

Organization for Frontless

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-Editor.

A conventional technique in military writing is to “tell ‘em what you’re going to say; say it; then tell ‘em what you said.” Since this paper is about a facet of unconventional warfare, I have adopted an other-than-conventional format. First, I will tell you what I am not going to say. Next, I will explain why I refuse to support this hypothesis. And, finally, in the process of traversing this rather roundabout route I hope not only to have stated, but proved my thesis.

What I am not going to say is this: “All that is required to fight counterinsurgency operations is a standard US infantry battle group or battalion.” This statement is only a little thinner slice of the old saw: Conventional forces can conduct counter-guerrilla operations.” Immediately, you see that perhaps my approach to this subject is the antithesis of the one followed by a number of commanders of conventionally oriented, combat-ready units. This latter approach has been fortified by a number of professional articles in which another facet of the same hypothesis has appeared, expressed in a slightly different way.

Many of these authors rationalize:

Counterinsurgency is nothing new. We professionals are and have been on top of this. Why, regular forces have been fighting guerrillas for years. Look at Alexander against Spitamenes in Bactria and Sogdiana; Napoleon in Spain; or the United States Army in the Philippines in the early 1900's.

Part of the fallacy in this reaction is that counter-guerrilla is not the equivalent of counterinsurgency, especially at the strategy and policy level. Counterinsurgency is something new, particularly for our generation, because it involves countering Communist-inspired “wars of national liberation,” the chief means of achieving the goals of international communism.

Initial Failures

Further, unhappily, conventional soldiers are not, now, nor have they been, as “on top of this” as they would like to think. During the initial stages of being placed in a counterinsurgency environment, conventionally oriented military forces, alone, historically have almost invariably failed to achieve decisive success. These initial failures are a sobering rebuttal to those who wax eloquent about the capabilities of conventional forces under such conditions. Their initial failures have been as applicable to campaigns which eventually ended in favor of the Free World, such as Greece, Malaya, and the Philippines, as in those that were lost, such as China, Indochina, and Cuba.

Many valiant soldiers, well grounded in the conventional mold of warfare, have arrived on the fields of counterinsurgency combat with optimistic prophecies of victory. Enough of them have departed with words of despair that their lack of decisive successes or failures should be food for serious thought by all professionals.

The point here is that, even if a conventional unit at the tactical level can fight and win against guerrillas, it does not follow that conventional units can defeat “war; of national liberation.” Usually, a conventional unit can defeat a guerrilla unit hands down when the irregulars are foolish enough to attempt to hold ground and slug it out on the regular's own terms. The full potential of a conventional unit is impotent, however, when it must wait and react only to the insurgent's initiative, when the regulars can't even find guerrillas, much less fix and fight 'em. This often has been the case.

Definition

And just what do we mean by conventional unit? Exactly what is this, as opposed to a so-called unconventional unit? I will define my conventional unit as one—a battalion, a battle group, a regiment—whose basic mission is “to close with the enemy by means of fire and maneuver in order to destroy or capture him or to repel his assault by fire, close combat, and counterattack.” It is trained only according to current training programs and

equipped and organized under current tables of organization and equipment.

Capabilities

The capabilities of this unit are:

- ◆ Close with the enemy by means of fire and maneuver in order to destroy or capture him.
- ◆ Repel enemy assault by fire, close combat, and counterattack.
- ◆ Provide base of fire and maneuver elements.
- ◆ Seize and hold terrain.
- ◆ Conduct independent operations on a limited scale.
- ◆ Furnish limited antitank protection.
- ◆ Provide indirect fire support for organic and attached units.
- ◆ Conduct long-range patrolling when appropriately equipped.
- ◆ Participate in air-transported (air-mobile) operations when provided with sufficient transportation.
- ◆ Maneuver in all types of terrain and climatic conditions.

What makes military units “not conventional?” A fair approach is to say that any unit that does not have the missions, training, and organization of the conventional unit is thus “unconventional,” or at least specialized. This differentiation is clearcut and unassailable in some cases.

Take police, paramilitary militia, or civil defense-type units-civilian irregular defense groups, for instance-whose main missions are village defense and static security.

At the other end of this specialized Spectrum are highly trained, purely offensive combat units such as Ferret Force, Hunter-Killer, Force X, and airborne or air-mobile units which have deep penetration, quick reaction, or raid-type missions. Also failing to fit into a conventional mold are technical service and combat support units whose specialties lie in such narrow fields as intelligence, civil affairs, medical aid, engineering construction, ground or air transport, military police, and propaganda or psywar training.

Free World insurgents and the Special Forces-type units that train and support them, conducting their own frontless internal wars of national liberation behind the Iron and Bamboo Curtains, are conventional in no sense of the word. And, finally, the people of a nation, one of the principal factors in winning such a war, are not even a formal

militant body, except under the Communist concept of warfare.

Indexes

What form, then, should combat power take when faced with the prospect of conducting actual counterinsurgency operations? Mao Tse-tung's and Vo Nguyen Giap's three stages -passive defense, active resistance, and general counteroffensive-are probably the best indexes to use.

In the first stage, militarily, the insurgents are on the defensive, both tactically and strategically. They are on the offensive, however, in almost every non-military facet of warfare. Demonstrations, strikes, riots, and terrorism are used. Sporadic military operations may finally appear, by action squads and small local bands. During the transitional gray period, terrorism is slowly intensified into true guerrilla warfare. This phase is clandestine, conspiratorial, methodical, and progressive.

The military response to an incipient stage-one condition must be principally a police-type action. This is proper, providing that it is not “too little, too late,” and provided further that it is accompanied by an appropriate offensive political and socioeconomic modernizing program.

Such a modernization program must be based on a true evaluation of the people's needs. Although they are low in the spectrum of violence, wars of national liberation are not really limited wars, but internal total wars in which a nation's survival is at stake. The objectives of the Communists are not limited socioeconomic or political reforms, but the complete destruction of the government in power, and its society.

In most emerging countries, today, the danger of such internal aggression far outweighs that of external attack. Even in those countries where a significant conventional war force-in-being must be kept, the in-addition to civic action potential of this force must be realized fully. An indigenous regiment that guards a portion of a border must make full use of its civic action potential.

Responsiveness

But again there are many other governmental organizations which, in theory, should be more responsive to the peculiar requirements of a purely deteriorating internal situation. A conventional unit which lacks the requisite covert intelligence capability and responsiveness, or police-type

training, often feels an intense sense of uselessness and frustration where

there is no threat of external aggression or no tangible enemy to strike.

Ramon Magsaysay fought a stage-one activity both in the latter days of his tenure as the Philippine Secretary of Defense and the early months of his Presidency. The missions of the armed forces of the Philippines were:

0 To act as an ambassador of good will from the government to the people.

0 To capture or kill the Huk.

These missions seem topsy-turvy when compared to the missions listed for a conventional unit. They are, however, identical to the missions given a regular Communist revolutionary army.

Even the regular forces of an emerging nation may take on the appearance of a massive, inwardly oriented police force, constabulary, or militia, with an emphasis on covert intelligence and anti-Communist cell penetration capabilities. These give it the ability to pick and react to coherent strategic and tactical targets in all elements of the society.

In the Malayan campaign, the British defeated the terrorists somewhere in the gray area as the Communists tried to escalate their campaign from stage one to stage two. Commenting

on this, a British military author has said:

... our hindsight does tell us one thing clearly: if we had had in 1948 the police Special Branch (intelligence) system that we had built up by 1954, the insurgency might never have gotten into its stride and would certainly have ended more quickly. Good local government and a strong police intelligence system are the finest possible investments for the prevention and defeat of an insurgency.¹

Police-Type Units

The ratio of police field forces and home guards to "conventional forces" in Malaya was almost 10 to 1. Even

these figures are misleading because the British regular forces, by the time they were finally committed to counterinsurgency

operations, had been completely retrained-at

expense in time and effort-in new tactics and techniques specifically for antiterrorist operations.

Countering stage one, then, demands a wide ranging offensive in the socioeconomic, political, military,

and psychological fields. The target: Control the population, win the people. The use of a conventional military unit is not appropriate.

The military forces of the country itself must be capable of and tailored specifically for the internal defense of the country. Where there is also an external conventional war threat, the requisite regular forces must have a dual capability.

The most appropriate offensive forces are specialized, highly mobile, elite, constabulary-type units. Under a responsive chain of command these units should have both police and military offensive capabilities. Where-ever possible, static defense should be by the people of an area themselves, by village militia-type units trained to minimum standards.

Positive civic action missions for all government forces are a must. Strategy and all offensive and defensive tactics must be based on an accurate responsive nationwide intelligence

net, both civil and military, which can pinpoint targets against

which to direct the all-out offensive.

Active Resistance

The full spectrum of subversive activities escalates a notch. Now the Communists' tactical offensive is initiated in certain favorable local areas, with guerrilla warfare the primary form of fighting against the established authority. Terrorism and sabotage are stepped up. Regional guerrilla

units are activated, trained, and sent into action. These units are made up from the best troops in the village militia units. Direct action assumes ever-increasing importance.

Government-occupied territory is converted into contested guerrilla areas and finally into bases (liberated zones). The people in these areas are slowly absorbed; the terrain is not important. Although now on the tactical offensive, the revolutionaries are still on the military defensive when viewed

from the strategic level. Regular revolutionary troops are now activated and trained for use in the impending stage three.

For the same essentially nonmilitary reasons that a conventional Western combat unit is not appropriate to the "passive defensive" phase, it is also not particularly appropriate to counter the "active resistance stage." This is primarily a phase in which the military offensive must be directed effectively against traditional guerrilla warfare.

Other Guerrillas

There is much to support the thesis that other guerrillas are the best way to fight guerrillas, somewhat paralleling one theory that the most effective tank killer is another tank. Conventionally oriented armies, when placed in stage-two situations, have seldom made a good showing until their tactics and techniques have been drastically modified and they have been retrained specifically for this mode of warfare. The "other guerrilla" tag is not truly accurate, but it gives a much better picture of the tactics and techniques which have proved successful.

One of the key missions of the government during this phase is to win the hearts and minds of the populace, to separate the people from the guerrilla. A massive effort is continued in the intelligence field to penetrate the Communist organization and to give the military and police units concrete targets against which to direct their offensive.

Tactically, the most successful offensive military operations against insurgents have been of the small scale, deep-penetration, Hunter-Killer type which renounce the strategic application of mass, but apply, instead, a strategic principle of momentum. Momentum in counter guerrilla operations is the product of the mass of many small independent units times their velocity when penetrating deep into guerrilla areas.

Key to Success

The key to tactical success here is to ensure that these deep-penetration, live-among-the-people units have sufficient intelligence and combat power so that they can hit hard and not be defeated in detail by the largest size guerrilla unit that can be massed in their areas of operations.

The extent to which the regular army of a country is able to reorganize itself as a counter guerrilla, counter-stage-two force remains inversely proportional to the threat of external aggression. Malaya and the Philippines are perhaps the two best examples of insurgencies that attempted to escalate to the second stage, in which the indigenous forces were able to reorganize and train with almost total disregard for maintaining a potential to counter external aggression.

What proved successful in Malaya were platoon and company-sized units based on the Ferret Force concept. Initially, these small reaction forces were positioned near the contested Chinese villages where they could protect the vital police posts and move among the people, who gradually and

eventually supported the military effort. The quick reaction ability of these forces prevented the terrorists from following the natural military escalation of their movement into the pure guerrilla stage-two actions.

Beaten here, the Communists withdrew from the population centers into the jungle and attempted to shift their support base to the aborigines. The government's offensive forces followed them into the bush. There, again, the quick reaction units did not hole up in static security forts, but patrolled constantly, much like the guerrillas, and gradually won the support of the aborigines away from the guerrillas.

These military techniques, combined with the strategic massive resettlement program, the improved intelligence and psywar systems, the responsive civil-military control organization, and the various other tactical and training aspects of the splendid Briggs Plan, which was implemented so vigorously by General Sir Gerald Templer, were decisive on the national strategic level.

Philippine Experience

The Philippine armed forces operated in much the same manner. The initial response of the Philippine Government was to use weak conventional military police units. These were beaten back, overrun, or arrived at tacit peace treaties with the Huks in their area.

Next, the Philippine Constabulary was reorganized and operations were broken down into routine hit-and-run patrols by small detachments or largescale, sweep-type operations. The latter usually lacked valid intelligence. Otherwise, they were well planned according to conventional doctrine-phase lines, zones of action, and the like. Unfortunately, they, too, proved unsuccessful.

Although some large-scale operations continued to be initiated, usually with little success, the military technique that proved most successful after the reorganization of the armed forces in December 1951 was constant patrol action. These patrols, both intelligence and combat, were designed to keep the enemy on the run, obtain information, and prevent any intercommunication, reorganization, or replenishment of supplies.

Ninety percent of the time units spent in the field was devoted to small patrol operations which were instructed, oriented, and prepared not only for the Huk enemy, but for the people as well. Killing Huk leaders alone was often tactically

decisive as differentiated from the conventional soldier's emphasis on total numbers and box score comparisons. The offensive tactics were based on swift small unit actions in which speed and surprise were of the essence.

These improved military techniques were supplemented by President Magsaysay's massive psychological warfare program and his socioeconomic reform program which gradually stole the thunder from the Communists' slogans and won the people to the government side.

Impatience

In observing such a war, however, the conventionally trained soldier often is apt to consider it more important that elite units be used on purely "kill guerrilla" offensive military missions. No matter that such offensive mission may leave a political province chief and his capital city unprotected, or that, because of a lack of adequate intelligence, the operation may be militarily ineffective.

The professional usually will be impatient with a longer range theory proposing that, in order to win over a population, it may not be as important to kill guerrillas as it is simply to convince them that the central government does, in fact, control the population. Defected guerrillas cumulatively add strength to the government's side. Deaths, either on the guerrilla or friendly side, add strength to neither effort and, in fact, may turn an entire family violently and inalterably against the troops that caused the death. The professional military man almost always seems to press for the more tangible short-range, direct confrontation military solution. Who is right?

To beat stage two, then, a continuation of the socioeconomic, political, military, and psychological offensive is needed. It must be wide ranging to control and eventually win the people. Again, the use of a conventional military unit is not appropriate.

In the purely military field static security is a continuing requirement to which the minimum essential combat power should be allocated. Ideally, the forces assigned to this task are troops of the people themselves—the village militia-type units. There is a need, too, for a continuation of the police-style offensive, perhaps now emphasizing the more urban areas, but with the potential of operating anywhere in the country.

Elite Troops

In the more rural areas—the traditional mountains, jungles, and swamps—the offensive is directed against the guerrilla units by mobile, hard-hitting combat patrols. Made up of elite, specially trained troops, these units must operate on the deep-penetration, live-among-the-people concept. Practicing "other guerrilla" doctrine, they apply the principle of momentum to their operations. Maximum use is made of every type of tactical mobility. Such specialized means as parachutes, armored personnel carriers, swamp boats, and helicopters supplement the traditional on-foot movements.

Well versed in civic action, these units should live and operate as much as possible in certain permanent areas so they will get to know the terrain and people. Under ideal conditions, these elite troops are recruited from the more aggressive government military men in the area of their responsibility.

All the military efforts must be based on coordinated valid intelligence and be directed by a responsive civil-military chain of command. At this stage whether this chain is civil or military depends on the situation; the criteria is whether or not it works effectively.

General Counteroffensive

Stage three is the stage of decision. It is initiated only when events in a country and abroad are conducive to success. The main objective is the destruction of the opponent's will to resist, and utilizes the full weight of revolutionary warfare. This implies the achievement of the political goals of the revolutionaries, not necessarily the physical destruction of the enemy's military power.

On the local tactical level, the military offensive is retained and exploited with a heavier emphasis on local and regional guerrilla actions. The offensive now also steps up to the strategic level for the first time, through mobile warfare.

Contrary to what some analysts contend, mobile warfare is not equivalent to conventional warfare. Giap says that mobile warfare has these characteristics—it is fought by regular, rather than self-defense or regional troops; regular forces are concentrated and massed for these operations. But in reality, it is nothing more than what we in the US Armed Forces, today, call guerrilla warfare extended to the point where it is large-scale and decisive. (The thought that guerrilla warfare can be decisive is anathema to many a conventional theorist.)

Giap also says that in some cases “entrenched camp warfare” may develop on various battlefields as an end result of the mobile warfare period. Only during this “entrenched camp” positional subphase of the general counteroffensive does Giap’s concept of fighting approximate conventional warfare in which the possession and retention of terrain is the primary technique used to destroy the enemy’s main force.

Will to Fight

In the counteroffensive phase Giap assigns large-scale mobile guerrilla warfare-war of movement-the paramount mission of annihilating the enemy’s will to fight. Regional and local guerrilla activities, although stepped up, are now of secondary importance and have the missions of winning the people, screening the regulars, destroying the enemy’s reserves, and cutting his lines of communication. These high and low keys of guerrilla fighting complement each other, providing the political-military atmosphere in which each thrives.

Few recent revolutionary wars which escalated to this stage were defeated. Many successful insurgencies, such as Cuba, achieved their political-military decisions prior to the initiation of true mobile warfare. Most of the Free World’s victories were also decisive in the earlier phases.

There are many pro-and-con lessons to be learned from the French conduct of their unsuccessful counter-stage-three insurgency operations in Indochina.

There are some who contend that the conventional setpiece battle of Dien Bien Phu really was not militarily decisive in itself since only four percent of the French regular combat potential in Indochina was annihilated by the Vietminh. Some say that the conventional French Army was not beaten by the primitive forces of Vo Nguyen Giap, it was betrayed by its own politicians at home.

This hypothesis is often advanced by those who wish to prove that conventional forces can always defeat guerrillas. Such thinking is a masterpiece of rationalization caused by a misinterpretation of what war really is.

War to Ho-Chi-Minh was and is the continuation of politics through other means. The Vietminh achieved most of their political goals from the Geneva accords; the French failed to achieve almost all of their political goals. Thus the French were certainly defeated in war.

Arguments

There is also much to support the hypothesis that Dien Bien Phu was fought mostly as a psychological battle to give the conventionally, oriented French military leaders and politicians a setpiece defeat that could be recognized clearly as such, as a basis to influence the Geneva meetings. One could argue that perhaps the French war already had been lost decisively and militarily due to the pernicious effects of guerrilla infiltration within the main population centers in the Red River Delta and elsewhere throughout Indochina; that the French would not accept the fact of this defeat unless convinced by a conventional reminder in their own military language of an already accomplished fact.

A popular misconception exposed by the Indochina War is that guerrillas operate willingly in the jungles, mountains, and swamps. Nothing could be further from the truth. While terrain in insurgencies is of secondary importance, nevertheless, the reverse of a conventional war cliché is applicable-in revolutionary warfare it is: “Take the low ground.”

Low ground, such as the Mekong River and Red River Deltas, usually contains the population centers. Strategically, it is this low ground that is decisive because it is there that the guerrillas control and win the people. They cannot gain such a decision in the swamps, jungles, highlands, or mountains; guerrillas only retreat to such terrain reluctantly. They do so, basically, for tactical reasons, to force the conventional units to give up many of their sophisticated advantages so that when the battle is again joined it is more on the guerrillas’ terms. But the strategic decision is gained elsewhere, among the people.

In fact, even Giap’s use of his regular forces in the “eccentric attack” strategy which he gradually evolved is the antithesis of conventional strategic warfare in the Western mold. And yet, at the same time, the “eccentric” strategy of his 1953-54 campaign is a classic example of the application of such principles of war as offensive, mass, economy of force, and surprise.

Two Offensives

Another interesting fact of this final campaign is that both the Vietminh and French forces initially were on the offensive, each trying to seize the initiative-the, French under the ill-fated “Navarre Plan” and the Vietminh under their “Winter ‘53-Spring ‘54” campaign. The differences between these two

offensives, however, are the differences between the conventional Western approach to war and the unconventional large-scale decisive guerrilla warfare doctrine of the East.

The French desired a quick, conventional battle in which their regular military superiority would assure them a clean-cut box score victory. In practice, French aggressive doctrine proved to be only fleetingly offensive at the strategic level. Nevertheless, there are many splendid mobility lessons to be learned from the French use of their limited means.

When it came time for a tactical decision, however, the French most often found themselves on the defensive—in forts and trenches, well dug in with barbed wire out, often in far-out airheads, Indochinese “Verduns” against which the Vietminh were supposed to bleed themselves white. Thereby the French renounced the tactical initiative and awaited the action of the Vietminh at times and places chosen by the enemy.

Hesitancy

Even in the tactical doctrine which was meant to implement the offensive portion of their “de Lattre Line” strategy—the Group Mobile concept—the French proved hesitant to apply true deep-penetration mobility to their plans, and often were encumbered by and tied to the firing radius of road bound artillery. Further, the French often fought their battles in a “win-the-people” vacuum. Those tactical units that came the closest to applying a live-among-the-people, deep-penetration concept, supplied and supported by air, showed considerable promise.

Giap, on the other hand, was badly bloodied when he attempted to continue the initial, essentially conventional successes he had achieved on the Chinese border. In trying to seize Hanoi, Giap initiated a Western-style, head-on, purely military strategy at Vinh-Yen, Mao-Khe, and along the Day River. During these battles in 1951 he pursued the false revolutionary war doctrine and destroyed the rhythm of the escalation. He had to revert to stage two for respite.

Giap had given the French exactly what they wanted—setpiece battles in which the cards were stacked in favor of conventional military power. From these initial defeats to the Battle of Dien Bien Phu, some three years later, Giap was not to offer a conventional response.

Greek Experience

Perhaps what happened strategically in Indochina was reversed in the third stage in Greece. There, the Greek National Army (GNA) from 1944 through 1948 had proved indecisive in its conventional “cordon-off and mop-up” operations against the Communist National People’s Liberation Army (ELAS). As Field Marshal Alexander Papagos said, during this period “the national forces were in danger of losing the war without fighting it.” Colonel J.C. Murray, turning a fine phrase that applies not only to Greece, but in general to the most effective revolutionary war strategy in any stage, said that the ELAS guerrilla strategy, at this time, was “neither offensive nor defensive but evasive.”² Although the stage-two operations on which the Communist commander, General Markos Vafiades, had based this evasive doctrine had been somewhat slowed, the ELAS, on the other hand, had not been defeated.

General Markos was relieved and replaced by Nikos Zachariades who attempted to escalate operations to the decisive “general counteroffensive.” Zachariades, however, adopted a stage-three strategy that was the antithesis of Giap’s mobile warfare. In attempting to initiate the fiction of a “free government,” the ELAS went into a conventional defense that was not only static, but piecemeal, divided between the Vitsi and Grammos Mountain areas. In preparation for this defense the ELAS forces had been reorganized along conventional lines.

There were other important tactical and strategic factors involved in what happened next, such as the cumulative effects of the Yugoslav denial of a contiguous cross-border “safe area,” the application of unity of command, and the essential failure of the Communist “win-the-people” program with its resulting improved intelligence capabilities in the Greek National Army.

But in following their faulty third stage strategy in 1949 the ELAS received a decisive conventional, 1:1 military defeat in detail from the rejuvenated Greek National Army under Field Marshal Papagos. The Communists were never able to recover from this defeat.

Contradictions

It would be dangerous to draw too many this-is-the-way-to-defeat-stage-three conclusions from the Greek campaign. The Greek campaign is but an example of how greater conventional combat power

on the offensive can defeat lesser conventional combat power on the defensive, a maxim of conventional war that has been proved many times before.

On the surface this campaign seems to offer much to prove the value of conventional tactics and techniques in counterinsurgency operations.

In his fine study, Colonel Murray presents contradictory evaluations of the “specialized versus conventional” counterinsurgency forces in the Greek campaign. Murray describes the ineffectiveness of the conventional Greek Army for the campaign they were fighting. Because of this lack of success, elite commando companies were activated which eventually were formed into five commando groups. These commando units then went on to fight the antiguerrilla war so effectively that they eventually gained “a monopoly in the right to fight guerrillas,” a privilege that the other Greek National Army units were content to let them have.

He then goes on to negate this positive atmosphere by saying:

It is doubtful if the functions assigned to commandos were of such a nature as to warrant the maintenance of special units, with the concentration of effort and dislocations of morale that such a course of action entails. To a degree, the effectiveness of the commandos was achieved at the expense of the standard infantry units. With proper training, the latter could have performed the missions assigned the commandos. They could, in addition, have held ground on the defensive or have taken their place in an attack against a fortified position. They could sustain themselves, moreover, without excessive reliance upon the service and supply agencies of the army.

At this point one would conclude that in evaluating the three-stage Greek War, Colonel Murray was a “conventionalist.”

But taking Murray’s remarks in their entirety, he is really only complaining about the tactics and techniques to which the specialized units were committed. When Colonel Murray concludes his study he ends with what is, in fact, a sweeping indorsement, not of the conventional approach to this phase of counterinsurgency operations, but to a marriage between elite, deep-penetration mobile units and tactical air. He says:

The British Military Mission advocated that (the commando groups) be reorganized as pursuit forces to range widely and rapidly through the mountainous country in pursuit of the elusive guerrilla. They were to be air supported, air supplied, and, insofar as practicable, airborne and air transported

The union of the capabilities of tactical air with those of the raiding forces would have multiplied their effectiveness.

Such a union might well have produced the effective synthesis means for conducting nearly all phases of the antiguerrilla war, except the deliberate attack of fortified areas.

Prediction

Charles von Luttichau, a historian with the Army’s Office of the Chief of Military History, has analyzed the World War II Soviet and German experiences with guerrilla and counter guerrilla warfare. Although he emphasizes not revolutionary warfare, but guerrilla forces operating in conjunction with conventional forces, Mr. von Luttichau’s look into a crystal ball in his conclusion is perhaps appropriate:

With a view to the future, one may conclude that guerrilla warfare has an inherent tendency to expand from small irregular nuclei into large movements resembling conventional forces. ... If this development is allowed to go unchecked, guerrillas, by the sheer weight of numbers and the real and psychological pressures they can exert, may dominate entire provinces and even gain de facto political control of a state. Counter guerrilla operations, in turn, demand quick, flexible and concentrated action by specialized forces in the early stages of a limited conflict.³

In the Greek and Indochina Wars, even when the fighting had escalated to the third stage, the military response that offered the most potential was an elite, specialized commando-type unit, highly versatile in all techniques of mobility, that simply continued to apply the principle of momentum with greater combat power. This was married to the tactical capability that had the greatest mobility and quickest response-tactical air.

Conclusion

In summary, these are my major points.

Countering insurgencies in any stage requires a “broad-based; nation-building, political, socioeconomic, population control, military, and political offensive.

The military organization most suited for the frontless war is not a massive, two-up-one-back, conventional western army. Depending on the specific stage of the insurgency the most appropriate offensive response is in stage one, primarily policy; in stage two, small-scale, deep-penetration-type

units; in stage three, larger scale, deep-penetration-type units of the ranger type. During all these stages, state security missions are best accomplished by paramilitary units.

Almost any military unit can be trained and equipped to conduct such counterinsurgency operations. Insurgents are not 10 feet tall—they can be beaten. Conventional troops do offer a splendid base on which to build offensive counterrevolutionary expertise.

Once conventional units have been so trained, however, they may or may not be able to accomplish their original hot war primary mission. Under my definition, such specially trained units—whether they are based on police, constabulary, or regulars—are no longer conventional but, in fact, have become unconventional, or at least highly specialized.

Ideally, conventional military units of another nation should never be committed to a counterinsurgency campaign in a given nation. If the decision is made to commit foreign conventional units, their introduction must be progressive to free indigenous units for action, starting with service and combat-support missions, next escalating to static security-type jobs, and, finally, as a last resort, engaging in offensive operations.

But once conventional units of any nation have been trained and equipped to conduct counterinsurgency operations, they are no longer conventional units; they have become specialized.

Without conventional training and equipment they probably will be incapable of again conducting conventional combat.

This article presents one view on the relative value of conventional as opposed to specialized forces in the conduct of counterinsurgency operations. We welcome further discussion and invite prospective authors to submit their manuscripts on the subject.

-Editor

Notes

1. Colonel Richard L. Clutterbuck, "Communist Defeat in Malaya; A Case Study," *Military Review*, September 1963, p 78. Copyright © 1963.
2. Colonel J. C. Murray, United States Marine Corps. "The Anti-Bandit War" from the book *The Guerrilla-And How to Fight Him*, edited by Lieutenant Colonel T. N. Greene. Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., New York, 1962, pp 63-111.
3. Charles V. P. von Luttithau, *Guerrilla and Counterguerrilla Warfare in Russia During World War II*, Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, Washington, D. C., 1963. p 166.

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