

The Utility of Military Deception during Counterinsurgency

**A Monograph
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Abstract

THE UTILITY OF MILITARY DECEPTION DURING COUNTERINSURGENCY by Maxwell S. Thibodeaux, US Army, 40 pages.

This monograph questions the utility of military deception (MILDEC) given its decidedly different dynamics inside counterinsurgency (COIN) operations. It examines relevant theoretical touchstones and doctrinal frameworks to determine whether the Army's concept of deception can accommodate such application. Available historic vignettes from Viet Nam, Philippines, Malaya, Kenya, and Rhodesia inform the theoretical inquiry. Finally a look at the legal and ethical implications of MILDEC during COIN leads to certain implications. The monograph finds that MILDEC is useful to counterinsurgents. In particular, the most effective deceptions in counterinsurgent history involve the prudent use of pseudo operators who are able to generate intelligence and results in an environment where conventional methods cannot. However, there are certain legal and ethical guidelines that planners should follow to insure that MILDEC does not become counterproductive. Specifically, an ethical test of publicity should be applied to rule out immoral applications of MILDEC in an environment where public support is paramount.

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INTRODUCTION

On June 5, 2006 Cable News Network reported that Iraqi police imposters kidnapped fifty people in central Baghdad.¹ They were wearing police uniforms and driving thirteen police vehicles. This was the worst, but not the only occurrence of kidnapping that summer. On November 14, 2006 insurgents in Baghdad wearing police commando uniforms kidnapped at least one hundred men from a research institute. The operation took place in broad daylight and included a fleet of twenty vehicles. Earlier kidnappers wearing blue camouflage (interior ministry uniforms) abducted thirty individuals from an Iraqi Olympics Committee meeting. A similar incident occurred again on January 20th, 2007 when insurgents masquerading as a U.S. security detail (wearing U.S. uniforms) intruded on a security meeting, captured and summarily executed 4 soldiers.² Worse still, citizens are regularly stopped in their vehicles at a “checkpoint” only to find that they have fallen into a trap. Civilians are then carted off to be summarily tried, killed, or ransomed.³

It is clear from these examples that insurgents regularly employ tactical deception to their psychological and material benefit. The population is simultaneously deceived and traumatized. A double blow is struck-- one to the population and one to the legitimate government. Citizens not only suffer directly from these abductions and murders, but they also begin to mistrust and fear legitimate authorities. Consequently any confidence in the protection that an Iraqi

¹CNN.com, “Police Impostors Kidnap 50 in Baghdad” (Internet: CNN, June 2006) [on-line]; available from <http://www.cnn.com/2006/WORLD/meast/06/05/iraq.main/index.html>; accessed October 2, 2006.

²Associated Press. "Meeting Deadly for U.S. Troops." in Detroit Free Press [database online]. available from <http://www.freep.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070127/NEWS07/701270335/1001/BUSINESS05>; Internet; accessed 8 February 2007.

³Paul Willis and Agencies, “At Least 100 Kidnapped in Raid on Iraqi Science Institute” [on-line]; available from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/core/Content/displayPrintable.jhtml;jsessionid=ATBRRNH1AP3ELQFIQMGSFF4AVCBQWIV0?xml=/news/2006/11/14/uiraq114.xml&site=5&page=0,1>; Internet; accessed November 16 2006.

government and police force can provide collapses. Deception becomes an effective tool for those opposing legitimate government to terrorize and paralyze the population. Ask yourself whether the advantage that deception provides in these instances is necessarily a one-sided advantage for insurgents. Perhaps there are similarly effective measures available to counterinsurgents. Some practitioners and pundits think it would be absurd not to take full advantage of these.

In any case, there is no specific doctrine and very little literature that directly informs military deception (MILDEC) planning for counterinsurgency (COIN).⁴ The issue remains relatively unattended even in the current atmosphere of swiftly evolving COIN doctrine and a serious fight to stabilize the governments of Iraq and Afghanistan against insurgents. While history provides several examples of MILDEC playing a significant role in success during conventional operations, the issue is less well established during unconventional conflicts and insurgencies.

What is more, deception tactics that have a good chance of success during major combat are often legally and ethically clouded by political and human issues during COIN. The gray area between combatants and the noncombatants they hide among is just one aspect of this difficulty. In fact, because of its frequent association with dirty tricks, deception may appear to be the domain of insurgents, not their adversaries who are legitimate representatives of the people. However to let this assumption of impropriety go unexamined is to cede undue initiative to the insurgent. That would be a mistake because of the relative importance of MILDEC to the art of war. The matter bears further examination.⁵

Both in theory and in practice, the dynamics of an irregular warfare may be decidedly

⁴For instance, FM 3-24, the Army's latest counterinsurgency manual, there are only three substantive sentences mentioning MILDEC. Likewise, in JP 3-13.4, there is only one sentence addressing deception's use during a counterinsurgency.

⁵This monograph is unclassified and does not directly examine ongoing or recent MILDEC efforts in the global war on terrorism (GWOT) or against insurgents operating inside Iraq. Therefore, while it may be informative, it cannot constitute a complete review of the potential for MILDEC during COIN.

different than those of major combat operations. Insurgent conflict is covert, necessarily prolonged, and resistant to the tactics of high intensity, lightning annihilation that are the mainstay of US Army major combat operations. Moreover, insurgent intelligence structures and networks are difficult to map and impossible to template in advance of a conflict. This is because every one is unique and evolving as opposed to conforming to a pre-existing doctrinal template. Moreover, the population plays a key role during insurgency that it does not play in conventional operations. As the British counterinsurgency expert Brigadier General Frank Kitson noted, “insurgency is persuasion backed by force rather than the force backed by persuasion”—in contrast to conventional conflicts.⁶ A careful examination of the prospects for MILDEC during COIN will help to clarify these differing dynamics and qualities.

Scope

This analysis emphasizes operational level planning and the achievement of operational level results, but it also assumes that systematic, coordinated tactical MILDEC qualifies as operational MILDEC. For instance in the case of the kidnappings mentioned earlier, the effects were both direct and indirect: tactical and operational. The direct effect was the intimidation of Iraqi citizens who were aiding US efforts to normalize Iraq. This was a tactical effect. However, the indirect or second-order effects were the intimidation of every other Iraqi citizen, and the general breakdown of trust between Iraqis and security forces. Moreover, these effects demonstrated operational reach because they were amplified by the publicity of the events. Tactical events like these are within the scope of the paper if they also change the operational dynamic. When they are capable and intended to affect the whole theater of operations in the aggregate, then they are considered part of an overarching operational deception.⁷

⁶Frank Kitson, *Operational Aspects of Counter-Insurgency* (Ft. Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1981) 4.

⁷I will explain later why this distinction is appropriate despite the definition that Joint doctrine gives to MILDEC.

Methodological Considerations

A tempting method to determine whether MILDEC holds some utility during COIN is to extrapolate solely from historical examples. However, this method alone is insufficient. This is in part because MILDEC resists historical documentation. The resistance is due both to reasons of strategy and to the high classification of recent MILDEC operations. Deception planners are regularly bound by matters of classification and compartmentalization, so they are not able to openly communicate their successes and failures. The assumption is that the more publicity a deception gets the less a chance of its success in the future.⁸

Another consideration with sticking solely to historic analysis is the question of whether the conditions that applied to historic cases are relevant to today's operating environment. For instance, MILDEC played an important part in the Malaysian, Philippine, and Rhodesian insurgent conflicts, which took place in largely rural settings, while there are relatively few documented descriptions of MILDEC in urban insurgencies such as Algeria, Cyprus, Hungary, and Ireland. There are also new technological aspects to consider because, in most documented instances, the insurgents lacked today's sophisticated and widespread availability of cheap, effective communications tools. Worldwide, encrypted communications are pervasive and advantageous to insurgents who may be tapping the expertise of others outside their part of the world. In contrast, sophisticated, worldwide communications and encryption would have been a monopoly of counterinsurgents 15 years ago. This is doubly the case because of the wide-spread access to worldwide media outlets these days. Insurgents are able to influence the information environment in an almost symmetrical manner compared with past insurgents.⁹

⁸This is a faulty assumption, but a common one nonetheless. For instance, publicity added to the overall effectiveness of insurgents who were impersonating police in Iraq. Also some may argue that the renowned Trojan horse ruse is ineffective since it is so well known. It is a spent round, but this is incorrect. This ruse has many forms and continues to be re-engineered—the latest version may be the internet variant. While everyone knows the story of the Trojan horse, few heed the danger posed because of the susceptibilities of human nature.

⁹This use of the internet as a means of coordination and information gathering presents and

Nevertheless, these historic instances offer some concrete experiences and lessons to draw from. The experiences that are particularly apt are ones that center on counterinsurgencies fought by smaller countries with the assistance of outside military assistance. Unfortunately, the history of MILDEC during COIN frequently involved covert operations and special conditions on the battlefield. As such, some types of deception operations have drawn ethical and legal concerns. For example, cross border raids conducted by the Selous Scouts in Rhodesia who were wearing third country uniforms violated the Geneva I protocols.¹⁰ Even when these kinds of actions are not illegal they can be morally and politically problematic.¹¹ As those studying these issues have noted:

The divergence between “ethics and practice can have serious consequences when deception fails, or [even] when it is discovered. This is particularly so when, as these cases reveal, the domestic audience becomes one of the primary targets of a deception. While the immediate embarrassment of the perpetrator may be short-lived, the long-term consequences may be much more serious: the erosion of public confidence and trust in elected officials which is essential to a healthy democracy.”¹²

Even so, deception operations involving military forces masquerading as insurgents appear as successful as they are controversial.

Because this is the case, ethical analysis must supplement historic analysis. One useful measure for whether these and other applicable military tactics are appropriate is to examine whether they are consistent with international law and other rules that govern the profession of arms. Yet given the contemporary operating environment even legal rulings are insufficient to

interesting opportunity for online deceptions which are analogous to the law enforcement community’s sting operations designed to catch pedophiles. MAJ Tim Ryan discusses this possibility in his recent monograph titled “Law Enforcement Virtual Masquerading As A Tactical Method For Combating Networked Terrorists.”

¹⁰Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and Relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol 1)." in Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights [database online]. Geneva, Switzerland [cited 2007]. Available from <http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/93.htm>. The article states, “it is prohibited to make use in an armed conflict of ... military emblems, insignia or uniforms of neutral or other States not parties to the conflict.”

¹¹Lawrence E. Cline and Army War College. Strategic Studies Institute, "Pseudo Operations and Counterinsurgency: Lessons from Other Countries," (2005): 12.

¹²David Charters and Maurice Tugwell, *Deception Operations : Studies in the East-West Context*, 1std ed. (London ; Washington: Brassey's UK, 1990): 265.

avoid the disutility of bad press and negative US and world opinion. It is prudent then to not only apply a legal test, but one for acceptability among the American people and the general conscience of mankind. Of course, no real litmus test can be made to determine whether a planned operation conforms with public expectations. Even so there may be a rational set of guidelines that can substitute.

Necessary and Sufficient Conditions

In the final analysis, the necessary and sufficient conditions that establish the potential utility of MILDEC planning in the context of COIN include; an adequate theoretical basis, successful and reasonably applicable historical precedents; absence of unacceptable legal/ethical complications with regard to international law and public expectations.

The following three chapters address the following applicable questions. Chapter 1 discusses the theoretical and doctrinal basis for using MILDEC in a COIN context, and whether it is sufficient. Chapter 2 poses the question of whether deception at the operational level of war has demonstrated utility in past counterinsurgencies. Finally, chapter 3 examines whether the kind of MILDEC that a COIN requires is compatible with international norms and public expectations. In short, is MILDEC in the context of COIN coherent, effective, and ethical?¹³

THEORETICAL AND DOCTRINAL BASIS

The standard array of COIN theorists do not address deception as an integral part of COIN strategy. Instead almost every COIN manual and book emphasizes that no two insurgencies are alike. Presumably different remedies and strategies apply to different situations. David Kilcullen wrote, “today’s insurgencies differ significantly — at the level of policy,

¹³Planning staffs at the Army Land Component Command and higher may wish to examine these issues prior to undertaking large scope MILDEC planning efforts. The point is to benefit from a careful study to determine whether MILDEC likely adds to or detracts from ongoing and future military COIN operations.

strategy, operational art and tactical technique — from those of earlier eras.”¹⁴ For example, today’s insurgencies are reactionary in nature, rely much less on the population’s support, and do not necessarily seek to supplant the established government. Thus they are very different from historical instances. The corollary is, what has worked effectively in the context of one historical insurgency may not in another. If this is correct, then even a close study of the history and practice behind successful COIN will be insufficient to guide the counterinsurgent’s action and plans.

Where historical variations make prediction unreliable, theory can play a role. Anchoring the concepts involved in both MILDEC and COIN should establish a preliminary theoretical basis for conducting deception during COIN. It should also lay out a theoretical framework for the interaction of MILDEC and COIN.

MILDEC by definition misleads adversaries in order to create a military advantage.¹⁵ That concept is well established in joint doctrine; however, the dynamics, maxims, and techniques that are suitable for one mission type (major combat operations) do not necessarily translate well to another (irregular warfare). The Army’s definition of counterinsurgency is “an organized, protracted politico-military struggle designed to weaken the control and legitimacy of an established government, occupying power, or other political authority while increasing insurgent control.”¹⁶ What is most unclear about the interaction between these two concepts is whether a protracted struggle that takes on political aspects expands the means of deception into the political frame or whether MILDEC is circumscribed to military actors and decision makers as targets. As we shall see, the operational design for effective MILDEC is affected by these

¹⁴David, Kilcullen, “Counterinsurgency Redux” [online] available from www.smallwarsjournal.com/documents/kilcullen1.pdf; Internet; accessed 12 March 2007, 1.

¹⁵Joint Publication 3-13.4, *Military Deception* (Suffolk, VA: United States Joint Forces Command, Joint Warfighting Center 2006): I-1. “Military deceptions deliberately mislead adversary decision makers as to friendly military capabilities, intentions, and operations, thereby causing the adversary to take specific actions (or inactions) that will contribute to the accomplishment of the friendly mission.”

¹⁶Army Field Manual 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*, December, 2006, 1-1.

conditions.

Classic Western Versus Eastern and Progressive MILDEC Touchstones

Clausewitz presents a very dim view of deception's role in an operational strategy. He writes, "craft, cleverness and cunning do not figure prominently in the history of war."¹⁷ He elaborates that "Analogous things in war-- plans and orders issued for appearances only, false reports designed to confuse the enemy, etc. -- have as a rule so little strategic value that they are used only if a ready-made opportunity presents itself."¹⁸

The view is that deception plays a marginal role in the art of war. Now it can be argued that Clausewitz' Book VII, Chapter 20, expends a great deal of ink describing the suitable conditions for employing a diversion in the attack, but it retains the leery tone that he establishes earlier. His thinking on this issue is too constrained to yield any benefit with regard to deception itself. This is so for two reasons. First Clausewitz does not recognize the variety of means for deception or the shifting object or target of deception that COIN implies. Instead he settles for falsified plans and diversions as primary means. Modern deception employs a variety of physical, administrative, and technical means. Secondly the overall framework for success entails an operation patterned on a battle of annihilation against the center of gravity or physical mass of the enemy. Such a concentrated mass is typically not the form the enemy takes during many important phases of COIN. Counterinsurgency turns the concept of mass on its head. The destructive power of a counterinsurgent is not mass and annihilation, but position and attrition. Clausewitz' gaze may seem fixed on the physical, whereas COIN and modern warfare are often oriented toward the information environment and the psyche.

Even so and as usual, Clausewitz' is still relatable to the subject at hand. His concept of

¹⁷Peter Paret, Michael Eliot Howard, and Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984): 202.

¹⁸Ibid.

the trinity directs attention to the politico-military characteristics of COIN. He points out that any theory that does not consider the relationship between the people, the commander, and the government, or that ignores the “concerns of the people” is a bad theory.¹⁹ Thus, he adds due consideration to the politico-military nature of any struggle—COIN included.

Moreover, his center of gravity concept is insightful so long as its interpretation can stretch beyond the physical dynamics of mass and can be applied to the system as a whole. So for instance in the case of COIN one cannot apply the original concept because no such mass is likely in a counterinsurgent fight. Instead one must apply an analogous concept that goes beyond focusing one’s efforts on a mass of troops on the battlefield. In terms of the focusing one’s decisive efforts on the enemy’s “hub of all power and movement, on which everything depends,” we can reinterpret his meaning through a joint doctrine lens to be the insurgent’s source of power providing strength and freedom of action.²⁰ In any insurgency this is bound to vary somewhat. However, the fundamental advantage (COG) of the insurgent is often his ability to cloak and de-cloak at opportune times at the tactical level-- that is, to hide and operate among the population with impunity and to otherwise harass the counterinsurgent force. Therefore, the more the counterinsurgent misdirects his blows by seeking a physical center of gravity, the more potential for power and movement the insurgent gains. Any COIN MILDEC must have the ability to operate on this aspect of insurgent operations.

Contrast Clausewitz’ weak estimation of MILDEC with Sun Tzu’s strong one: that all war is deception—that deception is the way of war, and that knowledge of oneself and one’s enemy is the guarantor of a hundred consecutive victories.²¹ Sun Tzu calls to mind the nature of

¹⁹Ibid., 28.

²⁰JP 1-02, “The source of power that provides moral or physical strength, freedom of action, or will to act.”

²¹Sun Tzu, *Sun Tzu's Art of War : The Modern Chinese Interpretation*, trans Hanzhang Tao and Shibing Yuan (New York: Sterling Pub. Co., 1987): 129 & 137.

insurgency when he writes:

When near the enemy, make it seem that you are far away; when far away, make it seem that you are near. Hold out baits to lure the enemy. Strike the enemy when he is in disorder. If they are united, try to sow dissention among them... Attack the enemy where he is unprepared, and appear where you are not expected. These are the keys to victory for a strategist.²²

In this way, Sun Tzu points out a relationship to the adversary that is translatable directly to a COIN environment. He also illuminates a facet of deception that is not altogether obvious—especially to one who is accustomed to thinking about warfare in terms of time and space, but not mind. MILDEC is not always oriented on lethal operations, as Clausewitz suggests, though it may involve physical, force movements and actions. On the contrary, it is rather more an information operation focusing on the information environment. So, not only are the dynamics of MILDEC expanded to include consideration for interaction with the people or populace, and an opposition to classical notions of striking a *coup de grace* on the physical center of mass, the dynamics are different because they take place inside the information environment.

This is a significant theoretical consideration since mediums for conflict such as air, sea, and space differ in their dynamics and characteristics. Sun Tsu's perspective suggests that a strategist should aim at more than a physical advantage in the array of forces on the battlefield. The shrewd strategist should try to put his adversary at a cognitive disadvantage. This kind of disadvantage can be identified clearly in the earlier example of insurgents impersonating officials in Iraq. The target is not a military target, but the populace, and the overall effect is a moral one. In order to generate similar effects, a counterinsurgent is forced to think in terms of a form of warfare that has a different dynamic and perhaps a different medium: information operations and the information environment respectively. Information operations—including MILDEC have a unique dynamic because they do not respond to a causal employment of force against force.

²²Ibid, 129.

Instead they conform to a kind of action theory, where desires and beliefs translate into motives for action. In the most simplistic sense information operations assume a see, think, do model (STDM).²³

Human Information Dynamics/STD as a Model for MILDEC

The smooth application of MILDEC in the COIN environment rests upon the correction of two theoretical inconsistencies between major combat operations and insurgency. First is the recognition that MILDEC does not necessarily support maneuver directly during COIN. That is, deception targets may not be traditional commanders or even centralized decision-makers. Second is a recognition that MILDEC, unlike maneuver combat, participates in a See, Think, Do, Model (STDM) that is common to the other core elements of Information Operations.

In a sense MILDEC has no inherent value. It is only useful in supporting other aspects of operations—traditionally maneuver aspects. What is important and relevant to the COIN environment is that information operations, like conventional operations may not focus on military commanders. Instead information operations may include non-physical goals such as gaining the initiative, revealing political sponsors, supporting intelligence, supporting Operational Security (OPSEC), supporting Psychological Operations (PSYOP) *etc.* These aspects in a COIN environment are as important as the outcomes of physical battles. Given the common Center of Gravity for insurgents—their ability to remain anonymous and invisible-- it is prudent to recognize that MILDEC can be redirected from its traditional goal of supporting maneuver.

To do this effectively one must use other elements of information operations that assume the STDM in a combined arms approach. For example, psychological operations are based on the notion that people exposed repeatedly to themes inside messages will tend to think or feel a

²³This paradigm is documented in the Army's MILDEC Planner's Handbook and in JP 3-13.4; however, it is documented in these places for MILDEC only. It is my own observation that this applies to other IO related disciplines such as PSYOP, and public affairs.

certain way and act accordingly. STDM predicts action according to the potential of the audience, the credibility of the message, and the time it takes for a theme or message to propagate and take hold.

Likewise, the MILDEC and OPSEC both assume the STDM. MILDEC and OPSEC are part of the same information dynamic—though often they use different means and methods against different target sets. For example good OPSEC derives from a close understanding of what the adversary is able to see, how he processes what he sees, and what he could possibly do about it given the right timing and circumstances. Predicting which patterns of behavior (indicators) the enemy has the capability to observe then suppressing them is inherently useful by itself, but it is even more useful when combined with MILDEC’s capability to leak misleading information through the holes in OPSEC. Three core elements (PSYOP, MILDEC, OPSEC) all focus on the dynamics of see, think, do, which are the basis of human based information operations. This theoretical underpinning is different enough from the conventional understanding of MILDEC’s application in high intensity conflict to make a difference.

A Joint, Definitional Hurdle

There is a problem with the way in which MILDEC is understood in joint doctrine which prevents it from a smooth application to COIN. Just last year the Joint Staff published *JP 3-13.4 Military Deception*, which includes a discussion of the levels of MILDEC operations. It distinguishes strategic, operational, and tactical MILDEC based upon the level of decision-maker targeted. Thus, operational MILDEC “seeks to influence adversary operational level decision makers’ ability to successfully conduct military operations.”²⁴ Likewise for the strategic and tactical levels, MILDEC targets strategic and tactical decision-makers.

There are at least two difficulties with this definition that limit its usefulness inside the

²⁴Joint Staff, *Joint Publication 3-13.4* (Norfolk, Va. July, 2006): I-4.

insurgent environment. First, it is too structured to represent the reality of actors and their role in the insurgent environment. A tiered targeting definition is not very easily applied to an insurgency that operates as a complex network versus a symmetric engagement between doctrinal forces with a recognizable hierarchy of leaders. The strategic and tactical definitions are similarly aligned based on the level of decision-maker one is trying to influence.

Secondly, the definition ignores the fact that operational aims can often best be achieved in the tactical aggregate. That is, a coordinated and coherent prosecution of tactical MILDEC can produce more than the sum of tactical effects.²⁵ It can produce a change in the way that insurgencies think and operate as opposed to affecting some operational decision-maker's key action. In fact the existence of an identifiable, operational decision-maker is largely superfluous though the joint definition relies on this distinction.

Earlier definitions of operational MILDEC were much broader, recognizing the potential for other approaches. *FM 90-2*, last published in 1988 made a different kind of distinction in sorting out the levels of MILDEC—one based on effects in the theater of operation: an area based distinction. The FM said, “Operational deception plans facilitate the successful conduct of in-theater campaigns at Army EAC [Echelons Above Corps].”²⁶ This did not require a hierarchy, only a location, and is therefore more applicable to countering insurgency which may not contain a hierarchy, but always contain an area of operations.

Other practitioners wisely acknowledged the potential for the combined or synergetic potential in MILDEC. For example, Marine Major Jack Hughes, writing in the 1990s defined operational MILDEC as “the integration of two or more tactical deceptions to achieve a common goal.”²⁷ This is very close to the doctrinal responsibilities of information operations to combine

²⁵This is a kind of gestalt rationale, but it is simply a recognizable characteristic of operational designs, which produce their effects through the combined quality of tactical engagements.

²⁶Army Field Manual 90-2 (obsolete).

²⁷Jack Hughes, “Deception: An Integral Part of Warfare” [online]; available from

tactical efforts to create an operational effect through the STDM. The fact that other means are being employed to produce an operational advantage in the information environment provides a compelling rationale for Operational MILDEC to be integrated and synchronized by the information operations staff as opposed to land maneuver experts. In any case, this Joint definition is neither definitive nor insurmountable. It should not be a theoretical hurdle for both practical and theoretical reasons.

Theoretical Necessity of MILDEC's Exclusive Advantage to the Insurgent

Insurgency is a political and military struggle where political power is the central issue.²⁸ Insurgents often if not invariably aim to weaken government control and legitimacy in favor of their own control-- often initially through the employment of guerrilla forces. Mao Tse Tung describes the tactics of these forces. He writes, "Their tactics must deceive, tempt, and confuse the enemy. They must lead the enemy to believe that they will attack him from the east and north, and they must then strike him from the west and the south."²⁹ Che Guevara echoes this advice when he writes that an insurgent is by necessity a "night fighter," who is prepared to use "surprise," "shock," and "deception," to his advantage. This is largely because insurgency's proponents lack the capability in initial stages to successfully engage conventional forces head on. Deception and selective engagement provide force multipliers for the insurgent.³⁰

Though new technologies and contexts are constantly emerging, there is no theoretical boundary that restricts the use of MILDEC for the counterinsurgent. There are only minor

www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/1990/HJL.htm; Internet; accessed 15 March 2007.

²⁸*Joint Publication 1-02, DOD Dictionary of Military and Related Terms* (Suffolk, VA: United States Joint Forces Command, Joint Warfighting Center 2006): 267. Insurgency is defined here as an "organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through use of subversion and armed conflict."

²⁹Mao Tse Tung, "On Guerilla Warfare," [database online] available from <http://www.bellum.nu/literature/mao001.html>; Internet; accessed 12 April 2006, 28.

³⁰USSOCOM Center for Knowledge and Futures and US Marine Corps Combat Development Command, *Multi-Service Concept for Irregular Warfare* 2006): 1, 7. Doctrine also acknowledges that insurgency generally avoids direct military confrontation in favor of subversion, attrition, or exhaustion.

quibbles with the doctrinal constructs that inform deception and perhaps which personnel should be planning it. Given the characteristics of insurgency, there have to be allowances for the general lack of military targets and the fine line between PSYOP and MILDEC-- especially in cases where the population and the insurgent are difficult to sort out. In the end none of these issues affect the theoretical coherence of deception in the environment. It might even be said that eastern theory argues for the primacy of MILDEC.³¹

Summary of Theoretical Issues

The main theoretical issues discussed are whether MILDEC theory translates well to the COIN environment; whether classical theory is more or less helpful in framing a theoretical basis for MILDEC inside COIN than eastern and progressive action theory; whether human information dynamics (STDM) tell us something important about the issue; whether Joint Doctrine precludes a way of looking at MILDEC in a useful way; and whether by theoretical necessity MILDEC advantages belong to the insurgent.

MILDEC theory has some problems translating into a COIN environment based on its orientation toward traditional notions of center of gravity (COG) and decision-makers from conventional force templates. However, this can be overcome by taking advantage of the elaboration of Clausewitz' definition of COG to the accepted Joint definition, and by acknowledging that while MILDEC is never an inherent good it can be used to support more than maneuver and annihilation strategies.

These alternate strategies may include the use of MILDEC to achieve a shift in initiative, to aid intelligence or otherwise to achieve an information advantage, but they should not be confused with PSYOP, which aims at transmitting true information to a large audience rather than misleading information to a select few.

³¹Here theoretical issues do not include ethical problems, which are addressed in a subsequent section.

If one pays strict attention to Clausewitz, one would be more apt to conclude that MILDEC plays a minor role in both conventional and unconventional conflict. On the other hand, eastern thought heavily emphasizes deception as a means, but still focuses on decision-makers. This makes it difficult to apply in a COIN setting, although it suits the insurgent strategy well because counterinsurgents invariably inhabit a tiered hierarchy. An even more practical question becomes how to translate the eastern ideas into a sufficiently familiar paradigm for US application, especially given the similar focus of joint doctrine on decision-makers and their level of influence. Progressive theory allows us to overcome the historical bias of Clausewitzian thought, which does not entirely escape its essential orientation on physical dynamics.

On the other hand, the theoretical dynamics of information theory and information operations doctrine transcends this physical orientation, turning instead to the information and cognitive domains with the STDM as a simplified action theory. MILDEC participates in the same STDM as other core elements of information operations which work for specific audiences as well as in the aggregate.

Overall joint doctrine does not frame operational MILDEC so that it applies to a COIN environment, although there are enough doctrinal echoes from the past to tune into. Likewise, classical theory is less helpful than non-western and progressive modes of thought when theorizing about MILDEC both inside and outside a COIN environment. Thus, it is best to adapt and modify what the traditional approach has to offer to the contemporary operating environment.

Joint doctrine suggests a compartmentalization of MILDEC based on striated levels of decision-makers which is unhelpful, but ultimately surmountable. Given these separate analyses, MILDEC in the COIN environment is theoretically coherent.

HISTORICAL SUCCESSES AND FAILURES

First in importance, and first in difficulty, is fooling the guerrilla enemy, misleading,

eluding, or blinding his information and observation screens.³²

Colonel Napoleon Valeriano
Aide to Philippines Secretary of National Defense³³

If Sun Tzu is correct then deception is the most important aspect of military art. It is unquestionably a difficult and risky aspect, but it is significant all the same because it can change the dynamic at all levels of war, between the strong and the weak, the prepared and the unprepared.

Any historian can cite cases where deception has proved its worth in cases which were otherwise intractable predicaments. The Egyptian deception at the start of the Yom Kippur War, Operation Fortitude during WWII, the British withdrawal at Gallipoli, and Napoleon's victory at Ulm are examples. What role then does deception play in modern wars?³⁴ Inside modern wars-- asymmetric ones waged by terrorists, insurgents, and other secret forces-- non-state actors may depend heavily on secrecy and anonymity to sustain their organization efforts. They induce or take advantage of intelligence failures at every point to improve their chances of success. Indeed it is often urged that an insurgent's success is not possible except through failures induced in the strong side. MILDEC is an available means for the insurgent to introduce important failures on an adversary's behalf: first in intelligence, and then in action or inaction. The question at hand is whether deception holds the same utility for counterinsurgents.

History offers instructive examples of counterinsurgents using MILDEC-- mostly at the tactical level. The following examples have taken place within the context of modern insurgency occurring after World War II. Some have been strictly conventional examples, while others have been experimental hybrids combining deception operations with human intelligence tasks in a

³²Napoleon D. Valeriano and Charles T. R. Bohannon, *Counter-Guerrilla Operations : The Philippine Experience*, Second ed. (New York: Praeger, 1966): 142.

³³A retired Filipino Army officer who served as the Secretary of National Defense's top aide: a veteran of the 1946-54 insurgency, and an advisor to the US Viet Nam Strategy. Colonel Valeriano is considered an expert COIN practitioner.

³⁴Roger Trinquier, *Modern Warfare : A French View of Counterinsurgency*, (New York: Praeger, 1964): 6. Trinquier identifies Counterinsurgency as Modern Warfare.

very creative manner. Taken together they demonstrate a range and perhaps even a progression of sophistication for the counterinsurgent to consider. Thus they are not ordered consecutively, but by level of sophistication.

Deception in Viet Nam 1958-1975

In the late 1950s until 1975 the U.S. assisted the Republic of South Viet Nam in its struggle to remain free of communist control. During the conflict, Military Assistance Command-Viet Nam (MAC-V) documented examples of MILDEC success. On the US side, pattern variations (effective OPSEC) and feints were useful. One event described as “particularly effective” involved a US Division drawing a Viet Cong regiment into a trap via administrative and physical observables.³⁵

One division objective was simple: to lure an un-located, but proximate Viet Cong regiment into attacking a US strongpoint. A leaked plan described the movement of engineer and supply vehicles with limited escort. Division planners war-gamed to produce the five most likely ambush sites along the route. In this case the most probable site was also the actual location of the ambush attempt, although preparations were made to cover other likely sites. Instead of vulnerable vehicles, the real friendly convoy was a reconnaissance in force along the leaked convoy route. Air-mobile infantry battalions provided rapid reaction to all five possible sites. The division also positioned artillery and laid on close air support. According to a Military Assistance Command description, the final result was that the enemy “regiment had suffered severe losses during the engagement and was estimated to have been reduced to less than 50% strength” largely due to casualties inflicted by artillery and close air support.³⁶

There are important lessons in this historic example. The most important thing to note is

³⁵MILITARY ASSISTANCE COMMAND VIETNAM SAN FRANCISCO CALIF 96222, *MACV Combat Experiences 2-69 1969*): 14.

³⁶*Ibid.*, 4.

that counterinsurgent forces were able to achieve the initiative via the use of MILDEC. As is often the case when facing insurgent forces, their location was difficult to determine, especially since most of the populace remained neutral. In this instance a pattern of plan leakage, most probably facilitated by support of the local population working in the headquarters, was instrumental in insuring the V.C. were very sure and very wrong about the vulnerability of US troops in the engagement area. This shifted the initiative by enabling a combined arms approach that chewed up the adversary.

OPSEC vulnerabilities and known weaknesses were turned into strengths on that occasion. The element of MILDEC made a significant difference. Moreover, there is no reason that this lesson could not be replicated in similar circumstances or even directed by the operational level headquarters in several areas. Even if these kind of operations do not succeed in luring in large insurgent groups, they can add an element of unpredictability in areas where OPSEC has failed. They can add a much-needed sense of unpredictability to counterinsurgent operations despite these OPSEC failures.

The publication of misleading orders became part of standard MILDEC in support of OPSEC. In other cases joint headquarters published mock orders to obscure the real time and place of ongoing operations. This kind of deception conducted in support of OPSEC is useful especially given the troubling aspect of a leaky planning headquarters inside a foreign base camp. The important lesson is that leakage can be leveraged with deception measures.

Deception in the Philippines 1899-1902, 1946-1954

Deception in the Philippines demonstrated a less conventional and more creative use of deception. Opposition to US purchase and annexation of the Philippines provoked Emilio Aguinaldo to continue an insurgency that pitted approximately 100,000 guerillas against

American forces.³⁷ Aguinaldo's opposition was a continuation of the Philippine Revolution which had been directed against Spain since 1896. Though Aguinaldo had returned to fight the Spanish at the request of the US, America did not recognize the subsequent constitutional convention of 1899 that declared him President of the Philippine Republic. The insurgency persevered.

In response, author Timothy Deady describes a Trojan Horse operation that targeted Aguinaldo. In February of 1901, four American officers took eighty Filipino scouts from the Macabebe ethnic group to a meeting at Emilio Aguinaldo's camp in Isabela province. In order to allay suspicions, the Macabebe's posed as Filipino loyalists and disguised the Americans as prisoners before taking them inside the camp. Once the camp was infiltrated, the pseudo group of insurgents captured Aguinaldo and his local supporters. These operations and the successful co-opting of Aguinaldo eventually brought about a formal end to his group's fighting and led to the recognition of US sovereignty over the Philippines.³⁸ In this case U.S. forces employed a common ruse to capture an important operational leader. This tactical action substantially aided the strategic victory.

During the second Philippine's insurgency in the 40s and 50s, LTC (Later Major General) Edward Lansdale proposed a creative MILDEC. Then a serving military intelligence officer Lansdale developed a detailed plan to draw in the guerrillas primary political leaders. He planned to capture key members of the Politburo by disguising a US submarine as a Soviet sub, concurrently baiting the encounter through the use of a prominent insider named Taciano Rizal. Rizal was the grand nephew of Dr. Jose Rizal—a prominent Filipino native son. According to Lansdale, who had developed a detailed plan, if Rizal could bring his compatriots inside the

³⁷Timothy K. Deady, "Lessons from a Successful Counterinsurgency: The Philippines, 1899-1902," *Parameters: US Army War College* 35, no. 1; 1 (2005): 58.

³⁸*Ibid.*, 40.

Politburo to the sub, the war would be “close to over.”³⁹ Unfortunately, Lansdale could not convince the proper authorities that he required a submarine. In any case, this was an operational deception (according to the current joint definition) and were it not for difficulties in procuring materiel, it could have been successful.

Later in the conflict, an elaborate plan for pseudo operations developed in response to key events. The death of an independent insurgent leader in Southern Luzon, Colonel Villegas, provided an opportunity for counterinsurgents to drive a wedge between Southern guerrillas and those in Central Luzon under Luis Taruc.⁴⁰

A force called Filipino Force X was formed out of a Filipino Company to pass themselves off as insurgents against Huk guerrillas deep in Huk territory.⁴¹ The forty seven original members of Force X were trained in a four-week program to mimic the mannerisms of the Huk insurgents for the purpose of infiltration. This kind of infiltration differed from human intelligence operations in two main respects. First, the scheme involved a whole group of individuals versus one or two infiltrators. Secondly, the ultimate goal of the infiltration was disruption and destruction versus the exploitation of information coming from the group. Presumably the false expectation that infiltrators came in ones and twos aided the group’s infiltration. Other advantages to a group of operators lay in the safety of numbers, relative combat power, and the fact that these groups would appear normal to the population.

One aspect of the deception designed to add credibility was a staged battle which implied an adversarial relationship between the pseudo group and US forces. Pseudo operators staged the battle to look like a success to authentic, Huk insurgents. In one case the success drew two other genuine Huk squadrons to the pseudo group for the purposes of combined operations. After six

³⁹Edward Geary Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars : An American's Mission to Southeast Asia*, (1ST ED.)d ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1972): 62.

⁴⁰Valeriano and Bohannon, *Counter-Guerrilla Operations : The Philippine Experience*, 143.

⁴¹Ibid.

days, the pseudo squadron staged a coordinated attack that turned on and wiped out the real Huk units.⁴²

Not only was this encounter lethal, but also it had a psychological impact on other units. The primary effect was the tactical attrition of two groups. The secondary effect was the disruption of Huk recruitment and coordination. There were several accounts of Huk on Huk violence as a result of the general distrust and disaffection that widespread pseudo operations caused.⁴³ The wedge was working to drive insurgent groups apart.

Moreover, this kind of deception turned the secretive insurgent practices against loosely coordinated guerilla forces. It seemed that pseudo operations might be a lynchpin tactic providing a great deal of utility when fighting guerrilla forces, though they may seem essentially tactical in nature. However, if the actual effect was to drive two insurgent groups apart or even to create enmity between insurgent groups, then this MILDEC could be said to have more than just tactical effects. Still we are not yet at a point where standing pseudo operators are constituted as part of an operational design. Operations were not sustained because according to LTC Lansdale, “use of deception on this scale gradually was dropped by both sides... as each started using tighter safeguards against being fooled.”

Deception in Malaya 1948-60

Following World War II the British fought an insurgency in Malaya whose stated goal was “conquering the country for the disciples of Chairman Mao.”⁴⁴ Although the British administrators ruled out the use of strategic deception, they used several tactical deception

⁴²Ibid., 146.

⁴³Grant Bridgewater, "Philippine Information Operations during the Hukbalahap Counterinsurgency Campaign," *IO Sphere 2006*, no. Spring (2006), [journal on-line]; available from http://www.au.af.mil/info-ops/iosphere/iosphere_spring06_bridgewater.pdf; Internet; accessed 11 November, 2006, 59.

⁴⁴E. D. Smith, *Malaya and Borneo*, (London: I. Allan, 1985): 5.

techniques to generate confusion among insurgents.⁴⁵ One technique was to generate a perception among insurgent intelligence that all patrols operating from a network of jungle forts were two weeks long and consisted in a fixed number of patrol members.

A patrol would return to the base perimeter at regular two-week intervals, but the troops returning were paratroops who had been dropped in the jungle to begin with, while the real patrol members stayed out for at least 100 days.⁴⁶ Patrols were generally more successful the longer troops stayed in the field.⁴⁷ A second tactic was to periodically drop dummy paratroopers into the jungle where they would be observed. These tactics combined to produce unreliability of insurgent intelligence. This is a recurrent deception goal that was also sought by COL Valeriano as he operated against insurgents in the Philippines. It was a process of overloading the insurgent's intelligence collectors in support of OPSEC.⁴⁸

Deception in Kenya 1952-1956

Land grievances and the desire for autonomy were the source of the conflict between Africans and European land owners in Kenya. Europeans, who had bought and developed land in the 'White Highlands', were being threatened mainly by three African tribes. These tribes began a campaign of murder and intimidation of government officials in September and October of 1952. They also attacked European farmers, burning farm buildings and maiming animals and forming a military organization called the Kenya Land Freedom Army.⁴⁹

Meanwhile, Sir Evelyn Baring, the newly arrived governor, declared a state of emergency

⁴⁵James R. Bortree, "Information Operations during the Malayan Emergency" (Ph.D. diss., NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL MONTEREY CA, 2006): 16.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 106.

⁴⁷John Coates, *Suppressing Insurgency : An Analysis of the Malayan Emergency, 1948-1954*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992): 171.

⁴⁸Valeriano and Bohannon, *Counter-Guerrilla Operations : The Philippine Experience*, 24.

⁴⁹Frank Kitson has suggested that land issues were only a smokescreen for the real issue, which was Kenyan autonomy. He explains that a cause must be sufficient to motivate membership whether it is the true, or dominant motive behind the insurgency. Kitson, Frank. *Low Intensity Operations : Subversion, Insurgency, Peace-Keeping*. Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1971.

as the tribes coalesced within a large scale recruiting campaign and took oaths to the insurgent cause. Those taking an oath to the Mau Mau were committing themselves to extreme violence in their cause of ejecting European land owners. These actions set the basic context and ideology of the Mau Mau Emergency.⁵⁰

Nine months after its start, Britain appointed General Sir George Erskine as commander in chief of all military units with operational control of all police and auxiliaries. Forces consisted of nine British battalions, a European Kenya Regiment, an East Africa armored car squadron, one artillery battery, and two Royal Air Force squadrons.⁵¹

On the other side of the conflict, insurgents were a poorly trained and equipped force of twelve thousand with no outside support. Nevertheless the Mau Mau were able to take advantage of harsh mountains and dense forest terrain as a safe operating base. They also had excellent food and medical supplies and lines of communication from Kikuyu tribal lands stretching all the way into Nairobi.

General Erskine realized after a short time that the conflict would be a long term endeavor and that his conventional forces were at a disadvantage given the terrain and the insurgents' "exceptional talent for stealth" in the environment.⁵² This set the conditions for the approval of some very unorthodox operations. Besides the type of conventional operations in Malaya, Erskine was convinced, perhaps from the experience of exploiting co-opted insurgents in Malaya, to do something similar in Kenya.

In 1953, about seven months after arriving in Kenya, Major Frank Kitson received word from another intelligence officer about an extraordinary occurrence. Hales, the other officer, had been with some of his African helpers when they were suddenly surrounded by several hundred

⁵⁰Michael Dewar, *The Art of Deception in Warfare*, (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1989): 185.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, 186.

⁵²*Ibid.*

Mau Mau insurgents. While the Africans in the group pretended to be supporters, Hale hid near some scrub and was not recognized-- presumably because the insurgents did not expect to see him among supporters.⁵³

Upon hearing this Kitson, was convinced the insurgents did not see Hale because they were not expecting to see him. That is, they had a tendency to assume fellow Africans were supporters. Subsequently Kitson sought and received General Erskine's approval to "cash in on the insurgents' gullibility."⁵⁴ He systematically trained ex-Mau Mau and other Africans to regularly impersonate the insurgents. This provided an excellent way to gain information that would enable the precise targeting of insurgents.

The incredible thing was that the impersonators were not limited to the Africans. Major Kitson also participated in a number of interactions. At one point Kitson and four other British Intelligence officers used this ruse to capture a gang leader and six other members of the Rift Valley Gang.⁵⁵

As the Mau Mau insurgents began to realize that they had little chance of forcibly ejecting the European population, they no longer prosecuted a campaign of murder and intimidation. Instead they settled on a somewhat desperate strategy of exhaustion. Their tactics became to "avoid contact with security forces but to cause sufficient trouble to cause continued deployment."⁵⁶ Presumably the idea was to wear out European resolve while resisting a decisive end to their operations. This decision indicates that the initiative had shifted from the insurgents to the counterinsurgents. Pseudo operations were not solely the cause for this shift, but they undoubtedly contributed.

In early 1955 Erskine handed over command to Lt. General G.W. Lathbury who soon

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Ibid., 187.

⁵⁵Ibid., 188.

⁵⁶Ibid.

realized conventional military measures were unlikely to flush out more elusive gangs. At this time about five thousand insurgents were still operating in dense, jungle safe havens. As Dewar describes the situation, “Clumsy and costly sweeps involving vast numbers of troops were no longer producing results commensurate with the effort to put into them.”⁵⁷ Thus the key British strategy became to root these elusive gangs and their leaders out via pseudo operations.

By late summer 1955, the remaining insurgents were scattered and marginal in number. Kitson conducted his final pseudo operation that summer. During the operation his group killed a terrorist leader named Waruingi Kurier.⁵⁸ In October 1956, Kenyan pseudo operators under the direction of Superintendent Ian Henderson captured Dedan Kimathi, the commander-in-chief of the Kenyan Land and Freedom Armies. Kimathi’s subsequent execution effectively ended the military campaign.⁵⁹

Dewar suggests, “Major Kitson's idea must stand as one of the most original uses of deception in the history of counterrevolutionary war.”⁶⁰ No doubt, the tactic that Kitson pioneered was effective both at a tactical and operational levels. It paved the way for offensive operations that were able to shrink and fragment the insurgency because of timely, accurate, and precise intelligence and access.

During the Mau Mau uprising in the 1950's, the British employed pseudo-gangs to a great extent and to good effect. British-trained “pseudo-gangs” posed as collaborators, infiltrating Kenyan insurgent organizations as well as identifying and squelching political support. The military made an intelligence gain-loss assessment prior to acting on the information gained from these operations.

This operational strategy paid dividends, especially toward the end of the revolt when

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Ibid., 189.

⁶⁰Ibid.

major insurgency leaders were killed or captured. With the success of the British in Kenya, it seemed as though pseudo operations would find its place as one of several necessary and effective components of counterinsurgency. Furthermore, it seemed as though this type of deception had attained an operational coordination that was not a feature of the Philippine theater.

Deception in Rhodesia 1965-1980

Just as in Kenya, land disputes as well as the exclusion of indigenous participation in the government were root causes for insurgency. Black and white areas were exclusively divided subsequent to the crushing of a native uprisings in the 1890s. By 1965 Rhodesia had become a self-governing British colony, but its independence was withheld. The United Kingdom was divesting other colonies in favor of majority rule, but like South Africa, where the white majority ruled the indigenous population, Rhodesia was unwilling to demonstrate the same degree of self rule (rule by the majority of indigenous people) that the United Kingdom had come to expect. So Britain withheld colonial independence. Nevertheless, Rhodesian Prime Minister Ian Smith rejected the United Kingdom's encouragement of majority rule in November of 1965 by unilaterally declaring Rhodesian independence. Smith's declaration then touched off a two-pronged insurgency.⁶¹

The opposing political factions were former political competitors. They were the nationalist Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU), representing the Shona tribes which comprised about 70% of the population, and Zimbabwe African People's Union, (ZAPU) whose power base was a significantly smaller at 19%.⁶²

The military wing of ZAPU was the Zimbabwe People's Liberation Army (ZIPRA)

⁶¹Country Watch, [online database]: "Zimbabwe Country Review," available from http://rrcs-67-53-160-138.west.biz.rr.com:2063/cw_topic.aspx?type=text&vcountry=190&topic=POHIS, accessed 11 December 2006, History Tab.

⁶²The ZAPU constituency was part of the Matabeles (Zulu) warrior class (tribe) that dominated the Shona tribes in pre-colonial times. Thus their constituency was numerically smaller.

which drew support from the Soviets, while the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) drew support and arms from the People's Republic of China, who began training members for a protracted war in 1963. Their common cause was to see an end to colonialism in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). The ZIPRA strategy involved leveraging external support for the overthrow of the Smith government.⁶³ In contrast the ZANLA strategy was a system of protracted, people's war.

The terrain in Rhodesia (520 miles long 450 miles wide) was very similar to that of Kenya. Guerrillas initiated operations from densely vegetated terrain that was geographically and demographically favorable-- Rhodesia's north-eastern and northwestern borders. The north-eastern border of Rhodesia in particular contained the rugged Mavuradohnha mountains with dense vegetation that hindered observation, especially during the rainy season from November to March.⁶⁴ This area was characterized by administrative neglect and vast land expanses with low economic value. Both groups also operated in exile from Zambia, making incursions into Rhodesia from the northeast and northwest, ultimately controlling a large portion of the northern territory.

During initial operations in 1966-67, operating forces were comprised of squad to company sized elements of the ZIPRA. Forces infiltrated from Zambia to sabotage white farms and infrastructure. In one instance they were able to set up small base camps approximately 30KM apart and remain undiscovered for three months.⁶⁵ However ZIPRA's efforts were disastrous, in part because the population was not on their side. By 1968 their morale had collapsed in multiple defeats. ZIPRA's tactics were more conventional than ZANLA's who concentrated on the political education of peasants and workers.⁶⁶ ZANLA's military efforts

⁶³J. K. Cilliers, *Counter-Insurgency in Rhodesia*, (London ; Dover, N.H.: Croom Helm, 1985): 7.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, 13.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, 7.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, 10.

picked up markedly beginning in 1972 after the establishment of a base of operations in northeast Rhodesia.

ZANLA's efforts to court the rural peasant population there made it easy to remain undetected while slipping back and forth across the border. At this point the Rhodesian government had scant information due to limited representation in the area and only a "token presence." White Rhodesians to this point were largely unaware of the extent of insurgent activities which "ranged from Sipolilo across to Mutoka in the east and southwards to the Chiweshe and Masziwa Tribal Trust Lands."⁶⁷

In 1973 Major R. H. Reid- Daly formed the Selous Scouts as a pseudo-guerrilla force in order to remedy the problem of limited access and information regarding insurgent forces.⁶⁸ In his words, the problem after 1972 was:

For the first time the Rhodesian Security Forces were faced with a seemingly insoluble problem...after carrying out their attacks the terrorists had not gone to ground in bush camps in uninhabited areas where they could eventually be tracked down... neither had they gone to ground in inhabited areas where information from the local population to the Police or Special Branch had indicated their whereabouts. This time there was nothing. No tracks... no information.

The Scouts' initial makeup was a unit of 120 individuals with the force growing rapidly with the recruitment eventually of 800 turned guerillas and a total force of 1,500 reporting to special branch. Their training involved mimicking the dress, habits, and signals of Rhodesian insurgent groups. A fresh influx of turned insurgents provided the information required in order to keep the Scouts current. Double the normal pay provided an incentive for the Rhodesian natives to volunteer.

These forces initially conducted only intelligence gathering operations and long range surveillance missions. Subsequently, they branched out into direct action missions and even

⁶⁷Ibid., 14.

⁶⁸Cline and Army War College. Strategic Studies Institute, "Pseudo Operations and Counterinsurgency: Lessons from Other Countries," 10.

cross-border excursions as the units matured. It was eventually decided that direct action risked exposure of the units and burned their cover. So the Scouts eventually began to operate in a coordinated fashion, via regular "fire forces." These conventional forces would be walked in to the target once its location was identified. Targets included enemy base camps or insurgent forces on the ground.

According to Ian F. Beckett, the operations were conducted in the following manner:

The Fire Force concept represented what might be termed 'vertical envelopment' of the guerrillas and this technique was also [sic] utilised in external raids into Zambia and Mozambique in which the SAS and Selous Scouts often figured prominently. On other occasions, the Rhodesians drove (often in captured vehicles) or walked to their targets, while there were also more limited penetrations across frontiers by small groups of Rhodesians to lay mines or set up ambushes.⁶⁹

According to some accounts, the Selous Scout were officially credited with either directly or indirectly being responsible for 68% of all terrorists killed during the course of the war. In the process their own losses amounted to 40 scouts.⁷⁰ According to one recent commentator, "the Selous Scouts were the most important element in providing actionable intelligence for the security forces... [and] the most potent factor in Rhodesia's COIN campaign."⁷¹

Leroy Thompson, a noted counter-terrorist expert, has suggested that while the Kenyan experience formalized pseudo operations into a highly successful counterinsurgent tactic, the Selous Scouts perfected the technique in Rhodesia. This case is somewhat problematic because the overall COIN effort in Rhodesia was unsuccessful. However the standard for success in deception measures is one that does not necessitate strategic success. There are too many other factors to consider. It only requires achieving the deception goal in a way that supports

⁶⁹Ian F. Beckett. "The Selous Scouts Home Page/The use of Pseudo Gangs Against the Mau Mau." in T.A.L. Dozer [database online]. Online November 17, 2002. Available from http://members.tripod.com/selousscouts/rhodesian%20army%20coin%2072_79%20part2.htm; accessed 10 October 2006.

⁷⁰Leroy Thompson. "The Selous Scouts Home Page/The use of Pseudo Gangs Against the Mau Mau." in T.A.L. Dozer [database online]. Online November 17, 2002. Available from http://selousscouts.tripod.com/use_of_pseudo_gangs_against_the_.htm; accessed 12 October 2006

⁷¹Cline and Army War College. Strategic Studies Institute, "Pseudo Operations and Counterinsurgency: Lessons from Other Countries," 13.

operational success. By these standards the Selous Scouts might be considered a success.

However, according to Major J.K. Cillier's recent book, pseudo operations in Rhodesia backfired and were a failure. He cites two reasons for this. First, because the command and control strategies for the Scouts failed, and secondly because the population became even more accommodating to ZANLA insurgents—the wrong operational effect.⁷²

Even with the success of the Scouts, the Smith government, which had been declared illegal and sanctioned both by the United Kingdom and the United Nation, continued to suffer sporadic guerilla attacks while the regional situation deteriorated. In 1974, ZAPU and ZANU transformed their organizations into a singular effort called the Patriotic Front. In 1975 neighboring Mozambique became independent as a result of a successful coup in Portugal, and committed its physical and psychological weight behind the insurgency.⁷³ Guerrilla activity continued until the Smith government was forced into concessions in December of 1979. The terms were a ceasefire, new elections, a transition period under British rule, a new constitution implementing majority rule while protecting minority rights, and the emergence of Zimbabwe in the place of Rhodesia.

If the Selous Scouts were the perfection of pseudo operations (as Leroy Thompson has suggested) then any commander should readily dismiss what looks only on the surface to be an extremely effective manner of COIN deception. This is so because, whatever the efficacy of Selous Scouts in killing scores of insurgents in Rhodesia, there were very real problems with the side effects of their presence and operations. In fact Lawrence Cline, a former Army Intelligence officer and Naval Post Graduate instructor describes a very unfortunate incident which has characterized the degeneration of Rhodesian pseudo operations. He writes...

Once [across the border], [Scouts] killed some 1,000 purported guerrillas. Militarily, it

⁷²Counter-Insurgency in Rhodesia., Review author[s]: L. M. Denny International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-): 717.

⁷³Cilliers, *Counter-Insurgency in Rhodesia*, 20.

was a remarkable feat. Unfortunately, the camp was formally registered with the United Nations (UN) as a refugee camp. Also, even by Reid-Daly's account, most of those killed were unarmed guerrillas standing in formation for a parade. To make matters worse, the camp hospital was set afire by the rounds fired by the Scouts, burning alive all the patients. The international condemnation of this raid almost certainly outweighs success in the long term.

These side effects demonstrated first, the difficulty in controlling a very secretive force due to the lack of intermediate levels of command, second, the problem of population loyalties being shifted in the wrong direction; and third, very costly losses in the battle for public opinion. Certainly, there are short-term, tactical benefits to operations that target high level leaders such as those targeted in the Philippines, and in Kenya; however, there do seem to be special precautions and considerations necessary to preserve the utility of pseudo operations.

The Rhodesians seem to have built and even improved upon the kind of pseudo operations that had been effective in Kenya and the Philippines. Instead of simply a tactic, these operations became part of the operational strategy to break up coordination between insurgent units. What is more, it constituted part of an operational design that coordination and control from the operational headquarters, which froze and unfroze zones of operation to avoid collateral damage.

Summary of Historical Selections

History clearly indicates the potential utility of MILDEC in the context of COIN. In Malaya and Viet Nam, fairly conventional MILDEC operations targeted communist insurgents and irregulars. These efforts had good results. In Malaya insurgent intelligence networks were stretched, tested, and rendered unreliable by deception efforts. In Viet Nam deception efforts resulted in U.S. forces capturing the initiative despite an OPSEC environment that would seem to rule out attempts to deceive the adversary. Division-level planners clearly showed that deception, combined with a sound, combined arms approach could improve a tactical situation immensely. However, this ruse was not replicated or put to use in a way that could create an operational

effect, as it was in Malaya even if operational headquarters occasionally benefited.

On the other hand, deception operations in the Philippines represented a more creative use of deception. There were stumbles and pitfalls, but these were followed by the impersonation of a whole unit of guerrillas to capture a leading adversary figurehead. Filipino Colonel Valeriano's C Company of his 7th Battalion Combat Team formed Force X in order to find, mix with, and ultimately disrupt or destroy other, whole units. Mock battles were used to support the deception story. The overall effect of these pseudo groups constituted both physical and psychological contributions to the success of COIN even if successes seemed to be limited to tactical advantage, and an unsustained period of pseudo operations.

In Kenya Major Frank Kitson seemed better able to sustain pseudo operations. He added systematic training and recruitment to the process of producing pseudo units and steered their operations toward high value targets such as Kurier and Kimathi. Furthermore his gangs obtained an operational quality that Force X in the Philippines did not because their training and preparation was not as systematic or detailed.

Many scholars and historians point to Rhodesia as a successful effort—one of the most developed and important examples of COIN MILDEC. Cline described the Selous Scouts as “the most potent factor in the counterinsurgency effort.”⁷⁴ It is true that the Scouts were the largest pseudo force with the furthest operational reach. Combined with the strike forces they were exceptionally lethal. The Scout's success in achieving an indirect deception goal—presumably to confuse and intimidate gangs and political leaders, meant that they offered a great deal of utility in delaying the final outcome of the insurgency. In fact the insurgent political parties never effectively achieved the Popular Front that they sought partially because of a the lack of trust

Cline and Army War College. Strategic Studies Institute, "Pseudo Operations and Counterinsurgency: Lessons from Other Countries," 13.

generated by pseudo operations. It was a Popular Front in name only.⁷⁵

However, as the surface layers are peeled away, it is apparent that over-reliance on the Scouts led to strategic and operational failure. That is, Rhodesia's over reliance on the Scouts became a liability. As Cilliers notes, "the very success of pseudo operations led to constant demands for the further expansion of the unit."⁷⁶ Even so, more units and more insurgent casualties do not make for a complete COIN strategy.

The history of pseudo operations suggests that they are effective if the deception goal involves gaining superior intelligence, enabling initiative, and threatening insurgents from the inside out. However, problems can develop when a second-order effect of these deceptions is mistrust in the civilian population. Pseudo operations, when conducted without proper restraint, engendered a real mistrust among the population as well as between rival factions.⁷⁷ It is clear that there are gray lines and solid, black lines and limits to be set in order to avoid substantial side-effects. Moreover, one must insure the proper command and control of units to avoid illegal or counterproductive behaviors.

LEGAL AND ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS OF MILDEC IN COIN

Although to use fraud in any action is detestable, yet in the conduct of war it is praiseworthy and glorious. And a man who uses fraud to overcome his enemy is praised, just as much as is he who overcomes his enemy by force.⁷⁸

Machiavelli, 1531

Legal Implications

In the context of war there is no expectation of truth-telling between enemies. Rather there is a general expectation of deceit, except in special circumstances. Deceit, like the use of

⁷⁵Cilliers, *Counter-Insurgency in Rhodesia*, 134.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*, 130.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, 131.

⁷⁸Niccolo Machiavelli and Leslie Joseph Walker, *The Discourses of Niccolo Machiavelli*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950): 571.

force, has its lawful limitations according to the Geneva Conventions which allow and proscribe certain activities. Among the relevant types of activity that conventions of war explicitly rule in are the use of camouflage, decoys, mock operations, the use of enemy codes/signals, and misinformation against an adversary. Among the relevant activities that they rule out are the wearing of enemy uniforms when engaging in attacks, and killing, injuring, or capturing an adversary by perfidy.⁷⁹ Perfidy literally means deceitfulness; however, in this context it means taking advantage of warfare's conventions to "[injure] the enemy by his adherence to the law of war."⁸⁰

Examples of perfidy include feigning surrender to achieve a surprise attack, or using medical facilities to hide command and control facilities. It is worth noting here that one of the main tactics of insurgents is to take advantage of the protected status of non-combatants in order to gain an advantage over counterinsurgents.

Since these laws proscribe the use of enemy uniforms to attack, kill, or capture combatants they would rule out some historical and future pseudo operations. For instance, the *Operational Law Handbook* of 2002 stated: "Selous Scouts posing as FRELIMO soldiers in order to gain access to a terrorist training camp and subsequently raiding that training camp while still dressed as FRELIMO soldiers is a fairly clear case of perfidy."⁸¹

One is tempted to sidestep a number of difficulties in the contemporary operating environment by simply claiming that these conventions do not apply to insurgents and terrorists who do not wear uniforms, or that no insurgent merits combatant status, or that the U.S. has

⁷⁹Geneva Protocol I. AP I, Article 39 (2) prohibits the use in international armed conflict of enemy flags, emblems, uniforms, or insignia while engaging in attacks or "to shield, favor, protect or impede military operations." The U.S. has signed but not ratified Protocol I and does not recognize it as a Law of Warfare; however, the U.S. does adhere to the "principles and spirit" of the law according to the 2006 *Operational Law Handbook*.

⁸⁰Derek I. Grimes, John Rawcliffe, and Jeannine Smith, ed. *Operational Law Handbook*, 2006d ed. (Internet; 2006), [database on-line]; Internet; available from www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/law/oplaw_hdbk.pdf 31; accessed 22 January 2007.

⁸¹Ibid.

signed but not ratified the protocols of Geneva where the prohibitions appear. However, the issue is not that simple. Not all insurgents are illegal combatants. The question of uniform wear is debatable if there are other tell-tale signs. And although the U.S. has not ratified these particular treaties it has made a commitment to uphold their principles and spirit.

Moreover, according to law professor Jordan J. Paust the laws of war do apply to insurgents so long as they meet the following minimum criteria 1) the semblance of an insurgent government, 2) an organized military force 3) control of significant portions of territory as their own, and 4) their own relatively stable population or base of support within a broader population.⁸² Whenever these conditions apply insurgents receive the protection of the Laws of War. Even if some insurgents are violating the laws of war by attacking civilian targets, they remain under the protection of the law of war (though they may be tried for specific war crimes).

So even though the Geneva conventions allow for ruses and such conventional applications of MILDEC, their legitimacy is somewhat less certain when those ruses include attacking while impersonating a recognized combatant force. In such cases, it would be perfidious to pose as one of them in order to go beyond gathering intelligence, violating Article 39 of Geneva Protocol I.⁸³ However, the use of pseudo operations to gain intelligence and to zero in strike forces for an attack would be legal. So at least some historical pseudo operations would be legal models for the future.

Still, a strictly legal evaluation of pseudo operations is insufficient. The following

⁸²Jordan J. Paust, "War and Enemy Status After 9/11: Attacks on the Laws of War," (*Yale Journal of International Law* 28, no. ii 2003): 326.

⁸³*Protocol I*. AP I, Article 39(2) prohibits the use in international armed conflict of enemy, uniforms, or insignia while engaging in attacks or "to shield, favor, protect or impede military operations." The U.S. does not consider this article reflective of customary law. (FM 27-10, para. 75; AP I, art. 46.) Acting clandestinely (or on false pretenses) to obtain information for transmission back to their side. Gathering intelligence while in uniform is not espionage. Espionage is not a law of war violation; there is no protection, however, under the Geneva Conventions, for acts of espionage. If captured, a spy may be tried under the laws of the capturing nation. E.g., Art. 106, UCMJ. Reaching friendly lines immunizes the spy for past espionage activities; therefore, upon later capture as a lawful combatant, the alleged "spy" cannot be tried for past espionage.

vignette provided by MAJ Higginbotham in his thesis “On Deceiving Terrorists” provides one example of a legally permissible, but morally problematic circumstance:

[Selous] Scouts would sometimes call in an air strike or direct attack on a terrorist force as the force left a kraal (village)... after two or three such occurrences the [terrorists] invariably suspected the kraal members of informing [Rhodesian] Security Forces of their presence. In revenge, and to forestall any repetition, innocent kraal members were executed. Almost without exception, this would put an end to any voluntary support that the terrorists could expect from the kraal.⁸⁴

Strictly speaking, this tactic does not violate the laws of war, although it is highly unethical because it deliberately instigates reprisals between insurgents and a civilian population. It is tantamount to targeting civilians directly. These kinds of operations create conditions under which counterinsurgents would be morally responsible, but legally immune, and that is a problem. Aside from moral questions, it is imprudent in the long-term to interact with the population in this manner because doing so engenders a lasting mistrust between the population and the legitimate government. This is the very definition of losing an insurgency.

An Ethical Test

Since legal proscriptions cannot adequately define the boundaries of deception during COIN, an ethical test might be more appropriate. In a recent article LTG Metz articulated something like an ethical test to gauge the efficacy of an operation using negative publicity as a guidepost. He wrote:

We developed what we called “the IO threshold.” Its purpose was to enable the MNC-I commander to visualize a point at which enemy information-based operations (aimed at international, regional, and local media coverage) began to undermine the Coalition forces’ ability to conduct unconstrained combat operations. [The enemy] is capable of effectively using the global media to impede our operations by creating the perception that our combat operations are indiscriminate, disproportionate, and in violation of the rules of war... Kinetic shaping operations had to be conducted underneath the IO threshold.⁸⁵

Here LTG Metz recognized an empirically measurable potential for political pressure to

⁸⁴Benjamin I. Higginbotham, "On Deceiving Terrorists" (Ph.D. diss., Naval Postgraduate School, 2001): 139.

⁸⁵Thomas F. Metz. “Massing Effects in the Information Domain: A Case Study in Aggressive Information Operations.” (Military Review 86, no. May-June 2006): 2-10.

build from public sentiment. A sense of moral outrage, or what he refers to above as the perception of --indiscriminate, disproportionate force-- can make those operations not only politically problematic, but near impossible to carry out. In the long term, public perceptions tend to harden creating a negative mythos long after the immediate effects have worn off. These persistent attitudes can work against the legitimacy of the government as well as the force operating on the ground. But it is also possible to see the issue from an ethical rather than a purely prudential point of view.

Immanuel Kant, an 18th century philosopher advocated a similar, but more rigorous ethical test called the test of “publicity”. The concept of publicity follows from Kant’s categorical imperative. In his conception, “All actions relating to the right of other men are unjust if their maxim is not consistent with publicity.” By publicity he did not mean that a government must publicize its actions and intentions. Instead he meant something more subtle and unrelated to empirical measurements such as a polling, *i.e.*, more like a hypothetical/rational measurement of the IO threshold, which is after all a moral threshold.

Kant meant that any action that *would* become impossible (because of opposition) if publicized, is unjust. According to Kant, this concept can be applied by any reasonable/rational being. One simply has to ask oneself to think through what would be unsustainable should the public know about it. Any solution that publicity would render an unworkable action is morally suspect. Put another way, any act that would be unsustainable if subjected to public knowledge is illegitimate.

Here is one of Kant’s examples:

[Maxim] “If a smaller state is so situated as to break up the territory of a larger one, and continuous territory is necessary to the preservation of the larger, is the latter not justified in subjugating the smaller and incorporating it?” We easily see that the greater power cannot afford to let this maxim become known; otherwise the smaller states would very early unite, or other powers would dispute the prey, and thus publicity would render this

maxim impracticable. This is a sign that it is illegitimate.⁸⁶

It is certainly consistent to think of the “IO threshold” as a publicity threshold in order to test the ethics of any future operation. It is only necessary then to use public affairs and PSYOP as the means to insure that the public does not misperceive COIN actions.

Without an ethical lens for assessing the legitimacy of deception in COIN, operators risk over generalizing and ruling deception out entirely. A recent brigade combat team commander writing about Information Operations in Iraq held that in the COIN environment one should “never try to implement any sort of deception operations.”⁸⁷ His rationale was presumably that trust, confidence, and credibility with target audiences was not only necessary to conduct effective information operations, but outweighed any benefit that deception could offer.

This sentiment is echoed in Army doctrine regarding Stability and Support operations.

Doctrine discusses the importance of transparency in this way:

Transparency means that the peace operation force must communicate its intentions and capabilities to all audiences inside and outside the area of operations. This differs from offensive and defensive operations when the force conceals its intentions and capabilities. Transparency serves to reinforce legitimacy and impartiality. It is more difficult to challenge the impartial status of an operation if the parties are kept informed. A failure to communicate will foster suspicion and may erode the development of the trust and confidence on which the long-term success of the operations depends.⁸⁸

Historical cases such as Malaya where administrators saw strategic MILDEC and propaganda as potentially compromising the theme of an open and honest administration are another example where this principle seemed to apply.⁸⁹ However, it should be noted that administrators did not rule out tactical MILDEC targeted directly at military forces.

Summary of Legal and Ethical Implications

...There is absolutely no need for special operations to be carried out in an illegal or

⁸⁶ Immanuel Kant. "Perpetual Peace: Appendix II." in www.constitution.org [database online]. World Wide Web 6 July, 2005. Internet; available from <http://www.constitution.org/kant/append2.htm>; accessed 2 January 2007.

⁸⁷ Ralph O. Baker, "The Decisive Weapon: A Brigade Combat Team Commander's Perspective on Information Operations," *Military Review* 86, no. 3 (May/June 2006): 21.

⁸⁸ Army, Field Manual 3-7, Stability Operations and Support Operations, 2003, 4-15 thru 16.

⁸⁹ Bortree, "Information Operations during the Malayan Emergency," 16.

immoral way. Indeed there is every reason to ensure that they are not because they are just as much a part of a governments programme as [any other measure].⁹⁰

General Sir Frank Kitson
Veteran of insurgencies in Malaya, Kenya, Cyprus and Ireland

There are special rules for MILDEC that apply in any military situation. The Law of Land Warfare and Geneva Conventions govern its use both in conventional and in COIN environments. Even if pseudo operations are among the most effective tactics, they are often times legally and morally hazardous. This is true because of the rules regarding the use of enemy uniforms during an attack, as well as the increasing influence of global media on a military's freedom of action and legitimacy in support of counterinsurgents. If a foreign power is perceived as making the situation worse, or abusing its military power at the expense of a civilian population, then this undermines any counterinsurgent effort. Likewise, if the legitimacy of the protected government is suspect because of abuses, the situation benefits the insurgent.

One good way to adequately test whether deception plans are ethical are to subject them to Kant's test of publicity. Doing so will hopefully avoid the over generalization that deception has no role to play in COIN. At the same time, the application of an ethical standard can help to alleviate situations where actions may be legally permissible, but morally problematic. Unlike other measures taken to defeat an insurgency, MILDEC cannot be completely transparent, but this does not mean that the civilian population could not understand the role that ethical deception can play in COIN.

In the final analysis there is nothing that would legally or ethically prohibit some tactical or operational MILDEC.

CONCLUSIONS

The method of this monograph was to lay out the necessary and sufficient conditions

⁹⁰Frank Kitson, *Operational Aspects of Counter-Insurgency*, 17.

determining the utility of MILDEC in a COIN environment. The first necessary condition was an adequate theoretical basis. If one goes to the Clausewitzian font for a drink, one finds a theoretical appraisal of deception as not much worth the time and effort. On the other hand if we look at Eastern military thinking and the thinking of insurgent theorists like Sun Tzu, Mao and Guevara one sees a great emphasis on deception. Practically speaking anyone can see that insurgents, and perhaps others in Iraq are availing themselves of deceptions that generate greater-than-tactical results. At the same time, our own doctrine and even some practitioners such as COL Ralph Baker draw the conclusion that we are better off without MILDEC. This is so in part because MILDEC is doctrinally oriented on individual decision-makers and the a tiered command and control structure, and because it is risky given the degree of trust that military forces are trying to cultivate with the population. It is clear that these conditions create tension for MILDEC. These are two serious issues, but they cannot be resolved entirely in a theoretical way.

If there is a way to harmonize MILDEC and COIN it is to step back from the particulars and recognize that the dynamics of the information environment are still applicable even if the standard dynamics of major combat operations do not apply. The basis of MILDEC is the See, Think, Do model, which remains relevant and in tact. In this context, MILDEC can be as valuable during COIN as it can be during conventional operations. It just may not be focused on producing results for the purposes of maneuver. Instead it can produce results that attack the lynchpin of insurgency—their ability to band together cohesively and to remain anonymous among the indigenous population.

So there are two important conclusions here. First, that deception operations can do more than influence enemy decision making. It can go further than aiding the lethal fight and can be put in the service of OPSEC, PSYOP, intelligence gathering, or in gaining the initiative. Second, MILDEC should not be limited by Joint concepts such as influencing operational level decision-

makers, so long as it is influencing the operational level fight. Overall the theory is adequate to inform COIN in MILDEC, but perhaps what one has to do is to think like a Mao or a Sun Tzu instead of a Clausewitz, and to remain in the framework of creating an information advantage through the See, Think, Do model of influencing behavior, leveraging the other disciplines that use this same model.

Historically speaking, MILDEC has been successful at the tactical level inside a COIN environment. There seem to be two main themes here. First, ruses targeting leadership or leadership fissures. Secondly mimicking insurgents for the purpose of drawing them and their substructures out. Though several varieties of MILDEC have been put to use, the one that seems to garner the most attention is pseudo operations. Practitioners and scholars frequently raise the issue of pseudo operations as a useful addition to COIN strategy.⁹¹ The truth is that tactically, pseudo operations provide some utility; however, it has not risen to the level of operational art—even if it may have at times targeted operational level decision-makers.

What looks most like an operational level construct for pseudo operations appeared in Rhodesia, where a centralized structure for pseudo operations stood up and was maintained throughout the conflict. In the final analysis Rhodesian pseudo operators were not part of an operationally sound design in the larger sense of a strategy-- that is, a strategy that was likely to bring conflict to a desired strategic aim. Moreover, the liabilities of indiscriminate policies on the population side of the equation more than offset the positive aspects of pseudo operations in that instance. As others have observed, tactical success guarantees nothing operationally.⁹²

While tactically it is possible to achieve results: to regain the initiative, to kill or capture more insurgents than would otherwise be possible, this does not always lead to operational and

⁹¹For instance Deady, Sepp, Kitson, Lansdale, Celeski.

⁹²Eliot Cohen et al., "Principles, Imperatives, and Paradoxes of Counterinsurgency," *Military Review* 86, no. 2; 2 (03//Mar/Apr2006 2006): 53.

strategic success. One indispensable goal of every COIN is to support the legitimacy of the local government, but pseudo operations run the risk of moving the population in the wrong direction as in the case of the pseudo insurgents in Rhodesia. Their activities actually led communities to accommodate ZANLA insurgents over the government.

Still, there are many cases where MILDEC has achieved its deception goal, which leads one to believe that it has a role to play in COIN strategies. This is especially the case in terms of OPSEC and Intelligence advantages that can come from tactical deception. MILDEC should not be ruled out altogether because there are acceptable solutions. LTG Metz's use of deception during operation AL-FAJR near Fallujah demonstrates this, as does Kitson's success in Kenya. Thus the standard of successful and reasonably applicable historical precedents is met.

Another necessary condition for the utility of MILDEC during COIN is whether it can be conducted without unacceptable legal/ethical complications. There certainly are occasions when things were taken too far. Although it might be permissible to include the population in MILDEC as unwitting participants, the wholesale adoption of insurgent techniques to intimidate the population are a legal and moral problem. The concept of an IO threshold is useful as a practical guide, and it ought to be turned into an ethical construct using Kant's concept of publicity. Setting these kinds of limits, going beyond what the law requires, is the best way to avoid the side-effects of MILDEC during COIN.

RECOMMENDATIONS

MILDEC planners should generally forego conventional planning in terms of physical centers of gravity in order to concentrate on the potential to influence the entire insurgent system. This can be done with methods detailed in the classified MILDEC Planner's Guide. Planners should not be constrained by the notion that operational level MILDEC invariably requires influencing singular, operational decision makers since insurgencies may be cellular in nature and

may not include the same kinds of decision makers as major combat operations do. In fact the key decision makers may be indistinguishable from the population. It may be that the most important deception goal is to identify these leaders through MILDEC.

MILDEC during COIN should target the insurgency, not the insurgent. There needs to be a systematic operational construct that goes beyond killing insurgents, and also beyond the constraints of targeting the decisions of operational level leaders. At a minimum MILDEC should attempt to saturate the insurgent's intelligence networks with misleading information as a way to achieve an information advantage. Ruses for the purpose of capturing insurgent leaders are another obvious way to apply MILDEC, so long as infiltration groups and attack groups remain separate to comply with the laws of war.

The personnel most likely to integrate MILDEC into the operational construct in an acceptable manner are those familiar with the dynamics of the information environment— Information Operations personnel working closely with the G5. This is because they are familiar with a combined arms approach that includes the de-confliction and coordination of disciplines operating within the information environment. Moreover, to the extent that insurgent command, control, and communication networks rely on public infrastructure they can also bring aspects of computer network operations and electronic warfare into the picture.

Army units acting as the Land Component Command (LCC) should also call on 1st Information Operations Command or other Theater Information Operations Groups for assistance with MILDEC planning. These commands have or will have personnel who are trained and potentially experienced in conducting MILDEC in a number of different contexts. The 1st IO Command also runs an internal course on MILDEC that is open to other participants.

Deception planners working against terrorists and insurgents should familiarize themselves with ongoing, domestic Law Enforcement use of mimicry techniques. A good

example is the recent “sting” operations targeting pedophiles. This would familiarize and reinforce the principles of lawful and ethical conduct in the process of a deception operation.

The COIN academy in Iraq should provide instruction and vignettes for successful deceptions conducted there and in similar theaters of operations historically. A case study should be developed for Kenyan pseudo operations and other tactical deceptions that took place there.

The Army Information Operations Proponent (USAIOP) should incorporate the practical and ethical lessons of historic MILDEC in COIN into FM 3-24.

If pseudo operations are conducted in future insurgencies, they should be conducted (at least initially) by special operations personnel who are trained and familiar with Unconventional Warfare (UW) since those operations are most similar to pseudo operations.

Joint Doctrine should be changed to reflect the diversity of approaches to operational MILDEC, acknowledging that targeting operational leaders is not the only approach.

Finally, an ethical test of publicity should be applied to rule out immoral applications of MILDEC in an environment where public support is paramount.

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