT NODES	CLERICS	TERRORISTS
PROTECTIVE SHIELD (SYMPATHETIC SUPPORTERS)	BANKING TRANSACTIONS		"STREET"	
	LAUNDERING ACTIVITIES			

Figure 2. Rings applied to insurgent warfare.

the enemy system by denying freedom of movement (a critical requirement), thus, denying him the critical capability of moving weapons, personnel, and ammunition unhindered.

This line of operation paralyzes the enemy's ability to move freely through a safe base of operations by simultaneously and relentlessly attacking his critical vulnerabilities. The element of simultaneity reduces the ability of insurgent leaders to adapt to the assault on their system. Thus, critical vulnerabilities are physical targets in the cognitive realm that represent depth in an insurgency and, ultimately, form a path through which we can deny sanctuary.

Figure 3. Strange model of center of gravity analysis.

Anticipating Enemy Adaptation

The planner must remember that developing an operational concept is not a unique event or tactical action. Planners must devise campaign plans that anticipate enemy adaptation and develop appropriate actions to prevent it across time. Only then will a linked series of tactical actions conducted simultaneously and relentlessly by various assets over an extended period accomplish operational and strategic objectives.[10] This constitutes deep battle and c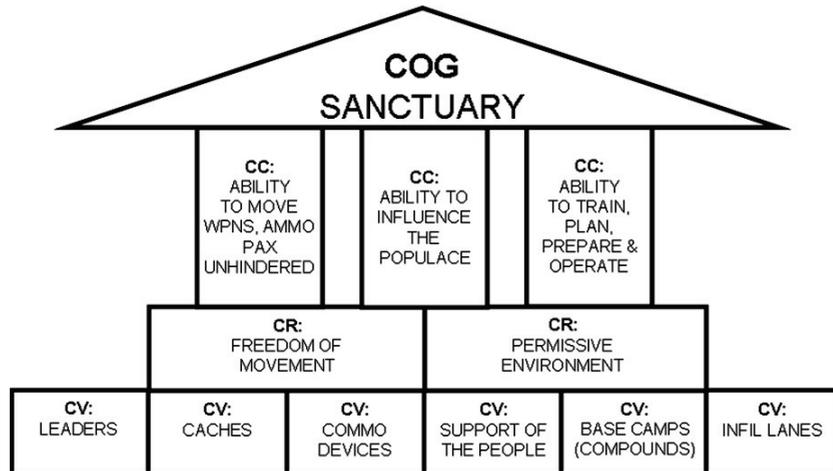ognitive understanding of the operational art in fighting a counterinsurgency; it is how planners in the contemporary operating environment (COE) might develop a concept to defeat an insurgent enemy.

In a counterinsurgency, there is a deep fight. However, current Army doctrine does not provide a theoretical understanding of the deep fight or a methodology for fighting it. History provides vicarious experiences that planners in the COE can study to learn how to fight and win the physical deep fight, but insurgent depth is also contingent on the elements of time and adaptation. While historical examples remain applicable, today's military planners must understand the nature of the insurgencies the Army faces. Planners must develop tangible solutions and campaign plans to defeat insurgents in the deep battle. ***MR***

NOTES

1. U.S. Department of the Army Field Manual (FM) 3-0, *Operations* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001), 4-17.
2. Ibid., 4-26.
3. James J. Schneider, "A New Form of Warfare," *Military Review* (January-February 2000): 56-61.
4. Eve Gerber, "Who Is the Kosovo Liberation Army?" *Slate*, 23 April 1999, on-line at <http://slate.msn.com/id/1002637/>, accessed 17 May 2005.
5. Douglas Porch, "Bugeaud, Gallieni, Lyautey: The Development of French Colonial Warfare*," in *Makers of Modern Strategy: From Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age,* ed. Peter Paret (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1986), 380-92.

6. Brian Linn, *The Philippine War* (Lawrence: The University Press of Kansas, 2000), 197-203.
7. Shimon Naveh, *In Pursuit of Military Excellence* (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 1997), 298.
8. John A. Warden III, *The Air Campaign* (Lincoln, NE: toExcel Press, 2000), 145-46.
9. Joe Strange, *Centers of Gravity and Critical Vulnerabilities* (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps University Press, 1996), 1-4.
10. FM 3-0, 2-3.

Major Lee K. Grubbs, U.S. Army, is Executive Officer, 2d Brigade Special Troops Battalion, Fort Drum. He received a B.S. from the University of Southern Mississippi and an MMAS from the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College (CGSC) School of Advanced Military Studies. He has served in various command and staff positions in the continental United States (CONUS) and Afghanistan.

Major Michael J. Forsyth, U.S. Army, is Executive Officer, 4th Battalion, 25th Field Artillery, Fort Drum, New York. He received a B.S. from Murray State University, an M.A. from Louisiana State University, and an MMAS from the CGSC School of Advanced Military Studies. He has served in various command and staff positions in CONUS and Afghanistan.