

THE POLITICAL OFFICER AS COUNTER-INSURGENT

CONDUCTING TACTICAL POLITICS AGAINST INSURGENCIES

By Dan Green

In conventional war, violence was a last resort, used after diplomacy had failed. In small wars, military and political action went on simultaneously, for combat and diplomacy could be different aspects of the same thing. At the beginning of a conventional war, political leaders handed over to military men the problem that diplomacy had not solved and told them to deal with it. But in small wars political authorities never let the strings out of their hands.

-- Ronald Schaffer
Introduction, Sunflower University Press edition,
United States Marine Corps, *Small Wars Manual*

If the forces have to be adapted to their new missions, it is just as important that the minds of the leaders and men - and this includes the civilian as well as the military—be adapted to the special demands of counterinsurgency warfare. Reflexes and decisions that would be considered appropriate for the soldier in conventional warfare and for the civil servant in normal times are not necessarily the right ones in counterinsurgency situations.

- David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*

POLITICS AND THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERROR

Any political strategy to defeat al Qaeda, its affiliates, and the insurgencies we face in Afghanistan and Iraq has at least three levels to it: strategic, operational, and tactical.¹ While large parts of any national strategy are well beyond the scope of this essay and are often, unfortunately, quite contentious, my primary focus in this paper is on how we conduct tactical diplomacy and politics and on those

aspects of operational plans that are integral to a province or city-level counter-insurgency strategy. My goal is to empower political officers, whether they are members of the U.S. Department of State (DOS) working at a Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) or a member of the U.S. military designated to handle political matters, with the conceptual tools, practical knowledge, and “tricks of the trade” they will need to perform the incredibly important role they will play in a comprehensive counter-insurgency strategy.² I am primarily

¹ Any strategy to defeat al Qaeda, its affiliates, and the insurgencies in Afghanistan and Iraq must integrate all elements of national power to include not only political resources and strategies but also economic, informational, and military.

² David Kilcullen, “‘Twenty-Eight Articles’: Fundamentals of Company-level Counterinsurgency,” *Military Review* (May – June 2006): 104. Dr. Kilcullen specifically recommends in his sixth article that a company must “[f]ind a POLAD (political-cultural advisor) from among your people” if one is not provided to you. Provincial Reconstruction Teams

concerned with helping the guy in the field who looks out from his forward operating base at the surrounding province or around the room at a meeting of tribal sheiks and elders and wonders how he's going to do his job.

POLITICS AND INSURGENCIES

Counter-insurgency efforts have taken on an increasingly important and vital role in the U.S. strategy to defeat global terrorism since the attacks of September 11th.¹ A key aspect of today's conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq and, historically speaking, a fundamental difference between fighting conventional wars and insurgencies is the role of politics and diplomacy. Unlike conventional warfare where "military action . . . is generally the principal way to achieve the goal" and "[p]olitics *as an instrument of war* tends to take a back seat", in unconventional warfare, "*politics becomes an active instrument of operation*" and "every military move has to be weighed with regard to its political effects, and vice versa."² At their core, insurgencies are about political power struggles, usually between a central government and those who reject its authority, where the objective of the conflict is the population itself and the political right to lead it.³ Thus, the center of gravity in this type of warfare is not the enemy's forces *per se*, but

(PRTs) are government civil-military organizations tasked with facilitating reconstruction, development and good governance while improving security in their province or city. They are presently in Afghanistan and Iraq and typically have representatives from a U.S. military civil-affairs unit, the U.S. Department of State, the United States Agency for International Development, the United States Department of Agriculture, and other agencies to facilitate these goals. Our allies also operate PRTs and, while their basic form can fluctuate due to each country's national goals and limitations, their core participants tend to remain the same.

¹ John Hillen, "Developing a National Counterinsurgency Capability for the War on Terror," *Military Review* (January – February 2007): 13-15.

² David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Security International, 2006), p. 4-5. Italics in the original.

³ Ibid.

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the population⁴ where "the exercise of political power depends on the tacit or explicit agreement of the population or, at worst, on its submissiveness."⁵

Due to the centrality of politics to this type of warfare, counter-insurgent forces must craft a political strategy that is sensitive to the needs of the population, seeks to secure their loyalty to the government, will mobilize the community to identify, expel, or fight the insurgent, and extends the authority and reach of the central government. To achieve these goals, a government must have "a political program designed to take as much wind as possible out of the insurgent's sails."⁶ If done effectively, the political strategy will have succeeded in

⁴ Kalev I. Sepp, "Best Practices in Counterinsurgency," *Military Review* (May – June 2005): 10.

⁵ David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Security International, 2006), p. 4-5.

⁶ Ibid, p. 72.

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“separating the insurgents from popular support” so they can be killed or imprisoned by the government’s security forces.¹ If a political plan is implemented poorly, or not at all, insurgent forces will capitalize on the grievances and frustrated hopes of a community to entice them away from the government and to the political program of the insurgent. The community may then actively assist the insurgent, providing him with a safe haven to rest, re-arm, re-equip, recuperate, and re-deploy to fight another day. In the long run, because this conflict is not about how many casualties counter-insurgent forces can impose upon the insurgents, but upon the will to stay in the fight, foreign counter-insurgents tend to grow weary of the amount of blood and treasure they must expend to defeat the insurgent. Though the insurgent could

¹ John A. Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), p. 115.

conceivably lose every military engagement he has with counter-insurgent security forces, he can still win the war if the political program of the government does not win the population over to its policies, plans, and initiatives.

PROVINCIAL RECONSTRUCTION TEAMS: POLITICS IN THE FIELD

At Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) located throughout Afghanistan and Iraq, DOS employees are either leading PRTs or serving as Political Advisors along with members of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), military Civil-Affairs and Psychological Operations units, and police advisors.² As of October 2,

² Sometimes Special Operations Forces (SOF) are co-located with conventional forces and Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT). The Panjshir Valley PRT is the only PRT in Afghanistan that is led by a DOS employee.

2006, there were 20 DOS representatives in Afghanistan and 29 in Iraq advising PRT military commanders or leading PRTs and furthering U.S. foreign policy goals.¹ The PRT's chief goals are to extend the reach and authority of the central host government, promote good governance, facilitate reconstruction and development, and, along with co-located military units, bolster indigenous security forces. All of these efforts fall under the general category of non-kinetic effects and are incredibly important to fighting an insurgency.

Non-kinetic efforts should form the great bulk of a counter-insurgent's response to an insurgency with military action taking second place.² Because the goal of the conflict is "the right to win the hearts, minds, and acquiescence of the population"[,³ . . . "[i]njudicious use of firepower creates blood feuds, homeless people, and societal disruption that fuel and perpetuate the insurgency."⁴ Accordingly, "[t]he most beneficial actions are often local politics, civic action, and beat-cop behaviors."⁵ These subtler forms of persuasion build confidence and trust between the people and their government whereas indiscriminate firepower that kills innocent people creates enemies. The tools the PRT brings to the non-kinetic fight are development dollars and expertise, diplomatic skills, including conflict resolution and cultural understanding, technical expertise, such as in the fields of agriculture, construction, and engineering, political skills, like fostering government institutions and

mentoring leaders, and management and policing skills, among a host of other capabilities.⁶

BEFORE YOU GO: GETTING SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

Once you've decided to become a PRT Political Advisor and you know which province you'll be working in, it's time for you to get to know the people and the patch of land that will become your home for the next year or so. While public information on your specific province will likely be quite sparse or dated, there are still a number of things you can do to prepare. If you are lucky enough to have one, seek out your DOS predecessor and pick his brain about everything in your province. Insist on having an overlap with him in the province so that he can introduce you to all of the local leaders he's been working with and point out the key landmarks of the area. The regional desk will resist your wanting an overlap because they are under enormous pressure to put as many people as possible in the field, but you must do this if you hope to have a good transition.⁷ Collect all of his reporting cables, notes, pictures, and local contacts and begin to commit this information to your memory. Also ask him to create a continuity book (hard copy and soft) if he is still in country and leave it behind for you. Then request that he prepare a brief paper for you on the province flagging short-term, medium-term, and long-term projects or problems that you will need to keep an eye on. Make sure to also ask him who the

¹ On 11 January 2007, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice stated before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that the number of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in Iraq would increase from 10 to at least 18 in the coming year.

² Kalev I. Sepp, "Best Practices in Counterinsurgency," *Military Review* (May – June 2005): 10.

³ David Kilcullen, "'Twenty-Eight Articles': Fundamentals of Company-level Counterinsurgency," *Military Review* (May – June 2006): 103.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Other non-kinetic capabilities exist independent of the PRT such as U.S. Army Civil-Affairs and Psychological Operations units that are attached to conventional and SOF forces. These are often the only non-kinetic resources we have in the field because PRTs are not in every province and are sometimes unable to get out to an area due to logistical or security concerns.

⁷ Thom Shanker and David S. Cloud, "Military Wants More Civilians to Help in Iraq," *The New York Times*, 7 February, 2007.

best interpreters are at the PRT. Locate the website of the military unit you'll be working with and print off all of their press releases, reports home, and biographies of the major leaders. Seek out the websites of military units that have previously worked in your area; while information will be dated it is still quite useful because you need to understand as much of what has happened before you arrive because the locals certainly will.

Reach out to the regional desks at the State Department and Pentagon and schedule a trip out to the Defense Intelligence Agency and the Central Intelligence Agency. The contacts and information they can provide you about your province will prove invaluable in the field. Go through the last six months of *The Early Bird* and scan for articles about your province; you'll be surprised at exactly how many have been written. Make a point of reviewing the official journals of the military such as *Parameters*, *Proceedings*, and *Military Review*, among others, because they will often have articles on operations in your area and on the challenges of unconventional warfare. Also visit your local bookstore and online booksellers for books on your region and, quite possibly, your province. Also consult the major works of insurgency and counter-insurgency (See Appendix A.) Make sure you attend the Foreign Service Institute's PRT course and the pre-deployment exercise at Ft. Bragg for PRT leaders.

If you have the contact information of your PRT Commander (or your military executive officer if you are in Iraq), reach out to him and ask him what he needs, not only in terms of what his expectations are of you and vice versus, but what nice things from "the real world" such as toiletries, movies, magazines, and food he would like to have at the PRT. This is all about building rapport, understanding,

and trust. Also use this opportunity to review your packing list to make sure you've included everything you'll need for your deployment.

MAKE YOURSELF TACTICAL

Make sure to get a copy of the Army's *Field Manual* (FM 7-8) which focuses on small unit tactics. This basic book of how units move, shoot, and communicate is incredibly important for you to read so that you have a basic familiarity with how the military responds to or initiates contact with the enemy. Hopefully, you will never be in a position to have to use these skills, but it's very useful to know how members of the military view the battlespace you'll be operating in. Also make a point of getting weapons qualified. If you can't do it before you arrive in Afghanistan or Iraq, do it when you get there. At minimum, learn how to use the pistol and the M-4 rifle and how to quickly load and unload them, clean them, and maintain them. When packing, use the packing list provided by your regional office and make a point of being able to carry your own things. You want to be self-sufficient, light, and mobile. There is nothing worse than showing up at your PRT with so much extra luggage/gear that it seems like you are showing up for an extended vacation rather than going to a war zone. First impressions count and you want to demonstrate to your military colleagues that you are here for counter-insurgency, not a holiday. Make a special effort to learn not only basic first aid but also how to deal with some of the more egregious wounds that you might encounter in theater. You will most likely never have to use these skills but if someone else's life can be saved by your actions, it's better to have the skills and use them than to not have them at all and see a friend die. Contact your local military

base and try to schedule a familiarization class with Humvees and the basic communication systems that are used in theater. Several months prior to your trip, make sure to begin a regimen of working out and getting in shape; there is nothing more embarrassing than not being able to go on a foot patrol, or keep up with it, or fit into your armor.

AFTER YOU ARRIVE: AT THE EMBASSY IN KABUL OR BAGHDAD

Once you've arrived at the embassy, make sure the PRT Commander (or your military executive officer if you are in Iraq) knows you are in country so that he can plan to pick you up when you arrive in your province; logistics are always a challenge in Iraq and Afghanistan and a forewarning of your arrival will be appreciated. After you've settled in at the embassy and your orientation has begun, get to know everyone in all the sections. A successful counter-insurgency effort requires that all the instruments of national power be used. Don't just focus on getting to know the political section, get to know all the sections such as economics, international narcotics and law enforcement, refugees, human rights, etc. All their training, contacts, and support can be very useful to you in the field. Also reach out to USAID, USDA, and other agencies. If you have the time, make a point of meeting representatives of the relevant ministries for your province. You may not have a lot of time so be strategic. Focus on the Ministries of Interior, Education, Health, and Public Works. Their support and the good rapport you build with them can help to supplement our own counter-insurgency efforts and help to extend the reach of the central government to your province as well; in many ways, their efforts at

non-kinetic assistance will be even more important than anything you alone can do.

Schedule a meeting with the Ambassador and seek out his advice. What does he need from you, what are his priorities for the country and your province? Don't be afraid to ask him how he can help you. It is your life on the line out in the field, the embassy should be doing everything it can to help you. Make a point of purchasing new movies and magazines for the soldiers as gifts and culturally appropriate presents for the locals. Gifts for locals can be paid for through representational funds from the embassy. While many an Afghan, for example, will appreciate a new turban, he will really appreciate a new radio or CD/DVD player. I found that silk carpets and leather pistol holsters were also well received.

BUILDING A GOOD RELATIONSHIP WITH THE MILITARY

Be a Team Player (Outside the Wire). Above all else, your military colleagues will want to know whether you are a team player who is willing to carry his own weight. This message can be conveyed in a number of ways. After you've arrived at the PRT, make a special effort to learn how to drive a Humvee and use the radios (if you haven't done so already), and operate a Mark-19 grenade launcher, a squad automatic weapon, a 240 Bravo machine gun, and a 50-caliber machine gun. You will probably never have to apply these skills but by showing your willingness to learn about them your military colleagues will respect you even more. It is everyone's mission to scan for improvised explosive devices and insurgents. Scan your quadrant and be a team player. Find out what you should do if you are involved in a firefight while in your Humvee. What

ammunition can you help pass up to the turret gunner and find out where the first aid kit is located in case you need to help administer assistance. As diplomats, we are not at the PRT to actually fight the insurgents. That being said, the distinction of who is and who isn't a war fighter is generally lost on the insurgents. When the bullets are pinging off your Humvee and you hear the whoosh of a rocket-propelled grenade, these fine distinctions of civilian (non-combatant) and military (combatant) seem to melt away pretty quickly. Your military colleagues will respect you and help you do your mission if you recognize the need for teamwork and they feel they can rely on you. There is no finer compliment than having a soldier tell you he is happy to roll outside the wire with you.

- Whether you are in a Humvee or not, whenever an ambush or attack takes place, take cover and do whatever the officer-in-charge says. He will save your life.
- Because a good deal of your job will be meeting with people outside the wire, make a point of thanking the soldiers who are protecting you and explaining to them why the meeting you attended was important enough for them to put their lives on the line to protect you. As with anything in a war zone, meetings will come up on short notice and sometimes missions have to be spun up pretty quickly. Make an effort to give your force protection enough lead time so that they can plan your mission. Not only is it a matter of courtesy, but you can never have enough lead time for force protection.
- Always bring a digital camera and extra batteries with you. Make a point of extensively photographing each and every mission and organize your photos into a dated filing system. This will give you a number of advantages. First, by photographing the local population, and especially the leaders, you will be able to organize a "Who's Who" file on the key personalities of your area. Second, by documenting the civil-affairs, reconstruction, and development projects your PRT is involved in, you will become a useful asset to your civil-affairs team which often has to file reports on the progress of their projects. You've made their lives easier by taking the pictures. Third, everyone likes to have photos of them performing their job in a war zone. You will often have the unique opportunity to take photos because the soldiers are protecting you. Take their photos as they are doing their job and give them copies at the end of the mission. This is a nice way of building rapport with the soldiers and getting to know them better. Fourth, it's useful to have photos of local landmarks so that you can brief new arrivals to your PRT. Fifth, by organizing your photos you are helping to create a history of your time at the PRT which is a useful thing to have when you are trying to remember when something happened. And last, if soldiers are killed, there is no better gift than sending photographs you've taken of their loved one to their family. It's not a pleasant thought but it's reality.
- You will often need time to stay at the PRT in order to write up your notes, draft cables, and unwind. In general, though, you should try to go on every mission outside the wire you can get on. There is no better way of knowing your province than being among its people. Don't ever shy away from a

dangerous mission. The soldiers will lose respect for you and being able to defeat the insurgents with politics and diplomacy requires you to go in harms way. Accept this, and you will succeed.

Be a Team Player (At the PRT). One of the chief advantages you will have because you are a civilian, diplomat, and advisor to the PRT Commander (Afghanistan) or actually leading the PRT (Iraq), is that the local population will often be quite ready to talk with you about the goings-on of their province. Write up your interviews and meeting notes and put them into a format that is useful to the military. Reporting cables are fine but daily Situation Reports (SITREPS) are a very effective way to get your views into the military system. SITREPS are also quite useful when you want to know when certain things took place in your province and for writing up lengthier reports on your area, so keep a file on the SITREP contributions you make. SITREPS are useful to you as well because they will often contain the photos you've taken which, because it makes your commander's report look better, helps you out in your relationship with the military by generating good will. Because I had written up all of my elections-related meeting notes I was able to write a formal history of the elections process in my province and how the PRT positively affected it. And because you will often be the only person interviewing some locals, your information is extremely valuable to the military and the counter-insurgency effort in general.

- Make a point of learning how to use PowerPoint and putting your information into a format that allows you to brief what you know about the province. There is nothing more embarrassing than having your PRT Commander brief visiting

dignitaries about the political situation in your province. With slides you become relevant; you may not like it but it's true. Additionally, by putting your information into a slide format, you can also pass it on to the military and they will value your input immensely and use it.

- Because the information you collect is part of an overall effort to understand the dynamics of your province and is a key component in identifying the insurgent from the general population, it is imperative that you make sure your information is timely, relevant, and put into a format that will be useful to the military. This is all about bringing the information, resources, contacts, and skills we all have as interagency members of a PRT to the collective effort of defeating the insurgent. Whenever a new military unit rotates into your province, make a point of sharing your information with them and briefing their commander and his intelligence and operations staff on the local situation.
- Make sure to attend as many meetings of the military as you can. You need to have total operational awareness of what is going on in your province and it is also a good opportunity to make sure you are well known among all members of the military. Many of them have never met a member of the DOS, attending their meetings and adding value to them will demystify them of what a diplomat is and give you a chance to show them what a regular "Joe" you really are.
- Make a special effort to know all the soldiers at the PRT and their responsibilities. For example, because I was on excellent terms with the head of our

first aid station I was often able to do favors for Afghans who required medical assistance. This helped me do my job by allowing me to build rapport with the local population. Additionally, though Political Advisors are typically around the O-5 or O-6 level with respect to protocol purposes and their position at the PRT, taking an interest in the soldiers you are serving with and recognizing that we are all risking our lives for our country goes a long way when you are in the middle of nowhere. A good relationship with your supply sergeant, for example, can come in quite handy when you need printer cartridges, paper, sunglasses, a knife, or a Leatherman tool among other things. Because you will rely on your PRT's force protection for doing any work outside the wire, make sure to cultivate a close working relationship with them as well.

- Since you are probably one of the few people who will have his own room at the base, make it a place where people can hang out. Purchase a refrigerator, procure a couch or extra chairs, and get a nice-sized TV along with a DVD player. Make sure people get to know you when you are no longer "on the clock".
- Because forward operating bases and PRTs often have members of a number of different military units co-located there, make a point of getting to know all of the leaders of these disparate elements. Don't become "captured" by your PRT. Be loyal to your PRT commander and colleagues but make sure to befriend the leaders of all of the military units. Help to ease any frictions they may have with other units or leaders and keep their advice and frustrations private. You need to be viewed as an

honest broker. They will likely respond to your good intentions and if you do your job well, you can help to ensure that we all can concentrate on the task at hand and not get mired down into personality clashes.

THE POLITICAL OFFICER IN AN INSURGENCY ENVIRONMENT

There are at least three counter-insurgency political environments you will most likely find yourself in. The first is where the overall political strategy for the country is sound and what you are doing is only a matter of facilitating its implementation. The second is where the strategy is wrong, non-existent, or poorly implemented. In this situation, no amount of tactical diplomacy on your part will fix the local situation. A wrong or non-existent strategy will never succeed even if the tactics are sound. At this point, you are only trying to stop the hemorrhaging of a patient who will eventually die. And finally, a winning strategy that has wrong tactics will eventually succeed, given enough time, as long as the right lessons are learned and applied.

Exactly how a Political Advisor is supposed to conduct himself in an insurgency environment may seem difficult to figure out at first. By and large, your PRT Commander will be elated to have you as his Political Advisor; the Commander is finally getting interagency support and he will greatly value the advice and insight you can provide. While your general marching orders are to provide political and cultural advice to the PRT Commander, present U.S. foreign policy views to the local community, and draft regular reporting cables to the embassy, how you facilitate the PRT's other goals of reconstruction, development, good governance, successful elections,

defeating the insurgent, and extending the reach of the central host government is less clear cut. Additionally, while most Political Advisors come to a PRT with some representational funds, cultural exchange programs, public diplomacy material, and visa paperwork, from the perspective of many military commanders, besides political and cultural advice and some language ability, we don't seem to provide a lot of additional value. Some PRT Commanders may even view you as a nuisance. We don't have the big bucks of either a civil affairs unit or a USAID representative nor do we have any technical knowledge that may be of use for reconstruction and development, but we likely have experience in the developing world, some greater cultural understanding, and some language ability. We are also good writers and have been trained to capture complex subjects and convey information about it to others in a succinct manner. Military commanders are happy to have you, don't get me wrong, but they generally don't know how to use you. The task for you is to make yourself relevant and to provide value added to your PRT Commander and the embassy.

1. Interview and Get to Know Everyone.

Once you've settled into your PRT, begin to systematically meet every key leader (official and unofficial) in your province. If you can, bring a present with you and meet the person at their home, government office, or shop. As you meet with the person, take mental notes about how the place is organized, does it appear to be a well run government office, are workers busy, are there a lot of customers, is there power and running water, do people wear their uniforms? Don't worry about noticing everything, there will be plenty of opportunities to get additional information. When you get

back to the PRT, write all of these observations down and make sure to note the date you met the person. The value of keeping your notes straight will only increase with time. Knowing when things happened and who participated in them and creating a recent history of your province and its people is essential to your success.

Because you are a member of the PRT and local leaders know that you are a key advisor to the PRT Commander, they will often be quite open with you about their needs, grudges, hopes, and fears. Many locals often view the PRT as one giant neon dollar sign that is open 24/7.¹ For this reason alone, many locals will talk with you because they hope you can get them a PRT contract, money and support from the local government, or some other dispensation. Be very careful about doing favors for people, especially at this early stage in your tour. People will always try to involve you in things that the PRT should rightfully *not* participate. Always be perceived as an honest broker who does not favor any one tribe, individual, or faction.

The challenge for you when you attend meetings and conduct formal interviews is to understand the person's personal story and history and the capabilities of their government directorates, militia, mosque, bazaar shop, etc. Where were they born, what is their education, their tribe, how long have they been in their position, how did they get their position, and who are their relatives? These and other questions will help you to not only know the person you're interviewing but will also help you to understand how your community operates and its recent history. Some people

¹ This wonderfully apt point of view of how the PRT is often seen by many locals was given to me by Tarin Kowt PRT Commander LTC William LaFontaine.

will be quite forthcoming with this information while others will only reveal tidbits to you over time after they've gotten to know you and have seen you repeatedly. Keep your notes straight and you'll eventually have a complete picture.

2. Collect as Much Information as You Can.

Collecting, organizing, presenting, and acting on information is one of the fastest ways you can become an indispensable member of a PRT. (Appendix B). As a Political Advisor and representative of the U.S. Embassy in your province, you will have an unusual opportunity to meet with local government officials and residents, members of the international community such as the United Nations (U.N.), non-governmental organizations, and coalition forces. Because you don't wear a military uniform, members of these groups will generally feel much more comfortable talking with you. You will have access to information that no one else will have at your PRT. Local residents and members of the government will sometimes turn to you to complain about military operations, factional leaders will seek you out to complain about how the governor mistreats them, and members of the U.N. will want to talk with you because they want to have the U.S. Embassy's support. Due to your incredible access to information, it is essential that you organize it and make it relevant to your military counterparts. Mastering this will make you and your advice essential to your military colleagues.

3. Organize Your Information. As I mentioned in "Be a Team Player (Outside the Wire)", always take lots of pictures. I always had my camera in my pocket, and because I took so many photos, eventually no one really noticed when I snapped a picture or two. Always try to pose with a local leader for a photo if you can't get one of them standing

alone. When you get back to the PRT, download this photo and add it to a write up of your meeting notes and organize it into a "Who's Who" file. (See Appendix C.) The "Who's Who" file should become the corporate memory of the PRT when it comes to the people and personalities of your province. It should contain all the information you've been able to collect on the key personages of your province and on their respective directorates, tribes, mosques, districts, etc. It is a living document and you must assiduously maintain its information. By getting to know the key players in your area you will have information that is incredibly useful to your military colleagues. Organizing your photos into files will directly enhance your influence at the PRT.

4. Create Situational Awareness. This may seem like intelligence gathering, but as a Political Advisor it is your responsibility to know your province and its people better than anyone else.¹ How are you supposed to advise your PRT Commander, or be the PRT Commander, if you don't know your province? Think of yourself as a mix between an anthropologist, historian, political scientist, local mayor, and city manager. You will want to know exactly how your province operates from the mundane things such as how sewage is disposed of, to how justice is administered and marriage works. You must think of politics holistically, not just in terms of politicians, government institutions, non-governmental organizations, etc. All these areas of knowledge must be integrated in your head. The insurgent will know this stuff like the back of his hand. You will never know it as completely as he does but you also have the power and resources of the

¹ Whenever a new military unit or important dignitary visits, make sure that you brief them on what you know about the province. Make yourself indispensable.

U.S. Government at your disposal that can certainly tip things in your favor. Remember, understanding the life of a community is more important than overwhelming firepower. With this knowledge, you can defeat the insurgent.

5. Conduct Assessments of Politicians, Directorates, Tribes, and People. Part of the process of extending the reach of the central government to your area and defeating the insurgent is making government institutions a vital part of the community where they will actually accomplish their core tasks. One of the ways you can become an invaluable member of your PRT in facilitating this goal is by recommending civil-affairs and USAID projects based on your knowledge of the area. When it comes to facilitating good governance and public administration, it is useful to ask certain basic questions that capture the process of institutionalization. In my province in Afghanistan, for example, one government directorate consisted of two men and a building with no power and water and it had no resources, budget, or equipment. However, knowing that information was useful, no matter how bleak the situation appeared to be, because it allowed me to constructively contribute to the conversation about where precious development dollars should be spent. Because a PRT has a fixed amount of resources, knowing where money should be spent versus where we'd like for it to be spent is crucial. Make a point of meeting and interviewing all government ministry leaders in the province. Find out how they obtained their positions and ask them about their respective personal histories. Don't forget to take their picture.

After you've gotten the personal stuff out of the way, begin to ask standard questions of what their government directorate actually does and what resources they have on hand. (Similar

questions could be asked of elected Members of Parliament, the Provincial Council, shuras, and tribal groups.) For example, find out whether they have a government building, whether it has power and water, does the directorate have resources, what is its budget, how many employees do they have, are they literate and trained, does the directorate actually do anything, does it solely operate in the provincial capital or does it do things in the surrounding districts? Once you've collected all this information about the local ministries, rate each of the directors and their directorates on their governance abilities. (See Appendices D and E). So, for example, the directorate I mentioned earlier that had two employees was rated "very poor" by my analysis but the director was rated as "good" because while he was actually trained to do the job he was charged with, which was irrigation, and had some good ideas about how to do it, he hadn't really taken much initiative to change the situation. His major shortcoming was that his directorate had no resources.

6. Craft a Political Strategy and Make It Operationally Useful. This is the point where all of your efforts at learning about your province and its residents will pay off as you write a comprehensive political strategy to defeat the insurgents in your area. (See Appendix F). After you've been at the PRT for a couple of months and know the lay of the land, draft a political strategy for the province. Your strategy should complement the security and development strategy for the area. If you have a predecessor who can give you some insight into the area, you might be able to draft this even more quickly. You will, of necessity, modify it as time goes on, but make a good first effort.

Consider, for example, the following issues: With all of the knowledge you've gained, what

patterns of violence have you noticed? Are certain tribal or geographical areas more susceptible to violence? Are all of the tribes represented in the government? All religious groups, districts? Does the government administer its programs evenly across the province? Are the leaders of your province honest, corrupt, hard-working, or lazy? This is your chance to shape the operating environment. As you make your recommendations, always ask yourself whether what you suggest will defeat the insurgent. It is time for you to create “a political program designed to take as much wind as possible out of the insurgent’s sails.”¹

- Begin to make recommendations to the governor and the central host government (through the U.S. Embassy) about who should be fired, replaced, or promoted. Don’t be shy but be politically savvy. Try to put an Afghan or Iraqi face on your initiatives.
- Lean on leaders to make the local government more representative and operate evenly across the province.
- Suggest changes to how the PRT operates, whom it hires (e.g. local nationals), where it spends its money, who it supports, etc.
 - Does the PRT tend to favor one tribe or area more than others? Spread the money around and link it to improvements in security and cooperation from recalcitrant villages/tribes, etc.
 - Are local hires also from one tribe or area? Diversify your staff while being
- mindful that some groups are just not ready to be hired for security reasons.
- Identify the fissures in society (personalities, tribal, religious, geographic) that the insurgent uses to split the community against you. Modify the behavior of the military, the PRT, and the local government to eliminate these opportunities by stressing the values of inclusiveness, responsiveness, performance, reform, consistency, representation, and respect.
 - If needed, use your contacts in the community and your knowledge of the area to initiate government institutions, representative bodies, or civil society. Put an Afghan or Iraqi face on it, but if there is a need, try to address it.
 - This will likely to a long process, and you will invariably be a coach, a teacher, and a mentor.
 - Start off new institutions by trying to establish a rhythm where habits become expectations which transition into informal rules and, eventually, with luck and hard work, formal rules and then laws.
- Focus your efforts on building government institutions and representative bodies and making them vital to the community, fostering civil society, eliminating safe havens for the insurgent (whether this is a geographical area, tribal area, or issue of grievance), and give the community something positive to support.
 - This is where your positive relationships with different military units can become handy. Because you can operate easily between different units, you can help

¹ David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Security International, 2006), p. 72.

provide the crucial political leadership that is needed if you plan to initiate a political program that requires the synchronized efforts of a number of different players.

- Uncover the self-interest of people, villages, and tribes and harness it to the public good. It'll be a more enduring base for projects and you will find that your undertakings will last longer. For example, we purchased two used school buses for the girls school in downtown Tarin Kowt to pick students up from outside the village. Because one bus would go to the governor's house on the outskirts of town to pick up his daughters and the other would go out to the police chief's house on the opposite side of the village to do the same, all of the girls who lived between their homes were able to get a ride to school. It wasn't a perfect solution but we never had to purchase fuel for the vehicles or pay the driver. These are small things but they represent a proper harnessing of a person's self-interest to furthering the public's.
- Always integrate information operations into your plans. A billboard boasting of the accomplishments of a newly reconstituted city council will do wonders for bolstering a fledging institution. Because you have access to a Public Affairs Office and Public Diplomacy materials, make sure you use them. Always think of how you will defeat the insurgents' political message. You are here to destroy his political organization through superior work, better results, and a compelling message that captures the hopes and dreams of a people.

- "If you are in charge, be in charge."¹ Don't be shy or timid, if you have done your homework, proceed with alacrity and confidence.
- As always, adjust your plans accordingly and think unconventionally; the insurgent does and so must you.

COMMON MISTAKES OF POLITICAL OFFICERS

- Don't fall in love with a local national who you just know will be the next "Father of Fallujah" or is just an Alexander Hamilton in waiting provided you work with him just a bit longer. Be realistic about the motivations of people, check your intel, and always ask yourself how is it in this person's self-interest to work with you. Don't get blinded by ideology, good intentions, or the fact that they speak perfect English.
- Don't mistake formal power with actual power. Just because someone shows up at a meeting doesn't mean they have real pull in the community. Sometimes they are the minions of more powerful men, members of the Taliban or al Qaeda, etc., trying to keep a tab on you and local leaders, or just rank opportunists. Knowing who is a real player can only be known by being familiar with the personal histories of local personalities and a thorough knowledge of the province and its history. Look for non-verbal cues as to who is a real player. Look for these signs: people stand up when the person enters the room, they kiss his hand or cheek in a sign of respect, they give him a seat at the front of the room, people in the

¹ Quote from 25th Infantry Commander LTC Terry Sellers.

room don't talk when he does. These and other clues will give you the information you need to make an assessment of whether you are talking with the real players.

- All too often, Political Officers think they are some sort of viceroy or glorified envoy for the province and, for some reason, are entitled to some sort of special treatment. Yes, you are special to some extent because you represent the U.S. Government's foreign-policy making apparatus. However, if you come across as arrogant, snooty, haughty, or somehow better than anyone else, you will be treated as special -- everyone will avoid you.
- Our views of what is going on in the province are read with a great deal of interest in Washington, D.C. Some officers get it into their head that they are some sort of glorified policy-maker who should only be concerned with "big picture", strategic level issues for the province. Yes, you should be concerned with issues that impact our policy priorities for Afghanistan and Iraq, but the bulk of your efforts should be on shaping the political terrain of the province and reporting on issues that are also useful to Kabul or Baghdad, but may not be so important to a D.C. reader.
- Many reporting cables are simply accounts of meetings that Political Officers attended. These reports can often be quite valuable. However, policy-makers in D.C., in Kabul, and in Baghdad really crave facts, statistics, and assessments of programs. One report that is the distillation of a number of interviews, assessments, and your personal observations is infinitely more valuable than

another cable on what a local potentate said.

- Don't fall into the trap of "I report, therefore I exist." Fewer reports of higher value are more useful than a lot with little. Remember, you are at your PRT to shape the political environment to facilitate the goals of the host government and the United States of America. Don't get too preoccupied with writing lots of reports.
- Don't fall in love with the Special Forces or Navy SEALs. Yes, they are high-speed and impressive. You are there to work at the PRT to focus on good governance, reconstruction, development, etc. Know what the SOF teams are doing, integrate with them when needed, get to know their leadership, but make sure you do the essential political tasks your province requires and don't get too wrapped up into kinetic operations or operators.

CONCLUSION

The responsibilities of a Political Officer in an insurgency environment are enormous, challenging, and absolutely vital to our efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq. While the U.S. military has quite ably adapted itself to the insurgency challenge, those of us at the U.S. Department of State need to follow their example and adapt to the challenge of unconventional warfare. We need to make politics and diplomacy central to a comprehensive counter-insurgency strategy at the tactical level. While I realize many of my colleagues may disagree with me over various points covered in this essay, my hope is that the ideas captured in this piece will have prompted some new thinking and perhaps even instigated some needed reform in how we approach our duties in the field. I also hope it

helps the guy in the field who doesn't have the luxury of waiting for institutions to change and needs to know how to do political work in the field right now.

Dan Green works at the U.S. Department of State (DOS) in the Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism. He served a year as a Political Advisor to the Tarin Kowt Provincial Reconstruction Team in Uruzgan Province, Afghanistan, for which he received the DOS's

Superior Honor Award and the U.S. Army's Superior Civilian Service Award. He also received a letter of commendation from Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Peter Pace. The views expressed in this article are his own and do not necessarily represent the views of the Bush Administration, the DOS, the U.S. Navy, or the Department of Defense. Mr. Green is currently mobilized by the Navy and is serving in Iraq as a tribal liaison officer. He can be reached via e-mail at dantkprt@yahoo.com.

APPENDIX A

POLITICAL OFFICER ESSENTIAL READING

INSURGENCY AND COUNTER-INSURGENCY

(VIEW ONLINE. ARTICLES ARE LINKED TO SOURCES.)

Wallach, Janet, *Desert Queen: The Extraordinary Life of Gertrude Bell: Adventurer, Advisor to Kings, Ally of Lawrence of Arabia*, New York: Anchor Books, 2005. **(Counter-Insurgency, Middle East, 1900-10s)**

Though massively overshadowed in the minds of the public by "Lawrence of Arabia", in a practical sense, Bell's work in the Middle East, and her efforts at creating modern-day Iraq in particular, had a more far-reaching and lasting impact on the region than Lawrence's exertions. Her works entitled "The Arabs of Mesopotamia" and "Review of the Civil Administration of Mesopotamia" are must reads, as well as her numerous contributions to *The Arab Bulletin*, from which Lawrence's "Twenty-Seven Articles" is drawn. A noted archeologist, historian, and writer (like Lawrence), her other publications are also quite useful to understanding the history and people of the Middle East.

Lawrence, T.E., *Seven Pillars of Wisdom: A Triumph*, New York: Anchor Books, 1991. **(Insurgency, Middle East, 1910s)**

There is no better way of defeating an insurgent than studying someone who has successfully been one. Lawrence's account of his experiences in Arabia against the Ottoman Empire on behalf of the British military is excellent. Useful to read because it provides some insight into how the modern Middle East was formed out of the ashes of the Ottoman Empire, the culture and abilities of the Arabs, and on the challenges of working with people from another culture.

Lawrence, T.E., "The 27 Articles of T.E. Lawrence," *The Arab Bulletin*, August 20, 1917. **(Insurgency, Counter-Insurgency, Middle East, 1910s)**

Practical advice for British military personnel on how to successfully work in the Middle East with Arab insurgents during their revolt against the Ottoman Empire. As useful today as it was then, perhaps more so. A must read.

Haldane, Aylmer L., *The Insurrection in Mesopotamia, 1920*, London: The Imperial War Museum, 1922. **(Insurgency, Counter-Insurgency, Iraq, 1920s)**

A first hand account by the British General who successfully put down the Iraqi uprising of the 1920s. What is interesting about this account is that the combatants are predominantly Shiite and the Sunnis support the British who eventually decide to keep the Sunnis on top of the country's power structure where they had originally been placed by the Ottomans. The U.S. invasion of 2003 completely changed the arrangement. If you can, read it.

Cassidy, Robert M., "The British Army and Counterinsurgency: The Salience of Military Culture," *Military Review* (May–June 2005), 53–59. **(Counter–Insurgency, Malay, Ireland)**

A useful analysis of how British military culture affected their approach to waging counter–insurgency campaigns in Malay and Northern Ireland. Because the British military is significantly smaller than that of the United States they have historically tended to emphasize counter–insurgency approaches that stressed low–tech, small unit solutions rather than high tech, big unit solutions that the U.S. has usually used. A useful read.

Cross, J.P., *'A Face Like A Chicken's Backside': An Unconventional Soldier in South East Asia, 1948–1971*, Pennsylvania: Greenhill Books, 1996. **(Insurgency, Counter–Insurgency, Malay, Borneo, 1940s–1970s)**

Fascinating first hand account of a British Officer's time in South East Asia fighting Communist insurgencies. In addition to his extensive practical experience he was also the Commandant of the British Army's Jungle Warfare School. Great resource for how to work with indigenous forces, on how insurgents operate, and on how to craft and implement a counter–insurgency strategy. If you can, read it.

Hashim, Ahmed S., *Insurgency and Counter–Insurgency in Iraq*, Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2006. **(Insurgency, Counter–Insurgency, Iraq, 2003–2005)**

A comprehensive overview of the insurgency in Iraq and early American attempts to craft and implement a successful counter–insurgency strategy. Reviews the history, motivations, and tactics of the Sunni insurgents and of rival Shiite groups. Discusses how Saddam Hussein and the Baathists gained and wielded power in Iraq and how the dissolution of his regime provided opportunities for other groups, such as exiled political parties, religious leaders, and terrorist groups such as al Qaeda, to fill the vacuum. Analyzes early U.S. policies in Iraq with a view to how they inadvertently created and fostered many of the insurgent groups we are now facing.

Kilcullen, David, "Twenty–Eight Articles": Fundamentals of Company–level Counterinsurgency," *Military Review*, (May–June 2006), 103–108. **(Tactical, Counter–Insurgency, 2001–2006)**

A modern–day update of T.E.Lawrence's "Twenty–Seven" articles, this journal article provides a tactical to–do list for U.S. units facing an insurgency. The author brings real–life experiences with insurgencies and counter–insurgencies to the article that are then significantly enriched by his formal academic training in the subject. A must read.

Teamy, Kyle and LTC Jonathan Sweet, "Organizing Intelligence for Counterinsurgency," *Military Review*, (September–October 2006), 24–29. **(Tactical, Counter–Insurgency, Iraq, 2005–2006)**

Useful article to better understand how important intelligence is in a counter–insurgency environment. Based on the authors' experiences in Iraq, they provide us with their view on what the optimum set up is for gathering intelligence and making it operationally useful in an insurgency environment. A must read.

Sepp, Kalev I., "Best Practices in Counterinsurgency," *Military Review*, (May–June 2005), 8– 12. **(Tactical, Operational, Strategic, Counter–Insurgency)**

A very useful article that analyzes the various strategies governments have pursued in their efforts to defeat insurgencies. Gives the reader a comprehensive list of what works and doesn't work informed by history. A must read.

Galula, David, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*, Connecticut: Praeger Security International, 2006. **(Tactical, Operational, Counter-Insurgency, Algeria, 1956-1958)**

This slender volume is worth its weight in gold. Written by a French military officer who fought insurgents in the French effort to pacify Algeria from 1956-1958, it reads as a how-to guide in conducting counter-insurgent operations. It provides the reader with the theory of counter-insurgency and on how to practically apply it in the field. Especially useful because the conflict was between a western power and a Muslim insurgency. A must read.

Galula, David, *Pacification in Algeria, 1956-1958*, Arlington, VA: Rand Corporation, 2006. **(Insurgency, Counter-Insurgency, Algeria, 1950s)**

This is Galula's more detailed account of his time in Algeria and fleshes out the basic insights he provided in his book *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (above). Especially useful because the conflict was between a western power and a Muslim insurgency.

Lederer, William J. and Eugene Burdick, *The Ugly American*, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999. **(Insurgency, Counter-Insurgency, Vietnam, 1960s-1970s)**

Though a work of fiction, its discussion of how the U.S. tried to prevent a Southeast Asian country from going Communist is well worth the read. Sometimes institutional and individual career preservation and advancement get in the way of getting the job done. Also helpful at understanding how the U.S. does counter-insurgency as a superpower and the mind of the insurgent.

Etherington, Mark, *Revolt on the Tigris: The Al-Sadr Uprising and the Governing of Iraq*, Ithaca, New York, 2005. **(Tactical, Coalition Provisional Authority, Insurgency, Counter-Insurgency, Iraq, 2003-2004)**

This account of a Coalition Provisional Authority Governorate Coordinator's time in Wasit Province in Central-South Iraq is a rare and invaluable contribution to the extent writings on Iraq. It provides a detailed and eminently readable account of a small CPA team's efforts to govern their province and lay the groundwork for stability. A useful book for understanding the challenges of working in a war zone while trying to improve governance and public administration. Presents the grim realities of trying to govern an area of Iraq without the proper personnel and resources to do it. What this small team was able to accomplish is very impressive. A must read.

Nagl, John A., *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005. **(Insurgency, Counter-Insurgency, Malay, Vietnam, 1960s-1970s)**

With the blessing of Chief of Staff for the U.S. Army General Peter J. Schoomaker, this work is *the* book that the U.S. Army swears by as it adapts to the insurgency it faces in Iraq. A succinct overview of how the British and U.S. military adapted, or didn't, to the insurgencies they respectively faced in Malay and Vietnam. Useful at understanding how you must think unconventionally, utilizing all aspects of national power (diplomacy, economic development, etc.), to defeat an insurgency. Analyzes how the British military was able to learn from its early mistakes in trying to defeat the Communist insurgency in Malay and how they incorporated those

lessons into an eventually successful strategy. Also analyzes how the U.S. Army in particular, in comparison to the Marine Corps, which seems to have gotten it right, began to painfully adapt its conventional military strategy in Vietnam to the unconventional threat it actually faced. Chapters 1–3, 8, and 9 are worth your effort.

Ricks, Thomas E., *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq*, New York: The Penguin Press, 2006. **(Iraq, 2001–2005, Politics Leading up to the War, Major Combat Operations, Post–Saddam)**

Best single volume to date on why we invaded Iraq, how we did it, the impact of D.C. and CPA decisions on stability and the insurgency, and on early U.S. military efforts to adapt to the changing security environment. A must read. Contains useful accounts of early counter-insurgency efforts in Mosul and Tal Afar.

DeForest, Orrin, *Slow Burn: The Rise and Bitter Fall of American Intelligence in Vietnam*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990. **(Tactical, Operational, Vietnam, 1970s, Counter–Insurgency)**

Fascinating and excellent overview of the experiences of one CIA officer's time in Vietnam as part of the Phoenix program. Takes you from the beginning of his tour in the early 1970s to the fall of Saigon. Provides you with a great overview of the mechanics of conducting interrogations at the tactical level and on the need to think unconventionally in your approach to collecting intelligence on and defeating an elusive enemy. A must read.

Herrington, Stuart A., *Silence Was a Weapon: The Vietnam War in the Villages, A Personal Perspective*, California: Presidio Press, 1982. **(Tactical, Operational, Vietnam, late 60s, early 70s, Counter–Insurgency)**

A fascinating account of an Army officer's time in Vietnam while a member of the Phoenix program which was tasked with disrupting and killing the Vietcong shadow government in South Vietnam. Great overview of the challenges of working with indigenous leaders and of working in the field at the tactical level. Interesting account of how you gather intelligence on an insurgency and on how you can effectively fight it. Great overview of how interrogating was organized in Herrington's province with some useful stories of the effectiveness of some approaches. Chapter Ten has a particularly interesting story of the process of turning one captured Vietcong soldier into a loyal member of the South Vietnamese Army. Great chapter on how change of scenery and a little kindness can yield vast amounts of information. A great book to read after *Slow Burn* (above).

APPENDICES B THROUGH F

OMITTED IN THIS EDITION

The author has provided brief but very substantive analyses and reports as examples of products from the Political Officer that are useful to the PRT.

We are seeking to make these available in two variations, but we don't have them in place yet. First, a copy-cat fictional version for public consumption, via our site. Second, the original version via an FOUO mechanism with limited distribution. When available, we will update the online version of SWJ Magazine with links. No ETA.

The sample material is largely common knowledge in the AO and certainly not classified, but it nevertheless speaks to real people and real situations. Therefore we are proceeding cautiously. The

simple but practical products provide cogent and concise examples that add a lot to the Political Officer who is trying to put the tenets of this article into practice. But the fundamentals are already provided in the article, and individual circumstances will vary greatly, so we err now on the side of caution knowing that there's great value as is, even without the immediate examples.

AMERICA'S CULTURAL FIRST BATTLES:

UNDERSTANDING THE INFLUENCE OF CULTURE ON WAR

By LTC Thomas P. Odom, US Army (ret.)

Somalia serves as stark reminder of the risks in not understanding the cultural battlefield.

As a military, our record in understanding the effects of culture on military operations is very much a history of learning by making mistakes. Ultimately we tend to get it right but only after getting it wrong. That really should surprise no one as war itself is often the product of cultural friction and misunderstanding. Where the U.S. military has tended to go astray is in not understanding that lack of cultural understanding has an effect on operations once conflict begins. In many ways that pattern of cultural misreads matches our experience in battle.

LOSING TO WIN

In the 1980s, Lieutenant Colonel Charles Heller and Brigadier General William A. Stofft put together an anthology of essays entitled *America's First Battles, 1776-1965*.¹ Both Heller and Stofft had been members of the Combat Studies Institute, at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Stofft became the Chief of Military History for the U.S. Army, going on later to become Commandant of the U.S. Army War College. *First Battles* described the American military pattern of losing early battles only to ultimately win the war in question. The sole exception to that pattern was Vietnam where early victories were misinterpreted and ultimately the U.S. lost

the war. Heller and Stofft's anthology described these struggles in terms of training, equipment, doctrine, and political factors. Cultural effects also played a role in these wars. Certainly the misinterpretation of early victories in Vietnam can be tied to cultural understanding.

NO MORE TASK FORCE SMITHS

Even as Heller and Stofft's work appeared on bookshelves, the U.S. military and the U.S. Army in particular were taking steps to break the seeming tradition of losing early to win later. The U.S. military had become a professional standing force, one that concentrated on training for war against the Warsaw Pact. The U.S. Army established the Combat Training Centers to ensure that we won first and won decisively.² U.S. Army doctrine similarly shifted from the Active Defense to the offensively minded Airland Battle.³ All of these changes were validated in 1991 in Desert Storm. We had the doctrine, the organization, the training, and the Soldiers necessary to win our first battle and we did decisively.⁴

¹ Lieutenant Colonel Charles E. Heller and Brigadier General William A. Stofft, editors, *America's First Battles 1776-1965* (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1986). This article is titled with great respect of their work.

² See General Paul F. Gorman, *The Secret of Future Victories*, (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: Combat Studies Institute, 1992) for a discussion of the evolution of U.S. Army training.

³ See Major Paul H. Herbert, *Leavenworth Papers Number 16 Deciding What Has to Be Done: General William E. DePuy and the 1976 Edition of FM 100-5*, (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: Combat Studies Institute, 1988), for an analysis of the development of the Active Defense and its ultimate replacement.

⁴ I use the collective pronoun "we" in a general sense to mean the greater senior leadership of the United States and the U.S. military. I was the Middle East current intelligence officer for the Middle East on the Army Staff from June 1990 to April 1993. While in that position I went to Fort

DESERT SHIELD AND DESERT STORM

Did we also get the cultural question right in Desert Storm? In retrospect, yes and no seems to be the answer. Our read of the strategic situation and its cultural implications was largely correct. We built an effective Coalition that isolated Iraq militarily and culturally. We understood the ramifications of the long-standing Arab-Israeli conflict for the stability of our Coalition. But we did not anticipate just how quickly cultural factors could come into play until Saddam began his SCUD war against Israel and us. We did not adequately prepare for the aftermath in Shia southern Iraq or Kurdish northern Iraq of our sudden victory in Kuwait. Tactically we generally treated cultural effects as something to be contained; our separation of Arab armies from Western armies in the Coalition's battle array makes that clear.¹

1965 REDUX

Overall I would say our decisive victory created a false assumption that we understood Iraq in general and Saddam in particular.² I would also state that our rapid and decisive victory blinded us to the longer-term cultural implications of our military presence in the region.³ At the strategic and operational levels,

Monroe as the intelligence researcher on the Desert Storm Study Group under Brigadier General Robert H. Scales, Jr. I was a primary author with General Scales and Lieutenant Colonel Terry L. Johnson on *Certain Victory: the U.S. Army in the Gulf War*, (Washington, DC: U.S. Army, 1993) reprinted by the Combat Studies Institute. See also my memoirs, *Journey into Darkness: Genocide in Rwanda*, (College Station, Texas: TAMU Press, 2005) for more insights on Desert Shield and Storm.

¹ Again this is the greater "we." Those of us who had extensive experience in the region as Foreign Area Officers on the Middle East largely got the cultural battlefield right; the gap between analyst and decision maker, however, is often too wide to bridge.

² Kevin M. Woods et al, *Iraqi Perspectives Project: A View of Operation Iraqi Freedom from Saddam's Senior Leadership* (Norfolk, Virginia: Joint Center for Operational Analysis, 2006).

³ During Desert Shield, I listened as four star general explained to a U.S. Senator how we would be able to build another National Training Center in Saudi Arabia after the war because the Saudis would want us to stay. This thinking held on in the Army staff well after the war when the intelligence officers like me finally started to get it across to our policy

I see strong parallels in our misinterpretation of early victories in Vietnam with our euphoria in winning Desert Storm.⁴ The roots of that misinterpretation in 1991 were the same as they were in 1965: we did not understand the cultural effects of our operations.

CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE PREPARATION OF THE BATTLEFIELD

The reality is that we do have the analytical tools and the analysts in our military to improve our record of "Cultural First Battles." U.S. military doctrine states that all missions begin with a mission statement and mission analysis. Intelligence preparation of the battlefield (IPB) flows from that mission analysis. Since all missions take place on a cultural as well as physical battlefield, cultural IPB must be integral to our traditional IPB process. The first step in cultural IPB is realizing cultural differences means more than different ways to say hello.

counterparts that the Saudis were not going to allow such a permanent facility.

⁴ See *Certain Victory* and *Journey into Darkness* for discussions on the implications of the war. Understand that in my role as intelligence researcher and a primary author my charter was to show that the Iraqis were credible enemies. Many including senior officers did not believe that; they saw large scale surrenders in the 100 hour ground war as proof the Iraqis would not fight. They missed two key cultural issues: one that the Iraqis had been under air attack for 40 days before the ground operation started; those who overlooked that point were making a critical cultural error because they assumed U.S. or other Western soldiers would not begin to collapse after 40 days of intensive air attack. WWII was the last time U.S. Soldiers were under anything like that inflicted on the Iraqis; U.S. soldiers did surrender. Secondly the detractors of the Iraqi military completely missed the point that the Iraqi Army had no emotional investment in holding Kuwait. It was not Iraq.

TWO BASE LINE RULES FOR CULTURAL INTERACTION OR APPLICATION OF CULTURE TO OPERATIONS

After 15 years as an Army Foreign Area Officer for the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa, with five tours in those two regions including Turkey, Sudan, Israel, Lebanon, Egypt, Zaire, and Rwanda, writing three books on Africa including my memoirs, and the fourth with General Scales and Terry Johnson, I boiled my approach to basic cultural understanding down to two simple rules:

- **They do not think like you do.** Thought patterns are learned and habitual. They come from cultural approaches to problem solving, language, religion, and other social mores. If you do not begin with this understanding as your base line, you immediately risk mirroring your culture on to your target. If you recognize this fundamental, then you can start to try and figure out what "they" are thinking.

For example, both French--indeed all Latin-based languages--and Arabic are heavily dependent upon passive voice. Both "cultures" are fatalistic, Arabs more so because of the influence of popular Islam (Islam as accepted by the masses; not necessarily by the well read). For the French it is *C'est la vie* or *C'est L'Afrique* for those engaged in African affairs. For the Arab Muslim it is *Inshallah* or in the case of Egyptians *Maalish*. In an American context, both could be translated for meaning as "sh@& happens."

- **They have an agenda in everything they do with you.** Agendas can be bad, neutral, or good. But they always exist. If you do not start with this understanding, then you are

making assumptions that their goals are the same as yours. If you do understand this, you can then proceed to using their agenda to your own advantage.

On the French in this regard, the French do things "the French Way" to prove that there is a "French Way" clearly superior to all others. French cars have reverse controls (lights, turn signals, horn). French SCUBA equipment has a reverse set up on the tank valves. French skydiving equipment has similar quirks. Nowhere is "the French Way" more active than it is in francophone Africa. French political policies and military actions are driven toward maintaining French influence in the region. Rwanda serves as an excellent case study. If you wish to read a Frenchman's take on French policies in Africa, look at Gérard Prunier's *The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide*.¹

AN AMERICAN COLLECTIVE CULTURE?

The second step in cultural IPB is to know oneself. "Knowing oneself" as an American implies of course that there is a definable American collective popular culture, a subject of entire libraries, one well beyond the scope of this article. In any case, the concept of "collective popular culture" differs from the ethnocentric individual tendency to see the world from one's own cultural perspective. Collective culture is how a "people" see themselves in relationship to the rest of the world. The information age has dramatically altered how one might approach this idea; a "world culture" may be emerging--at least among those with access to the benefits of the information age. But as one moves down the ladder of "Third World" countries or even

¹ Gerard Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997) pages 103-104.

further inside the ethnic, social, and cultural strata of those countries, one increasingly encounters "popular cultures" that see themselves as the center of the universe. These cultures are ethnocentric in a macro sense.

THE AMERICAN CULTURE

American culture is a Western culture, largely based on British culture with influences from other parts of Europe, the Native American peoples, African Americans, Latin Americans, and to a lesser extent Asian Americans and other groups of immigrants. Due to the extent of American culture, there are many integrated but unique subcultures within the U.S. In many ways, the military services of the United States constitute such a sub-culture.

US MILITARY CULTURE

Like our greater "collective popular culture", the U.S. military culture is western in its outlook: it is founded largely on the basis of self-less service to the people as captured in the concept of the Nation State. It is critical in our cultural IPB process that we identify how that U.S. military culture guides our approach to war. There are many studies, histories, or articles written about an "American Way of War." Russell F. Weigley's work of the same title is a classic.¹ In many ways our doctrine is a cultural statement.

Indeed our adherence to doctrine as a base plate for our operations documents that we as a military continually evaluate, test, and rethink how we define our approach to warfare. **FM 3-0 Operations** is the Army's "bible" on the conduct of warfare. But looking at this issue from a longer perspective, certain trends or

characteristics emerge. Four key trends emerge:

- Preference for Firepower Over Manpower
- Preference for Offense Over Defense
- Preference for Technologically Complex Over Simple
- Preference for Speedy Resolution Over Extended Operations
- Preference for Destruction Over Defeat of Our Enemies

These five "preferences" drive our approach to military operations. Consider those five longstanding American preferences from an enemy's perspective. Then you will start to see US strategic, operational, and tactical weaknesses.

COALITION WARFARE

As a military we also retain our cultural parameters in coalition warfare adding our own military spin to inter-cultural relationships.

- We have a strong tendency to eschew consensus building
- We assume that the wisdom inherent in our way of doing things will be recognized and accepted if not acclaimed
- We seek perfection in ourselves and in our allies
- We see alliances as friendships and we want to be loved
- We prefer to see our enemies as evil

Our record in coalition warfare is mixed. There are any number of positive examples dating back to the French and Indian Wars. But at the tactical level, most American military

¹ Russell F. Weigley, *The American Way of War, A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1977).

leaders would rather not do coalition and say that they did. Many American tactical leaders like coalition warfare only slightly less than they like joint operations. Accepting the necessity of such operations and thereby gaining their benefit is often a hard sell.

But there are benefits to coalition operations that outweigh their challenges:

- Coalition efforts by their very nature keep any operation from being an "American war"
- Coalition partners are often more attuned to the local situation, especially in stability operations or counter insurgency
- Coalition partners often bring specific strengths that can be matched with American military strengths; the Coalition's strength becomes more than the sum of its parts

For those reasons, coalition warfare is very much a part of the American Way of War, even though that conflicts with certain aspects of the U.S. military subculture. In many ways our use of coalition warfare is an extension of the greater American "collective popular culture." As a democracy our system of government is built on consensus building and compromise. As a people we prefer to use force as part of a greater effort. That preference for coalition warfare--the desire to "keep any operation from being an "American war"--creates friction with our tactical preference to go it alone whenever we can.

Easing that friction is very much tied to cultural IPB. First of all in looking at coalition building, we must first establish the goals of that coalition and our own role in achieving them. Are U.S. forces there to assist, advise, train, fight or all of the above? Put in military terms, this first step is basic mission analysis.

- Assistance implies that there is an extant government and military that is relatively capable. A typical assistance role for U.S. forces is humanitarian assistance or civil military operations.
- Advising foreign forces implies a more direct role in the operation of those forces. Advisors advise commanders. Advisors do not command.
- Training foreign forces is also part of coalition warfare. Conventional training operations are not advisory missions. A mobile training team goes to a unit, trains it, and then departs. A unit may come to a training site, undergo the training, and then it departs. Unconventional training operations may in fact blend the training with an advisory role and in some cases with a command role.
- Fighting as part of a coalition is like all things military depends on the mission, the enemy, the terrain, troops, and time available. Full integration of coalition forces is a rarity. There are very few examples of such integration: the 1st Special Service Force in WWII was an integrated U.S. and Canadian force. But it retained its national identities at the same time. More common is the practice of sectors or zones according to nationality; in some cases, this may be done by capability.
- And in certain cases as in Iraq and Afghanistan today, U.S. Forces may find themselves simultaneously engaged in all of these efforts. While no one unit is likely to do all, many unit leaders are likely to do several.

CULTURAL ANALYSIS AND IPB

The second step is cultural IPB according to the mission analysis. That IPB must address the cultural IPB of the coalition's members, the enemy, and the area of responsibility (AOR). The key to building effective military coalitions is understanding the cultures of the militaries involved and how they interact with the cultures of the AOR. Obviously other military cultures can vary greatly. In a military dictatorship, a foreign military may be the "state." In the case of a single party state, the military may be there to keep the "state" in power. In many cases, a foreign military may have its own loyalties inside the AO divided by language, culture, history, ethnic, and social structures.

CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR IPB ON COALITIONS:

- Language, culture, societal norms, and capacities often determine how and how well a coalition will function. The same factors will also play a role in how the enemy attacks that coalition and how much those attacks succeed.

Sudan--a Sudanese Major after watching a British training film on the "Role of the Military", stood and declared that the Sudanese Army was there to keep the government in power. The class essentially fell apart after that comment.¹

Desert Storm--The Coalition ground forces included U.S. Army and Marines, British Army, French Army, and Arab army contingents from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the Emirates, Egypt, and Syria. It was arrayed much that way on the ground with the Arabs acting as one main component and the western forces as another. Some of the most serious "friction" within the Coalition ground

forces was between the French on one hand and the Americans and British on the other.

- The more similar the coalition members are to each other, the stronger the coalition and the less vulnerable it is to the enemy's efforts to disrupt it.

WWII -- was without doubt the ultimate example of coalition building by both the Axis and the Allies. Perhaps the tightest alliance was between the Americans and the British and the worst was between the Germans and the Italians. After Italian failures in Greece and North Africa, the Germans had rescued their allies from defeat only by taking over each campaign. Once the war moved onto the Italian boot, Italy's days as a German ally were numbered and the Allies worked hard to exploit that division. In the case of the Americans and the British, General Eisenhower's greatest contribution to the war was keeping the two allies--divided by a common language--together.

- A coalition of cultures alien to an operational area is vulnerable unless it includes other coalition members from within that area.

Desert Storm--the recruitment and inclusion of Egyptian and Syrian military forces into the Coalition were effective counters to Iraqi propaganda that the Coalition was intent on conquering the AOR.

- What are the cultural strengths and weaknesses of the coalition as a whole and in part?

WWII --Up until the German invasion of the USSR, the British after the fall of France fought on virtually alone. Only their cultural orientation as an island people saved them, though the Battle for the Atlantic was a desperate affair. Once Hitler made his fatal decision to attack the Soviets, the British islands transformed from a final redoubt to the

¹ I was in the class. See *Journey into Darkness*.

world's largest forward operating base for the reconquest of Europe. Britain could count on the Soviet "Bear" led and sometimes terrified by Stalin to grind down the Germans without mercy. Yet even as the Allied armies converged on Germany in late 1994, the alliance of necessity between the West and the Soviets began to unravel and the Germans attempted to exploit the divide.

- Do coalition members have certain strengths that should be capitalized on? If so, how can those strengths be put to best use?

WWI --The British instigation of the "Arab Revolt," making T.E. Lawrence famous, took advantage of the Arab tribes penchant for raiding and desire to rid themselves of the Turks. The British intent was to safeguard their control of the Suez Canal as the lifeline to British India by tying down Turkish forces with an Arab rebellion. The Arab Revolt also countered German efforts to exploit the idea of Jihad as proclaimed by the dying Ottoman Empire.

Desert Storm--Using the Egyptian and Syrian forces as follow on forces into Kuwait City did much to assure the Kuwaitis--and the larger Arab world--that their liberation was not a conquest.

- What weaknesses of coalition members are likely to be exploited?

Desert Storm--The Iraqis deliberately targeted Israel with SCUD missile strikes to prompt a military reaction. That ploy nearly worked and would have seriously affected the Coalition. The Iraqi propaganda machine also attacked the Saudis as decadent party boys hosting infidel armies on Muslim holy territory. Syria and Egypt were portrayed as equal participants in this heresy.

- What is the best command structure to maximize strengths and minimize weaknesses of the coalition?

WWII-- Churchill accepted Eisenhower as Supreme Commander in recognition that the U.S. would bring the largest arsenal-- weapons, manpower, industrial base-- into the fight against Germany.

Eisenhower's greatest strength was his ability to minimize national tensions within the command structure and to restrain national rivalries at the tactical level when necessary.

- What are the cultural friction points between coalition members and between the coalition and the population of the AOR?

France--the French military is divided between its exterior forces--the Legion, Naval Infantry, and Naval Commandos-- and its interior forces--the Army, Air Force, and regular Navy. The exterior forces are used to enforce French interests abroad--especially in Africa. The interior forces are for the protection of France. These forces have their own cultures and viewpoints when dealing with foreign (US) forces, depending on whether the AO is inside Europe or elsewhere. French forces--especially exterior forces--exhibit the same Anglophobia as the French government.

CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR IPB ON THE ENEMY:

- An enemy indigenous to the area of operations has the cultural high ground, especially against a coalition alien to the AOR.

WWI --The Arab Revolt was successful because it capitalized on this idea. The Turks and their German allies were both alien to the Arabian Peninsula and what is now Jordan, Israel, and Syria.

- In the case of an enemy indigenous to the area, what are the cultural ties and schisms between that enemy and the population? How strong are those cultural ties? How can the schisms be exploited?

Viet Nam--U.S. special operations targeted Viet Cong cadre to disrupt insurgent operations and control/influence on the Vietnamese peasants. In the highlands, U.S. special operations used longstanding ethnic tensions between the Vietnamese (lowlanders) and highland tribes to limit VC influence by organizing the highlanders into irregular units.

- In the case of a coalition including indigenous allies, what are the cultural ties and schisms between the enemy and those allies?

Counter insurgency--In counter insurgency operations, this is almost always the case. The indigenous allies within the coalition are in effect an extension of the larger indigenous population, the overall objective of the counter insurgency effort. The insurgents are also an extension of the same larger population. The coalition's efforts must be in synch with those of its indigenous allies and the larger population. If the coalition uses its indigenous allies to suppress the population then it is not fighting a counter insurgency. It is fighting the population and the insurgents.

- Is the enemy part of a cultural group that extends across national borders? Is the enemy part of a larger coalition? How strong are those ties? Are there exploitable weaknesses?

The Kurds--Transnational ethnic groups often give rise to this phenomenon, especially if they are disenfranchised on one or both sides of a given border. The Kurds are a relevant example in Iraq, Turkey, and Iran. The longevity of the "Kurdish Question" is testament to the strength of the Kurdish ties across borders and their susceptibility to exploitation by their enemies.

CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR IPB ON THE AOR

- Every battlefield has a cultural context. That context is more important on some than on others.

French Algeria--In a counter insurgency operation, the indigenous population is the objective. Successful counter insurgency operations in Malaysia sought at once to limit the insurgents' contact with the general population. The Battle for Algiers failed because the French treated the entire Muslim population as defacto insurgents.

WWII--In the WWII battlegrounds of North Africa, the indigenous population was essentially a backdrop--until the Axis forces became a threat to Allied control of Egypt. Anti-British operations by pro-German Egyptian officers were a real threat.

WWII--even a war at sea has a cultural context. Allied coast watcher efforts and other special operations made effective use of indigenous populations against the Japanese. The global war at sea was a struggle between Anglophone Allied countries with direct cultural ties to centuries of British sea power against Axis Powers whose most adaptive naval partner--the Japanese--was dominated by its Army leaders. Despite Germany's pioneering use of submarine warfare in both WWI and WWII, the country was a newcomer to naval warfare when compared to the British.

WWII--In many ways the Anglophone vision of global sea power also applied in the Allies' exploitation of strategic air power against the Axis. The U.S and British Commonwealth development and use of the strategic heavy bomber was unanswered in any coherent fashion by Germany, Italy, or Japan.

- Are the indigenous populations in the AOR part of the fight? How do they regard the

combatants, coalition or enemy? What are the cultural ties and schisms between that indigenous population and the coalition or the enemy?

Peacekeeping and peacemaking--In the case of stability operations, especially peacekeeping or peace enforcement, the cultural "battlefield" is at least if not more important than the physical terrain. The conflicts in the Congo 1960-1965, Lebanon 1958 and 1975-2000, the Balkans from 1990 until present, and the newly emergent republics like Chechnya are but recent examples.

SUMMING UP

No commander who wishes to win ignores terrain or weather. No commander who wishes to win ignores the military capabilities of his enemies. Better commanders understand the confluence of terrain, weather, and enemy capabilities in formulating a course of action. But the best commanders in history used the cultural dimension as an integral part of warfare. We have as a military often overlooked the cultural component of military operations to our detriment, suggesting that our tendency to see the enemy as a poor copy of ourselves is our cultural Achilles heel.

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UNDERSTANDING IRAN'S MOTIVATIONS IN IRAQ

THE COST CALCULUS OF EXTERNAL SUPPORT

By Ryan Carr

Insurgent conflicts are conspicuously at the center of today's international security landscape. After decades of neglect, the United States' military has spent the last few years feverishly trying to relearn some of the counterinsurgent lessons from its past. Arguably the most discussed lesson concerns the ultimate "prize" in insurgent conflicts – winning the hearts and minds of an indigenous population. In Iraq, increasing attention has focused on how to improve our politico-military policies in an effort to garner the support of Iraqis. However, Iraq also reminds us of another critical lesson from our past – the role and impact external supporters can have vis à vis successful insurgencies. As Jeffrey Record of the U.S. Air Force's Air War College points out, during the Vietnam War the North Vietnamese, "among the most tenacious and skilled enemies the United States has ever fought, could hardly have prevailed unarmed, which is how they would have had to fight absent the massive Soviet and Chinese assistance they in fact received."¹ He goes on to note that,

North Vietnam, the political and military engine of the Communists war in Indochina, had no arms industry; it had to import even small arms and small-arms ammunition from the Soviet Union, China, and other Communist Bloc countries...*Had the Vietnamese Communists been isolated from external*

*assistance, as were their fellow Communist insurgents in Malaya and the Philippines in the latter 1940s and early 1950s, they almost certainly would have suffered the same fate: defeat*² [emphasis added].

While insurgencies are ultimately won or lost in the domestic political arena, successful efforts often depend on some measure of external support. The mere presence of such support does not guarantee an insurgent victory, but it can often provide the help an insurgency needs to turn the corner or sustain ongoing operations. Given the impact this variable has had on the outcome of a number of notable insurgencies from the past, including Vietnam, we must remind ourselves about how external support can affect insurgencies, but more importantly, what motivates external supporters to provide such assistance. By understanding an external supporter's motivations, counterinsurgents can work to more effectively offset such support, which can bolster their chances of fostering an acceptable outcome. As such, the U.S. should reevaluate its operating assumptions concerning Iran's support of the Iraqi insurgency, in order to improve its prospects for the long-term stabilization of Iraq and the region.

¹ Record, Jeffrey. *External Assistance: Enabler of Insurgent Success*. Parameters: US Army War College Quarterly. Autumn, 2006. Pp. 36-37.

² Ibid. Pp. 36-37.

UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE AND IMPACT OF EXTERNAL SUPPORTERS

External support can come in the form of moral, political, or material assistance, from a number of places, including states, Diasporas, refugees, and non-state actors (i.e. non-governmental organizations).¹ From the Tamil Diaspora to Al-Qaeda, different types of external supporters have impacted a number of insurgent conflicts as of late. Notwithstanding the growing influence that these types groups can have, particularly in a post Cold War environment, the fact remains that the material support provided by states is the most influential type of external support an insurgency can receive. The role and impact external states have had on insurgencies like the American Revolution, the Vietnam War, and the Soviet-Afghan War speaks for itself. While other types of support and supporters have impacted various modern conflicts, no similar combination has been as instrumental in contributing to insurgent victories.

This combination is significant for two reasons: first, external states are typically in the best position to provide the high levels of material support an insurgency craves, in the form financing, supplies, and armaments. During the American Revolution, only a state like France could have consistently provided Washington's army with the amount of "gold, clothing, and cannons" he needed to engage the British army.² Second, given the relative capabilities of states, external state supporters are uniquely positioned to coordinate and

provide for the advanced types of material support that insurgents cannot readily obtain from anywhere else, including intelligence, training, and relevant technology. Hezbollah's de-facto victory over Israel in the summer of 2006 was largely attributable to Iranian support in the form advanced military training, anti-tank weaponry, and Katyusha rockets.³

The Bush Administration has long been concerned about Iranian support for the Iraqi insurgency. It has said that Iran is providing military, financial, and operational support to the insurgency.⁴ The bipartisan *Iraq Study Group* reported "Iran has provided arms, financial support, and training for Shiite militias within Iraq."⁵ The current U.S. commander in Iraq, Army General David H. Petraeus, cited lengthy interrogations as having "revealed" that Iran has been providing funding, material resources, and "training on Iranian soil."⁶

However, insurgent reliance on state support does not come without risks. An external state's motivations are far less rigid, and therefore subject to change depending on the nature of the geopolitical considerations at hand. While a state's motivations can be diverse, they are by no means entrenched. While insurgents are well aware of this fact, given that the "donor-client"⁷ relationship is based solely on the interests of the state, the U.S. seems to have ignored this reality.

³ Cordesman, Anthony. "Iran's Support of the Hezbollah in Lebanon." Center for Strategic and International Studies. 15 July 2006.

⁴ The Associated Press has reported that some Mahdi Army militia fighters are receiving as much as \$200 monthly stipends from Iran. See Hendawi, Hamza and Qassim Abdul-Zahra. 'Shi'ite Militia Is Disintegrating.' *The Associated Press*. 21 March 2007.

⁵ *The Iraq Study Group Report*. First Vintage Books Edition: December 2006. Pp. 28.

⁶ Wood, Sara. 'Petraeus: Interrogations Reveal Iranian Influence in Iraq.' *American Forces Press Service*, Washington, DC – Pentagon News Conference. 26 April 2007.

⁷ O'Neill, Bard. *Insurgency and Terrorism: Inside Modern Revolutionary Warfare*. McLean: Brassey's, 1990. Pp. 117.

¹ Byman, Daniel et. al. *Trends in Outside Support for Insurgent Movements*. Santa Monica: RAND, 2001.

² Joes, Anthony James. *America and Guerilla Warfare*. Lexington: University of Kentucky, 2000. Pp. 47, as quoted in Record, Jeffrey. *External Assistance: Enabler of Insurgent Success*. Parameters: US Army War College Quarterly. Autumn, 2006. Pp. 39.

THE GEOPOLITICS BEHIND IRAN'S DECISION TO SUPPORT THE IRAQI INSURGENCY

Increasingly, U.S. policymakers continue to publicly call into question why Iran is supporting the Iraqi insurgency. In recent discussions about Iran's presumed role in Iraq and Afghanistan, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates commented, "What [Iran's] motives are other than causing trouble for us, I don't know."¹ This is by no means a trivial statement. Unlike conventional conflicts, the motivations tied to insurgent relationships are of the utmost significance, because counterinsurgent success largely depends upon being able to influence these relationships.

For the counterinsurgent, an understanding of the relationship between insurgents and their external state supporters is just as important, because it can be also be exposed under the right circumstances. The absence of such an understanding leaves the counterinsurgent in a dangerous position – predisposed to a widening the conflict – given the lack of a comprehensive strategy for negating this support. This is precisely what the counterinsurgent needs to avoid, if at all possible.

In 2001, RAND conducted a study entitled *Trends in Outside Support for Insurgent Movements*, which focused on twelve motivations for different external supporters that might best be grouped into three categories: sympathy, aggression, and defensive considerations. The first, sympathy, can be based upon of an ideological, ethnic, or

religious compatibility with an insurgency. The second, aggression, focuses on attempts to garner regional influence or to foster some type of self-serving change through insurgent support.² It is the third motivation – based on defensive considerations – that deserves the most attention, when considering the role of state sponsors.

When it comes to discussing the role of Iranian support for the Iraqi insurgency, U.S. civilian and military leaders often characterize Iranian support as being of a fundamentalist nature, tied to either a co-religionist or aggressive narrative. Such a characterization has incited fears about a Shia revival throughout the region. U.S. policymakers attributed a similar fundamentalist characterization to China's support for North Vietnam, in which a similar narrative based upon ideology and aggression was constructed. Unfortunately, these narratives discount the notion that Iran's role in Iraq, as was China's role in North Vietnam, is also largely attributable to defensive considerations stemming from the role of the counterinsurgent.

THE COUNTERINSURGENT'S ROLE IN INDUCING EXTERNAL INSURGENT SUPPORT

The impetus for an insurgent-counterinsurgent struggle can vary, depending on the ideological, political, or moral context of the situation. But once the conflict is underway, an external state will focus on one question: which entity represents a greater threat – the insurgent or the counterinsurgent?

¹ Michaels, Jim. "Iran's Leaders Likely Know Of Arms Sent To Taliban, Gates Says." *The USA Today*. 14 June 2007.

² Byman, Daniel et. al. *Trends in Outside Support for Insurgent Movements*. Santa Monica: RAND, 2001. Chapter Two: State Support For Insurgencies, Pp. 9-40.

When facing a threat, Stephan Walt has argued that states are most likely to balance against that threat, based upon its power, proximity, and aggression.¹ Within an insurgent-counterinsurgent context, we find that counterinsurgents typically poses a greater threat to an external states because of their ability to project their military capabilities, in conjunction with their proactive efforts to reassert their authority. This is particularly true of a counterinsurgency that involves a regional or outside power, as is the case in Iraq. A regional or outside power, like the U.S., can appear very threatening to a proximate state, given that it has already demonstrated the requisite capabilities needed to project its power abroad.

As was the case during the Vietnam War, China viewed the introduction of U.S. assistance and troops as a threat to its national security. Yet, at the time, the U.S. viewed Chinese assistance as offensive in nature, which ultimately resulted in an escalation of the conflict, to include the rest of Southeast Asia. As the Vietnam War demonstrated, the consequences of the security-insecurity paradox are real.

A LOOK BACK AT THE VIETNAM WAR

Between 1955 and 1965, China supplied North Vietnam with enough weapons and ammunition to outfit 230 infantry battalions.² As reported years later in China's *Jen Min Jih Pao* (*The People's Daily*), Peking introduced some 320,000 troops into Vietnam over the

course of the war, with an annual maximum number of troops topping out at 170,000. Most of these troops functioned as logistical and support personnel, as well as technical experts. By 1972, China had supplied both the DRV and the insurgent People's Liberation Army (PLA) of South Vietnam with 480 122-mm howitzers, 2,960 57-mm anti-aircraft guns, and 37,237 mortars.³ The DRV's eventual conquest of South Vietnam could never have been achieved without the commitment and support of China. While the U.S. and South Vietnam would have had trouble totally eradicating the North Vietnamese and the Vietcong resistance movement, the DRV would never have been able to achieve total victory without the crucial support that China provided.⁴

China initially supported North Vietnam against the French for a number of reasons, including ideology and regional influence. But on the eve of the Geneva Convention in 1954, China became fearful that the "United States might step in [to replace France], thus menacing China on its own doorstep." Suddenly, China's first priority became its own security. It quickly shifted its stance in support of a negotiated settlement that would allow France to maintain some stake in Vietnam, in order to prevent the United States from "filling the vacuum left by [a French] departure." Despite its ideological affinity, China proved all too willing to sacrifice the Vietminh and their nationalistic aspirations in order to enhance its

¹ See Walt, Stephen. *The Origins of Alliances*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987.

² Zhang, Xiaoming. *The Vietnam War, 1964-1969: A Chinese Perspective*. *The Journal of Military History* V(60) October 1996. Pp. 736.

³ Ibid. Pp. 737.

⁴ Despite escalating tensions between the Soviet Union and China, they collaborated in all types of areas to support Hanoi during much of the war. The Soviet-Chinese subplot within the Vietnam War is extremely intriguing. However, it lies beyond the scope of this paper. For more information on the role of the Soviet Union in the Vietnam War, see Rupen, Robert A. and Robert Farrell, eds. *Vietnam and the Sino-Soviet Dispute*. Praeger: New York, 1967.

own security.¹ It was clear that China's first concern was ensuring an agreement that would secure its southern border.

From China's perspective, Vietnam, along with Taiwan, were possible locations from where the U.S. might next attempt to initiate direct military hostilities against the Chinese. They saw the U.S. as determined to succeed where they had previously failed (i.e. Korea), and feared that a "ring of encirclement," beginning with Vietnam, could ultimately lead to the end of Communist China.²

An honest assessment of the situation in Southeast Asia supports this conclusion: the Korean conflict ended in a stalemate in 1953; by 1955 the U.S. was already preparing to begin training South Vietnamese troops. In 1956 President Eisenhower announced that the U.S. would begin sending American military advisors to South Vietnam; by 1962, the U.S. formalized its escalating commitment to Vietnam by formally establishing the U.S. Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV). Four years after establishing MACV, the U.S. had 400,000 dedicated combat troops stationed in Vietnam. These successive developments only fueled China's cause for concern.³ China viewed the continuing escalation as the likely precursor for a war between the two adversaries.⁴ Thus, the strategic importance of Vietnam became the primer for Chinese foreign policy from the late 1950s through the 1970s.⁵

¹ Karnow, Stanley. *Vietnam: A History*. New York: Penguin Books, 1991. Pp. 207-08.

² As quoted in Zhang. Pp. 734-35. Zhou Enlai articulated this "encirclement" concern in 1965, saying, "Our assistance to Vietnam is to break the ring of encirclement and defend [China]."

³ Karnow, Stanley. Pp. 734.

⁴ Zhang, Xiaoming. Pp. 742-43.

⁵ *Ibid.* Pp. 733. Zhang goes on to note that at the time, Chinese leadership were particularly concerned that the U.S. would not be able to accept successive setbacks with respect to the Nationalists in Taiwan as

While the U.S. publicly announced, as early as February 1965, that it had no desire for "a direct confrontation" with China, Chinese officials remained skeptical, and for good reason.⁶ In 1965, Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara sent President Kennedy a memorandum that discussed the military decision to bomb North Vietnam. McNamara wrote that this decision was built on the need to "contain Communist China." From the Eisenhower through Johnson administrations, nobody seriously considered that China might actually be worried about its own security. Instead, each viewed China's actions as inherently aggressive, built on an ideological commitment to the future of Communism in Southeast Asia.

Some thirty years later, McNamara would come to acknowledge the folly behind the once prevalent notion that China was bent on establishing a Southeast Asian communist bloc at all costs. In his autobiography, *In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam*, McNamara points out his "totally incorrect appraisal of the 'Chinese Threat' to [American] security that pervaded [U.S.] thinking." He goes on to note that, "among other shortcomings, [U.S. policymakers] took no account of the centuries-old hostility between China and Vietnam," admitting their "lack of expertise and historical knowledge seriously undermined U.S. policy."⁷

China's post 1954 decision to support the DRV was based primarily on defensive and not ideological or aggressive considerations.⁸ While China was eager to see its model of

well as Korea. They believed that the "long-anticipated" direct invasion of China could likely result from their continuing escalation in Vietnam.

⁶ Zhang, Xiaoming. Pp. 744.

⁷ McNamara, Robert S., with Brian VanDeMark. *In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam*. New York: Random House, 1995. Pp. 218-19.

⁸ Zhang, Xiaoming. Pp. 733.

communism spread throughout Indochina, its primary concern remained its own national security, followed by its dominance of the region. China was fearful that an American victory would position a hostile U.S. on its Southern doorstep. If America were to succeed, China reasoned that it would only be a matter of time before the U.S. began establishing permanent military bases in Vietnam, within striking distance of Beijing.

IRAN'S ROLE IN IRAQ

Turning toward the issue of the day, we often hear of parallels between Vietnam and Iraq. While some comparisons are wildly off the mark, others have proven more instructive.¹ Such is the case with the role and importance of external state supporters. As was the case in Vietnam, external support for the Iraqi insurgents, particularly on a strategic level, has proven deadly.

There is disagreement concerning what, if any role Iran is playing inside Iraq.² Given the pretext on which the U.S. went to war with Iraq – the threat posed by Iraq's weapons of mass destruction and Saddam's ties to al-Qaida – the Bush administration's credibility with respect to the intelligence arena has rightly suffered. Suffice to say, while a full understanding of Iran's role in post-Saddam Iraq will not be understood for quite some time, claims regarding their entrenched involvement remain highly probable.

One of the most vociferous arguments made by the U.S. concerns Iran's supply of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), and similar technological assistance, to elements of the Iraqi insurgency. In its findings, the *Iraq Study Group* also noted, "there are also reports that Iran has supplied improvised explosive devices to groups – including Sunni Arab insurgents – that attack U.S. forces."³ Weapons such as these have contributed to the proficiency with which insurgents have been able to attack American forces. As of May 2007, these types of weapons were responsible for 38.6 percent of all U.S. casualties.⁴ Reports also suggest that other high-tech weaponry, including mortars and sniper rifles, purchased by Iran, have ended up in the hand of Iraqi insurgents.⁵ U.S. intelligence officials have been quick to point out that Iran has consciously refrained from supplying Shiite militias with more sophisticated weaponry, such as the surface-to-air missiles that have been used by Hezbollah against Israel, so as not to provide the Bush Administration with any grounds for a direct military response.⁶

IRAN'S COST CALCULUS

After 9/11, the U.S. faced a monumental decision – where do we go from here. Only time will tell if the Bush administration's approach has made us safer – to date the early returns are by no means clear. But what is clear is that by taking a more militant approach against a state like Iraq – we put a number of other states, including Iran, on notice.

¹ For an instructive look at some Iraq-Vietnam comparisons, see Biddle, Stephen. *Seeing Baghdad, Thinking Saigon*. Foreign Affairs, March/April 2006.

² For more on the mixed record of the Iran-Iraq insurgency link, see Alexandra Zavis and Greg Miller. 'Scant Evidence Found of Iran-Iraq Arms Link.' *The Los Angeles Times*. 23 January 2007, and Ellen Knichmeyer. 'British Find No Evidence Of Arms Traffic From Iran.' *The Washington Post*. 4 October 2006.

³ *The Iraq Study Group Report*. First Vintage Books Edition: December 2006. Pp. 28.

⁴ www.brookings.edu/iraqindex 31 May 2007.

⁵ Harding, Thomas. 'Iraqi Insurgents Using Austrian Rifles From Iran.' *The Daily Telegraph*. 13 February 2007.

⁶ Zavis, Alexandra and Greg Miller. 'Scant Evidence Found of Iran-Iraq Arms Link.' *The Los Angeles Times*. 23 January 2007.

After invading Afghanistan in 2001 and then Iraq in 2003, the American military firmly entrenched itself on Iran's Eastern and Western borders. While tensions between the U.S. and Iran have remained volatile since the 1979 Iranian revolution and subsequent U.S. Embassy hostage crisis, the Bush administrations increasingly provocative rhetoric (such as Iran's inclusion in the "axis of evil") has only served to escalate the looming prospect of future hostilities. Add to this equation Iran's ongoing nuclear dispute with the West, and from their perspective, the prospect of an imminent attack by the U.S. (or an ally like Israel) probably seems like an all too real possibility. Therefore, given its vulnerable position, it was no surprise to learn that just after the U.S.' 2003 invasion of Iraq, Iran attempted to engage the U.S. in direct talks for the first time in over 20 years.

As first reported by *Newsweek* magazine in 2007, Switzerland's Ambassador to Iran at the time, Tim Guldemann, sent a fax to the U.S. Department of State which contained a one-page Iranian document termed a "roadmap" for comprehensive discussions with the U.S. on a number of high-profile issues. The one-page document was accompanied by a cover letter, in which Ambassador Guldemann stated that he "got the clear impression that there is a strong will of the [Iranian] regime to tackle the problem with the U.S. now and to try it with this initiative."¹ According to Guldemann's letter, the proposal had the approval of Iran's supreme religious leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's President at the time, Mohammad Khatami, and its one-time Foreign Minister, Kamal Kharrazi. It seems readily apparent that Iran was willing to make some concessions, probably in exchange for security

guarantees. The U.S. never responded to this fax.

In 2007, Former Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage said of the 2003 communiqué, "We couldn't determine what was the Iranian's and what was the Swiss ambassador's," adding that his "impression at the time was that the Iranians 'were trying to put too much on the table.'"² *Newsweek's* Michael Hirsch also reported that Larry Wilkerson, former Secretary of State Colin Powell's chief of staff, said in e-mail that the Iranian overture could have been the beginning of "meaningful talks" between the U.S. and Iran. However, Wilkerson added such a proposal "was a non-starter" given Vice President Cheney's opposition.³

In all likelihood, Iran's 2003 attempt to open up a dialogue with the U.S. points to the fact that they were likely worried that they might be the next member of the "axis of evil" to suffer a preemptive strike, particularly after the U.S. initially rolled right through the Iraqi army with ease. At the same time, the Bush administration was riding high following its display of "shock and awe," and was not interested in any dialogue. Not surprising, as the U.S. spent late 2003 moving to consolidate its hold over Iraq, there were no reports about Iran providing support to the Iraqi insurgency. In fact, at the time, Iran even agreed to suspend elements of its nuclear program. One can presume that at this point Iran was afraid to play any role in fomenting unrest in Iraq for fear that the Bush administration would use any pre-text it could to confront Tehran militarily. But as the security situation in the Iraq rapidly deteriorated, it seems likely that Iran felt increasingly emboldened, and by 2004/05 they

¹ Kessler, Glenn. '2003 Memo Says Iranian Leaders Backed Talks.' *The Washington Post*. 14 February 2007.

² Hirsch, Michael. 'A Blown Chance?' *Newsweek*. 8 February 2007.

³ Ibid.

were willing to begin taking risks in order to help sustain an insurgency that was preoccupying the U.S.

Over the last two plus years, as the balance of power in Iraq has continued to shift, reports concerning Iran's role in Iraq have steadily increased. The emerging success of the Iraqi insurgency appears to have given Iran some breathing room. If one is to assume that Iran is playing a significant role in the Iraqi insurgency, their actions are likely motivated by an overriding desire to bolster their own security vis-à-vis the U.S. In 2005, Abbas Milani, Director of the Iranian Studies Program at Stanford University, said that it is increasingly obvious that Tehran wants to see American troops tied down in Iraq to ensure that a future war with Iran is "simply untenable."¹

During this time, the Bush administration has seemingly vacillated between ratcheting up its aggressive rhetoric and offering a more conciliatory approach toward Iran. For instance, in March 2007, the U.S. Navy initiated a major exercise in the Persian Gulf designed to send a message to the Iranians, while reassuring "regional audiences" about the capabilities and determination of U.S. forces.² The timetable for the exercise, which had been previously scheduled, was accelerated in part as a response to the Iran's refusal to curtail its nuclear programs.³ Two months later, while on a visit to the region, Vice President Cheney delivered a speech aboard the USS John C. Stennis warning that the "United States was prepared to use its naval power to keep Tehran

from disrupting oil routes or 'gaining nuclear weapons and dominating this region.'"⁴ This defiant message was curiously followed by calls for increased engagement between the U.S. and Iran on the part of Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, as well as the first instance of direct diplomatic negotiations between the U.S. and Iran since 1979.⁵

Despite some recent indications that it might be willingly to engage Iran on some level, the U.S.' long-standing track record, coupled with pundit discussions of 'doubling-down' on its bet to remake Iraq and the greater Middle East, have kept Iran understandingly leery of what a stable Iraq could mean for its own future.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

It is clear that Iran is not looking to take on the U.S. militarily. The fact that Tehran has not committed to supplying certain types of support to the Iraqi insurgency belies this point. Iran is willing to bear some costs, including the possibility that the U.S. might take some direct action against it, in order to balance against America's influence in the region. Iran is chiefly concerned with supporting the Iraqi insurgency in order to help bolster its own security, and has supported both Sunni and Shiite factions as a result.

Why does it seem like the U.S. has neglected to appreciate this motivation with regard to Iran? As was the case in Vietnam, in order to justify continued support, the U.S. has worked to build consensus for the war by framing it as

¹ Anna Badkhen. 'The Iranian Factor in Iraq Insurgency.' *The San Francisco Chronicle*. 21 August 2005.

² Michael Gordon. 'U.S. Opens Naval Exercise in Persian Gulf.' *The New York Times*. 28 March 2007.

³ Caren Bohan. 'U.S. Says Not Escalating Tension With Iran.' *Reuters*. 28 March 2007.

⁴ Sanger, David E. 'Cheney, On Carrier, Sends Warning to Iran.' *The New York Times*. 12 May 2007.

⁵ As recently as April 2007, Secretary of State Rice asked that Iran attend a high-level conference on the future of Iraq, being held in Egypt. See Dinmore, Guy et al. 'US Urges Iran to Join Iraq Talks.' *The Financial Times*. 22 April 2007. Direct diplomatic negotiations between the U.S. and Iran took place on 28 May 2007. See Stockman, Farah. 'Talks Called Positive As U.S. Asks Iran For Help On Iraq.' *The Boston Globe*. 29 May 2007.

a struggle between good and evil. While this helps to generate support at home, it also fuels a psychological conceptualization of the insurgency as ideological, aggressive, and fundamentally committed. While these motivations may certainly be true of many Iraqi insurgents, they do not reflect Iran's motivations.¹ Yet, by conflating the two the U.S. has absolved itself from having played any part in provoking a balancing response from Iran.

The U.S. should not rely on the 'us versus them' construct, while refusing to consider how our actions are being perceived abroad. It is imperative that U.S. policymakers, from the administration to the military, develop some self-awareness, and begin to appreciate how our actions provoke reactions. This is not to suggest that the U.S. should acquiesce to Iran's support of the insurgency, or ignore their attempts to develop nuclear weapons. The U.S. must appreciate that geopolitical considerations are principally driving these events, and not let our emotions get the best of us. The often-mentioned carrot and stick approach has utility, but to create meaningful incentives and expectations we must first engage Iran in open and honest communication. Dialogue is not a dirty word. Secretary Rice has indicated that the U.S. is willing to directly engage Tehran on some level. This engagement must push forward, and comprehensively address a myriad of sensitive issues, including the subject of security guarantees. While nuclear and regional concerns are of the utmost importance, it is

time the U.S. realized that not every situation must default to a to a zero-sum calculation. The fear-mongering allusion to the Munich Agreement has lost its utility – the U.S. must begin to reaffirm a return to realism before we find ourselves on the verge of a wider conflict.

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¹ While some continue to argue that Iran is driven by rigid ideological considerations, I contend that ideological motivations in the international system have proved fleeting when a state's core interests are at risk. In support of this contention, I would point to Iran's partnering with the United States and Israel during the Iran-Iraq War to procure some much needed weapons despite the fundamental ideological differences between both sides.

ORGANIZING FOR COUNTERINSURGENCY AT THE COMPANY AND PLATOON LEVEL

By Captain Jeremy Gwinn, US Army

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In today's military, the requirement to conduct tasks far outside traditional specialties is an accepted reality. Operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have taught leaders across the services the need for flexibility and creativity both in action and organization. The recently published Field Manual (FM) 3–24 (MCWP 3–33.5) *Counterinsurgency* (COIN) manual provides an excellent framework for leaders to understand the demands of the COIN environment and draw from recent lessons. With regard to organizing for COIN, the manual makes several valuable recommendations such as establishing a company level intelligence section and identifying a political and cultural advisor. My purpose here is to go one step further, providing specific recommendations for company level leaders organizing for COIN operations. Some of the ideas presented involve actual changes to task organization, while others involve developing skills internally that, by doctrine, only exist in specialized attachments. These steps are by no means prescriptive, but intended as a starting point for discussion among officers and non-commissioned officers (NCOs) at the company level.

WHY ORGANIZE FOR COIN?

The first step to optimizing the platoon or company organization for a COIN mission is

understanding why reorganization is necessary. Units generally deploy as brigade combat teams (BCT) or similar task forces with a full complement of support: Civil Affairs (CA) Teams, Tactical Human Intelligence (HUMINT) Teams, Tactical Psychological Operations (PSYOP) Teams, as well as organic S2 and other staff sections. These assets are task organized to the battalion and sometimes company level so that everyone gets his slice of support. If that is the case, why develop these capabilities among infantrymen, tank crewmen, military policemen, or anyone else conducting COIN?

The specialized assets will not always be available. Though the attachments are task organized downward, they are typically not available to a company commander or platoon leader 24 hours a day. For instance, a company commander can receive CA team support with several days lead time to perform a major assessment or humanitarian distribution. If, however, in the course of a patrol, a platoon leader discovers a small school in serious need of repair or re-supply, he would probably not have a CA officer nearby to help assess the need. If the school sits in a key location of popular support for the insurgency, a good assessment conducted at the platoon level with rapid follow-through of support may deal a stronger blow to the enemy than any tactical victory. The pace of operations for units in Iraq

and Afghanistan is simply too fast to always say, “We’ll request CA and get out here next week.” Units will never catch up.

Every COIN Soldier must internalize the importance of specialized functions. When the PSYOP team, the HUMINT team, and the CA team are the only ones doing PSYOP, HUMINT, and CA, riflemen ignore these roles. Those infantry Soldiers probably know the area and the people better than anyone else. Do not reduce them to just pulling security for the attachments. When these capabilities are developed internally, Soldiers and their leaders understand that their jobs are much more than just clearing buildings and engaging targets. They will demand these additional responsibilities. The most junior rifleman must understand his daily interactions with locals affect attitudes of the population more than anything the task force PSYOP officer can do. The same is true in many other areas such as intelligence collection, media interaction, CA, and others.

An organic unit will perform better than an ad hoc one. For obvious reasons, an organic company or platoon will encounter less friction than one that is cobbled together, often at the last minute. Maneuver units and their habitual attachments still need to train together and be prepared to operate as a team, because there will be times that it is necessary. Still, if a leader can reduce the number of attachments without losing critical capabilities, he can dramatically reduce risk and increase the odds of success. All too often, a platoon or company departs for an operation with so many attachments that the ungainly convoy resembles a battalion. Not only does such an operation create an unnecessarily large signature, it is difficult to control and account for, especially in enemy contact.

ADDRESSING SPECIALIZED FUNCTIONS AT THE COMPANY LEVEL

Take a page from the Special Operations Forces (SOF) playbook. SOF have long understood the need for multiple roles and special skills at the small-unit level. Due to the decentralized nature and low-level (usually section or platoon) of our operations in COIN, our conventional units are well-advised to follow suit. This does not mean that attachment support is no longer needed at company level and below. Men and women in these units are specially trained and absolutely critical to success. We can, however, do better by developing similar capabilities organically and determining a threshold for how and when to use the attachments.

CIVIL AFFAIRS

FM 3-24 recommends that platoons and companies create a political and cultural advisor position. This role can be combined with a CA specialist position. At company level, the duty typically falls to the Fire Support Officer (FSO). At the platoon level, however, the CA role breaks down. In some cases, the job may fall to the Forward Observer (FO), but much of the time, this man is ill-suited to the responsibility. Leaders should thoughtfully select a Soldier based on maturity and organizational skills, not just on rank or Military Occupational Specialty. At the platoon level, duties would include:

- Maintaining a file on key leaders (civil and religious) in the Area of Operations (AO).
- Note-taking for the platoon leader during interactions.

- Conducting simple need assessments and compiling for project nomination.
- Organizing small quick-impact packages.
- Reporting CA related information to the Company FSO

Regardless of rank, this Soldier should report directly to the platoon leader for operational purposes.

To facilitate downward information flow, the company and platoon CA specialists can give briefings on relevant political or cultural information and fulfill information requests, both tasks which leaders unnecessarily do themselves much of the time. In preparing Soldiers for this duty, the unit's CA team is an invaluable asset, and lateral information flow between the unit and the team should be continuous. Perhaps the most important thing that company and platoon CA specialists should learn from the unit's CAT-A is the project nomination process. Because most projects must be nominated and tracked through traditional CA channels, these Soldiers should understand how to identify potential projects and what information will be required.

PSYCHOLOGICAL OPERATIONS

The role of PSYOP within our companies and platoons will, by their nature, be less well-defined than that of CA. The three critical PSYOP capabilities at this level are:

- Spread a message through face to face interaction.
- Exploit an event for information purposes.
- Prevent the enemy from exploiting an event for his information purposes.

Every Soldier has both the capability and the responsibility to deliver approved messages. The leader's responsibility is ensuring the content and consistency of the message. In COIN operations, information and perception are often more important to achieving success than tactical wins. For this reason, a Soldier should know his unit's information themes before departing on patrol just as well as he knows the location of his ammunition. Even though only key leaders generally have interpreters, every Soldier walking the streets can convey a powerful message through his actions and gestures. Arm this man with a few key phrases in the local language and the capability is multiplied.

Exploiting an event such as a terrorist attack or a coalition operation is absolutely critical in the COIN fight. In fact, the information effort that follows an action is often more important than the action itself. This is not license to lie or use excessive spin, which will be seen through and must be avoided, but rather a requirement to tell our side of the story as rapidly and persuasively as possible. U.S. forces must understand that if they fail to do so, the insurgents will seize the initiative with their own story, one unconstrained by the truth.

Company level leaders cannot defer this responsibility to the PSYOP team. By preparing and organizing for PSYOP, company commanders and platoon leaders can take advantage of their superior knowledge of the area, people, and events to take the initiative in the information battle. For example, neighborhoods that experience frequent improvised explosive device (IED) attacks suffer civilian casualties and property damage. Even though the IEDs are clearly the work of insurgents, an enemy can easily exploit the events, creating the impression the U.S.

presence degrades neighborhood safety. If U.S. forces respond to IED attacks with undisciplined and indiscriminate force, then the insurgent message is strengthened. The U.S. unit must persuasively disseminate its own message: the insurgents do not care about the safety or property of the population. Combined with medical assistance to the civilian wounded and presented in a sincere and sympathetic manner, such a U.S. message can be powerful. While the temptation exists for the platoon leader or company commander to be the primary communicator in these situations because they have interpreters, this is not ideal. The platoon leader must coordinate the activities of the entire platoon. Instead, identify a team or squad to disseminate the message using the platoon leader's interpreter. Depending on the situation, the team may go door to door in the surrounding area or just talk to people gathered in the street. Other duties that should be delegated by the platoon leader are medical aid, crater analysis, and, of course, security. These duties will probably rotate and may not even be identified ahead of time. The key is that the platoon leader and his NCOs understand those actions that must be quickly accomplished after an exploitable event takes place.

MEDIA AFFAIRS

For interacting with members of the media, commanders cannot rely only on themselves and other company senior leaders. On the contrary, every Soldier should be comfortable and trusted in this important role. When embedded journalists are placed with a commander or platoon leader, as is usually the case, they will actively seek out opportunities to talk to the lower ranks. This is due to the common perception among the media that an

officer or senior NCO will only regurgitate talking points and not speak honestly or candidly. Likewise, simply giving our junior Soldiers a list of media talking points is insufficient. The more a journalist perceives an attempt by leadership to direct the comments of the lower ranks, the more he will believe the unit has something to hide. The resulting story will reflect this bias. We should encourage (and train) our men to speak candidly to the media within the bounds of operational security, at the same time ensuring they understand that it is not the time to vent frustrations. The vast majority of Soldiers are proud of the work they do in combat, and should use media interactions to focus on their accomplishments and those of their unit, keeping comments within the scope of his duty position.

INTELLIGENCE

With few exceptions, collection at company level and below will be from human sources or HUMINT. Our Soldiers constitute an invaluable collection asset by what they observe on a daily basis. The value of their observations, however, depends on whether they know what to look for. Requirements will constantly change, so leaders should implement a routine of disseminating information requirements and reporting observations during and after the mission.

The most valuable collection asset in the COIN environment is the local population. Leaders should strive to develop relationships with willing locals, placing a priority on the safety of the informant and not attempting to rush the process. In places where mobile phone service is available, make maximum use of this resource for communicating with local contacts. The availability of Micro/Small Rewards or similar funds can also be helpful. Still many

locals are unwilling to accept money for assistance, due to feelings of guilt and increased danger if they are officially in the pay of U.S. forces. While non-THT personnel are generally not authorized to develop source networks, they can still build relationships that glean useful information about the population and the enemy. Leaders should rely on judgment to determine when a relationship reaches the point where the contact should be passed on to the THT as a potential source. The THT can help determine this threshold.

Effective intelligence analysis at the company and platoon level means maintaining a current understanding of the situation in the unit's AO. The goal is to paint a nuanced picture of attitudes, intentions, and how the enemy operates with relation to the population and terrain. The picture should be a composite of all available information, including, most importantly, the knowledge contained within the company. When done properly, this product will surpass any situation template (SITEMP) created by the battalion S2. For this reason, SITEMPs at all levels should be driven from the bottom-up and company commanders should feed their own analysis to the S2. Some steps to help achieve the desired result are:

- Regular debriefs at squad and platoon level.
- Open discussions among company key leaders (at least platoon sergeant and above). A less formal setting will tend to illicit more thoughtful analysis and debate about the enemy situation.
- Maintain a company graphic SITEMP as an evolving product. Avoid focusing on historical events. Strive to interpret enemy logistics and attack patterns, as well as attitudes and intentions of both the enemy and the population.

Intelligence analysis is one area that is so critical, the company commander may choose not to delegate, provided he has received sufficient input from below. The FSO will likely assist, as he is heavily involved in the battalion targeting process, but it is ultimately a commander responsibility. Good analysis at the company level will naturally lead to bottom-up target nomination, so the FSO should be prepared to build target packets for input to battalion. Additionally, the FSO can be helpful in tracking local contacts and building profiles on potential targets.

Outside of the company, information and intelligence flow is equally critical. Platoon leaders and platoon sergeants should be comfortable not only interacting with counterparts from other companies, but also with members of the battalion S2 section. The company commander need not be an information bottleneck, so he should not be the only member of the company permitted to ask the S2 or his staff a question.

ADVISING LOCAL MILITARY AND POLICE FORCES

Even if the unit is not specifically tasked with an advisor mission, they will likely have occasion to conduct combined operations with local forces. These operations can be highly effective and preferable to U.S.-pure operations due to the local knowledge of the indigenous forces and greater likelihood of acceptance by the local population. At the same time, many of the local military and police forces in Iraq and Afghanistan still require mentorship and supervision to behave professionally, lest combined operations create a worsened impression of both indigenous and U.S. forces.

The issue of command structure in combined operations can be sensitive. As a general rule, U.S. company commanders will not have direct command over the local force, but should seek a partnered relationship with the indigenous commander. Such a relationship can clearly raise unity of command concerns. As with so much else in COIN, no definitive solution exists. Instead, U.S. commanders must artfully strike a balance between unity of command and the need to respect the authority of the local commander. In organizing and preparing for these operations, commanders should consider some basic tips:

- Let the local force take the main effort. For actions on the objective (as in a raid or cordon and search), put a small group of U.S. Soldiers (no more than a fire team in any one place) with the locals to advise, but do not undermine the authority of the indigenous leader.
 - Give the local forces the lead on tactical questioning and interrogation, while monitoring the process closely.
 - Take advantage of U.S. vehicles' superior protective capability when determining convoy placement.
 - Keep radio communication with the leader of the local forces during an operation. This sounds obvious, but is often not done. The local forces can usually spare a radio for a U.S. leader's interpreter to monitor.
 - In the planning process with local forces, be very specific regarding level of force to be used and measures to minimize property damage. They will try hard to impress their U.S. partners, but in the absence of guidance tend to err on the side of too much force and too much damage.
- Conduct prior coordination with the advisor team to avoid redundancy and confusion. These teams are generally small and not sufficiently manned to provide supervision in multiple locations during an operation. If a local military or police unit does not have U.S. advisors, then working to establish a relationship for combined operations is even more critical.

As a guiding principle, U.S. commanders should let the indigenous forces do as much as possible, even though the US tendency is often to try to do it all ourselves. The presence of indigenous forces in an operation should not merely be a superficial attempt to give it a "local face". Mission success for combined operations can be defined as meeting tactical objectives while furthering the capabilities and perception among the populace of the indigenous force.

CONCLUSION

Our conventional forces have been conducting COIN operations for over five years and have adapted tremendously well to the unconventional environment. Even units that received no specific COIN training prior to deployment have, in the great tradition of our military, improvised and adapted in the course of ongoing operations.

Our training centers are now providing deploying task forces an incredibly realistic COIN experience prior to deployment, and the onus is on junior leaders to adapt their organizations before they arrive in combat. The effectiveness of pre-deployment training is multiplied when companies and platoons develop specialized capabilities organically. This is the primary level of activity in COIN and

the level where tactical wins or losses contribute to the strategic outcome.

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REGAINING MOMENTUM IN STABILITY OPERATIONS

By Maj Karl C. Rohr, USMC

All our recent conquest...developed through two phases: that of the initial war, with the winning of apparently decisive victories, followed by that of insurrection, inevitable painful, and of which the issue was more administrative than military, the organization of the country.

— E.F. Gautier, Morocco 1910

For the United States the success of stability operations can only be determined through the dangerous and slow progressive transition to democracy and a stable peace.¹ Yet despite this long-term nature it is often thought that interventions are won and lost in the first months. The longer it takes to implement security during an intervention the less chance the intervention has of success.² In an insurgency, as in regular combat, gaining and maintaining momentum is critical throughout.³ The sooner the intervention force can insert government and gain a decisive advantage over anti-government forces, the better the situation will be. However, gaining and maintaining this relative superiority is difficult.⁴ Once lost, it can be regained but it becomes increasingly difficult to do so.⁵ To facilitate the long-term effort, initiative must be seized as quickly as possible. The initial tactical operations should focus on highly visible short-term efforts followed immediately by the institution of longer-term actions.

The longer it takes to establish a stable security situation the more the people suffer.⁶ When external actors compel change, those actors such as the United States, must be capable of taking over the roles of the government without delay.⁷ Stability operations must match the rapidity of action that combat operations exert. Unfortunately, there is currently no methodology as to how to accomplish this comprehensive state building.⁸ The current methods rely on ad hoc groupings of military, government and private players generally incapable of forging the necessary organization.⁹ None of these activities currently are designed for rapid deployment or implementation in order to counter momentum loss.

SOMALIA

One example of lost momentum in an intervention is the U.N. operation Restore Hope. In this then unprecedented action the U.S. played the role of an enabling force. Somalia, a

¹ Edward Mansfield and Jack Snyder "Democratic Transitions and War: From Napoleon to the Millennium's End," in Pamela Aall et al, (eds.) 113-126: 126

² Frank Kitson, *Low Intensity Operations*. (London: Faber, 1971 (1973)) 80

³ Timothy Sisks, "Democratization and Peacebuilding: Perils and Promises," in, Pamela Aall et al, (eds.) 785-800: 797

⁴ William McRaven, *Spec Ops, Case Studies in Special Operations Warfare: Theory and Practice*, Random House Publishing: Presidio Press, 1996. 4

⁵ *ibid*, 6

⁶ Robert Orr "Governing When Chaos Rules: Enhancing Governance and Participation." *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol 25, No. 4, (Autumn 2002). 139-152.:139

⁷ Brian Watson, "Reshaping the Expeditionary Army to Win Decisively: The Case for Greater Stabilization Capacity in the Modular Force," US Army Strategic Studies Institute (August 2005) 5

⁸ Francis Fukuyama, *State Building, Governance and World Order in the 21st Century*. (Ithaca: Cornell University, 2004) 99

⁹ Pamela Aall, "What do NGOs Bring to Peacekeeping?" in, Pamela Aall et al, (eds.) 365-384: 377

country without a government whose people lacked the basic food and medical supplies to survive prior to the intervention could only be supplied via a loose network of aid organizations and warlord militias.¹ This network was extremely corrupt and inefficient. The arrival of U.S. forces quieted the situation for a short period. This was the time for the international community to establish law and order, and would have required a hands-on, direct rule approach. However, the opportunity was wasted and the local bandit leaders used it to their advantage. Once they realized the international force was not going to enforce basic law and order the warlords began flexing their muscle.

The U.S. mandate did not include the creation or implementation of government.² This, it was argued, would have required far too much involvement. The international force exacerbated the situation by brokering peace deals with the warlords, giving them de facto legitimacy. The design of the interim Somali government, basically an amalgam of warlords, was fatally flawed, the time invested in it was inadequate and demonstrated a lack of commitment to rebuilding the Somali state.³ The momentum gained in the initial landing of foreign troops was quickly lost and eventually exploited by the local warring factions. From that point on the various U.N. and U.S. forces were playing catch up, trying vainly to regain the initiative.

CREATING OPPORTUNITY

In stability operations that involve counterinsurgency operations there are times,

as in Somalia and present day Iraq, when momentum is lost and the insurgents gain the upper hand. Here a modified decisive enabling operation can be launched in order to reclaim the initiative, to forcibly create a window of opportunity. The keys to this effort are isolation of the insurgents, organization of the counterinsurgents and the establishment of a unified civil-military command and control system. Historically reclamation has been successful to varying degrees in the Greek Civil War; the Philippine Huk Rebellion and the Malayan Emergency.

At the outset of the Greek Civil War, 1946–1949, the Greeks and the British Army that supported them were not organized, equipped or trained to fight a counterinsurgency.⁴ By 1947 the insurgency was growing rapidly and the disorganized Greek government agencies were not up to the task of defeating it. This same year the United States under the Truman Doctrine stepped in, replacing the British forces. U.S. military aid and military advisers quickly flooded the country improving the equipping and training of the Greeks dramatically.⁵ However, the US trained and equipped Greeks remained unable to crush the guerillas as they relied on large-scale inefficient search-and-destroy missions and ignored political, economic and humanitarian efforts.⁶

Frustrated with the lack of results gained from the investment, the Greeks began to experiment with smaller scale isolation operations including such activity as temporary relocation of non-combatant populations.

¹ I.M. Lewis, *A Modern History of Somalia, Nation and State in the Horn of Africa*, 4th Edition, (Athens Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2002) 270

² *ibid*, 277

³ *ibid*, 278

⁴ Robert Asprey, *War in the Shadows, The Guerilla in History*, (New York: Doubleday, 1975) 736

⁵ *ibid*, 740-741

⁶ John Ellis, *From the Barrel of a Gun: A history of Guerilla, Revolutionary and Counterinsurgency Warfare, from the Romans to the Present*. (Pennsylvania: Stackpole Books, 1995) 200-204

Further, they appointed General Papagos as the new commander-in-chief. General Papagos, a respected war hero, accepted the job under the condition that he be given solitary command. This had the effect of reducing bureaucratic and political interference in field operations.¹ The results were felt immediately; the guerilla forces hard pressed by well-organized and coordinated government forces began resorting to greater acts of violence and terrorism angering the general populace. This and the increased professional and dedicated efforts of the security forces isolated the guerillas, and in conjunction with proactive diplomatic and political actions broke the insurgency.

The Philippine Huk Rebellion, 1945–1953, started along similar lines. The guerilla forces began exploiting the turmoil in government at the end of WWII in order to rectify real and perceived grievances.² At the outset it was estimated that ten percent of the population supported the Huks; ten percent did not and eighty percent were neutral.³ The Huk exploited this neutral majority both willingly and unwillingly. They provided food, clothing, shelter, security and information to the guerillas. The Huk fully understood that every action they undertook provoked a reaction from this target group, the government forces did not. As in Greece, the security forces were woefully under-prepared to face this type of warfare. They were poorly trained, ill disciplined, few in number and best at static defense.⁴ In retaliation for attacks, they tended to resort to extreme violence and intrusive tactics when frustrated by the more agile guerilla forces. The U.S., recognizing the danger, began funneling military aid and

advisors into the Philippines. The Philippine security forces benefited greatly but made the same mistake as the Greeks: utilizing this windfall of support to initiate large-scale search-and-destroy operations. Again these served to little effect except to anger the neutral population. Surprise, absolutely necessary to these operations, was impossible to achieve. Further many of the tactics such as free fire zones and recon by fire only caused pain for the peasantry. More sophisticated tactics were sought.

By 1950 the Philippine Forces began operating small patrols, extending the presence of the government to the village level.⁵ They roamed far and wide focusing on disrupting guerilla communications. Further they developed infiltration units that could operate in insurgent territory gaining vast amounts of actionable intelligence.⁶ The ability to execute this newfound initiative came from the appointment of Ramon Magsaysay as the Secretary of National Defense.

Magsaysay like General Papagos was a strong, independent commander who understood the power of a unified command. At one point there were over twelve different organizations competitively collecting intelligence on Huk activities. These efforts were not coordinated and the information gained was not readily shared. After his appointment Magsaysay streamlined these activities and focused the overall effort. The major aim of all activities was to win the cooperation of the populace. To this end he changed the focus of the Army from search-and-destroy to a less invasive form of isolation and intelligence gathering.⁷ Individual regions

¹ Asprey, 742

² Ellis, 205

³ Asprey, 748

⁴ *ibid.*, 748-758

⁵ Ellis, 207

⁶ Asprey, 756

⁷ *ibid.*, 758

were segregated by the military to ensure positive interrogation of the population while insuring individual privacy and safety. These actions reinforced the concept of active government sponsored stability and security. The patrolling of small mobile units became constant, aggressively reinforcing the security provided by the central government.¹ Further generous amnesty programs were offered in order to bring guerillas in peacefully. The programs were so effective that eighteen months after Magsaysay took charge the insurgency was broken.²

The Malayan Emergency, 1948 to 1960, was of greater magnitude than the previous actions however; the concept was the same. Once again, a sub-national group bent on overthrowing the existing government exploited the turmoil of WWII.³ In this case the government was a colonial possession of Great Britain, though independence was promised in the near future. As with both Greece and the Philippines the security forces of the state, including British and Commonwealth troops, were not properly organized, prepared or sufficiently large enough to prevent the insurgents from establishing substantial bases throughout the country. In addition, the British Malayan government was slow to respond to the growing threat. However, they did declare a State of Emergency giving the security force powers similar to Martial Law.

The British counterinsurgency program was articulated by Sir Henry Briggs in what came to be known as the Brigg's Plan.⁴ This plan consisted of the following tenets:

- To dominate the populated areas and to build up a feeling of complete security which would, in time, result in a steady and increasing flow of information from all sources.
- To break the Communist organizations within the populated areas.
- To isolate the guerillas from the food and supply organizations in the populated areas.
- To destroy the guerillas by forcing them to attack the security forces on their own ground.

Actions taken under this plan involved resettlement to strategic hamlets, relocating over five hundred thousand people by 1953, identification card systems and cordon and search operations. They had the right to impose curfews and issue severe penalties for aiding the insurgency. Yet the authority to implement these actions did not end the war.

Unfortunately, the British military began the war as had the other government forces, concentrating upon large-scale operations attempting to scour the jungles for guerillas. These activities had limited success, wasted manpower and resources, as had the Greek and Philippine operations. The British eventually learned the same lessons that only small, mobile, self-sufficient patrols, over long periods of time could effectively isolate regions.⁵ And only if these actions were tied to intensive intelligence gathering, civilian political and economic activity; subordinate to the overall campaign plan that answered to a single unified command.

¹ Ellis, 208

² Asprey, 758

³ Ellis, 209

⁴ *ibid*, 210

⁵ Asprey, 789

Ultimately it took a strong personality to wield the authority and meld the disparate organizations of state and security into one cohesive force capable of defeating the insurgency. This strength was brought to Malaya in the person of General Sir Gerald Templar, a dynamic, unconventional character with immense energy who understood clearly the mission at hand. His famous quote “The battle for the hearts and minds of the people” has summarized his concept of stability operations. He realized that his job was to implement the plans and organizational strategies laid out by Briggs and to follow through in a forceful coherent manner.

One of his methods was to remove the State of Emergency by regions.¹ When a region was deemed close to secure he would focus on it, ramping up the security measures and security force presence for a brief period then backing off and declaring the region “white” or free from insurgents. The region would then be freed from heavy restriction as a reward. Additionally, the counterinsurgents offered amnesty, monetary rewards and re-training to any guerilla willing to surrender. This proved highly useful at garnering information on other insurgents.

CONCLUSION

Through resolute action such as: isolation of the insurgents from the general population; deployment of a coherent, tailored counterinsurgency organization; and unity of command lost momentum can be regained. These examples demonstrate that even when the initial window of opportunity is missed, through lack of understanding of the threat, negligence or unpreparedness, the employment

of cohesive and overwhelming enabling forces and decisive follow-on activity can defeat an existing insurgency.

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¹ Noel Barber, The War of the Running Dogs, The Malayan Emergency: 1948-1960, (New York: Bantam Books, 1971(1987)) 199