

# Military Review

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**Cover Photo:** BAGHDAD, Iraq—Army Colonel James H. Coffman Jr., after receiving the Distinguished Service Cross, 24 August 2005, for combat actions in support of the 3rd Battalion, 1st Iraqi Special Police Commando Brigade on 14 November 2004, during a five-and-a-half hour battle with terrorists trying to overrun an Iraqi police station in Mosul. When an enemy round severely wounded his shooting hand and damaged his M4 rifle, Coffman bandaged himself and continued fighting with AK-47s he collected from commando casualties. Coffman refused evacuation for treatment until the battle was over. In remarks during the award ceremony, Coffman praised the Iraqi Commandos for their service and commitment to defending freedom in Iraq. He said he viewed the ceremony as a tribute to the Iraqi and Coalition forces that have fought, bled and died together. Iraq's Minister of Interior, Bayan Jabr, and Iraqi Maj. Gen. Adnon Thebit, commander of the Special Police Forces, also each presented Coffman with Iraqi medallions. Following the ceremony, Coffman stated that he did not believe democracy could be fast-tracked in Iraq, but would take time. The United States had to work through several years of contentious issues—including a Civil War—before it enjoyed a stable democratic government, he noted. "It's easy, when you've had a couple centuries of experience with democracy, to overlook the difficulties in getting that," Coffman said. "I can't think of a nobler endeavor than to help 28 million people achieve it." (MNSTC-I Public Affairs)

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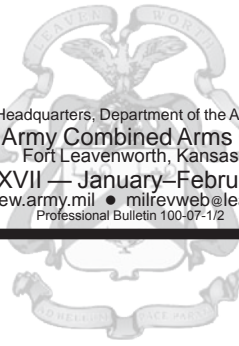
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# WAITING FOR GODOT IN IRAQ

F. J. Bing West

**I**N SAMUEL BECKETT’S PLAY *Waiting for Godot*, the two protagonists passively await Godot, a tramp who will give direction to their lives. Godot, of course, never shows up. Similarly, the leaders of the Army and Marine Corps cannot wait for policy direction or a strategic clarity about Iraq that is not going to show up.

Supposedly, the current mission is to establish a stable and democratic Iraq. But Lieutenant General Raymond Odierno, about to assume command of Multi-National Corps–Iraq, has said he did not know whether insuring a Western-style democracy will remain the mission, telling a *New York Times* reporter, “Notice I left out a few things, such as a democracy in the sense that we see a democracy in the United States.”<sup>1</sup>

The immense challenges facing our ground forces demand leadership with clear focus. For the next several years, our forces will remain engaged in combat in Iraq, with the ambiguous mission not enjoying the support of the majority of the American body politic. This tension between the military mission and political goals will affect battlefield performance, strategic credibility, the social contract between the people and our Army, and budgets. Let us look at each of the four challenges.

## Battlefield Performance and Risk

There is no historical precedent for the current situation. President George W. Bush has said we will not leave until victorious, but the Iraq Study Group—ten distinguished Americans—has concluded that Iraq is “deteriorating,” while General Peter Pace, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, has said, “We’re not winning, but we’re not losing.”<sup>2</sup> No one knows when this war is going to end—or how—whether satisfactorily or badly.

As we enter the fifth year of the war, a majority in Congress and in the opinion polls want our forces substantially withdrawn, while acknowledging that the mission—leaving a stable, orderly, and democratic Iraq protected by its own forces—has not been achieved. At the same time, the president, with two years remaining as commander-in-chief, has not altered the mission, despite a widespread belief that his own political party will successfully force a mission change before the next presidential election.

This is quite different from the Vietnam case, when President Richard M. Nixon took office in 1969 promising a strategy of American withdrawal. He easily won reelection four years later, in large part because American ground

*F. J. Bing West is a former assistant secretary of defense and Marine Vietnam veteran. Currently a consultant to the Office of the Secretary of Defense, West has been to Iraq ten times, embedded with 24 different battalions. He is the author of The Village, a 485-day chronicle of a Combined Action Platoon that lost seven of its 15 Marines; The March Up; and No True Glory: A Frontline Account of the Battle for Fallujah. West appears frequently on The News Hour and is currently writing a history of the Iraqi insurgency. He is also doing a major piece on Iraq for The Atlantic Monthly.*

*Note: The views expressed in this article are the author’s and do not necessarily reflect those of the U.S. Army or the Department of Defense.*



forces were no longer fighting in Vietnam. In Iraq, the other shoe of American politics—the public announcement of the withdrawal of most of our 140,000 American troops—has not yet dropped.

General Pace has also said the war cannot be won militarily, let alone won by Americans. To judge by our military performance, Pace's words are accurate. "Clear, hold and build" has given way to "Control Baghdad, withdraw from the front lines, increase the advisors, and turn operational control over to the Iraqis." The plan seems to be for U.S. forces to keep a lid on the sectarian violence, especially in Baghdad; train Iraqi security forces; and shift control of the Iraqi Army to Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki. Major General William Caldwell, the military spokesman in Iraq, said, "We should see the complete transfer of command and control of all Iraqi Army divisions by late spring, early summer."<sup>3</sup>

Mr. Maliki, however, has not behaved like a strong leader. Giving him more control over the armed forces in order to bolster his confidence runs the risk of putting all eggs into a fragile basket. Because this has been front-page news for months, including the deliberate leaks of explicit memos from the White House, everyone understands that American units and advisors are conducting a holding action. Winning is not an option, while the risk of a tragic end to the American involvement in Iraq is there for all to see.

Indeed, the level of pessimism among the American policy-making elites, the Congress, and the press is astonishing. Having visited with 15 U.S. and Iraqi units in September and October, I am a solid five on a scale of one (disaster) to ten (success). In other words, the anecdotal evidence is confounding, and there are no objective, countrywide measures for determining whether stability or civil war is more probable.

The challenge is to inspire professional behavior in the face of strategic uncertainty and public pessimism. In both Korea and Vietnam, the expectancies about combat performance changed as the wars drew to a close. In 1953 in Korea, patrols were carefully plotted to minimize the chances of anyone being snatched, and in 1970 in Vietnam, aggressive patrolling was frowned upon as the units pulled out. We have not yet reached that demarcation point in Iraq, but it's coming fast. In this climate, are Soldiers expected to behave with

***The challenge is to inspire professional behavior in the face of strategic uncertainty and public pessimism.***

the same aggressiveness and risk-taking that they did when attacking Baghdad in 2003?

In November, *The New York Times* ran a front-page Sunday story about a captain, frustrated by the feckless Iraqi police, who said in essence that the job was to get the Soldiers home without losing anyone else.<sup>4</sup> That created a stir across the military Internet, with one Marine general famous for his combat ferocity and blunt words writing: "Suck it up."

Determining the balance between tactical aggressiveness and care for one's Soldiers is tough at any time. It becomes particularly challenging when every Soldier understands that Iraqi political leaders are irresolute in confronting the Sunni insurgents and Shi'ite murderers, and that the American congressional election has produced a landslide vote against the president's insistence on staying the course.

There have been quiet changes of command in Iraq when patrolling has not been aggressive. Yet to avoid casualties and kidnappings, our generals have issued blanket tactical restraints, such as always wearing thirty pounds of armor and never leaving the wire with fewer than eight Americans or four HMMWVs. In Iraq, our counterinsurgency doctrine—an exhortative taxonomy—emphasizes "non-kinetics," and our rules of engagement are as strict as those governing the police in the States. In theory, higher commanders communicate their intent, leaving initiative and details of execution to their subordinates. In reality, the higher command dictates force protection measures and investigates continuously. Decentralized decision making is limited in order to reduce the chances of friendly casualties.

In 2007, we're about to bulk up our advisors to provide more combat experience on the streets, at the point of battle. In terms of the disparity in self-protection equipment and firepower, there is, and will remain, a huge difference between the advisors and the Iraqi forces. This leads to a question about the advisors' mission: Are the Iraqis expected to do as the advisors do, or as they say?

In December I received an e-mail from an advisor in a remote outpost, sent shortly after a suicide bomber killed one of his men. The advisor wrote, “We don’t want to stay in this town forever, but while we’re here we sure as hell believe we’re going to fix the problem. There are too many irritants floating around the terms ‘winning or losing’ and ‘belief in the cause.’ The job is hard and serious enough that without total commitment to your unit, a belief in something larger than yourself, it would be easy to cut corners, to take an extra hour or two of sleep, to slough the time inside the wire...and your peers would recognize it immediately and cast you out. Keegan said that infantrymen work for recognition only by their peers. I agree with that.”

A few days after I received that e-mail, the Associated Press ran a story about a unit that was 10 miles and a thousand attitudes away: “We’ve been here for 12 months now and there’s been no progress,” an American Soldier said. “It’s like holding a child’s hand, how long can you hold onto his hand before he does something on his own. How much longer do we have to get shot at or blown up? I don’t want to live my life like this.”<sup>5</sup>

We shouldn’t drift into divergent interpretations of the mission and of aggressive versus force protec-

tion tactics, as we did in Vietnam as the war ground down. How aggressive we expect our battalions and advisory teams to be over the next two years requires explicit address. General George W. Casey Jr., commander of the Multi-National Force-Iraq, meets with every American combat battalion commander and staff. Undoubtedly Lieutenant General Odierno will do likewise. Across the board, there should be one set of standards and expectations about aggressiveness for our battalions and advisory teams. At Camp Fallujah, a sign reads, “Welcome to the fight!” Good on that command. That has to be the spirit. Aggressiveness saves lives.

## Strategic Credibility

However the war in Iraq ends, the American press, policymaking elite, and a majority of the public have already concluded it was a failure. Facts don’t change attitudes, and the judgment against Iraq has been rendered. Whether U.S. generals acted wisely in Iraq, or were as culpable as the civilian policymakers, will be debated over the course of the next decade. Retired Army General Jack Keane, a former vice chief of staff of the Army, told *The New York Times*, “There’s shared responsibility here. I don’t think you can blame the civilian leadership alone.”<sup>6</sup>

The subject of who erred in Iraq will be more divisive than Vietnam in one key respect: the military is divided internally. After Vietnam, the military and those who served closed ranks, with 95 percent proud of their service and an overwhelming majority believing the cause was noble.

Unlike the South Vietnamese, the Iraqis have not fought doughtily, and many have expressed bitterness against the United States. In areas where there is scant violence—most of the provinces—there is little willingness to sacrifice for the country and no gratitude to America for bringing freedom. The religious leader of the Shi’ites in Iraq, Ayatollah Sistani, is hugely influential in political matters and has met with UN representatives, but he refuses to meet with an American official.

In Iraq, the ministries do not provide for their own troops. The feckless Iraqi politicians, divided by sectarian loyalties and a society traumatized by decades of murderous tyranny, have been unable to generate sustained competence and cadres of leaders. The consequence is that too many Iraqis look first to taking care of family, then tribe, and



DOD

LTG Ray Odierno, incoming commander, III Corps, Camp Victory, Iraq, 14 December 2006.

***A defeat for the United States would be more than a national humiliation; it would adversely affect trade, our economy, our domestic comity, and the willingness of other nations to ally with us. Losing is not an option.***

then religious sect, with national loyalty a distant fourth in priorities.

Al-Qaeda in Iraq, however, is real, evil, implacable, and dedicated to killing. A collapsed Iraq would result in a wider, messier regional war. A defeat for the United States would be more than a national humiliation; it would adversely affect trade, our economy, our domestic comity, and the willingness of other nations to ally with us. Losing is not an option.

So what is the mission today? To train Iraqi security forces capable of restoring a modicum of enduring stability. Whether this will be accompanied by a Western-style democracy or by a military controlling things behind the scenes, as was the case in Turkey and South Korea a few decades ago, remains to be seen.

Highly respected generals like retired Marine Tony Zinni have criticized the policy that led to the war, with the press providing a multiplex megaphone, while remaining silent about the military strategy for fighting the war. Unfortunately, U.S. generals have not distinguished themselves in the four years that have led to the current, minimalist mission of training indigenous soldiers to take over a job we defined poorly and could not complete. In Desert Storm in 1991, our generals basked in public adulation and accepted it as their due. Modesty was not a trait to be found in the books, reviews, and ticker-tape parades that followed the swift eviction of Iraqi forces from Kuwait.

After 9/11, U.S. Central Command seemed set on a second path of glory. Together with Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, General Tommy Franks was lauded for routing the Taliban. This was followed by the impressive march to Baghdad in April 2003. Franks retired and, like his predecessors, Generals

Norman Schwarzkopf and Zinni, wrote a best-selling memoir that distilled his military wisdom.

That was the high-water mark for public adulation of generals. The iron rule of politics—and all generals, like all senior executives, have polished political skills—is that courtiers boost winners and eschew losers. As Iraq disintegrated in late 2003, the press began to distance itself from the generals it had feted.

The press has begun to question the role of the generals in key decisions. General Franks concurred in the White House decision to violate the principle of unity of command, agreeing it was proper to relieve his deputy, Army retired Lieutenant General Jay Garner, as the director of the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance in Iraq, and install Ambassador Paul Bremer. This shift established a separate chain of command to the president, and gave Bremer authority to determine the mission and budget of both the new Iraqi Army and the police. That was a terrible decision. Franks preached unity of command, and concurred in its abolition.

In July 2003, General John Abizaid, who followed General Franks as the CENTCOM commander, declared an insurgency had emerged in Iraq, yet permitted Combined Joint Task Force-7 (CJTF-7), the coalition military command in Iraq at that time, to flail around with unilateral offensive operations for another year and a half. This ignored basic counterinsurgency doctrine. CJTF-7 and CENTCOM ordered a Marine expeditionary force (MEF) to assault Fallujah in April 2004, overruling the subordinate command's protests. Then CENTCOM ordered the MEF to halt the attack when it was two days from finishing the mission. The MEF then handed the city over to former Iraqi generals, who lost control to Musab al-Zarqawi. In deciding to hand over power to the Iraqi generals, the MEF consulted with CENTCOM, but did not coordinate with Ambassador Bremer and the State Department, who vociferously objected when they belatedly learned about the transfer of power inside Fallujah. There was no glory in those military decisions.

The next year, 2005, saw repeated offensive sweeps driving the insurgents from one city to another. In Anbar Province, there were never enough troops for the mission. Senator Joe Biden (D-DE) announced on TV that a senior general in Anbar told him he needed more U.S. forces. Yet



CENTCOM, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the command in Iraq all claimed they needed no more American troops. Hmm. This is not a reflection of character; everyone makes mistakes. Senior officers adhere to a code of leadership and honor that should be emulated by those senior corporate executives who have made a virtue of greed.

But there has been a systemic flaw that persists through today. In conventional war, the objective is to defeat the enemy force. This lays the civilian population open to occupation, as in World War II, or forces the enemy government to accept terms, as in World War I. Progress can be measured by terrain taken or armies shattered. In an insurgency, those measures are misleading, and others must take their place.

In Iraq, our military offered no set of measures to the public. So the press came up with its own: the degree of daily violence, especially civilian deaths. In response, the military pointed to an ever-increasing number of “trained” Iraqi forces, as the violence escalated. The result was that a large portion of the press, the Congress, and the foreign policy community grew to doubt the wisdom and the candor of the generals.

In 2003, maneuver warfare was brilliantly applied in the swift march to Baghdad. When the war shifted to an insurgency, though, we persisted for 18 months with inappropriate maneuver warfare tactics. This was Phase I: maneuver warfare inappropriately applied against insurgents.

Saddamists directed the Sunni insurgency in late 2003 and 2004. Former army officers had the skills and drew on a legion of disaffected youths galvanized by the seditious preachments of Sunni clerics who gained power in the absence of local government. The American invaders were the target. Simultaneously, al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) was targeting Shi’ite symbols and leadership.

By 2005, AQI was pushing aside the Saddamists and emerging as the bellwether among the diverse insurgent cells. Under General Casey, the American combat battalions shifted to counterinsurgency, aiming to win over and protect the Sunni population. Practically, this meant fewer heavy-handed searches and raids and more attention to dialogue and civic works. The counterinsurgency FM issued in December of 2006 codified the changes that had evolved since early 2005. Every American battalion in Iraq was practicing counterinsurgency. This was Phase II: counterinsurgency versus insurgents.

Underlying contradictions, though, were never resolved. A large majority of Sunnis wanted the Americans to leave. They didn’t want AQI taking over and imposing Taliban rule, yet they considered it legitimate for the insurgents to kill Americans. The Americans were infidel invaders that had stripped the Sunnis of power and handed it to the Shi’ites who had been oppressed for centuries. AQI and the “moderate” cells that called themselves “the honorable resistance” agreed that the Americans had to be thrown out. The Sunnis had not accepted that they deserved to lose their power dominance, or that the loss was permanent. For over 18 months, American officials have been meeting in Jordan with at least seven insurgent groups that claimed to want reasonable terms, but rejected every offer. Obdurate irrationality prolonged anti-American violence.

The U.S. did not succeed in Phase II. As of November 2006, General Abizaid said that Anbar Province, the stronghold of the insurgency, was “not under control.”<sup>7</sup> By then, the American counterinsurgency dictum of “clear, hold and build” had been overtaken by events. Beginning with the destruction of the Samarra mosque in February 2006, the war had shifted into Phase III—sectarian violence that



AFP

**GEN George W. Casey Jr., second from left, commander of Multi-National Force-Iraq, with soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 24th Infantry Regiment, in Mosul, 27 January 2005.**



demands the police techniques of identify, arrest, and imprison.

The Shi'ite death squads were retaliating with increasing ferocity in response to the merciless Sunni suicide bombings. Faced with ethnic cleansing, mass murder, and chaos in Baghdad, U.S. troops were rushed into the capital. But Prime Minister Maliki responded by declaring that Sadr City, the lair of the death squads, was off-limits to U.S. units. This placed the American forces on the tactical defensive, limited to patrolling and pinprick raids insufficient to quell the violence. Every day, the American press corps in Baghdad reported scores of bodies found bound, tortured, and executed. The frustration of the American public resulted in severe Republican losses in the midterm elections, followed by the dismissal of the Secretary of Defense and publication of the Iraq Study Group report. The Group recommended a huge increase in advisors, withdrawal in 2007 of U.S. combat units as conditions permitted, and aid to the Iraqi Government dependent upon its meeting benchmarks of performance. President Bush then declared he would adopt a new strategy. "The American people expect us to come up with a new strategy to achieve the objective which I've been talking about," Bush said.<sup>8</sup> Any comprehensive strategy has political as well as military components. But the press and the White House—strange bedfellows—have given the rest of the U.S. Government a free pass in the war. Iraq's judicial system is broken, unemployment is enormous, and Maliki and the Shi'ites have to reconcile with the Sunnis to substantially decrease the violence. These are political and economic missions. Yet the State Department, AID, Department of Justice, and the rest of the U.S. Government never showed up with an adequate, professional work force. In 2007, it is incumbent on the White House to change that.

The U.S. military strategy must also change. Over the next year, most of the battle space will be handed over to the Iraqi Army,

with U.S. combat units pulling back to be used more as quick reaction and raiding forces against al-Qaeda in Iraq and death squads. American units are not going to continue to occupy Sunni cities and try to win the support of the Sunni population or protect them from the insurgents that were hiding in plain sight among them. Counterinsurgency is no longer central. The primary task has shifted to training Iraqi security forces.

American forces face three tasks: 1) reduce the violence in Baghdad while getting control over the police; 2) partner with the Iraqi Army in the Sunni Triangle, cut local deals with the tribes and stand up the police; and 3) bring the advisory effort to the fore, increasing the numbers from 3,500 to 15,000. The advisors must have a joint U.S.-Iraqi board to appoint the key Iraqi commanders and to relieve for malfeasance. Lacking this leverage, our advisors risk their lives, but cannot affect the critical input: Iraqi leadership. We must adapt our tactics to the new tasks. Our forces are not attriting the enemy in firefights. The enemy has learned not to engage Americans. I recently met with several squads of grunts who were completing their second tours. Of 40 riflemen, about six or seven were fairly positive they had shot an insurgent. The common



**A U.S. Marine Corps M1A1 Abrams fires its main gun into a building to provide suppressive counterfire against insurgents who fired on other Marines during a firefight in Fallujah, Al Anbar Province, Iraq, 10 December 2004.**

DOD

reference for battling insurgents was “it’s like fighting ghosts.” Firepower isn’t the answer because it cannot be applied.

About 20 percent of the effort of a combat brigade goes into raids, mostly at night. These yield most of the results in terms of detainees. Eighty percent of the effort is devoted to self-protection and patrols, patrols, patrols—most in partnership with Iraqi units. The initiative to engage, though, lies with the enemy. We drive or walk by, and he chooses when and how to attack. Patrols keep a lid on the violence, but do not change attitudes or the balance of the war. Patrols buy time. This is not a strategy; it is a holding action.

Holding for what action, and by whom? The enemy has used the same tactics of mass sectarian murder-by-suicide and intimidation-by-assassination for four years. The hard-core killers must be identified, arrested, and put away for life. The war has passed through the counterinsurgent phase and into the police phase.

The first tactical imperative is to identify the insurgent who hides in plain sight among the civilians. Four years after the war began, we have no reliable means to identify insurgents in Baghdad or the Sunni triangle. Our U.S. Border Patrol carries handheld PDAs that take a thumbprint of a pedestrian or driver, send it over the radio, and inside two minutes have the individual’s history on the screen. If there is no prior data, the print is entered into the database. The procedure is simple, fast, and has an acceptable success rate. We and the Iraqis conduct thousands of patrols and stop tens of thousands of cars each day. If our forces were equipped with these PDA devices, all military-aged males in Baghdad and the Sunni Triangle would be registered inside six months.

But in Iraq, our military-industrial complex has successfully fought every effort to introduce any such simple fingerprinting system. The intelligence community, not known for conducting patrols, insists on an elaborate, convoluted system called BATS—the Biometric Automated Toolset System. Every time BATS falters, more money is heaved at it. Improvements have been slowly made, but the system is reserved for Americans only, and run on computers cleared for sensitive data. So at the battalion level, to include all Iraqi battalions and police stations, we go without the most basic tool of population control: identification.

The Iraqi police arrest practically no one. One in every 318 Americans is in jail for violent crimes; one in 869 Iraqis is in an Iraqi jail for committing a crime or for insurgency. The United States holds another 14,000 in Iraq. Added together, one in 719 Iraqis is in jail—two to three times less than in the United States. Yet the chances of a civilian being killed in Iraq are 21 times greater than in the United States, and 43 times greater if you are in the security forces in Iraq.

Iraq is holding fewer prisoners than Saddam released in late 2002, when he opened the jail gates and let loose tens of thousands of criminals that society had incarcerated over the decades. Today, eight out of ten detainees walk free—and they are paid \$6 a day for their inconvenience.

By 1969, South Vietnam had 40,000 guerrillas in Kho Tang Island and other prisons. Adjusting for differences in population, to match that Iraq should have in prison at least 60,000, rather than the 14,000 it does have. The reason we are not affecting the enemy is because we let him go. The “catch and release program” is frustrating to American and Iraqi Soldiers in Iraq; the farcical “rule of law” aids and abets the insurgents and death squads. This war is going to drag on unnecessarily because our senior commanders, military and civilian, do not understand that the war effort is being systematically undercut by not arresting and imprisoning insurgents and death squad members for the duration of the conflict. The greatest single defect—and it may be mortal—in the effort to restore stability is the refusal of the Iraqi and American systems to imprison the criminals, insurgents, and death squad members. Sending more U.S. troops into Baghdad and letting the death squads walk free makes no sense. If you cannot identify the insurgent, and you are on the tactical defensive waiting for him to shoot, and you cannot imprison him when you do arrest him, you are not going to prevail. And that’s a military reality, not an economic or political one.

So how do we prevail? We don’t. Our troops keep a lid on the violence until the Iraqi Shi’ite leadership reaches a political agreement with the Sunnis, who in turn essentially cease to support the insurgents or kill al-Qaeda in Iraq. In other words, our strategy is for someone else to implement a strategy.

The United States does not control the central actors in Iraq. We are like a powerful trader in a volatile market faced with alternative trading models. General

Abizaid and President Bush are doubling-down their bet on Maliki. He has been weak so far, and by putting in more U.S. troops and ceding him more control over Iraqi forces, they are betting he will improve.

The Iraq Study Group took the opposite tack. They recommended tying U.S. assets to the market performance. If the market met expected benchmarks, add assets. If it underperformed, reduce the assets.

So where are we headed? Down two tracks: the one is the development, under American advisors, of the Iraqi security forces; the other is the emergence of a responsible Iraqi Government. General Abizaid has assured the Congress that Maliki will move against the Shi'ite militias and emerge as a true leader by February, March, or April 2007. It may be that Maliki is on the verge of a character-altering epiphany. But if Maliki is incapable of moving against the militias or effecting reconciliation, Bush will face the choice of sticking with a failed democracy the United States created, or tolerating a behind-the-scenes power play by a fed-up Iraqi military.

Four years ago, al-Qaeda in Iraq did not exist. But it does now, and it's damn dangerous. Due to our own fecklessness, Zarqawi took over Fallujah in the summer of 2004, and it took a bloody battle to expel him. His successor cannot be allowed to set up a sanctuary in another city and impose Taliban-like rule. We must be prepared to let Maliki fail, and we must not fail with him. We are training Iraqi troops to be the cement holding Iraq together in place of Americans. We should hedge our bet and leave open a government model like South Korea or Turkey in the '60s and '70s—both emerging democracies with weak national assemblies and strong armies that insured order prevailed.

Beyond Iraq, one long-term result from this confusing war is clear: the combatant commanders have lost power. For over a decade after the Goldwater-Nichols Act, the theater commanders were called Commanders in Chief, or CINCs, and they had authority independent of the Joint Chiefs and Washington. General Franks, for instance, delighted in the story of calling the Joint Chiefs "Title X m-f's" and recounting how they responded after his seemingly victorious march to Baghdad in April 2003 by taking off their blouses to reveal purple T-shirts with the same words emblazoned.

This act of self-deprecation and homage marked the apex of the bureaucratic power of the theater commanders. In the next conflict, the Joint Chiefs

***Due to our own fecklessness, Zarqawi took over Fallujah in the summer of 2004, and it took a bloody battle to expel him.***

will yield no such deference to the strategic decisions of any one commander. Neither will the press, the Congress, or the public.

## **The Social Contract**

All is not healthy within the body politic. Given the Desert Storm victory in 1991 and the march to Baghdad in 2003, the press expected swift victory and were not cautioned otherwise. Since 2003, the mainstream press has relentlessly featured front-page stories of gore and chaos in Iraq. It is not the scale of the violence that is affecting public attitudes: 58,000 American Soldiers died in Vietnam, compared to about 3,000 deaths to date in Iraq. Rather, the polls suggest that public morale is sapped by years of effort without demonstrable progress.

How Iraq will turn out is problematic: no Iraqi soldier or cop dares go home in uniform. A government is not in charge when its security forces must hide their identity.

If history is a guide, even dramatic improvement in Iraq will not turn around the negative impression now held by a majority of Americans. As I said earlier, facts don't change attitudes, and that's especially true when egos and reputations are attached. We've seen it before. In the early years (1965-1967) of the Vietnam War, the U.S. high command in Saigon was so unremittingly optimistic in shaping every report that the press referred to the daily press briefing as "The Five O' Clock Follies." The military had lost credibility.

Nevertheless, the press did credit General Creighton Abrams with the success his counterinsurgency campaign achieved. In 1969, I took a public bus to visit a district 15 miles south of Da Nang in Quang Nam Province; today, there is no way an American will take a bus in Iraq. But the popular histories of the Vietnam War stopped with the dreadful strategy of General William Westmoreland. Abrams's dogged, successful



pacification campaign from '68 to '70 became a codicil to a foregone conclusion foretold by journalists who became part of the story. David Halberstam's *The Best and the Brightest*, Neil Sheehan's *A Bright Shining Lie*, Robert N. McNamara's self-justifying memoirs, and other fabled accounts essentially ended at Tet '68. The rest of the war became a journalistic footnote.

The same will be true of Iraq. To read the mainstream press, Iraq had shattered irreparably by the end of 2006. Tomorrow can bring only further descent into bloody civil war and chaos. That's the storyline upon which editors have staked their reputations, and if Iraq calmed down and achieved the violence level of California, there would still remain enough mayhem to continue calling the country a mess. There will be no Iraq ending that causes Democrats and Republicans, journalists and politicians alike to acknowledge that the war enhanced long-term national security.

Because America has tuned out the war, it has left dangling what it expects of its Soldiers. Unlike Vietnam, the vast majority of citizens respect the individual Soldiers and the military as an institution. Lurking behind that respect, though, there is more pity for the Soldiers serving in Iraq than pride or a sense of shared commitment and sacrifice. Iraq is not accepted as the nation's burden to resolve. The White House and the military high command bungled that by assuming a quick victory that did not require demanding a commitment by the public at large.

By the fifth year of fighting, the prevailing popular attitude seems to be, "Oh you poor Soldiers, you're away from home too long, and you risk being killed or wounded." Many, including retired generals, are opposed to the mission in Iraq, but support the Soldier, who does believe in his mission. This creates a contradiction that is alleviated by saying, in essence, "Well, do your duty, but don't take undue risks."

The unspoken social contract between the people and the Soldier has changed, at least temporarily. Duty, obedience, and separation from family are expected of the Soldier, but valor—risking one's life—is not publicly esteemed. The press attaches valor to names from past wars—Murtha, Kerry, Webb—when there is a political agenda. Acts of astonishing bravery in Iraq pass with scant notice.

War means taking the risk of dying in order to kill the enemy. The price of courage, in turn, is casualties. Both the public and our armed forces have

become accustomed to comparatively low risk and few casualties, while inflicting comparatively little damage. To carry over such public expectations against a future enemy would be disastrous.

Holding forth uncommon courage as the common virtue must remain the watchword of those who choose to serve. But in America, bile about Iraqi policy has lessened praise for valor, lest it be taken as endorsement of the policy. We must publicly salute courage if we expect it to remain a core American value. As the poet W.H. Auden once wrote, "Teach the free man to praise." The new secretary of defense has a chance to turn the public climate around by routinely singling out the valorous. The press will pick up the signal.

## Strategy and Budgets

Supporting the annual operations in Iraq and Afghanistan consumes \$90 billion while the escalating costs of education and health care, combined with infrastructure repairs too long deferred, demand the attention of legislators. The Defense budget is a competition among the services under a fixed ceiling that is too low and unlikely to rise.

How the military and the Office of the Secretary of Defense reach budgetary agreement is an arcane art, but it is related to strategy. Three strategies are competing for funds. The first is the high-tech, standoff-strike model, an example of which is the 80-days 1999 bombing campaign to inflict economic pain and force Serbia to withdraw from Kosovo. This strategy has the decided advantages of zero casualties and few boots on the ground. It focuses upon "near peer competitors" (read China) and by itself can devour the entire defense budget.

Second, the Navy, underfunded in shipbuilding, has initiated a well-publicized national campaign (funded by wealthy donors to the Naval War College Foundation) to construct a new maritime strategy. In the '80s, Navy Secretary John Lehman unveiled an anti-Soviet maritime strategy that the Reagan administration embraced, leading to a sharp increase in the Navy budget. The current effort will result in a thoughtful document with influential support.

The third strategy entails fighting the long war against Islamic extremists plus having sufficient forces and equipment to hedge against land wars requiring hundreds of thousands of American Soldiers (e.g., another war in Korea).



***We must publicly salute courage if we expect it to remain a core American value.***



DOD

**“Praise for valor”:** GEN Peter Pace presents the Gold Medal of Remembrance to the son of U.S. Army SFC Paul Smith at the “A Time of Remembrance” ceremony in Washington, D.C., 21 May 2006. Smith was killed in Baghdad, Iraq, and posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor.

All three strategies have putative validity, and so funding will be spread among them. Ground forces for the long war are in trouble, though, because emotional reaction to the Iraq imbroglio will cloud judgments about funding. After Saigon fell, the Congress cut Army and Marine funding, prompting then-Secretary of Defense James R. Schlesinger to claim that the cuts “were deep, savage and arbitrary.” President Ford then fired Schlesinger, and the cuts held amidst an atmosphere of ennui that persisted for several years.

Given a defense budget hurtling toward a train wreck, strategic choices have to be made. Political

distaste for Iraq will severely affect the long-term funding of the Army and Marine ground forces unless there is forceful, respected military leadership that articulates a coherent strategy. The Army and Marines should replicate the Navy model and not make separate pitches based on weapons systems. Land forces need a general—General Casey or Petraeus leap to mind, but there may be others—who has a vision that acknowledges mistakes, incorporates lessons from Iraq, and moves beyond that belabored country.

## Summary

Four lessons from Iraq are clear. First, senior military leaders in Iraq should convey a common set of expectations about aggressive mission behavior for the duration of this politically divisive war. Second, we have to evaluate our military performance with candor, and not copy the politicians who refuse to acknowledge error—no one gets through life, war, or a football game without a lot of mistakes. Iraq is a police war and the American and Iraqi systems are not identifying, arresting, and imprisoning at rates guaranteed to shorten and perhaps win the war. That these errors, acknowledged throughout the ranks, go uncorrected year after year tarnishes the reputations of our generals. Third, the social contract between the Soldier and the American public needs to be restored. The new secretary of defense should go out of his way to reaffirm the virtue of valor and urge the press and Congress to do the same. Courage, Aristotle said, is the virtue that makes all other virtues possible. As a nation, we have forgotten that. Fourth, the competition for defense resources is going to be fierce. To lessen the budgetary cuts that follow after an unpopular war, a credible general officer must articulate a convincing strategy for land forces. **MR**

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# Developing a National Counterinsurgency Capability for the War on Terror

John Hillen, Ph.D.

**T**HE WAR ON TERROR pits the United States and its allies against violent ideologues who would replace secular governments or (to their minds) apostate states with theocratic regimes hostile to the values upon which inclusive democratic societies are based. Our enemies' strategies and tactics collectively amount to a global series of insurgencies, competing for the right to govern in predominantly Muslim nations around the world. In many ways, we can usefully characterize the war as a counterinsurgency (COIN) campaign against an ideologically driven collection of insurgents who act transnationally, are highly networked, and, like cancer, are adapting and metastasizing. If we are to prevail in the long war, we must mobilize and synchronize all elements of our national power—diplomatic, military, economic, social, and informational—to develop antibodies to and eventually find a cure for this new and dangerous kind of enemy.

Our national security system provides us with overwhelming capability to defeat conventional, state-based threats, but it is not organized to deliver the coordinated support to political, economic, civil, and educational institutions that our foreign partners need to prevail against locally based insurgents. During the Vietnam War, General Creighton Abrams said to a group of diplomats that “in the whole picture of this war, battles don't really mean much.” This was an exaggeration, but only a slight one. National security and defense communities around the world agree that successful counterinsurgency is primarily political in nature, focusing on ameliorating or counteracting conditions that lead to popular support for insurgency, support without which no insurgency can hope to succeed.

Despite its inherently political nature, COIN theory has been almost entirely developed within military circles. This work, such as the new Army-Marine Corps COIN field manual, recognizes that every insurgency has a specific geographic, political, and social context, but all insurgencies have characteristics in common. Every insurgency originates in a competition for governance and/or resources, the perpetration of real or perceived injustices by a governing entity, competing visions of social and cultural equities in the affected society, or some combination thereof. Any effective COIN campaign, therefore, must address the political, economic, and social problems that gave rise to the insurgent movement in the first place. Although direct military action against insurgent leaders may be necessary when an adversary perpetrates destabilizing violence and does not respond to other means of engagement, military action in and of itself is not likely to result in redress of the local conditions that gave rise to the insurgency.

*Dr. John Hillen is the Assistant Secretary of State for Political-Military Affairs. The bureau he heads is the principal link between the Departments of State and Defense and provides policy direction in the areas of international security, security assistance, military operations, humanitarian assistance, and defense trade. A former Army officer, he served in reconnaissance and airborne units and was decorated for his actions in combat in the 1991 Persian Gulf War. Dr. Hillen received his B.A. from Duke University, his M.A. from King's College London, his doctorate from Oxford, and an M.B.A. from Cornell University.*



It is a potentially crippling irony that the parts of the U.S. Government best suited to deliver essential COIN capabilities are those least engaged in current efforts to frame COIN policy and doctrine. This must change; the civilian departments and agencies of our government must make a deliberate, concerted effort to apply COIN principles to their policies, plans, programs, and operations where their missions and competencies can make a difference between success and defeat in the various battles of this war.

That's not to say our agencies aren't trying to adapt to the world in which we operate. Indeed, several seem to have contracted COIN fever, although that is not the term of art by which they refer to their efforts. The Department of Defense's *Quadrennial Defense Review* Building Partner Capacity and Irregular Warfare Roadmaps and the State Department's new Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization and Director of Foreign Assistance all seek to build what arguably could be considered COIN *capacity* in Defense and *capability* at State. The U.S. Agency for International Development has created a new Office of Military Affairs and is rethinking its strategic approach to development, clearly understanding that development is key to building and protecting responsible governance in underdeveloped regions of the world.

Moreover, in our efforts to realign and reform institutions, we should all be seeking to contribute resources and capabilities to President George W. Bush's National Strategy for Combating Terrorism (NSCT). This comprehensive document elaborates in great detail what Executive Branch departments and agencies must bring to the fight against terrorism. Enormous amounts of intellectual capital and other resources are being devoted to implementing the strategy in our individual and collective venues. A national COIN strategic framework would complement and further the NSCT by allowing us to knit together various instruments of national power *on an operational basis* in specific national, regional, and local contexts. A national COIN framework would serve our national goals in real and immediate ways, in places plagued by or at risk of destabilizing insurgencies.

There is growing awareness in the national security community that civilian capacity to plan and conduct interagency operations does not exist in the

U.S. Government and must be created. This is easier said than done; it will require each agency to look beyond its own domain to a shared understanding of problems and then agree on shared approaches to solving them. The lack of a strategic COIN framework inhibits interagency coordination of responsibilities for COIN operations, undermines our ability to build partner capacities, and detracts from our ability to build international coalitions dedicated to defeating enemy insurgents. Until we create such a framework, we will have no basis for organizational or curricula design that would institutionalize lessons learned and support the development of the skill sets, tools, and policies that would make us successful COIN operators.

***A national COIN framework would serve our national goals in real and immediate ways, in places plagued by or at risk of destabilizing insurgencies.***

In his excellent article "Best Practices in Counterinsurgency," published in the May-June 2005 issue of *Military Review*, Kalev Sepp identified the key actions that must be taken in order to counter insurgency. These are—

- The provision of basic human needs, such as food, water, shelter, health care, and a means of living.
- Development of an adequately sized and trained police force able to gather and act upon intelligence at the community level, supported by an incorrupt and functioning judiciary.
- Enactment of population control to separate insurgents from indigenous support.
- Political and information campaigns that give people a stake in the success of their government and encourage the peaceful reintegration of insurgents.
- Deployment of military forces, both indigenous and supporting, organized and trained to support the police and fight insurgents.
- Adequate border controls to prevent the flow of foreign fighters and weapons that fuel the insurgency.



- Empowerment of a single legitimate executive authority that can direct and coordinate counterinsurgency efforts.

Clearly the majority of these efforts involve work we associate with “civilian” skill sets and even agencies—but the uniformed military is often placed in the position of having to undertake such activities. Moreover, many conventional military units and commanders do not consider some non-kinetic COIN tasks to be core competencies—and that’s not necessarily a bad thing.

We need to be able to field interagency teams of experts to assist and advise foreign governments and military forces in developing appropriate COIN strategies, operations, and tactics, particularly with regard to modifying local government behaviors that build support for insurgents and erode popular support for counterinsurgent goals. These interagency teams, whose members would be deeply experienced in their primary agency competencies (intelligence, policing, security sector reform, development, public information, and direct action), would be specially trained in counterinsurgency techniques and able to work in close concert with military forces in hostile or semi-permissive environments. In fielding these teams, U.S. agencies would strengthen their capacity for “jointness” and gain valuable, deployable expertise. To this end, we are developing COIN handbooks for use by both strategic planners and interagency field operators and will capitalize on existing programs to collect and disseminate lessons learned among current and future COIN practitioners.

Through advocacy and education, we must build support in the Congress for the authorities and funding that would create deployable capabilities and capacity in the U.S. Government to conduct COIN

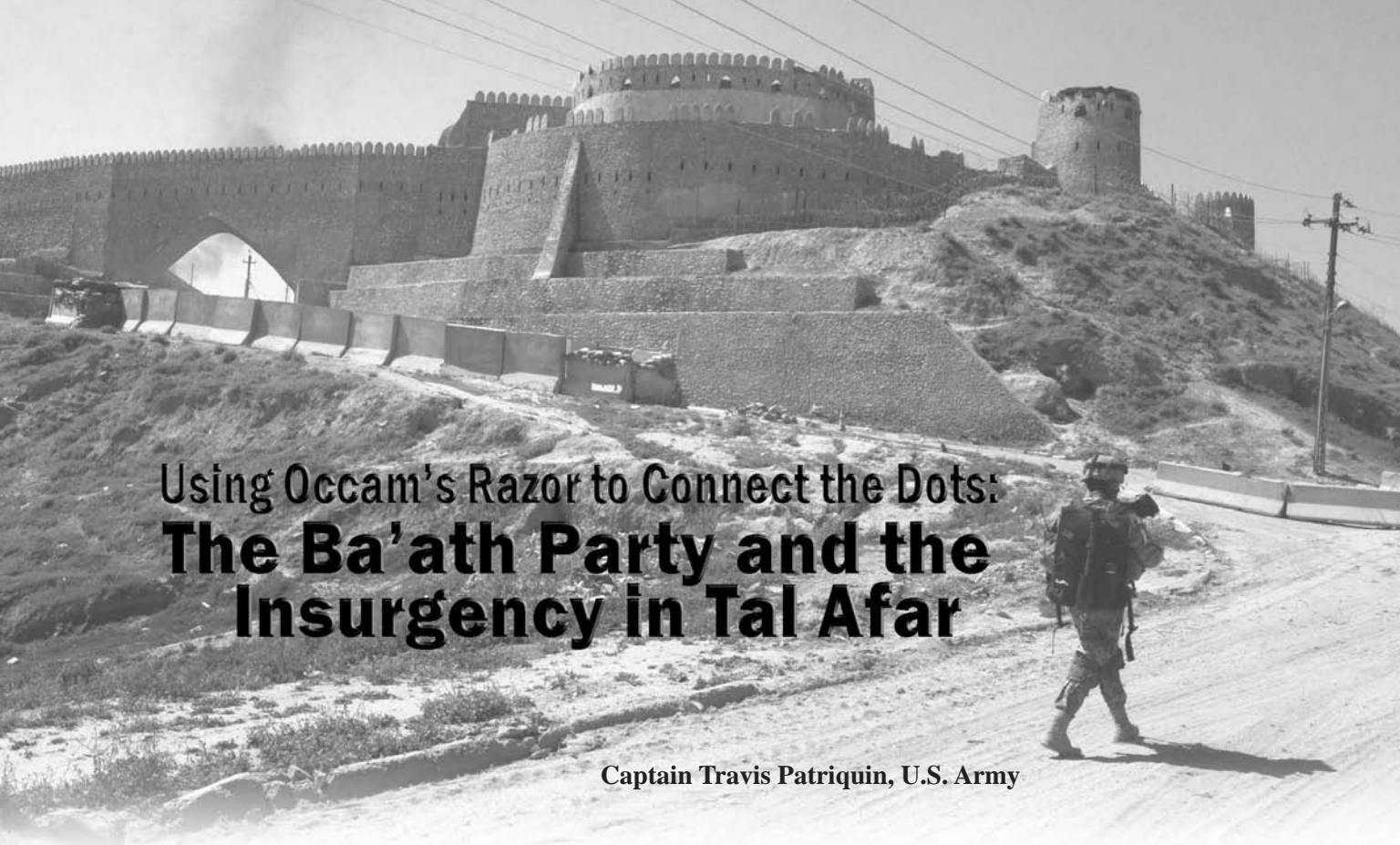
operations. Such capacity would complement and reinforce the Civilian Response Corps being developed at the State Department by the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization. While stabilization and reconstruction (S&R) capacity building focuses on post-conflict environments, COIN capacity, by definition, would be engaged before or during conflict. Although there is certainly significant overlap between the skill sets required for COIN and S&R, they are not identical, and there will be great value in developing each community in tandem to avoid duplication and achieve synergy of effort.

As a first step, we are committed to establishing a national Center for Complex Operations that will work closely with entities, both inside and outside the government, that specialize in training and education on governance, development, rule of law, transitional security, S & R, and related issues. This center would help rationalize the many related and important, but currently uncoordinated, ongoing U.S. efforts to deliver COIN capabilities more effectively. State recently launched a COIN website, [www.usgcoin.org](http://www.usgcoin.org), which we plan to expand to a robust information clearinghouse and virtual collaboration center for COIN professionals and public policy officials, perhaps under the sponsorship of the center.

In September 2006, the Departments of State and Defense co-hosted a seminal conference on “Counterinsurgency in the 21st Century,” bringing together experts in diplomacy, defense, foreign policy, media relations, foreign assistance, irregular warfare, homeland security, development, stability operations, and conflict transformation. We are planning a similar event in Europe in early 2007 that will focus on building an understanding among partner nations of our effort. Such an event will encourage other nations to adopt and enable a similar approach to our shared security problems. We are working closely on this effort with the government of the United Kingdom, with which we share a vision on how best to deal with our shared security challenges.

In summary, State has assumed leadership of this important new national security initiative, one grounded both in the study of history and in recent painful national experience. We will seek to encourage and support the development of a holistic, robust national capacity to engage and defeat enemy insurgents as we seek peace, security, and prosperity for all in the 21st century. **MR**

***We need to be able to field interagency teams of experts to assist and advise foreign governments and military forces in developing appropriate COIN strategies, operations, and tactics...***



# Using Occam's Razor to Connect the Dots: The Ba'ath Party and the Insurgency in Tal Afar

Captain Travis Patriquin, U.S. Army

*Occam's Razor is a rule in science and philosophy stating that entities should not be multiplied needlessly. It is interpreted to mean that the simplest of two or more competing theories is preferable, and that an explanation for unknown phenomena should first be attempted in terms of what is already known. In other words—the simplest explanation is most likely the best.*

**I**N AN ERA that appreciates the power of statistical probabilities, Occam's Razor is especially useful when access to all the facts necessary to arrive at absolute certainty is difficult, if not impossible, to obtain. The problem at hand to which we might apply the principle involves discerning the most significant factors from among the many complex elements fueling the insurgency in Tal Afar, Iraq, and elsewhere in the country. The rational conclusions derived may seem glaringly obvious to some, but a sudden epiphany or even a total surprise to others.

*Captain Travis Patriquin, an infantry officer, served as a brigade civil affairs officer, Ready First Combat Team (1/1 AD), in Ramadi, Iraq. A graduate of Campbell University and the U.S. Army Officer Candidates School, he served in conventional and Special Operations units in the United States, South America, Europe, the Middle East, and Central Asia.*

## The Turkoman of Tal Afar

A good way to begin to apply Occam's Razor to the situation in Tal Afar is to examine the city's history and demographic distribution from the perspective of city planning. Such an examination exposes compelling clues about the underlying nature of the insurgency there and points to the most likely leaders of the opposition to the coalition and the Iraqi government.

**Ethnic background.** We start by observing that the population of Tal Afar has historically been virtually 100 percent ethnic Turkoman—not Arab.<sup>1</sup> The Turkoman people first arrived in Iraq through successive waves of migration accompanying invading Turkic armies. They established themselves in permanent communities that became insular, xenophobic enclaves. A

PHOTO: A Soldier from TF 2-37 AR approaches the 14th-century Ottoman Castle in old Tal Afar. (DOD)

general suspicion of outsiders continues today: a city of at least 250,000 people, Tal Afar has never had a hotel and has no current plans to build one. Turkoman distrust of “uninvited guests” is indicative of a closely knit culture that neither desires nor welcomes outside interference.

In contrast to the more restive and predominantly Arab groups elsewhere in Iraq, Tal Afar's Turkoman population had, until relatively recently, a long history of comparatively peaceful relations despite sectarian divisions. This was mainly because they saw themselves as kinsmen within an ethnic group defined primarily by origin and language, not by affiliation with any religious sect. As a result, for over 1,300 years, millions of Turkoman Sunnis, Shi'ites, and Assyrian-Christians lived side by side in relative peace, frequently marrying across sectarian lines and, as a group, remaining relatively united politically against those perceived as outsiders. Occam's Razor therefore allows us to eliminate ethnic or religious friction as the principal cause of the ongoing conflict in Tal Afar. It leads us to conclude that the insurgency must have somehow been triggered by other—outside—motives or actions.

**The Turkoman and outside influence.** The mistake that most would-be occupiers have made in dealing with the Turkoman was to marginalize them on one hand while on the other leaving them enough autonomy to avoid assimilation. As a result, a resilient sense of Turkoman ethnic identity not only emerged, but intensified over time.

Starting with the British Mandate of 1921, colonial administrators went about carving up Middle Eastern lands to accord with schemes involving great-power spheres of influence. They created a host of arbitrarily drawn nation-states, mainly to keep emerging Middle Eastern entities docile and dependent on their former colonial masters. Turkoman enclaves, however, were clearly viewed as incidental to great-power politics, and so the British showed little regret when expediency dictated ceding control of Turkomani regions to the Ottoman Empire. In a similar vein after World War I, the British, having gained nominal rule over territory in which Turkoman enclaves survived, did little to help the Turkoman satisfy their independent ethnic aspirations.

One consequence of this policy was that Iraq's Turkoman population frequently and ferociously fought the British to expel them from what they

regarded as a hereditary Turkoman homeland. They fought as a generally unified ethnic front, heedless of sectarian religious differences.

## Ba'athist Co-optation

Following the departure of the British, the Turkoman enjoyed a brief period of relative regional autonomy that lasted until the rise of the Ba'athist Party under Saddam Hussein. In contrast to the former colonial powers, Saddam's regime took severe measures to extinguish minority identity in Iraq. In their attempts to stamp out non-Arab differences in the name of a unified Iraq, the Ba'athists sought to absorb the Turkoman into Iraqi society.

As coalition partners now know well, Saddam's Ba'ath Party, for better or worse, became the unifying sociopolitical force that held Iraq together. Ba'athism was an unswervingly secular movement. Ruling with an iron grip for several decades until Saddam's overthrow in 2003, the Ba'athists brutally oppressed sectarian religious parties to prevent them from blocking the creation of a single Iraqi national identity. The Ba'athists maintained overall control of the population through a combination of policies that promoted fierce loyalty among party members while instilling terror in all who opposed them. Ba'athists manifested their loyalty to the party by performing without question ruthless and horrific acts aimed at keeping the party in power.

The fanatic loyalty of Ba'athist members was coupled with an incredibly diverse and efficient internal intelligence network that spied on every sector of Iraqi society. Together they created a society in which state-sanctioned acts of murder and intimidation aimed at eliminating internal political opposition became commonplace. The end result was a Ba'ath Party habituated to using domestic terror as a “legitimate” tool of governance, and a traumatized Iraqi public with deep and lasting psychological scars that remain as barriers to trust and faith in any central government today.

So deeply seated was the general public's fear of the party and its reprisals that there is no serious challenge to the proposition that, had the coalition not intervened in Iraqi affairs, the Ba'athists would still be firmly in charge today. In fact, many Iraqis believe the party would rapidly and mercilessly emerge to resume power if the coalition were to leave Iraq tomorrow.



Although the Ba'athists were widely loathed and feared, they were also envied in many quarters, mostly because of the power and privileges they enjoyed. Thus, one effective way to reduce the influence of ethnic minority identity was to recruit members of ethnic minority groups into the party via service in the Iraqi Army, and then co-opt those with the most promise by offering them economic opportunities, special status and privileges, and the ability to participate in administering coercive power. Under this policy, many soldiers recruited from the Turkoman population became ardent Ba'athists and supporters of Saddam's government.

The policy helped develop a loyal cadre of grassroots party members of diverse ethnic origin. These adherents were used to neutralize political and ethnic enclaves like the Turkoman. To hedge his bet, Saddam did not go so far as to promote minority Iraqi soldiers to high responsibility on the basis of merit—promotion to high rank in the military was reserved for those who were most politically reliable and had specific reasons for showing extreme loyalty to Saddam personally, such as being a close family or clan member. Nevertheless, despite these discriminatory practices, the Turkoman proved that they were very good soldiers and loyal to the regime. They often ended up in highly sensitive units, frequently serving as technical specialists for handling special weapons or for collecting internal intelligence.

To help motivate soldiers like the Turkoman and to ensure their loyalty, Saddam put in place an extended system of perks and privileges for those who had served the government faithfully. One of these perks was the right to live in specially built, Ba'athist-only communities equipped with amenities and privileges (e.g., priority for power and water service) not accessible to common Iraqis. That such privileges might arouse the ire of other Iraqis was unimportant to Saddam; in fact, the internal animosity and jealousy created may have been viewed as a positive benefit, since any chance to sow division among potentially rebellious ethnic groups would have been viewed as desirable.

In what amounted to resettlement schemes, many loyal Turkoman Ba'athist soldiers were rewarded upon retirement with land grants or given the right to purchase land cheaply, so that they might establish such communities. These settlements were strategically located among populations of suspect

loyalty. Tal Afar was the site of one such Turkoman resettlement.

## **Ethnic Strife via City Planning**

In applying Occam's Razor to the situation in Tal Afar, it is important to understand that Ba'athist policies divided the city, effectively pitting the north against the south. Tal Afar had been a significant urban center since the early Ottoman Empire. The pattern of construction and physical layout of the southern and eastern areas of town continues to reflect the priorities of a medieval city's political and community concerns. The city center is a communal gathering place with wells (harkening back to a time before running water was piped to individual houses), a marketplace, and houses of worship. The streets through this area are narrow and difficult to negotiate with modern vehicles. They are easily congested. Freedom of movement is also limited because the streets were originally laid out not to aid movement, but to channel potential enemies into vulnerable locations. Today, not only the physical layout in south and east Tal Afar, but also the demographic tendencies engendered by current city planning, reflect medieval patterns of family associations, tribal law, and social traditions.

By contrast, the northern part of the city is characterized by more or less modern city planning and a cosmopolitan sense of secularism reflected widely in the attitudes and habits of its relatively new settlers—the loyalist NCO retirees of Saddam's army. The vast majority of these men were Turkoman, and after the end of the ill-fated invasion of Kuwait, they represented more than half of the military-age males in north Tal Afar—approximately 20,000 men.

The location of the new Ba'ath Turkoman community in the north was not selected arbitrarily; it was purposely situated to increase Ba'athist presence, influence, and control in key areas where loyalty to the central government was suspect. It was no accident that a community of Ba'athists of proven loyalty, consisting mainly of highly skilled military technicians who could be readily mobilized, was built on key terrain overlooking the vital Mosul-Sinjar Highway.

The Ba'athist neighborhoods of Hai al Sa'ad, Qadisiyah, and Hai al Bouri have central plumbing, square blocks, and wide streets built to accommodate motor vehicles. Unlike neighborhoods in south





DOO

Wide streets, good wiring, and plumbing mark Tal Afar's northern "retirement communities." U.S. Army Soldiers from the 1st Brigade, 1st Armored Division, on a combat patrol in Tal Afar, Iraq, on 9 April 2006.



DOO

The southern, predominantly Shi'a section of town remains crowded and unimproved. 1st Armored Division Soldier SPC Anthony Bouley conducts a combat patrol in Tal Afar, Iraq, on 13 February 2005.

Tal Afar, they are ethnically diverse, with a mix of religious persuasions and secularist viewpoints. Thus, for reasons both ancient and modern, the more contemporary and secularist population of north Tal Afar is at odds on many different levels with the population of south Tal Afar, which remains dominated by traditional tribal and religious relationships rooted in older traditions. Clearly, Saddam's policies effectively split Tal Afar both physically and spiritually, giving him the ability, if he needed it, to convert the north's residents into networks of Ba'athist agents for the purpose of armed insurgency and terrorism.

### Instigating Sectarian Strife

In apparent accord with other state policies aimed at broadening and deepening ethnic and religious divisions, Sunni imams began arriving in Tal Afar in 1988, not long after the Ba'athist Party had established its retirement community in the north.<sup>2</sup> These imams began to have considerable success in spreading extreme Wahhabi and Takfiri versions of Islamic beliefs, both of which are intolerant of the values and beliefs not only of Westerners, but of Shi'a Islam as well.

Owing to the tight control that Saddam exercised over every aspect of Iraqi life, such potentially divisive activity had to have been sanctioned in some way by the government itself. The social and political fractures engendered by Wahhabi zealots dovetailed so well with Saddam's overall divide-and-conquer tactics that coincidence seems out of the question. The imams' actions would have been especially attractive to Saddam since they served to stoke suspicion primarily against the Shi'a, a group the dictator personally loathed and had long considered to be a potential fourth column for Iran.

In the face of such a dramatic reversal of the former conditions of religious balance and tolerance among the Turkoman in Tal Afar, most Shi'a continued to attend their own mosques. Meanwhile, the majority of the Sunni population in the city's northern neighborhoods responded to the fiery message of the Wahhabi zealots and began to act with animosity toward the Shi'a. Not surprisingly, serious sectarian tensions and divisions emerged where none had existed before. Today, the legacy of tensions between Tal Afar's Shi'a and Sunni communities continues to exacerbate the political and social discord that prevails in the city.

### The Insurgents Unmasked

Looking back at the conscious creation of north Tal Afar and other areas in Iraq as bastions of Ba'athist/Sunni loyalty, it is somewhat surprising that in the aftermath of Saddam's overthrow in 2003, various coalition leaders expressed astonishment, confusion, and even denial over how quickly a fairly well organized insurgency emerged. Some coalition figures still refuse to acknowledge the obvious, and assert instead that the insurgency is in the main a terrorist conspiracy fueled by foreigners working for Osama bin Laden. The major problem with this assertion is that very few of the insurgents captured or killed have been foreigners. Outsiders are certainly playing a role, especially as suicide bombers, but hardly in the numbers one would expect if they were to be regarded as the driving force of the insurgency.

Other coalition leaders claim that the insurgency is mainly the result of support from Iran through a network of Shi'a contacts. This theory, too, is flawed. Although Iraqi Shi'a militias are only too glad to accept help from anyone offering it, for the most part the Iraqi Shi'a have little love either for Iran or the Iranians' fundamentalist brand of Shi'ism. Even more problematic is that the Shi'a appear to be the insurgents' main target. The vast

Three days after he arrived in Iraq, Bremer dispatched an aide to Jay Garner's office with a copy of the de-Baathification policy....

Garner read it. *Holy Christ*, he thought to himself. *We can't do this.*

He contacted the CIA station chief and asked him to meet him in front of Bremer's office right away. As Garner walked down the hall to the viceroy's suite, he ran into one of the State Department ambassadors and explained what was happening.

"We've got to put a stop to this one," Garner said. "It's too hard, too harsh."

Garner and the station chief barged into Bremer's office.

"Jerry, this is too harsh," Garner said. "Let's get Rumsfeld on the phone and see if we can't soften it."

"Absolutely not," Bremer said. "I'm going to issue this today."

Garner asked the station chief what would happen if the order were issued.

"You're going to drive fifty thousand Baathists underground before nightfall," he said. "Don't do this."<sup>3</sup>

—Rajiv Chandrasekaran, *Imperial Life in the Emerald City*

majority of civilian casualties since 2003 have been Shi'a. This would seem to eliminate them from being the principal force behind the insurgency.

Why the identity and motivation of the insurgents should be regarded as such a mystery by some, given what we know about the history of Tal Afar under Saddam, is itself a kind of mystery. Nevertheless, many in the coalition still wonder aloud who the insurgents are, how they are able to coordinate their campaign, and how many of them there are, especially since the insurgency has proven to be virtually impenetrable to coalition infiltration efforts. Although it may be convenient to blame the rise in violence following the collapse of Saddam's regime solely on foreign fighters or on meddling by Iran, to do so is to overlook the simplest, most logical explanation, at least as far as Tal Afar is concerned—that the insurgency is being conducted through a deeply entrenched network of Ba'athists who are still connected via positions of authority and privilege held long before the coalition invaded. This network would logically include a large number of Ba'athists who show an outwardly benign, even cooperative face to the occupying forces, enabling them to move about openly in public. Thus, questions about the insurgents' identity and manpower can be answered simply by counting the number of Ba'athists who used to have power in each region prior to Saddam's overthrow, then subtracting the number of former Ba'athists who have proven themselves to be pro-government. This should give anyone a good estimate of the size of the insurgent force, including its supporters.

Unfortunately, this easiest explanation leads to a politically ominous conclusion: the insurgency numbers not in the thousands or tens of thousands, but in the hundreds of thousands, even though only a relatively small number might actually be engaged in fighting at any one time. Applying this logic in Tal Afar, we are probably looking at over 20,000 former Ba'athists involved in supporting the insurgency in some way, shape, or form.

Writer Scott Taylor provides support for this conclusion in a

first-hand account of his captivity during Operation Black Typhoon. Taylor describes the resistance in Tal Afar as "purely Turkoman" and notes that his first encounter with a foreign fighter was when Ansar al Islam handed him over to an Arab terrorist in Mosul.<sup>4</sup> Colonel H.R. McMaster, commander of the 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment (ACR) in Tal Afar during Operation Restoring Rights, seems to second Taylor's observation. According to McMaster, the vast majority of fighters captured during Restoring Rights were Iraqis, not foreigners.<sup>5</sup> It is also hardly coincidental that such foreign fighters as there are enter Iraq mainly from the last Ba'athist country in the world, Syria, which had many unofficial and familial ties to Iraq's Ba'ath regime prior to Saddam's ouster, and to where many of Saddam's supporters have fled.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, a host of influential Tal Afaris who had close ties to the deposed regime still travel relatively freely between the city and Syria to those very areas that continue to supply foreign fighters and suicide bombers.

Thus, although there is no doubt that foreign fighters have provided many of the foot soldiers (and a lot of the cannon fodder) for the insurgency, a reasonable person who looks at things broadly and from the perspective of prior history will arrive at a simple conclusion: a network of Ba'athists established long before the 2003 overthrow of the regime is clearly active, and it enjoys widespread popular support in key areas of Tal Afar.

Strong secondary evidence supports this contention. When foreign fighters turn up in the insurgency,



A U.S. Army M1 Abrams tank from the 1st Armored Division conducts a combat patrol in Tal Afar, Iraq, on 27 February 2005.



they often appear as suicide bombers. Several U.S. commanders have likened these bombers to “human cruise missiles.”<sup>7</sup> Actually, they are more like laser-guided bombs, directed to their targets by someone on the ground who has done reconnaissance, figured out where the bomber might have maximum effect, and then taken pains to smuggle the bomber into Iraq, arm him, and direct him to the attack site. Without that ground support, each individual suicide bomber would have a difficult time becoming a significant threat. Which, then, should we regard as the more important component of such a threat, the foreign suicide bomber, or the insurgent network that devises the campaign for employing him and facilitates his attack? Peeling problems back to their essentials, Occam’s Razor suggests that it is the local Iraqi insurgent—the plan synchronizer, bomb maker, attack coordinator, and propagandist—who is the actual center of gravity in the suicide bomber scenario. In Tal Afar, the principal threat is the former Ba’athist Turkoman put in place by Saddam long before the current war began.

In summary, a long history of ethnic resistance and cross-border smuggling, combined with Ba’athist resettlement policies and measures of control prior to 2003, provided the social dynamics, cadre, and physical infrastructure conducive to organizing resistance to the occupation. In the chaos following the regime’s fall, Saddam’s agents could easily have exploited the status quo in Tal Afar to establish and fund covert networks of loyal intelligence operators who would then organize resistance fighter cells. Organizational efforts would no doubt have included gathering weapons caches, establishing networked contacts to aid insurgent movement and activity, giving instructions and assistance to foreign volunteers, funding public relations efforts to sow discontent, and training others in the art of insurgency.

The above hypothesis jibes with the chronology of the insurgency in Tal Afar as related to me personally by a 30-year-old Sunni male resident of the city. This man stated that in late 2003 and early 2004, the first foreign fighters started to arrive in Tal Afar from across the nearby border with Syria and from other areas in Iraq, which they had had to flee. Welcomed and housed primarily in the Sunni neighborhoods, these fighters described themselves as *mujahadeen* and bragged in the local mosques and streets that they had come to fight the “invaders.”

They could not have arrived en masse uninvited and unassisted.

My contact also stated that the town leaders were primarily responsible for giving the foreigners the go-ahead to commence operations. Among those operations were activities aimed at intimidating Shi’ite families into fleeing from specific areas in northern parts of the city. The foreign fighters would then occupy many of the former households to gain control of key routes and ground, which they would exploit in future actions. At the same time, the insurgency initiated targeted assassinations and other terror attacks. One of the first citizens of Tal Afar killed in a terrorist attack was a Sunni contractor working with the United States who was murdered because he was getting “too rich.” Another early casualty was Sheik Dakhil, of the Marhat clan. Significantly, his position was quickly filled by one Mullah Marhat, an individual of murky and suspect background.

Marhat entered the scene under a cloud of suspicion. As a rule, coalition forces routinely investigate the background of individuals stepping forward to assume public office. They interview would-be leaders and do background checks, especially with regard to previous military service in Saddam’s army. Experience shows that most Iraqis are glad, even proud, to describe what they did in the army. Marhat, however, was very reluctant to discuss his background or his military service. Moreover, despite a three-year search, coalition forces found no official record of his former activities. He was later arrested on accusations of being a Ba’athist operative. Interestingly, immediately following his arrest, Tal Afar experienced a sudden and precipitous decline in violent insurgent activity.

The Marhat case ended successfully for the coalition, but it demonstrates a technique on the rise among the predominantly Ba’athist insurgency: the murder of certain prominent Sunni leaders clears the way for former Ba’athists to assume key leadership positions in Tal Afar’s government, business sector, and tribes.

## Coalition Mistakes with Iraqi Leaders

The coalition’s experience with Mullah Marhat highlights a potential vulnerability in its approach to situations like those found in Tal Afar. This key vulnerability stems from a typically American overeagerness





Military officers meet with city officials in Tal Afar.

to make friends in the local community and to quickly establish a cooperative working relationship with locals. U.S. units initially engaged with anyone calling himself a sheik. Unfortunately, it now appears that they were frequently duped by persons who took advantage of U.S. ignorance of the Turkoman community generally, and of Tal Afar specifically, to successfully pass themselves off as sheiks.

Our naive and clumsy approach to community relations was particularly apparent in our initial dealings with the Marhat and Jolaq tribes, formerly relatively minor entities within the hierarchy of regional tribal-clan affiliations in and around Tal Afar. Ill-conceived coalition engagement with the sheiks of these groups, such as buying weapons from them or delivering food to them, proved to be a strategic error. Arbitrary as they were and undertaken without considering the impact such intercourse might have on the entire local situation, these acts were interpreted as favoritism aimed at undermining the prestige and authority of other, traditionally dominant, tribal groups. As a result, we angered and alienated groups that could have acted as key agents in working with the coalition to stop insurgent elements and establish stability in the community.

We also empowered many supposed sheiks who were more interested in personal gain than in aiding their fellow Iraqis. The paucity of real progress in tamping down the insurgency and rebuilding parts of Tal Afar revealed that these unscrupulous men had no influence to guarantee compliance with the law and no ability to provide accurate information on insurgents in our area of responsibility. For example, we engaged with one Sheik Mullah because we had

heard through the indigenous grapevine about his great concern for his people's safety and the economy. When we examined his activities closely, however, we discovered that he was primarily involved in reconstruction contracts for personal gain and empowerment.

Such activity is especially pernicious since resources diverted from helping the Iraqi people build their economy frequently find their way not only into the pockets of greedy men, but into the hands of insurgents themselves. It is well known that

insurgents attempt to obtain money from coalition forces for supposedly legitimate ends and then use the money to fund their activities.

To uncover and counter such practices, Occam's Razor should be ruthlessly employed by enforcing an audit trail of the money paid to current sheiks. Failure to account for significant sums of money, or to produce the quality or quantity of products called for in a contract, are strong indicators that funds are being skimmed or pocketed for later use by insurgents. Another simple analytical tool might be to correlate the visits a sheik makes to Syria with the incidents of terrorist attacks upon his return to Tal Afar.

Unfortunately, hasty engagement with the lesser or even spurious sheiks continued for some time and contributed to increasing dissension and insurgent activity in the Turkoman community. Eventually, Shi'ite leaders felt compelled to call upon the Ministry of the Interior to send forces from Baghdad. In an effort to maintain their power, the Sunnis in turn called for foreign fighters, and this precipitated a surge of violence.

The upshot was a conflict between Turkoman Shi'ites who rallied around the Jolaq sheiks and their American supporters, and Sunni (Ba'athist) insurgents who initiated a wave of attacks that successfully, albeit temporarily, gained control of the northern part of the city. Although the foreign fighters were chased out of Tal Afar during Operation Black Typhoon in 2004, they later returned unmoled when U.S. forces left the city proper.

The speed and ease of the insurgents' return speaks volumes about the quality and source of inside information they clearly were being provided by local

supporters. Not surprisingly, the mayor and chief of police, both former Ba'athists, did nothing to stop the return of the insurgent fighters, who once again plunged the city into chaos. Thereafter, the stream of foreign combatants increased until the 3d ACR arrived in Tal Afar and began Operation Restoring Rights in August of 2005. However, even though the 3d ACR completely encircled the fighters, many of the latter simply disappeared from Tal Afar. This could not have happened without significant assistance from residents and the prior preparation of escape routes.<sup>8</sup> Clearly, the insurgents had a lot of indigenous support, much of it not apparent to outside observers.

In the final analysis, anyone applying Occam's Razor to the situation must conclude that the insurgents could not have moved in and out of the areas around Tal Afar without widespread assistance from persons well-versed in arms cache techniques, and without a functioning intelligence network manned by those with intimate knowledge of the area's geography. It is likely, too, that a large number of the insurgents were not foreigners at all, but members of the local population who could ditch their weapons and melt easily back into the general population.

## The Razor and Cultural Awareness

During the 3d ACR's ensuing civil-military operations, many supposed sheiks and other figures came forward claiming to control key areas of the northern part of town. This was especially interesting—and suspect—because up until that time, most residents of northern Tal Afar had openly derided tribalism and its tradition of sheikdom, and no sheiks were known to have existed in the north.

However, investigation revealed that many residents of Tal Afar's northern neighborhoods had close ties to relatives living in the older, southern part of Tal Afar, where the city's traditional sheiks resided. These sheiks were usually modest men who willingly sheltered their relatives and friends fleeing the sectarian violence in the northern part of the city.

Originally, the identity of many of these sheiks was kept from coalition forces, but after evaluating the probable influence of the Ba'athist program of "Arabization" on Turkmenian cities, we concluded that tribes with Arabized names in north Tal Afar were, in fact, connected to tribes in the south with which the coalition had already developed a relation-

ship. We discovered, for example, that "Hawday," a name prominent in the north, was an Arabized version of Jarjary, the name of a tribe in the south. The north Tal Afar Jarjarys had had to Arabize their name when they entered the army, to accord with Saddam's policy of forced assimilation. Thereafter, whenever we wanted information on members of the Hawday tribe, we went into south Tal Afar to the neighborhood of the Jarjarys. Understanding this imposed cultural anomaly assisted us in engaging sheiks and concerned citizens, who later helped us ferret out hostile Hawday tribal members.

## Conclusions

Despite some officials' wishful thinking, a significant portion of Iraqis do not want democracy. For them, the conflict is driven mainly by Ba'athist loyalists who want some measure of power back without the limiting shackles of the democratic process. Any solution we formulate to the current insurgency must take this into account. We must acknowledge that the predominantly Sunni Ba'ath party is playing a major role in directing the insurgency, and then make our plans accordingly.

In Tal Afar, this is certainly true. Our enemy there consists mainly of Ba'ath party members who were trained as Saddam's soldiers and are prepared to wage war until they regain some measure of the status they lost. Ethnic and sectarian religious strife is certainly complicating the picture, but the insurgency is being fought primarily by former Ba'athists. After fading into the background, these men stimulated disaffection and division in Iraq for their own purposes. It is more out of expediency than religious conviction that they have adopted "Allah Hu Akbar" as their current battle cry instead of "Saddam, Saddam."

If the problem in Tal Afar is essentially the product of an increasingly well-organized network of residual Ba'athist members operating in cooperation with Iraqi Ba'athists currently living in Syria and elsewhere, the way ahead seems clear: formulate a solution that will satisfy their aspirations, perhaps by giving them a share of power, while also taking effective action to deconstruct their network.

Occam's Razor would suggest that engaging the insurgents and supporters in north Tal Afar through the real sheiks who control Sunni families in the south part of the city is the simplest and

most feasible way to defeat the insurgency. Dealing realistically with these leaders will be more productive than our current practice of engaging a handful of sheiks whose names were passed on to us by previous units.

We must also embrace the concept of amnesty for those who are willing to come in out of the cold, even for those who have killed coalition members. Insurgents who have no prospect of a job or a place in the new Iraqi society will have no reason to stop fighting; in fact, they will have every reason to continue. We will also benefit by engaging radical imams in a similar manner, if for no other reason than to gather intelligence on them and their followers.

Finally, the single-minded objective of such engagement must be to secure the Shi'ite population's safety and the Sunni population's compliance with the law. Joint meetings with Sunni and Shi'ite sheiks might help the Turkoman reunite, and the sooner this happens, the sooner law and order will be restored. Tal Afar's unrest has been the result of insiders trying to build a power base, not random acts by terrorists. Bringing in a key leader from Baghdad to unite the town, agree on blood money, and settle tribal disputes (some of which we unwittingly took part in) should be our next step. Another key move should be to identify former Ba'athists and individuals with prior military experience.

A close look at former Ba'athists may uncover surprises as well. It is reasonable to assume that at least a few Kurds and Shi'a had a role in Saddam's secular army. Are Shi'a and Kurds operating against us in Tal Afar today? We won't know until we vet the population for former Ba'athists.

Tal Afar could become a shining example, a working Iraqi democracy in miniature. But we must first use Occam's Razor, tempered with cultural understanding of the Turkoman, to adjust our course. Only non-sectarian engagement in which the coalition does not take sides will lead to the intelligence and operational breakthroughs necessary to stabilize Tal Afar. A substantially larger, more loyal Iraqi security force now exists in Tal Afar, and the town has a powerful and popular mayor, but the future threat to the city should not be understated. We cannot, in good faith, turn Tal Afar over to the Iraqi Security Forces until the coalition has stabilized the security situation. **MR**

## NOTES

1. Helen Chapin Metz, *Iraq: A Country Study* (New York: Kessinger, 2004), 85. Metz is my primary source for the information about Turkoman history in this article.
2. Information obtained by personal interviews and debriefings conducted by the author in Tal Afar, 2006.
3. Rajiv Chandrasekaran, *Imperial Life in the Emerald City: Inside Iraq's Green Zone* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf and Random House, 2006), 70-71.
4. Scott Taylor, *Among the Others: Encounters with the Forgotten Turkmen of Iraq* (Ottawa, Canada: Esprit de Corps Books, 2004), 208-228.
5. *Frontline* interview with Colonel H.R. McMaster, online at <[www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/insurgency/interviews/mcmaster.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/insurgency/interviews/mcmaster.html)>.
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7. Author's personal experience.
8. 3d ACR Operation Restoring Rights after action review, regimental archives, Fort Hood, Texas.



CPT Travis Patriquin

As is the custom of *Military Review*, articles accepted for publication undergo careful editing, and usually a number of rewrites, in close consultation with the author to satisfy mutual concerns and to ensure professional standards of grammar and usage are observed. Correspondence on such issues is usually done through e-mail together with phone coordination when possible. In the case of the above article, the staff of *Military Review* corresponded with the author, who was forward deployed in Iraq, over a period of several months. The process was more than usually challenging because the author was only able to work on the article periodically, in between professional responsibilities. The proposed final draft of the article was sent to him via e-mail several times during the second week of December, but without a final approving response. On 11 December, the staff of *Military Review* was saddened to learn through press accounts that the author, Army CPT Travis Patriquin, had been killed in action as a result of an Improvised Explosive Device attack in Tikrit. CPT Patriquin was reportedly a hard working, extremely pleasant individual who had a penchant for lifting the spirits of his colleagues by telling humorous stories and seeing the bright side of dark situations. He also seems to have had a rare gift for languages, having acquired not only Arabic, but Spanish, Portuguese, and two Central American Indian dialects. He is survived by a devoted wife and three young children. We presume he would have approved the final draft of his article, published here.

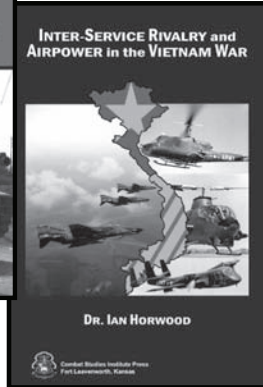
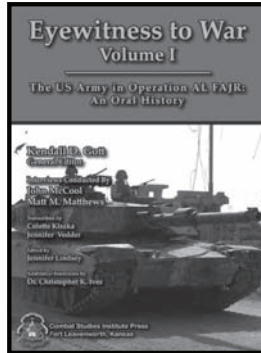




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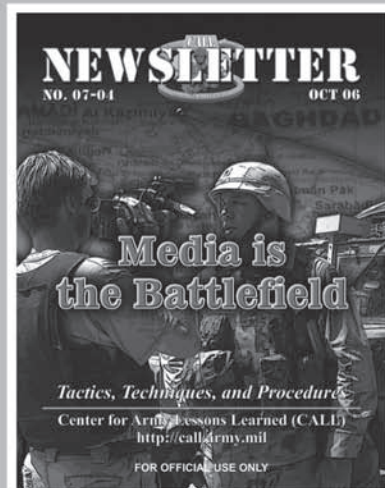
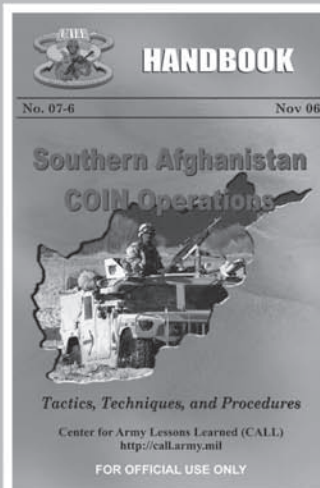
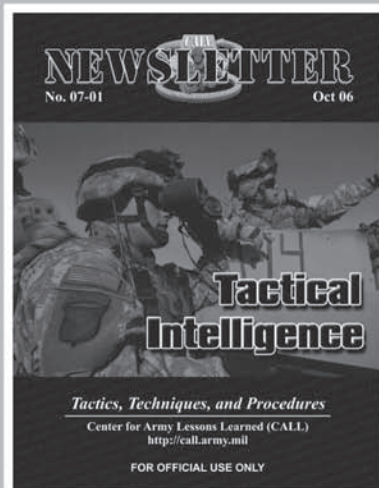
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# Commander's Assessment: SOUTH BAGHDAD

Lieutenant Colonel Ross A. Brown, U.S. Army

**T**HE CHALLENGES a battalion commander faces in Iraq are as great as any U.S. battalion commanders faced in other wars. After a year of combat, from March 2005 to March 2006, I developed an assessment of my Area of Operations (AO) in southern Baghdad that, based upon discussions with my peers, encapsulates many of the challenges other battalion commanders face elsewhere in Iraq. This article attempts to explain those challenges and my conclusions about them, as well as my perspective of what we need to do to win, at least in my former AO.

To prepare myself and my unit, the 3d Squadron (Thunder Squadron) of the 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment for combat in Iraq, I read historical descriptions of counterinsurgency (COIN) operations, the draft field manual on COIN (FM 3-7.22), and all the lessons-learned I could find. I discovered that counterinsurgency is almost universally defined as the combined military, paramilitary, economic, psychological, and civic actions taken by a government to defeat an insurgency. In such a fight, the host country's population is the strategic and operational center of gravity; thus, winning the people's confidence and support is the centerpiece for operations at those levels. Although there aren't any centers of gravity at the tactical level, gaining the local population's confidence and support is just as important as in the higher echelons of operations.

## The Problem

The Army's Military Decision Making Process (MDMP) offers a template for solving problems. The first step in the process is to conduct mission analysis in order to scope the military problem and identify its components. Subsequent steps in the MDMP seek to solve the military problem by leading to the execution of activities according to a plan or order. Although I began my tour using only a few components, or bullets, to outline my military problem, the number of bullets increased as my tour wore on. By the end, I had 16:

- The enemy blends into the population.
- The enemy learns and adapts and is usually about a week behind us tactically.
- The enemy rapidly reseeds its leadership and is diverse—there are multiple different groups operating in the AO with multiple cells.
- The enemy uses Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) as an offensive weapon.

*Lieutenant Colonel Ross A. Brown, U.S. Army, is a division chief in the School of Command Preparation, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. He holds a B.S. from the United States Military Academy and an M.A. from the University of Louisville, and he is a graduate of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College. LTC Brown has served in a variety of command and staff positions in the continental United States, Germany, Bosnia, and Iraq.*

PHOTO: SGT Michael Olivas, 3d Squadron, 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment (Thunder Squadron) provides security during a battalion command visit to a squadron patrol base, September 2005. (AFP, 2005)

- The terrain does not easily support tracked movement and forces the use of predictable routes.
- The AO is an enemy support zone with caches, meeting places, training, etc.
- There are no large population centers in the AO.
- The population is at best neutral, but seems to support the insurgents.
- The majority of the population is Sunni, with small enclaves of Shi'a spread throughout the AO.
- Wahabbists/Salafists are operating along the Tigris River.
- There are five different tribes in the AO, each with multiple sheiks.
- Coalition engagement with the AO's population was spotty prior to our arrival.
- Unemployment is high.
- We have multiple Iraqi Security Force (ISF) partnerships.
- There are effectively no funds to buy and use informants.
- We are fighting a fight the squadron did not train for.

I anticipated that the number of components defining my problem would initially increase as I conducted operations and learned more about my AO, but I thought that by the end of my tour they would be dramatically reduced. Not only did they increase, but even with a much greater understanding of the complexities of my area, I was unable to solve my problem prior to being relieved by my successor. The fact is that we could have continued to fight the war in my area for the foreseeable future. Everything was contingent upon the population allowing the conflict to exist and their continued willingness to replace the insurgents we killed or detained.

## The Enemy

When we left our AO, we were fighting multiple known insurgent groups, the most infamous of which was Al Qaeda in Iraq. In terms of battlefield geometry, I defined the *battle zone* in Multinational Division-Baghdad's (MND-B's) area of responsibility as central Baghdad. The capital is the strategic focus for the enemy in MND-B and where he benefits his cause the most by killing civilians and ISF. His mayhem there undermines the credibility of the government, spreads fear, sows the seeds of a sectarian divide, and generally attracts the most international interest. The areas that surround central

Baghdad, particularly my AO in the south, are best characterized as *support zones* where the enemy lives, trains, plans, and prepares for operations. While the enemy did conduct operations against my cavalry squadron, I characterized these as tactical operations, lower in priority to the strategic operations in central Baghdad and the more beneficial tactical operations against the ISF. Although the insurgent groups we faced had different political objectives, I concluded that there was some synchronization between them since attacks were not sporadic and tended to following discernable trends from month to month. I also came to believe that the groups were linked logistically, and we attempted throughout the year to disrupt all the groups' activities by limiting their logistical support.

## The People

Understanding the history, language, customs, and traditions of the people among whom you are fighting is essential in a counterinsurgency. Most of the cultural preparations for our operations in Iraq amounted to a few classes on Iraqi customs and one on basic language. Our officers worked through the 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment's recommended reading list, designed to broaden our understanding of the Iraqi people and their country, but there were few discussions about the readings—there simply wasn't much time available after regular predeployment training and maintenance. The relative lack of cultural training wasn't critical, however, because 60 percent of the Soldiers in my squadron had served in Operation Iraqi Freedom I. Having returned from Iraq only 11 months before, my Soldiers already had a working knowledge of Iraq's customs and language.

I concluded that the people in our AO would allow the insurgents to move freely through them and live among them unless we or the ISF were physically present 24 hours a day. I also believe that the people are withholding their loyalty to both the newly elected government and the insurgents until they think they know who is going to win. From my perspective, the majority of the people have survived by "going along to get along" throughout the years, and they are convinced that to commit to either side too early could cost them their lives.

In my dealings with the Iraqi people, I was struck by their penchant for interpreting everything





AFP, 2005

**SFC Kim Bradshaw, NCO in charge of the author's personal security detachment, inspects one of the patrol bases the squadron used to control its area of operations, September 2005.**

through the lens of individual self-interest. This applied to both the civilians and the ISF. The concept of putting community or country first was less important than individual best interest. I also had the sense that they didn't care much what kind of government they'd ultimately have, whether it would be a democracy, theocracy, or autocracy. The people's priority was to ensure that their basic needs were satisfied, and the government or group that could best do that would gain their favor. Throughout my year in Iraq, I used this premise of "satisfying basic needs" to allocate funds and prioritize projects. In the end, Maslow's "Hierarchy of Needs" was a very applicable tool for understanding the people's

***In my dealings with the Iraqi people, I was struck by their penchant for interpreting everything through the lens of individual self-interest.***

requirements and prioritizing civil-military projects. It also led to my minimizing discussion on the benefits of a democracy. If you drink the same water as your cows, you're likely not interested in a U.S. Soldier explaining the advantages, theory, and practice of Jeffersonian democracy.

It is important to understand the tribal structure of Iraq and your AO, and I knew little about either when I first arrived in Baghdad. What I learned over time was that first and foremost, tribes will protect their own. Individuals willing to provide information about insurgents or criminals would do so about members of other tribes, but never about members of their own. Another thing I learned was that despite a forest of satellite dishes pumping popular Arabic media into every home and hut in my AO, word of mouth was the most trusted form of communication within the tribes. It became something that I would try to influence in my discussions with sheiks and tribal elders. I also came to realize that sheiks had no real power and therefore, I didn't spend too much

time wooing them. A trusted sheik told me that he could influence the perspective of those 40 years and older, but had very little influence over younger tribe members. Since the vast majority of those I was fighting were younger than 40, the sheiks couldn't help me much.

Some COIN thinkers believe that civil-military projects can influence the loyalty of the people. I concluded that while the Iraqis in my AO would accept gifts, money, and projects, such perks did little to sway them to our side. As a result, I used the very limited project money I was given to build soccer fields for kids (in the hopes that we'd have better luck with the next generation), to satisfy basic human needs like clean water per Maslow's Hierarchy, and to make it easier to do my mission by, for example, improving roads. In the end, I told my subordinates that all project money would be used for our mission first and the Iraqi people second.

## The ISF

During my tour, our squadron was partnered with two Iraqi Ministry of the Interior (MOI) battalions and two Iraqi Army (IA) battalions. While each

unit had different strengths and weaknesses, there were some commonalities among them. For one, very few of the Iraqi officers or NCOs we worked with had had any formal military training. We are currently building a professional education infrastructure with the Iraqis, but in the meantime, U.S. commanders need to know who and what they are working with.

Since most ISF leaders are chosen from within the ranks, sycophancy is valued more than education, effectiveness, or professionalism. The result, at least in our case, was ineffectual units and frustration among those Iraqi soldiers who wanted to lead, fight, and win. Additionally, the units we worked with were either all Shi'a or all Sunni, and there were no Kurds. This led to a bias for or against the populations in which the units were operating. One of our IA partners was a Shi'a battalion whose commanding officer was also sheik of the tribe from which the battalion's soldiers came. His executive officer was his son. He told me that if we left Iraq, he would move his battalion south to defend the community that he and his soldiers were from. Unfortunately, I believe that as long as we have sectarian-based units comprised of soldiers from the same communities, we won't be able to develop a viable national army whose loyalty to country is greater than loyalty to community and religion.

A commander new to theater must also understand the prevailing mindset of his Iraqi partners. While the MOI special commando units we soldiered with were very offensive-minded, our IA partners were more defensively oriented. IA leaders were generally more comfortable establishing checkpoints or working out of forward operating bases (FOBs) than conducting raids. Nevertheless, we found that when we had Iraqis under our command during U.S.-initiated offensive operations, they proved to be tough, capable soldiers.

Another challenge was that our ISF units had very limited planning, command and control, and logistics capabilities. Our internally generated military transition teams (MiTTs) focused their energy on developing these capabilities at the company and platoon level while my own headquarters focused on the ISF battalion staffs. We introduced our counterparts to the MDMP, helped them create logistics systems, and augmented their very limited and ineffective communications architecture.

***...we found that when we had Iraqis under our command during U.S.-initiated offensive operations, they proved to be tough, capable soldiers.***

When working with the ISF, Operations Security (OPSEC) is a consideration that shapes all operations. A prudent commander will always keep in mind the fact that some of his ISF partners could be insurgent infiltrators or sectarian sympathizers, and he will take the steps necessary to ensure OPSEC. When we worked with the MOI, all planned targets for an operation had to be vetted by MOI headquarters before permission was given to my partnership unit to proceed. This requirement caused one of my largest and most complex operations to fail when an insurgent spy in MOI headquarters gave the enemy our target list (thankfully, this leak did not result in the loss of life of any of our Soldiers). The Ministry of Defense is more supportive of multinational operations and didn't require permission above the IA brigade headquarters for our operations.

When I left Iraq, the ISF in my area were clearly incapable of providing security or conducting operations without our support and guidance. I often wondered whether they were as interested in winning the war as we were or whether they just needed a paycheck. I'm glad to report that, in spite of my apprehensions, the ISF improved consistently throughout our tour of duty.

## **How to Lose**

As a result of suffering casualties and, at one time, feeling as if we were losing the war, I came to several conclusions about how a unit can lose in Iraq. The surest way to lose is to be predictable. Leaving the FOB at the same time every day, using the same routes or vehicles, reacting to attacks or events in the same way—all offer the enemy predictable behavior that he can then target. Closely related to being predictable is failing to learn and change. To be effective, units must create an environment in which initiative is rewarded and everyone is committed to learning and changing in order to maintain the initiative. I set up weekly skull sessions in my squadron

***The surest way to lose is to be predictable.***

battle-rhythm during which commanders and staff sought to solve the problems we were facing. The sessions were free-wheeling, combative—and productive. There is no place for group-think in combat and particularly in counterinsurgencies. I am most proud of the fact that the organizational energy of my squadron was focused on winning by seizing the initiative and creating as many problems for the enemy as possible. It's not easy to do this, but the battalion commander can begin by creating an environment that leads to a learning organization.

Another way to guarantee that you will lose is to conduct U.S.-only operations and presence patrols. Putting an Iraqi face on all operations reinforces the legitimacy of the government and the ISF while also making it easier to identify foreign fighters and conduct effective tactical questioning. The Iraqis can quickly discern different Arabic accents, and they can get the most out of potential detainees and locals through tactical questioning. The people feared the ISF much more than U.S. Forces and were generally more willing to talk to their countrymen and provide information about the enemy. Sometimes we used this to our advantage by threatening to allow the ISF to talk to potential detainees in our place. The Iraqi people in my AO knew that our treatment of them was guided by the Law of Land Warfare and our rules of engagement, but they weren't sure if the new Iraqi Army had transitioned from Saddam's Army and its abusive treatment of the people.

All patrols in Iraq are combat patrols. I told my leaders in Kuwait that if there was no military necessity for a patrol or no clearly defined purpose for an operation, then we wouldn't do them. To conduct a presence patrol and lose a Soldier's life was grounds for relief or worse in my view. I gave patrol leaders the authority to cancel a patrol until they and their Soldiers clearly understood what their objective was and what was expected of them during and at the end of the patrol. Although only one patrol was cancelled by a patrol leader during our year in Iraq, I believe the empowerment my subordinates felt ensured that our combat patrols had the proper focus and value in defeating the enemy.

Senior-level commanders in Iraq have stated that U.S. forces will increasingly operate from large

FOBs. To do so without also establishing patrol bases in the AO would have caused our squadron to lose and to suffer far more casualties than we did. Not only do we provide the enemy predictability by operating from large FOBs, but we are also unable to establish or maintain a secure environment in the AO if we are constantly moving in and out of it. The U.S. Marines in Vietnam, the British throughout their recent military history, and my own squadron in Iraq proved that living among the people is the most effective way to establish a secure environment and to protect our own forces.

Mass and its application in a counterinsurgency is probably worthy of an article in and of itself. My own conclusion is that the sequential application of mass along all lines of operations (LOOs) in an AO will fail. Unless the enemy is planning to attack, he will move to other, safer, places once a friendly offensive operation is communicated or initiated. We have only to look at the results of operations in Fallujah and Tal Afar for examples of this. While some insurgents decided to stay and fight in both of these cities, others left to fight another day in another place of their own choosing. To be effective in my AO, I had to spread resources equally among my subordinate units and then conduct precision offensive operations based upon intelligence from informants. Had I massed in one area and then sequentially massed in another with the expectation that once clear an area would remain clear, then we would have lost in our AO. We simply can't mass and "win in the west" and then, based upon a decision point, mass and "win in the east" if we are to be victorious in a counterinsurgency.

There is a requirement, then, to mass simultaneously along all LOOs throughout an AO. We had four lines of operation in our area: combat operations, ISF

***...living among the people is the most effective way to establish a secure environment and to protect our own forces.***



operations, information operations, and civil-military operations. To be effective, we couldn't just focus on one or two LOOs; we had to integrate all four lines into each of our operations and the overall campaign, and we had to apply them simultaneously. As an example, when we executed a raid, we included our ISF partners, used tactical psychological operations teams and our own Soldiers to ensure the public knew what our intent was, and then followed up the raid the next day by making goodwill gestures to the population, such as distributing soccer balls, repairing roads, or providing clothing and food. The integration and simultaneous application of all four lines in each operation during the campaign prevents the enemy from focusing on one line. Over time, it creates depth along each line of operation.

## How to Win

By the time we redeployed, I thought we were winning the war in our AO. Although I don't believe we could have completely extinguished the insurgency with the limited resources we had available, we were winning. To get to where we were, we came up with 10 commandments for winning the COIN war in south Baghdad:

- Keep instructions clear and operations simple.
- Constantly modify tactics to maintain the initiative.
- Use civil-military ops for the mission, not the people.

- Mass throughout the depth of the battlespace and along all LOOs—create multiple problems for the enemy.

- Establish patrol bases throughout the battlespace to disrupt, control, project, and defeat.

- Execute continuous and complementary air assault, mounted, and dismounted operations.

- Conduct precision offensive operations based on multi-sourced human intelligence.

- Use Special Forces to complement conventional operations and augment intelligence.

- Engage sheiks to gain intelligence and execute info ops.

- Clear–Hold–Build/Project to create interior lines.

We have already discussed most of the bullets above, but I would like to highlight a few more. I began operations primarily using M1114s (up- armored Humvees). Although the M1114 is a very capable vehicle, our tanks and Bradleys proved to be much more effective in protecting the force and deterring or destroying the enemy. During our year in Iraq, 30 of our combat vehicles were destroyed, to include 6 tanks, 10 Bradleys, and 14 M1114s. Had we not used mainly heavy tracked vehicles, we would have had many more casualties. Some may argue that a tank or Bradley deters effective interaction with the public. My priority was to protect the force first, knowing that once our Soldiers and our Iraqi partners were talking to

the people on the ground, their mode of transportation wasn't important. I'd also like to highlight that if we used tracked vehicles for an operation, we always put our Iraqi partners under armor, either in M113A3s or Bradleys, to protect them and ensure they knew that we thought their lives were as important as our own Soldiers' lives.

As our tour wore on, our dismounted operations increased. Although we were a heavy armored cavalry squadron, the demands of counterinsurgency in Iraq require all ground maneuver Soldiers to be physically tough, capable of conducting long dismounted operations in temperatures over 100 degrees Fahrenheit and under body armor. We also executed over 30 air assaults, using anywhere from



AFP, 2005

The author, right, with SFC Kim Bradshaw and CPT Robert Guillen, attempts to identify the position an insurgent observer used to detonate an IED about an hour earlier, September 2005.

For a more detailed explanation of recommendations dealing with convoy operations and IED avoidance, to include schematics and recommended march order, see the 3/3 Armored Cavalry After Action Report, dated March 31, 2006, which can be found on the Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL) database at the following webpage address:

<https://call2.army.mil/focus/pubs/index.asp>

2 to 18 aircraft. I concluded that the helicopter is decisive in Iraq. Transports can speed Soldiers to the right locations, and attack aviation can acquire, kill, or otherwise deter the enemy. In the end, the continuous sequencing and complementing of air assault, mounted, and dismounted operations maximized the element of surprise, disrupted the enemy, and ensured we were not predictable.

So how did we know we were winning? Measures of effectiveness are among the most hotly debated issues in Iraq. Everybody has an opinion, but we set stock in the following:

- A decrease in the number of attacks against the squadron and IA forces in the AO.
- An increase in the number of informants offering targetable information.
- An increase in the number of caches located.
- Demonstrated willingness of locals to work on or support projects initiated in our AO.
- An increase in the number of local leaders willing to support our initiatives or start their own (e.g., neighborhood watch with IA support).

As the ISF matured, they increasingly conducted independent reconnaissance patrols and area security operations. Based upon their interaction with the population during these patrols, and after the establishment of patrol bases permanently manned by an Iraqi infantry company (with a small squadron MiTT) throughout the AO, the number of informants increased tenfold. Information from these informants provided the intelligence necessary to gain and then maintain the initiative in our AO.<sup>1</sup>

After receiving information about enemy activities or locations, we would launch a raid to destroy or detain insurgents and their caches. To win, battalion commanders must develop an informant network that will drive their operations. Although a lack of funds to buy informants prevented us from

challenging the insurgents to the degree that we wanted, the ISF proved invaluable in developing an informant network that my subordinate commanders, tactical human intelligence team, and intelligence officer could leverage.

At some point in the rotation, I read an article about Andrew Krepinevich's argument for adopting a "Clear-Hold-Build" strategy in Iraq.<sup>2</sup> While I liked this basic concept, I further modified it and inte-

grated the establishment of patrol bases, which we had used in Ranger school and I had observed the British using in Bosnia. IEDs were our greatest threat, and although we were attempting to kill the emplacers and manufacturers and destroy the means to make IEDs, we knew we would have to deliberately clear routes in the AO before establishing patrol bases. My subordinate commanders together developed a technique that integrated ground-penetrating radar, dismounts, an explosive ordnance detachment, tanks, Bradleys, and aviation. Not a single Soldier was killed or seriously wounded utilizing this technique, and we discovered and destroyed over 50 IEDs.

After the route had been cleared to an abandoned house or one belonging to a known insurgent, we occupied the home and rapidly established security and a permanent traffic control point. We manned the route leading to the patrol base with permanent mounted or dismounted patrols in depth, and we never relinquished control of it. As a result, we severely disrupted the enemy's ability to emplace IEDs. After establishing patrol bases throughout our AO and securing the routes that led to them, we did not lose a Soldier to an IED. Additionally, by securing the routes that led from our FOB to our patrol bases, we effectively created interior lines that allowed us to mass quickly, move relatively securely, and provide logistical support expeditiously.

***After establishing patrol bases throughout our AO and securing the routes that led to them, we did not lose a Soldier to an IED.***

Although the interior lines were valuable for defense and logistics, we were offensively oriented, and so we also used the secure lines and bases to project our influence further into the AO. Conducting offensive operations from our patrol bases, we severely disrupted the enemy's lines of communication to Baghdad as well as his ability to plan and prepare for operations against us. Concurrently, we built upon our success by focusing civil-military projects on the locals' quality of life while the continuous security we were now able to provide led to increased, albeit limited, economic activity. The enemy responded to our patrol bases with more ambushes, snipers, and mortar fire, but we met them with massed direct fire and indirect fires. When the Lightweight Countermortar Radar was digitally linked to our Paladin battery, we limited the enemy's ability to fire mortars. At the same time, we created a niche in the COIN fight for our superior firepower and artillery.

## Conclusion

As the ISF became more confident and capable, they conducted more independent security operations while we conducted combined/multinational offensive operations. This modus operandi played to both our strengths and, coupled with operations along the other LOOs, severely hindered the enemy's ability to move freely in the population; it put him on the defensive. According to the measures of effectiveness we had compiled, at the end of our tour we were winning the war in our AO. To turn winning into lasting victory, however, we needed additional assets that weren't available.

I used the graphic below to explain our challenges to the sheiks in my AO:



In general terms I told them that an unstable, violent environment all but prohibited economic investment and ensured unemployment, which were the sheik's greatest long term concerns. No long term investment and no jobs then led to a thriving insurgency as the people supported and participated in the fighting to express dissatisfaction with their ineffectual government and the U.S. occupation. The result was more violence directed against the people, their property, the ISF, and our squadron. I suggested to the sheiks that we break this cycle along the lack of stability/security line. I told them that being partners against the insurgency was the only way to establish the secure environment that would break the insurgency's back and deliver the economic benefits their people deserved.

As I look back now, I have to say that the greatest hurdle we had to overcome in our area was the Iraqi people's reluctance to partner with us and the ISF against the insurgency. In the end, we could continue to provide a certain degree of security and to disrupt the insurgency, but without the people's moral resolve and support, any hope of decisive victory was scant. The people's lack of commitment spilled over into the ISF—our military partners were never as committed as we were to building the new Iraq. Our own side is culpable, too. As I stated earlier, we were never really resourced to defeat the insurgency in our AO. Nor was our commitment to victory matched by the other representatives of national power. There was very little if any contribution from the diplomatic, financial, and law enforcement agencies of the U.S. and Iraqi governments. Their help either trickled down in tiny amounts or didn't come at all.

In sum, I was convinced upon leaving Iraq that given the circumstances we faced and the resources that were committed, we would have continued to fight the war in my AO for the foreseeable future. **MR**

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## NOTES

1. Almost no reliable information for executing operations came from our higher headquarters. They contributed by fusing intelligence from multiple headquarters in an attempt to identify enemy trends across the larger AO, and by providing resources that helped answer my priority intelligence requirements.

2. Andrew F. Krepinevich Jr., "How to Win in Iraq," *Foreign Affairs* (September-October 2005), <<http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20050901faessay84508/andrew-f-krepinevich-jr/how-to-win-in-iraq.html>>.





# THAILAND:

## Anatomy of a Counterinsurgency Victory

Thomas A. Marks, Ph.D.

**F**OR STUDENTS OF WAR, historical cases relevant to the present United States counterinsurgency in Iraq are plentiful, though not always immediately obvious. The Vietnam War is a case in point. That conflict provides numerous lessons regarding counterinsurgency, but many of them have been overlooked because analysts typically study the war as if it were a purely local affair, occurring amidst a regional vacuum. They forget that the fighting in Vietnam was only part of a wider regional struggle encompassing other national theaters of operation. Each of those theaters had its own unique character and distinct ways in which the United States was involved. Hence, each offers us a discrete set of lessons for today's campaigns. The counterinsurgency in Thailand (roughly 1950-1983) was one such related but distinctive struggle.

The Thai case is particularly relevant for us because it was, from start to finish, more akin to our 1955-65 advisory experience in Vietnam than to the main force employment era in the decade that followed (1965-73). Thus there is much that veterans of El Salvador, Colombia, Peru, Afghanistan, and Iraq would recognize. This is important, because the conventional side of the Vietnam War (depicted in such films as *We Were Soldiers*, *Platoon*, and *Hamburger Hill*) occurred only after earlier efforts to strengthen state capacity failed. By contrast, such efforts did not fail in Thailand, which makes the circumstances and nature of our involvement there such an important case study for serious students of counterinsurgency today.

That said, the usual caveat, as we shall see, is perhaps even more the case here. Every insurgency has its unique elements, none more so than Thailand's. In the end, peculiarly "Thai" factors drove events, but the ability of the counterinsurgency (with or without American input) to operate successfully within the distinctive parameters of Thai culture, even as the insurgents did not, offers particularly instructive lessons.<sup>1</sup>

### Constructing the Counterstate

As in other regional conflicts, the Thai conflict grew out of a Communist bid for power. In a challenge to the Royal Government, the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) shed its pre-Second World War adherence to orthodox Marxist-Leninism, embraced Maoism, and adopted people's war as its strategy. From the outset, societal transformation was the CPT's goal. Its strategy

*Thomas A. Marks is Professor of Terrorism, Insurgency, and Counterinsurgency at the School for National Security Executive Education (SNSEE), National Defense University, and also Chair of the Irregular Warfare Department (SNSEE). He holds a B.S. from the United States Military Academy and a Ph.D. from the University of Hawaii. A former government officer, Dr. Marks is the author of Maoist Insurgency Since Vietnam (London, 1996), considered the current standard on the subject of "people's war." His latest book is Maoist People's War in Post-Vietnam Asia (Bangkok: White Lotus, forthcoming). He has lectured and published widely on terrorism and insurgency.*

PHOTO: In hill areas of Chiangrai Province, northern Thailand, in 1987, the author uses Mandarin to speak to Yao tribesmen. Yao and Mandarin are related, which allows communication. Tribesmen had reported illegal logging, which was hurting crop yields; the government was seeking to discern whether insurgents were using the activity to generate funds.

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY  
OF THE AUTHOR

was to negate the state's greater military power by mobilizing the people against it through the creation of a counterstate. Direct mobilization of a popular base and indirect mobilization through front organizations were to be the party's main lines of operation. Violence would be but one tool among many in an armed political campaign designed to march steadily towards seizure of the capital, Bangkok.

Tactically, the Communist Party used local guerrilla units (main forces were never formed) to challenge government control of certain areas. Operationally, the link between the party and the guerrillas was the clandestine infrastructure, the counterstate, rooted in CPT control of local areas that functioned as its bases for further expansion. To establish authority in such areas, the CPT employed terror. Recalcitrant villagers, or those whose community standing made them symbols of government authority (e.g., village headmen and schoolteachers), were selectively targeted.

Simultaneously, to attract and unify popular support, CPT political themes and propaganda concentrated on promoting the perception that the party was the Thai people's sole champion, its only effective means to address grievances. Hence the CPT concentrated its activity mainly in rural areas beset by poverty and politically estranged from the central government.

Following Maoist doctrine, the CPT began developing its counterstate in peripheral areas of the kingdom, in the unincorporated space of what became three largely autonomous campaigns: the North, Northeast (*Isaan*), and South. Although Thailand is not especially large, neither is it small. Its 514,000 square kilometers (198,500 square miles) and 28 million people (in 1962) put it in the same league with a unified Vietnam (smaller in population than Vietnam, but larger in area).

Northeast Thailand was especially susceptible to such revolutionary activities, due in part to economic, cultural, and political characteristics that distinguished it from other regions.<sup>2</sup> It was the kingdom's



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largest and most populous region, yet its poorest (thanks mainly to an ecology that limited agricultural and other forms of economic development). It was politically alienated from the central government because of its population's Thai-Lao ethnicity and culture. Thai-Lao personalities had dominated radical politics immediately after World War II, and the region's delegates in Thailand's military-dominated parliamentary system had incurred the ire of the ruling elite by supporting neutralist sentiments even as Thailand moved closer to the West.<sup>3</sup>

Government repression allowed the CPT to tap the latent grievances already present owing to the Northeast's economic and social predicament.<sup>4</sup> To focus the resulting outburst, the CPT constructed its counterstate along standard Leninist lines. At the apex was a 7-man Politburo, below it a 25-man Central Committee. Central Committee members performed various staff functions, one of the most



important being supervision of the military apparatus and creation of a united front (as called for by Maoist doctrine). Committee members frequently served as heads of Communist Party provincial (*changwat*) committees, which oversaw CPT district (*amphoe*) committees that, in turn, guided “township” (*tambol*) and village (*muban* or *ban*) party structures.<sup>5</sup>

The resulting alternative government structure emerged as a serious clandestine challenge to state authority and legitimacy in outlying areas. Robert F. Zimmerman, a U.S. official with long experience in Thailand, observed the following about this quasi-government’s basic component, the village: “The party’s greatest strength...lies in its elaborate organization at the village level in those areas where Communist insurgents are strongly entrenched. An excellent illustration of this organization at its best is the infrastructure that existed in Ban Nakham village, Ubon Ratchathani Province, in 1966. Although government Communist-suppression operations destroyed this infrastructure, there is little reason to doubt that it remains typical of communist practice in areas where the insurgents are in control. The Ban Nakham village organization was headed by a village committee consisting of a chairman, two assistant chairmen, and four other members, with one of the assistant chairmen and the four ordinary members responsible for directing the activities of eight specialized committees of 15-30 members dealing with such matters as youth and military affairs, political

propaganda, labor and business, women’s affairs, etc. This structure functioned within the village but was responsible to a ‘zone commander’ and two assistant commanders based in the jungle.

“Through this apparatus operating at the local level, the Communists have been able not only to recruit and motivate active adherents but also to mobilize sufficient popular support in the major insurgent areas to generate sources of manpower, food, shelter, and finances (in part through local tax levies), and to develop an effective intelligence network. They have also benefited from a certain amount of illicit ‘assistance’ in the form of accommodation or even bribes offered by government officials or by private construction firms engaged in building roads into the insurgent areas.”<sup>6</sup>

According to former CIA officer Ralph W. McGehee, this infrastructure became quite extensive: “Using all the index cards and files, I wrote a final report. I prepared name lists of all cell members, including their aliases, by village. In this district the list contained the names of more than 500 persons. Those 500 persons did not appear anywhere in the Agency reporting at the time. The CIA estimated there were 2,500 to 4,000 Communists in all of Thailand. But our surveys showed the Communists probably had that many adherents in Sakorn Nakorn Province alone.”<sup>7</sup>

It appears, however, that in some ways McGehee and his superiors might have been comparing apples and oranges. The CIA’s 2,500-4,000 figure seems

to have been an estimate of armed guerrillas, while the 500 individuals in McGehee’s district were part of the mass base. When a village came under control of the CPT shadow government, its mobilization included providing manpower for a militia. Only the best members of this body joined the actual guerrillas in the CPT’s bases, located in inaccessible areas. In other words, by counting only the full-time guerrillas, the CIA overlooked the much larger number of individuals actually involved in the



Captured photo of CPT combatants at a camp in the Thai south. As was typical of the era, the insurgents sought to imitate the uniforms and symbols of the People’s Liberation Army of China.



movement. It is also important to note that, in contrast to the romantic Maoist vision promulgated by CPT literature, the guerrillas' weapons and equipment did not come from raids conducted against government forces, but from other Southeast Asian Communist sources.

With reliable sources of supply from abroad and recruiting made easy by repression at home, the CPT expanded steadily. By the early 1970s, a majority of the provinces in the kingdom had been classified as "infiltrated," meaning some sort of CPT activity was present.<sup>8</sup> Still, this activity remained confined mainly to areas outside the heartland, beyond the central plain that was the social, economic, and political center of Thailand. Penetration of urban centers of power on the central plain would occur later.

## The State Responds

To counter the rising threat, the Thai government adopted a strategy directed against the combatants of the insurgent counterstate.<sup>9</sup> This was an inappropriate response to the CPT challenge because it sought to suppress the opposition by brute force rather than attempting to assuage the popular discontent fueling the insurgency. In December 1965, the highest levels of the government ordered the formation of a Communist Suppression Operations Command (CSOC), later to become the Internal Security Operations Command (ISOC). Saiyud Kerdphol, a respected officer whose background included covert operations in Laos against Communist forces, was placed in charge of this new command. What the government had in mind, though, was not counterinsurgency, but better management of the counterinsurgency campaign.

Saiyud later recounted, "The RTA [Royal Thai Army] then was run by 'the old school,' the pre-World War II officers. They had tremendous difficulty understanding counterinsurgency, rebellion, and the fundamental causes which fed revolt. Praphas [former Deputy Prime Minister and the muscle behind the government that ultimately fell in 1973], for example, named CSOC the 'suppression command.' He could understand that the fight had to be coordinated—that's why he set up CSOC—but he wasn't talking about CPM [civil-police-military; essentially, the coordinated application of all resources to the insurgent problem, as done by the

British to defeat the Communists in Malaya during the Emergency]. Some of the younger generation of officers, though, were more attuned to reality. Among them was Prem [later Prime Minister].

"We understood immediately that what we were dealing with was a political problem. We applied CPM to the problems of the Northeast, yet we knew more was needed than simply a response. Coordination is the key to winning, but all must look at the problem through the same eyes. You need a common blueprint on which to base the plan.

"Two things were obvious: there was nothing worse than to fight the wrong way, *and* the key is the people. We had to ask ourselves, why do the people have a problem, why are they taking up arms? We did a lot of mechanical things, such as setting up Village Defence Corps and special training centers through which we could run all regular companies.

"The crucial point, though, more than numbers, is orientation. You have to keep analyzing a target area. You have to keep asking yourself, 'What are the reasons for popular discontent? What are the problems?' Figure out the solutions, then implement and coordinate."<sup>10</sup>

More or less disregarding his superiors, Saiyud began to organize CSOC for a genuine counterinsurgency, one that would seek to get at the roots



Saiyud Kerdphol talks with tribespeople in Pua, Nan Province, northern Thailand, in May 1973. Civic action activities are being carried out in the background. Then a major general, Saiyud had attracted attention early in his career for his insights into insurgency and counterinsurgency.

of the conflict. To clearly define the nature of the problems, he did two things immediately. First, he set up an intelligence analysis center with branches in the field. Copies of all government reports (and any other data that could be gathered up) were then fed into the intelligence system and analyzed with the aid of borrowed computer time—a novel methodology for Thailand at the time. This weeded out typical bureaucratic misstatement and inaccuracy and expedited distribution of a definitive assessment of various problems to pertinent agencies. Second, he established an extensive research and analysis branch under the brilliant and at times controversial scholar, Somchai Rakwijit. Under Rakwijit's guidance, the branch soon produced comprehensive assessments based on sound data. Rather than relying on suspect reports passed from outlying regions through the official bureaucracy, he sent researchers into the field, often alone, to study insurgent-infested areas.

Using the data generated by these systems, Saiyud developed a response that called for a mix of civil and military measures. His modus operandi constituted a textbook approach to classic counterinsurgency: identify the problem; move in with solutions, using the military to shield the effort; and send specially trained forces to seek out the guerrillas.

Although Saiyud's approach seemed logical, it encountered resistance. CSOC was at first given authority only over the small CPM task forces deployed to insurgent-affected areas. In 1967, guided by a comprehensive intelligence network set up by Saiyud, the task forces began to show promise in uncovering and dealing with the CPT infrastructure. But when CSOC asked for more units, military opponents, jealously guarding their own turfs, demurred. Before long, authority over field units was transferred back to regional army commanders.

Consequently, this first attempt at establishing a counterinsurgency program was rendered largely ineffective. Most commanders simply would not deploy their forces on what they viewed as a secondary mission. Instead, they concentrated on personal political and economic concerns. When actually called upon to move against insurgent forces, commanders did so in the traditional military fashion most resented by local peoples: search and destroy.

Nowhere was the ineffectiveness of the traditional approach more obvious than in the North. There, beginning in December 1967, a number of land quarrels between Hmong tribesmen and Thai in Chiangrai and Nan provinces exacerbated longstanding hill tribe versus lowlander tensions. The Thai government's initial response was heavy-handed and succeeded primarily in making more enemies. The security forces responded to ambushes with artillery and air strikes that destroyed villages and threw still more recruits to the insurgency. A flood of refugees ensued, devastating the economy of a large area of the North.<sup>11</sup> Concerted attempts by more enlightened officials to adopt alternatives were brushed aside or enmeshed in red tape to ensure they were not resourced.

Saiyud realized the inappropriateness of heavy-handed suppression and fought to implement his CPM strategy, as detailed in a plan titled *The Struggle for Thailand, Section II, A Solution for the North*. His approach was initially rejected by key government officials—"body count" remained the order of the day. Not surprisingly, as the number of villages destroyed grew, so did the number of guerrillas. Some CPT propaganda sessions reportedly involved as many as 200 armed guerrillas. Although its total strength in the North was still only an estimated 3,000 by 1973, the guerrilla movement managed to make life there extremely unsettled in many areas.<sup>12</sup>

This remained the general pattern of events for some time. While many Thai appeared to comprehend the socioeconomic nature of the Northern insurgency, the government's wrongheaded response ensured the failure of its misdirected counterinsurgency efforts.

## An Alternative to Brute Force

The root of the problem in the North was that the hill tribe people concerned, the Hmong, not being ethnically Thai, were treated as second-class citizens. The government's discriminatory racial attitudes, reflected by the average Thai soldier, frequently translated into hostile acts against members of the population. The CPT took advantage of the hostility generated.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that regardless of structural conditions, villager loyalty remained very much up for grabs during this period. Despite



**A staging point for small unit patrols in Nan Province, northern Thailand. Vehicles were used to move troops to jump-off points and to push bulk supplies. Harsh terrain meant tedious foot patrolling under dangerous circumstances.**

the CPT's efforts to paint itself as the people's champion, communist ideology had limited popular appeal. In fact, setting aside the ham-fisted strategy employed by their rulers, most Thai preferred to side with the government and the status quo unless traumatized by specific grievances.

Using "other war" means, Saiyud sought to exploit this Thai inclination to side with the government or to remain neutral, particularly in the Northeast, where the target population, although culturally distinct, was nonetheless regarded as within the "Thai" family. He and other like-minded officials pushed through programs to meet popular needs through regional development.

Publicly, at least, Bangkok was under no illusions concerning poor conditions in the countryside.<sup>13</sup> During the early to mid-1950s, before the outbreak of actual violence, the government had begun a number of development programs to address the conditions. By 1958, this approach had been broadened to include the first community development pilot projects; and in 1960, a National Community Development Program was put into effect, consolidating many of the already existing programs (which had been scattered among various departments). According to government literature,

National Community Development was designed to bring about the partnership of the Royal Thai Government (RTG) and its people at the local level.<sup>14</sup> It aimed "to encourage the people to exercise initiative to improve their communities and ways of living through cooperative efforts on the self-help basis" and to "bring the coordinated support of the various ministries concerned to assist the villagers in carrying out their projects."<sup>15</sup> By the end of 1961, at least on paper, most Northeastern villages were covered by the program, even, it should be noted, as repressive measures sent activists fleeing to the CPT for protection.

While National Community Development was directed at villages throughout the kingdom, additional measures to deal specifically with the Northeast were also implemented. The overall effort was facilitated by the United States, which had established an economic aid mission to the kingdom in 1950. Much of the \$300 million in planned expenditures was provided by Washington. The principal vehicle for American assistance in this field was the Accelerated Rural Development (ARD) program. ARD created, trained, and equipped a local organization to plan, design, construct, and maintain rural roads and other small



village projects. Provinces selected for ARD were those most in need of immediate developmental help. In practice, this meant those provinces threatened by Communist insurgency as designated by the Thai National Security Council. Once a *changwad* was designated an “ARD province,” the governor’s staff and equipment were augmented. Simultaneously, the governor was authorized to implement village-level projects on his own.

By 1969, the governors of the 24 ARD-designated provinces—most of them in the Northeast—had progressed from having virtually no resources with which to mount any type of development program to having 250-member staffs, millions of dollars worth of equipment, and vastly increased budgets. The government had committed a cumulative total of \$58,824,000 to the program, supplemented by \$49,308,000 from the United States. How these funds were expended, it should be noted, reflected economic priorities. Road building and maintenance were the dominant categories. Other ARD activities included mobile medical teams, district farmer groups (cooperatives), and youth and potable water programs.

### Mixed Results of “Development”

In terms of achieving politico-military objectives to end the insurgency, ARD’s results in 1969 were mixed. Although physically and statistically there was a great deal of economic progress to show, the ultimate objective had been to “reduce, or even eliminate, insurgency through the development effort.”<sup>16</sup> This had not happened. To the contrary, American and Thai evaluations consistently noted that ARD made no meaningful difference in the target population’s overall disposition toward the government even though the actual activities involved were generally appreciated.<sup>17</sup> Even where the villagers’ lot improved demonstrably (e.g., per capita income increased), the rosy statistical picture often did not reflect the continuing realities of the poor security situation.

Hence ARD failed to achieve a great deal toward realizing its objectives. This should not have been surprising, since the government had adopted a predominantly economic response to a fundamentally political problem. What should have been one supporting element in an overall program became the main effort due to the government’s one-dimensional

vision of “development” as panacea. The outcome was as predictable as it was ineffective.

The Communist insurgents wanted to restructure the existing systems of social stratification and to redistribute political power by seizing the reins of the state. Because there were no peaceful means to employ—they had been officially frozen out of the system—violence became their principal instrument. Noncommunist opponents of the existing order were similarly precluded from real participation. Their only choices were to sit on the sidelines or join the insurgents.

The solution to such a structural dilemma, then, should have been political reform. But this Bangkok could not see. Although political reform was mentioned as a goal, it was completely overshadowed by the program’s economic aspects, such as infrastructure development. The skewing of goals was reflected in ARD’s unsatisfactory results.

### Role of the United States

Ironically, both the “hard” military and “soft” development sides of the Thai approach were generally attributed to U.S. direction.<sup>18</sup> Such a view was simplistic and misleading. Certainly U.S. influence was significant, but Thailand’s collaboration with the United States during this period was a marriage of convenience for both parties. It was driven by a shared security perspective whereby both states sought to maximize their gains. In fact, when the drawbacks of partnership came to overshadow the advantages, the Thai government asserted its independence and backed away from greater collaboration.

What was on display, amidst a context of American strategic dominance, was the Thai capacity for assessment and adaptation, as demonstrated by Saiyud. The Thai government’s approach matured in a manner that reflected peculiarly Thai characteristics and concerns.

In terms of grand strategy, the Thai sought two ends: national development and security, especially from external threats.

National development proceeded along a path that emphasized economics. A thread of American thought asserted that Western-style economic modernization would result in social and political “modernization,” the product being the maximization of national potential for domestic peace.<sup>19</sup> The Thai came to accept this formula.

Security demands were assessed as most pressing in the post-World War II world due to the perceived menace posed by Chinese and Vietnamese expansionism. The Thai, therefore, negotiated American guarantees and military presence. They watched the evolution of American attitudes toward (and capacity for fighting) “brush fire wars,” an evolution that began in earnest during the Kennedy presidency.<sup>20</sup> Inevitably, key Thai personalities such as Saiyud studied and were influenced by American and other Western (especially British) counterinsurgency concepts.

Western doctrine, regardless of origin, posited three essential tasks for successful resolution of insurgency: security force operations against the insurgents, population and resource control, and elimination of grievances.<sup>21</sup> Institutional predispositions of the Thai military led to emphasis upon security force operations, as well as population and resource control. Within the national context of an economics-driven development strategy, elimination of grievances emphasized providing resources and resolving economic complaints as opposed to rectifying the weaknesses of the political system. This approach played out in ARD, wherein goals such as “roads built” and “wells dug” quickly overshadowed more abstract objectives such as fostering popular participation in the political process.

Thai development efforts, then, did not begin at U.S. behest, but rather evolved from a shared perspective towards an appropriate approach. Nevertheless, the impact the United States had on the nature of Thai programs was considerable. This became even more the case as American officials formulated a plan with the Thai government for a coordinated response to insurgency.

A U.S. Military Aid Program (MAP) and a Joint U.S. Military Assistance Group (JUSMAG) had been in Thailand since the Korean War (during which Thailand deployed a regimental combat team and various sea and air assets), with the Military Assistance Command-Thailand (MACTHAI) added in 1962 for “operational combat assistance.” The mechanisms needed by the Americans to support Thailand’s counterinsurgency plan were fully realized during the tenure of Ambassador Graham Martin (1963-67). Programs, budgets, and U.S. personnel increased substantially. In mid-1966, Martin created the position of Special Assistant for Counterinsurgency to coordinate and regulate all

U.S. military and civilian activities directly related to the problem of insurgency in Thailand.<sup>22</sup>

The number of personnel who administered such support fluctuated constantly. George Tanham has provided useful figures, all for the late 1973, early 1974 time frame (later than the period under discussion, but still illustrative): 101 embassy personnel; 179 U.S. Agency for International Development personnel in the United States Operations Mission (USOM), a plurality working with ARD; 26 personnel in the field element, United States Information Service of the United States Information Agency; 550 personnel in JUSMAG/MACTHAI (a portion of whom were assigned to Special Forces Thailand); and approximately 200 personnel assigned to a field unit (in Bangkok) of the Advanced Research Projects Agency, most of whom were contractors. Other units, such as the 4,000 men of U.S. Army Support Thailand, could be used as appropriate for missions within Thailand.<sup>23</sup>

Compared to the force levels in South Vietnam, those in Thailand were minuscule. Yet these forces were very effective. Although specifically prohibited from participating in combat operations, they performed the functions we now associate with stability operations.<sup>24</sup>

By the end of 1966, 60 percent of American aid funds were going to the Northeast. Mobile Development Units—16 units of 120 men each that carried out civic action projects—received an initial investment of \$1.5 million. The significant ARD input through Fiscal Year (FY) 1969 has already been mentioned (just over \$49 million).

Active as the United States was, a delicate balancing effort was required between providing support specifically to Thailand and support to the war effort elsewhere in Indochina. By the end of 1967, 33,369 U.S. Airmen and 527 aircraft were in the kingdom (by 1970 the personnel figure would reach 48,000), carrying out missions principally against North Vietnam. A Thai division of 11,000 men (14 percent of the army’s total strength) was in South Vietnam, and a substantial 20,000-man “covert” force (27 light infantry and 3 artillery battalions) was in Laos.<sup>25</sup> In sum, “Vietnam War activities” were substantial and had a significant impact upon the economy and society of Thailand.

Even as the United States took a more active interest in the Thai counterinsurgency effort, there



**A Thai soldier on guard duty at a patrol base of 4th Company, 5th Battalion, 5th Infantry Regiment, during operations in Betong district of Yala Province, May 1985.**

was a conscious effort to avoid the missteps made in Vietnam. U.S. personnel might goad the Thai and offer funds, but they did not co-opt Bangkok's strategic direction, as they had with the Saigon regime. While the Thai did adopt many programs modeled after American counterinsurgency efforts in South Vietnam, their approach to dealing with the CPT maintained a distinctly Thai flavor and pace, both of which often proved exasperating to the Americans.

As one of the few Asian states that had avoided becoming a colony, Thailand responded to international and domestic challenges with Thai designs and imperatives. American aid and presence,

although certainly increasing the viability of the Thai counterinsurgency (to include individual programs such as ARD), did not instigate or control it. Indeed, the American contribution to the Thai campaign, for better or worse, followed much the same trajectory as the larger Indochina conflict. The gradual winding down of the U.S. presence in Southeast Asia led to diminishing resources and removal of the sense of urgency that had marked the American advisory effort. By 1976, there were only 4,000 Americans left in Thailand, most providing communications or logistics support and not connected to the Thai counterinsurgency.

### **Changes in National and Regional Context**

In Thailand, unlike in Vietnam, American assistance primarily worked to improve the Thai capacity for action. On the ground, Thai emphasis on the economic development approach, coupled with the overemphasis on military operations, allowed the CPT not only to survive, but also slowly to expand. As the 1970s began, Thailand found its agriculturally based economy unable to meet rising economic demands and its narrow political system unable to accommodate demands for increased popular participation. The government bureaucracy, monopolizing power, crushed efforts to form a viable democratic system. Calls for reform could not be dealt with in any substantive fashion because the mechanisms to do so simply did not exist.

In October 1973, the government finally reached a crisis point: a wave of student demonstrations ended with the arrest of activists demanding greater democracy. Violence erupted, and the military regime collapsed with startling rapidity. For the next three years, a succession of weak democratic governments sought to come up with a viable form of popular rule.

As the unstable situation persisted, demands by the left for the mobilization of marginalized elements of the population aroused fears of mob rule among traditional segments of the Thai polity. Those segments, in turn, made common cause with military factions favoring a return to authoritarian rule. In a coup on 6 October 1976 that featured a bloody assault on Thammasat University, the perceived center of leftist influence, the military bureaucracy returned to power. Many individuals, ranging from



students to activist workers to politicians, fled into the jungles or made their way to Indochina.

Eventually, these political refugees numbered in the thousands. Their numbers, their representation of virtually all major societal strata, and their profound bitterness towards the system all spoke to a spectacular opportunity for the CPT. Here at last was the systemic crisis for which the Communists had long hoped. After years of laboring in marginalized areas, unable to penetrate the heartland, the CPT finally found itself with the political vacuum it had sought that accompanied a state of political and social polarization.

As the acknowledged leading opposition group, the party was ideally situated to become the key agent for shaping and directing the forces demanding change. Presented with at least 4,000 new recruits from diverse backgrounds and occupations, many of whom were “progressive” in their orientation, the CPT saw a chance to replicate the popular front strategy that Mao had realized with his anti-Japanese united front.

Banking on anti-government and anti-American sentiment fostered by more than two decades of CPT propaganda labeling American imperialists and their reactionary Thai allies as the people’s great enemies, the CPT called upon all sectors of society to rally to it and launched an assault on all aspects of the old regime, even the king.<sup>26</sup> After decades of slow, difficult expansion, the party (and many knowledgeable observers) felt that the events at Thammasat University had revealed to all, at last, the true fascist character of the military regime and its obedience to imperialist American instructions. Thus the CPT thought the way was paved for mass insurrection.

The party’s resulting attacks, directed against both the government and Bhumipol Adulyadej, the ninth king of the Chakkri dynasty, represented a significant change of strategy. Virtually all aspects of the “old feudal order” were now fair game and were denounced in favor of a proposed new society—a Communist one. Externally, too, the situation seemed to favor this open attempt to seize power: Cambodia, China, Laos, and Vietnam all gave the CPT support.

What the CPT thought was as an extremely advantageous situation suddenly collapsed under the weight of other, unanticipated, events in Southeast Asia. Most important, the Vietnamese

invasion of Cambodia (1978) rekindled fears of Communist territorial expansionism into Thailand itself and stoked Thai nationalism. Then, in early 1979, China’s thrust into Vietnam dramatically heightened anxieties that the kingdom was about to become involved in internecine conflict among two Communist powers vying for political influence in Southeast Asia.

Doubt and fear extended beyond the government into the ranks of the CPT itself. With its close ties to both China and Vietnam, the CPT leadership found itself caught between Thai nationalism and ideological commitment to other communist movements and sponsors. Ironically, perceived expansionism by the Communist Vietnamese, not American imperialism, now seemed to pose the greatest threat to the survival of the Thai nation and thus to the Thai revolution. When the CPT refused to go along with Vietnam’s plans, the party paid the price.

In January 1979, even before the Chinese attack on Vietnam, CPT backing for Beijing led the Central Committee of the Lao People’s Revolutionary Party, which took its directions from Hanoi, to order the CPT to vacate its bases in Laos. Coming on the heels of the loss of sanctuaries in Cambodia due to continued fighting along the Thai-Cambodian border, this was a substantial blow. The CPT was wracked by a bitter internal battle complete with defections to the Vietnamese side and formation of a rival, pro-Vietnamese, organization, *Pak Mai*.<sup>27</sup> High-ranking CPT members began to defect to the government.

Although the Sino-Vietnamese split had dislocated base areas and disrupted supply lines, resulting in serious setbacks, it was ideological issues that tore the CPT apart. The causes of such serious internal turbulence stemmed from what dissidents cited as overly rigid adherence to the Chinese version of people’s war and failure to learn from (in particular) Vietnamese success. Dissidents within the party argued vigorously that had the CPT been ready—had it mobilized in the urban areas instead of strictly following Maoist doctrine and staying in the countryside—it could have moved decisively amidst urban chaos. For the Politburo, this position represented a dangerous doctrinal deviation.

Battle was joined at the long-delayed Fourth Party Congress, held in regional sessions throughout 1982. During the Congress, dissident accusations of “old guard” ballot tampering split the party,

thereby signaling the beginning of the end for the CPT. Battered from within and without, especially by an increasingly effective government counterinsurgency strategy, the membership became disillusioned. What had been a trickle of defections became an uncontrollable hemorrhage.

## The Government's New Approach

In a sense, the CPT had self-destructed. However, internal disaffection and external fratricide were not the whole story. Individuals were willing to leave the party only because the state had given them somewhere to go. Ultimately, changes in the government's political policy and the environment that such changes engendered created such a haven.<sup>28</sup>

The needed changes were begun shortly after the events of October 1973. In November, Prem Tinsulanond, then a relatively obscure officer, was made the deputy commanding general of the Second Army, charged with security in the Thai Northeast. Among his many duties was responsibility for directing the Northeast region's counterinsurgency program.

Modifying Saiyud's original CPM approach (the two men knew each other well) by enhancing its political aspects, Prem soon began to see results. Psychological operations, persuasion, and heavy use of the civilian provincial governors and their resources constituted a marked departure from the normal emphasis on firepower. By 1975-76, the Second Army had become a model of sorts in dealing with the insurgency.

Second Army's approach can be characterized as development-for-security, with development understood to be a socio-economic-political process. "It is the weakness of the system which allows guerrillas to grow," Saiyud stated flatly. "The target, therefore, is the population, not areas or enemy forces. Problems of the system must be addressed. The popular base of the insurgents must be destroyed. Strengthen the villages first, *then* go into the jungle after the guerrillas."<sup>29</sup>

This Prem did, acting within his own area of control. Eight years had passed, however (from Saiyud's 1965 assignment to CSOC/ISOC until Prem's assignment to the Northeast), before Saiyud's philosophy could blossom full force. During the interim, those who did not see repression as the answer to the insurgency were forced to be content with doing whatever they could.

Once in charge, Prem did things differently. His methodology was not unlike that used successfully in numerous other areas around the world by counterinsurgent forces. First, a target area was blanketed with troops, who drove off the CPT's armed units. Then, all particulars of the population were learned and the insurgent counterstate dismantled through systematic intelligence collection and exploitation. At the same time, civic-action programs were instituted and local forces formed, while special operations against strongholds kept insurgent forces at bay. Finally, civil authorities again assumed complete control.

What gave substance to the form, however, was the growth of the democratic system. Prem's forces, rather than being the law, became the administrators of the law. In effect, they became the embodiment of the Buddhist ideal of how things ought to be. The democratic process they insisted on accorded with traditional demands by the populace for a just order, thereby legitimizing the government.

Prem's initial success attracted attention. From then on, his rise was rapid. In 1976, he became commander of the entire Second Army Region. Only two years later, in September 1978, he assumed command of the army as a whole. By February 1980, he was prime minister. Under him, Saiyud ultimately became supreme commander of the armed forces.

Throughout his rise, Prem drew his key support from the "Young Turks," officers of battalion-command level influenced by their counterinsurgency experiences (especially in Indochina) and a desire

***Prem's forces...became the administrators of the law. ...The democratic process they insisted on accorded with traditional demands by the populace for a just order, thereby legitimizing the government.***

to move the military toward more professional concerns. The Young Turks were joined by another group calling themselves the “Democratic Soldiers.”<sup>30</sup> The latter were to be equally important.

If the Young Turks provided the brawn, the Democratic Soldiers provided the brains. The major difference between the two was that the Young Turks came from the line while the Democratic Soldiers had been staff officers. Learning from Communist defectors and their own study, the Democratic Soldiers advanced “democracy,” which they left quite undefined, as the key weapon against insurgency. Among their main supporters were Major General Chaovalit Yongchaiyuth, Prem’s aide-de-camp, who would later head the army and oversee the destruction of the CPT, and Major General Harn Leenanond, head of army operations (G3), later to command the Fourth Army in the South and to destroy the CPT there as he had helped Prem to do in the Northeast while a member of the latter’s staff.

These two individuals were apparently the principal authors of an extraordinary document, Prime Minister (PM) Order No. 66/23 (the 66th order in the Buddhist Era Year 2523, or 1980), “The Policy for the Fight to Defeat the Communists,” subsequently augmented by PM Order No. 65/25 (1982), “Plan for the Political Offensive.”<sup>31</sup> What they set forth was a politically driven strategy to meet the Communists. As 66/23 unequivocally stated, “Political factors are crucial [to the success of the counterinsurgency], and military operations must be conducted essentially to support and promote political goals.”<sup>32</sup>

The follow-up 66/25 left no doubt what Prem had in mind:

“Let the development of democracy be the guiding principle .... We estimate that the CPT has slowed our democratic development, using weak points as propaganda subjects to deceive the people. Simultaneously, the CPT itself has pretended to give democracy to the people. What the CPT has in mind, however, is tactical democracy... [To meet them,] all patterns of dictatorship must be destroyed.”<sup>33</sup>

Put in other terms, if lack of “development” in an all-encompassing socio-economic-political sense was the cause of insurgency, then it was the army’s task to foster just such development as a counter. That such a view could come to the fore would have been impossible without the old-regime crisis that

erupted in October 1973. Rising out of the turmoil, Prem, in concert with like-minded individuals, completely reoriented the Thai counterinsurgency approach. Asked much later what had been the principal factor that changed the campaign after he had spent years fruitlessly trying to convert his fellow officers, Saiyud responded simply: “Prem. What made the difference was having someone who could order support. This made all the difference in the world. We already had the ideas and the concepts. They had been in place for years.”<sup>34</sup>

To implement them, Prem took CSOC/ISOC out of its advisory role and placed it again in the operational chain of command. Not only was it given the power to direct CPM task forces, as had been the case initially under Saiyud, but the regional army commanders, who had always been independent, were fully integrated into the structure. Gradually, all regular army and security force units in operational areas were likewise placed under the CPM task forces, where they worked intimately with civil authority.

## **Bangkok Wages People’s War**

Operationally, local forces were the foundation upon which all else was built. This concept was not new; it had been an integral part of Saiyud’s counterinsurgency plans. Yet Saiyud’s response had been premature. His call for self-defense forces and local participation were ahead not only of the bureaucracy, but even the populace. Tradition-oriented Thai peasants were not yet receptive to the idea of defending themselves. “The villagers were more afraid of the police than the enemy,” Saiyud has noted.<sup>35</sup> This ended with October 1973 and its aftermath. It was democracy that thrust popular concerns to the fore and stimulated the people’s willingness to defend what was theirs.

What *was* theirs? That which was “Thai.” Here, we begin to pull together the many loose ends that have appeared in the course of this discussion. We can cite no particular point at which the people came to think of the system as “theirs.” October 1973 was surely a benchmark, but the events that followed, with the left and right battling for control of the emerging democratic system, were just as important. In every sense, the contest became a campaign of the streets. The CPT—the illegal left—erred in not recognizing the need to get into



the battle directly (because its doctrine told it to stay in the rural areas). The legal left, which was on the streets, erred in adopting foreign cultural idioms and forms.

In particular, proponents of rapid change made the mistake of interpreting the situation in terms alien to the bulk of the population. The left saw the military as a creature of the West rather than recognizing that its structural position was a logical consequence of Thai historical factors. As a result, the left was quite unprepared for the reaction its actions sparked.

It was no accident that what have normally been termed “right wing pressure groups” achieved the strength they did in the post-October 1973 era. They built upon those cultural idioms salient to popular existence: “Buddhism, Nation, Monarchy.” In a sense, the second of these subsumed the other two: to be a Thai was to be a Buddhist within a hierarchy that culminated in the monarch. To lose one’s place in this hierarchy was to lose one’s identity as a Thai.

Yet the CPT leadership, joined by that of the legal left, little understood just how far it had strayed from Thai cultural idioms. The two groups assumed that the conditions that had given them an alternative worldview would automatically produce the same worldview in others. They projected their individual cases onto the whole, and by so doing, they analytically distorted Thai reality.

Supporters of the status quo used the years 1973-76 to rally the populace against those who would destroy their world. Although the left prided itself on its mobilization abilities, its forces soon found themselves swamped by mass mobilization carried out by the right. The Village Scouts organization alone, which had a paramilitary component and drew its membership through appeals to nationalism (defined particularly as loyalty to the monarchy and Buddhism), reached a membership of 2.5 million, or over 5 percent of the total population, by mid-1978.<sup>36</sup> The CPT counterstate could not begin to match this strength.<sup>37</sup> Nor could the legal left, for all its organizational skills, attract such numbers.

And the Village Scouts were but one of several anticommunist organizations, with others, such as *Nawaphol* and *Krathing Daeng* (“Red Gaur”), though fewer in numbers, far more militant. When

the legal left was perceived to have taken the logical next step in its “anti-Thai” approach—threatening the monarchy by attacking the Crown Prince—the carnage of October 1976 resulted. Specifics of the episode become, in such a context, virtually incidental. Given the shape of the emerging cultural confrontation, the clash would have occurred eventually.

CPT attacks on the monarchy all but sealed the party’s doom. The subsequent reactionary mushrooming of popular mobilization by rightist groups enabled regular forces to be reassigned to face external threats. The population aroused became “a people numerous and armed.”

Thus were born the “Rangers.” Begun while Prem was army commander, the local-forces Ranger concept turned the communist methodology of mass mobilization on its head. It used locally recruited manpower, often drawn from already existing organizations such as the Village Scouts, to operate against the insurgents, while nationalist mass organizations in the villages fostered systemic loyalty. Controlled by regular army personnel, the Rangers had, by the end of 1981, grown to 160 companies, about 13,000 men, more than the CPT armed strength of 12,500 at the time.<sup>38</sup>

So plentiful were recruits that they were difficult to absorb properly. Lack of control at times forced the disbandment of units, but others were formed to take their place. Soon, the local-forces structure covered all areas of the kingdom. This development occurred with almost startling rapidity. In a sense, it capped another complementary effort. As the government pushed to integrate all areas of the kingdom, growing numbers of former soldiers who had fought in the Indochina conflict were hired as security forces by construction companies charged with building strategic roads. As such, they engaged in regular combat with the insurgents.<sup>39</sup> Other ex-soldiers were recruited as settlers and relocated into contested areas with their families, creating strategic hamlets.

All of these measures met with success. That CPT people’s war should be buffeted by Bangkok people’s war was irony of the first order. What followed was almost anticlimactic. Because the change in government strategy coincided with the larger changes in the international situation and with the intra-party strategic debate, all elements



Thai “Rangers,” or local forces, examine a captured CPT camp in Nan Province. The Rangers experienced explosive growth once the CPT directly attacked the Thai monarchy. Surveys consistently showed that more than half of all rural people still viewed the royal couple as divine, a reality completely missed by a materialist movement committed to Maoism.

necessary for the demise of the CPT came together simultaneously.

Prem’s political strategy, which held that insurgents would not be treated as prisoners, but as those returning to the fold, established an environment that became especially important in promoting a willingness among Communist guerrillas to lay down their arms. Offered amnesty with minimal security precautions, demobilized insurgents were enticed to resume normal lives.<sup>40</sup> By mid-1983, the vestiges of the CPT had, for all practical purposes, become a nuisance rather than a threat.<sup>41</sup>

Those insurgents laying down their arms returned to a different Thailand. Not only had the democratic system created a new political environment, but Prem’s administration had paved the way for an economic boom by abandoning statist policies in favor of greater integration within the world economy. Reform formalized under Prem resulted in a period of significant national vitality that continues to the present. Consequent rapid industrialization and urbanization spawned a whole

host of new challenges and problems, but ones so different to those being discussed by radicals that the CPT became essentially irrelevant. Throughout, the United States remained an important player by promoting these developments, though on a much smaller scale than during the Vietnam War era.

***Prem’s political strategy, which held that insurgents would not be treated as prisoners, but as those returning to the fold, established an environment that became especially important in promoting a willingness among Communist guerrillas to lay down their arms.***



## Conclusions

In the end, Thailand won its battle with the CPT insurgents. Noteworthy as the victory was, however, particularly in light of the results in Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam, it would be incorrect to see the Thai example as a template for employing elsewhere a particular combination of tactical techniques. To the contrary, the Thai victory was largely a result of its strategic approach being realized in an operational art shaped to Thai realities, particularly political realities. Had the various elements not been carried out in accordance with those realities, the outcome could have been very different. In this sense, the counterinsurgency existed in symbiotic relationship with its society.

As Saiyud stated, the weaknesses of the Thai system provided the opportunity for the CPT. An imperfect system itself “threw up” the manpower that became the CPT. A people’s war strategy, combined with a plenitude of manpower produced by government abuses, allowed the CPT to grow. Seeking structural change to pursue socialist development, the CPT established itself in remote areas and worked to build the sanctuaries it needed to achieve critical mass. It then sought to make its counterstate viable by pushing into the central heartland.

In each of its three main campaign areas—the Northeast, North, and South—the Communist Party had the benefit of working in unique circumstances that favored the recruitment of marginalized individuals. In the Northeast, particularly, building a counterstate seemed possible. But these conditions were not replicated in the heartland, where U.S. assistance played an important role in strengthening state capacity.

Unable to penetrate the central core of the kingdom, the CPT had to wait for new developments. These came with the explosive ouster of authoritarian rule and subsequent chaotic efforts to fashion a democratic system by implementing parliamentary mechanisms and increasing local government. Sudden allowance for popular democratic participation naturally enough produced different views of how this should occur and what shape the result should take. To that end, the forces of the left and the right became locked in conflict. If this democratic political space was midwife to societal conflict, it also produced salvation for the system. New military leadership emerged, and it saw democracy as the means for countermobilization.



**Royal Thai Army M-60 machinegunner operating in Uttaradit Province, northern Thailand. The CPT built its northern theater of operations by exploiting grievances that had long festered among highland tribes over lowlanders intruding into their traditional areas.**

Political mobilization, however, is a dangerous business in the absence of institutions into which unleashed popular forces can channel their energies. In Thailand’s counterinsurgency campaign, existing cultural practices and idioms provided these. Numerous mass organizations in support of the traditional pillars of society—Buddhism, the nation, and monarchy—were formed. At times, their energy amounted to millennial fervor, as would be anticipated in a time of profound structural upheaval. By voicing their support of the pillars, members could opt for utopia, a perfect Buddhist world, even while remaining firmly fixed in reality—supporting the system that protected the pillars.

That the security forces were able to mobilize this outpouring while the Communists could not resulted, of course, from the fact that the Communists never really attempted to do so. Instead, their ideological worldview overpowered their strategies. Mao would have condemned them, for the essence



of the united front strategy he passed on called for the exploitation of structural reality as the would-be revolutionaries found it. This, the government, rather than the insurgents, was able to accomplish.

“Government” in this context must be used with some reservations. Before October 1973, a fundamental weakness of the Thai counterinsurgency was that it was not a national reform effort, but the strengthening of an imperfect system (with substantial U.S. assistance). Although this reinforcement was important, when all was said and done, the old order responded to insurgent violence with violence. Some, to be sure, were more enlightened than others and recognized the counterproductive nature of repression, but they were neither in positions of power nor citizens of a system that could behave otherwise.

This is not to say that countermobilization against the insurgents could not and did not occur on a tactical scale. It did, particularly when Saiyud was given authority through the mechanisms of CSOC/ISOC. Yet this could only be a short-term solution given the long-term structural dilemma at hand: how to ask the populace to fight for “their” system when they had little direct stake in it (aside from the lifestyle offered by the status quo). Defense became possible only when a faction of the military, represented most prominently by Prem and Saiyud, became the government and could mobilize the populace behind democratic institutions.

This process further highlighted the importance of cultural idioms. The bureaucratic polity was not necessarily predatory, because it was kept in check by the same cultural dicta that had in the past checked the absolute power of the monarchy. CPT efforts at mobilization could overcome the traditional worldview and replace it with an alternative construct

only where the representatives of the authoritarian polity had crossed the bounds of acceptable conduct. Because of specific decisions made by men like Saiyud and Prem, these transgressions never reached the level necessary to negate existing popular conservatism and latent support for the ideal order.

In a phrase, Saiyud and Prem rescued the system from itself. That rescue was not preordained. Prem and Saiyud wandered in the bureaucratic wilderness for years before their moment came. Then, too, they were produced by the same system that “made” their opposite numbers, whether in the authoritarian polity (rival officers) or in the developing radical system (the insurgents). That they saw reform as the more proper course resulted from individual choice. When the moment came to be heard, they acted. Had they given heed to opposing counsel, the situation could well have deteriorated to the point where even the CPT’s mistakes would not have kept it from becoming a key player in the drama of Thai political transition.

It follows naturally enough that the precise techniques adopted by Prem and his cohorts, while necessary, were certainly not sufficient to ensure the victory of the parliamentary option in the democratic system. The counterinsurgency methodologies implemented, from local-forces to special-unit operations, had been in existence, but they had never been brought into play in support of a viable political goal. Predictably, attending simultaneously to the entire range of irregular warfare demands, from tactics to politics, within a strategic approach that is correct and sustainable was—and still is—the key to successful counterinsurgency. Support of such an approach is ultimately in the interests of the United States. **MR**

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## NOTES

1. For a more in-depth treatment of the events in Thailand, see Thomas A. Marks, *Making Revolution: The Insurgency of the Communist Party of Thailand in Structural Perspective* (Bangkok: White Lotus, 1994) and Marks, *Maoist Insurgency Since Vietnam* (London: Frank Cass, 1996), particularly chapter 1 (19-82).

2. See Thomas A. Marks, “Government Policy as a Reflection of the Development Model: The Case of Accelerated Rural Development (ARD) in Northeast Thailand,” *Journal of East & West Studies* (Seoul) 10, no.1 (1981): 59-95.

3. See Charles F. Keyes, *Isan: Regionalism in Northeast Thailand* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 1967). For attitude surveys, see Somchai Rakwijit, *Village Leadership in Northeast Thailand and Study of Youth in Northeast Thailand* (Bangkok: Joint Thai-US Military Research and Development Center, 1971).

4. See Komsan Madukham, *Dong Prachao: Land of the Dead* (Bangkok: Pita-kpracha, 1977) [in Thai]. This is a useful volume; one of eighteen such works that Somchai Rakwijit, research director for CSOC/ISOC, arranged for his personnel to produce using pen names. The authors thus had access to all available data, to include classified material.

5. Interview with Somchai Rakwijit, Bangkok, 13 May 1986. See also David Jenkins, “The Hit-Run ‘Government,’” *Far Eastern Economic Review* [hereafter, *FEER*], 23 July 1973, 26-27. The precise combination of these elements at any particular

time was problematic. More often than not, the standard nomenclature for identifying a particular area of CPT activity was to designate it a “zone.” A zone could embrace anything from a village to a province.

6. Robert F. Zimmerman, “Insurgency in Thailand,” *Problems of Communism* (May-June 1976): 27. Additional details may be found in Justus M. van der Kroef, “Guerrilla Communism and Counterinsurgency in Thailand,” *Orbis* 17, no.1 (Spring 1974): 106-39 (see especially 119-22).

7. Ralph W. McGehee, *Deadly Deceits: My 25 Years in the CIA* (New York: Sheridan Square, 1983), 109.

8. Zimmerman (page 21) observes: “There is sometimes considerable controversy both within and between various government agencies (Thai and foreign) as to where ‘Communists’ are or are not ‘active.’”

9. Portions of this section have appeared in my “Thailand’s Terror Years,” *Soldier of Fortune*, August 1990, 30-37 (cont).

10. Interview with Saiyud Kerdphol, former Supreme Commander of the Royal Thai Armed Forces, Phayao Province, 31 August 1987.

11. See Arnold Abrams and Chiang Kham, “Mountains of Discontent,” *FEER*, 2 July 1970, 20-22.

12. See John R. Thomson, “The Burning Mountain,” *FEER*, 25 April 1968, 218-20.

13. See, for example, the assessment contained in Community Development Program, *Summary of National Community Development Programme Thailand* (Bangkok: Department of Interior, 1961).

14. For an example of such literature, see Community Development Bureau, Thanom Kittikachorn, *Trends in Community Development* (Bangkok: Department of Interior, 1964); and Vichit Sukaviriya, ed. *Facts about Community Development Programs* (Bangkok: Ministry of Interior, 1966).

15. Community Development Bureau, 1.

16. George K. Tanham, *Trial in Thailand* (New York: Crane, Russak, 1974), 75.

17. See, for example, Ralph E. Dakin, ed., *Security and Development in Northeast Thailand: Problems, Progress and the Roles of Amphoe, Tambol and Muban Government* (Bangkok: USOM/Thailand, 1968); and USOM/Thailand, *Impact of USOM Supported Programs in Changwad Sakorn Nakorn* (Bangkok: 1967). Further analysis is contained in Peter F. Bell, "Thailand's Northeast: Regional Underdevelopment, 'Insurgency', and Official Response," *Pacific Affairs* 42, no. 1 (Spring 1969): 47-54.

18. This is a central theme in, for example, Chai-anan Samudavanija, Kusuma Snitwongse, and Suchit Bunbongkarn, *From Armed Suppression to Political Offensive: Attitudinal Transformation of Thai Military Officers since 1976* (Bangkok: Institute of Security and International Studies, Chulalongkorn University, 1990). For an alternative approach that proceeds within a larger framework of reaction to perceived threat, see Thomas A. Marks, "The Thai Approach to Peacemaking since World War II," *Journal of East & West Studies* (Seoul) 7, no. 1 (April 1978): 133-55, and Marks, "An Eclectic Model of Thailand's Participation in the Vietnam War," *Peace Research* (Ontario) 11, no. 2 (April 1979): 71-76.

19. Agency for International Development, *Introduction to Program Presentation to the Congress/Proposed FY 1971 Program* (no date).

20. For particulars of this development, consult Michael T. Klare, *War Without End* (New York: Vintage Books, 1972); Frances Fitzgerald, *Fire in the Lake* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1972); and David Halberstam, *The Best and the Brightest* (Greenwich, CT: Fawcett Publications, 1972).

21. For a representative selection, see United States Military Academy, *Revolutionary Warfare*, 6 vols. (West Point, NY: Department of Military Art and Engineering, 1967); Naval War College, *Selected Readings for Counter-insurgency Course*, 4 vols. (Newport, RI, 1968); Robert Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency* (New York: Praeger, 1966).

22. Tanham, 115-50.

23. *Ibid.*, 115-28.

24. The no-combat rule did not apply to "black ops" such as the use, during the period March 1966–January 1967, of a score of helicopters attached to the U.S. 606th Air Commando Squadron in support of Thai actions in the North and Northeast.

25. The battalions concerned had been formed in Thailand after being recruited by the Thai army. They were apparently trained by the CIA and detailed U.S. Special Forces personnel. Udon was the site of "HQ 333" for Thai forces in Laos. Each unit was built around a core of regular Thai army personnel, all of whom "resigned" before becoming "volunteers." The initial cost to the United States had been \$26 million annually for payroll expenses, one-third the amount of all U.S. aid budgeted for Laos. At the time, the insurgent Pathet Lao, who could function only because of North Vietnamese presence, claimed that half the "Lao government forces" were

in reality Thai. The balance of those forces were Hmong tribesmen of the "Secret Army" under Vang Pao.

26. A more detailed treatment can be found in Thomas A. Marks, "The Thai Monarchy under Siege," *Asia Quarterly* (Brussels) no. 2 (1978): 109-41; and Marks, "The Status of the Monarchy in Thailand," *Issues & Studies* (Taipei) 13, no. 11 (November 1977): 51-70.

27. This rival organization, *Pak Mai* (New Party), was later to be revealed as the Thai Isan Liberation Party, founded in Vientiane on 22 October 1979. See "Northern Separatists," *FEER*, 4 April 1980, 7.

28. Much of the material in this section, particularly that related to personalities, has been drawn from personal experience. I am also indebted to discussions with Saiyud Kerdphol; Anthony "Tony" Paul, former regional editor (*Asia*) for *Reader's Digest*; John McBeth, former Thailand correspondent for *FEER*; Mike Jones, former Lieutenant Colonel, Special Air Services (SAS) and security consultant; and John Cole and Denny Lane, both former U.S. Army attachés in Bangkok. In certain cases, these discussions spanned at least a decade and took place in numerous locations.

29. Interview with Saiyud Kerdphol, Phayao Province, 31 August 1987.

30. See Chai-anan Samudavanija, Kusuma Snitwongse, and Suchit Bunbongkarn.

31. Texts with commentary may be found in Sarochna Robbamrung, *Internal Security, Kingdom of Thailand*, unpublished paper dated 11 February 1987, prepared for the U.S. Army War College. Several sources claim that Prem himself wrote 66/23. It is not a long document. I have been unable to confirm actual authorship, though it is certain the Prime Ministerial Order was the product of much discussion among a small circle that included the officers named.

32. Sarochna, 2, 33, *Ibid.*, 5.

34. See n. 28.

35. Interview with Saiyud Kerdphol, Bangkok, 13 May 1986.

36. This is the figure given by Marjorie A. Muecke, "The Village Scouts of Thailand," *Asian Survey* 20, no. 4 (April 1980): 407.

37. Anthony Paul, "The Jungle War the Communists Lost," *Reader's Digest*, Asian edition, October 1984, 2-6, gives peak CPT strength as 14,000 armed insurgents, with another 20,000 individuals directly involved in support activities. No estimates ever placed the mass base in the 2.5 million range, the number who went through the Village Scouts Training Program, a one-week course.

38. Paisal Sricharatchanya, "Security: Playing the Same Game," *FEER*, 18 December 1981, 15-16.

39. See, for example, Jim Coyne, "Thailand's Battle Road," *Soldier of Fortune*, February 1982, 37-43 (cont).

40. In a witty piece, "Insights: Sex and the Single Insurgent," *Asiaweek*, 8 April 1983, 24, Anthony Paul noted: "As the surrendering insurgents have flooded into the Army's 'open arms' over the past twelve months, the soldiery have been impressed by the defectors' priorities in the first hours of their new coexistence with capitalism. Said a Phitsanulok-based colonel: 'As far as I've been able to establish, a communist is someone with an overpowering interest in seafood (notably missing from the jungle diet) and sex. Did Marx say anything about this?'"

41. For an excellent overview, see Anthony Paul, "Winding Down a War," *Asiaweek*, 8 April 1983, 16-24.

At the clinic of Ibrahim Higer

**At the clinic of Ibrahim Higer  
an American Colonel and minions  
avoid tea, eye cracked catheters,  
the crowd**

**inquire about vaccinations,  
his schooling in Basra, little joke  
over good times gone, come again,  
the crowd**

**ask where water and power are  
made, he doesn't understand, for it must  
be by God, surely, or jest?,  
the crowd**

**what diseases does he see, what  
pestilences, shingles?, can they bring  
medicine?, would he like help, training?,  
the crowd**

**about the pharmacy, where is it?,  
how do drugs arrive?, does he  
have black-market issues?, of course,  
the crowd**

**waste?, sharps?, is there an  
incinerator?, where are your dead  
buried?, have you not seen them, sir –  
the crowd**

**his top, his biggest needs, what are  
they?, an ambulance?, IV fluid?, a guard  
at the entrance?, can they just hold back  
the crowd**





# Mounted Vertical Maneuver: A Giant Leap Forward in Maneuver and Sustainment

Brigadier General Robin P. Swan, U.S. Army, and  
Lieutenant Colonel Scott R. McMichael, U.S. Army, Retired

FOR ALMOST 70 YEARS, the U.S. military has possessed and employed a capability to conduct strategic, operational, and tactical maneuver by air with light forces through airborne operations. Nearly 50 years ago, the Army expanded that capability by developing the means to conduct air assault operations with dismounted units. Readers of *Military Review* can easily visualize these kinds of operations and recognize the advantages they provide to joint and ground commanders. However, their limitations are also well known. Once positioned by air, dismounted forces are limited in tactical reach, lethality, and survivability. In most situations, commanders must quickly reinforce air-delivered light forces with other capabilities to fully exploit the positions of advantage achieved and to generate meaningful operational momentum. This effort often requires considerable time and is dependent as well on the availability of strategic airlift and the improved airfields needed for their employment.

In contrast, imagine having the ability to move mounted forces by air directly to positions close to objective areas, then having that mounted force seize critical objectives without extensive pauses or the need for immediate reinforcement. For roughly the past 10 years, the Army has devoted significant efforts to investigating the near-revolutionary effects it might achieve with such intra-theater operational maneuver and tactical vertical maneuver.

Mounted vertical maneuver (MVM) is the Army's concept of a future capability to move mounted, protected forces by air across extended distances, from positions either outside or inside the boundaries of the joint operations area (JOA), to strike directly against critical enemy objectives throughout the depth and breadth of the battlespace. If realized, MVM will provide extraordinarily versatile new options that will extend the reach and power of future joint force commanders (JFCs). It will enable JFCs to respond more effectively to opportunity or uncertainty, to conduct forcible entry, to isolate portions of the battlefield, to exploit success, and to expose the enemy's entire force to direct attack by mobile ground forces at any point. Furthermore, MVM could be one of the key means future JFCs use to accelerate the defeat of the enemy by combining the defeat mechanisms of *dislocation* and *disintegration*, as described in both joint and Army futures concepts. The operational benefits that this kind of capability affords are so great that the Army thinks MVM should be pursued as a national program.

Mounted vertical maneuver is a fundamental component of the Army's family of future concepts for the future Modular Force. It provides a means

*Brigadier General Robin P. Swan is Director, Concept Development and Experimentation Directorate, Army Capabilities Integration Center, Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC). He is a graduate of Indiana University of Pennsylvania, the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, the School for Advanced Military Studies, and the Armed Forces Staff College. He has also been a National Security Program Fellow at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University. BG Swan has served in numerous command and staff positions in the United States, Germany, Hungary, and Bosnia.*

*Lieutenant Colonel Scott R. McMichael, U.S. Army, Retired, is a director and regional manager for System Studies & Simulation, Inc. He has supported U.S. Army TRADOC as the senior concept developer for the past six years and is the primary author of the Army's future capstone concept, TRADOC PAM 525-3-0, The Army in Joint Operations. A former artillery officer and Soviet foreign area officer, LTC McMichael is the author of *Stumbling Bear: Soviet Military Performance in Afghanistan* (Brassey's UK, 1991) and was a major contributor to *Slaughterhouse: The Encyclopedia of the Eastern Front* (The Military Book Club, Garden City, NY, 2002). He publishes widely in defense journals.*





Artist's rendering of a mounted vertical maneuver operation.

to fully exploit the advanced capabilities of the Army's medium-weight forces, including existing Stryker Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs) and BCTs that will be equipped with the Future Combat Systems (FCSs) in the next two decades. The concept is equally applicable to the maneuver and air-based sustainment of any light, motorized, or medium-weight mechanized forces that may be mission-tailored into future combined and joint task forces. As this article will demonstrate, MVM is relevant across the full range of military operations, including homeland security. Moreover, it is not merely an Army idea, but has substantial support from other elements in the U.S. defense community.

## Historical Background

How new is the idea of MVM? One hesitates to mention the imaginative "mobile infantry drops" of Robert Heinlein's *Starship Troopers* (1959) simply because critics of the MVM concept often dismiss the book's ideas, quite wrongly, as pure science fiction. Brigadier General Richard Simkin's highly admired book *Race to the Swift: Thoughts on 21st Century Warfare*, published in 1985, is probably the best known early work that addresses the capability.<sup>1</sup> In it, one finds a scholarly treatment, well grounded in military theory, of the need for a mounted vertical maneuver capability. To quote Simkin: "The rotor is to track as track is to boot." Simkin clearly viewed the development of an MVM capability as both feasible and necessary to maintain a maneuver and mobility advantage in future conflict.

The former Soviet Union actually developed a capability for mounted vertical maneuver within its airborne forces. Soviet airborne divisions included three airborne regiments, each containing three airborne battalions equipped with light armored assault vehicles (BMDs). In the Soviet-Afghan War (1979-1989), the Soviets used these forces most often in direct action against the *mujahideen*, almost always deploying them into action by helicopter. Soviet air assault brigades were similarly structured, with two parachute-trained and two heliborne battalions, the latter equipped with BMDs and employed in the same manner. A variety of authoritative sources note the extraordinary mobility and agility of these forces during that war and uniformly confirm their effectiveness, characterizing them as the units feared most by the Afghan resistance.<sup>2</sup> Soviet doctrine at that time also envisioned using these formations for deep operational maneuver in theater war (a feature the U.S. Army touts as fundamental to the MVM concept).

The German Army, too, experimented with the concept of mounted vertical maneuver during the cold war. Viewing the Soviet capability for deep penetrations by armored formations as a major threat, the Germans examined the utility of moving battalions and brigades equipped with light armor and anti-tank guns rapidly by helicopter, to block any deep penetrations by mobile Soviet forces.

Serious U.S. Army investigation of what was then called air-mechanization began in the mid-90s under the auspices of the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC). With the initiation of the Army After Next (AAN) program under Chief of Staff of the Army Dennis Reimer, TRADOC began a series of annual war games, supported by pre- and post-analytical excursions, that featured a variety of air platforms and organizational structures employed in MVM over operational and strategic distances. Concept exploration was pursued through the Army Transformation War Game series from 2000-2003 and subsequently continued through the Unified Quest series of annual war games in support of Future Force (and future Modular Force) development.

Since 2001, TRADOC has imported the MVM concept into war-gaming venues with the Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Joint Forces Command, and Office of the Secretary of Defense. The concept has

also informed three Defense Science Board (DSB) panels (2004-2006) and been identified as one of 10 critical future capabilities recommended for development by the DSB Sea-basing Task Force.

During the course of this eight-year period, TRADOC examined a variety of rotary, tilt-rotor, and fixed-wing platforms with Vertical and Super Short Take-Off and Landing (VTOL and SSTOL) profiles, as well as various organizational structures and equipment complements.<sup>3</sup> The command projected an assortment of other joint enablers, such as airborne lasers, persistent and pervasive ISR (Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance), networked joint fires, and advanced escort aircraft, that would support large-scale vertical maneuver. Concept planners also examined vertical maneuver within the context of joint sea-basing and produced a maturing parallel concept for the temporary basing of advanced vertical-lift capabilities on board a variety of sea platforms, such as converted container ships and aircraft carriers. This supporting concept, known as the Afloat Forward Staging Base, was explicitly incorporated into the Sea-basing Joint Integrating Concept (JIC). It is currently influencing several naval research and design efforts.<sup>4</sup>

In short, the MVM concept is founded on a comprehensive body of work carried out over a long period of time and exposed to a wide variety of experimental conditions, within a broad spectrum of service, joint, and defense forums.

## Conceptual Foundations

Lessons learned from active operations around the globe comprise one of the primary foundations of the MVM concept because they reveal known operational shortfalls that MVM capabilities can address beneficially. Among the more important known shortfalls are—

- Absence of an agile heavy-airlift capability that can deliver forces and stocks to the point of need.
- Runway-dependent fixed wing airlift, leading to excessive dependence on improved airfields.
- Unsuitability of fixed-wing aircraft to conduct air-based sustainment into forward operating areas.
- Virtually non-existent capability to conduct forcible entry operations by air with mounted forces (except in a follow-on, airlanding framework).
- Tactical vertical maneuver and operational

maneuver by air limited exclusively to light, dismounted forces because of the non-existence of suitable aircraft.

- Limited capability for ground force self-deployment over operational distances directly to the fight.
- Absence of capability to conduct vertical maneuver or sustainment by air from sea-based platforms except by dismounted forces, limited to tactical depths.
- Shortfalls in air refueling capability that could extend the depths to which non-strategic airlift can operate.

These deficiencies have serious operational consequences. Overall, they severely curtail the options available to joint force commanders to exploit the vertical dimension with ground forces. In addition, they reduce the operational agility of the joint force and limit simultaneity, while increasing the predictability and vulnerability of operations to enemy interdiction. Finally, they exacerbate the need for operational pauses and simplify the operational challenges facing any future adversary.

**Assured access challenge.** The emerging Joint Operational Environment (JOE) also drives the MVM concept.<sup>5</sup> For several years, the JOE strongly emphasized that future U.S. forces will likely face an increasingly complex challenge to regional access. The significance of this challenge was explicitly recognized by the 2001 National Defense Panel and the 2002 and 2006 Quadrennial Defense Reviews. Several components of this challenge were clearly apparent in recent operations.

The first component is political in nature. The United States can no longer take for granted that it will have the political access to theater staging bases, ports, or overflight rights that it has enjoyed in the past. Adversaries will, in fact, take overt action to limit U.S. regional access through a variety of means, including diplomatic action, threats, and coercion. Even erstwhile allies may deny the United States political access, as Turkey did during the force build-up for Operation Iraqi Freedom. In the future, responsible joint planners must avoid overly optimistic assumptions about regional access. They must prepare for the likelihood that U.S. forces will have to conduct deployment, forcible entry operations, and sustaining operations from more distant intermediate staging and forward operating bases than has been the case in the past.

Mere geography can also pose access challenges. Although it is reasonable to expect that U.S. forces will continue to operate largely within the littoral regions of continental land masses, that may not always be the case. Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), for example, represents a notable exception to that rule. Had the United States not been able to secure basing rights in Pakistan and Central Asia, its ability to carry out OEF objectives would have been gravely compromised.

Complex terrain and immature infrastructure within operational theaters further complicate assured access. A long-range vertical maneuver and sustainment capability could be one of the most important means of overcoming these kinds of access limitations.<sup>6</sup> (See figure 1.)

Third, future adversaries will challenge U.S. access at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels. *Strategic preclusion* may rely primarily on diplomatic action, coercion of U.S. regional allies, or direct use of force against strategic deployment capabilities. *Operational exclusion* involves enemy use of physical means to deny, degrade, and delay the entry of U.S. forces into the theater. Adversaries will likely also conduct *tactical denial* to prevent U.S. use of air and sea entry points anywhere within the joint operations area.

Physical methods and capabilities to deny access will range from high- to low-tech and be applied, potentially, at any point in the U.S. land-sea-air power projection chain of operation from home base to tactical assembly areas. At the high end, the most capable enemies will employ theater ballistic missiles (TBMs), air- and ground-launched cruise missiles, advanced integrated air defense systems, sea mines, submarines, space and undersea denial operations, and NBC munitions. Farther down the scale, anti-access measures could include intentional contamination, wide-spread employment of landmines and complex obstacles, direct action by special operations forces, terror strikes, use of



**Figure 1. Operational Example of MVM, Task Force 58, Afghanistan.** From a sea base in the Indian Ocean, armored forces could have been introduced at night and sustained without forward operating base or airfield requirements.

human shields to deter attack of key anti-access capabilities, and information warfare to degrade automated elements of the U.S./coalition deployment command, control, and planning process.

All of these challenges—political, geographic, and enemy anti-access action—will be exacerbated by the existing shortfalls enumerated earlier. Thus, it is imperative that the defense community empower future JFCs with capabilities that enable U.S. forces to adjust to and overcome such challenges. Mounted vertical maneuver that is not dependent on easily targeted airfields is one of the best means of meeting those challenges.<sup>7</sup>

**Joint concepts.** Although the MVM concept is most closely associated with the Army, many foundational joint concepts identify capability gaps in this area and point to the future need for vertical maneuver and sustainment. The Capstone Concept for Joint Operations and a number of other approved joint operating and joint integrating concepts all



identify future operational requirements for MVM capability.<sup>8</sup> These joint concepts recognize that future joint operations must account for the assured-access challenge. In addition, virtually all of them project that U.S. joint forces will conduct simultaneous, non-contiguous operations distributed broadly throughout the JOA. The joint concept of distributed operations is predicated on JFCs having the ability to dispose forces and focus operations against those enemy forces and capabilities whose defeat will lead most quickly and effectively to overall victory. This approach is in contrast to the highly sequential and highly phased campaigns of the past. It enables the JFC to combine the traditional defeat mechanism of destruction with those of dislocation and disintegration.<sup>9</sup>

Figure 3 below describes how JFCs will likely want to conduct campaigns in the future. Clearly, the ability to conduct non-contiguous, distributed operations within the land domain represents transformational change that will present significant operational benefits to the future joint force. Mounted vertical maneuver and sustainment are critical to enabling this kind of transformational change.

## The MVM and Sustainment Concept

The centerpiece of the MVM concept is the ability, by means of advanced theater airlift platforms, to maneuver and sustain operationally significant, combat-configured, medium-weight mounted forces to tactical and operational depths for immediate employment against objectives of particular significance. The future Modular Force will execute joint-enabled operational maneuver by air to extend the reach of the JFC, to enable him to respond to opportunity or uncertainty, to isolate or dominate specific portions of the battlefield, and to exploit success. (See figure 2.) Operational *movement* positions or repositions forces to secured positions of advantage to dislocate enemy forces or place them at a disadvantage for subsequent operations. In contrast, operational *maneuver* repositions forces in proximity to objective areas for immediate operations, potentially exposing the entire enemy area of operations to direct attack.<sup>10</sup>

Originating from either land- or sea-based staging areas and terminating in a vastly expanded number of entry points, vertical maneuver manifestly enables

### **Strike with fires and maneuver throughout enemy's entire dispositions ★ ★ ★**

- Lift combined arms formations with integrated sustainment throughout the JOA
- Conduct operational maneuver with mounted and dismounted forces ★ ★ ★
- Conduct air mobile strike operations against high value, high payoff targets
- Deny the enemy key terrain and facilities
- Strike from bases outside the theater

*These are the ways and means to achieve dislocation and disintegration*

### **Maintain continuous, high-tempo operational pressure ★ ★ ★**

- Fully exploit the third dimension and the non-contiguous battlespace
- Mass effects without massing forces
- Rapidly move and shift forces and fires against critical objectives by air and sea
- Conduct forcible entry at any point, in any phase of the campaign
- Exploit a ground-air mobility advantage over a ground-bound opponent

### **Sustain high-tempo, distributed operations within non-contiguous framework**

- Augment ground LOCs with air lines of communications
- Sustain by air from sea-based stocks and supplies
- Distribution sustainment directly to units in forward areas
- Significantly reduce sustainment demand ★ ★ ★

★ ★ ★  
*Transformational Change*

**Figure 2. How will the future joint force commander want to fight?**

distributed operations within a non-continuous battlespace and permits direct attack against enemy centers of gravity with maneuver and fires. It can also be used to seize key terrain and decisive points. Because it compels the enemy to defend in all directions, it constrains enemy efforts to mass, reinforce, sustain, and resynchronize forces and operations. In all cases, it is intended to have a definitive impact on the course and outcome of major operations, often accelerating decision or setting conditions for subsequent phases of the campaign.

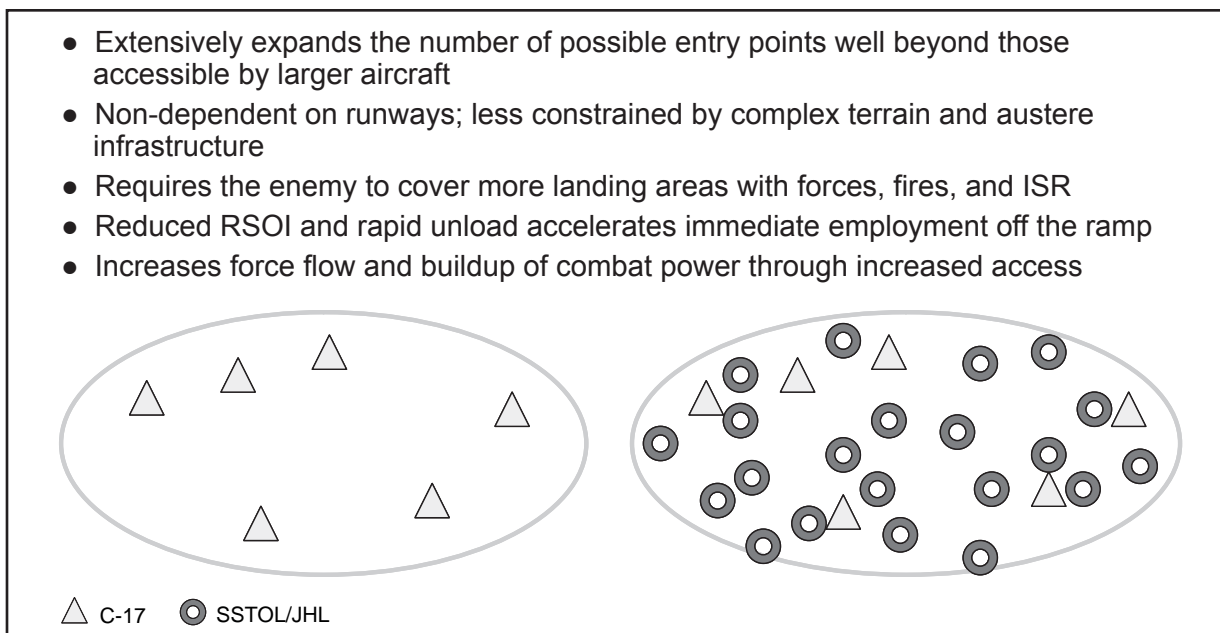
Operational maneuver by air depends on the suppression or destruction of enemy air defenses and security of the landing area. It will normally be most effective when it is supported by the rapid advance of ground-mobile forces to reduce risk, reinforce, and exploit the results of the air-based maneuver. At the tactical level, vertical maneuver will often lead to rapid tactical decision, shortening the duration of battles and enabling forces to move quickly from one engagement to the next without a significant operational pause. In all cases, forces must be capable of reorientation against follow-on objectives with minimum delay. Subsequent to force insertion, the same airlift assets will then be employed to sustain those forces until ground lines of communication are established. In this manner, vertical maneuver changes the geometry

of the battlespace and mitigates the assured-access challenge at the operational and tactical levels. (See figure 3.)

Planners envision that the future Modular Force structure will conduct operational-level vertical maneuver and sustainment by multiple battalions, either mounted, dismounted, or mixed. Joint allocation of advanced heavy-lift VTOL and fixed-wing (SSTOL and current aircraft) assets will be required to generate and sustain operational maneuver by one or more brigades in close sequence.

### Relevant to All Operations

The discussion above necessarily focuses on major combat operations as the best means of describing the benefits of the MVM concept. However, the broader relevance of MVM across the range of military operations is evident. Capabilities that enable MVM will also materially improve counter-WMD (Weapons of Mass Destruction) and other special operations due to extended range, higher payloads, improved terrain negotiation, greater simultaneity, expanded operational access, and increased options for force employment. Similarly, the inherent requirement of large-scale stability operations for widely distributed sustainment and maneuver of rapid, mobile response forces over extended distances will be better satisfied by MVM



**Figure 3. Vertical maneuver addresses the assured access challenge.**

capabilities. Their applicability to border-security operations against hostile neighbors or to the isolation of enemy sanctuaries is also clear.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, vertical maneuver would improve the U.S.'s ability to strike terrorists with mobile ground forces when remote, long-range fires won't suffice.

Vertical maneuver capabilities will also improve U.S. responsiveness to natural disasters and humanitarian crises. These crises often occur in remote regions or in regions hampered by austere transportation infrastructure (or infrastructure damaged in the course of the disaster). Recent contingency operations highlight the efficacy of MVM capabilities, particularly VTOL with extended range and payload. Since MVM capabilities can also be employed to move, maneuver, or sustain allies who may be hindered by the lack of even rudimentary airlift capabilities, they may also be an important factor in strengthening coalitions.

## Keys to a Concept of Operations for MVM

In today's environment, an operation to move mounted forces by air is highly constrained, first by the number of C-17 aircraft allocated from the force pool, and secondly by the number of improved airfields and the maximum-on-ground capacity (MOG) of those airfields at both ends. Generally, these operations are highly sequential, relatively predictable (because of their dependence on airfields), displaced a considerable distance from objective areas, and long in duration.

In contrast, the airlift platforms envisioned for MVM will maximize the simultaneity of an air operation by using multiple departure points and landing areas—not just improved airstrips, but also clearings, roads, agricultural fields, playing fields, large parking lots, golf courses, dirt strips, and other unimproved sites. Moreover, the use of multiple flight paths will enable the simultaneous delivery of formations in volume rather than sequentially, thereby reducing exposure time to enemy detection and complicating hostile engagement.

Planners will select landing sites based on their tactical proximity to the objective area (roughly 20-100 km, depending on the enemy's ability to detect and oppose) and to each other in order to enable rapid assembly and forward movement for immediate attack. Aircraft will move mounted platforms internally loaded, fueled, and armed with crews on

board. Although larger insertions will normally be desirable, landing sites will be sized no lower than platoon level and arranged in time and space to permit rapid assembly to battalion strength. Aircraft characteristics will permit rapid egress to reduce exposure on the ground for both air and ground elements. If suitable airfields are available, current airlift may also be used to move selected elements of the committed force that are not immediately required for assault. Naturally, planners will consider a variety of factors in building the operation, to include the types and numbers of aircraft available and the need to sustain committed forces by air lines of communications through and beyond the operation's initial stages.

As noted earlier, vertical maneuver will be supported by a suite of dedicated joint capabilities to ensure protection from enemy detection and engagement during flight and landing, to enhance situational awareness, and to establish favorable conditions in the objective area. En route updates will keep leaders abreast of changing conditions and permit adjustments to flight paths and landing areas, if required.

## Operationalizing the Concept

The first new capability required to operationalize MVM is advanced theater airlift. *Marginal improvement over current theater airlift will not be sufficient to enable vertical maneuver.* Fundamental requirements for new airlift include:

- VTOL or SSTOL capability to avoid reliance on improved airfields and to increase the number of entry points that can be employed simultaneously.
- Payload weight and volume sufficient to move one or more medium-weight armored vehicles with crews, fuel, and ammunition (26-30 tons, sized to Stryker and FCS).
- Extended unrefueled range (500 nautical miles) with maximum payload and improved speed (250-300 knots/hour).
- Ability to fly at altitude to reduce exposure to short-range surface-to-air missiles.
- Suitability for use in air-based sustainment.

VTOL and fixed-wing SSTOL have advantages and disadvantages when compared to each other in operational scenarios. Generally, fixed-wing SSTOL will fly faster, further, higher, and with larger payloads. On the other hand, VTOL aircraft



provide substantially more access, permit more simultaneity, have a higher degree of agility, may be more night-capable, and enable insertions closer to objective areas. Survivability considerations appear to be comparatively equal.

Currently, the Army places highest value on the qualities of access and operational agility, favoring VTOL over SSTOL (or STOL) capability for those reasons, although the combination of the two capabilities is the most desirable approach. Certainly, the cost to research, develop, and acquire VTOL or SSTOL airlift will be substantial, as it is for any new, non-incrementally developed major system, but numerous credible studies have demonstrated reliably that heavy-lift VTOL development is technically feasible.

**Survivability.** Ensuring aircraft survivability throughout the course of an MVM operation is a significant challenge that the Army fully recognizes. The proliferation of man-portable air defense missiles (MANPADS) and projected improvements in enemy capabilities to detect and oppose vertical maneuver are major threats. The complexity of the challenge demands a holistic solution set with the following components:

- Aircraft equipped with passive and electronic protection systems that deny, degrade, or deceive enemy detection and acquisition, coupled with active protection systems that effectively neutralize enemy fires in flight.
- Ability to fly at altitude for the majority of transit, with terrain-masking flight profiles nearing terminal points.
- Improved capability for joint suppression of enemy air defenses and the networks supporting them.
- Persistent surveillance of landing areas, tied to active means for suppression of enemy capabilities to oppose insertions.
  - Neutralization of the MANPADS threat.<sup>12</sup>
  - Deception operations.
  - En route updates that enable commanders to adjust operations in flight.

Naturally, the development of effective tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTP) will also be important. TTP will address the use of escort aircraft, pathfinders, and special operations forces to monitor and assist in setting appropriately secure conditions and to enhance situational awareness of landing areas.

**Joint fires.** As a joint-enabled operation, MVM will require support by long-range and air-delivered joint fires characterized by high levels of synchronization, timeliness, positive control, and accurate targeting of enemy capabilities positioned to oppose the operation. Research suggests that both lethal and nonlethal (e.g., electronic suppression) munitions will be especially relevant for MVM. The quality and diversity of joint fire support must also be sustained during the ground assault phase of the operation.

**Situational awareness.** Vertical maneuver operations demand a high level of situational awareness because of their vulnerability, complexity, and simultaneity. Conditions in objective areas and enemy capabilities to oppose the operation must be identified with a high degree of fidelity. Again, improvement in capabilities for persistent surveillance and en route updates to situational awareness are imperative. Although the complete elimination of uncertainty is neither likely nor necessary, it is reasonable to expect that future advances will enable an appropriately high quality of situational awareness to support MVM operations.

## Recent Analytical Efforts

While it is true that the Army has taken the lead in developing the MVM concept, joint and multi-service organizations have recently undertaken several significant analytical efforts. The most important of these is the Joint Vertical Airlift Task Force (JVATF). Directed by the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics (ASD/AT&L) in 2004, the JVATF was based on OSD's assessment that the lack of a heavy-lift VTOL capability is the military's most critical rotary-wing capability gap. After several months of preliminary study, the JVATF evolved to pursue two parallel joint research efforts focused on what is now called Joint Heavy Lift (JHL). Those two efforts—concept refinement and requirements analysis—are cosponsored by OSD and the Army, with joint participation in integrated product teams enriched by industry participation. The eventual goal is to complete an Initial Capabilities Document for approval by the Joint Requirements Oversight Council.

The concept refinement effort comprises modeling and simulation-based evaluation of five different technical approaches to JHL in a variety of

scenarios, missions, and environmental settings.<sup>13</sup> In parallel, a 30-person joint government team of scientists and engineers is conducting cost and technical feasibility analysis for the five technical approaches. Overall, these efforts represent the most authoritative operational and technical analysis to date in the area of heavy-lift VTOL.

Joint sea-basing is another area in which the MVM concept has been vetted with some degree of joint rigor. This article previously cited the incorporation of the Afloat Forward Staging Base concept for sea-based vertical maneuver within the Sea-basing Joint Integrating Concept. In 2005, the Army also partnered with the Marine Corps in a bilateral analysis of sea-basing capability gaps that has informed the refinement of the Joint Integrating Concept and been endorsed by the Joint Staff. That analysis explicitly cites MVM as an existing capability gap.

Third, the Defense Science Board HLVTOL/SSTOL Task Force is nearing completion of its 18-month study and is expected to release its draft report in early 2007. The MVM concept constitutes an important component of that study. The Army eagerly awaits its release.

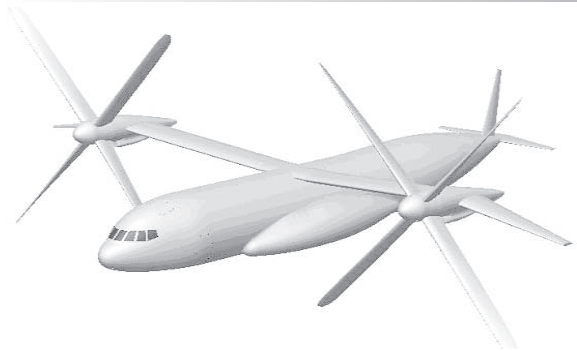
Finally, the commander of the U.S. Transportation Command directed the initiation of the Joint Future Theater Airlift Assessment (JFTACA) in October 2006. Its stated purpose is to analyze potential joint-force theater airlift implications facing the future joint warfighter. JFTACA will examine non-materiel and materiel solutions such as Joint Heavy Airlift, the Advanced Joint Air Combat System, the Joint Precision Airdrop System, and other emerging technologies that may be available during the 2015-2025 time period. Targeted for completion in late 2007, the JFTACA concept-based analysis study may culminate with prioritized recommendations for both materiel and non-materiel solutions to theater airlift shortfalls. TRADOC is leading the Army's participation in the study. The MVM concept and the body of analytical work supporting it, including the Joint Heavy Lift project cited above, will inform the study comprehensively.

## The Critics

The MVM concept is not without its critics. It must be stated forthrightly that some of the objections emerge from less than a full understanding of

the concept and often result in its mischaracterization or oversimplification. For example, one recent evaluation of the concept characterized it largely as being a means of rapid strategic deployment, whereas the Army clearly views MVM primarily for employment at the operational and tactical levels. Critics also tend to focus on the significant challenges to MVM's realization without examining the ways and means by which these challenges can be overcome. Overall, the primary objections to the concept are—

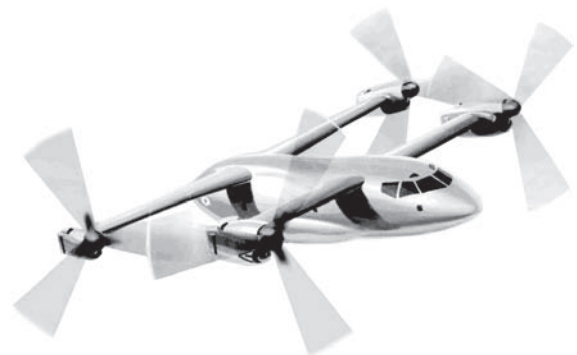
Slowed rotor tilt rotor



Advanced tandem rotor



Quad-tilt rotor aircraft



- *The risks are too great.* This argument rests largely on assertions that MVM will be too vulnerable to enemies employing inexpensive off-the-shelf capabilities, such as MANPADS, and that sufficient levels of situational awareness to support MVM will never be achieved. The Army perspective is that there is risk in every operation, but it can be dealt with effectively by using a holistic systems-of-systems approach with redundant capabilities.<sup>14</sup> One might also observe that the “too risky” argument is an old one that often accompanies debate over new programs. With respect to situational awareness, it would be difficult to identify any capability that is receiving more attention today for improvement across the joint force. The Army clearly recognizes the importance of situational awareness and understands its challenges. Given the ongoing work in this area it is possible to be confident about continuing advances despite the complex requirements of vertical maneuver.

- *MVM is unnecessary.* The Army considers that the need for MVM has been sufficiently established by the uniform concern within the defense community about future assured-access challenges; the emergence of a non-contiguous battlefield framework characterized by widely distributed operations; the operational demands of the war on terrorism; the rising importance of counter-WMD operations; the frequent involvement of U.S. forces in disaster relief and humanitarian crises; the lessons of recent operations; and strong support within joint concepts for maneuver and sustainment throughout the depths of a theater in conflict.

- *History says it cannot be done today; ergo, it cannot be done in the future.* This is another old argument that has accompanied the development of almost every major new advance in military capability, from the tank to the aircraft carrier. History is usually a good teacher, but it does not define the future. It can be a bad teacher if used selectively or if historical examples are mischaracterized.<sup>15</sup> Fortunately, the American military experience in modern times is to find a way to develop and employ new capabilities once they have been determined to be desirable and feasible.

- *U.S. industry will be challenged to develop and build the airlift.* While there is no question that the U.S. technical base regarding VTOL has atrophied over the past 20 years, a national commitment to develop new airlift will lead to revitalization.

- *HLVTOL and SSTOL capability are technically infeasible.* Critics charge that any aircraft built to carry heavy payloads into austere landing areas will fly too slow or too low to be survivable. This conclusion is disputed by a number of objective analyses that are readily available, including the work of the JHL government technical team cited above. In addition, none of the three DSB studies that have examined vertical maneuver requirements has reached this conclusion. Although there is technical risk, it falls within an acceptable range and no major technical breakthroughs are required.

- *Costs will be too high.* Some critics tend to exaggerate the cost of developing advanced HLVTOL or SSTOL airlift. One recent article cites a unit cost of \$250 million per VTOL aircraft, which is roughly double the price tag cited in the two-year-long JHL study effort. More importantly, this argument is premature. The question is best left to a later date, after the joint requirements process has had full opportunity to determine the need. Ultimately, the question of how much cost is too much is a direct function of need and desirability.

## A Final Word

The Army acknowledges the objections to MVM and accepts the need to evaluate them all as it continues to explore the concept. At the same time, it is desirable to encourage all interested parties to fully examine the large body of research and analysis that underpins the MVM concept. Three other concluding points are noteworthy:

- First, all should realize that MVM is a maturing concept, not a program. However, the concept has broad support that extends beyond the Army and appears to be growing. MVM is rooted in a mindset that looks 15 to 20 years into the future to consider what will be feasible and desirable in that timeframe; thus, it is focused far more on future opportunities than on current challenges.

- The MVM concept is not just about the Army; it is about enabling future joint force commanders to fight differently and more effectively.

- The capabilities MVM promotes are highly relevant not just to major combat operations, but across the entire spectrum of conflict.

Given this perspective, one can assert confidently that the defense community as a whole will benefit broadly from further exploration of the MVM




concept. Its ongoing development is particularly timely given the near-term requirement to replace the C-130 fleet. If continuing investigations confirm the operational significance of MVM and its ability

to meet the diverse challenges of the future joint operating environment, the potential benefits to the future joint force could legitimately be characterized as near-revolutionary in quality. **MR**

## NOTES

1. Richard E. Simkin, *Race to the Swift: Thoughts on Twenty-First Century Warfare* (London: Brassey's Defence, 1985).
2. The most authoritative sources are those from Soviet military journals such as *Military Herald*, *Red Star*, and *Military History Journal*. For English-language sources, see Scott R. McMichael, *Stumbling Bear: Soviet Military Performance in Afghanistan* (London: Brassey's UK, 1991) or Mark Urban, *War in Afghanistan* (London: Macmillan Press, 1988).
3. Short Take Off and Landing (STOL) is defined by DOD as the ability to take off and land an aircraft within 1,500 feet over a 50-foot obstacle. Super STOL reduces the distance to 1,000 feet.
4. Department of Defense, Sea-basing Joint Integrating Concept, August 2005.
5. U.S. Joint Forces Command, *The Joint Operational Environment: The World Through 2030 and Beyond*, November 2006.
6. U.S. relief operations in Indonesia following the 2004 tsunami were particularly hampered by austere infrastructure made worse by the tsunami's destruction. Those operations relied heavily on vertical airlift to go where fixed-wing aircraft could not.
7. U.S. forces will likely face all aspects of the access challenges described here in any significant contingency involving operations against Iran.
8. Major Combat Operations, Joint Forcible Entry Operations, Sea-basing, and Joint Logistics (distribution) concepts also support the key ideas of mounted vertical maneuver.
9. Defeat by dislocation emphasizes using the maneuver of combined arms forces to obtain significant positional advantage over the enemy in a manner that renders the enemy's dispositions less valuable, perhaps even irrelevant. Disintegration focuses on integrating dislocating and destructive effects to shatter the coherence of the enemy's operational integrity through direct attack of his most critical capabilities.
10. The distinction between operational movement and maneuver is significant with respect to the immediate impact achieved against the enemy and the time

- available for the enemy to respond. The mobility capabilities required for operational maneuver and the level of joint support it will require will normally be considerably more demanding than for movement.
11. U.S. operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as recent Israeli operations in Lebanon, were all hindered by the difficulty of securing borders with hostile states.
  12. Although many of them are classified, significant programs explicitly focused on neutralizing the MANPADS threat have long been underway.
  13. The Joint Heavy Lift (JHL) organization has completed two of the three functional analyses required by the joint requirements process, as well as a draft initial capabilities document. The performance parameters for JHL have been derived from this work.
  14. Every offensive system that exists today is vulnerable to cheaper defensive means if other means are not routinely incorporated through complementary and reinforcing action to reduce the risks. [For example, infantry to accompany armor]
  15. History can be a malleable tool for parochial interests. For example, because Serb authorities eventually acceded to NATO demands, the 1999 Kosovo campaign is often cited by air-power proponents as an operational example of the effectiveness of remote precision strikes. However, those proponents fail to mention that the Serbs continued their ethnic-cleansing program during the NATO bombing campaign and made no concessions until their goals were largely achieved. One senior NATO official, Secretary General Lord Carrington, subsequently observed that NATO strikes actually caused rather than prevented ethnic cleansing. Many observers at the time asserted that ground forces were the best way to prevent ethnic cleansing and vertical assault was the best means of doing so quickly. Air-power proponents have challenged that perspective as being infeasible, ineffective, and excessively risky. Their assessment might have been true at the time, but it asks and answers the wrong question. A better approach to this bit of history would be to examine how ground forces could have been introduced, given different capabilities, and then assess their operational impact on that kind of military problem in the future.



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# COUNTERPOINT:

## AIR-MECHANIZATION: An Expensive and Fragile Concept

**Lieutenant Colonel John Gordon IV, Ph.D., U.S. Army, Retired;  
Colonel David E. Johnson, Ph.D., U.S. Army, Retired; and Peter A. Wilson**

*Lieutenant Colonel John Gordon IV, U.S. Army (Retired), is a senior policy researcher at RAND Corporation. He holds a B.A. in history from The Citadel, M.A.s from St. Mary's and Marymount Universities, and a Ph.D. in public policy from George Mason University. The author of numerous articles on military subjects, he has led RAND studies for the U.S. Government and several European nations. He is also an adjunct professor at Georgetown and George Mason Universities.*

*Colonel David E. Johnson, U.S. Army (Retired), is Group Manager, International and Security Policy, and a senior researcher at RAND. He holds an M.A. and Ph.D. in history from Duke University and has master's degrees from the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College and the Industrial College of the Armed Forces. He has authored or coauthored numerous RAND studies, including Learning Large Lessons: The Evolving Roles of Ground Power and Air Power in the Post Cold War Era, and the book Fast Tanks and Heavy Bombers: Innovation in the U.S. Army, 1917-1945.*

*Peter A. Wilson is a senior defense analyst at RAND who specializes in defense planning and policy research. He has a B.A. from Princeton University and an M.A. in political science from the University of Chicago. He has conducted numerous studies for the Department of Defense and various foreign clients, coauthored a variety of RAND studies, and published articles on a broad range of national security issues.*

FOR ROUGHLY A DECADE the Army has been examining a concept widely referred to as air-mechanization. According to the concept, some portion of future Army forces would be designed specifically for quick transport to a key location on the battlefield (“intra-theater aerial maneuver”) using aircraft of roughly C-130 size. In theory, this capability would enable Army forces to conduct rapid aerial maneuver of medium-weight mechanized units over a distance of several hundred miles to place the units suddenly on an enemy’s flank or in his rear areas. Recently, retired Army Major General Robert Scales publicly endorsed the theory, asserting that “the challenge of future warfare on land cannot be met without building modular FCS [Future Combat Systems]-equipped aero-mechanized brigades that form the aerial blitzkrieg force of the future.”<sup>1</sup>

That this concept has already had considerable influence on the Army is apparent in the FCS program, a family of manned and unmanned vehicles whose weight has been constrained primarily by the design requirement for transport aboard relatively small (C-130-sized) cargo aircraft.

Our analysis suggests that the air-mechanization concept is flawed in a number of areas that make it untenable when more closely examined. More specifically, assumptions about the need for rapid deployment and optimism about the level of tactical situational awareness that will be available during a conflict are questionable, so much so that it is difficult to justify the massive investment of limited resources required to conduct such maneuver operations. It also disregards relevant history regarding past airmobile operations, ignores the realities of what can be accomplished within plausible defense budgets, and is too sanguine about what the U.S. aircraft industry can feasibly deliver. The concept’s proponents also gloss over, if they don’t ignore altogether, the cheap and easily obtained countermeasures that any adversary would likely employ to deal with air-mechanized assaults of the kind envisioned in the concept.

### What Is Air-mechanization?

The concept of air-mech calls for medium-weight ground units to be lifted by C-130-class aircraft to key points on the operational battlefield. This means that the fighting vehicles transported must be of a size and weight that

will allow them to be moved in this type of aircraft. Theoretically, air-mech would enable joint force commanders to maneuver mechanized forces with much greater speed over several hundred miles in operations aimed at more quickly attacking enemy centers of gravity. Proponents of the concept have called for radii of action of up to 500 miles from point of take-off to prospective landing zones.

## Questionable Assumptions

The success of air-mech rests on a number of suspect assumptions, two of which call into question the viability of the entire concept.

**Rapid deployment, quick engagement.** The first questionable assumption is that the Army will be able to deploy rapidly and engage quickly. During Operation Allied Force, NATO's operation against Yugoslavian forces in Kosovo from March to June 1999, the primary U.S. Army element was Task Force (TF) Hawk, a brigade-size force built around two Apache helicopter squadrons. Despite the relative lightness of the force, it still took roughly 20 days to deploy this 5,000-Soldier unit from Germany to Albania. Once it arrived in Albania, additional training was required to familiarize the pilots with flying conditions in the mountainous Balkan terrain. By the time the unit was declared ready for employment (on 26 April), fixed-wing air operations had already been ongoing for some time. Ultimately, senior U.S. political and military leaders decided not to commit the low-flying Apaches in Kosovo as they apparently determined that the risks outweighed the benefits. After 78 days of fixed-wing air attack, the Yugoslavian government in Belgrade agreed to evacuate its forces from Kosovo. NATO had won without the commitment of Army forces, including the attack helicopters of TF Hawk.

What did the U.S. Army learn from this experience? The Army, which thinks of itself as the "supported service" within the U.S. military, concluded that if it had only been able to deploy its forces faster to Albania, those forces would have been committed in an effort to drive the Serb forces from Kosovo, with NATO's airpower in support. Therefore, the lesson was "get lighter, and more deployable." As is true with most large organizations, events (and their possible meanings) are viewed through parochial institutional lenses. And such was the case with the U.S. Army in the aftermath of Allied Force. The



Army Apache pilots familiarize themselves with the terrain at Rinas Airport, Tirana, Albania, on 23 April 1999 during Operation Sustain Hope and NATO Operation Allied Force.

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fact that NATO's senior political leaders (with the possible exception of Britain's Tony Blair) were unwilling to commit ground forces was apparently not included in Army assessments of the event. Rather, the Army concluded that if its forces had been able to deploy faster, they would have been committed against the Serbs. This interpretation of the lessons of Kosovo merely reinforced thinking that had already been underway in the Army's Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) for several years before Allied Force.<sup>2</sup> TRADOC-sponsored "Army After Next" wargames had been ongoing since 1996. Those in control of the games concluded that high-speed intercontinental deployment and rapid intra-theater operational maneuver (by air) were the key capabilities the future Army had to acquire to remain relevant. The fact that high-speed deployment has rarely been needed—Korea in June 1950 and Saudi Arabia in 1990 are the only two significant post-World War II examples where such a capability was critically important—was apparently not included in the Army's internal assessment.<sup>3</sup>

After Allied Force, some of the authors of the air-mech concept argued that if the Army had had such a capability, it would have conducted a fundamentally different operation against the Serbs.<sup>4</sup>



When General Eric Shinseki became the Chief of Staff of the Army in the summer of 1999, one of his first actions was to initiate the Stryker wheeled combat vehicle program to create a “medium-weight” combat-unit capability in the Army.<sup>5</sup> Citing the Kosovo experience, Shinseki declared that to preserve its relevance, the Army had to become more deployable.<sup>6</sup>

Undoubtedly, the Army’s plans to introduce medium units into its force structure, first the Stryker and in the future an appropriate number of FCSs, are moves in the right direction toward greater flexibility and speed of deployment. Fundamentally, the introduction of medium units means that the Army can provide joint force commanders more options. However, the acquisition of a fleet of medium combat vehicles should not be justified in terms of aerial maneuver. The Army has already paid some price in vehicular capability by mandating that the FCS be able to fit into aircraft of roughly C-130 size. (Later, this article will highlight the significant problems associated with the aerial maneuver concept.)

**Situational awareness.** The second major assumption that air-mech relies heavily on is the idea that future commanders will have a far greater level of situational awareness than today’s commanders have. This assumption about situational awareness is critical for two reasons. First, air-mech calls for flying slow, cargo-type aircraft at low altitude up to several hundred miles into enemy territory. This means that the success of any air-mech scheme of maneuver basically depends on avoiding or neutralizing enemy air defenses. Second, once the lighter vehicles that the aircraft will carry (Stryker or FCS) are on the ground, they will be highly vulnerable if they suddenly encounter well-armed or heavier enemy forces. Because air maneuver necessitates lighter vehicle weights, the vehicles’ ballistic armor will be limited. Therefore, without what by today’s standards would be phenomenal knowledge of the enemy at the lower tactical levels (brigade and lower), the aircraft and the lighter ground units that are fundamental to air-mech will be at much greater risk than if employed in a more methodical, mutually supporting, though somewhat slower, combined arms manner.

If the answer to the vulnerable light-vehicle quandary is air-mechanized units armed with 20-

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ton or larger combat vehicles, problems remain. Moving such vehicles will still require large and relatively slow, and hence vulnerable, cargo planes. Moreover, heavily loaded aircraft of this kind will lack maneuverability and range.

In response, some proponents see the solution in quad tilt-rotor aircraft. These are faster than helicopters (roughly 250 knots compared to about 170 to 180 knots for most helicopters). However, even the theoretical speed of 250 knots is quite slow by modern aircraft standards. As a point of comparison, 240 to 250 knots puts a quad tilt-rotor in the same speed class as the biplane fighters many air forces still used at the start of World War II. In addition, despite various on-board countermeasures that could help reduce certain threats, this type of aircraft will remain extremely vulnerable to many types of ground fire. Such aircraft are also extremely expensive and difficult to replace compared to conventional cargo aircraft. Even the loss of a few could adversely affect any operational plan that depended on them.

Aircraft conducting air assaults into enemy territory will, by definition, be exposed to low-altitude defenses. The threat includes anti-aircraft guns, shoulder-fired infrared missiles, beam riders (such as the Swedish-made RBS-90), small arms fire, and RPGs.<sup>7</sup> Low-altitude defenses do not typically use emitting radars to locate and track targets; they are passive, optically directed systems. The lack of telltale electronic emissions means that when concealed, these weapons are very difficult to locate—until they fire on an aircraft.

Today, locating and suppressing non-emitting low-altitude defenses is very difficult. The problem is so challenging that since Operation Desert Storm in 1991, the Air Force and Navy have generally kept their strike aircraft well above 10,000 feet. Given

the accuracy of the precision munitions that arm today's aircraft, there is little need for the Navy and Air Force to descend into the lethal envelope of low-altitude defenses to engage targets. Both services recognize the difficulty of locating this class of weapon on the ground, and they simply fly above the threat. Air-assault aircraft winding their way to a landing zone do not have that luxury.

Because it is difficult to defeat concealed low-altitude air defenses, an air-mech force would almost certainly have to fly only where the enemy is highly unlikely to be. The ground force, with its lightly protected vehicles, would then have to move what may be considerable distances to reach its objectives. Such conditions could obviate the entire purpose of an air-mech assault. Consequently, though the vehicles of an air-mech force would give it much greater ground mobility than today's generally foot-mobile light forces, the maneuvering ground force would need very high levels of situational awareness as it moves toward the enemy. Recent operations in Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Iraq, however, show that we continue to experience extreme difficulty consistently locating concealed enemy forces, especially in forests, jungles, suburbs, and urban areas.

***Because it is difficult to defeat concealed low-altitude air defenses, an air-mech force would almost certainly have to fly only where the enemy is highly unlikely to be.***

### **Ignoring Relevant History**

At the end of the Vietnam War, the U.S. Army aviation community was in a difficult situation. The last two years of the war for U.S. forces, 1971–1972, saw some ominous developments. In February and March 1971, Operation Lam Son 719 (the incursion into southern Laos by the Army of the Republic of Vietnam, heavily supported by U.S. aircraft, artillery, and helicopters) took place. Roughly two divisions of South Vietnamese (ARVN) troops moved by helicopter or ground into blocking positions 10

to 30 miles into southern Laos to sit astride the Ho Chi Minh Trail. The North Vietnamese Army (NVA) response was rapid and violent. Using the jungle for concealment, the NVA surrounded many of the hilltop ARVN firebases. As the ARVN forces came under increasing pressure, large numbers of U.S. Army helicopters had to be committed for resupply, casualty evacuation, fire support, and finally, extraction of the surviving ARVN forces. U.S. Army aircraft had to fly over the NVA forces that were concealed in the jungles surrounding the South Vietnamese firebases.

Losses were heavy. In about seven weeks of operations, 106 helicopters were destroyed and another 600 damaged, many seriously.<sup>8</sup> Army personnel casualties were also high: 65 U.S. helicopter crewmen were killed in action, 818 wounded, and 42 went missing in action. These losses were inflicted by optically directed small arms, RPGs, heavy anti-aircraft machine guns, as well as 23-mm and 37-mm anti-aircraft guns. Importantly, in 1971 the NVA did not have shoulder-fired missiles.<sup>9</sup>

In the spring of 1972, the North Vietnamese launched a major offensive to topple the Saigon regime. Again, the NVA managed to seriously limit U.S. helicopter operations by deploying (for the first time) the SA-7 shoulder-fired missile. In the early 1970s, the SA-7 was state-of-the-art, especially since there were few countermeasures available to aircraft at that time. The SA-7's effect was immediate and profound. Combined with the large number of 12.7-mm and 14.5-mm heavy machine guns the NVA deployed, the SA-7s drove off low-altitude observation planes and helicopters. The clear result of these developments meant that overflight of enemy territory had become prohibitively dangerous for low-altitude aircraft. The kind of bold, sweeping vertical maneuvers executed during the middle years of the Vietnam War were over.<sup>10</sup>

In the mid-seventies, the Army aviation community struggled with the lessons of the war's final years. When the Army refocused on conventional war in Central Europe after Vietnam, it had to consider the low-altitude air defenses of the Soviet forces. The integrated and sophisticated air defenses of the Warsaw Pact made whatever the NVA could throw up look amateurish. Therefore, when the Apache attack helicopter was developed in the early 1980s, it was *not* intended to "go deep" into

the enemy array. Rather, the Apache was to move rapidly to a threatened point in the line, hover over and behind friendly ground forces, and then fire at approaching enemy units using Hellfire missiles, its long-range stand-off weapons.

These conclusions concerning low-altitude aircraft operations were developed with the lessons of Vietnam still fresh in the Army's memory. By the late 1980s, however, many of the important lessons had apparently been forgotten.<sup>11</sup> Operation Desert Storm in 1991 seemed to give advocates of deep, aggressive helicopter operations evidence to make their case. As they noted, the deep left hook by the 101st Airborne (Air Assault) Division was conducted with little difficulty. That maneuver, however, contributed relatively little to the overall campaign. In the end, history shows that Kuwait was not liberated by a deep vertical envelopment. It was freed by a direct armored assault that shattered Iraqi units already reeling from 38 days of intense air bombardment and that seized objectives in short order. While the 101st's move looked interesting, it was not essential to the accomplishment of the coalition's mission. In fact, the 24th Infantry Division (Mechanized) reached the Euphrates River roughly a day after the 101st did, putting heavy armor astride the Iraqis' supply line leading from Baghdad to Kuwait.<sup>12</sup>

Task Force Hawk's experience in Kosovo underlines the problematic nature of the case for a deep aerial assault capability. As the task force was deploying, there were grave doubts about the Apaches' survivability. The mountains between Albania and Kosovo meant that a combat-loaded Apache could only enter Kosovo via some eight passes through the mountains. Additionally, the heavily forested and hilly terrain inside Kosovo afforded excellent concealment to the opposing Serb forces. Those forces were numerous. Before the bombing operations started, there were well over 25,000 Serb troops inside Kosovo, and they were protected by hundreds of anti-aircraft guns and shoulder-fired missiles as well as several batteries of radar-guided surface-to-air missiles (SA-6).<sup>13</sup> Some air-mech

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proponents have claimed that had an air-mech force been available, NATO could have deployed it into Kosovo quickly, effectively precluding Serb offensive operations. The assertion does not stand up to scrutiny. First, there were the 25,000 Serb troops, plus paramilitaries, inside Kosovo before NATO initiated operations, so there was no possibility of precluding anything—the Serbs were already there in large numbers. Second, had a brigade of air-mech (or airborne) forces been deployed into Kosovo, it would have been totally alone: the closest NATO ground forces were U.S. and British troops in Macedonia, and they were few in number, with a very limited offensive capability. How likely is it that NATO and U.S. decision makers would have been willing to deploy an isolated ground force into the midst of more than 25,000 enemy troops, particularly when those troops had ample air defenses?<sup>14</sup>

The sheer magnitude of the low-altitude air-defense threat meant that, with the exception of General Wesley Clark, most senior leaders were unwilling to risk the Apaches in operations inside Kosovo, even at night.<sup>15</sup> Given the large numbers of civilian refugees inside Kosovo, senior leaders were also unwilling to use area fires to suppress air defenses. As previously mentioned, low-altitude defenses generally do not expose themselves via radar emissions. This was certainly the case in Kosovo,

where NATO was having great difficulty locating even the medium- to high-altitude surface-to-air missiles due to clever Serb radar management.<sup>16</sup>

It should be noted that the proposed Army air missions into Kosovo were to have been conducted by small numbers of armored attack helicopters (four to eight at a time), not the dozens or scores of transport aircraft that an air-mech-type assault would have required. It is also noteworthy that the Serbs were well prepared for a possible air assault. Serb units were observed conducting anti-air-landing exercises in the vicinity of possible landing zones. There was no major landing zone in the province that was not within range of literally dozens of Serb mortars, cannon, and multiple rocket launchers. The



Serb brigades in Kosovo included scores of armored fighting vehicles, many of which were located close to prospective landing zones. Also, many of the possible landing zones were mined. The reception that the Serb Army could have provided to an air assault force would probably have made any Vietnam-era “hot” landing zone look mild.

Iraq in 2003 offers a final historical example. All the ground components—the U.S. Army, the Marine Corps, and the British Army—planned to conduct air assault operations out in front of their leading armored elements. Key objectives such as bridges or other important terrain were planned for seizure by helicopter-borne forces that would then be joined by the approaching armored units. Due to their lack of vehicular mobility, the air assault forces of 2003 would have consisted of light infantry units, thus requiring their transport aircraft to fly to landing zones relatively close to the objectives. However, the air defense threat in Iraq was assessed to be very low, which facilitated at least the planning of air assault operations. Nearly 10 years of Operations Northern and Southern Watch had crippled Iraq’s integrated air defense system. The majority of the threat would be from small arms, RPGs, machine guns, plus an occasional antiaircraft gun and a few shoulder-fired missiles. Nevertheless, that relatively minimal threat was enough to place major constraints on coalition helicopter operations.

Despite their pre-war plans, coalition units conducted no air assault operations forward of the leading edge of armor in the major combat operations phase. In the words of a senior Marine Corps staff officer, “We considered the risks, and we considered the benefits, and there was always too much risk.”<sup>17</sup> The U.S. Army and British Army said the same thing: it was simply too risky to send troop-carrying aircraft into enemy controlled territory, even at night.<sup>18</sup>

The now well-known deep attack by the U.S. 11th Attack Helicopter Regiment on 23 March 2003 further dampened the willingness of Army commanders to risk helicopters forward of the leading edge of their heavy ground forces. The 11th’s attack was intended to severely damage the Republican Guard Medina Division near Karbala, south of Baghdad. In that operation, every attacking Apache in the regiment was hit by enemy fire. One aircraft was shot down, and many of the other 30

were seriously damaged. The next morning, only seven of the remaining aircraft were airworthy.

The good news was that compared to Vietnam-era aircraft the Apache proved to be a very survivable helicopter. The bad news was that intense small arms fire and RPGs—the same type of weapons used in Lam Son 719 three decades earlier—drove off an entire regiment of very expensive, sophisticated attack aircraft. Five nights later the 101st Airborne Division made another deep attack into generally the same area. Although no aircraft were lost to enemy fire (two were lost to mishaps), the attack inflicted very little damage on the enemy.<sup>19</sup> The Army attempted no more deep attacks against regular Iraqi Army formations.

The Marines had their own challenges with helicopters. Their Cobra attack helicopter force suffered considerable damage from enemy ground fire. Approximately 46 of the 58 AH-1W Cobras deployed with the 3d Marine Air Wing suffered battle damage. Initially, the Cobras performed useful close support and armed reconnaissance roles, the latter missions taking them 5 to 15 kilometers into enemy territory in front of the leading ground elements. The Cobras often gathered useful information and engaged targets of opportunity, but took very heavy fire from concealed enemy forces. By roughly 1 April, the accumulated battle damage forced the Marines to stop using Cobras for armed reconnaissance. Thereafter, the helicopters were limited to close support, hovering over or close to friendly ground forces.

By the time they made the final push on Baghdad, Army commanders had become very cautious in their use of rotary wing, low-altitude aircraft. The commander of the 3d Infantry Division, Major General Buford Blount, prohibited *all* helicopter missions from going north of the Euphrates River from about 1 April 2003 until Baghdad’s fall roughly a week later. Even medical evacuation helicopters were only occasionally allowed to go north of the river, to pick up grievously wounded personnel.<sup>20</sup>

In southern Iraq, the British Army was equally cautious in its use of low-altitude aircraft. After helicopters transported elements of the Royal Marine’s 3 Commando Brigade ashore at the start of operations, the British restricted their use near the enemy. For example, on several occasions the British Army’s 16 Air Assault Brigade planned for helicopter movement

of troops to encircle Iraqi forces near Basra. Each time, the operation was cancelled. The hard-to-locate, non-emitting, low-altitude air defense threat was simply too pervasive.<sup>21</sup>

It is very significant that the U.S. Army, the USMC, and the British Army, all independently of each other, reached the same conclusion regarding vertical maneuver in front of the leading edge of armor: *the risks were simply too great*. Given the facts, this unwillingness to do vertical maneuver is even more striking because—

- OIF was supposedly a war of vital national interest.
- Coalition forces had complete command of the air.
- The enemy's integrated air defenses were largely destroyed before the start of the war.
- The residual air-defense threat consisted mostly of small arms, RPGs, and an occasional anti-aircraft gun.

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If senior commanders were not willing to take the risks associated with deep vertical maneuver in those circumstances, when would they be?

The air movement of the Army's 173d Airborne Brigade (reinforced by a small task force of tanks and mechanized infantry) from Italy into northern Iraq is sometimes cited by proponents of air-mech as an example of what the future will look like. In reality, the 173d deployed into a safe area already controlled by Kurdish forces. Once it arrived, it needed time to accumulate sufficient supplies for sustained operations. Finally, the 173d's actual contribution to the campaign was negligible. This is no insult to the unit or its Soldiers. The fact is that the major combat operations phase in Iraq was won by

heavy forces driving up the Tigris-Euphrates Valley, backed by considerable air support.

## Compatibility Problems

History isn't the only thing militating against the air-mech concept. Now and for the foreseeable future, the available planes are not compatible with the available vehicles. To make air-mech work, the Air Force has only C-130 and C-17 transports. The Army has the Stryker. The Stryker will fit (barely) inside a C-130, but not without first removing its anti-RPG slat armor. This armor would have to be reinstalled upon arrival in the area of operations—hardly a selling point for a force meant to move out and fight on arrival. The 20-ton Stryker also significantly reduces the C-130's range because it forces the aircraft to operate at close to its maximum payload. The vehicle's weight, moreover, compels the C-130 to use improved, rather than field, landing strips, thereby limiting the possible areas into which the force can be air-landed. The larger C-17 can carry possibly three Strykers, but it requires an even more developed airfield than the loaded C-130 does. The end result is an even greater loss of deployability.

Nor will the arrival of the FCS solve the plane-vehicle problem. To retain some compatibility with the C-130, the Army intends to offset the FCS's weight (24 to 26 tons) by making the system modular, so that components can be removed to make the FCS transportable by C-130. But like the Stryker's slats, these components will have to be reinstalled upon arrival in the area of operations, and the C-130 will still require an improved runway.

Air-mech proponents hope that in the future a heavy vertical take-off and landing (VTOL) aircraft can be built to permit truly vertical maneuver and to reduce or negate the need for runways. Examples of this type of hypothetical aircraft include either a large helicopter (such as a very large CH-47 with a 20- to 25-ton payload) or a large tilt-rotor aircraft such as a four-engine version of the V-22 Osprey. But until—and unless—such an aircraft is designed, the air-mechanization concept will be hamstrung by the need for airports and improved airfields.

## Fiscal Realities

Operational concerns and compatibility problems aside, air-mech faces issues of cost and technological feasibility. To put it simply, it would be hugely



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**The CV-22 Osprey fires countermeasures during a safe-separation test over the precision impact range area at Edwards Air Force Base, California, in 2004.**

expensive to create even one brigade of air-mech capability. The cost of the FCS itself is very high, at least \$130 billion for the research and development plus production of 15 brigades of equipment (enough for roughly one-third of the active Army).<sup>22</sup> The cost of the aircraft would also be enormous.

A very large premium has to be paid for VTOL aircraft. Take, for example, the V-22 compared to the C-130. The C-130J can lift up to 20 tons of payload over short distances (although loads of 13 to 15 tons are much easier on the aircraft). That aircraft costs roughly \$65 million. The VTOL V-22 tilt-rotor can do some things the C-130 cannot, most notably take off and land without an airstrip. This is why the proponents of air-mech see tilt-rotor aircraft as the key enabler of the concept. However, a major problem is that the aircraft they envision is prohibitively expensive. The V-22, which costs \$70 million, can lift only six tons of payload, less than one-third the maximum payload of C-130J. It is easy to see the premium required for VTOL capability.

To lift a combat-equipped FCS, a large tilt-rotor would have to be sized for roughly 28 to 29 tons. Aircraft cannot be designed to habitually lift their theoretical maximum payload. Just as the C-130 has a theoretical maximum capacity of about 20 tons, but a planning factor of roughly 15 tons, so would a tilt-rotor intended to lift a 24- to 26-ton FCS have to be designed toward a higher threshold.<sup>23</sup> Recent

analysis conducted for the U.S. Navy showed that a quad tilt-rotor sized to lift 20 tons would cost roughly \$200 million per aircraft. With the recent weight increase of FCS to between 24 and 26 tons, the size—and cost—of the aircraft would have to grow. It is likely that a VTOL aircraft capable of lifting an FCS over any substantial distance would cost about \$250 million each.<sup>24</sup>

At a cost of roughly \$250 million per aircraft, a plausible research and development cost from \$10 billion to \$15 billion, plus a major investment in new infrastructure capable of handling this class of aircraft (which the Army lacks today), building the aircraft component of air-mech would be enormous. To have enough aircraft to move just one FCS-armed brigade, the Army would have to purchase a minimum of roughly 300 aircraft for operational units. That figure presumes two lifts (round trips) to move one brigade (at 25 tons per aircraft per lift, with the brigade weighing roughly 15,000 tons, comparable to a Stryker brigade). Additionally, the Army would have to purchase spares and training aircraft that would push the total buy up to at least 375. At \$250 million per aircraft, plus research and development (R&D) costs, the program (not including new infrastructure) would cost between \$130 and \$135 billion. If the Army wanted sufficient aircraft to move one complete FCS-armed brigade in a single lift, the total cost would be well over \$200 billion.

The great cost of the aircraft would also affect the rate at which the Army could acquire them. At a unit cost of \$250 million per aircraft (more than the current cost of a new production C-17), very few large tilt-rotor aircraft could be purchased each year. The maximum annual production of the C-17 is 15 airplanes—and the Air Force is in the primary business of buying and operating large aircraft, whereas the Army is not. Producing 20 aircraft a year would cost the Army some \$5 billion annually, or roughly 50 percent of its entire current procurement account. Even at this optimistic production rate, it would require 17 to 18 years to produce enough aircraft to give the Army the ability to lift one-half of one of its brigades. If the program were started next year (a virtual impossibility), the R&D period would last roughly a decade, followed by at least five years of low rate initial production, after which full rate production (20 per year for the sake of argument) could start. Therefore, it would be between 2038



***...it would be between 2038 and 2040 before the Army could accumulate enough aircraft to give it the ability to move one half of one brigade of its ground maneuver force via organic heavy-lift aircraft.***

and 2040 before the Army could accumulate enough aircraft to give it the ability to move one half of one brigade of its ground maneuver force via organic heavy-lift aircraft.

One way the Army might afford the aircraft would be by sharing the cost with another service. However, given the demands on their budgets, it is unlikely that the other services would be willing to commit substantial funds to such an Army-sponsored aircraft. That the Air Force will have no interest in such an aircraft goes almost without saying. It is already heavily committed to the F-22A, its version of the F-35; C-130J production is still underway; more C-17s may be built; a tanker replacement is on the horizon; and the service needs additional surveillance and reconnaissance platforms. The Air Force is, to put it nicely, already oversubscribed. Moreover, operationally, the USAF has no need for a heavy-lift VTOL aircraft. Realizing this, the Army has not seriously approached the Air Force for cooperation in the heavy vertical lift project.

On the other hand, the Army has held out considerable hope that the Navy and Marine Corps would support such a program. The Marines have vertical lift needs of their own, and the Army would welcome sea-service participation in a joint program, even if the Navy and Marines have to be forced to do so by Congress or the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

The problem is that the type of aircraft that the Army wants is simply not compatible with shipboard operations. To carry a 24- to 26-ton payload, the aircraft would have to be so large and heavy, with rotors that will produce hurricane-force winds on crowded flight decks, that it is problematic at best for shipboard use.

A recent Navy study of lift capability examined seven hypothetical aircraft. Significantly, that study

was based on aircraft sized for 20-ton payloads. Since the Navy study was completed, the weight of the FCS has increased, resulting in a requirement for an even larger aircraft. Such an aircraft (whether helicopter or tilt rotor) would be so large that it could not use the ships' elevators, nor would it be able to enter hangar bays. Indeed, these aircraft would be so large that they would place major constraints on air operations by aircraft designed for normal shipboard use.<sup>25</sup>

Additionally, the Marines do not need a heavier aircraft than already contemplated. Whereas the Army's Stryker (20 tons) and FCS (24 to 26 tons) require an aircraft with roughly a 25-ton lift capability, there are important break points in the equipment weight of a Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB). The Marine's CH-53E can already lift all the equipment of a MEB except the 25-ton Amphibious Assault Vehicle-7 (AAV-7) and the 65-ton M-1A1 main battle tank. The AAV-7's replacement will be the 35-ton Expeditionary Fighting Vehicle (EFV). The Marines have no requirement for either the EFV or the M-1A1 to be airlifted. Their next heaviest piece of combat equipment is the 14-ton Light Armored Vehicle (LAV-I). With the CH-53 capable of airlifting the LAV-I, and with no expectation that its two heaviest pieces of combat gear be moved from ship-to-shore by air, the Marines have no need for an aircraft of the type the Army desires.

## **Susceptibility to Countermeasures**

We have already discussed the survivability issue in terms of the optimistic assumptions about situational awareness regarding non-emitting, low-altitude air defense weapons. Of at least equal importance is the gross mismatch between the costs to the United States of this concept compared with the cost to an opponent to deploy countermeasures. By orders of magnitude, the cost calculation argues against the air-mech concept.

Whereas medium/high-altitude defenses are very expensive and require considerable training for the operators, low-altitude air defenses require neither. The state-of-the-art Russian SA-18 shoulder-fired surface-to-air missile costs roughly \$50,000 per launcher. Each missile costs about the same. So, a launcher with six missiles represents an investment of some \$350,000. When training aids and other extras are added, it may come to about \$400,000.

Assuming the cost to the United States for one quad tilt-rotor is \$200 million, an opponent could purchase 500 SA-18 launchers and 3,000 missiles for the same investment. Clearly, there is a tremendous disparity between the cost of air-mech and the countermeasures that can threaten or defeat it.

To hedge against U.S. development of counters to a single system, an opponent would almost certainly buy an assortment of air defenses. Antiaircraft guns (\$150,000 to \$5 million each depending on the model), anti-helicopter mines (roughly \$30,000 each), beam-rider systems such as RBS-90, and quick-response, radar-guided, low-altitude missiles like the Russian SA-15 would probably be mixed and matched to create a multifaceted air defense system that would foil U.S. countermeasures. It may be beyond the ability of the United States to counter at all. Recall the Navy and Air Force's response to today's low-altitude threat: they usually fly above it unless there is some extreme operational reason not to do so. An air-mech force cannot do that. It could only fly around the air defense threat, landing where there is probably nothing that the enemy cares about anyway.

The main point is that compared to costly medium/high-altitude defenses, low-altitude defensive systems (not to mention small arms and RPGs that are also used against low-flying aircraft) are very cheap. They are also much easier to train operators on compared to the sophisticated systems required for medium/high-altitude defenses (such as SA-10/12 or Patriot). This fundamental reality means that the United States could find itself in the situation of having purchased a hugely expensive air-mech "system" (the expensive ground vehicles, a costly reconnaissance network in an attempt to gain situational awareness, and very expensive aircraft) only to find that commanders are not willing to use it—even when the opposition consists of cheap, low-tech countermeasures.

## **A Fragile Concept**

In summary, the air-mech concept is hugely expensive, vulnerable to relatively cheap countermeasures, and would probably involve such risk that it would only rarely, if ever, be used in the manner advocated by its proponents. The chances of risk-

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averse senior U.S. decision makers deploying a brigade hundreds of miles from the nearest friendly ground force is remote (unless the deployment is into a safe area, such as the movement of the 173d Airborne Brigade into the Kurdish-controlled part of northern Iraq in 2003). There is little likelihood of an operation ever being conducted that remotely resembles the large-scale, deep penetrations envisioned by air-mech advocates.

What should be done? Although this article has highlighted the multiple major problems with the air-mech concept, a case can be made for the purchase of a small number of new heavy-lift VTOL aircraft. During ground combat in Operation Iraqi Freedom, aircraft were used to supplement the traditional truck-based ground supply system. The farther the ground force moved from its supply base in Kuwait, the more the logistics system was strained. A judicious number of heavy-lift VTOL aircraft would have been very useful logistically. Given the effectiveness of Iraqi air defenses, the same cannot be said about using such aircraft in an offensive mode.

If the Army wants a joint program with the sea services in order to share costs, it will have to make major compromises on the aircraft's design. An aircraft intended to vertically lift the roughly 25-ton FCS will be way too large for reasonable use aboard ship. Even an aircraft built for a 20-ton payload would present major challenges for ship-board operations. The aircraft's size, the velocity of its rotor wash on the deck, and its large blades hanging over the ship's side while rotating at high speed would be major issues for naval aviation. If an airplane is too large to fit on a flight-deck elevator or too big to stow inside a ship's hangar bay, it will be of little use to the Navy and Marine Corps. Therefore, to attract joint sponsors from the sea

services, the Army would have to be willing to make major compromises to its requirements.

For nearly a decade the Army has been examining the utility of air-mechanized forces and associated aircraft. This article has highlighted the many problems that would challenge the creation and employment of a true air-mech capability. Perhaps the most telling point is that the air-mech concept, which would be hugely expensive by any standard,

could be severely threatened, if not entirely negated, by cheap, low-tech countermeasures. It is becoming increasingly clear that in the coming decade the U.S. military will have to make some very hard, fundamental choices about the capabilities it truly needs in an era of fiscal constraints. Building a future capability that is based on a hugely expensive, very fragile concept is not an option that deserves further consideration, much less investment. **MR**

## NOTES

1. Robert Scales, "The Shape of Brigades to Come," *Armed Forces Journal* (October 2005): 32.
2. John Gordon and Jerry Sollinger, "The Army's Dilemma," *Parameters* (Summer 2004): 33-45; Dennis Steele, "The Wheels Start Turning," *Army* (February 2000), 36.
3. For a discussion of the historical need for rapid intercontinental deployment, see Alan Vick, et al., *The Stryker Brigade Combat Team: Rethinking Strategic Responsiveness and Assessing Deployment Options* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2002).
4. See Huba Wass de Czege, "The Continuing Necessity of Ground Combat in Modern War," *Army* (September 2000), 8-12, for perhaps the most extreme postulation of what the Army could have accomplished in Kosovo if it had air-mechanized forces. According to Wass de Czege, "the incursion of the Serb Army into Kosovo could have been preempted before the genocide began. . . . One or two [U.S. Army] objective force divisions could have been flown into Kosovo to block the entry of most of the Serbian forces. They would have used organic aircraft with enough range to fly into Kosovo from at least beyond the Adriatic Sea" (page 11). Emphasis in the original.
5. The term "medium forces" generally refers to combat units armed with tracked or wheeled fighting vehicles in the 15 to 26 ton weight class.
6. "Highlights of AUSA's Annual Meeting," *Army* (December 1999), 45-52.
7. A beam-rider missile is controlled by a gunner on the ground who keeps his sight fixed on the target. Control commands are transmitted to the missile based on the gunner's sight picture. Currently, beam riders are immune to countermeasures.
8. As a point of comparison, the entire buy of the UH-60 helicopter was 1,463 aircraft. The aircraft lost and damaged during Lam Son 719 would have accounted for about half of the fleet in less than two months.
9. <[www.a101avn.org/LamSon719.html](http://www.a101avn.org/LamSon719.html)>. Lam Son 719 was known to U.S. troops as Operation Dewey Canyon II. It lasted from 30 January to 24 March 1971.
10. Peter Wilson, "Defense of Hue and Quang Tri City—the 1972 NVA Invasion of MR-1" (Washington: Center for Naval Analysis, 1974).
11. See the following web site for a discussion of the evolution of U.S. Army thinking on attack helicopter development, particularly the 1972 decision to cancel the Cheyenne attack helicopter and the early post-Vietnam development of the AH-64 Apache: <[www.centennialofflight.gov/essay/Rotary/Assault\\_heli/HE17.htm](http://www.centennialofflight.gov/essay/Rotary/Assault_heli/HE17.htm)>.
12. Frank Schubert, et al., *The Whirlwind War* (Washington: Center of Military History, 1995), 174-190.
13. Bruce R. Nardulli, et al., *Disjointed War, Military Operations in Kosovo, 1999* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2002), 94.
14. Robert H. Scales, *Yellow Smoke: The Future of Land Warfare for America's*

- Military* (Rowan & Littlefield, 2003). See also John Gordon IV, David Johnson, Walter L. Perry, and Bruce R. Pirnie, "Letter to the Editor: Kosovo and Landpower," *Army* (April 2001), 4-8, for a discussion of the insurmountable obstacles air-mech forces would have faced during Operation Allied Force.
15. Nardulli, 94-95.
  16. Unlike the Iraqis in 1991 who turned their air-defense radars on and left them operating for long periods, thus making them ideal targets, the Serbs in Kosovo frequently moved their mobile radars and only operated them for brief periods from a given location. This greatly complicated NATO's ability to locate and target them. Indeed, NATO could never be sure how much damage it had inflicted on the Serb air-defense system.
  17. Interviews with members of the 1st Marine Division, Camp Pendleton, California, October 2003.
  18. Interviews with British Army Doctrine and Development Command, Upavon, United Kingdom, August 2003; interviews with members of the 3d Infantry Division (Mech), Fort Stewart, Georgia, October 2003.
  19. Gregory P. Gass, "The Road Ahead," *Rotor and Wing* (October 2003): 26.
  20. Interviews with MG Buford Blount, February 2004; interviews with members of the 3d Infantry Division (Mech), Fort Stewart, Georgia, October 2003.
  21. Interview with UK Ministry of Defense, London, July 2003.
  22. For information on FCS cost growth, see the August 2006 Congressional Budget Office report, "The Army's Future Combat Systems Program and Alternatives," xvi. The report cites an estimate by the Pentagon's Cost Analysis Improvement Group that placed FCS R&D and production of 15 brigades at \$160–173 billion.
  23. FCS is being designed in a modular fashion so that components can be removed to lower vehicle weight, possibly allowing for C-130 transport. The reassembly of the vehicles upon arrival at their destination could, however, be time-consuming and certainly not conducive to immediate employment.
  24. John Gordon, et al., *Assessment of Navy Heavy-Lift Aircraft Options* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2005).
  25. Of the aircraft options examined for the Navy, only the CH-53X (now known as the CH-53K), an improved model of the existing CH-53E, was determined to be readily shipboard compatible. That aircraft is, however, limited to roughly 15-ton payloads. Some of the helicopter variants (sized for a 20-ton payload) might be able to enter a ship's hangar bay, but several important technical challenges would have to be resolved first. Of the helicopter variants, a large tandem (i.e., a large CH-46 or 47) was most compatible with shipboard operations in terms of its shape and rotor wash.

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# Counterinsurgency Intelligence in a “Long War”

## The British Experience in Northern Ireland

Brian A. Jackson, Ph.D.

**H**ISTORY DEMONSTRATES that insurgents armed with conventional weapons (the gun, the bomb, the rocket) can sustain violent campaigns against state militaries over long periods of time. Victory against such insurgents rarely comes from destruction of troops on a battlefield and, as they typically blend into the population, the enemy is often more difficult to find than to neutralize. In many recent conflicts, resilient and adaptive insurgent organizations using hide-and-seek tactics have checked nations and, in some cases, have prevented them from achieving foreign policy goals.

After seeing the clearly demonstrated effectiveness of U.S. forces in rapid, decisive operations against conventionally arrayed opponents, future U.S. adversaries will almost certainly apply insurgent-like tactics, whether those adversaries are insurgent groups or state forces simply striving for asymmetric advantage. Therefore, in the current environment, the ability to effectively wage counterinsurgency (COIN) warfare is an important element of national power.

As events in Iraq demonstrate, military organizations that have optimized their effectiveness for rapid, decisive operations experience a significant learning curve when engaging in counterinsurgency. Effective COIN operations are, in many ways, the opposite of rapid and decisive: They are slow and deliberate; success may come more from patient use of stabilizing security pressure than from the outcome of defined battles; and depriving combatants of their political support and appeal may be a straighter path to victory than direct engagement. Successful COIN campaigning will often require a significant shift in perspective to clearly grasp the challenges inherent in this kind of warfare and to select the right tools to overcome those challenges.

Where information is needed to identify the enemy, determine how to neutralize or isolate him, and guide security actions across the full spectrum of conflict, intelligence is a central—perhaps the most important—tool for effective COIN. However, another challenge to traditional military organizations in COIN is that the necessary approach to intelligence diverges significantly from conventional modes of operation. Simply applying familiar approaches developed in other contexts can undermine rather than promote mission success.

### Learning from the British

A study of historical cases can sometimes provide new perspectives on current problems and help improve organizational performance. One often cited

*Dr. Brian A. Jackson is a physical scientist at RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, California, conducting research on such topics as homeland security and terrorism. He holds a doctorate in bioorganic chemistry from the California Institute of Technology, Pasadena. He wishes to acknowledge David Frelinger and Tom McNaugher, of RAND Corporation, for providing input to early drafts of this manuscript.*

PHOTO: A British soldier grabs a Catholic protester during a civil rights march on Sunday, 30 January 1972, in Londonderry, Northern Ireland. The event became known as “Bloody Sunday,” because British soldiers killed 13 civil rights marchers and wounded several more. (AFP)

case is the British experience in Northern Ireland, particularly the fight against the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) that began in 1969.<sup>1</sup> A number of other terrorist organizations were active in Northern Ireland at the time, but PIRA’s capabilities posed the most potent threat.<sup>2</sup> PIRA has been characterized as a sophisticated, intelligence-led terrorist group because of its capability and operational precision.<sup>3</sup> Only recently, with the reported completion of the group’s decommissioning, has its armed campaign come to an apparent end.

Compared to many nations entering insurgent conflicts, the United Kingdom came to the hostilities in Northern Ireland with significant experience in COIN and its modern adjunct, counterterrorism. Some of the U.K.’s previous insurgent conflicts have been held up as examples of effectiveness in such wars. In spite of that experience, however, the conflict in Northern Ireland did not begin well or go smoothly. Poor intelligence operations were a key source of the problems: as reported by historian Chris Ryder, “the principal weakness, according to the Chief of the General Staff who visited Northern Ireland [in 1971], was in intelligence gathering.”<sup>4</sup>

In the context of an insurgency, intelligence must deliver the strategic insight needed to know what actions will be effective and what levels of commitment are required, the tactical insight to hit the insurgent target when military action is taken, and the context needed to understand the broader political and other effects of potential security activities. Analyses of the Northern Ireland conflict from military and other perspectives highlight problems in each of these areas:

- Misunderstandings by political leaders about the root causes of the violence.<sup>5</sup>
- Unrealistic expectations about the length of time needed to resolve the situation.<sup>6</sup>
- Tactical intelligence shortfalls that led to action more beneficial to PIRA than to advancing the fight against it.<sup>7</sup>
- Failure to appreciate how covert offensive actions—even successful ones—by special operations or intelligence organizations would play out in the political arena and other spheres.<sup>8</sup>

Over the course of the conflict, security and intelligence organizations adapted by studying the overall effects of their actions and learning from each engagement.<sup>9</sup> In time, they became extremely

successful. Consistent with the nature of COIN operations, that success did not translate into traditional measures of military progress, such as discrete battles won or numbers of enemy soldiers eliminated. Rather, it paid off in increasingly effective linkage of security activities into the overall political conflict and drastic reductions in PIRA’s freedom of action and effectiveness. In one of the highest compliments a combatant can pay to the intelligence efforts of his opponents, PIRA member Brendan Hughes said that intelligence efforts had “effectively [brought] the IRA to a standstill where it could move very, very little.”<sup>10</sup>

The totality of the British intelligence experience in Northern Ireland, both its successes and challenges, is what makes it a valuable example from which to draw insight to shape contemporary COIN intelligence operations.<sup>11</sup> Had the practices from earlier British conflicts transferred seamlessly and flawlessly into the fight against PIRA, the value of the Northern Ireland experience as a case study would likely be much more limited. Given the adaptability of insurgent groups and the specificity of local circumstances, effectively implementing COIN operations will almost always demand learning and adaptability on the part of military and intelligence organizations. These units must shape themselves appropriately for the fight, apply the right tools to collect and analyze intelligence, and use the intelligence effectively against the insurgency. The British experience provides lessons in all these areas.

## Building the Right Coordination Structures

Multiple organizations were involved in the intelligence fight against PIRA. At the beginning the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), which might have been expected to spearhead intelligence collection to prevent terrorism, was not in a position to conduct such activities. This prompted the British Army to intervene in Northern Ireland and forced it (and other intelligence organizations) to take the lead in intelligence activities.<sup>12</sup>

As the conflict became more intense, many different intelligence units from military, law-enforcement, and intelligence agencies became involved. Later, national organizations (MI5 and MI6, the Security Service and the Secret Intelligence Service,

respectively) also initiated operations to collect political intelligence.<sup>13</sup> In an effort to describe the organizational landscape of the intelligence activities fielded in Northern Ireland, Mark Urban lists nearly 20 units that were formed or evolved from one another between 1969 and 1983.<sup>14</sup> Many were added to bring diverse intelligence capabilities to bear.<sup>15</sup> However, as new agencies and units became involved in operations, no focused attempt was made to weave them into a single, coordinated intelligence effort. This is not surprising, given that such coordination activities require time and effort that could not then be directed at the adversary. Also, efforts involving many organizations almost invariably generate interagency conflicts that inhibit coordination.<sup>16</sup>

The initial lack of coordination had real operational costs. Poor integration meant specialized teams and capabilities were not always used well. For example, Ryder writes, “Owing to a misunderstanding of its role, the SAS [Special Air Service] was misused at first, its special skills wasted because ordinary infantry commanders did not know how to make best use of them.”<sup>17</sup> Failures to share also meant security forces might respond to incidents without the information necessary to be effective or to protect themselves. For instance, not sharing new intelligence on PIRA bomb designs with explosives ordnance disposal (EOD) officers who responded to bomb incidents nearly resulted in EOD casualties.<sup>18</sup>

Parallel intelligence efforts in separate organizations also generated inefficiency. Because of security concerns, army officers stationed in the area on short tours developed their own intelligence sources rather than rely on the police, who were permanent residents.<sup>19</sup> Such efforts produced security classification issues that further complicated sharing and coordination. Ryder says, “Further hostility was caused when the army frequently classified material ‘For UK eyes only,’ which denied the RUC sight of it.”<sup>20</sup>

Such parallel streams also generated the potential for single

sources to provide (or sell) the same piece of information to more than one intelligence agency, so that when the agencies did attempt to share data, multiple reports could be interpreted as independent confirmations rather than simply multiple contacts with the same source.<sup>21</sup> Problems in coordination also reportedly resulted in the unintentional compromise of sources, hurting the ability of all agencies to collect information.<sup>22</sup>

Although they took years to develop and implement, mechanisms were eventually put in place to address intelligence coordination challenges.<sup>23</sup> Changes included centralization of overall command and control for security activities, including appointment of an “intelligence supremo” and coordinating apparatus.<sup>24</sup> One key to this shift was the development of tasking and coordination groups (TCGs) that brought together the tactical activities of various organizations involved in the intelligence fight. According to Urban, “the TCGs attained a critical role in what security chiefs called ‘executive action’—locking together intelligence from informers with the surveillance and ambushing activities of undercover units.”<sup>25</sup>

While such structures are needed to bring together information produced in disparate operations staged by different organizations, they also provide critical control. They limit duplication of effort and help deconflict the actions of various organizations to ensure those operations do not interfere with one another.<sup>26</sup> Such structures are also needed to concentrate intelligence forces as effectively as possible. The diverse capabilities that different agencies can

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bring to a fight add value only if those capabilities can be brought to bear when needed.<sup>27</sup>

## The Right Tools for Intelligence Collection

Any intelligence effort must be able to collect information. However, the nature of the COIN mission challenges traditional ways of thinking about intelligence collection, especially against members of a comparatively small insurgent organization within a larger civilian population.

Intelligence collection is generally thought of as a distinct activity in which intelligence-specific tools are used to gather data for analysis and application. The COIN intelligence mission has elements that fit readily within this view. For example, developing and exploiting informers or infiltrators clearly requires the same compartmentalization and protection that is standard intelligence practice. Informers within PIRA were of critical importance in the COIN effort and played an important part in the intelligence fight.

That said, the British experience in Northern Ireland demonstrates that COIN intelligence collection efforts must diverge considerably from “classical intelligence” methods. Limits to the availability of clandestine sources mean that other collection tools must be developed and applied. The effectiveness of these other tools depends on the relationship of intelligence specialists with other parts of the security force and even with the general population in the area affected by the insurgency.

### **Tool 1: Collecting low-grade intelligence.**

While infiltrators or informers can provide valuable data, they might not be available in sufficient numbers for success in a broad COIN effort. The complement for high-grade intelligence that such sources provide is large amounts of low-grade information that, added together, can provide a picture of insurgent operations.<sup>28</sup> This approach, attributed to General Sir Frank Kitson, requires an intelligence collection approach that is a hybrid of military intelligence, law enforcement, and traditional intelligence agency approaches.

The building up of low-grade intelligence is particularly important against groups like PIRA that adopt decentralized structures for security purposes.<sup>29</sup> British security forces were quite successful in decimating a number of other terrorist

groups that operated in Northern Ireland using more centralized structures. Keith Maguire says, “The ability of British security forces to turn *any* members of these [centralized] groups made possible the identification of entire geographic units. In the case of the INLA [Irish National Liberation Army] or the Red Hand Commando, one defection led to the identification of the entire leadership of the organization and perhaps its entire membership within a few months.”<sup>30</sup>

Where does such low-grade intelligence come from? The primary sources are direct security force observation and interaction with members of the public.

- *Every soldier a collector.* Direct collection of low-grade intelligence by security forces relies on the eyes and ears of the entire force, not just the efforts of intelligence specialists.<sup>31</sup> Because insurgents and terrorists blend in with the general population, familiarity with what is normal in an area provides the basis for detecting anomalous behavior that might indicate insurgent activity. Like the community patrolling police officers do, this strategy leverages an individual’s ability to learn what the baseline activity is in his area of responsibility and then apply his own human processing power to identify activities of concern.<sup>32</sup>

In Northern Ireland, troops pursued this strategy extensively with “constant mobile and foot patrols, which allow[ed] troops to familiarize themselves with their area and to pick up background information.”<sup>33</sup> Priming patrols to look for key elements (such as using “face books” of insurgent suspects

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An armed British soldier patrols a street in Belfast, Northern Ireland, in February 1972.

whose positions and activities were of particular interest) increased the intelligence gathered.<sup>34</sup> For this strategy to be truly effective, however, the various pieces of information obtained must be brought together in a way that addresses intelligence needs at all levels, from the need for information to shape tactical operations to the requirement to synthesize data to drive strategic decisions about the entire conflict.<sup>35</sup> The British relied on debriefings after patrols to collect information and build the overall intelligence jigsaw of the conflict.<sup>36</sup> In *The British Army in Ulster*, David Barzilay writes, “A patrol never ended up at the main gate [of the military base]. We would get a quick cup of tea, have a cigarette and in a relaxed atmosphere the patrol would be discussed and every piece of relevant information written down and passed on to the company intelligence section.”<sup>37</sup>

While individual soldiers or units can be effective intelligence gatherers, standard military practices of compressed tours of duty and frequent troop rotation can make reliance on this strategy problematic. Detailed local knowledge is only built up over time,

and the departure of soldiers at the end of their tours takes them away when they might be operating at their highest performance level.

Early in its activities, the British military took few steps to aid knowledge transfer between units rotating into and out of the theater. According to Michael Dewar, “During the early years, battalions were rushed out at little or no notice as both the government and the military merely reacted to events.”<sup>38</sup> Over time, to help with knowledge transfer, the army developed processes to overlap the command and intelligence functions of incoming battalions with units already operating in theater.<sup>39</sup> Such processes began to erode the advantage held by the insurgent, who lived and operated in theater and, therefore, could maintain and apply a higher level of local knowledge.

• *Think “people first.”* Even if it is possible to harness the eyes and ears of each soldier in a COIN theater, there will always be areas that security forces cannot access. Therefore, the counterinsurgent must rely on the other eyes and ears in theater—those of the general population in

which insurgents hide. As members of the public go about their daily business, they will almost certainly observe actions or overhear information of immeasurable value to security forces.

In Northern Ireland, the general public provided key intelligence at times. Some input came via a confidential telephone system put in place by security forces.<sup>40</sup> However, direct interaction between members of the public and security forces was frequently key to gathering this type of intelligence.<sup>41</sup> At regularized interactions with security forces, such as at checkpoints, individuals sometimes took the opportunity to pass on intelligence data.<sup>42</sup> In contexts like these, collection depends even more on individuals outside intelligence organizations or specialties. The nature of interaction between individual soldiers and members of the public can determine success. To ensure that every soldier’s actions were consistent with overall goals, soldiers were taught to be courteous but firm: “Slowly it was sinking in that the way a battalion behaved made a big difference to its overall success. Toughness was acceptable; roughness was not.”<sup>43</sup>

For interaction and information exchange to be possible between the public and security forces, soldiers have to be able to speak the population’s language. In Northern Ireland this wasn’t a problem, as it is in Iraq, where security force members who can speak the language are critical assets. If a member of the public who has critical intelligence approaches a soldier and cannot make himself understood, he might not persevere to find another person who can understand his language.

- *Public opinion drives collection.* In COIN, image matters. The population’s potential to provide valuable information means that perceptions—the public image of security forces and their activities—have operational consequences. If, for example, citizens believe they will not be protected from retributive violence, their willingness to participate with authorities will be understandably reduced.<sup>44</sup> Where insurgents or terrorists take actions that are perceived as particularly brutal or inexcusable by the general population, citizens may pass on information in spite of such fear. However, relying solely on the adversary’s tactical mistakes to spur the flow of intelligence is not sufficient for a robust COIN effort.

Actions matter too. When the actions of security forces are seen as inappropriate or repressive, public

trust can be quickly lost. Interrogation of suspects is a good example. While interrogation can provide a key information stream for intelligence purposes, how interrogation practices are perceived publicly is important.<sup>45</sup> If the counterinsurgent’s practices are unduly harsh, the insurgent will use them for propaganda purposes. This was certainly the case in Northern Ireland where so-called “interrogation in-depth had revealed a great deal of information in a war where intelligence was at a premium. But success in counterinsurgency operations cannot be measured in purely military terms. The interrogation issue was a political setback for the security forces and a propaganda victory for the IRA.”<sup>46</sup>

The value of information obtained via tough interrogation methods must be traded against the methods’ potential to shut down voluntary cooperation from the population.<sup>47</sup> Bad perceptions can also lead to political reactions that constrain intelligence gathering. Tony Geraghty tells us that “the political storm raised by [troops’ internment and interrogation practices] resulted in official limitations on interrogation which gave the IRA a real military prize.”<sup>48</sup>

Similarly, actions taken by security forces that affect the general population must be assessed with a view toward their influence on public opinion. While large-scale operations such as cordon-and-search might provide ways to collect information on broad portions of an area’s population, they frequently antagonize the public and inhibit cooperation. Limiting broad operations and using other intelligence-gathering methods can pay dividends in effectiveness and public image.<sup>49</sup>

**Tool 2: Specialized operations and units.** While broad efforts to collect intelligence data can provide much information useful for COIN, other needs require more specialized tools. Some focused

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intelligence operations applied in Northern Ireland were quite simple in concept. For example, security checkpoints (particularly rapidly implemented “snap” checkpoints) were used to collect information on the movement of individuals and vehicles.<sup>50</sup> Similarly (and despite the risk of creating ill will in the population), stop-and-search operations of individuals in areas of security concern helped collect certain types of information.<sup>51</sup> Other operations were more complex and required specialized units and capabilities to carry them out.

Observation posts (OPs) were a major part of the intelligence fight. Some OPs were overt, such as the one on top of Divis Flats in West Belfast, where observers continuously scanned the streets using high-powered binoculars and, at night, infrared sights.<sup>52</sup>

Covert surveillance posts (complemented by soldiers patrolling undercover) were also used in problem areas to enable long-term monitoring.<sup>53</sup> At such posts, continuity in staffing helped build up baseline local knowledge, making it easier for an observer to detect anomalies that might suggest PIRA activity. According to Barzilay, “Each time the OPs changed, the same marines went to the same positions and took over the same watches [so they] could get used to the routines of the day, such as the milk float on its rounds, the dustman calling, the paperboy on his rounds, and the pubs opening and closing. In this way each marine became familiar with the personalities and locality and was able to spot a change of routine when it occurred.”<sup>54</sup>

Overt observation was challenging. In close-knit neighborhoods, strangers could be readily identified and were rapidly challenged, making it difficult to carry out overt and static surveillance activities. This necessitated development and application of a wide range of specialized teams with training in close observation of individuals and other methods of focused intelligence gathering. Groups such as the 14th Intelligence Company, special close-observation platoons, the E4A unit in the police department, and the SAS all played these roles in different parts of the intelligence fight in Northern Ireland. Some military intelligence teams operated for extended tours (compared to the shorter rotations of other units) to provide continuity and to allow them to build up local knowledge and expertise.<sup>55</sup> Having units that could monitor areas and individuals covertly made it possible to gain additional

intelligence through the use of challenge-response type operations, in which overt actions by security forces were combined with close observation to capture any PIRA activities or defensive actions “flushed out” by the overt element.<sup>56</sup>

**Tool 3: Flexible technical means.** While British security services deployed a range of intelligence efforts that relied on direct observation and information collected by individuals, such operations always had inherent, and frequently significant, risks. Therefore, technical tools were needed to provide alternative and complementary ways to gather information. Such tools were also important force multipliers because there frequently weren’t enough specialized surveillance operatives to satisfy the demand for their services.<sup>57</sup>

Strategies applied in Northern Ireland included such traditional means as airborne sensors with live-feed television, sophisticated photographic devices, and infrared detection systems.<sup>58</sup> Listening devices, phone taps, hidden cameras, motion detectors, and technologies that intercepted communications traffic also played critical roles.<sup>59</sup> Reportedly, a variety of devices were deployed in areas of particular interest, from zones where PIRA operatives moved across the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland to underground tunnels where terrorist operations were suspected.<sup>60</sup>

Technical surveillance efforts were also specially adapted for COIN. Technologies were molded to the mission, not vice versa; they augmented the collection effort instead of determining how it would be done. As a case in point, the critical task of identifying and tracking PIRA activities meant that photographic surveillance approaches were applied in ways more akin to how they would be used by law-enforcement agencies than in traditional military intelligence gathering.

Photographing terrorist suspects and using photos of them to identify their associates was key to building dossiers and identifying people who might be recruited as agents.<sup>61</sup> When security forces identified sites (such as arms caches, residences, or commercial buildings) that terrorist group members used, security forces frequently chose to monitor the sites with audio and video surveillance for extended periods in an effort to identify unknown terrorists or supporters.<sup>62</sup>

Another intelligence tool particularly suited to tracking PIRA operational practices was the tracking transmitter, which helped security forces map

***When security forces identified sites ...that terrorist group members used, [they] frequently chose to monitor the sites with audio and video surveillance...to identify unknown terrorists or supporters.***

the movement of particular vehicles or materials through the terrorist infrastructure. Transmission devices in vehicles made it possible to track the position of an informer or a suspect’s vehicle as it called on various locations in Northern Ireland. Mapping such travels helped identify sites that might merit follow-up investigation.<sup>63</sup> In the middle to late 1970s, improvements in technology made it possible to surreptitiously place similar tracking devices in weapons and explosives discovered in PIRA arms caches.<sup>64</sup> The practice, known as jarking, made it possible to trace the marked arms’ progress through the group’s logistical system. When devices were produced that could capture audio, they were also used by security to listen to conversations occurring around the weapon.<sup>65</sup>

### **The Right Capabilities for Analysis**

The many collection modes deployed against PIRA answered Kitson’s requirement for masses of low-grade information on the insurgency and its activities. However, without robust analytical capabilities to make sense of the information, a COIN effort can drown in data rather than gain greater knowledge of the situation on the ground. Desmond Hamill says, “[W]hat was needed, then, was for it all to be brought together and meshed into a constructive and useful pattern.”<sup>66</sup>

Correlating the snippets of information collected by COIN intelligence efforts into a coherent picture requires a commitment of manpower and capability.<sup>67</sup> Early on the British military reportedly did not commit the manpower needed to do the job. According to Bruce Hoffman and Jennifer Taw, “In 1973, the number of military intelligence specialists ‘involved in collating and assembling this information were left to each unit, but the numbers were comparatively

small, around the normal wartime establishment of six men.”<sup>68</sup> Effective interpretation and dissemination of the large volumes of data produced required much more, with the effort eventually growing into a “large organization [to utilize] the information brought in by the troops in the field.”<sup>69</sup>

While the effective use of intelligence requires sufficient analytical capability, technology (databases and computational power) also plays an important role in weaving the “points” of low-grade intelligence data together into a coherent picture. Initially, data management included the use of banks of card files and lists of photographs of potential PIRA members or sympathizers.<sup>70</sup> As the counterinsurgency continued, these tools evolved into complex databases and computerized information management systems. Descriptions of intelligence efforts indicate that there were individual systems for data on vehicles (code named Vengeful) and individuals (code named Crucible).<sup>71</sup>

Critically, data was collated from across the collection spectrum. Law-enforcement organizations, for instance, fed their intelligence into a unified criminal intelligence system: “Monitoring of terrorist suspects and their supporters was also carried out and the details forwarded to an intelligence-collating facility. . . . These details would be entered into a computer system, where an easy and retrievable reference could be made and a composite printout of the date, time, and place of the sighting of the particular vehicle/vehicles could be accessed.”<sup>72</sup> Ryder tells us, “Every single piece of information reaching the RUC from any source was . . . systematically collated. The ballistic and forensic reports on every incident were married with even the most inconsequential scraps of intelligence.”<sup>73</sup>

Such systems were constructed and populated through systematic gathering of framework data (geographic, census, and other descriptive information about the theater and its inhabitants) to provide context for collected intelligence information.<sup>74</sup> Committing the time and resources necessary to construct and feed such systems requires up-front investment, but in a long-term fight against an insurgent group such investment makes sense. The systems’ return accrues over time as the information they hold increases and their capabilities expand.

Additional knowledge-based features were reportedly added to the data-collation systems to

improve analysis of data and pattern recognition, which made it possible to apply such techniques as traffic analysis and network analyses of groups and to detect even small changes in suspects' behavior.<sup>75</sup> For example, if the systems lost track of specific PIRA suspects, attention was then focused on locating those individuals to determine the reasons for the change in behavior.<sup>76</sup>

The computer systems' rapid retrieval capabilities also provided soldiers on the ground with quick access to intelligence to guide action. Barzilay writes, "Soldiers on foot and vehicle patrol [would look] for particular men and vehicles. When the target [was] spotted a full report [was] radioed to the battalion headquarters and then passed on to the intelligence officer, who pass[ed] that information to the computer, if necessary in a matter of seconds. At many bases throughout Ulster there [was] a direct terminal link to the computers. That link also enable[d] the intelligence officer or operator to see what [was] on 'file' about the particular target and pass this information back to the man on the ground. It could be a simple piece of information that a man is often seen in the area where he has been spotted, or it may refer to the fact that he should be approached with caution because he is known to have been involved in terrorist activity and armed."<sup>77</sup>

Feeding information back to soldiers on the ground generated more and better data collection. Barzilay continues, "Those who mount vehicle checkpoints, whether Royal Military policemen or ordinary soldiers, [were] given a daily briefing on what to look out for. That information might have come as a tip-off, from police criminal intelligence or Special Branch, or it might have come from other information which had previously been fed into the computer [intelligence systems]."<sup>78</sup> Getting such information made the soldiers see the system's tangible benefits. It gave them incentive to contribute information to the systems.

## Applying Intelligence in a Long Fight

In military intelligence activities, the focus is usually on moving as quickly as possible from collecting information to acting on it—transitioning from sensor to shooter, as the U.S. Army calls it—in an effort to capitalize effectively on all available information. Intelligence in counterterrorism and

counterinsurgency sometimes enables successful operations in which terrorist-insurgent plans are disrupted; adversaries are shot, killed, or captured; cells are rolled up and prosecuted in the courts; or logistical bases are captured and supply lines broken. Examples of such operations can be found throughout the history of the violence in Northern Ireland. In a long-term fight, however, such actions might be the exception rather than the norm. High-profile victories are not the most common—or even always the most desirable—outcomes of COIN intelligence efforts.

In Northern Ireland, applying intelligence immediately and actively was risky, not only for military or police personnel, but for intelligence sources whose identities and activities might be discovered as PIRA carried out its own post-mortem investigation of security force success.<sup>79</sup> A balance had to be struck between acting immediately on actionable information, thereby gaining a local victory, and "continuing to watch" in an effort to build up a sufficiently detailed picture of the insurgents' activities, plans, and order of battle to enable more effective action at a later time.<sup>80</sup> This balance necessitates different strategies for acting on intelligence in a COIN environment.

Because of the risk of revealing sources and methods, intelligence in Northern Ireland was often used to frustrate rather than to strike directly at PIRA. Based on knowledge of a planned terrorist attack, for example, security forces shaped the environment so PIRA would choose to abort the operation. Urban tells us that "an IRA team sent to assassinate a [member of the security forces] will not press home its attack if there are several uniformed police, perhaps stopping vehicles to check their tax discs, outside his or her house. The police or soldiers involved will almost always be ignorant of the covert reason for their presence."<sup>81</sup>

Such disruption operations did not even have to involve overt action by security forces. Urban continues, "An intelligence officer relates one incident where it was known that an IRA team was to travel along a particular route on its way to an attack. They [the security forces] arranged for a car 'accident' to take place on the road. 'There wasn't a uniform in sight,' he recalls, 'but it was assumed that they [the insurgents] would get unnerved sitting in the tailback, thinking the police were about to arrive.' The ploy succeeded."<sup>82</sup>





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Members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary remove a Catholic demonstrator from the city walls of Londonderry, Northern Ireland, before the start of the Protestant Apprentice Boy Parade on 12 August 1995.

## Changing the Vocabulary for COIN

The U.S. Department of Defense recently adopted “the long war” as a descriptive term for the current struggle against the insurgency in Iraq and the more general fight against global terrorism. Such a change in vocabulary is significant, given that much of contemporary U.S. military planning has focused on how to win a short war by bringing together force, precision, agility, and speed to make quick victory possible. However, waging war effectively requires more than acknowledging that wars are fought and won on different time scales. As the British experience in Northern Ireland shows, it is not enough merely to adopt the long-war terminology; rather, the U.S. military will have to make a broad set of changes if it wants to build organizations that can win such conflicts. Winning a long war is not the same as winning many short wars in succession.

Rather, winning a long war requires applying an entirely different, sometimes antithetical set of tools than those optimized for achieving victory through rapid, decisive action.

Perhaps not surprisingly, Northern Ireland provides many examples of organizations making the transition from seeking quick victory to waging long-term operations. When it deployed, the British Army did not expect to be involved in a conflict for decades, and its early actions were not designed with the requirements of a long-term fight in mind.<sup>85</sup> According to Graham Ellison, the police organizations involved in the conflict adopted the Army’s viewpoint, believing that strong action in the short-term could tighten the noose on the terrorists and win the fight.<sup>86</sup>

The same was true for PIRA. Early on, PIRA approached its fight from the perspective that “just one more heave” would push the British from Northern Ireland. The organization only transitioned away from that view much later, to an approach focused on maintaining its survivability over the long-term and integrating its violent action with a more explicit political strategy.<sup>87</sup> Both sides made these changes

Other strategies included simply depriving the terrorists of their targets. If word of a planned ambush on a security-force patrol came in from intelligence sources, the area could simply be put out of bounds for patrols, meaning that the PIRA attack team would sit in position waiting for a target that never appeared.<sup>83</sup> More subtle deployments of security forces were used to divert terrorist teams down particular routes and to influence how terrorist lookouts (“dickers”) would report the risk of staging operations around particular security-force bases or sites.<sup>84</sup>

This approach to applying intelligence, where security forces essentially “play for a tie” (and no direct damage is done against either side, but the terrorists’ planned operation is thwarted) takes a long-term view of the conflict. It acknowledges that there is value in frustrating operations while preserving intelligence sources, rather than going for a tactical win immediately. While “playing for a tie” does not directly attrit insurgent weapons or personnel, it constrains the insurgent organization’s freedom of action and costs it the time and effort invested in the disrupted plans.

because strategies based on winning quickly, and primarily through military means, produced results that were unsatisfactory at best and frequently quite damaging to their interests.

For security organizations, truly adopting a long-war approach entails a shift from decisive to patient operations; it means understanding how security efforts contribute to or detract from political and other efforts against an insurgency. It is important to consider the overall impact of security actions because many COIN intelligence activities do not produce clear military results that can be measured in adversary casualties or materiel destroyed. Collecting extensive data on individuals in an area of responsibility and debriefing soldiers returning from patrol on the “feel” of neighborhoods might seem unsoldierly to military intelligence traditionalists, but it works.

Similarly, larger considerations might dictate limited action, perhaps only quietly disrupting insurgents’ plans, or even foregoing the opportunity to strike an identified target, in order to collect needed information. Because military intelligence typically strives to move actionable information into target folders and onto strike lists, it might be difficult to pass up an attractive, valuable target, whatever the potential payoff in future intelligence opportunity. Patience and discipline, however, not scattered tactical victories, overcome insurgencies.

The vagaries of COIN make collecting, analyzing, and applying intelligence quite different from traditional military intelligence operations, which are optimized for rapid, decisive action. The long collection-and-analysis cycles involved and the sometimes subtle uses of data also make it difficult



A youngster walks past Real Irish Republican Army graffiti on walls in West Belfast, Northern Ireland, 4 March 2001.

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to assess the outputs of COIN intelligence in purely military terms. For example, when the outcome of an extensive intelligence operation is a standoff or draw, the military utility of the activity might seem limited at best; however, in the context of an integrated political and military effort, there might be a great deal of utility in such an approach. When you neutralize the enemy’s ability to cause harm, you create opportunities for other action along other lines of operation.

Because insurgencies are usually ended by political means, the mission of security forces might not be to destroy the insurgent organization and its membership. Instead, it might simply be to prevent the insurgency from shaping its environment through violence. Once security forces have effectively rendered the insurgency impotent, broader action on political and other fronts can catch up and render it irrelevant. **MR**

## NOTES

1. See, for example, Conor O’Neill, “Terrorism, Insurgency and the Military Response from South Armagh to Falluja,” *RUSI* (2004): 22-25, online at <[www.rusi.org/publication/journal/ref:P417394CE896AE/](http://www.rusi.org/publication/journal/ref:P417394CE896AE/)>.

2. For simplicity, I refer to the conflict as being against PIRA, although activities in Northern Ireland focused on a wider variety of terrorist organizations.

3. Former law-enforcement member, interview by author, March 2004, Northern Ireland.

4. Chris Ryder, *A Special Kind of Courage: 321 EOD Squadron-Battling the Bombers* (London: Methuen, 2005), 47.

5. See, for example, Tim Pat Coogan, *The IRA: A History* (Niwot, CO: Roberts Rinehart Publishers, 1993), chap. 16; Desmond Hamill, *Pig in the Middle: The Army in Northern Ireland, 1969-1984* (London: Methuen, 1985), chap. 1-2.

6. David Barzilay, *The British Army in Ulster*, vol. 2 (Belfast, UK: Century Books, 1975).

7. Early in the conflict, improperly targeted actions such as large-scale internment operations invigorated rather than broke the back of the terrorist group. (See Coogan.)

8. Bruce Hoffman and Jennifer Taw, *A Strategic Framework for Countering Terrorism and Insurgency* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1992), online at <[www.rand.org/pubs/notes/N35061/](http://www.rand.org/pubs/notes/N35061/)>; Mark Urban, *Big Boys’ Rules: The Secret Struggle Against the IRA* (London: Faber & Faber, 1992).

9. J. Bowyer Bell, “The Irish Troubles Since 1916,” *Columbia International Affairs Online*, 2002, online at <[www.isn.eth2.ch/pubs/ph/list.dfm?v21=60981&v33=60242&click52=60242](http://www.isn.eth2.ch/pubs/ph/list.dfm?v21=60981&v33=60242&click52=60242)>.

10. Brendan Hughes quoted in Peter Taylor, *Brits: The War Against the IRA* (London: Bloomsbury, 2001), 302.

11. A wealth of information is available in the open literature, including first-person narratives of individuals on both sides, making it possible to explore these issues in more detail than in many other campaigns. Available sources include memoirs by individuals in military intelligence and special operations organizations, law-enforcement organizations, British Army units operating in Northern Ireland, and non-Army EOD units; and by infiltrators and informers in the paramilitary/terrorist groups. Also valuable are works looking at individual services or containing analyses cutting across the activities of intelligence and security forces operations in the conflict.

12. David A. Charters, "Intelligence and Psychological Operations in Northern Ireland," *RUSI* (1997): 22-27 (originally published in *Journal of the Royal Services Institute for Defence Studies* 122); Hoffman and Taw, 87.

13. Keith Maguire, "The Intelligence War in Northern Ireland," *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, vol. 4 (1990): 145-65.

14. Urban, 255. The various roles and agencies are also discussed in Tony Geraghty, *The Irish War: The Hidden Conflict Between the IRA and British Intelligence* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 130-31; James Rennie, *The Operators: On the Street with Britain's Most Secret Service* (South Yorkshire, UK: Pen & Sword Military Classics, 2004), 176.

15. Barzilay, vol. 1, 1973, 222.

16. Graham Ellison and Jim Smyth, *The Crowned Harp: Policing Northern Ireland* (London: Pluto Press, 2000); Hoffman and Taw, 97; Urban, 18-24; Geraghty, *Inside the S.A.S.: The Story of the Amazing Elite British Commando Force* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1980), 165-69; Jack Holland and Susan Phoenix, *Phoenix: Policing the Shadows* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1996), 139, 287; Bradley H.C. Bamford, "The Role and Effectiveness of Intelligence in Northern Ireland," *Intelligence and National Security*, vol. 20, no. 4 (2005): 581-607, 586.

17. Charters; Holland and Phoenix, 187.

18. Ryder, *A Special Kind of Courage*, 53.

19. Urban, 20, 22.

20. Ryder, *The RUC 1922-1997: A Force under Fire* (London: Mandarin, Random House UK, 1995), 157. See also Geraghty, *The Irish War*, 136.

21. Geraghty, *The Irish War*, 151.

22. Bamford, 593.

23. Law-enforcement member interview.

24. Hoffman and Taw, 22-23, 94-95.

25. Urban, 95.

26. Holland and Phoenix, 223-28.

27. See also Mark Bowlin, *British Intelligence and the IRA: The Secret War in Northern Ireland, 1969-1988* (Master's thesis, National Security Affairs, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California, 1998) for discussion of the benefits achieved from coordination of intelligence organizations. Current U.K. COIN doctrine describes coordination and management processes for intelligence in greater detail. See U.S. Army Field Manual 1.0, *Combined Arms Operations*, vol. 1, part 10, "Counter Insurgency Operations (Strategic and Operational Guidelines)" (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001), chap. 6, Intelligence.

28. *Ibid.*

29. Brian A. Jackson, "Groups, Networks, or Movements: A Command-and-Control-Driven Approach to Classifying Terrorist Organizations and Its Application to al Qaeda," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 29, 3 (April-May 2006).

30. Maguire, 152.

31. The idea that good intelligence relies on the eyes and ears of the entire force echoes current Army efforts at making "every soldier a sensor"; in reality, however, the soldier is much more than simply a sensor, given that individuals have processing power and an ability to assess a situation to distinguish activities that are truly of interest from false positives. Simple technological systems cannot make this discrimination. For more information, see online at <[www.army.mil/professionalvideo/movies/sensor.html](http://www.army.mil/professionalvideo/movies/sensor.html)>.

32. Law enforcement member interview.

33. Charters; Hoffman and Taw, 90.

34. Martin Dillon, *The Dirty War* (London: Arrow Books, 1991), 409.

35. Maximizing the effectiveness of patrolling to gather intelligence also might require changes in traditional ways military units respond to hostile situations and environments. For example: "The classic procedure for soldiers under fire is to take cover and return the fire. [Because of the IRA's tactics of firing and seeking to escape, soldiers] had to be taught that the only way to succeed, if at all, was to move forward very fast and straight away start entering the surrounding houses. There were three reasons for this new drill. First, if they got in quickly they had a fair chance of picking someone up, or at least the weapon. Second, if the incident had been bloody, people inside would be in a state of shock and might say things that they would normally suppress. And, third, the more houses they visited the less chance there was that those who did talk would be identified. However, there were dangers in doing even this regularly, because it could set up a patrol for a devastating ambush" (Hamill, 140-41).

36. Michael Dewar, *The British Army in Northern Ireland* (Swindon, Wilts, UK: Guild Publishing, 1985), 182-83.

37. Barzilay, vol. 2, 218.

38. Dewar, 181.

39. Hamill, 243.

40. Openness to public information has obvious risks. PIRA used such systems to inject misinformation into the police system and to lead security forces into ambushes. See Geraghty, *The Irish War*, 52; Alan Barker, *Shadows: Inside Northern Ireland's Special Branch* (Edinburgh, Scotland: Mainstream Publishing, 2004), 101-102, 115; Barzilay, vol. 1, 221-22; Hoffman and Taw, 96; Ryder, *The RUC*, 124-25; Sean MacStíofáin and Gordon Cremonesi, *Memoirs of a Revolutionary* (Edinburgh: R & R Clark, Ltd., 1975), 331, as well as "law-enforcement officer interview" (above). Developing

overlapping processes required information systems and practices adept at assessing and validating likely "imperfect" intelligence data. The overlap might necessitate additional research and surveillance operations. (See Barker, 115.)

41. Barzilay, vol. 2, 218.

42. *Ibid.*, vol. 4, 24-25.

43. Hamill, 141.

44. Maguire, 152.

45. Ellison and Smyth. The value of interrogation as a source of a range of intelligence reinforces the importance of security forces being able to communicate in the local language. Effective interrogation frequently requires communication with individuals over extended periods of time. Shortages of security force members (especially those trained in interrogation processes) who can communicate directly with prisoners can make effective interrogation difficult, particularly if numbers of detainees begin to significantly exceed the number of trained and linguistically skilled interrogators. The pressure to "speak with everyone" can lead to abbreviated interrogation processes that greatly reduce the potential take of information from any single detainee.

46. Charters; Hamill, 60-61.

47. Although length constraints for this article do not allow a full exploration of interrogation techniques, it is important to note that effective counterinsurgency requires a variety of information that could be sought through interrogation. While the focus of interrogation is frequently tactical in nature (seeking details of upcoming operations), strategic information to provide more general insights into insurgent organizations is also needed. As a result, interrogators must be appropriately trained for COIN operations to ensure that the full value of interrogation operations can be realized. (See Geraghty, *The Irish War*, 60-61.) Using official and operational secrecy to shield intelligence activities in an attempt to avoid their negative effect on public opinion can be effective, but might simply defer the accounting.

48. Geraghty, *The Irish War*, 51.

49. Urban, 108.

50. Charters; Barker, 56.

51. Dewar, 177-88; Dillon, 32-33.

52. Dillon, 409; see also Barzilay, vol. 3, 142.

53. Dillon, 32-33; Holland and Phoenix, 113-17; Barzilay, vol. 4, 28; Rennie, 15.

54. Barzilay, vol. 2, 215.

55. Barker, 43; Barzilay, vol. 4, 23-28; Barzilay, vol. 3, 106; Urban, 45, 47; Ellison and Smyth; Sarah Ford, *One Up: A Woman in Action with the S.A.S.* (London: HarperCollins, 1997), 2-3, 155-56; Rennie.

56. Hoffman and Taw, 90.

57. Urban, 119.

58. Barzilay, vol. 1, 76; Dillon, 409, 411-12; Geraghty, *The Irish War*, 131; Urban, 118.

59. James Adams, Robin Morgan, and Anthony Bambridge, *Ambush: The War Between the SAS and the IRA* (London: Pan Books, 1988), 3-5; Dillon, 398-401; Geraghty, *The Irish War*, 134-35, 147; Taylor, 248.

60. Dillon, 409-11; Geraghty, *The Irish War*, 134-35.

61. Barker, 133; Dewar, 76-77; Barzilay, vol. 4, 28.

62. Dillon, 398-99; Rennie, 221-23; Geraghty, *The Irish War*, 135.

63. Dillon, 398-401; Martin McGartland, *Fifty Dead Men Walking* (London: Blake Publishing, Ltd, 1997), 116, 144; Ford, 162.

64. Ford, 205; Rennie, 173; Urban, 118-19; Dillon, 401-402; McGartland, 258; Geraghty, *The Irish War*, 147.

65. Urban, 118-19; Dillon, 401-402.

66. Hamill, 242.

67. George C. Styles and Bob Perrin, *Bombs Have No Pity: My War Against Terrorism* (London: William Luscombe, 1975), 111.

68. Hoffman and Taw, 90; see also Hamill, 134-35.

69. Hoffman and Taw, 90.

70. Barker, 94; Urban, 116.

71. Barker, 57; Barzilay, vol. 4, 24; Geraghty, *The Irish War*, 158-59; Urban, 115-17; Rennie.

72. Hoffman and Taw, 91; Barker, 57.

73. Ryder, *The RUC*, 150.

74. Dewar, 177-88; Charters; Hamill, 134-35; Barker, 94-95.

75. Geraghty, *The Irish War*, 160; Karl M. van Meter, "Terrorists/Liberators: Researching and dealing with adversary social networks," *Connections* 24 (2002): 66-78, 68-69, online at <[www.insna.org/Connections-Web/Volume24-3/Karl.van.Meter.web.pdf](http://www.insna.org/Connections-Web/Volume24-3/Karl.van.Meter.web.pdf)>.

76. Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), *Irish Nationalist Terrorism Outside Ireland: Out-of-Theatre Operations 1972-1993, 1994, 2005*; Dillon, 406.

77. Barzilay, vol. 4, 24.

78. *Ibid.*, 25. It should be noted that even in Northern Ireland where multiple bombings occurred every day during periods of the violence, questions were raised about how intelligence-gathering efforts affected individual rights to privacy. (See Barzilay, vol. 4, 23.)

79. Nuala O'Loan, "Independent Investigation into Police Conduct in an Environment of Terrorism," in *The Eighth Annual Conference of NACOLE*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1 November 2002, online at <[www.nacole.org/OLoan\\_11\\_02.htm](http://www.nacole.org/OLoan_11_02.htm)>.

80. Urban, 107; Ford, 206.

81. Urban, 213.

82. *Ibid.*

83. McGartland, 77, 175-78.

84. Urban, 207, 213.

85. Barzilay, vol. 2.

86. Ellison and Smyth.

87. C.J.M. Drake, "The Provisional IRA: A Case Study," *Terrorism and Political Violence*, vol. 3 (1991): 43-60, 47.



# The Paradox of Logistics

## in Insurgencies and Counterinsurgencies



OR

“Why a ‘little bit’ goes a long way and a ‘whole lot’ is never ‘enough’ ...”

Lieutenant Colonel Marian E. Vlasak, U.S. Army

ARMIES THAT WAGE WAR against insurgencies are often confounded by a logistic paradox that poses an important question: Why does a “little bit” of logistics seem to go a long way for the insurgents, while a “whole lot” of logistic support never seems to be enough for counterinsurgency efforts? What is going on here? Why is it that insurgents are able to achieve tactical and even political results that seem out of proportion to the logistics that produced them? Conversely, why is it that massive logistic support is needed to conduct counterinsurgency warfare? Why is it that the substantial logistic effort that counterinsurgency warfare requires continues to be dismissively underappreciated? And even when significant logistic resources are allocated for counterinsurgency warfare, why does much of it appear to be “wasted”? Traditionally, insurgency and counterinsurgency warfare has been examined from ideological or tactical perspectives, with less attention paid to *how* this type of warfare is materially sustained. As the United States, once again, faces the dilemmas posed by this type of conflict, it might be useful to reexamine our understanding of the role of logistics by juxtaposing insurgent and counterinsurgent practices.<sup>1</sup>

While insurgent or guerrilla warfare has a long history going back to ancient times, World War II seems to be an appropriate modern starting point for the purposes of this study. In the aftermath of this war, there was an explosive proliferation of the weapons and vast quantities of materiel mass-produced for that conflict and the cold war that followed. The ensuing unprecedented dispersion of these substantially improved lethal capabilities put a new spin on logistic practices in guerrilla and insurgency warfare.

From a logistic perspective, potential insurgents now had “more equal” access to significant quantities of industrially produced materiel that previously

*Lieutenant Colonel Marian E. Vlasak holds bachelor's degrees from the New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology and the U.S. Military Academy, and has a master's degree in history from Syracuse University, where she is pursuing her Ph.D. LTC Vlasak was a 2005 research fellow at the Combat Studies Institute, which will soon publish her Tracking the Goods—Methods of Critical Supply: World War II to the Present. She has served in a variety of command and staff positions in the continental United States and Somalia.*

PHOTOS: (left) Vietcong bicycle porters preparing to move out on the Ho Chi Minh trail. (right) An American POL convoy awaiting movement in Pleiku, South Vietnam. (DOD)

had been accessible only to agents of the state. By coupling more sophisticated materiel with traditional asymmetric tactics, insurgents were able to reduce the disparity between their capabilities and those of the state-sustained militaries and other authorities they were fighting. This effect was most visible in formerly colonial corners of the world, where the Second World War left ill-resolved questions of self-determination and polity. In the aftermath of the cold war, as after the Second World War, residual stockpiles of exceptionally destructive war materiel produced by modern industry continue, ironically, to provide even the most anti-modernist insurgents with a capability that they alone cannot generate for their own use.

The last time the American Army was compelled to seriously assess the logistical practices of its erstwhile enemy and itself in an insurgent and counterinsurgent environment was during the Vietnam War. For this reason, much of this article draws upon the experiences of that war, which logistically was fuelled as much by the cold-war-inspired synergistic dynamism of the military-industrial complex as by ideologies and logistic doctrines (both insurgent and conventional) forged in the larger conflict of World War II.



**Vietcong remanufacturing satchel charges and other explosives by cannibalizing captured allied artillery shells.**

## The Resurrection of Insurgency Logistics Doctrine

While World War II saw plenty of conventional large-force invasions, it also provided a lot of incentives and opportunities for aggrieved locals to resist under a variety of nationalist and ideological banners. One particular resister showed that he had an especially keen grasp, logistically, of what he was up against and, more significantly, how modern

materiel could be leveraged in new ways to the insurgents' advantage:

*It must first be noted that the...aggressor is a strong... power whose invasion...is based upon a relatively advanced stage of industrial production and of army-navy-air techniques. However despite the higher level of the enemy's industry, he remains [a]...power deficiently gifted by nature. He has not himself been able to mass enough human, financial and material power to last out a prolonged war and to cope with an immense theater of war. In addition to this, anti-war sentiment is developing amongst the [enemy's] people which is affecting the morale of the lower officers and the broad rank and file of her army. Besides, [the enemy's] opponent is not limited to [us] alone, hence she cannot devote her entire force of men and material to an invasion of our country. . . . she has to reserve her forces to deal with other powers. On account of these reasons [the enemy's] war of aggression is definitely disfavored by a prolonged war and by the extensive occupation of territory. Strategically [the enemy] is forced to demand a war of quick decision. It would be difficult for her to continue if we could persist for more than three years.*

This quotation, penned by Mao Tse Tung in 1939, has a presciently contemporary quality.<sup>2</sup> Although Mao wrote it in the context of the Chinese struggle against the Japanese occupation, it could easily be adopted by many of the asymmetric challengers facing the United States today.<sup>3</sup>

From a logistic perspective, the notable point is that this document is an insurgent's avowed recognition of his inferior position with regard to access to modern materiel. Furthermore, it implies that other methods of sustainment would have to be found. From Mao's perspective, his guerrillas needed methods that were both *sustainable* and *suitable* for a long war—a war that would outlast the resources, capabilities, and will to fight of a modern industrial enemy state with a theoretically unlimited means of production, particularly when compared to the seemingly paltry potential capabilities of the insurgents.

Mao left it to one of his lieutenants to articulate more specifically just what these other methods were to be. In a section of *On Guerrilla Warfare* detailing the “Most Important Factors in the Guerrilla War of Resistance,” Chu Teh noted that right after “No. 1. Political Warfare” (understandably a point of primacy for ideologically driven communists) came “No. 2. Economic Warfare,” “No. 3. Warfare in Human Material,” “No. 4. The War

of Armaments,” and finally, “No. 5. The War of Transportation and Communications.”<sup>4</sup>

Sections two, four, and five get at the heart of insurgent logistics issues and methods.<sup>5</sup> “Economic Warfare” as defined by Chu meant that “guerrilla detachments, *despite their lack of arms and equipment*, [ital. mine] must be prepared to lead this struggle against the enemy” by adhering to the “following rules”:

- Confiscation of all enemy property within their areas of operation.
- Confiscation of all property owned by traitors.
- Encouragement of economic assistance of the masses.

In the section on “The War of Armaments,” Chu noted:

*The enemy is well armed and we [the guerrillas] are not. . . . Yet, armament is not an all-powerful factor in warfare. Every weapon loses its effectiveness under certain conditions. For instance, planes, armor, and heavy weapons lose much of their effectiveness at night. [At least they did in 1938, when Chu wrote this.] Furthermore cutting the enemy's supplies and communications will largely neutralize this superiority in armament. . . . Our basic aim in reference to arms and equipment is to capture from the enemy as many new weapons as possible and to learn how to use them against the enemy himself.*<sup>6</sup>

Apparently, Chu's advocacy of these practices was effective. In 1943, he wrote in a report on his activities against the Japanese that his forces had been able to obtain “rifles. . . . 95,000; light and heavy machine guns over 2,000; pistols, 4,027; anti-tank guns, 29; field guns, 73; ‘quick-firing guns,’ 225,” and “two anti-aircraft guns” along with “thousands of head of horses,” and “592 drums of American gasoline.”<sup>7</sup>

The last commodity was, no doubt, especially appreciated in light of the next section of his manual. In this part, “The War of Transportation and Communications,” Chu noted that:

*The front and rear in modern war are of equal importance. The requirements of food, arms, ammunition, gasoline, and other supplies, all indispensable for motorized forces, are increasing tremendously. The severance of the front from the rear in any modern war can mean the difference between defeat and victory for a whole army.*

*This is why modern army contact is a decisive condition for victory. Armor, complex weapons, and*

*planes all require the utmost of highly developed and smoothly flowing communications. For this reason guerrillas should concentrate upon this potential weakness of the enemy. . . .*<sup>8</sup>

Furthermore, Chu advocated that “guerrillas *must be resourceful in the extreme*, (ital. mine), endeavoring to achieve victory by any and all methods and situations at their disposal. . . . Guerrillas with few weapons and little in the way of equipment, can achieve permanent victories when they receive the support of the masses. . . .”<sup>9</sup>

It was this doctrine of “extreme resourcefulness” that Chu most successfully put into practice in 1941 in what became known as the “Nanniwan Movement,” which was reportedly his “pride and joy.”<sup>10</sup> In this campaign, Chu sent a brigade to a devastated region of China where the unit found a “two-thousand-pound bell in an ancient abandoned temple.” From this stock of metal, by hand and craft methods, “they fashioned their first plow, hoes, . . . picks and shovels to excavate living quarters in the hillsides, the first tools to make furniture and dig wells.” In short order they imported some animals from outlying areas and created spinning and weaving cooperatives for clothing. They also began producing necessary foodstuffs and useful war materiel—not the least of which were land mines which “the people had been taught to make . . . of every kind. . . .” Furthermore, along with their underground quarters, “they dug underground air-raid shelters which they extended into long tunnels which often connected different villages. Inhabitants of a village under attack could take shelter in another [village]. . . .” In the meantime, enemy troops who had been slowed down by the simple-but-effective domestically produced mines liberally sown on the surface paths leading to now-deserted villages “would find themselves suddenly surrounded by . . . troops who arose out of the earth behind them.”<sup>11</sup> Clearly in Chu's scheme of insurgency logistics, resourcefulness was taken to a holistic operational end.

Another associate of Mao and Chu's, Ming Fan, wrote a companion to *On Guerrilla Warfare* titled “Textbook on Guerrilla Warfare.” In this work, Ming was even more specific on the role and supply of “Weapons and Ammunition for Guerrillas.” He wrote that even though the weapons of the enemy may be “far superior” in “scope and effectiveness,”



because of the guerrilla methods, they are not as decisive “as in regular warfare.”<sup>12</sup> His “textbook” went on to claim that the insurgents’ presumably inferior logistics position was not insurmountable:

*...weapons are not difficult to obtain. They can be purchased from the people’s ‘self preservation corps.’ Almost every home has some sort of weapon that can be put to use. Local governments and police headquarters usually have weapons. Furthermore, pistols, carbines, and ‘blunderbusses’ can usually be manufactured in local guerrilla established plants.*<sup>13</sup>

Ming further noted that ammunition for such weapons could be obtained in the following ways:

*...given by friendly troops [i.e. subverted by sympathizers from the government the insurgents are fighting against]...purchased or appropriated from the people...captured by ambushing enemy supply columns...purchased under cover from the enemy army...from salvage in combat areas...from the field of battle...self made [or adapted] by the guerrilla organization especially items such as grenades....*<sup>14</sup>

Presumably, mines and bombs figured into the latter list too.

Another section of Ming’s “textbook” was devoted to “Supply and Hygiene for Guerrillas.” Here he noted that “of the various essential needs ...only supply and hygiene are absolute necessities” and that “problems of food and water and medical attention...must be solved....”<sup>15</sup> From Ming’s perspective, larger units were logistic liabilities because of the difficulties of obtaining larger amounts of supplies. Since guerrillas had to rely on “the masses” for foodstuffs and supplies, they had to be careful not to unduly burden the masses in their areas of operation, lest the masses turn against them. In the guerrilla’s view, it was better to take advantage of the “clumsiness” of large occupying conventional forces insensitively tramping through the populace, stirring up alienation and sympathy for the insurgent cause. The people, it was assumed, would then express their sympathy for the insurgents with widespread low-level “penny packet” logistic support.

In terms of organizing labor for supply and support activities, the textbook further advocated that “guerrillas should also divide their units according to age and sex. Young women could be organized into ‘Women’s Vanguard,’ older and weaker females into ‘Mending and Cleaning Units,’ ...and the aged assigned to routine warning and sentry duties.”<sup>16</sup> This division of labor was seen as a

method for most efficiently taking advantage of every potential means of production—something of logistic significance in the relative poverty of a guerrilla economy. More valuable still was that the use of such ubiquitous personnel by the insurgents made it less likely that they (the personnel) would be identified as performing militarily useful logistics activities.

As detailed and effective as Mao and his comrades’ guerrilla logistic “doctrine” was, it was left to another disciple of communism to refine the doctrine and adapt it to a style of insurgent warfare that effectively blended and evolved guerrilla and conventional methods as required. This time, though, it was the French and then the Americans instead of the Japanese who would be slow to appreciate the importance of logistic methods in this style of warfare.

## Vietnam

Ho Chi Minh and General Vo Nguyen Giap, who had both spent substantial formative periods with Mao and his Chinese guerrillas, adopted everything that Chu had advocated logistically in *On Guerrilla Warfare*.<sup>17</sup> In the hands of Ho and Giap, guerrilla or insurgent logistic practices became something of an interim “underpinning” while more modern or industrial sources of supply and methods of delivery were cultivated and infrastructures were developed.

In the early years of the Indochina War, reliance on Mao and Chu’s logistic methods was particularly significant. From the beginning, the guerrillas practiced the Maoist doctrine of obtaining weapons and materiel by seizure whenever possible. While resisting the French, the indigenous Vietnamese communist insurgent movement, the Vietminh, developed quite a record of capturing and co-opting French supplies. One particularly illustrative example of their successes will suffice. In May of 1953, the Vietminh, organized into roughly three companies, “attacked a training school for potential leaders at Namh Dinh.” All 600 trainees and the complete account of weapons and ammunition for the school “were captured—without the loss of a single Vietminh soldier.”<sup>18</sup> No doubt that experience provided a most enduring lesson about the viability of Vietminh logistic methods.

When preferred weapons could not be easily captured, the Vietminh were not above capturing,

salvaging from the field, or buying from corrupt officials whatever materiel was available. When obtainable anti-tank mines or large caliber artillery shells did not necessarily match up with their weaponry or otherwise fit their requirements, the Vietminh still viewed these items as valuable raw materials for remanufacturing materiel more suitable to their tactical purposes. By these methods, the Vietnamese insurgents' creativity, ingenuity, and capacity became legendary. In this regard they were also following the directives of Chu's tenacious logisticians who had recycled by hand the 2,000-pound bell to suit their military purposes decades earlier.

### **LOCs and Bases: Webs v. Lines, Rafts v. Islands**

If the insurgents were willing to creatively assess what things could be transformed into valuable materiel, they were similarly flexible in their views concerning labor and personnel engaged in logistic support activities. Vietnamese Communist insurgents, in part inspired by their Chinese predecessors, were particularly impressed by and willing to take advantage of female labor. They used women either as unexpected combatants or as overt or surreptitious logistic supporters (especially porters and couriers).

Out of necessity, the Vietminh were probably more enlightened in their use of women for logistic functions than were either their South Vietnamese antagonists or the American forces. Their flexibility played out in some surprising and noteworthy ways as the Vietnamese insurgents' logistic methods evolved and matured on the Ho Chi Minh Trail. This was particularly true when it came to maintaining the trail as a flexible logistic instrument and providing logistic support to transporters who stopped at *binh trams* (mobile rest and support stations) along the way. One young woman gained fame for her expert single-handed administration of one such way station for fighters heading south. There, "she provided them with food: rice . . . supplied by the army and edible greens that she collected" along with a place to sleep if required.<sup>19</sup> At other *binh trams* and surreptitious, ephemeral logistics "rafts" that were relocated as required and buried in jungle off the trails, women worked as nurses, cooks, and equipment repair and fabrication personnel. Thousands of

other women and girls worked to widen, repair, and make detours on the trail as necessary.<sup>20</sup>

Because the American military continued to poorly appreciate the number of women involved in fighting for and providing supplies to the Vietcong insurgents in often unorthodox ways, strategic planners continued to miscalculate the nature and magnitude of the combined Vietcong-North Vietnamese Army (NVA) efforts. As a result, they failed to consider or devise effective ways to negate or co-opt the women's efforts.<sup>21</sup>

Discussion of insurgent or guerrilla use of the Ho Chi Minh Trail as a Line of Communication (LOC) is even more interesting when it is compared to the LOCs employed by American, South Vietnamese, and other allied Free World forces operating in South Vietnam. American popular conceptions of "the trail" are usually based on maps such as the one in figure 1. Linear, simple, and direct, they are comparable to our own LOC mapping practices. The reality was much more complex.

From the late 1950s on, the communists were anxious to "foster the impression" that they "were in total adherence" with the terms of the 1954 Geneva Accords, which prohibited military build-ups by either regime in either zone. Consequently, they explored various alternate means of covertly pursuing these prohibited activities. In May 1959, the North Vietnamese leadership created a logistics unit, called Group 559, for the purpose of expanding the traditional infiltration route to the south—the Ho Chi Minh Trail.<sup>22</sup> The trail, or rather *trails* (here the common use of the singular form for a plural entity made for a problematic verbal-mental construct), were in reality "a network of thousands of paths" that had existed for generations, beaten by the feet of "countless . . . highland tribesmen, rebels, outlaws, opium smugglers," and others who thrived on the concealment generously made possible by the rugged terrain and tall dense vegetation, much of it reaching to heights of over 200 feet.<sup>23</sup>

To Western eyes as late as the mid-1960s, the existence of such a robust trail seemed to be an impossibility or the stuff of myth and legend. But by 1967, it had become in fact a "massive maze of roads, bridges, waterways and paths." The U.S. Special Operators who encountered it described it as a "spider web . . . on top of a web . . . on top of web" or "a guerrilla's Appian Way." Others claimed a map

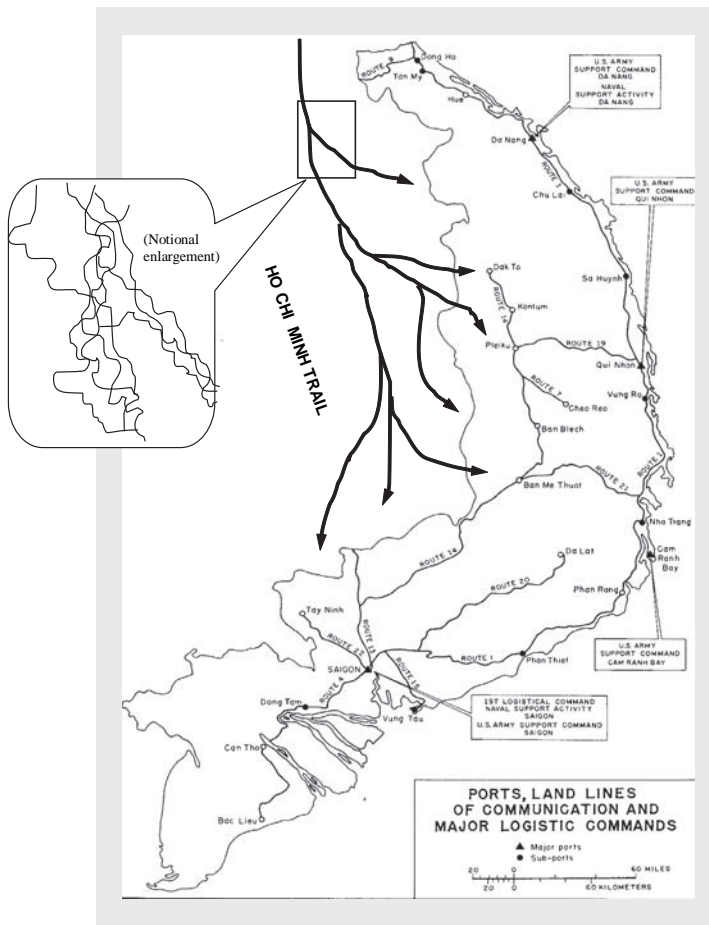


Figure 1. A U.S. “map” of the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

of it would have looked like a “rye grass root, an ancient family tree, a dendritic river, or the human nervous or cardiovascular system . . .” Its extent or length was also the subject of much conjecture. In 1967, U.S. estimates placed it at 200 miles; by 1969 that figure was revised to 2,000; and by 1971 still another revision placed it at 4,000 miles.<sup>24</sup>

Notwithstanding American claims that they had covered every inch of the trail with electronic sensors and spent almost a billion dollars a year doing so with the “most efficient electronic system ever devised”—a system managed with state-of-the-art computers—results were far from decisive.<sup>25</sup> This program was linked to other efforts to eliminate the trail’s obscuring foliage by any means possible in any place that the route’s problematic tentacles were thought to pass. Despite these efforts, post-war revelations by Hanoi placed the expanse of the trail at easily twice what the Americans were tracking: between 8,500 and 12,500 miles. Hence,

prodigious quantities of materiel still managed to get through.<sup>26</sup>

As the war continued into the early 1970s, the trail continued to be progressively and amazingly improved, thanks in part to its covert characteristics and its continuous relocation into sanctuary areas in Cambodia and Laos.<sup>27</sup> By the mid-1970s, the trail had improved to such an extent that much of it could routinely accommodate increasing numbers of motor trucks, which more and more came to replace porters and bicycles.

Efforts to map the trail were frustrating at best. For American operators trying to interdict it, their first problem for much of the war was just trying to locate “it,” even with their tremendous technological sophistication. “It” was a moving target. “It” did not relocate in any mathematically predictable or programmable way. “Its” veiled random resilience was maddening, despite bold claims to the contrary.<sup>28</sup>

In contrast to those used by their communist enemies, American logistic methods in Vietnam were linear in orientation and relied upon conventional brute-force logistics with a growing emphasis on bulk delivery methods. For the most part, there was nothing surreptitious or small scale about American LOCs, the log bases that they ran between, and U.S. logistic practices. For the Americans, counterinsurgency was a relatively new or unfamiliar style of war, at least in light of their recent experiences in Korea and during World War II. Because secure rear areas were increasingly hard to come by and the technology being brought to bear in the war was increasingly dependent on a sophisticated support infrastructure, base camps and log bases were created to provide relatively secure places where such logistic requirements could be performed. As such, these bases became logistic islands firmly anchored in a sea of insecurity.

The creation of such logistics or operational support bases theoretically provided other advantages. First, they established “a government presence in the area of operations.” Second, they were supposed to aid “in limiting guerrilla mobility in the immediate vicinity.” And third, as a result of limiting guerrilla mobility, they were supposed to provide “a measure of security to populated areas close by.” At no time, though, were these functions supposed to overtake



the bases' primary mission of providing logistic support to combat units.<sup>29</sup>

Again, the reality proved to be somewhat more complex. While combat commanders liked having the relatively reliable support that such island-like logistical launching pads provided, they did not like the fact that these bases "tended to devour their combat resources and [become] 'the tail that wagged the dog.'"<sup>30</sup> By 1968, their complaints had arrived at the Department of the Army, whose "solution" was to "approve a personnel increase for base camps," complete with further increases in logistic requirements—anything to insure the invaluable bases' reliable administration and support.<sup>31</sup>

In keeping with Mao's and Chu Teh's prescriptions for guerrilla logistics, the Americans' adoption of the base camp method of logistic support (figure 2) proved to be something of a dream come true for the insurgents. The bases provided fat, juicy targets that didn't move much, and as such, they were often the targets of the insurgents' avowed covert methods of corruption and theft by duplicitous local sympathizers hired on to perform menial labor. Even more enticing was the high volume of predictably rich logistic traffic that flowed between the bases. Despite the increasing use of tactical and intra-theater air for logistics, the primary method of resupply for most of the war remained overland, by road.

The bases supporting the 25th Infantry Division at and surrounding Cu Chi (figure 2) provide a good example of how these practices played out in reality. By the summer of 1968, the Cu Chi bases were being supported by 4 convoys a day, totaling over 268 vehicles, being pushed out from the Long Binh depot complex. Despite taking all the "usual precautions," including planning for well-placed artillery support, patrols, ambushes, search-and-destroy operations along the route, emplacing outposts at critical junctions, etc., problems with guerrilla attacks persisted.<sup>32</sup>

Frustrations with recurring losses rose to such a level that in August 1968 the 25th Division

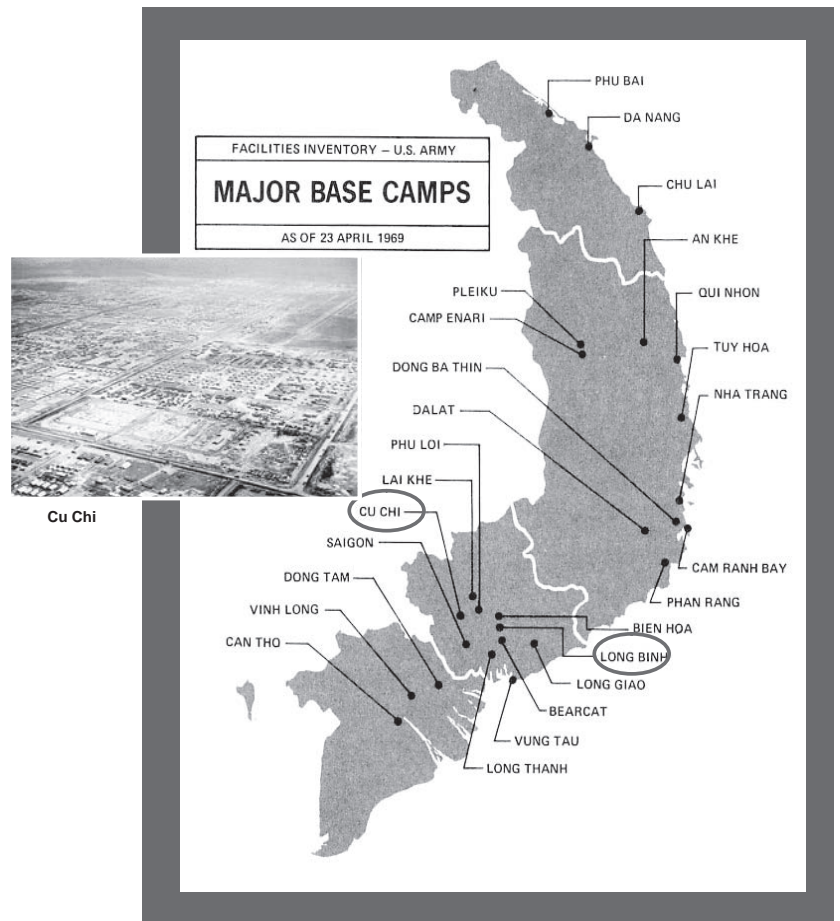


Figure 2. U.S. base camps in the Republic of South Vietnam.

"developed new aggressive convoy procedures."<sup>33</sup> Whether by design or not, mimicking the insurgents' smaller scale delivery methods proved beneficial for counterinsurgency operations. Now, "convoys were divided into smaller, self-sufficient march units." Furthermore, "ammunition and fuel vehicles were placed at the rear to prevent an entire convoy from being blocked by burning vehicles, wreckers and spare vehicles were added. . . . a major innovation was having the convoy commander airborne . . . from where he directed march units and security forces. . . . [and] gunship cover was arranged ahead of time," particularly for sensitive passages. Convoy personnel were retrained on the new robust procedures. It did not take long for these new methods to reap results.<sup>34</sup>

Instead of being sources of insurgent supply, U.S. convoy forces began to kill substantial numbers of enemy attackers and capture their weapons. By taking this approach, "the division had turned a

*defensive situation into a highly profitable offensive maneuver*” [ital. mine].<sup>35</sup> Besides limiting the insurgents’ resupply capacity, this practice had a positive effect on the surrounding civilian communities. The roads also became safer for civilian commerce and agricultural activity.<sup>36</sup> By taking this approach, U.S. forces finally started to effectively address one of the operational logistics tenets of the Mao-inspired communist insurgents. These developments suggest something about the possibilities for logistically delivering—literally—the desired stability outcomes supportive of civil life.

Not all insurgent logistic activities and gains were as dramatic or deliberate as attacks on resupply convoys. Poorly executed American operational activities afflicted by seemingly inconsequential materiel losses fed by a poor appreciation of the importance of supply discipline in a counterinsurgent environment also provided the insurgents with some surprising and very real gains. For example, U.S. efforts to interdict activity on the Ho Chi Minh Trail by B-52 bombing proved to be problematic and inexact. Inadvertently, this tactic delivered a logistic silver lining to the Vietcong who traveled the trail and were hard-pressed to keep enough protein in their diet on their long and arduous journeys. Neither those who planned the B-52 sorties nor those who flew them knew that the 30-foot craters their bombs made filled up with water in the rainy season and “often saw service as duck or fish ponds.” In this capacity, the new ponds “play[ed] their role in the guerrillas’ never-ending quest to broaden their diet.” They provided a particularly valuable source of protein at a point in the guerrillas’ journeys when their nutritional needs were becoming acute.<sup>37</sup>

On the other end of the ammunition scale from the 500-pound bomb was the problem of small arms rounds. The Vietnamese communist forces’ use of the AK-47 rifle is legendary. Less well known was that, for logistical reasons, they also developed a keen affection for the American M-16, even though it was a much more temperamental weapon. A former Vietcong company commander interviewed after the war by William Broyles, a Marine Corps officer turned journalist, told Broyles that “most of us carried M-16s [because] it was so much easier to get ammunition. You [the Americans] were always dropping magazines full of it, or we could buy it

from the puppet [South Vietnamese] forces.”<sup>38</sup> These cases serve as nice examples of the importance of understanding the linkages, such that they are, between your own operational and logistics practices and those of your enemies—particularly in counterinsurgency warfare.

Along with the important issues of supply discipline and failing to understand the secondary effects of operational and logistical activities, a couple more related points are worth mentioning here. While in Vietnam, the American Army did its best to not only arm the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) with modern American materiel, but to inculcate the ARVN with the American-style technology-driven big-army logistics methods required to sustain such materiel. As part of its assistance to the Republic of South Vietnam, the United States sold or gave its ally millions of dollars of materiel and sent hundreds of South Vietnamese to school to learn how to maintain it.<sup>39</sup>

In the U.S. effort to build up the ARVN, particularly during the last phases of the war, it seems that incomplete consideration was given to the logistic *suitability* and the long-term *sustainability* of such high-tech, logistics-intensive equipment, given the cultural and economic liabilities endemic to South Vietnamese society at the time and the inevitability of a comprehensive American pullout.<sup>40</sup> By contrast, the NVA’s more gradual adoption of modern “big-army logistics methods” was more enduring because it was accomplished at a pace sustainable by the North Vietnamese themselves and was not overly reliant upon the overwhelming beneficence of any one foreign national benefactor. (All Soviet-bloc countries were contributors of industrially produced materiel, as was China.)

Furthermore, the North Vietnamese logistic modernization effort was accomplished “on top of a base” of primitive guerrilla logistics that never really went away. While it is true that guerrilla logistic methods are often slow to regenerate combat power (hence the insurgents’ characteristic strike-lull-strike operational tempo), particularly in the face of overwhelming strikes, the retention of this resilient “reserve” capability kept the proverbial logistics rug from ever being completely pulled out from under the Vietnamese Communist forces. The result was that, just as the NVA completed its modernization and logistics transformation and

was ready for the final push into Saigon, the ARVN was increasingly forced to sustain new high-tech equipment by itself.<sup>41</sup> This was something it was ill-equipped to do because its logistic capability had been artificially grafted onto it and was not linked to any indigenous or locally sustainable logistic capacity. In contrast, the NVA's logistic capabilities were more suitable and sustainable because they were authentically homegrown.

## Final Thoughts

What logistic lessons might be instructive for modern counterinsurgency warfare in other cultural or ideological environments? How do the latest rounds of admonitions by political scientists such as Stephen Biddle about the perils of conflating “the communal civil war” now brewing in Iraq with the “Maoist ‘people’s war’ of national liberation” that took place in Vietnam square with our understanding of insurgent logistic practices and how counterinsurgency logistic efforts might be more efficiently and effectively conducted?<sup>42</sup> While Biddle’s caution has some validity, in some important ways the Maoist logistic prescriptions are unique among Maoist doctrines. When examined closely, the Maoist logistics doctrines are not intimately linked or dependent upon any one political ideology, communist or otherwise, for their utility or applicability. Thus, the insurgent logistic doctrines remain practical prescriptions for any organization or movement seeking ways to develop logistic capabilities and combat power against state forces and authorities.

In assessing Maoist doctrine and its relevance to current hostilities in the Middle East, one might also consider the similarity between, and the logistic strength provided by, the extended-family-like brotherhood developed by various communist parties and the real extended family structure of tribal and clan affiliation now significantly found within a larger Islamic cultural framework. This

similarity is supported by the work of scholars such as David Ronfeldt, who has analyzed the role of “extreme tribalism” in the shaping of modern asymmetric threats.<sup>43</sup> While tribal constructs, either extreme or not, are clearly motivated by vastly different ideologies, belief systems, and social network orientations, their significance to the logistic support of insurgencies cannot be ignored, despite American strategists’ historical tendency to do so.<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, in counterinsurgency operations, we cannot continue to be blinded by our own culturally based ideas about what kinds of networks are logistically significant. Nor can we continue to assume, as we did in Vietnam, that new technology will satisfy our need to address these types of complex enemy logistic networks. At their heart, these problems are social and conceptual and not amenable to engineered solutions. Also not to be ignored in insurgent logistic networks is the significance of predominant cultures of corruption (as defined by post-progressive Western values and codified in Western political and economic tenets about the value of private property, the role of government to provide services to all classes of citizens, and the rights of individual agency).

Finally, there appear to be more than a few parting points to ponder about the logistics of insurgency and counterinsurgency warfare as experienced by the United States in Vietnam:



The same old business? A U.S. Air Force convoy team with 557th Expeditionary Red Horse Squadron returns to Forward Operating Base Marez, Iraq, along Main Supply Route Tampa following a delivery of construction supplies to Contingency Operating Base Speicher, Tikrit, Iraq, 16 September 2006.

DOO



- Operators at all levels of war must be mindful of the implications of using overt and covert LOCs and logistics bases. It appears that in counterinsurgency, direct or linear LOCs are not always the most effective.

- There are benefits for both insurgents and counterinsurgents to using complex logistics networks that can take advantage of redundancies and quick regeneration capabilities.

- Bulk logistics have liabilities too. Sometimes a steady, stealthy “small packet flow” can deliver more, for both types of combatants.

- Robust LOC defenses can be turned into a

highly effective form of offensive maneuver against insurgents.

- Insurgents continuously and vigorously seek to negate and co-opt counterinsurgency high technology to better preserve or improve their own logistic posture. This should not be surprising as it is a tenet of existing insurgent doctrine that is applicable to a wide array of ideological causes and cultural conditions.

- Indigenous counterinsurgency capabilities, like those of successful insurgents, must be linked to indigenously sustainable logistics capabilities.

Lastly, never forget that in insurgencies, “their” logistics is often “your” logistics! **MR**

## NOTES

1. This article draws upon a paper previously written by the author titled “The Roots of Responsive Logistics: Trails and Tails in Vietnam,” presented on 3 August 2005 at the Combat Studies Institute’s annual conference (“An Army at War: Change in the Midst of Conflict”) and published in the proceedings of that conference by John J. McGrath, general editor, Combat Studies Institute, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 2005, 229-245.

2. Full text follows, with excisions in italics: “It must first be noted that the *Japanese* aggressor is a strong *imperialist* power whose invasion of *China* is based upon a relatively advanced stage of industrial production and of army-navy-air techniques. However despite the higher level of the enemy’s industry, he remains an *imperialist* power deficiently gifted by nature. He has not himself been able to mass enough human, financial and material power to last out a prolonged war and to cope with an immense theater of war. In addition to this, anti-war sentiment is developing amongst the *Japanese* people which is affecting the morale of the lower officers and the broad rank and file of her army. Besides, *Japan’s* opponent is not limited to *China* alone, hence she cannot devote her entire force of men and material to an invasion of our country. *The most she can devote is about a million men* as she has to reserve her forces to deal with other powers. On account of these reasons *Japan’s* war of aggression is definitely disfavored by a prolonged war and by the extensive occupation of territory. Strategically *Japan* is forced to demand a war of quick decision. It would be difficult for her to continue if we could persist for more than three years.” From Mao Tse Tung, “Problems in the Guerrilla War of Resistance against Japan,” in Chu Teh, et al., *On Guerrilla Warfare* (n.p., 1939), reprinted in Gene Z. Hanrahan, ed., *Chinese Communist Guerrilla Warfare Tactics* (Boulder, CO: Paladin Press, 1974), 17.

3. *Ibid.*

4. Chu Teh is referred to as “Chu Teh” or “Chu Geh” under the Wade-Giles system of romanizing Chinese names. Today in the People’s Republic of China, his name is romanized as “Zhu De,” according to the Pinyin system. In both forms of romanization, Chinese family names come first and so, when referring to individuals by one name, the first one is used (e.g., Mao, Chu, or Ming respectively). This article uses the Wade-Giles spelling because that is the system used by the sources cited. See endnote 7 below. Chu Teh went on in the 1950s to become the Commander in Chief of the People’s Liberation Army, also known as the Chinese Red Army. See Chu Teh, “On Guerrilla Warfare,” in Hanrahan, 3, 63-74.

5. *Ibid.*, 66-69.

6. *Ibid.*, 69.

7. Agnes Smedley, *The Great Road: The Life and Times of Chu Teh* (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1956), 387-88. Agnes Smedley was an American correspondent who worked out of China for much of the 1930s and the Second World War. While she has proven to be a controversial figure, and various charges of espionage continue to influence the accounting of her life, her biography of Chu Teh is one of the few detailed sources of his activities in this period. It also provides a wealth of insights difficult to find elsewhere about the logistic practices of Chinese insurgent guerrilla fighters.

8. Te, “On Guerrilla Warfare,” 69.

9. *Ibid.*

10. Smedley, 386.

11. *Ibid.*, 387.

12. Ming Fan, “A Textbook on Guerrilla Warfare,” in Hanrahan, 76-78.

13. *Ibid.*, 76.

14. *Ibid.*, 76-77.

15. *Ibid.*, 77.

16. *Ibid.*

17. Julian Thompson, *The Lifeblood of War: Logistics in Armed Conflict* (New York: Brassey’s, 1991), 134-135.

18. *Ibid.*, 162.

19. Huu Mai, in Bich Thuan, “Women Gunners in Quang Binh,” in *The Mountain Trail* (Hanoi: Vietnam Women’s Union, 1970), 117-36, cited in Sandra C. Taylor, *Vietnamese Women at War: Fighting for Ho Chi Minh and the Revolution* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1999), 120-121.

20. *Ibid.*

21. Taylor, 81.

22. Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History* (New York: Penguin Books, 1983), 253-254.

23. Richard L. Stevens, *The Trail: A History of the Ho Chi Minh Trail and the Role of Nature in the War in Vietnam* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1993), x.

24. *Ibid.*, x-xi citing “The Special War,” *Time*, 19 May 1967, 34; Michael Maclear, *The Ten Thousand Day War: Vietnam, 1945-1975* (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1981), 151, 172-173, 182; “The Indispensable Lifeline,” *Time*, 15 February 1971, 28; “Untold Story of the Ho Chi Minh Trail,” *U.S. News and World Report*, 15 February 1971, 23.

25. Paul N. Edwards, *The Closed World: Computers and the Politics of Discourse in Cold War America* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 3-7; George L. Weiss, “Battle for Control of the Ho Chi Minh Trail,” *Armed Forces Journal* (15 February 1972), 19.

26. Stevens, xi.

27. *Ibid.*, x-xi.

28. Weiss, 19. One Air Force officer went so far as to boast that they had “wired the Ho Chi Minh Trail like a drug store pinball machine and we play it every night.” The author of this 1972 article smugly suggested that the “real secret about the ‘secret war’ is that this time we may be winning.” Unfortunately, subsequent events and revelations proved him wrong.

29. Department of the Army, *U.S. Army Counterinsurgency Operations Handbook* (Reprint) (Guilford, CT: Lyons Press, 2004), 7-1—7-2. This source does not address Vietnam-era doctrine, but it is reflective of the thinking in that period about logistics bases.

30. John H. Hay Jr., *Vietnam Studies: Tactical and Materiel Innovations* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1989), 151.

31. *Ibid.*, 151-152.

32. *Ibid.*, 154.

33. *Ibid.*

34. *Ibid.*, 154-155.

35. *Ibid.*

36. *Ibid.*

37. Trong Nhu Tang with David Chanoff and Doan Van Toai, *A Vietcong Memoir* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985), 167.

38. William J. Broyles, *Brother In Arms: A Journey from War to Peace* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986), 194.

39. James Lawton Collins Jr., *Vietnam Studies: The Development and Training of the South Vietnamese Army, 1950-1972* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1986), 103-104, 111.

40. Lt. Gen Dong Van Khuyen, *Indochina Monographs: RVNAF Logistics* (Washington, DC: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1980), 453-4. Lt. Gen Van Khuyen notes that “ARVN logisticians only embraced modest objectives for their self-reliance program, which began in 1969 with the Vietnamization process.”

41. Thompson, 217-218.

42. Stephen Biddle, “Seeing Baghdad, Thinking Saigon,” *Foreign Affairs* 85, no. 2 (March-April 2006): 2-14.

43. David Ronfeldt, “Today’s wars are less about ideas than extreme tribalism,” *Christian Science Monitor* (Monday, 27 March 2006), 9.

44. *Ibid.* Ronfeldt claims that American strategists have a preference for the “optimistic ‘end of history’ idea” as advanced by Francis Fukuyama in 1989 and find the construct of “tribalism . . . too anthropological” for their comfort.

# BREAKING the TETHER of FUEL

Naval Research Advisory Committee Future Fuels Study Panel

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*The Naval Research Advisory Committee is the senior scientific advisory group to the Secretary of the Navy, the Chief of Naval Operations, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, and the Chief of Naval Research on matters relating to research and development. The committee provides independent problem assessment, recommendations, and/or alternatives to resolving research and development issues and problems within the Navy and Marine Corps. More information about NRAC is available at their web site at <<http://www.onr.navy.mil/nrac>>.*

PHOTO: Fuel trucks belonging to Combat Service Support Battalion -10 convoy north to Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom. (DOD)

**D**URING THE ADVANCE on Baghdad, senior Marine and Army field commanders had many significant interdependent variables to contemplate in addition to the capability and intent of the Iraqi forces before them. In order to maintain both the velocity and operational tempo of their highly mobile forces located across a wide battlespace, the subject of fuel was an ever-present consideration. Much time, energy, and continuous analysis was put into determining when, or if, a culminating point would be reached due to this vital resource. The challenge, “unleash us from the tether of fuel,” came from Lieutenant General James N. Mattis, Commanding General, Marine Corps Combat Development Command, and his Operation Iraqi Freedom experience as Commanding General, 1st Marine Division. Mattis’ challenge was taken on by John Young, then-Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Research, Development, and Acquisition), who directed that the Naval Research Advisory Committee (NRAC) identify, review, and assess technologies for reducing fuel consumption and for producing militarily useful alternative fuels, with a focus on tactical ground mobility. Technical maturity, current forecasts of “market” introduction, possible operational impact, and science and technology investment strategy were considered.

The most telling characterization of fuel usage came from the Marine Corps 2003 Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) Study. This study showed that almost 90 percent of the fuel used by MEF ground vehicles would accrue to tactical wheeled vehicles (TWVs), including HMMWVs, 7-ton trucks, and the logistics vehicle system. Moreover, the study showed conclusively that combat vehicles (e.g., M1A1 tanks, light armored vehicles, and assault amphibious vehicles), although fuel guzzlers individually, as a fleet consume a relatively minor fraction of the fuel. Consequently, TWVs became the primary target for fuel economizing.

## Findings and Recommendations

The principal findings and recommendations of this study fell in two main time frames—the near term and the mid-to-far term. Each of these is discussed below.

While the panel identified no single near-term action that would achieve the goal of reducing fuel consumption by 50 percent or eliminating the tether of fuel, the panel found a way to improve efficiency (hybrid-electric vehicle technology) and improve fuel utilization on the battlefield (dynamic fuel management). To ensure that operational commanders are better able to achieve their missions, system engineers and designers need to work with military users to better design future vehicles with increased fuel efficiency to maximize combat power. For the Marine Corps to take advantage of these opportunities it must commit to the development of the hybrid-electric architecture for TWVs and the development of sensor and communications systems to enable operational commanders to manage fuel allocation and resupply in real-time during combat operations. Near-term responses for these two areas are as follows.

Figure 1 describes the architecture and benefits of hybrid-electric vehicles. Series hybrid-electric drive vehicles offer the most effective and efficient way to meet the fuel challenge. In contrast with the all-mechanical approach, the series hybrid vehicle architecture utilizes a single engine power source and a single electric generator that provide all power for vehicle transport (propulsion) as well as for auxiliary electric power. Since the hybrid architecture no longer requires use of very heavy mechanical clutches, transmissions, and drivetrains, the engine can operate at an ideal speed independent of vehicle speed, thereby significantly improving fuel efficiency. Improved fuel economy, as much

as 20 percent or more, can significantly reduce the existing MEF shortfall in fuel as well as reduce the expeditionary footprint.

A series hybrid-electric architecture of the type described above would provide the greatest flexibility for vehicle design, since much of the space- and weight-consuming aspects of conventional mechanical power distribution systems (i.e., driveshafts and transmission/differential gearboxes), can be eliminated. This is a true open architecture for vehicle designs that has significant potential for improving overall system and passenger survivability. The ability to distribute and locate critical components to less vulnerable positions on the vehicle, combined with the inherently redundant nature of a series hybrid propulsion system, greatly improves overall system survivability. The integration of survivability capsules or “blast buckets” for passengers would also become more achievable. Presently, such an approach becomes operationally unsuitable when placed above a conventional drivetrain. The overall height of the vehicle is a dramatic limitation for both mobility and transportability. But with no intervening shafts and components running the length of the frame, these capsules can be “nested” such that present suitability issues are eliminated. These basic advantages, combined with the significant available excess electrical power to operate active and passive vehicle defense systems, make the hybrid a great choice for improved survivability.

Component elements of this architecture would include primary power sources, such as diesel-electric generator sets and distributed electric motors at the drive wheels for propulsion and braking, as well as onboard weapons systems, sensor systems, and communications systems modules. Such a standardized common power structure would also provide an extensible framework into which new technologies could be integrated as they mature.

- Vehicle design flexibility
- Power distribution flexibility
  - traction power
  - mission payloads
  - mobile electric power
- Improved survivability
- Inherent modularity improves maintainability and upgradability (readiness)
- Design growth to emerging electric sources (e.g., fuel cells)

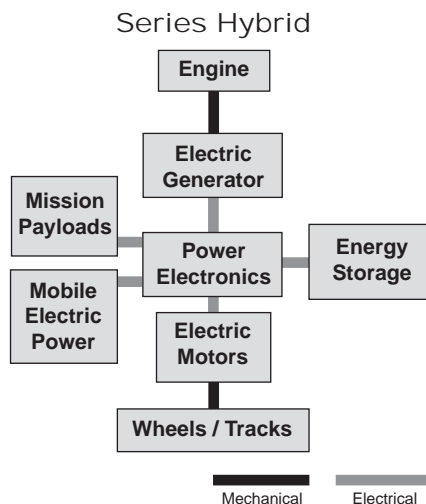
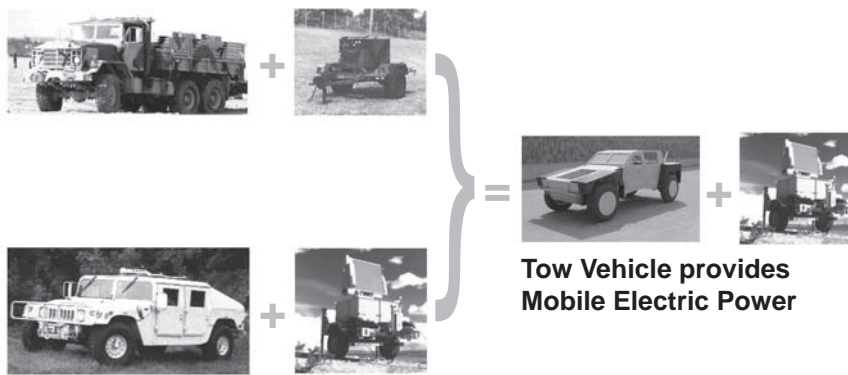


Figure 1. Hybrid-electric vehicle (HEV) architecture.





**HEV technology for Tactical Wheeled Vehicle replacements can improve fuel economy and enhance operational capability**

**Figure 2. HEV electrical power reduces expeditionary footprint.**

This framework would provide much more flexibility in terms of integration of required payload and mission packages. In addition, the series hybrid-electric vehicle architecture provides “exportable” mobile electric power as an integral part of the vehicle using the same common electric power infrastructure.

The fastest growing requirement on the battlefield is electric power. From the power requirements of the individual Marine to the increasing power requirements for sensors, weapons, and armor systems, the need for ubiquitous electric power as the force maneuvers to its objective is burgeoning. The current solution is towed generators that literally double the amount of wheeled equipment that must be accommodated by the logistics system as well as the tactical vehicle fleet. As illustrated in Figure 2, effectively making the towing vehicle the generator, due to its ability to shift its propulsion electric power to conditioned field-usable electric power, cuts the number of systems, simplifying the logistics and operational problem.

Improving the management of fuel resources on the battlefield can lead to a significant extension of operational reach and enhance tactical success. To deliver fuel in the most efficient and timely manner to dispersed units across the battlespace, several fundamental elements of information must be known. These include the location and fuel status of each tactical vehicle, including all types of refueling assets; the location of both friendly and enemy forces; and a detailed knowledge of the terrain in

the area of operations. The ability to see in real-time the fuel picture of all assets in the battlespace, combined with the ability to dynamically reallocate petroleum assets as combat operations evolve, can greatly improve the efficient delivery of this scarce and critical resource.

To substantially improve fuel management during combat operations, a combination of new hardware and software tools formed into a system will need to be introduced into the ground

combat element. A near-term opportunity is found in the automatic fuel status reporting requirement. Commercial fuel reporting systems like those found in the trucking and railroad industries may serve as an initial model to be adapted for military use. The study panel was made aware of an ongoing project within the Marine Corps that was evaluating a specific technical approach. These activities should be supported and the field of evaluation expanded. Application to all mobility assets of the ground combat element must be included and not limited to only fuel transportation systems. A dynamic allocation system includes the automatic vehicle location/fuel status reporting segment, but goes a considerable step further. A complete fuel management system must include, at minimum, the ability to fuse the friendly and enemy situation, as well as integrate the topography of the area of operations. These are the critical parameters necessary to properly create and evaluate real-time fuel reallocation courses of action. The dynamic allocation system should have the ability to create these initial courses of action for evaluation by the commander and his staff. It is recommended that these two activities not wait to be pursued and fielded until the wider “autonomic logistics” effort is complete, but rather form a key domain element that can be integrated as a module when an autonomic logistics system is eventually fielded.

## **Alternate Fuels**

In the mid-to-far term and separate from the hybrid-electric vehicle discussion above, numerous

alternative fuels are being evaluated across the spectrum of power and energy density to satisfy national fuel needs. Fuels may either be derived directly from natural resources (e.g., petroleum, natural gas, or uranium) or by a method of storing energy in a more convenient form (e.g., alcohol from biomass or hydrogen from electrolysis of water). In order to minimize transportation and onboard storage requirements, high-energy density fuels are essential, and as such, stored energy density is a useful metric for comparing various fuels. Since fuels may be solid, liquid, or gaseous, both energy per unit mass and energy per unit volume are important. Figure 3 compares the energy densities for various fuels (relative to that of gasoline). Liquid hydrocarbon fuels, such as diesel, represent the highest energy density fuels available for ground transportation. (A chemist asked to develop the ideal transportation fuel stated that the result would be a liquid hydrocarbon.) Currently, these fuels are obtained from refining (mostly imported) petroleum. This resource faces ever-increasing global demands and is dwindling. Critical U.S. refineries are almost all in coastal regions that are subject to both weather disasters and terrorist actions. Petroleum must be replaced with a suitable substitute. Fortunately, the United States has large deposits of coal and shale oil (see Figure 4).

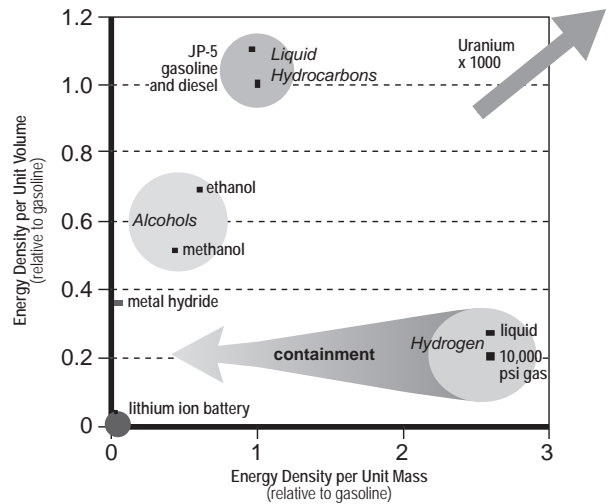


Figure 3. Energy density of fuels.

derived from low-grade coal for nearly 50 years. Sasol’s FT plant in Secunda, South Africa, produces 150,000 barrels of manufactured fuel per day. FT fuel production is mature technology. China, which also has abundant domestic coal, has purchased essentially the entire world output of coal gasifiers for the past several years to produce fertilizer via the FT process.

The flow chart in Figure 5 shows an integrated gasification FT fertilizer power plant proposed

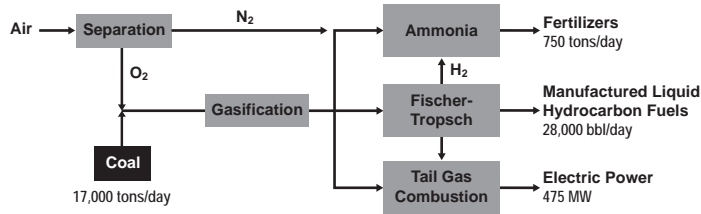
The United States’ future dependence on liquid hydrocarbon fuels without abundant domestic crude oil supplies will not be unprecedented. In pre-World War II Germany, Franz Fischer and Hans Tropsch developed a process to produce liquid hydrocarbon fuel from coal. The so-called Fischer-Tropsch (FT) process supplied a substantial fraction of Germany’s transportation fuels after Allied actions threatened the output of the Ploesti oilfields and refineries. South Africa was unable to import crude oil in large quantities during the apartheid era, and consequently, all of South Africa’s vehicles have been powered by FT-generated fuels

- **Liquid hydrocarbon fuels have ideal properties and are needed as transportation fuels for the foreseeable future**
  - Oil-derived fuels primarily imported and will become increasingly scarce
  - Existing refinery infrastructure
    - Predominantly coastal and vulnerable
    - Operating at capacity
- **Alternative: Fuel efficiency, domestic resources, interior production**



Figure 4. Mid-to-far term fuel strategy.

- Gasification + Fischer-Tropsch = Clean fuel from domestic sources
- Technology mature for natural gas, coal
- Significant development underway by South Africa, China, Gulf States



Sasol Fischer-Tropsch Plant, Secunda, South Africa

- 10 such plants would provide all DOD fuel
- Commercial financing of such plants viable, given DOD commitment to purchase manufactured fuels at attractive prices

Figure 5. Manufacturing fuel to spec.

by Beard Generation (a 20-year-old producer of small- to medium-scale project-financed power plants). From 17,000 tons per day of low-grade coal, the plant would produce 28,000 barrels per day of liquid hydrocarbon fuel, 750 tons per day of ammonia, and 475 megawatts of net electrical power. Importantly, the gasification process serves to separate the sulfur and heavy metal contaminants found in low-grade coal (which makes it undesirable as a raw fuel). Thus, the liquid hydrocarbon fuels produced from coal via gasification and the FT process are intrinsically clean. Use of such fuels will minimize emissions (sulfur and particulates) from internal combustion engines.

The Beard proposed plant described above would cost approximately \$3 billion and employ about 200 full-time staff. Beard envisions building such plants near rich low-grade coalfields, areas that are typically economically depressed since emission controls have made such coal economically unattractive for power production. Although such plants are relatively small, it would only take about 10 of them to supply all of the Department of Defense's (DOD's) liquid hydrocarbon fuel requirements. Beard claims that commercial financing of such plants will be possible, with adequate internal return on investment and revenue/debt margins. This change in posture need not be funded by the government (and indeed, to realize the full potential

of this approach, the government could not afford to capitalize the needed changes in infrastructure); the rising price and increasing scarcity of crude oil will motivate commercial firms to invest in manufactured fuel infrastructure. DOD could, however, catalyze commercial development of this highly desirable infrastructure by making a long-term commitment to purchase liquid hydrocarbon fuels at attractive prices.

## Summary

In response to Mattis' challenge to unleash us from the tether of fuel, the panel determined that the tether is still there but has found a way to lengthen it through hybrid-electric vehicle technology and untangle it using dynamic fuel management. Hybrid-electric drive vehicles offer the most effective and efficient way to accomplish Mattis' goal. Improved fuel economy, as much as 20 percent or more, can significantly reduce the existing Marine Expeditionary Force shortfall in fuel as well as reduce the expeditionary footprint. From the perspective of the farther term, the United States is in the fortunate position of having domestic resources that will, with the development of appropriate infrastructure, enable the continued use of liquid hydrocarbon fuels, without the economic and security disruptions attendant with the import of crude oil as the primary feedstock. DOD needs to commit now to procuring manufactured liquid hydrocarbons for the long term as an assured supply of fuel, at lower than current market price to encourage commercial financing, to push technology, and to help motivate the building of the necessary manufacturing and distribution infrastructure. **MR**

*Authors' Note: Statements, opinions, recommendations, and/or conclusions contained in this article are those of the NRAC panel and do not necessarily represent the official position of the U.S. Navy, U.S. Marine Corps, or the DOD.*





# Clausewitz's **SCHWERPUNKT** Mistranslated from German— Misunderstood in English

Milan Vego, Ph.D.

*Eine Operation ohne  
Schwerpunkt is wie ein  
Mann ohne Charakter.*  
[An operation without  
Schwerpunkt is like a man  
without character.]

—Field Marshal Paul  
von Hindenburg

*Dr. Milan Vego is a professor of joint military operations at the U.S. Naval War College. He holds a B.S. and M.S. from Belgrade University and a Ph.D. from George Washington University. He is the author of the textbook Operational Warfare (2001) as well as The Battle for Leyte: Allied and Japanese Plans, Preparations, and Execution (2006).*

PHOTO: German motorized units on the advance in Belgium, May 1940. (Robert Hunt Library)

AS THE U.S. ARMY moves forward in its efforts to transform itself in profound ways, it might be useful for its leadership to reexamine the origins of some concepts that serve as the theoretical underpinnings of current Army and joint doctrine. Among those that should be closely reconsidered is “center of gravity” (COG), a concept widely attributed to Carl von Clausewitz and now regarded as the heart of any sound plan for a campaign or major operation.<sup>1</sup> Even a cursory glance at the military literature of the last 30 years, starting with core doctrinal documents produced by the Army itself, reveals how pervasive and essential the COG concept has become in U.S. operational thinking. Massive amounts of time, energy, ink, and paper have been expended on defining, analyzing, and arguing how the concept should be properly applied within the context of a supposed Clausewitzian paradigm of war. Unfortunately, the major problem with this, at least from a historical perspective, is that Clausewitz never used the term “center of gravity.” Furthermore, he might not have agreed entirely with what that concept now denotes in the American military lexicon.

The term from which the COG concept has been extrapolated, *Schwerpunkt*, really means “weight (or focus) of effort.” In reassessing center of gravity as an underpinning of doctrine, it is important to observe that the original *Schwerpunkt* concept is actually closer in meaning to what the U.S. military now calls the “sector of main effort” and the “point of main attack” (defense). Although the original Clausewitzian rendering of *Schwerpunkt* could, like the COG, encompass both physical and human elements, it is less complicated to identify, but not necessarily to apply, than the U.S. concept of a COG or COGs. In contrast to the modern application of the concept of center of gravity, Clausewitz’s *Schwerpunkt* dealt almost exclusively with the strategic level of war.

The purpose of this essay is to trace the development of the *Schwerpunkt* concept as the Germans understood and employed it (in a manner probably more congruous with Clausewitz’s intent) from Field Marshal Alfred von Schlieffen’s time as chief of the German general staff, through the interwar years, to World War II. We can then compare the German interpretation with its American counterpart to examine the validity of the current U.S. concept of center of gravity. Our investigation will perhaps offer a related but significantly different alternative to the modern COG concept, one that we might use to focus planning for future campaigns or major operations.

## The Development of *Schwerpunkt*

Clausewitz used *Schwerpunkt* on several occasions in his seminal work *On War* (see chapter 4, “Closer Definition of the War’s Objective: Suppression

of the Enemy,” of Book 8). In countries subject to domestic strife, he claimed, the *Schwerpunkt* is generally the capital. In the same paragraph he states that “in small countries that rely on large ones, it [*Schwerpunkt*] is usually the army of their protector; among alliances, it lies in the community of interests; and in popular uprisings it is the personality of leaders and public opinion. It is against these that our energies should be directed.”<sup>2</sup>

When assessing all of these possibilities, one should keep Clausewitz’s ideas on *Schwerpunkt* in context. Ultimately, Clausewitz firmly believed that the destruction or neutralization of the enemy’s forces was the means to final victory. Identifying the *Schwerpunkt* would enable the attacker to effect those means.

Although several German and Austrian theoreticians in the mid- to late-nineteenth century stressed that the enemy capital constituted a *Schwerpunkt* against which one’s efforts should be directed, the understood purpose for dealing with the capital was the same: to threaten or seize it as a means of ultimately destroying or neutralizing the enemy’s armed forces. The theoreticians therefore coined a new term, *Schwerpunktlinie* (“line of weight of effort”)—the shortest, most direct line between one’s own base of operations and the enemy capital. To achieve victory, one’s army was expected to operate decisively along the line of weight of effort and thereby reach its objective faster.<sup>3</sup>

**Clausewitz firmly believed that the destruction or neutralization of the enemy’s forces was the means to final victory. Identifying the *Schwerpunkt* would enable the attacker to effect those means.**

## Schwerpunkt Evolves

From its original meaning of “weight of effort,” *Schwerpunkt* underwent some subtle but significant changes in the late 1880s and afterward, primarily stimulated by vigorous debate among German theoreticians about whether the introduction of more destructive weapons had rendered large-

scale attack obsolete.<sup>4</sup> The German problem at the strategic level was the high likelihood of a war against strong opponents on two fronts. A consensus emerged that the weight of effort concept offered the only way to neutralize the absolute strategic superiority Germany’s potential enemies would have. The Germans therefore planned to achieve operational superiority at decisive points on each front as quickly as possible, in order to end the conflict before it could turn into a draining two-front war of attrition.

Few were more influential in emphasizing the essential importance of the weight of effort principle than Schlieffen.<sup>5</sup> He had concluded that because of the advent of million-man armies and the increased lethality of new weapons, the front line would inevitably be extended and continuous. This meant that the attacker could hope for success only if his forces were deployed in a timely manner in depth and at precisely the right place—at the decisive point.<sup>6</sup> Schlieffen believed that ruthlessly weakening one’s forces at some parts of the front line and concentrating one’s forces at a point where a decision could be gained were prerequisites for success. Decisive operations would be conducted where the enemy was weakest and no enemy attack was expected.<sup>7</sup> Schlieffen’s influence was mainly responsible for the German emphasis on incorporating *Schwerpunkt* at both the operational and tactical levels of war.

The Germans further refined the concept of weight of effort between the two world wars.<sup>8</sup> The Reichswehr’s field regulations in the early 1920s stipulated that any attack must have its weight of effort, which must be emphasized in an operation order.<sup>9</sup> Under General Ludwig Beck, chief of the army general staff from 1935 to 1938, thinking shifted to the question of how to conduct penetration and envelopment maneuvers using *Schwerpunkt* as a guiding principle. Factors to consider in planning a decisive penetration maneuver included the enemy’s disposition, the nature of the terrain, and the effective employment of one’s forces.<sup>10</sup>

## Selecting the Schwerpunkt

The most important document for the initial phase of a campaign was what the Germans called *Aufmarschanweisungen* (“deployment instructions”). This document clearly spelled out both the boundaries

and direction of the Schwerpunkt and stipulated the need to concentrate one's forces to support it. Thus, forces in other sectors had to be reduced in favor of the selected course of action.<sup>11</sup> It was also understood that commanders at all command echelons were principally responsible for selecting their own Schwerpunkt, although senior commanders, where it was appropriate, retained the prerogative to designate their subordinates' weight of effort.<sup>12</sup>

**Commander's intent.** The main factors in selecting the weight of effort were the commander's intent (*Absicht*), the enemy situation, and the terrain.<sup>13</sup> (See Figure 1). The intent provided the higher commander's vision of an operation's end-state. Under the German system, the commander's vision was virtually sacrosanct; however, doctrine stipulated that in the execution of a mission, each subordinate commander should be given freedom to act within the boundaries of the overall commander's intent.<sup>14</sup> To balance the commander's vision against flexibility of action, subordinate commanders were required to evaluate all their planned actions in accordance with the higher commander's intent.<sup>15</sup> In general, the commander's intent promoted unity of effort in a fluid situation that failed to conform precisely to one's plans and expectations. The intent both circumscribed and encouraged the exercise of initiative by subordinate commanders.<sup>16</sup>

In the Wehrmacht, the commander's intent did not simply reiterate the scheme of maneuver; rather, it encouraged subordinate commanders at lower levels to think and act faster than the enemy and to seize the initiative. Every commander was required to understand the commander's intent two echelons above his level of command. This was necessary to enable decision making when the higher commander could not be reached in time for further guidance.<sup>17</sup>

**Enemy situation.** Although multiple factors came into play in determining the Schwerpunkt, by far the most important was the enemy situation. The German approach was to thoroughly analyze their own and the enemy's situation before deciding on a weight of effort and formulating courses of action. Ground and air reconnaissance were critical for gaining accurate and reliable intelligence on the enemy's actual deployments.

**Terrain.** Terrain was another important planning consideration. In selecting the ground for the

weight of effort, the Germans believed that the most valuable terrain points were those that controlled the enemy's positions over a large area and that could exercise an immediate effect over adjacent parts of the enemy forces.<sup>18</sup> Other important terrain considerations were the number of lines of communication an area had and whether the site could be approached along concealed routes.

It must be said, however, that ease of trafficability was hardly the deciding factor in the selection of a weight of effort. The Germans always balanced the disadvantages of using relatively few and unfavorable lines of communications in the area against the advantages of achieving operational surprise.<sup>19</sup> In fact, in planning the invasion of France in 1940, the Germans opted for surprise in the Ardennes versus ease of movement and concentration in Belgium and Holland.

Also weighing heavily in selecting the location of the weight of effort were the ability to employ attack aircraft and mechanized forces en masse and to use artillery in a decisive role.

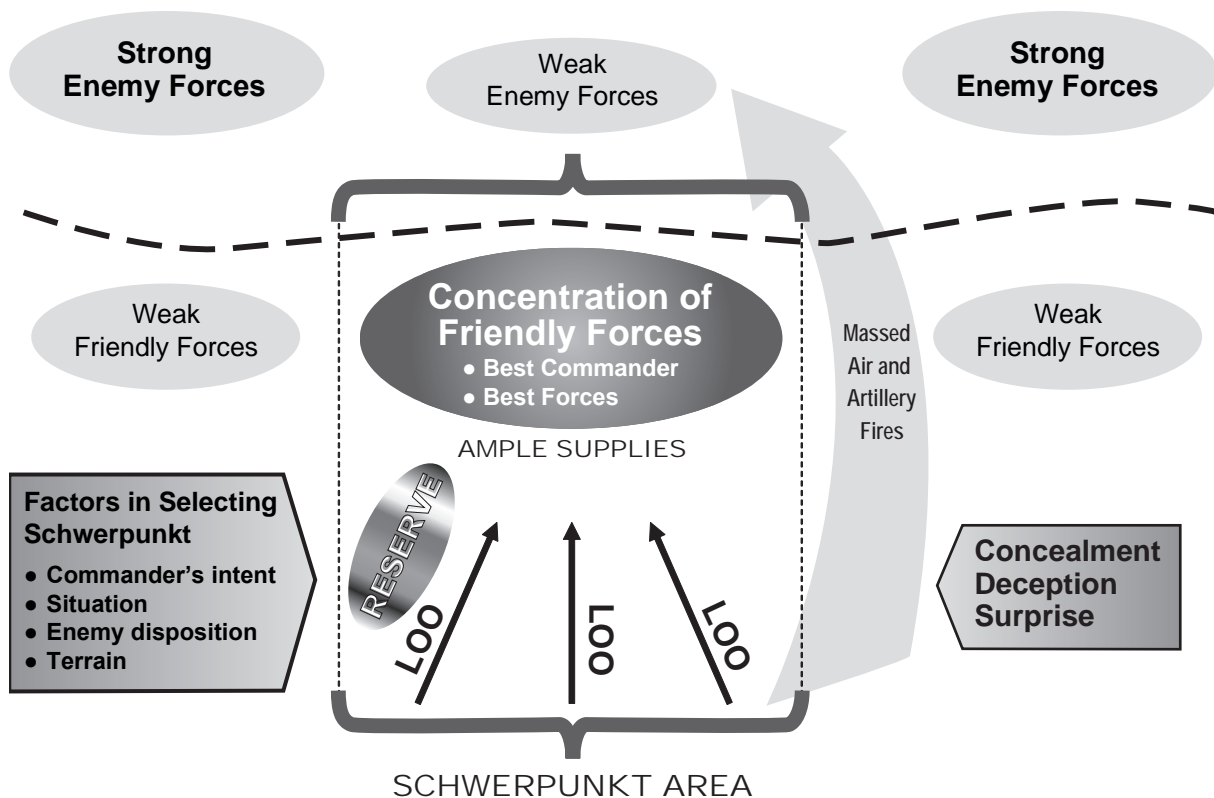
## Parsing Schwerpunkt

The lateral width of the weight of effort was called the *Schwerpunktabschnitt*, and it was expressed in terms of its length in kilometers. *Schwerpunktraum* was the staging area running in depth behind the front lines. It had to be deep, to permit steady reinforcement of the forward forces after penetration was achieved. The Germans emphasized that local superiority at the weight of effort would be created by selecting narrow "combat strips" (*Gefechtsstreifen*) and then nourishing one's attack from within one's depth.<sup>20</sup>

## Schwerpunkt in the Attack

In planning an attack, the Germans aimed the weight of effort (*Angriffsschwerpunkt*) where they believed the enemy had his weakest forces, either in numbers or in terms of quality. Of constant concern was the danger that the enemy might deduce German intentions from the buildup of forces at specific locations and take prompt countermeasures. Hence, the Germans emphasized that the prerequisites for success were to act without warning and to move one's forces swiftly while preserving secrecy and deceiving the defender.<sup>21</sup> The German plan for Operation Yellow, the invasion of France





**Schwerpunkt (weight of effort) in the attack.**

in May 1940, was a model of *Schwerpunkt* planning. It correctly posited the weight of effort at the Meuse River between Sedan and Dinant, a crucially important sector defended by only seven mostly second-rate French divisions.<sup>22</sup>

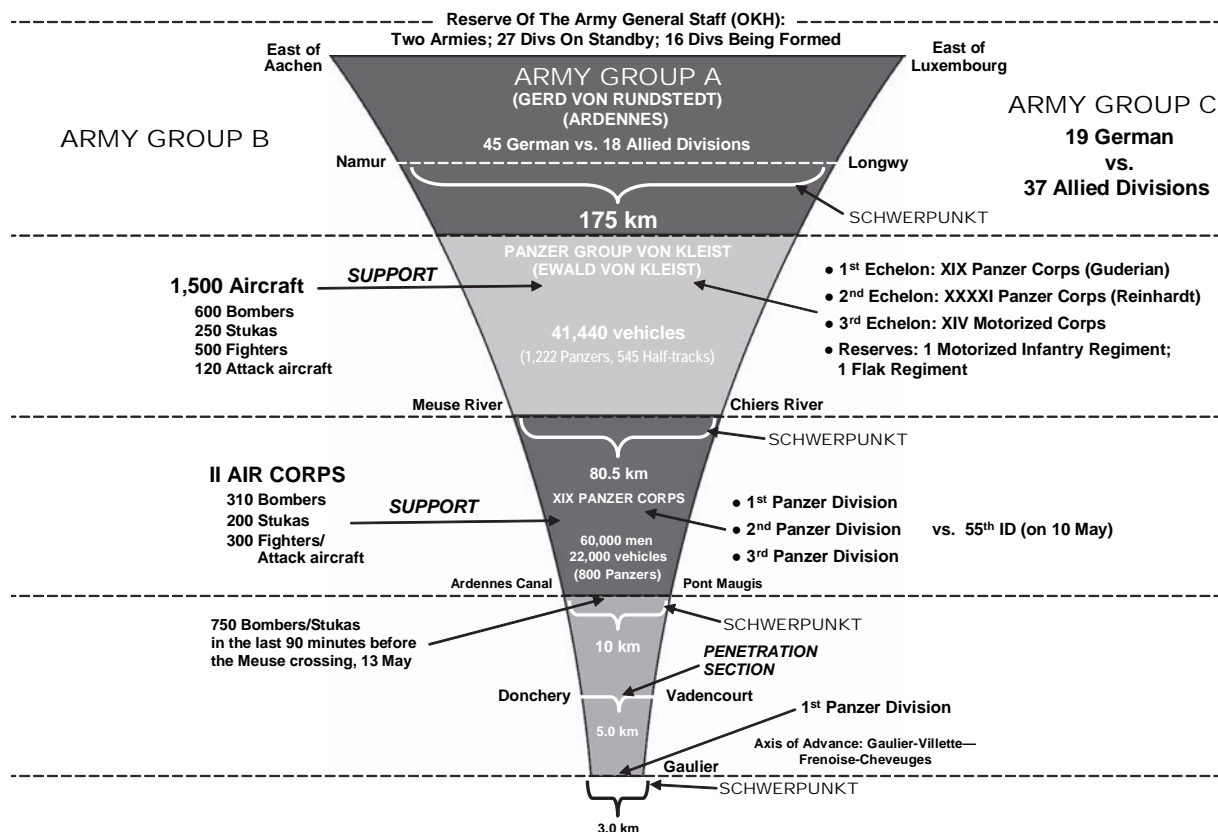
In planning an attack, the Germans also tried to determine the boundaries between two adjacent enemy forces and place their weight of effort at that particular sector of the front. For example, in late December 1944, in Operation *Wacht am Rhein* (Watch on the Rhine), which led to what is popularly known by the Allies as the Battle of the Bulge, the Germans selected their *Schwerpunkt* in the sector containing the boundary between the British and U.S. armies.<sup>23</sup> The weight of effort of the entire operation was between Monschau and Echternach, selected largely because that area was thinly occupied by Allied troops in comparison to other sectors. The German commanders believed that they faced the 1st U.S. Army, with 8 infantry and 3 armored divisions. (Actually, only 5 U.S. divisions and part of an armored division, totaling 83,000 men and 400 armored vehicles, were deployed in the 62-mile-long Monschau-Echternach sector.)<sup>24</sup>

## Schwerpunkt in the Defense

In the defense, the Germans stipulated that the weight of effort should be designated opposite the enemy's weight of effort. In other words, the enemy's deployment and the commander's intent determined the ground one would defend.<sup>25</sup> In conducting a delaying defense, the Germans would try to select the weight of effort in an area that forced the attacker to canalize his forces in a narrow, deep strip containing obstacles.<sup>26</sup>

## Schwerpunkt within Schwerpunkt

In a campaign, the Germans determined weight of effort at each level of command, from the army group down to the tactical force. Thus, there were multiple *Schwerpunkte* within the weight of effort of an army group, an army, or an army corps. For example, among the three army groups deployed for Operation Yellow, the weight of effort fell to General Gerd von Rundstedt's Army Group A (4th, 12th and 16th armies and Panzer Group von Kleist), deployed along a 100-mile front behind Namur and Longwy. Within this army group a subordinate



**Schwerpunkt within Schwerpunkt: Operation Yellow, May 1940.**

weight of effort was Panzer Group von Kleist (XXXI Panzer Corps, XIX Panzer Corps, and XIV Motorized Corps). This force had 5 of the 10 panzer divisions then available to the Germans (2 other panzer divisions were assigned to the 4th Army) and was deployed behind a 50-mile stretch of the Meuse and Chiers rivers at 3 locations.<sup>27</sup> The weight of effort for General Heinz Guderian’s XIX Panzer Corps (3 panzer divisions), with 60,000 men and 22,000 vehicles, was the 6.2-mile-wide sector between the Ardennes Canal and Noyers-Pont Maugis. Guderian, in turn, selected the 3.1-mile-wide sector between Donchery and Vadencourt as the weight of effort for his 1st Panzer Division.<sup>28</sup>

The selection of each Schwerpunkt was determined based on what was felt to be a complete and accurate reconnaissance of the terrain and the enemy’s forces deployed in the area. In making such determinations, commanders not only had to study maps of the area, but were also required to reconnoiter the terrain themselves and be informed of the results of patrols in that area. It was considered a significant and particularly dishonorable error when

forces were deployed improperly because the commander lacked sufficient information on the enemy order of battle or the terrain.<sup>29</sup>

**Force Distribution under Schwerpunkt**

As history attests, the Germans often selected the proper weight of effort and assigned sufficient forces for the task. In other cases, however, either adequate forces were not available or the higher commander made a wrong decision in distributing his forces to support the Schwerpunkt. For example, in his famous memorandum for possible war against France in 1905, Schlieffen may have properly distributed German forces between two wings (though it now can only be left to conjecture). He apparently intended the right flank to be as strong as possible while remaining on the defensive in Alsace and Lorraine. Schlieffen therefore envisaged a force of 23 army corps, 12 and a half reserve corps, and 8 cavalry divisions advancing through Belgium into northeastern France. The pivot of the maneuver was to be in the area of Metz-Diedenhofen (Thionville).

On the left flank, Schlieffen's plan called for the deployment of only three and a half army corps, one reserve corps, and three cavalry divisions.<sup>30</sup> A total of 54 divisions were to be deployed between Metz and Aachen, leaving only 8 divisions in the Alsace-Lorraine area—a ratio of 7 to 1 between the right and left wings of the German armies. Schlieffen's successor, General Helmuth von Moltke Jr., had eight new divisions available for deployment, and, in contravention of the *Schwerpunkt* concept, he assigned them all to the left wing. This changed the ratio of forces between the two wings to 3 to 1, and in doing so probably doomed the German drive into northern France.<sup>31</sup> Consequently, what the Germans had long feared—a two-front war of attrition—came to pass.

Prior to World War II and Germany's invasion of France and the Benelux countries, the German Army general staff issued "deployment instructions" (19 October 1939) assigning 37 divisions to Army Group B, in contrast to 26 divisions to Army Group A. This decision, too, was a bad one, for the Allies had deployed the largest number of their divisions in the northeast, opposite Army Group B. Ignoring the dictates of *Schwerpunkt*, the general staff had chosen to attack where the enemy was strongest rather than weakest. However, the Germans rectified their error before the invasion by shifting the weight of effort of the entire campaign from Army Group B to Army Group A, in the center, deploying 45 divisions on the Luxembourg border, where the Allies had only 18.<sup>32</sup> (To the immediate south, in the neighboring Ardennes, the Belgians had deployed only two weak divisions.) In the area of the weight of effort of Army Group A's Panzer Group von Kleist, the French had deployed the 9th and 2d divisions.<sup>33</sup> The French hastily deployed four cavalry divisions and two cavalry brigades into combat to face Kleist's advancing panzers on 10 May. A full 37 divisions (including one Polish division) were deployed behind the Maginot Line, where they faced only 19 divisions of German Army Group C.<sup>34</sup> The rest is history: Army Group A swiftly penetrated the Allied forces in the center, outflanking the Maginot Line and isolating the large Allied force in the north in a pocket. Using the *Schwerpunkt* concept properly, the German Army conquered France in an astonishing 45 days.

## Concentration at Weight of Effort

In German theory and practice, each commander was responsible for concentrating his forces at the weight of effort (*Schwerpunktbildung*) in a timely manner.<sup>35</sup> This was perhaps one of the most critical elements for the success of the entire campaign or major operation. Among other things, one's forces had to be deeply echeloned in the area of the weight of effort. Thus, the length of the weight of effort had to be relatively short. The selected area of concentration had to allow the concentrated fire of many weapons, ample supplies of ammunition, and strong air support. Another requirement was the creation of sufficient reserves in the area of the weight of effort to exploit combat success.<sup>36</sup>

In concentrating their forces against an enemy's weakest points, the Germans were careful to ensure that conditions were favorable for a quick and complete penetration. Each commander was responsible for getting his forces to the attack area in a timely manner, and then arraying them in depth along a narrow front, so as to afford the maximum concentration of troops at the point of enemy weakness. During deployment, surprise was important, too. Using speed, mobility, terrain, and the cover of night, commanders were expected to maneuver their units into their assault positions without alerting the enemy to the impending attack, thereby precluding the enemy from reinforcing the area targeted for *Schwerpunkt* and ensuring that the odds remained stacked in the Germans' favor.<sup>37</sup>

**Best units in the lead.** It was also important that the higher commander, whenever possible, assign his best commander and troops to the weight of effort. That said, the Germans realized that the best troops would not always be available or, even if they were, other considerations might preclude their use. The best units might be deployed too far from the selected area to arrive in time for the attack, or they might be decisively engaged in combat elsewhere. In some cases, morale might suffer if the higher commander gave clear preference to one of the forces under his command.<sup>38</sup> In practice, *Schwerpunkt* had to be flexible.

**Weighted support.** To ensure initial success and to facilitate the forward momentum of the weight of effort once it was underway, the Germans took pains to provide additional artillery fires, heavy air support, and extra radio communications to the



weight of effort. Because of expected high rates of consumption, commanders had to make the necessary coordination for extra stocks of ammunition. Some German theoreticians, however, believed that it was wrong to concentrate artillery too much in the sector of the weight of effort, because the enemy could draw the correct conclusion and make timely preparations for his defenses.<sup>39</sup>

**Favorable terrain.** One of the most important factors for successful concentration at the weight of effort was terrain. As indicated earlier, if planners had done their job properly, and if the situation allowed, the selected terrain would offer a number of lines of communications leading to the concentration site. An area with many longitudinal and lateral roads and railroads was most desirable because it allowed more flexibility in moving forces to the concentration area.

More lines of operations could also equate to faster concentration and exploitation of a penetration. In practice, of course, such optimal conditions weren't always available. In the May 1940 campaign, Panzer Group von Kleist, the main German force designated to break through the Belgian and French defenses in the Ardennes, had to move from the German border to the Meuse River, a distance of about 105 miles. Kleist's columns were forced to travel along narrow and curving roads 31 miles through Luxembourg, 62 miles through Belgium, and 6.2 to 12.4 miles through French territory to the Meuse River. The Germans planned to reach the Meuse in three days and to cross it a day later. The theoretical length of Kleist's columns—composed of 41,140 vehicles, including 1,222 tanks and 545 half-tracks—was about 960 miles. Army Group A, however, assigned Kleist's forces only four roads totaling in length about 250 miles, and it denied a request for the use of at least one more road.<sup>40</sup> Despite the poor trafficability, Panzer Group von Kleist achieved its objectives.

**Employment of reserves.** The principal means of influencing the course of combat at the Schwerpunkt was through deployment of the reserve. In an attack, the reserve could be used to shift the weight of effort or to protect the flanks and rear.<sup>41</sup> In a campaign or major operation, an operational reserve could be used to strengthen the attack or defense in the sector of main effort at the most decisive moment, to ward off enemy counterstrikes, or to

meet other unanticipated contingencies.<sup>42</sup> Normally, reserves were deployed in the rear of the selected section of the weight of effort.<sup>43</sup>

**Surprise.** The principle of concentration at the weight of effort was closely linked to the principle of surprise. The Germans invariably tried to surprise the enemy by maintaining strict secrecy regarding their plans and the movements of their forces, particularly at the weight of effort. In the invasions of France in 1940 and the USSR in June 1941, and in the Manstein counteroffensive in southern Russia in March 1943, panzer and motorized forces were initially held far in the rear of the envisaged attack area. Their relative concealment, combined with the enemy's belief that such forces could not move to the attack area quickly, contributed considerably to the eventual success of these operations.<sup>44</sup>

The Germans invariably planned diverse measures of operational deception prior to the start of a campaign or major operation. In 1940, they prepared and executed elaborate plans to deceive the Allies about the location of their weight of effort. In the first three days of the invasion, they used most of the Luftwaffe's bombers and the much-feared Stuka dive bombers in Army Group B's area, carrying out extensive attacks against targets in northern Belgium, the Netherlands, and the French interior. The relatively few Luftwaffe fighters in the Ardennes were mostly employed against Allied reconnaissance aircraft.

The Germans also used propaganda very effectively to conceal their operational intent. Army Group B's successes were highly publicized, whereas the activity of the German forces around Sedan was barely mentioned in the German press. Ironically, this actually had an adverse effect on the morale of the troops in the Sedan area, because their exploits were not publicly acknowledged.<sup>45</sup>

The German airborne forces also had a role in the deception in May 1940. Tactically, their assaults into northern Belgium and the Netherlands supported the maneuver of Army Group B, but operationally they were undertaken to make the Allies think that the German weight of effort was in the north, not the center. In fact, the spectacular actions of the German paratroopers against fortress Eben Emael had a hypnotizing effect on the top Allied military commanders, who became exclusively focused on what was happening in the northeast. This fixation,

combined with the Luftwaffe's deceptive employment in the north, led to the Allies' fatal decision to move their best troops into Belgium even as German panzer and motorized forces poured through the Ardennes toward the Meuse River. When the Allied commanders realized what the real German weight of effort was, it was too late.<sup>46</sup>

The Germans also took steps to convince the Allies that the pending invasion would reprise the Schlieffen plan of 1914. In the months preceding the actual attack, Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, head of Abwehr, sent many of his intelligence agents to neutral countries and various other places in the world, visiting business friends and attachés to spread rumors that the old Schlieffen plan was to be used again in 1940. These measures were highly successful.<sup>47</sup>

## Shift of Weight of Effort

German theoreticians understood that changes in the situation could require changes or shifts in the weight of effort [*Schwerpunktverlegung* or *Schwerpunktverlagerung*].<sup>48</sup> They stipulated, however, that weakening the weight of effort in favor of some other, endangered, part of the front would be done only in extreme cases. Key above all was to maintain the initiative and offensive momentum of the Schwerpunkt.

In planning their offensive in the west, the Germans drew up four deployment instructions. As we have seen, the first variant of the plan (issued 19 October 1939) assigned the weight of effort to Army Group B in the north. In a new directive dated 29 October, this was changed to two weights of effort (Army Groups B and A). The third version, issued 30 January 1940, had three weights of effort (two in Army Group B's sector and one in Army Group A's sector). Three weeks later, the Germans made their final change, shifting the weight of effort to Army Group A in the center.

With this last alteration, the Germans also changed the force size and mix of their three army groups. The third plan's allocation of 37 divisions to Army Group B and 26 to Army Group A changed to 29 for B and 45 for A, with 42 reserve divisions designated to reinforce Army Group A. More importantly, the Germans assigned 7 of their 10 panzer divisions to Army Group A. As a result, on 10 May, the ratio of forces in the north (Army Group B) was 60 to 29 divisions in favor

of the Allies, while in the central-southern part of the front, in the sector from Namur to Longwy on Luxembourg's border (Army Group A), the ratio was 45 German to 18 Allied divisions.<sup>49</sup>

An unexpected favorable development in the situation during combat also could, or even should, stimulate a shift of the weight of effort. The most effective means to change the weight of effort was to shift the fire of artillery and other heavy weapons and to deploy the reserves.<sup>50</sup> It was part of the commander's art to recognize and rapidly exploit the enemy's weak points, then shift the weight of effort to a place where concentrated artillery fires could have a quick effect while also shifting the reserves to the newly selected weight of effort.<sup>51</sup>

***An unexpected favorable development in the situation during combat also could, or even should, stimulate a shift of the weight of effort.***

The Germans exhibited such art in 1940 when they shifted the weight of effort of their Luftwaffe from the northern part of Belgium to the Sedan sector. Fifteen-hundred aircraft, including 600 bombers and 250 Stukas, were assigned to support Army Group A's lead element, Panzer Group von Kleist. In support of Kleist's XIX Panzer Corps, 310 bombers, 200 Stukas, and 300 fighter aircraft of the II Air Corps conducted "rolling barrage" attacks before and during the crossing of the Meuse River. Their weight of effort was the 2.5-mile sector north and south of Sedan. In a then-unprecedented display of air power, about 750 bombers and Stukas attacked the French positions at Sedan in the 90 minutes before the crossing of the Meuse River on 13 May.<sup>52</sup>

## Conclusion

Despite some resemblance to what the U.S. Army generally calls the sector of main effort and the point of main attack (defense), the German concept of Schwerpunkt, or weight of effort, is actually much

more sophisticated. It differs significantly from the concept of center of gravity. Both weight of effort and center of gravity have advantages and disadvantages, but perhaps Schwerpunkt's greatest advantage is that it does not require absolute knowledge of the enemy situation to succeed. In contrast to the center of gravity concept, Schwerpunkt focuses primarily on the employment of one's combat forces at the tactical and operational levels of war. At the strategic level, the weight of effort is applied only in regard to the overall distribution of one's forces among various theaters.

There are some drawbacks to using Schwerpunkt. For analyzing and applying sources of nonmilitary national power to achieve theater-strategic objec-

tives, the concept is inadequate. Also, as the historical examples cited above might suggest, the weight of effort is probably more suitable for attack than defense. Nevertheless, Schwerpunkt is still a very useful campaign planning tool. Not only does it offer a useful alternative to "center of gravity" for planning and executing a campaign or major operation, but it can be applied successfully in any kind of combat—land, sea, or air. In the end, each method—Schwerpunkt and center of gravity—has its advantages and disadvantages. Hence it stands to reason that one should master the theoretical underpinnings of both concepts and be able to apply them according to personal preference and experience. **MR**

## NOTES

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# Dealing with the Iraqi Populace: An Arab-American Soldier's Perspective



Sergeant Mounir Elkhamri, U.S. Army

*Editor's Note: The author recently completed an 18-month tour of duty in Iraq where he served with Special Forces Operational Detachment Alpha, with a maneuver battalion, and as a personal translator and cultural advisor to the commander of Task Force Freedom (a two-star command). This variety of jobs was possible because of his fluency in Arabic and familiarity with Arab culture. He wrote this article to help units deploying to or already in Iraq. It is one Soldier's perspective on what we are doing right and what we can do better.*

**A**LTHOUGH COALITION FORCES have been in Iraq for over three years, some commanders still do not fully understand how important cultural and human factors are to the success of the counterinsurgency. Commanders need to realize that the unconventional fight primarily revolves around the Iraqis, not the insurgents, since the Iraqis are the center of gravity in this war. As long as coalition forces continue to measure their daily progress solely on the number of terrorists killed and the number of suspects in custody, real progress will be delayed. If coalition forces react only to the insurgency and fail to mobilize the Iraqi people, then the insurgency potentially will be a long one.

How can we get the Iraqis to support us in the counterinsurgency fight? The answer is very simple—improve the quality and increase the quantity of our cultural training prior to deployment, so that Soldiers and commanders will be able to understand and respond to the needs of the Iraqi people.

## Cultural Awareness

We cannot expect the troops to understand Iraqi culture simply by viewing a one- or two-hour PowerPoint® presentation. Cultural training should represent a large portion of the troops' predeployment training, especially for maneuver and civil affairs units. During this phase, the troops should learn basic Arabic words, gain some understanding of Islam, and focus on becoming familiar with the terrain, history, ethnicities, level of cooperation, and prior coalition activities in their Area of Operations (AO).

*Sergeant Mounir Elkhamri is a Middle East military analyst for the Foreign Military Studies Office (FMSO) at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. He has native fluency in Arabic and working fluency in French and German. He is a graduate of the University of Missouri at Kansas City and is currently working on his masters in Middle East Studies.*

PHOTO: The author walks with some Iraqi kids in Tal Afar, Iraq, 15 October 2005. (DOD)

In a perfect world, the redeploying unit would provide this information to the deploying unit so that it would be readily available to the troops and their leaders. But units preparing to redeploy rarely have the resources or the time to prepare an extensive briefing for the relieving unit, so another option would be to create an Iraq-Afghanistan Center that debriefs, collects, and prepares such information and other lessons learned from returning troops and commanders. This center could brief deploying units on cultural issues, needs of the local people, and significant events in their specific AO, as well as provide overall lessons learned from other AOs.

Cultural knowledge accrued during predeployment training will serve the troops well when they conduct dismounted patrols and raids, man checkpoints, or otherwise interact with the locals. It will allow troops, commanders, and the civil affairs staff to draw a fair picture of what to expect once they are on the ground, and it will aid planning.

## On the Ground in Iraq

Once in theater, with a solid understanding of the culture, commanders can better relate to the people. Commanders should spend time engaging local leaders and interfacing with the public to understand the community's needs and expectations; political, religious, and social relationships; and greatest concerns.

During these engagements, the commanders and their staffs need to assess the influence, qualifications, and capabilities of Iraqi Government officials and military leaders in the area. During my deployment, I witnessed several appointments of Iraqi officials as vice-governors, mayors, and chiefs of police based on family and political affiliations rather than qualifications. I met numerous commanders from both the Iraqi Army and the Iraqi Police who were promoted for political purposes from lieutenant to lieutenant colonel or from major to brigadier general and assigned to command battalions or brigades. Such appointments and promotions never sat well with the local Iraqis. With a greater understanding of the societal relationships in their AOs, commanders would be more likely to recognize, and could perhaps prevent, situations that would destabilize a community.

Armed with cultural knowledge, commanders will also understand that they have to pay close

attention to how they interact with mukhtars, sheiks, mayors, and other influential Iraqi leaders. A commander should take pains not to visit too often or spend too much time with any one leader; otherwise, they will be open to charges of favoritism toward certain individuals, tribes, or villages.

Such social engagements are time consuming, require a lot of patience, and may even interfere with daily operations, but they are essential to keep the channels of communication open; in fact, these engagements are key to the stability of the AO. Commanders should meet with local officials on a weekly basis to share information, discuss the area's critical issues, and determine how they can solve problems.

## Main Iraqi Concerns

As they engage with their Iraqi counterparts, commanders will learn about the community's primary concerns. These may include issues such as the need for better security or the need to eliminate corrupt government officials in the area, but, throughout Iraq, the most critical concerns are fuel, electricity, employment, and health care.

**Fuel shortages.** Because the Iraqi Government continues to struggle with fuel shortages and demand for fuel is increasing, each AO requires a fuel control plan. Commanders should use Iraqi security forces and local officials to create a fuel distribution plan for gas stations in their AOs. One very effective plan was executed in the Tigris River Valley, in an area about 40 miles south of Mosul. Squads from either the local police or the army were sent to all gas stations to establish order, ensure a fair distribution of gasoline, and, most important, to eliminate price gouging and black market fuel sales. This approach let Iraqi citizens pump their share of fuel for the same price at any gas station. It also kept them from waiting all day in line only to find out that no fuel was left because the gas station owner had sold most of it to the black market merchant.

**Electricity.** Distribution of electricity in Iraq is unreliable and unfairly apportioned. For example, in Mosul some neighborhoods had electricity flowing through their lines for over 20 hours a day, while neighborhoods on the other side of the city received only 4 to 6 hours of electricity a day. The electricity in both areas came from the same power plant, so



GEN George W. Casey Jr. and the Iraqi Minister of Interior, Bayan Jabr, visiting the governor of Ninewa, D Reid Kashmoulah, 25 July 2005. Left to right: Vice Governor of Ninewa, Dr. Khasrou Goran; Casey; Jabr; the author; and Kashmoulah.

why the unbalanced distribution? The answer: either the insurgents or abusive local Iraqi Government officials controlled the distribution of electricity.

Insurgents often destroy the lines that supply electricity to certain districts because they use those districts as safe havens. No electricity means no light at night—a distinct disadvantage to coalition forces conducting night raids. Insurgents also shut down electricity to signal when coalition forces are present in an area.

The second reason for irregular distribution of electricity is that some Iraqi Government officials pressure engineers in charge of power plants to provide continuous service throughout the day to their towns or neighborhoods. They have no regard for shortages in other areas.

In either case, coalition commanders should get involved in fixing the problem. They should recommend that their Iraqi security force counterparts increase the number of patrols around power plants or even put a platoon or squad in each plant. If a local Iraqi official's selfishness is the reason for the unfair distribution, the commander should try to resolve this issue with the local official. At the same time, the commander should push the issue up through the chain of command, even though it may take months and sometimes years for the Iraqi Government to take corrective actions.

**Employment.** Because Iraqis always get their hopes up for better employment opportunities when a new unit arrives in their area, commanders should plan their civil affairs missions before they enter the theater. A large part of the planning should be based on information from the unit they are relieving; they should have a good idea which projects have priority. This will also keep the incoming civil affairs staff from assuming that every village needs new schools, new roads, water projects, and the like. The reality is that Iraqi infrastructure needs vary from one village or city to another. An effective civil affairs plan should be based on the needs of different sectors and take into account what coalition forces have already accomplished. It should also include any long-term projects previously discussed with the residents, so that both the departing and incoming civil affairs teams will be on the same page.

After one month in country, it is time to start discussing the projects list for the area with local sheiks, mayors, and mukhtars. The civil affairs officer should explain to the residents that the projects list is the result of coordination with the departing unit commander and feedback received from the local community. In this way, the civil affairs officer demonstrates that Iraqi input is important to the coalition and incorporated in the coalition





DOD

MG David Rodriguez, commander of Task Force Freedom, MNFI-NW, presents the 3d Iraqi Intervention Force's brigade commander with a plaque honoring those Iraqi soldiers killed or injured while serving in the 3d Brigade IIF in Mosul, Iraq. The author stands between Rodriguez and the 3d IIF Brigade's commander.

plan. This will minimize the distrust locals have for the new civil affairs staff during the transition period. Unfortunately, departing units sometimes promise a village a project that never gets off the ground because the incoming unit decides that it is not a priority or because the leaders don't want to get involved in any civil affairs activities.

The civil affairs staff should put in place a fair and equal bidding process. This process should give priority to local contractors, but if an outsider wins the contract, he should be required to hire locals to work on the project. This approach will serve both the locals and the coalition by creating jobs in the area. It will also allow the civil affairs section to keep a close eye on the contractor by talking with the local workers. The civil affairs staff should also pay close attention to the contractor who ends up winning project bids all the time, because the Iraqis may interpret it as favoritism.

Units should track the history of past and current contractors, particularly the quality of their work. There have been incidents in which contractors started a project but never finished it and, in some cases, even took the project funds and disappeared until new units arrived in the area. Then they reappeared and bid successfully on new projects, because the new civil affairs section wasn't aware of the contractors' history.

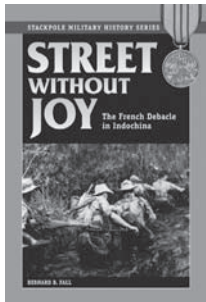
Civil affairs should also do a better job assessing a project's cost before placing it on the list for bidding. According to Iraqi civilians, the coalition has overpaid on numerous projects.

**Health care.** Public health in Iraq is in free fall, and health care is often triage care at best. Because Iraqi health care services lack medical infrastructure, equipment, and staff, the coalition should seize the opportunity to strengthen bonds with the locals by creating a medical assistance program that satisfies Iraqis' basic medical needs. The program should consist of frequent visits by coalition medics to clinics, hospitals, and villages to conduct medical screening and provide basic health care. Such a program benefits the locals and provides training for Iraqi doctors and nurses. Coalition medical programs should not become the primary care in the region, but they can strengthen ties with the local community.

### Building Ties to the Community

During my time in Iraq, I was able to observe various American, coalition, and Iraqi units. The most effective were always the ones with close ties to the local community. The average Iraqi does not want chaos. He wants a chance to raise his children and provide a better life for them. If we show him how to do so, he will support us—not the terrorists. **MR**

# MR Classics Revisited



**Street Without Joy**, Bernard B. Fall, reviewed by Lewis Bernstein, Ph.D., Seoul, South Korea

Very often, a book on an arcane subject illuminates an entire field or issue. Bernard B. Fall carefully observed the French efforts to hold Indochina against a faceless and resourceful enemy. His work of sober reporting prods one to reconsider some of the shibboleths of contemporary American foreign policy. This impressionistic examination of the first Indochina War presents parallels to the current debate over military doctrine and the types of war for which U.S. armed forces must prepare. Fall's classic influenced the first American attempts to advise the South Vietnamese. It also reiterates the truism that the history of warfare is insignificant unless one knows what the fighting was about.

Fall visited Indochina and observed major and minor operations. Later historians have surpassed his research and modified some of his conclusions, but they have not captured the feeling of desperate urgency, excitement, exultation, and sorrow he felt as an Indochina eyewitness. Fall wrote in contact with the events and expressed the feeling and seeing of the thing. He conveys the perspective of a scholar who saw events as they unrolled and talked with others about what they have all witnessed and participated in. Fall also investigated the written records as rigorously as possible, using his own observations and the testimony of others to reconcile contradictions and clear up inconsistencies. While he relied upon his own eyes and ears, he used scholarly techniques to validate—or discount—the evidence of his own senses.

He tells of the slow, sure French defeat by a communist-nationalist insurgency. Unable or unwilling to

present an effective alternative to the Viet Minh message of independence, the French used traditional military methods against an independence movement. However, *Street Without Joy* is part reminiscence and part journal, not a comprehensive history of the French Indochina War or a revolutionary war manual.

Fall sympathizes with the common soldier of the French Union Forces. He respects and admires their courage, professional abilities, and élan fighting for a cause few at home cared about. The French Expeditionary Corps was mired in a war over which it had little control, subordinate to successive governors in Hanoi and governments in Paris who would not recognize Vietnamese dreams of independence and thus had little clue as to what might be needed to effectively defeat the Viet Minh.

The reader gets a clear picture of the author's divided and conflicted loyalties. Born in Vienna, raised in France, having fought with the Resistance in World War II and served as a postwar war crimes investigator, Fall came to the United States to study and first went to Vietnam as a Fulbright scholar. He knew and admired Ho Chi Minh and Vo Nguyen Giap for their abilities to unify and motivate their forces against the French and, later, the Americans. Despite this respect, he saw the two men as ruthless Communists, although he underestimated the strength of their nationalism and misunderstood the reasons they had become Communists.

Implicit in Fall's argument is a critique of the way the French and the Americans waged war. In summarizing the early American efforts in Vietnam, he draws parallels to the French failures and points out that the Americans made the same mistakes because they continued to fight as they always had.

The Americans had assumed the French failed because of co-

lonialism, discounting France's successful counterinsurgency experiences before Indochina. In fact, the French had developed new tactics, but failed to match the Viet Minh's war-making capacity. The Viet Minh were not tactically adventurous, but its members made war every hour of every day, which is the same path the North Vietnamese Army and the Viet Cong took against the Americans. The French Army's high command did not understand the political nature of the war until it was too late; in any event, they were powerless to change policies made in Paris. Unlike the U.S. Army, which could fall back to preparing for a war against the Soviet Union in Central Europe after the end of the Vietnam War, the French were confronted with another counterinsurgency challenge in Algeria. Fall's book is a series of studies with the common theme of the French underestimating their foe.

Fall describes the breakdown of Franco-Vietnamese discussions on power sharing after the Japanese surrender. His account of the negotiations in Hanoi between Ho and the French representative, General Leclerc, reveals their mutual distrust and dishonesty. Leclerc at least understood the core Viet Minh demands and realized that no French army was strong enough to destroy this nationalist movement. French and Vietnamese intransigence ended negotiations.

Fall discusses the military aspects of France's war effort, writing with a perspective that shows a wistful longing for a different outcome, one where France did not suffer the humiliating defeat at Dien Bien Phu and its final withdrawal by the end of 1956. He narrates the course of battles that are only obscure names to American readers—Tu Le, Cao Bang, Hoa Binh, Na San, and even Dien Bien Phu.

One finds all the major French and American actors here as Fall

skillfully melds military and political events together. This is especially evident in his description of Dien Bien Phu, where he depicts the French pleading with President Dwight D. Eisenhower for U.S. military intervention.

Fall concludes with chapters on the war in Laos, the second Indochina War, and the future of revolutionary war. He calls Laos a defeat for American interests and laments that the Americans in Vietnam are as arrogant as the French had been. Blinded by their contempt for French military skill, American officers overlooked the French Army's expertise in counter-guerrilla operations and ignored the political nature of the war. Fall's cogent summary of revolutionary warfare up to 1961 makes several points, to wit, the enemy did not use Army field manuals in practicing war, counterinsurgency campaigns cannot be improvised, and lack of sophistication does not equal lack of firepower.

Fall's book on the French war in Indochina offers a disturbing examination of failed policies. The parallels that present themselves to the alert reader can lead to reflection about the current trends in transformative military policy. Even if one disagrees with Fall's conclusions about counterinsurgency warfare, one must marshal one's thoughts in opposition. This is a disturbing book, not just for what it says about an earlier war, but for the parallels one may draw about a current one.

### Suggested Readings

David W.P. Elliott, *The Vietnamese War: Revolution and Social Change in the Mekong Delta, 1930-1975*, vols. 1-2 (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 2003).

George Herring, *America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975*, 4th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2001).

John T. McAlister Jr., *Vietnam: The Origins of Revolution* (New

York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969).

David G. Marr, *Vietnam 1945: The Quest for Power* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

Nguyen Du, *The Tale of Kieu*, trans. and annotated by Huynh Sanh Thong (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983).

Peter Paret, *French Revolutionary Warfare from Indochina to Algeria* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1964).

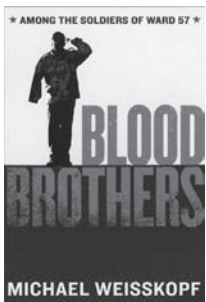
Jeffrey Race, *War Comes to Long An: Revolutionary Conflict in a Vietnamese Province* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972).

Roger Trinquier, *Modern Warfare: A French View of Counterinsurgency* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1964).

U.S. Marine Corps, *Small Wars Manual* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1940).

Alexander Woodside, *Community and Revolution in Modern Vietnam* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1976).

## MR Book Reviews



**BLOOD BROTHERS: Among the Soldiers of Ward 57**, Michael Weisskopf, Henry Holt and Company, New York, 2006, 289 pages, \$25.00.

In 2003, the American Soldier was selected as *Time* magazine's "Person of the Year."

Senior correspondent

Michael Weisskopf was sent to Iraq to write the story. He lived with a First Armored Division platoon for three weeks, often patrolling with the unit to get a better appreciation for the conditions under which its members operated. On 10 December 2003, the unit was moving along the streets of northwest Baghdad when it stopped momentarily near a mosque. Weisskopf was sitting in the back of a HMMWV with his photographer and two Soldiers. He was the only person who noticed

that something had been thrown into the vehicle. Weisskopf picked up the object and attempted to throw it away from the HMMWV. When he awoke, he found that his wrist "looked like the neck of a decapitated chicken."

*Blood Brothers* is the story of Weisskopf's recovery and rehabilitation from the grievous wound he received saving the lives of those he accompanied. Woven into the book are the stories of three Soldiers—Sergeant First Class Luis Rodriguez, Sergeant Pete Damon, and Corporal Bobby Isaacs—whom Weisskopf came to know during his time on Ward 57, the amputee ward at Walter Reed Army Hospital. A civilian would not normally receive treatment at a military facility, but a waiver was granted to Weisskopf because of the obvious courage of his actions.

Much of Weisskopf's book is a personal quest to understand what

happened on the day he was injured. Although those around him proclaimed him a hero, Weisskopf was never quite sure he had done anything heroic. He could not remember whether he had knowingly picked up a grenade, which would have been an act of valor, or if he'd just picked up an unknown object out of curiosity. In addition to chronicling Weisskopf's journey, the book explores the challenges experienced by the three Soldiers: a career medic who lost a leg and could no longer deploy with his unit; a National Guardsman who lost both hands while inflating a helicopter tire; and a young infantryman who lost both legs and, for the better part of a year, suffered almost continuously from infection and other problems.

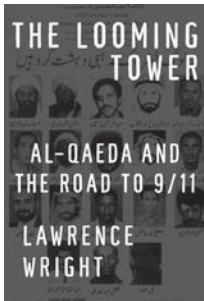
*Blood Brothers* tells a story many would understandably prefer to ignore. It is a trying experience to read about Soldiers who return from war



unable to attend to their most basic needs. The men of Ward 57 deployed in prime physical condition but returned with enormous disabilities. Weisskopf captures the tremendous

effort the government makes in treating its wounded Soldiers, noting that this commitment is greater than at any other time in history. One will likely find the individual stories dis-

turbing, yet the knowledge that our Nation keeps faith with its warriors, regardless of expense, is uplifting.  
**LTC James E. Varner, USA, Retired, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas**



**THE LOOMING TOWER: Al Qaeda and the Road to 9/11**, Lawrence Wright, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 2006, 469 pages, \$27.95.

Why did 9/11 happen? Government agencies, mass media outlets, and a presidential commission have offered various

explanations in such detail that the basic facts of the tragedy have become common wisdom in America. These explanations, however, focus primarily on what happened and how it happened. In *The Looming Tower*, Lawrence Wright digs further.

Wright's compelling narrative traces the evolution of radical Islamic fundamentalism, from Arab resentment of American support for Israel to the competing radical Islamic movements in the jails of Cairo to the final deadly combination of money, motive, opportunity, and bureaucratic indifference that enabled Al-Qaeda to murder thousands of innocent victims in the space of a few hours.

Wright begins in 1948 with the tale of Sayyid Qutb, an angry, middle-aged Egyptian scholar whose brief hiatus in the United States reinforced his resentment of Western materialist values. Qutb's sojourn took him to California, New York City, and Washington, D.C., but he spent much of his time as a graduate student in Greeley, Colorado, where he observed Americans' paradoxical embrace of Christianity, racism, hedonism, and greed. Qutb left America in 1950, full of hatred for what he viewed as a "spiritual wasteland," and returned to Egypt. Wright tells us that "[Qutb's] sour impressions, when published, would profoundly shape Arab and Muslim perceptions of the new world at a time when their esteem for America and its values had been high."

Qutb returned to a nation on the

brink of collapse. Under the corrupt and negligent rule of King Farouk, poverty and despair spiraled out of control in post-colonial Egypt. When Gamal Abdel Nasser seized power in 1952, he appointed Qutb to a government post, but their uneasy alliance soon collapsed, and Qutb resigned. Nasser's secular vision of a modernized, pan-Arab socialism conflicted directly with the Islamic theocracy espoused by Qutb and his likeminded allies in the Muslim Brotherhood. In 1954, a failed assassination attempt emboldened Nasser to crack down on the dissident Muslims. Qutb spent most of the next 12 years in Egyptian jails and was executed in 1966 after his conviction for treason.

Qutb's jail sentence did not silence him. During his lengthy stay in the prison hospital he wrote *Milestones*, a radical manifesto rejecting scientific reason and embracing the principle of *takfir*, the excommunication of those Muslims who failed to properly embrace the laws of the Quran. Qutb's radical theology provided a convenient rationale for Muslims to violate the Quranic restriction against violence toward other Muslims. As Qutb predicted, his martyrdom would inspire disillusioned young men throughout the Arab world, most notably an idealistic Egyptian medical student, Ayman al-Zawahiri, and a pious, charismatic Saudi millionaire, Osama bin Laden.

The heart of Wright's tale lies in the developing relationship between these two men. Wright suggests that Zawahiri first met bin Laden while passing through Jeddah en route to Afghanistan. Like thousands of other young Arabs in the early 1980s, Zawahiri was drawn to the holy war against the Soviet invaders. Bin Laden also answered this call, traveling to the Pakistani city of Peshawar, where he gained prominence as the main sponsor of Arab jihadis traveling through Pakistan en route to combat. Zawahiri, meanwhile, had assembled

a group of Egyptian jihadis and was practicing medicine in Peshawar, where he eventually became bin Laden's personal physician.

Bin Laden's initial quests for military glory led to several humiliating defeats. During a minor skirmish in 1987, however, his outnumbered band forced an attacking Soviet force to withdraw. The brief encounter entered jihadist mythology as the Battle of the Lion's Den. Bin Laden and his Arab fighters became heroes, and their reputation for reckless courage would attract hundreds of followers to their nascent organization.

Wright's narrative follows the two leaders from Afghanistan to Sudan. There, under the protection of an Islamic regime, Al-Qaeda took shape. Intent on purifying the world by restoring Islamic rule, bin Laden identified the United States as his main enemy. His family wealth supported hundreds of followers, who established a training camp near Khartoum. Zawahiri, meanwhile, remained focused on overthrowing the Mubarak regime in Egypt. Egyptian officials, however, captured a computer that enabled the arrest of more than 800 members of Zawahiri's group. In 1993, Zawahiri himself was vilified by Egyptian Muslims when his attempt to assassinate Mubarak killed an innocent schoolgirl. He eventually merged the remnants of his group with Al-Qaeda, creating a tragic synthesis between bin Laden's mesmerizing influence and Zawahiri's deadly brilliance.

Wright's final chapters, a series of missed opportunities to avoid tragedy, will infuriate readers. He briskly details Al-Qaeda's early, clumsy attacks against American targets and the bureaucratic rivalries that repeatedly disrupted American efforts to dismantle the terrorist organization. Wright's account allots plenty of blame to both the current and previous administrations, but

his description of bureaucratic intransigence at the CIA and the National Security Agency prove particularly frustrating.

In the end, Lawrence Wright's thoughtful and compelling examination of Islamic extremism provides a convincing answer to questions about the causes of 9/11. More important, he explains why so many desperate young men continue to answer the call to jihad, and why the "long war" we are fighting is so aptly named.

**LTC William Latham, USA, Retired, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas**

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**DETERRING AMERICA: Rogue States and the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction**, Derek D. Smith, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2006, 197 pages, \$24.99.

Given current events involving North Korea, *Deterring America: Rogue States and the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction* is especially timely. The author, Derek Smith, argues that the United States needs to reevaluate its foreign policy and strategies concerning the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD). Smith offers a theoretical and historical analysis of WMD proliferation and prescribes alternative methods for response that will not be viewed as overly aggressive or arrogant and therefore will not perpetuate the problem. Although Smith is comparatively new to the field of international relations, he has excellent academic credentials (Harvard, Yale, Oxford) and has published several articles on nonproliferation topics.

The first part of *Deterring America* introduces the dilemmas involved in deterrence theory, discusses the rationality behind brinkmanship diplomacy, and explains why the United States feels it cannot adopt a reactive position on proliferation. The second part applies the principles discussed in part one to U.S. experiences with Iran and North Korea. This portion covers the risks of applying existing policy without properly understanding adversarial perceptions. The last part assesses the various counter-

proliferation strategies available to the United States; the political, legal, and moral implications of preemptive or preventive war; and ways of working within the existing international system to create a "global quarantine" against WMD proliferation.

Smith's ideas are not entirely original, but he does an excellent job of combining the thoughts of multiple prominent theorists into a concise and coherent argument. His discussion of brinkmanship is illuminating, as is his explanation of how "rogue" nations and non-state actors apply deterrence. Smith points out that Iran and North Korea have different goals and that dealing with each country therefore entails different risks. Without going into great detail, he implies that Iranian aspirations are rooted in radical ideology and North Korea's are based on power. Unfortunately, Smith limits his discussion of Iran by referring the reader to other works on the subject. In addition, although he touches on complications associated with the emerging threat of small dirty bombs, Smith regrettably remains focused on larger scale WMD proliferation.

*Deterring America* is both opportune and pertinent. By arguing for the establishment of an unambiguous global norm against WMD proliferation, Smith adds to the debate about the UN's role and relevance in dealing with such an important subject. Military professionals will find this book to be a valuable complement to the National Security Strategy.

**MAJ Douglas E. Brown, USA, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas**

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**THE BLOG OF WAR: Frontline Dispatches from Soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan**, Matthew Currier Burden, Simon and Schuster, New York, 2006, 282 pages, \$21.00.

Back in the day, Soldiers used to communicate from the frontline by mail, or what we today call snail mail. Now, technology enables service-members to communicate by e-mail or by posting accounts of their exploits on blogs. They are increasingly doing the latter; in fact, there is a veritable tidal wave of blogs detail-

ing the unvarnished feelings Soldiers have about their experiences in the combat zone. Matthew Burden's new book, *The Blog of War*, saves the reader the time and trouble of surfing through these endless sites in search of the most interesting details and anecdotes about service in Iraq and Afghanistan.

For anyone who has served in the military, many of the experiences the book reprises will be familiar: the awkward goodbyes, the intense camaraderie, the looking out for fellow Soldiers. What may not be familiar are the innermost feelings of those who have been exposed to continuous violence in a harsh environment or seen the horror of sudden, violent death. In an effort, perhaps, to show our common humanity, Burden balances the harsher blog entries with those about the social (nonviolent) interactions between U.S. Soldiers and Iraqi citizens. But it's the Soldiers' reactions to violence that really stand out. A great part of our fascination with war memoirs stems from our need to know how otherwise ordinary men and women cope with extraordinary pressure and the prospect of instant death. On this count, Burden's sampling of blogs is particularly insightful.

This book came to me for review shortly before the Army released its new recruiting slogan, "Army Strong." My initial response to the slogan (and the blogs) was tepid until I saw a video previewing "Army Strong" and then read Burden's book. Now, I get it. The book describes the strength of character instilled in the men and women who are put in harm's way; its blog entries depict their toughness and courage as they carry out the tough missions assigned to them. Their sense of duty is admirable—they may not like what they are experiencing, but they are professionals and know it is their duty, no matter how unpleasant their tasks may be. Some bloggers are on their second and third tours, which says even more about the strength of their character.

*The Blog of War* is organized by subject (e.g., "Life in the War Zone," "The Healers," "The Warriors"). This serves to orient the

reader quickly to the different blogs' subject matter and the writers' various perspectives; however, it can be confusing to someone trying to view the war from a chronological perspective. Readers trying to understand how attitudes about the war have changed over time will have to consult other sources. Still, Burden's peek into the new phenomenon of Soldiers' blogs provides a rich, visceral picture of how the current wars are affecting the Nation's warriors.

**LTC David Van Laar,**  
**USA, Retired,**  
**Fort Leavenworth, Kansas**

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**BEYOND SHOCK AND AWE: Warfare in the 21st Century,** Eric L. Haney with Brian M. Thomsen, eds., Berkley Publishing Group, New York, 2006, 258 pages, \$24.95.

In *Beyond Shock and Awe*, Eric Haney claims that the future operating environment will be even more complex than today's, and he ponders how the U.S. might structurally and psychologically transform to meet the challenge. Broad in scope, Haney's book contains a mixed bag of contemporary analyses from an array of authors. From the indifferent to the insightful, the book attempts to forecast the nature of future warfare. Pragmatically, it suggests how we might train, equip, and structure any future force.

How the U.S. military should continue to transform is a topic of immense importance, especially against the backdrop of what promises to be an enduring war on terrorism fought with increasing legal constraints. At a time when innovative thinking is positively encouraged, *Beyond Shock and Awe* offers some cogent suggestions; overall, however, it falls short of providing novel thinking on the subject.

Perhaps the book's best piece is John Helfers' "Hearts and Minds in 2025: How Foreign and Domestic Culture Will Shape the Future Battlefield." This well-written essay delves into the expected dynamic complexity and ill-defined nature of modern warfare, particularly the need for cultural knowledge, in a balanced, informative manner.

Helfer concludes that "by taking the time to understand the person, group, or society, how they live and operate, and how they can be dealt with either from a platform of peace or, if necessary, a position of force, our military and nation can hope to truly exhaust all other methods before resorting to force." Given the lessons of Iraq, few should disagree with such findings.

Unfortunately, not all chapters are as well-considered or thorough as Helfers'. "War by Deception and Wishful Thinking" and "French Algeria and British Northern Ireland: Legitimacy and the Rule of Law in Low-Intensity Conflict," are two such examples. The latter is an erudite but overly selective analysis of two insurgencies in just eight and a half pages. Such brevity is frustrating—despite some important lessons learned about the critical importance of civilian control of the military.

On balance, *Beyond Shock and Awe* is a light yet thought provoking read. Easily digestible in bite-size essays, the book raises a number of issues worthy of consideration concerning the training and structuring of military forces. It is not, however, a serious study, and some readers may be frustrated by the superficial nature of some of its chapters.

**MAJ Andrew M. Roe, J3 Ops,**  
**British Army, Basra, Iraq**

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**HOUSE TO HOUSE: Playing the Enemy's Game in Saigon, May 1968,** Keith Nolan, Zenith Press, Osceola, WI, 2006, 368 pages, \$24.95.

Keith Nolan is well known for his critically acclaimed histories of the Vietnam War. His 11th and latest book, *House to House*, should be equally well received and may in fact be one of his best books to date.

Following the Tet Offensive in February and March 1968, and prior to the start of the Paris Peace talks, Hanoi needed a political goal. North Vietnamese leaders therefore embarked on an operation to prove they could once again invade Saigon. Their purpose was to cause as much damage as possible by compelling U.S. and Vietnamese

forces to fight in and destroy the city's neighborhoods. *House to House* tells the story of four 9th Infantry Division battalions that fought in the southern suburbs of Saigon in May 1968, including one battalion that entered combat for the first time.

Nolan gives us an unvarnished, realistic portrayal of life in an infantry unit fighting an elusive enemy. The chaos associated with urban combat (including civilians on the battlefield and media interaction) is realistically portrayed through first-person accounts. The book also provides an excellent and thorough account of the leadership challenges the officers and NCOs faced while fighting in urban terrain. It considers their failings and shortcomings as leaders, the emotions associated with losing men to booby traps and ambushes, and the causes and effects of poor discipline. One of the most valuable and interesting aspects of this book is the detail it offers about the motivations and thoughts of leaders and their subordinates.

Nolan concludes that the U.S. forces won a pyrrhic victory. Although they defeated the enemy, they flattened neighborhood after neighborhood of the predominantly pro-American Vietnamese who lived in southern Saigon. The friendly population was caught in the middle.

*House to House* is exceptionally well written and easy to read, and it evinces a depth of research that readers may not find in other literature written about urban operations today. It is filled with remarkable stories that are seamlessly weaved together. I highly recommend it to all readers because of its relevance to the challenges facing leaders today.

**LTC Robert Rielly,**  
**USA, Retired,**  
**Fort Leavenworth, Kansas**

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**OUTPOST KELLY: A Tanker's Story,** Jack R. Siewert, The University of Alabama Press, Tuscaloosa, 2006, 150 pages, \$19.95.

In the summer of 1952, the UN and North Korea were working on a diplomatic solution to the Korean War. At the same time, there were continuous battles along the



future border, often involving small changes to the front lines and the seizing of key terrain. *Outpost Kelly* is the account of one of these battles. Written by Jack Siewert, the book focuses on the role that Siewert's tank platoon played in helping the 15th Infantry Regiment win the fight for Outpost Kelly in July 1952.

*Outpost Kelly* details the events leading up to and through the battle. Siewert describes how his temporary support mission evolved into a longer and much more exciting combat operation. We see how his small attached unit quickly becomes an integral part of a larger scale combined arms fight, providing stationary direct-fire support to infantry—a non-doctrinal mission for armor. Siewert is forced to improvise new and effective tactics, techniques, and procedures.

*Outpost Kelly* also looks at the many factors that contributed to friction at the tactical level: monsoon weather, difficult terrain, inadequate intelligence, maintenance and equipment problems, and the boredom and complacency engendered by the long, static days between fighting. More importantly, however, we learn how Siewert overcame these issues through effective leadership and planning. In the end, despite numerous forces conspiring to thwart them, Siewert and his platoon succeed in providing superb support to the infantry at the critical moments in the battle, thereby ensuring victory and the seizure of Outpost Kelly.

Siewert's book is a must-read for tactical leaders. It clearly demonstrates the importance of troop-leading procedures and the mental agility required to adapt to an ever-changing battlefield. Siewert does an excellent job conveying how leaders and soldiers cope with the excitement, fear, ambiguity, and confusion of combat. Organizational leaders can also benefit by observing how doctrine was adapted to best utilize weapons and systems in a difficult wartime environment. Finally, Siewert brings us the underreported history of the hill fighting in the latter stages of the Korean War. Perhaps someday we will gain the historical benefit of a view of the battle

for Outpost Kelly from the North Korean perspective.

**MAJ Lance K. Calvert, USA,  
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas**

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**BLACK CADET IN A WHITE BASTION: Charles Young at West Point**, Brian Shellum, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 2006, 175 pages, \$16.95.

On the second floor of the Combined Arms Research Library is a special meeting site: the Charles Young Room. Near the door to the room is a framed photograph of the room's namesake along with a brief description of his achievements. The picture shows an African-American man, perhaps in his 30's, dressed in a U.S. Army uniform of the early 20th century. The inscription tells us he was the third black graduate of the U.S. Military Academy, the senior black officer in World War I, and the first black U.S. military attaché. For most who pass by the picture, that information is likely to be as much as they want to know about this relatively obscure man from the Army's past. That is unfortunate, for the story of Charles Young is an inspiring one of courage and victory against long odds.

Defense Intelligence Agency historian Brian Shellum undertakes the project of recounting Young's remarkable life. *Black Cadet in a White Bastion* is the first in a series of books Shellum plans to write toward that end. This initial book takes the reader from Young's humble beginnings in southern Ohio, where he grew up the son of former slaves, to his graduation from West Point after five lonely years in which he fought the ostracism of his fellow cadets, a draconian disciplinary system, and crushing academic challenges that nearly drove him from the Academy. Shellum, a West Pointer himself, builds a compelling biographical narrative. He has done impressive detective work, and where the historical record is slim, he makes judicious conjecture.

Perhaps one hears the cliché "triumph of the spirit" too often. However, Young's life was truly such a triumph. Beyond telling the story of an American hero, Shellum

reminds us that the U.S. Army's recent achievements in race relations followed a long, unfortunate record of bigotry and exclusion.

**LTC Scott Stephenson,  
USA, Retired,  
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas**

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**GRANT: A Biography**, John Mosier, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2006, 186 pages, \$21.95.

This latest biography on General Grant is well worth reading. Written by John Mosier, it is part of the ongoing "Great General Series" that so far includes works on Patton, Eisenhower, LeMay, MacArthur, and Stonewall Jackson. Mosier, a noted historian, has published other historical works, to include *The Myth of the Great War* and *The Blitzkrieg Myth: How Hitler and the Allies Misread the Strategic Realities of the Second World War*.

Mosier's new book differs somewhat from the many other well written biographies on General Grant. Concise and very informative, it focuses mostly on Grant's generalship, strategy, and legacy. In doing so, it paints an illuminating picture of what made General Grant so uniquely effective among his many capable peers.

Mosier does offer a brief look into Grant's formative years. Two items in particular lend insight into the future leader's makeup: he taught himself algebra at an early age, and he was a reasonably talented artist. Both accomplishments suggest an adept intellect and a capacity for abstract thought not usually accorded Grant. Mosier contends that these qualities would contribute greatly to Grant's effectiveness as the commander of all Union forces later in the Civil War.

The author also touches on Grant's civilian life after his service during the War with Mexico and before the Civil War. It is widely believed that Grant was a failure at civilian life, but Mosier again confounds conventional lore by providing evidence that Grant was a relatively successful and happy middle class person. He earned at least enough money to provide a comfortable brick home for his family, and he remained happily married to the same woman for his entire life.

Another of the book's strengths lies in its analysis of the many battles and campaigns Grant participated in during the Civil War. Mosier clearly shows how Grant's grasp of the art of war exceeded that of his subordinates, superiors, and enemies. For example, Grant's conception of how to prosecute the war successfully differed vastly from that of his fellow Union officers and even President Lincoln. Ultimately, of course, Grant's view was proven correct. The general's understanding of the changes that the new technology (rifling in cannon barrels, improved firearms, the telegraph) wrought on war was similarly unique. He was also something of an innovator when it came to campaign planning. No adherent of any of the accepted warfighting theorists of his time, Grant designed campaigns according to terrain, enemy forces, and resources. As a result, unlike many of the other Union generals during the war, Grant sought to destroy the Confederate Army and occupy its territory instead of simply fighting battles to seize terrain.

Overall, Mosier does an excellent job explaining Grant's genius for the art of war. He attributes Grant's success to the general's near-encyclopedic knowledge of military history, his ability to think abstractly, and his propensity for issuing clear, concise orders; and he shows how each of these characteristics are clearly apparent in all of General Grant's major battles

and campaigns. *Grant: A Biography* gives us a lucid, enlightening picture of the general and what made him truly unique. I strongly recommend this book to any reader who wants to quickly gain insight into this extraordinary soldier.

**LTC Thomas G. Meara,  
USA, Retired,  
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas**

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**A REVOLUTION IN ARMS: A History of the First Repeating Rifles**, Joseph G. Bilby, Westholme Publishing, Yardley, PA, 2006, 280 pages, \$26.00.

Following in the steps of his earlier work on Civil War weaponry, Joseph Bilby's *A Revolution in Arms* describes how the search for rapid-firing projectile weapons reached a turning point in the 19th century. Focusing on the Civil War era, Bilby details the introduction to the American battlefield of the first breech-loading rifles and, more importantly, metallic rim-fire cartridges.

While scholars of the American West are sure to be familiar with the famed Winchester and Spencer rifles that "conquered" the Plains, Bilby relates the lesser-known tale of the technological innovations that gave rise to those weapons. Men like Benjamin Henry and Christopher Spencer, despite facing resistance from military bureaucrats and other weapons makers, developed firearms that pushed the boundaries of firepower.

This book is more than just a technological history. It also discusses how the new firearms were implemented during the Civil War. Using bureaucratic reports and personal accounts from officers and enlisted men, Bilby demonstrates how repeating rifles increasingly found their way into the eager hands of Soldiers over the course of the war. Unfortunately, the slow arrival of repeating rifles prevented a systematic effort at maximizing their potential. Bilby argues persuasively that their use on the battlefield was "improvised," and that the officer corps made little effort to incorporate the weapons into existing doctrine. As a result, the "revolution" Bilby speaks of appears to have been a purely technological one.

At times, the book strays from its focus, offering extended and unnecessary accounts of campaigns and battles in which repeating rifles played a minor role. However, Bilby's comprehensive depiction of repeating rifles from their initial conception in the minds of their creators all of the way through their first use (and misuse) on the battlefield reveals the mixed record that the American military has had with technological innovation. This makes the book a recommended read for dedicated scholars as well as casual readers who seek a better understanding of both the Civil War and the evolution of firepower on the battlefield.

**Steven E. Sodergren, Ph.D.,  
University of Kansas,  
Lawrence, Kansas**





## **DREAMSEEDS**

**A desert land, desolate place,  
Mankind moves at primal pace.  
Ancient homes of mud and straw,  
Give abode to Evil's rise and fall.**

**This barren land serves battleground,  
For our tale of Good's resound,  
Of eternal call for vigilance,  
Infinite struggle for righteousness.**

**In epic war of Good and Evil,  
Romantics write of Good's retrieval  
Of Honor, and of Heroine,  
Vanquished foe, and conquered sin.**

**But on fateful day of 9-1-1,  
All Good's intens were undone,  
By Evil's wicked, sharpened scythe,  
Good's innocence suffered, died.**

**And Evil won 'gainst antagonist,  
Breeding terror with ignorance.  
Adding potion of poverty,  
Mixed with aberrant religiosity.**

**And in the depths of defeat,  
Scarlet blood and carnage meet,  
In a jagged field of sacrifice,  
Good plants Dreamseeds of device.**

**Dreamseeds root, begin to grow,  
As nations grieve in sorrow.  
Dark days loom, doubts abound.  
Good is dead? Freedom unsound?**

**All the while, Dreamseeds thrive.  
Heartland heroes give their lives,  
To a cause just and pure.  
Fight for freedom gives allure.**

**A pulse is found, begins to quicken.  
Dreamseed roots begin to thicken.  
Nurtured, fed by Good's life force,  
The human spirit on due course.**

**To fight again another day?  
Accept defeat some would say.  
But human spirit, soul, and mind,  
Resurrect Good in healing bind.**

**Strength of millions 'round the the world,  
Witness Freedom's colors unfurled,  
Good gains footing, stands erect,  
Evil shudders, feels affect.**

**And ignorance, once Evil's whore,  
Withers as Good opens door,  
Letting knowledge, wisdom in,  
The mortal enemy of Evil, Sin.**

**A coalition of Good and Willing,  
Cast Freedom's blanket o'er the chilling.  
Victims of the darkest days,  
When Good was lost in a haze.**

**Of smoke, doubt, and harmful press,  
In Evil's struggle for redress.  
Of empty grievance, empty core,  
Evil won battle, lost the war.**

**What's this Dreamseed, one would ask?  
Your child's mind, a conjured task,  
Hope, desire, and fantasy,  
Enduring Freedom and Security?**

**Dreamseeds grow where'er planted,  
Stunted growth whene'er canted,  
But grow unsurpassed and ably  
Only when planted in land o' the free.**

*— Major Todd Schmidt*

In addition to being a full-time Army officer and part-time poet, Major Todd Schmidt is the founder and president of Operation Dreamseed, a charitable organization dedicated to providing school supplies to Afghan schoolchildren. For additional information, see <http://www.operationdreamseed.org/about.cfm>.