

Small Wars: Civil-Military Relations

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Section I- Introduction

Western COIN [counterinsurgency] doctrine generally identifies the 'hearts and minds campaign' -gaining and maintaining the support of the domestic population in order to isolate the insurgent-as the key to success. It thus sees the population as a potential instrument of advantage. It further recognizes that military operations must contribute to the achievement of this effect and be subordinate to the political campaign. - Brigadier Nigel Aylwin-Foster, British Army

Chapter 1, Section VI of the 1940 Small Wars Manual addresses the inevitable contact of military forces with the local civilian authorities and general population. It stresses the impact of cultural awareness in military-civil operations. Military leaders who lack cultural knowledge and sensitivity can be detrimental to the mission and the lives of their service members. Winning the support of the civilian population is paramount to successful military-civil operations. This paper addresses and expands on the themes of military-civil relationship discussed in the 1940 manual. Specifically, it addresses relations with the population, cooperation with local security forces, and contact with local civil and religious leaders with the intent to bring these themes up to date based on interviews and lessons learned during Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF.) Although the lessons and conclusions in this paper are drawn from OIF, the principles have applications to future small wars.

Section II- Contact with the population.

Cordial relationships between our forces and the civilian population is best maintained by engendering the spirit of good will...every endeavor should be made to assure the civilian population of the friendliness of our forces. No effort should be spared to demonstrate the advantage of law and order and to secure their friendly cooperation. - FMFRP 12-15, Small Wars Manual

Military leaders and their subordinates must establish and maintain positive relationships with the civilian population in order to win small wars. They must be prepared to interact with the civilian population at any time. Winning the hearts and minds of the population is a long and arduous process, but without the population's support, military leaders will find themselves losing the war against the insurgents. The common practices used by the coalition forces are not new or revolutionary. Military leaders must place emphasis on treating the civilian population with dignity and respect, assuring them of the friendliness of the forces, and earning their trust and respect.¹

The center of gravity in small wars is the support of the people. The triangular relationship between the people, the government, and the insurgents explains why it is important to win their hearts and minds. Governments lose legitimacy for many reasons. They may be corrupt or inefficient in providing rule of law, public services or basic security for their region. Such failures of governance create ripe conditions for the insurgents to gain credibility and popular support. FM 100-20 states, "the leaders of the insurgency must make their cause known to the people. They must gain popular support. Their key tasks are to break the ties between the people and the government and to establish the credibility of their movement. They must replace the government's credibility with that of their own." As noted by one commander, the struggle between the government and the insurgents becomes "a fight over people", specifically the large uncommitted population on whose support hinges the fate of the insurgency.²

Maintaining positive interaction that demonstrates sincere benevolence with the people is a combat multiplier. The 1st Marine Division followed this is the policy of "no better friend". A Marine battalion in the strong anti-coalition area of Al Anbar Province in Iraq employed a "good neighbor" policy.³ Marines at all levels practiced this policy and their leaders emphasized it

daily to the point that young Marines fell into the routine of applying it as part of the rules of engagement (ROE). The principles were simple and common sense. Be as polite and courteous as possible to all Iraqis unless feeling threatened by suspicion of insurgent affiliation, possession of contraband, or any hostile intent. This policy went beyond just being respectful to locals, and encouraged Marines to be sincerely friendly. Leaders encouraged waving, smiling, handshaking, interacting with the children, and sharing comfort items.⁴ Distributing agricultural tools to the farmers and book bags, school supplies, water, candy, and soccer balls to the children in the name of benevolence served to improve relations with the Iraqis.⁵ Marines used the elders as intermediaries in order to secure their position in the community. As one battalion commander asserts “since we couldn’t readily give the Iraqis the things they really wanted...we did the small things to show we cared...by giving the item to the elders, we showed sensitivity to the elder-child relationship. How would you like it if your neighbor was always giving your kids candy, toys, etc and you couldn’t afford to do the same? It would make you mad—we didn’t want that. In this way we showed common—I argue transnational—courtesy and common sense.”⁶

It is important to point out, what a battalion commander calls “the polarity of our generosity.”⁷ His Marines were focused on giving the little things they could to show their kindness. His experience shows that what his Marines perceived as generosity sometimes had detrimental effects. Some Iraqi elders were indignant and unreceptive due to their pride. They saw the generosity as a handout and as a temporary solution to their long-term needs of security, jobs, education, and good government. The Marines’ desires to fix schools are a great illustration. While the Marines felt like they were making a significant contribution, the Iraqi elders could not understand why the Marines were so focused on fixing the small things while bigger problems such as jobs, gas availability, reliable electricity, clean drinking water, working

sewers, and security didn't get fixed. This presents a big dilemma for a commander who has limited resources and can't provide the long-term solution. A way to address this dilemma, according to this battalion commander, was an effective information operations (IO) campaign letting the Iraqis know that their bigger needs were being addressed, but that it would take some time and additional resources. Until those problems could be solved, he would address those that he could impact immediately with his own resources. This open, honest communication was fundamental in building trust.

More than showing kindness and generosity, military leaders also want to create trust, build relations, and make friends. A company in the same Marine battalion that employed the good neighbor policy also adhered to the motto "first do no harm" to achieve these objectives. During what they termed "house visits" or "knock and talks,"⁸ the Marines in this company demonstrated courtesy and empathy with the local population and avoided damagingly heavy-handed tactics. A senior Iraqi official who worked closely with Coalition forces, and who had his house searched on two occasions as part of a routine search explained the contrast in approach. On one occasion, the troops conducting the search applied common sense, used minimum force necessary, and most importantly, demonstrated cultural sensitivity by treating the women appropriately. The second routine search was conducted with aggressive tactics by a new battalion who had just arrived in theater. This search led to formal complaint and undoubtedly produced adverse consequences.⁹ In trying to find the balance between capturing the insurgents and winning the support of the people, military leaders and their subordinates must understand "that their actions should be well thought out so that in trying to capture or kill one insurgent, we don't make ten new enemies."¹⁰

During OIF-I, a Marine company operating in Babil Province, a mostly Shiite populated area, also discovered that winning the support, trust, and respect of the people was absolutely essential to bring stability to its AOR.¹¹ While conducting foot patrols in Al Mashru, this Marine unit found large crowds of Iraqis displaying their distrust of Americans and expressing their desires for the Marines to leave.¹² The Marines found the source of the population's discontent when the company commander met a man who was convinced that his brother had been killed while in the custody of coalition forces. Trying to convince him otherwise, the company commander promised the man he would gather information on his brother's whereabouts and return with the news. Unfortunately, the company commander found out that the man's brother had died three weeks earlier while in the custody of coalition forces because he had refused to eat and to take insulin for his diabetes. The company commander immediately ordered an exhausted platoon of Marines to accompany him back to Al Mashru to deliver the bad news to the dead man's brother. Upon receiving the bad news of his brother's death and the non-traditional Muslim burial, the man's brother told the company commander to bring his brother's body to him by 0600 the next day or the entire town would turn against the coalition. The company commander understood the gravity of the situation and realized that he had to meet the man's request. He drove an hour and a half to the site where the Coalition had buried the body, exhumed, and placed the remains in a casket to bring to his brother the next morning as promised. Despite being extremely upset about the loss of his brother, the man expressed his gratitude and told the young company commander that he had earned his trust and that of the town.¹³ A fruitful relationship was developed between the military forces and the local population in this town, to include the loyalty of the grateful man's uncle who was a sheik and the head of a 10, 000-man tribe.¹⁴

The company commander's actions reveal four universally applicable points. First, gaining trust is not easy; unit leaders at all levels have to listen and then go out their way to show genuine concern. Second, once that leader makes a promise, he must exhaust all means available in order to be true to his word. It shows that he cares. Third, it is very important to understand cultural sensitivities. Last, it pays to be diplomatic. Letting an ego get in the way, or creating an argument because a leader thinks the demands are unreasonable will only aggravate the situation.

The commander must select the location of the unit's Forward Operating Base (FOB) in order to establish and maintain a positive relationship with the civilian population. Establishing the FOB amongst the population, centrally located, where the majority of the people live enhances the security of the population. Close proximity to the population provides better security. Additionally, if the population trusts the military units in their area, the former will be apt to provide the latter intelligence on enemy activity. For one battalion in Hillah, its neighborhood established a neighborhood watch that killed an insurgent mortar team as they set up an 82mm mortar.¹⁵ This mutual security relationship was also illustrated in Vietnam. CAPs were successful in Vietnam because the Marines lived in the villages with the people and provided security at all times. This is particularly challenging in Iraq with 150K US servicemen trying to secure a population of 26 million. An Iraqi may see a foot or vehicle patrol passing by on occasion, but this doesn't protect him from his neighbor who is an insurgent. One way that a battalion commander helped the security situation was to establish CAP-like relations by having Marines live with the police and national guard units.¹⁶

Another reason to establish the FOB centrally located with the population is that the FOB provides jobs, from markets to garbage collection to construction projects. As a battalion

commander asserts, each of his FOBs in Iraq hired over 100 Iraqi locals to work inside them on a daily basis.¹⁷

One significant problem that commanders must guard against is the creation of fortress FOBs that may alienate the population.¹⁸ In one region, the population could not understand why they had no power or clean water yet the Marines returned to their FOBs and had constant electricity, clean water, and gas for their vehicles.¹⁹ The perception was that the Marines were stealing the electricity and water from the population because FOBs always had lights and water to drink. The Iraqis usually received 4 to 8 hours of electricity through the civil electric grid so this perception was a real problem. Once again, one battalion commander recommended a strong IO program telling the Iraqis that electricity came entirely from generators and water from wells below the FOB.²⁰

Another criterion for site selection is the site's usefulness to the population. A commander wants a site he can easily secure while not taking away a useful asset to the people. One battalion commander moved units several times because his units occupied old factories that they were able to make operational again so the people could work. During OIF-I, many units moved into former Baath Party buildings to include Saddam's palaces. Over time, the civilians would point to these locations where coalition forces were headquartered and say "one oppressor has been replaced by another!" Convincing the Iraqis that the Americans were there to help became difficult, especially since US forces had all the gas, clean water, great food, and electricity they needed and the Iraqis services did not substantially improve. Some commanders out of necessity had to guard the Iraqi government offices in their AORs. While this was an important mission, it undermined the credibility of the local security forces. A technique employed by one commander if he had to guard a public office, was making sure the Marines

were well out of sight from the people while close enough to assure the Iraqi security we would be there if needed.²¹

Ultimately, there comes a time when it will be appropriate and necessary for US forces to move out of centrally located areas so not to have such an immediate presence. At that time, US forces must turn it over to the Iraqis and let them do it even if imperfectly. As long as the people see the coalition still in the center of town, they will see the US and not the Iraqis providing the security.

Damage to private property by the military forces is frequently the cause of complaints by members of the civilian population...If the military commander were supplied with a fund to be used for the prompt adjustment of limited claims, the foregoing condition might be materially improved. –FMFRP 12-15

Another way that military forces will interact with the civilian population is settling claims. In Iraq, the most common was from military vehicle accidents with civilians. Others common claims were collateral damage claims from fighting and from accidental death to civilians caused by shootings and accidents. Payment to of property and personal damage inflicted by military operations to locals was a frustrating and difficult issue for some units, while it was a combat multiplier for others.

A Platoon commander in one Marine battalion experienced that to win the support of the population, his company had to be sensitive to all the claims, and that it was impossible to avoid anger and resentment if they did not quickly address claims. In this particular unit, the battalion delegated funds to the company level to pay claims with an itemized list of amounts to be paid for certain property damages. These discretionary funds, commander's emergency response funds (CERP), were critical in building a relationship with the people.²² As LtCol Nagl asserts in his book, "The U.S. is working diligently in Iraq, as it did in Vietnam, to improve the lives of the people. Dollars are bullets in this fight; the Commander's Emergency Response Program

(CERP), which provides field commanders funds to perform essential projects, wins hearts and minds twice over - once by repairing infrastructure, and again by employing local citizens who are otherwise ready recruits for insurgents. CERP is helping with the painstaking process of building relationships with the Iraqi people.”²³

A company commander in a different battalion experienced frustration in settling claims because of the lack of adjudicating authority. He felt that the payment of claims required a more reliable system with the need for an Iraqi representative to interpret needs, evidence and accuracy of the claim.²⁴ Another frustration he encountered was that the battalion found itself paying for damages caused by units that operated in that area prior to their arrival.²⁵ The company commander’s recommendation was to refer claims to the battalion’s staff judge advocate (SJA) and avoid becoming directly involved in the settlement of terms and amounts.²⁶

For practical purposes, it is important to compare the approach of the two unit leaders and draw applicable points. First, an area commander is the man responsible for the AO so he must adjudicate the claims as quickly as possible, to include paying for damages caused by previous and transit units passing through. Second, the area commander himself or someone from his unit must handle settling the claim. If the civilians go to the area commander with a claim and all the commander does is listen and send the claim for processing by higher authority, the message he presents is that he is not in charge. A unit must be able to process claims quickly and efficiently or will rapidly lose any legitimacy it has in the area. If a patrol gets in a vehicle accident with a civilian and then lets the simple matter of fixing a wrecked car become lost in red tape or dispute over amount of money to be paid, then the population will quickly turn against the Americans. One battalion commander explains how he used to laugh about Marines concerns over being ripped off on claims settlements. He asserted that “here we are spending a million dollars a day

to keep forces in Iraq and Marines will alienate an entire family, neighborhood, and tribe by trying to pay a few hundred dollars less on a vehicle claim... so what if the man comes out a little ahead in an otherwise bad situation. At least he is happy and not your enemy”²⁷

The commander’s reconstruction efforts were critical in establishing credibility with the population.²⁸ Involving key civilian personnel in the planning was very important. Some commanders appointed councils and established town halls with regular meetings to prioritize reconstruction projects, with the focus on basic life support needs.²⁹ The best way to get support from the local populace was to attempt to assist in the five areas commonly referred to as SWEAT (sewer, water, education, architecture and trash).³⁰ The key in winning their support was to prioritize projects so that the Iraqis could directly and quickly see improvements in the lives and health of their children.³¹ It’s important to note that some Iraqis understood that there were limitations to the things that could be provided and that certain projects took time to coordinate. The common lesson learned by different commanders was to set reasonable goals and not to promise unrealistic expectations.³² Once you promised to provide any service, it was paramount that you exhausted any resource to deliver what was promised.³³

The integration of the civilian population into most reconstruction projects was another technique used by military leaders. Most utilized local contractors as much as possible to complete reconstruction work. This expedited the process, provided a local face to the work being completed, and helped with the extremely high unemployment rate.³⁴ Part of some local job programs was to start a factory to build playground equipment for schoolyards.³⁵ Other skilled labor initiatives involved the distribution of over \$181,000 over two months in the three towns. This money assisted in reconstructing seven schools that had not received government funding since the 1970s, four government offices, three police stations, three health clinics that

were in dismal condition, two water treatment facilities, two electric transformer stations, and one veterinary clinic, and dredging a canal.³⁶ When commanders noticed some Iraqis were still unemployed, they initiated unskilled labor projects such as collection of garbage that had piled on the streets.³⁷ In Babil during OIF 1, a battalion started the Babylon Lions, a conservation corps-like project that hired 1000 Iraqis to pick up the garbage littering the streets and remove the damage from the war. According to the battalion commander, they “had a local textile factory make them uniforms (more jobs) and hired truck drivers (more jobs) to drive the capture trucks we confiscated from looters to move our Lions around the area. Marines supervised the workers and provided them clean water, food, and most importantly, leadership. As the program blossomed, we were able to turn it over in entirety to the Iraqi governor who then put the entire program on the civil parole. The program was a great success.”³⁸ Perhaps the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) started the smartest unskilled work program. It hired 100,000 workers to clean the grass and fungi out of the extensive canal system in Iraq. The workers did all the work by hand instead of using machine operated shovels, which would have been faster and more effective. The intuition and reasoning behind the CPA’s initiative were brilliant. Doing the work by hand hired more people for a longer period of time. Additionally, the hard work in the hot sun all day, and the money in their pocket would hopefully make the workers too tired and too happy to conduct insurgent activity at night.³⁹

Two challenging aspects of reconstruction, however, were instilling a sense of competitive bidding among local contractors and civic officials and avoiding corruption.⁴⁰ According to a battalion commander, “nepotism is nearly all encompassing of anything economic in west-central Al Anbar. This is due to the tribal structure of society, which the local population and power centers fell back on after the fall of the Hussein regime. Efforts into

breaking this nepotism, by presenting competitive bidding processes led to competition and sparked local economic activity with U.S. provided stimulus.”⁴¹ Constant supervision of construction projects was paramount. Military leaders awarded money up front, but did not pay the rest until the contractors made satisfactory progress. There were cases of corruption in which local leaders tried to utilize their power to keep money for personal gains. In these cases, military commanders gave the culprits a choice: return the money or go to jail.⁴² One commander in Al Anbar proposed two rules as a guide during reconstruction efforts. First, “just like market research is done in the US before introducing a new product, research in determining the impact (second and third order effects) of the civil military operation should be conducted using those that understand local culture, before the work is committed to.”⁴³ Second, “don’t just throw money at problems” – just like combat power it has to be used at the decisive time and place to be effective in defeating the enemy.”⁴⁴

The People of many countries take their religion as seriously as their politics. Consequently members of the United States forces should avoid any attitude that tends to indicate criticism or lack of respect for the religious beliefs and practices observed by the native inhabitants. –FMFRP 12-15

The 1940 Small Wars Manual briefly discusses religious sensitivity, but it is a topic that requires further discussion to show how it heavily influences commanders’ decision during military operations. In Iraq, the daily interaction with a population for whom religious beliefs and practices are very important demanded that commanders at all levels enforce respect for these beliefs and practices. A “common-sense approach” was effective for commanders in ensuring their subordinates overcame the challenges in respecting religion. Education was essential.⁴⁵ Education in the form of cultural awareness as well as the S-2 and Iraqi input on important religious dates to factor into operations was very beneficial.⁴⁶ Leaders also developed an awareness of the local religious practices from their liaisons, from the newspaper, local radio,

and lessons learned from patrol de-briefings. Tactical commanders subsequently briefed such practices to other patrols prior to deployment to ensure they acted respectfully.⁴⁷ On holy days or during weddings or funerals, units were always sure to be respectful of religious areas and avoided unnecessary overt military presence.⁴⁸ Finally, leaders ensured that US forces did not desecrate religious sites, and conducted careful planning to prevent accidental damage or the perception of desecration.⁴⁹

One enormous challenge for coalition forces was that enemy forces realized the coalition's respect for local religious facilities and increased their utilization of these sites to meet, store weapons, and conduct attacks on US patrols.⁵⁰ One technique to overcome this challenge was to videotape enemy attacks from mosques and distribute the videos to the local leadership.⁵¹ In the wake of global television and technological evolution, commanders must establish an effective way of communicating with the population. Otherwise, the enemy, who is also aware of the power of video, will gain a strategic advantage by communicating his message.

When conducting cordon and searches in Iraq, the most effective procedure was to utilize local national security forces to search and secure religious sites.⁵² A good illustration of the importance of religious sensitivity occurred during the fighting against Maqtada Sadr's militia near the Imam Ali Mosque in Najaf during OIF II. Despite heavy insurgent activity from the mosque, coalition forces maintained a cordon around it and restricted friendly forces from shooting at the mosque.⁵³ Although Coalition forces could have easily defeated the insurgents with conventional means, by doing so would have destroyed the mosque, thereby, turning tactical victory into strategic defeat.⁵⁴ The implication is that in small wars, political considerations will weigh heavier on tactical actions more so than in conventional wars.⁵⁵

Section III- Cooperation with local security forces.

It follows, therefore, that by cooperating to the fullest extent of his authority with the native forces in the performance of civil police functions, the military commander will...be rendering valuable assistance towards the accomplishment of the ultimate mission assigned to the combined military forces. –FMFRP 12-15

Developing trust and establishing personal relationships were no different in cooperating with law enforcement agencies than in dealing with the population. Military commanders developed trust and personal relationships to establish stability and legitimacy.⁵⁶ US military forces in Iraq worked closely with Iraqi security forces, military and police, to establish stability and regain legitimacy. Whether working with Iraqi National Guard units or local police forces, the techniques and procedures employed by military commanders yielded great success. Overall, the techniques that proved to be efficient employed a variation of the Combined Action Platoon (CAP) that was among the most effective ways the U.S. military found to secure the populace and defeat the Viet Cong in Vietnam.⁵⁷ The end state of the military's relationship with the Iraqi security forces was that the Iraqi forces could provide the security without U.S. support.

For a battalion commander, establishing trust was the first step in cooperating with local security forces. To facilitate this, U.S. forces should co-locate with local security forces.⁵⁸ Military forces lived, ate and slept with the local security forces as they established a training program.⁵⁹ Military leaders and subordinates established mutual trust “by sharing simple staples of everyday life in Iraq that mattered to the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF)-drinking tea, smoking cigarettes, eating, and talking about tribe, family, and at times religion”.⁶⁰ According to one commander “once individual trust is established, a foundation is formed from which more mature relationships can evolve.”⁶¹

Subsequent to establishing trust is developing and maintaining personal relationships.⁶² These relationships became a critical mitigating factor until the development of common

standard operating procedures. In Iraq, security forces “would be hesitant to adopt U.S. processes...not because the Iraqis had a negative view of U.S military techniques, quite the contrary; it was because they maintained Arab and Iraqi pride.”⁶³ By sharing hardships, local security forces and U.S. military personnel fostered personal relationships, which became a crucial factor in making combined operations a success. Military leaders recognized the success of the local security forces, bolstering the pride and morale of security forces. “Public recognition of police officers and their better actions caused a cascade effect in the local police force as well. Once an officer is publicly recognized for excelling at his job, the fever spread and the other officers also wanted to perform better and be recognized themselves.”⁶⁴ One battalion commander would hand out Navy Marine Achievement Medals during a public ceremony to the Iraqi soldiers and police who displayed positive actions. These soldiers had never received a “thank you” or recognition under Saddam’s regime, and a heartfelt thanks and recognition went a long way to build their esteem and confidence.⁶⁵

When an Iraqi policemen or soldier was injured in the line of duty, one battalion commander always visited them in the hospital and made sure they received the best care available in the Iraqi system.⁶⁶ If gravely injured then he would medevac the man through the Coalition system and assured him of the best possible care. By doing this the battalion commander showed the injured man and his family that the Americans cared. Furthermore, the battalion commander also tried to make sure their families received monetary compensation for their injured family member so the family would not be placed in undue hardship. As the battalion commander states, he “usually I did this through the governor’s, police, or military chain of command so the leaders would learn to take care of their people and put a positive “Iraqi face” on the issue. People in a dangerous line of work must know that they and their families

will be well taken care of if something were to happen. It's these little things that build trust in relationships and in the system.”⁶⁷

As TE Lawrence stated in his “Twenty-Seven Articles”, “Better the Arabs do it tolerably than that you do it perfectly. It is their war, and you are to help them, not win it for them.”⁶⁸ Commanders found this maxim extremely helpful in guiding their subordinates while developing relationships and training with local security forces. In the early stages of the training process, it was evident that the goal of local security forces was to be able to provide the security without the assistance of their US counterparts. Accomplishing this goal would require a crawl, walk, and run method. Once trust was established, local security forces were incorporated into tactical operations as often as possible and coalition leaders found it easier to get local security forces to patrol with their subordinates.⁶⁹ This also enhanced the trust and legitimacy of the Iraqi security forces in the eyes of the population because the local populace saw their own forces conducting operations.

One unit developed a “Train the Trainer” program by which veterans in the local forces were identified and trained in basic combat skills, vehicle and personnel search procedures, dismounted patrolling, establishing checkpoints and medical training.⁷⁰ The objective was for this trained cadre to assume responsibility for training its own forces. At times, some of the local security forces leaders wanted to conduct certain tasks in their own way. Allowing them to demonstrate how they wanted to perform a task was at times more important in the end because it gave them a sense of ownership and avoided creating an attitude of superiority. Ultimately, building trust, developing relationships, and training local security forces to an acceptable level requires time and patience on the part of the military commander and his subordinates.⁷¹

Not all contact with local security forces was as pleasant and rewarding as described. In some instances, US military leaders were forced to deal with corruption and intimidation by the insurgents.⁷² Coalition forces faced a significant dilemma of vetting the Iraqi officers and in particular the senior Iraqi leadership. In one part of the country, a battalion went through four police chiefs in six months until it found the person that was honest and acceptable to the population and not perceived as closely aligned with previous regime.⁷³

Section IV- Contact with civil and religious leaders⁷⁴

Such conference will invariably lead to acquaintance with the government's leading officials with whom the military commander may be required to deal throughout the subsequent operation. Meetings with these officials frequently require considerable tact...When the mission is one of rendering assistance to the recognized government, the relationship between its officials and the military commander should be amicable. –FMFRP 12-15

It is paramount for a military leader to understand local behavior and values in order to negotiate effectively with civil and religious leaders. According to LTC Wunderle, a Middle East Foreign Area Officer and Army Research Fellow at RAND Corporation, “culture can be likened to a minefield - dangerous ground that, if not breached, must be navigated with caution, understanding, and respect... Cultural interpretation, *competence*, and adaptation are prerequisites for achieving a win-win relationship in any military operation. Cultural Competence results from the intimate knowledge of an adversary's (or allies) motivation, intent, will and tactical methods.”⁷⁵

Behavioral considerations are important for a commander to establish trust and develop the relationships that will assist in accomplishing the mission. Nonverbal communication, for example, will be extremely important “in order to adequately communicate with someone from an Arab country and avoid any miscommunication, misperception or misinterpretation.”⁷⁶ What

is not being said, but perhaps expressed through body movements, facial expressions and body posture, is as important as what is being said. As LTC Wunderle asserts, another behavioral consideration is the space used to communicate. Americans tend to establish a circle of personal space that is much less tolerant of invasion than many other cultures.⁷⁷ A third behavioral aspect is touch. Arab culture places a great deal of emphasis on shaking hands, embracing, or kissing.⁷⁸

It is imperative for a military leader to gain an appreciation for local values in order to improve his negotiation skills. The traditional American way of doing business can alienate the local leadership with whom a commander must have cordial and amicable relations. A commander must be prepared for long negotiations and slow deliberations and ready to exchange pleasantries at some length before getting down to business. Middle Easterners in general will be skeptical and mistrustful at first since they tend to establish business relations with family or members that are so close that they almost consider family. As LTC Wunderle states “they always want to know their business partners very well before talking business with them...the business relationship is based on trust, and networking is very essential for doing business.”⁷⁹

A battalion commander in one of the provinces established situational awareness by determining who were the local leaders and decision makers. The structure of the town had civil and administrative leaders, as well as religious and tribal leaders.⁸⁰ Sources of power and extent of authority will vary from group to group and from situation to situation.⁸¹ Once he had good situational awareness, his focus turned towards establishing relationships with key players in the community. He thoroughly immersed himself in the culture, and was highly regarded by the population. He conducted radio and television addresses on a regular basis so everyone in the province knew whom he was, and was focused on the political networking aspect. Most of his success was because he met, ate, and visited the home of nearly every political, religious, and

intellectual leader in the province, careful not to take sides or alienate any of the leadership. Although they all wanted something, he treated them well, listened to their concerns, and was sensitive to their customs. In return, they gave him information because they trusted him. By treating them as equals rather than subordinates, he gained a lot in return.⁸²

Another technique that gained the support of the local government was the military leadership's regular attendance at political meetings where key decisions were made regarding the reconstruction effort.⁸³ This became a great venue to show concern and empower the local government. Working through the imams, village elders, and empowered tribal leaders was of benefit as long as care was taken not to play favorites.⁸⁴

Section V- Conclusion

The satisfactory solution of problems involving civil authorities and civil population requires that all ranks be familiar with the language, the geography, and the political, social and economic factors involved in the country in which they are operating. Poor judgment on the part of the subordinates in the handling of a situation involving the local authorities and the local inhabitants is certain to involve the commander of the force in unnecessary military difficulties and cause publicity adverse to the public interests of the United States. –FMFRP 12-15

Although the lessons and conclusions in this paper are drawn from OIF, the principles have applications to future small wars. The themes of military-civil relationship discussed in the 1940 manual, specifically, relations with the population, cooperation with law enforcement agencies, and contact with local civil and religious leaders are still valid today. Ultimately, winning the support of the civilian population is paramount to successful military-civil operations. Unlike conventional operations where the target is enemy units and locations, in small wars the target is the support of the people. Without it, US forces will be alienated from the population and perceived as illegitimate occupiers.

More than showing kindness and generosity, military leaders also must create trust, build relations and make friends. Some universally applicable points, as we have seen, are that gaining trust is not easy. The most important lesson is the importance of cultural knowledge and sensitivity. Understanding and respecting the cultures of others, opens many doors and facilitates meaningful relationships. Second, you have to listen and then go out your way to show genuine concern to earn trust. Third, once you make a promise, you better exhaust all means available in order to be true to your word. It shows you care. It is paramount for a military leader to understand local behavior and values to gain an appreciation for the art of negotiation, a powerful tool in dealing with any component of the society.

It is appropriate to end with T.E Lawrence maxim, “better the Arabs do it tolerably than that you do it perfectly. It is their war, and you are to help them, not win it for them”. It must be pointed out that Lawrence’s maxim doesn’t apply only to Arabs. The Iraqi people are proud people who ultimately want to be able to run their country without US intervention. The most successful commanders kept this in mind. No matter what the mission, a reconstruction project or local security, they always made sure to put an Iraqi face associated with that mission. By seeing their own people accomplishing these tasks, the local Iraqis will gain confidence that their country will have security, jobs, education and good governance.

¹ . Major Brett Clark and Captain Scott Cuomo, response to author’s questions, 3 January 2006.

² . These comments were taken from a brief that Col Mayer provided me to help me explain why it is important to win the hearts and minds of the population. LTC Tom Guthrie, USA, gave this brief to his Bn in preparation for Iraq.

³ . Major Clark.

⁴ . Major Clark.

⁵ . Major Clark.

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- ⁶ . Col Mayer was the battalion commander for First Battalion, 4th Marines during OIFI. His battalion operated in Babil Province, mostly a Shiite populated area.
- ⁷ . Colonel Mayer. His comments were that critics may fault my analysis of the system in which Marines were generous and benevolent in their actions in that the “system” I describe is not a system, but a charity based on us giving Iraqis something—whether its food, water, tools or money. That’s not a long-term solution or system, but one based on charity that ends once we leave. His subsequent explanation clarifies the perception of US good deeds and hopefully provides the reader awareness, caution, and insight into the polarity of US generosity.
- ⁸ . Major Clark. These two terms, house visits and knock and talks, are slang military terms to mean visits by a military personnel to a civilian establishment where the intent is to maintain low profile as to not scare the people, and gather potential intelligence on insurgent activity. Although the key is to not show military force, it important to note that force protection measures should still be taken into consideration.
- ⁹ . Brigadier General Nigel Aylwin-Foster, “Changing the Army for Counterinsurgency Operations,” Military Review, November-December 2005, 5. The senior Iraqi official mentioned by General Aylwin-Foster is LTG Nasier Abadi, with whom he had frequent contact and who eventually became vice chief of the defense staff in the newly created Iraqi Ministry of Defense. His house was searched twice.
- ¹⁰ . Colonel John Mayer.
- ¹¹ . Captain Scott Cuomo, unpublished essay provided to author, 3 January 2006.
- ¹² . Capt Scott Cuomo, response to author’s questions, 3 January 2006.
- ¹³ . Captain Scott Cuomo, unpublished essay provided to author, 3 January 2006.
- ¹⁴ . Captain Cuomo essay.
- ¹⁵ . Colonel John Mayer.
- ¹⁶ . Colonel John Mayer.
- ¹⁷ . Colonel John Mayer.
- ¹⁸ . Capt Cuomo.
- ¹⁹ . Capt Cuomo.
- ²⁰ . Colonel John Mayer.
- ²¹ . The comments on the criterion for site selection of FOBs were provided in discussion with Col Mayer.
- ²² . Captain Cuomo.
- ²³ . John A. Nagl, Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2002), xiii.
- ²⁴ . Major Clark.
- ²⁵ . Major Clark.
- ²⁶ . Major Clark.
- ²⁷ . Col Mayer who had extensive experience adjudicating claims in his area provided the analysis and implications of settling claims expeditiously. His insights are consistent with the guidance he provided his company commanders who were also area commanders.
- ²⁸ . Major Brian Collins, interview with author, 12 January 2006.
- ²⁹ . Major Collins.
- ³⁰ . Major Beaty.
- ³¹ . Major Beaty.
- ³² . Major Collins and Major Eric Beaty, response to author’s questions, 30 December 2005.
- ³³ . Major Collins.
- ³⁴ . Major Beaty, Collins and LtCol Phil Skuta, response to author’s questions 19 December 2005.
- ³⁵ . LtCol Skuta.
- ³⁶ . Captain Cuomo.
- ³⁷ . Major Collins.
- ³⁸ . Colonel John Mayer.
- ³⁹ . Colonel John Mayer.
- ⁴⁰ . LtCol Skuta and Major Beaty.
- ⁴¹ . LtCol Skuta.
- ⁴² . LtCol Skuta and Capt Cuomo.
- ⁴³ . Major Clark.
- ⁴⁴ . Major Clark.
- ⁴⁵ . Major Clark and Major Beaty.
- ⁴⁶ . Major Clark.

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- 47 . Major Beaty.
- 48 . Major Clark and Major Beaty.
- 49 . Major Beaty.
- 50 . Major Beaty.
- 51 . Major Beaty.
- 52 . Major Clark and Major Beaty.
- 53 . Captain Cuomo describing the actions during the battle for Najaf and the measures taken to avoid any shooting of the Imam Ali Mosque.
- 54 . The Imam Ali Mosque is the most holy site for the Shia faith. This was not an ordinary mosque. Rules of engagement allow Marines to return fire on a mosque that has insurgent fighting within; the Imam Ali Mosque was different due to its sacredness.
- 55 . Colonel John Mayer.
- 56 . LtCol Philip C. Skuta, “Partnering with the Iraqi Security Forces,” Marine Corps Gazette, April 2005, 36-37.
- 57 . 1stLt Jason Goodale, and 1stLt Jon Webre, “The Combined Action Platoon in Iraq,” Marine Corps Gazette, April 2005, 40. Also Bing West, The Village (New York: Pocket Books, 1972) talks a lot about the CAP and its success in Vietnam.
- 58 . Capt Cuomo.
- 59 . Major Ty Edwards, response to authors questions, 1 January 2006 and Major Beaty.
- 60 . LtCol Skuta, “Partnering with Iraqi Security Forces”, 36.
- 61 . LtCol Skuta, “Partnering with Iraqi Security Forces”, 37.
- 62 . LtCol Skuta, “Partnering with Iraqi Security Forces”, 37.
- 63 . LtCol Skuta, “Partnering with Iraqi Security Forces”, 37.
- 64 . Major Beaty.
- 65 . Colonel John Mayer.
- 66 . Col Mayer felt that, Iraqis respond favorably to the same leadership principles officers use with their Marines.
- 67 . Colonel John Mayer.
- 68 . LtCol Skuta, “Partnering with Iraqi Security Forces”, 36.
- 69 . Major Beaty and Captain Cuomo.
- 70 . 1stLt Jason Goodale, and 1stLt Jon Webre, “The Combined Action Platoon in Iraq” 42.
- 71 . LtCol Skuta, “Partnering with Iraqi Security Forces”, 37.
- 72 . Major Clark.
- 73 . Major Edwards.
- 74 . The 1940 SMW titles this section “contact with national government officials”. For the purposes of this paper, I have titled it “contact with civil and religious leaders” since I talk about more than just government officials. In Iraq, the government officials are several notches down the totem pole of the leadership hierarchy, especially at the tactical level.
- 75 . LTC William Wunderle, “Through the Lens of Cultural Awareness: Planning Requirements in Wielding the Instruments of National Power,” Power Point Presentation sent by LtCol John Mayer.
- 76 . LTC Wunderle.
- 77 . LTC Wunderle.
- 78 . LTC Wunderle.
- 79 . LTC Wunderle.
- 80 . Major Edwards.
- 81 . LTC Wunderle.
- 82 . Major Edwards.
- 83 . Major Beaty.
- 84 . Major Clark.