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# Decade of War, Volume I

Enduring Lessons from the  
Past Decade of Operations

15 June 2012

Joint and Coalition Operational Analysis (JCOA)  
A division of the Joint Staff J7

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<b>REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE</b>			<i>Form Approved</i> <i>OMB No. 0704-0188</i>		
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<b>1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY)</b> 15 Jun 2012		<b>2. REPORT TYPE</b> Research report		<b>3. DATES COVERED (From - To)</b>	
<b>4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE</b> Decade of War, Volume 1. Enduring Lessons from the Past Decade of Operations			<b>5a. CONTRACT NUMBER</b>		
			<b>5b. GRANT NUMBER</b>		
			<b>5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER</b>		
<b>6. AUTHOR(S)</b>			<b>5d. PROJECT NUMBER</b>		
			<b>5e. TASK NUMBER</b>		
			<b>5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER</b>		
<b>7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> Joint and Coalition Operational Analysis Division, Joint Staff, Suffolk, VA			<b>8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER</b>		
<b>9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b>			<b>10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)</b>		
			<b>11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)</b>		
<b>12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT</b> Distribution Statement A - The Decade of War, Volume I report is approved for release and dissemination without caveat.					
<b>13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES</b>					
<b>14. ABSTRACT</b> In October 2011, General Martin Dempsey, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, issued a task to "make sure we actually learn the lessons from the last decade of war." In response, the Joint and Coalition Operational Analysis (JCOA) division reviewed 46 lessons learned studies conducted from 2003 to the present, and synthesized the studies' 400+ findings, observations, and best practices into the 11 strategic themes described in this report. More than a "decade of war," the 46 studies covered a wide variety of military operations; from major combat operations in Iraq, to counterinsurgency in Afghanistan and the Philippines, to humanitarian assistance in the United States, Pakistan, and Haiti, to studying emerging regional and global threats. JCOA's initial analysis was further refined and discussed by subject matter experts from across the Department of Defense during a weeklong Decade of War conference in May 2012. This report represents the synthesis of those efforts, and while significant, is only the initial step in turning these critical observations into "learned lessons." The work that follows, integrating findings into a continuous joint force development cycle, will serve as an enabler to building a more responsive, versatile, and affordable force. This initial effort is envisioned to be the first volume in a sustained, multi-phased effort to identify critical, high-level lessons for the joint force.					
<b>15. SUBJECT TERMS</b>					
<b>16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:</b>			<b>17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT</b> UU	<b>18. NUMBER OF PAGES</b> 50	<b>19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON</b> jcoa@js.mil
<b>a. REPORT</b> U	<b>b. ABSTRACT</b> U	<b>c. THIS PAGE</b> U			<b>19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (include area code)</b>

## Joint and Coalition Operational Analysis

**Mission:** In support of the Chairman's Joint Lessons Learned Program, and as directed, the Joint Staff J7 JCOA Division collects, aggregates, analyzes, and disseminates joint lessons learned and best practices across the range of military operations in order to enhance joint capabilities.



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## Decade of War Study

The Decade of War study is JCOA's response to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff's call for learning the lessons of the past decade of US military operations.<sup>1</sup> To conduct the study, the Decade of War study team reviewed 46 JCOA studies dating from the organization's inception in 2003 through early 2012, examining over 400 findings, observations, and best practices in order to identify enduring lessons that can inform future joint force development.<sup>2</sup> This report captures the major themes of the first phase of the study.<sup>3</sup> The study findings were vetted through the Joint Staff J7-sponsored Decade of War working group in May 2012; input from working group members was consolidated into this report. Future phases of study are planned to identify additional issues not captured in the initial body of work.



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<sup>1</sup> GEN Martin E. Dempsey, CJCS, to LtGen George Flynn, "Chairman Direction to J7," official letter, 6 October 2011.

<sup>2</sup> The 46 studies are listed in Appendix A.

<sup>3</sup> The Decade of War study, therefore, neither addresses every aspect of every operation over the past decade, nor is it a comprehensive analysis of lessons developed by other organizations.

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## Foreword

In October 2011, General Martin Dempsey, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, issued a task to “make sure we actually learn the lessons from the last decade of war.” In response, the Joint and Coalition Operational Analysis (JCOA) division reviewed 46 lessons learned studies conducted from 2003 to the present, and synthesized the studies’ 400+ findings, observations, and best practices into the 11 strategic themes described in this report. More than a “decade of war,” the 46 studies covered a wide variety of military operations; from major combat operations in Iraq, to counterinsurgency in Afghanistan and the Philippines, to humanitarian assistance in the United States, Pakistan, and Haiti, to studying emerging regional and global threats.

JCOA’s initial analysis was further refined and discussed by subject matter experts from across the Department of Defense during a weeklong Decade of War conference in May. This report represents the synthesis of those efforts, and while significant, is only the initial step in turning these critical observations into “learned lessons.” The work that follows, integrating findings into a continuous joint force development cycle, will serve as an enabler to building a more responsive, versatile, and affordable force.

The Decade of War, Volume I report is approved for release and dissemination without caveat. Additional themes and associated issues are expected to emerge as this study continues, and will be provided for review, resolution, and incorporation across the joint force.



LtGen George J. Flynn, USMC  
The Joint Staff, J-7  
Director for Joint Force Development

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# Decade of War, Volume I

## Introduction

The year 2001 began with the inauguration of a United States (US) president deliberately aiming to shift the use of the military away from the numerous humanitarian and peacekeeping interventions of the 1990s toward responding to and defeating conventional threats from nation states. The mood was optimistic, with the new US national security strategy citing widespread financial prosperity and no sense of an imminent threat to the homeland.<sup>4</sup> But this situation proved to be fragile: the events of a single day, September 11, altered the trajectory of the US and the way it used its military over the next decade. A national strategy that had focused on countering regional aggressors and sophisticated attacks using weapons of mass destruction (WMD) was now confronted by an enemy that attacked the homeland with low technology in asymmetric and unexpected ways—individuals armed with box-cutters using hijacked civilian aircraft.

In the decade following 9/11, it became evident that the Cold War model that had guided foreign policy for the previous 50 years no longer fit the emerging global environment.

Key changes included:

- A shift from US hegemony toward national pluralism
- The erosion of sovereignty and the impact of weak states
- The empowerment of small groups or individuals
- An increasing need to fight and win in the information domain

In the midst of these changes, the US employed its military in a wide range of operations to address perceived threats from both nation-state and terrorist groups; to strengthen partner nation militaries; to conduct humanitarian assistance operations; and to provide defense support of civil authorities in catastrophic incidents such as Hurricane Katrina. This wide range of operations aimed to promote and protect national interests in the changing global environment.

In general, operations during the first half of the decade were often marked by numerous missteps and challenges as the US government and military applied a strategy and force suited for a different threat and environment. Operations in the second half of the decade often featured successful adaptation to overcome these challenges. From its study of these operations, JCOA identified overarching, enduring lessons for the joint force that present opportunities for the US to learn and improve, best practices that the US can sustain, and emerging risk factors that the US should address. These lessons were derived from JCOA's 46 studies during this past decade and vetted through the Joint Staff J7-sponsored Decade of War working group in May 2012; input from working group members was consolidated into this report.<sup>5</sup> This initial effort is envisioned to be the first volume in a sustained, multi-phased effort to identify critical, high-level lessons for the joint force.

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<sup>4</sup> "A National Security Strategy for a Global Age," White House, December 2000.

<sup>5</sup> A list of JCOA's 46 studies is provided in Appendix A.



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The Volume I report of the Decade of War study discusses the eleven strategic themes that arose from the study of the enduring lessons and challenges of the last decade:

- **Understanding the Environment:** A failure to recognize, acknowledge, and accurately define the operational environment led to a mismatch between forces, capabilities, missions, and goals.
- **Conventional Warfare Paradigm:** Conventional warfare approaches often were ineffective when applied to operations other than major combat, forcing leaders to realign the ways and means of achieving effects.
- **Battle for the Narrative:** The US was slow to recognize the importance of information and the battle for the narrative in achieving objectives at all levels; it was often ineffective in applying and aligning the narrative to goals and desired end states.
- **Transitions:** Failure to adequately plan and resource strategic and operational transitions endangered accomplishment of the overall mission.
- **Adaptation:** Department of Defense (DOD) policies, doctrine, training and equipment were often poorly suited to operations other than major combat, forcing widespread and costly adaptation.
- **Special Operations Forces (SOF) – General Purpose Forces (GPF) Integration:** Multiple, simultaneous, large-scale operations executed in dynamic environments required the integration of general purpose and special operations forces, creating a force-multiplying effect for both.
- **Interagency Coordination:** Interagency coordination was uneven due to inconsistent participation in planning, training, and operations; policy gaps; resources; and differences in organizational culture.
- **Coalition Operations:** Establishing and sustaining coalition unity of effort was a challenge due to competing national interests, cultures, resources, and policies.
- **Host-Nation Partnering:** Partnering was a key enabler and force multiplier, and aided in host-nation capacity building. However, it was not always approached effectively nor adequately prioritized and resourced.
- **State Use of Surrogates and Proxies:** States sponsored and exploited surrogates and proxies to generate asymmetric challenges.
- **Super-Empowered Threats:** Individuals and small groups exploited globalized technology and information to expand influence and approach state-like disruptive capacity.

In this report, we briefly summarize each of these strategic themes and provide recommendations for the joint force.

## Lesson One: Understanding the Environment

In operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere, **a failure to recognize, acknowledge, and accurately define the operational environment led to a mismatch between forces, capabilities, missions, and goals.** The operational environment encompasses not only the threat but also the physical, informational, social, cultural, religious, and economic elements of the environment.<sup>6</sup> Each of these elements was important to understanding the root causes of conflicts, developing an appropriate approach, and anticipating second-order effects. Despite the importance of the operational environment:

- The US government (USG) approach often did not reflect the actual operational environment
- Different components of the USG had differing approaches, based, in part, on different understandings of the environment
- A nuanced understanding the environment was often hindered by a focus on traditional adversaries and a neglect of information concerning the host-nation population
- Over time, forces and leaders adapted tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTP), organizations, and materiel solutions in order to better understand the environment

There were a number of examples where the approach taken by the US military and other government agencies did not reflect the actual operating environment. Iraq in 2003 after major combat operations was one example of this: the US government moved to establish a new sovereign Iraqi government and focused on long-term, state-of-the-art national infrastructure while ignoring early signs of an insurgency. Another example of this occurred in Afghanistan, where the early focus on top-down governance approaches ignored tribal and cultural historical preferences as well as the practical advantages of a bottom-up approach.

In some cases, separate elements of the US government had different approaches based on their views of the nature of the conflict and operational environment. In Iraq in 2003, military plans included assumptions regarding the rapid reconstitution of Iraqi institutions based on the understanding that national capabilities had to be rapidly reconstituted to promote governance and stability. Yet, the first two orders issued by the civilian Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) unexpectedly removed both host-nation security forces and mid-level government bureaucrats, crippling Iraqi governance capacity and providing fuel for the developing resistance to the coalition.<sup>7</sup> These actions created a “security gap” that lasted for years and widened over time, reducing the effectiveness of the reconstruction effort, causing the population to lose trust in the coalition and Iraqi government, and allowing terrorist and criminal elements to thrive. Even two years later, civilian- and military-led reconstruction and

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<sup>6</sup> The operational environment is defined in detail in Joint Pub 2-01.3, “Joint Intelligence Preparation of the Operational Environment,” 16 June 2009.

<sup>7</sup> CPA Order 1, issued 16 May 2003, removed all Iraqi government employees associated with the Ba’ath Party from current and future employment with the Iraqi government. CPA Order 2, issued 23 May 2003, dissolved the Iraqi Army and associated elements.

development efforts had different missions and perceived end-states, which led to large expenditures with limited return, as well as missed opportunities for synergy.

A complete understanding of the operating environment was often hindered by a focus on traditional adversary information and actions in the US approach to intelligence gathering. This focus impacted the US effectiveness in countering asymmetric and irregular threats from insurgencies and mitigating terrorist and criminal influences. Further, shortages of human intelligence (HUMINT) personnel and interpreters needed to capture critical information from the population, and lack of fusion of this intelligence with other sources, exacerbated the problem. Other intelligence capabilities and platforms proved to be valuable but in short supply, but their numbers surged in both Iraq and Afghanistan as their value was recognized. Similarly, recognizing an unmet requirement, manned expeditionary intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) platforms were developed and fielded, including Task Force Odin and Project Liberty.<sup>8, 9</sup> Units also learned to employ different kinds of ISR capabilities according to their local environment.

Because the traditional intelligence effort tended to focus on enemy groups and actions, it often neglected “white” information about the population that was necessary for success in population-centric campaigns such as counterinsurgency (COIN) operations. Local commanders needed information about ethnic and tribal identities, religion, culture, politics, and economics. Intelligence products provided information about enemy actions but were insufficient for other information needed at the local level. Furthermore, there were no pre-established priority intelligence requirements (PIRs) or other checklists or templates that could serve as first-order approximations for what units needed to know for irregular warfare. As a result, processes for obtaining information on “white” population-centric issues tended to be based on discovery learning, and were not consistently passed to follow-on units.

Humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) operations similarly relied on information about the environment for success. Timely initial assessments were critical to an effective response. These assessments were used to determine command and control requirements, damage estimates (including the status of critical infrastructure), the size and type of required military response units, and their deployment priorities. In natural disasters, these assessments were often difficult to achieve due to limited availability of assets. While the US military had significant capability for performing these assessments, the assets used for these assessments (usually air assets) were typically also in high demand for delivering aid and performing search and rescue missions.

In the latter part of the decade, forces learned to overcome the abovementioned challenges, gradually developing innovative, nontraditional means and organizations to develop a more nuanced understanding of the operational environment. These means included direct interaction with the local population through patrols, shuras, and key leader engagements (KLEs); the

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<sup>8</sup> Task Force ODIN was established in 2006 as an expeditionary aviation battalion for providing ISR.

<sup>9</sup> Project Liberty featured modified C-12 aircraft with ISR capabilities. These aircraft were first fielded in 2009.

creation of fusion cells that coupled information from operations and intelligence; the expanded use of liaison officers (LNOs) to facilitate communication and coordination; and the practice of all-source network nodal analysis to guide actions and engagements. These efforts were supported by leaders and organizations taking on risk to lower classification of information to better share with GPF, interagency partners, host-nation forces, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and academia. This information collectively informed a broad set of activities, including high-value individual (HVI) targeting, KLEs, development of host-nation capacity and rule of law, and reconciliation, enabling both the effective targeting of enemy organizations and resources as well as addressing underlying causes of insurgency or terrorism.

Similarly, senior leaders relied on many sources to increase their understanding of the operational environment and glean insights as to what approaches were successful, informing adaptation of their overall approach. These sources included interagency, coalition, and host-nation partners; think-tanks and academia; host-nation civilian advisors; commercial entities, and NGOs. Experts could provide insights into local issues, explain motivations, and help guide consequence management. Some also had local knowledge and contacts that aided coordination with the host nation.

Forward presence was another key element in achieving an accurate understanding of the environment. In areas where US forces were not deployed in significant numbers, even a modest forward presence enhanced situational awareness and deepened relationships. One example of this was the US Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) area of responsibility (AOR). Moving from a robust, Panama-centric presence to a modest presence in the AOR presented challenges; however, SOUTHCOM worked to maintain forward locations and basing arrangements to sustain presence and access in the region despite the move of its headquarters. Similarly, US forward presence in the Philippines proved to be useful well beyond the narrow US counterterrorism (CT) focus of their mission. Resultant relationships with host-nation forces at multiple echelons provided for improved exchange of information and strengthened understanding of terrorist and insurgent operations, as well as greater acceptance of US presence and opportunities for synergy in support of shared goals.

### **Way Ahead:**

**Improve assessments:** Educate leaders on the importance of conducting assessments based on information, intelligence, and insights drawn from a wide variety of sources (KLEs, interagency subject matter experts [SMEs], academia, think-tanks, battlefield circulation, etc.).

**Develop future requirements:** Given the increasingly decentralized and joint nature of operations, develop a strategy for best meeting ISR and information requirements of military forces.

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**Promote fusion:** Pursue policies and information technology (IT) solutions to promote information fusion and dissemination in support of operations and reduce compartmentalization/stove-piping of intelligence and information across the interagency and among partner nations.

**Revisit classification policies:** Re-examine classification policies to preserve necessary operations security (OPSEC) but reduce unnecessary classification of information to promote information sharing and common understanding of the operational environment.

**Improve ISR support to operations:** Increase access to expeditionary ISR platforms and improve training of personnel on available ISR capabilities to operations (e.g., to better enable conduct of focused, intelligence-driven operations, or to enable rapid assessments in support of HADR operations).

**Build relationships:** Bring in experts from all backgrounds—military, other interagency, NGOs, think-tanks, academia, private sector, and local nationals—and leverage their insights and expertise to inform and tailor approaches.

**Improve language and cultural proficiency:** Expand and incentivize language and cultural training across the force.

**Leverage forward presence:** Cultivate and leverage relationships and expertise on the operating environment that result from forward presence of military and other interagency elements.

**Plan comprehensively:** Conduct, refine, and update campaign planning, applying operational design that reflects an understanding of the environment, describes the problem, and outlines an approach to accomplishing strategic objectives.

## Lesson Two: Conventional Warfare Paradigm

The two instances of major combat operations in Afghanistan in 2001 and in Iraq in 2003 were validation of the US ability to conduct such operations rapidly and surgically.<sup>10</sup> It is critical for the US to retain this capability to provide overmatch capability in major combat operations against peers and regional aggressors. However, **conventional warfare approaches often were ineffective when applied to operations other than major combat, forcing leaders to realign the ways and means of achieving effects.** This was necessary in part because adversaries, seeing the overmatch capability of the US in conventional war, decided to employ asymmetric means instead of conventional force-on-force combat operations.

Conventional warfare is exemplified by fighting in World War II, Korea, and Operation DESERT STORM. The paradigm of conventional war has been characterized as:

- Use of force against opposing uniformed military forces
- Centralized command and control (C2) and intelligence to support the massing of resources against the enemy center of gravity of enemy forces
- The purpose being to weaken the opposing military force until capitulation of the nation state is achieved
- The military force being the chief agent<sup>11</sup>

The past decade saw many operations other than major combat, such as counterinsurgency, stability, counterterrorism, humanitarian assistance/disaster relief, anti-piracy, and counter-narcotics operations. Operations conducted in many locations, such as in the former Yugoslavia republic, Chechnya, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Vietnam, Panama, Bosnia, Kosovo, Colombia, Somalia, Yemen, and the Philippines, suggest that operations other than conventional warfare will represent the prevalent form of warfare in the future. As evidenced by the last ten years, forces found success in employing different methods and resources for these other types of operations:

- Combining direct and indirect approaches for generating needed effects, leveraging a broad set of tools including precise force, money as a weapons system, and key leader engagements
- Empowerment of lower echelons, where tactical forces were empowered to act flexibly and decisively through decentralized C2 and pushing down joint assets to lower echelons
- Sustainability and capacity building, where success hinged on the sustainability of achieved progress, achieved through building of host-nation capacity
- A partnered, whole-of-government approach<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Initial operations in Afghanistan could be regarded as a hybrid of major conventional war (because of the high intensity) and irregular operations (because of the low density of ground forces, many of them host-nation guerilla-type forces).

<sup>11</sup> Martin van Creveld, "Modern Conventional Warfare: An Overview," National Intelligence Council Workshop, 25 May 2004.

<sup>12</sup> For example, "Unconventional Warfare," Army Special Operations Forces, FM 3-05.130, September 2008; Major Anthony M. Henderson, "Command, Cooperation, and Control for Joint Distributed Operations," Naval War College, 13 February 2006.

In conventional war, forces employed a direct approach in combat, using force against an enemy military to achieve objectives. In contrast, over the past decade, forces learned to combine both direct and indirect approaches for generating effects. The combination of these approaches leveraged a broad set of tools including the use of precise force, money as a weapons system, information operations (IO), and KLEs to address threats both directly and indirectly. In particular, the indirect approach was able to target underlying root causes for the support of terror and/or insurgency.

The use of force continued to be a critical tool in operations. Moreover, the use of precision engagements and avoiding collateral damage, especially noncombatant civilian casualties (CIVCAS) became paramount in preserving necessary freedom of action.<sup>13</sup> Efforts to be precise and discriminatory in engagements were aided by increasing availability of precision air- and ground-based weapons. In addition, units had increasing quantities of ISR support to determine positive identification and screen for potential collateral damage. Finally, leaders pressed units to take additional steps to avoid civilian casualties beyond those required by international law, such as tactical patience and looking for tactical alternatives (e.g., employing a sniper instead of using an airstrike against enemy taking refuge in civilian homes). Forces in Afghanistan discovered that there were win-win scenarios for the use of force and limiting collateral damage: forces could maintain or increase mission effectiveness while also reducing civilian casualties. Conversely, US forces found that insurgent groups were strengthened and US freedom of action could be curtailed when US forces caused civilian casualties, particularly when the incident took on political dimensions or was highlighted in the international news media.<sup>14</sup>

Conventional war features a hierarchical top-down command structure to manage the different forces and support the massing of major military elements against the center of gravity of enemy forces. Information and intelligence gained by tactical forces are fed back to the top where adjustments were made to the overall scheme of maneuver. In contrast, for other kinds of operations in the past decade, especially those featuring fleeting targets and population-centric campaigns, forces found this arrangement ineffective. Rather, flexibility and empowerment at the lowest appropriate level promoted success in these kinds of operations. Leaders deliberately decentralized authorities and capabilities to support a mission-type mode of command, providing the intent of the strategy and then allowing subordinate forces the freedom to innovate and explore tactical alternatives within given left and right limits. Later, when progress was evident but some areas presented persistent problems, forces developed flexible command and control arrangements that combined the strengths of decentralization with the ability to mass effects through centralization.

Unlike conventional war, success in many of the operations over the past decade depended on building local capacity and sustaining gains that were made during operations. This focus on capacity building taxed the military and the US government overall, as they were often not

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<sup>13</sup> The ability to conduct military operations in an area of operations without interference.

<sup>14</sup> These events could create anger within the population, fueling insurgent or terror elements either directly by taking up arms or indirectly through the provision of shelter or money.

prepared for these tasks, especially on the scale demanded in Iraq and Afghanistan. For example, the task of creating Iraqi military and police forces, along with their accompanying institutions, created a severe burden on both US military and civilian organizations. This burden was magnified by the initial lack of preparation for this mission and compounded by the semi- to non-permissive security environment in which civilian agencies and departments did not normally operate.

Conventional warfare and operations other than major combat have different means (“the use of force” versus “broader effects combining direct and indirect approach”) and ends (“capitulation of a military force” versus “sustainability and capacity building”). Because of these differences, operations other than major combat required a broader response than the military was prepared to provide, necessitating an effort that combined the strengths and capabilities of multiple USG departments and agencies, as well as coalition partners and, in some cases, NGOs. Best practices and challenges regarding interagency unity of effort are included in this report in Lesson Seven, *Interagency Coordination*, and for coalition operations in Lesson Eight, *Coalition Operations*.

### **Way Ahead:**

**Retain overmatch capability:** The US must maintain its overmatch in conventional warfare against peers and regional aggressors.

**Capture TTP for rapid adaptation:** Retain and refine the ability to rapidly adapt.

**Institutionalize non-conventional warfare:** Refine the ability of the military to conduct non-conventional warfare, identifying specific capabilities and adaptations developed over the past decade that must be sustained.

**Update education and training:** Incorporate key lessons from the past decade regarding non-conventional warfare into education and training.

**Maintain flexibility of task organization:** Be prepared to create, task, and resource tailored organizations to meet unique operational conditions and requirements.

**Empower jointness:** Provide necessary authorities, expertise, and access to joint enablers at the lowest appropriate level.

**Leverage knowledge management:** Promote common situational awareness, unified action, and swift learning of lessons through streamlined sharing and collaboration solutions.



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**Reorient intelligence:** Be prepared to transition the intelligence paradigm from the traditional top-down flow to a bottom-up flow when necessitated by local conditions. Maintain the ability of GPF to conduct all-source network analysis.

**Reassess force alignment and employment:** Readdress force structure and related policy issues regarding active, Reserve, Guard, and civilian components to better leverage expertise and capabilities and allow more agile and tailored support to operations.

## Lesson Three: Battle for the Narrative

Over the past ten years of military operations, adversaries of the US realized that physical victory on the battlefield was not the only way to meet their overall objectives; by influencing *perceptions* on a local or global scale, they could advance their interests. The US also had interests in shaping perceptions, and this resulted in a competition in the information domain. In this paper, we call this competition over influencing perceptions “the battle for the narrative.”<sup>15</sup> Over the past decade, **the US was slow to recognize the importance of information and the battle for the narrative in achieving objectives at all levels; it was often ineffective in applying and aligning the narrative to goals and desired end states.** In particular, the US response to the emergent battle for the narrative was characterized by:

- An initial lack of leadership emphasis and resources that addressed information as an instrument of national power
- The proliferation of technology that changed the paradigm of communication and information flow
- Eventual adaptation, where the US developed best practices that allowed it to be more proactive in the battle for the narrative
- Increased transparency that benefited relationships and garnered external support for US efforts
- Continued challenges in matching words with deeds

In major combat operations, the US was successful in employing military power; however, other instruments of national power (diplomatic, information, and economic) became more important as operations shifted away from major combat. In particular, the US was challenged with providing accurate and timely information in the battle for the narrative. This was partially because the US did not appear to apply necessary resources and leadership emphasis on this aspect of operations. Additionally, both plans and staffs did not reflect a significant emphasis on communication in the first half of the decade.

The proliferation of the internet, social media, and personal electronic devices caused the paradigm of communication to shift: it was no longer possible for the military to tightly control and limit information.<sup>16</sup> While the military was slow to adapt to these developments, the enemy was not, developing considerable skill in using these new means of communication to their own ends. In addition, the enemy was frequently unconstrained by the truth: for example, they could feed false information to the media through the use of news stringers on fast-dial from an insurgent/terrorist cell phone. This allowed the enemy to make the first impression, an impression that could be difficult or impossible to overcome, even when false. For example, a premature detonation of an improvised explosive device (IED) in Kandahar City, which resulted

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<sup>15</sup> Under this definition, the “battle for the narrative” encompasses strategic communication and its key elements: public affairs, public diplomacy, and information operations.

<sup>16</sup> Instances of progress made through transparency put into question whether the paradigm of tightly controlling information is the best approach, even if it were still possible.

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in many civilian casualties, was quickly (and falsely) reported to be a Predator strike. Though not true, years later, locals still believed the casualties came from a coalition airstrike.

New advances in communication also impacted Israel during the 2006 Lebanon War. Initially, the Israeli military response to Hezbollah was widely seen as justified, but as time progressed and Hezbollah successfully manipulated print, broadcast, and online media, the world increasingly saw images of civilian casualties (both doctored and real) and the tide of public opinion turned. There was a widespread sentiment regarding Israel's "disproportionate response," and Israel was not successful in turning this tide.

The US later adapted and developed best practices to be more proactive in the battle for the narrative. For example, Multi-National Force – Iraq (MNF-I) developed a cell that monitored both national and international media to understand trends and issues. This effort was directly supported by senior leaders so that the process could influence as well as inform. If an Iraqi government leader said something that was harmful to the coalition effort, the MNF-I commander would promptly go meet with him and try to resolve the situation. Similarly, the Presidential Information Coordination Cell (PICC) in Afghanistan was established to manage communication and information between the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and the host-nation government. The PICC was often successful in resolving potentially negative issues before they became public.

In addition, ISAF increased its transparency concerning the issue of civilian casualties, inviting in both governmental and non-governmental organizations to better understand ISAF efforts and allow these other organizations to provide input in a recurring, candid forum. Though this was slow to develop, increased transparency benefitted the relationship of ISAF both with the host-nation government and non-governmental organizations; these other organizations responded to this transparency by adopting more supportive and sympathetic positions regarding ISAF operations that were positive contributions in the overall battle for the narrative.

Finally, while managing information and communication was critical in the battle for the narrative, the past decade also showed that words alone were not sufficient; they had to be consistent with deeds. The image of the US was frequently tarnished by tactical actions that contradicted US values or strategy. The Abu Ghraib scandal in Iraq, documented in photos that were widely disseminated, undermined the mission and significantly marred the image of the US. Years later, terrorists in Iraq and Afghanistan cited the Abu Ghraib incident as their motivation for striking the United States. In Afghanistan, the burning of Korans in spring 2012 created significant backlash. In that case, US personnel were taking actions to remove a variety of documents, including some religious texts, which had been altered by detainees. The context for these actions—that Korans had been cut up and written in by detainees in part to communicate messages—was not communicated, and the US forces' action was perceived as religious persecution rather than countering insurgent efforts. Similarly, the negative sentiment concerning Israel in the 2006 Lebanon War, while exacerbated by an enemy IO campaign, was rooted in a heavy-handed Israeli approach that failed to adequately discriminate between combatants and noncombatants and went against international norms for the conduct of combat.

## Way Ahead:

**Assess our ability to use information:** Conduct a comprehensive examination and assessment of force structure, actors, and tools with regard to communication strategy.

**Update policy and doctrine:** Expand policy and doctrine to encompass best practices and recent challenges. This should include an approach that leverages technology and new advances in social media.

**Tailor the communication strategy:** Ensure communication strategy considers all relevant actors' instruments of power; cultural, religious, and other demographic factors; and employs innovative, nontraditional methods and sources.

**Increase transparency:** While observing necessary OPSEC, aggressively share information with host nations, NGOs, and others to increase transparency and understanding of US positions.

**Coordinate approach:** Develop and execute a communication strategy with interagency, coalition, and when possible, host-nation participants.

**Anticipate consequence management:** Develop the communication strategy at each level for the plan, branches, and sequels, anticipating the requirement for consequence management to mitigate actual and alleged negative incidents.

**Resource the IO effort:** Ensure the right equipment and experienced, trained personnel are available to conduct information operations.

**Proactive messaging:** Develop innovative, nontraditional sources to “keep a finger on the pulse” of the operating environment and maintain an aggressive information assessment and analysis cycle.

**Be fast and not wrong:** Be “first with the truth” by using pre-planned messages and streamlined authorities for communication; at the same time, only report confirmed details to avoid retractions and a loss of credibility.

**Build partner capacity:** Help partners develop the capability to report responsibly in the media and provide key enablers to help them execute this mission.

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**Reinforce words with deeds:** Include a rigorous treatment of the laws of armed conflict (LOAC), ethics, civilian casualty consequence management, and cultural awareness as part of the “profession of arms” in training and leadership development.

**Involve commanders:** Ensure commanders at all levels know that the battle for the narrative is “commanders’ business.” Leaders must both monitor for early warning indicators of potential issues that could negatively affect the narrative and look for good-news stories that reinforce the narrative.

## Lesson Four: Transitions

All operations in the past decade featured important transitions, such as the transition from Phase III to Phase IV in Iraq, the transfer to Iraqi sovereignty (performed in two steps in 2004 and 2005), the transition to North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) leadership in Afghanistan in 2006, and the transition to host-nation responsibility during numerous HADR events (e.g., the Pakistan earthquake of 2005).<sup>17</sup> Transitions between phases of operations offer opportunities for advancing our strategic interests if they are managed well; alternately, they are opportunities for the enemy or for the failure of our intended objectives if they are not. In the first half of the decade, **failure to adequately plan and resource strategic and operational transitions endangered accomplishment of the overall mission.** The US handling of transitions over the past decade was characterized by:

- Poor preparation, faulty assumptions, and inadequate branches and sequels
- Significant disconnects between military and civilian planning efforts
- Insufficient resourcing of key transitions
- Lack of guidance and unity of effort from strategic leadership
- An eventual improvement in our ability to conduct successful transitions later in the decade

Transitions were often poorly prepared for with regard to planning and training. Plans for transitions did not include well-developed branch plans for contingencies. In Iraq, while Phases II and III were meticulously planned and trained extensively, post-major combat operations were not. In addition, pre-deployment training focused on major combat tactics and maneuver of large-sized forces, not contingency or stability operations. The joint and Service training centers prepared forces for major combat operations, while planning and rehearsal for post-combat conditions were far less comprehensive. Non-combat skills, to include civil affairs, were not adequately rehearsed alongside combat, war-winning skills, making it more difficult to incorporate them into operational units. It was not until later that training centers tailored pre-deployment training to integrate lessons on stability and counterinsurgency tasks.

In addition, the post-major combat plan for Iraq was reliant upon civilian elements of the USG and based upon assumptions of a stable security environment and a capable Iraqi government and security force. Despite the significant role that USG civilian elements had to play, they were not significantly involved in early planning efforts. This contributed to significant disconnects between planning assumptions used in military- and civilian-led efforts; as previously described, these disconnects were exacerbated by CPA actions in the summer of 2003, as well as divergent military and civilian reconstruction approaches over the following several years.

Similarly, during the transition to NATO leadership in Afghanistan in 2006, military planning assumed that the chief duties of ISAF would be reconstruction and the provision of humanitarian

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<sup>17</sup> Phase III refers to major combat operations, while Phase IV refers to post-major combat operations.

aid. This faulty assumption caused a mismatch between ISAF policies and actual, on-the-ground mission requirements.

One reason for faulty planning assumptions was that the planned end states were based largely on US expectations instead of those consistent with the host nation and mission. For example, the planned end state for Afghanistan was envisioned to be a strong central government, despite no record of such a government in Afghan history and lack of broad popular support for that system of governance. Another was the lack of anticipation of operations shifting from a military LOAC framework to a warrant-based law enforcement framework as host-nation sovereignty increased. These faulty assumptions led to mismatches in approaches that were later overcome by adaptation. The approach that envisioned a strong central government in Afghanistan was later combined with efforts to develop local governance and security (e.g., Village Stability Operations/Afghan Local Police [VSO/ALP]), while the transition from a LOAC framework was addressed through ad hoc approaches to address requirements for warrants and evidentiary support to satisfy the host nation and preserve freedom of action.

Transitions tended to be poorly resourced and lacked adequate numbers of personnel with sufficient expertise or training. For example, shortly after the end of major combat operations in Iraq, the V Corps commander arrived in theater to assume command of Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF) 7, having trained for division-level combat operations and not as a joint task force that would lead national-scale reconstruction and stabilization. His staff was not manned, equipped, or resourced to accept these responsibilities, as many experienced and theater-acclimated forces and support assets were redeployed after major combat operations. Civilian manning for CPA also remained low throughout 2003. Over the ensuing years, Embassy and Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) partners gradually increased in number, but they often lacked the necessary expertise and experience.

In the first half of the decade, strategic leadership repeatedly failed to properly guide and execute transitions. In Iraq 2003, the transition plans were changed drastically at the last minute, requiring V Corps to take the unexpected role described above and develop plans on the fly.

Lack of unity of effort between civilian and military organizations tended to be a key component of transition challenges.<sup>18</sup> The rapid transfer from military to civilian leadership in summer 2003 repeated a lesson seen from previous operations over the history of the US: premature transition to civilian agencies.<sup>19</sup> Similar challenges were observed in the hand-over of sovereignty to Iraq

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<sup>18</sup> Hindrances to unity of effort included unequal tour lengths of civilian and military personnel, lack of comprehensive, preparatory war-gaming for the whole-of-government team; institutional barriers; and lack of understanding of counterpart cultures and bureaucratic processes. This issue is discussed in more detail in Lesson Seven, *Interagency Coordination*.

<sup>19</sup> Defense Secretary Stimson, "If there is one outstanding lesson to be gained from prior American experiences in military government, it is the unwisdom of permitting any premature interference by civilian agencies with the Army's basic task of civil administration in occupied areas... in those important American experiences in military government (Civil War, Philippine War, and WWI) where civilian influence was permitted to be exercised, the results were,

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in June 2004. The two senior leaders were replaced simultaneously, when GEN Casey succeeded LTG Sanchez and AMB Negroponete succeeded AMB Bremer. Several critical organizations were also created during this time, including Multi-National Force – Iraq, Multi-National Security Transition Command – Iraq (MNSTC-I), and the US Embassy. These changes in key leaders and organizations during the transition added to the challenges.

Transition timelines that were politically-driven exacerbated the lack of resources. For example, in Iraq in 2004, civilian and military organizations had only just sorted out their respective responsibilities for training, equipping, and supporting operational employment of the Iraqi security forces when the US executed the transition to Iraqi sovereignty. The transition, coupled with the delay in establishing these responsibilities, pushed the Iraqi security forces into a role for which they were not yet ready, degrading security and further challenging the effort to build these forces. While the US will not always have control of timelines for transition, the timelines under US control should be informed by accurate assessments that include risk to the mission. For timelines not under US control, senior leaders can still work to maintain necessary influence to keep transition timelines as realistic as possible.

Many of these transition challenges described above were remedied during important transitions in the latter half of the decade. Leaders learned critical lessons and worked to understand the operational environment; they designed transitions to be more conditions-based to reflect this understanding. Likewise, an awareness of specific weaknesses of host-nation militaries and governments facilitated the use of tailored enablers to prop up host-nation capabilities and promote success during key transitions. Transitions were planned and resourced appropriately, with key staff retained through the critical transition periods.

Other operations demonstrated the importance of unity of effort and integrated leadership to successful transitions. For example, in Haiti humanitarian assistance/peacekeeping operations in 2004, SOUTHCOM benefited from pre-existing relationships with interagency partners that helped them overcome the challenges arising from the ad hoc nature of and wide variety of participants in the operation. Within days of the deployment of US troops to Haiti, SOUTHCOM leveraged its joint interagency coordination group (JIACG) to provide a forum for discourse between the various USG elements involved in the region. Again, after the Haiti earthquake of 2010, the robust integration of interagency representation at SOUTHCOM gave the command an enhanced ability to gain situational awareness and provide focused aid in the challenging environment, promoting successful transition of responsibilities to the variety of civilian agencies and international organizations working on behalf of the Haitian government.

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respectively, demoralizing, costly, and ludicrous.” Harry L. Coles and Albert K. Weinberg, *Civil Affairs: Soldiers Become Governors*, Center of Military History, 1992.



## Way Ahead:

**Plan the transitions:** Because phases are not discrete events, transitions must be planned for ahead of time and properly resourced.

**Understand, influence, and enable:** Understand the capabilities, authorities, and restrictions of the government agency, coalition partner, or host nation to whom responsibilities are being transferred, and work to maintain influence and to enable their success.

**Manage the transitions:** Clearly define desired end states for transitions, develop an assessment process to provide feedback to inform the transition, and ensure continuity through transitions by avoiding major changes to leaders, staff, and organizations during significant transition events.

**Tailor training:** Continue to develop innovative training and education approaches that enhance individual, unit, and leader preparation for civil-military team transition environments.

**Codify the comprehensive approach:** Establish civil-military organizational structures and doctrinal-type guidance to support a comprehensive approach to transitions that is conditions-based yet acknowledges politically-determined milestones.

**Leverage a variety of sources to improve situational awareness:** Continue to develop innovative, nontraditional methods and sources to maintain situational awareness, a key requirement for transitions as resources/force levels change.

## Lesson Five: Adaptation

Adaptation is an essential part of the military profession and of military operations. At the same time, adaptation must be balanced with the requirement to appropriately train and equip forces in order to keep adaptation and resultant risk at manageable levels. In the course of operations, especially in the first half of the decade following 9/11, **DOD policies, doctrine, training, and equipment were often poorly suited to operations other than major combat, forcing widespread and costly adaptation**, and in the process, threatening the mission. For example, doctrine voids were exposed during this time, as evidenced by the amount of important doctrine that was created in the second half of the decade to compensate.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, forces were trained to win against another nation's armed forces, and were not prepared to combat adaptive insurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan. Equipment suited for conventional war was not always suited for COIN or stability operations, resulting in many urgent operational needs voiced in theater for required capabilities.

Fortunately, the challenge of inadequate planning and preparation was matched by widespread and often successful adaptation at all levels. Forces on the ground learned from challenges and adapted their approaches to compensate, developing:

- New organizations
- New TTP
- Rapid fielding and innovative use of tailored materiel solutions
- Adaptive leadership approaches
- Agile workarounds for the passing of and acting upon lessons

While this adaptation was generally successful, it was also costly in terms of time and resources expended.

Since forces were primarily organized for major combat operations, there was a necessity to develop new types of organizations at all echelons to address the changed environment. This included organizations at the strategic headquarters in Iraq such as the Force Strategic Engagement Cell (FSEC) that worked toward reconciliation of insurgents, the PRTs that worked at the regional level to extend governance capacity of the host-nation government, and the Human Terrain System that developed human terrain teams (HTTs) working at the local level to provide subject matter expertise on local culture. Similarly, forces developed in-theater initiatives such as the COIN Academy, which provided near-term, tailored training to fill identified gaps while the schoolhouses adjusted their curricula to better match the operational missions. At the same time, advisor and lessons learned organizations were used to identify and overcome tactical and operational shortfalls across a broad set of missions.

Forces also adapted TTP to promote success in this kind of environment. One example was the F3EAD (find, fix, finish, exploit, analyze, and disseminate) targeting approach superseding the

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<sup>20</sup> For example, JP 3-24 *Counterinsurgency Operations*, 5 October 2009; JP 3-07 *Stability Operations*, 29 September 2011; and JP 3-26 *Counterterrorism*, 13 November 2009. Each of these doctrinal publications had significant updates during this time period.

decide-detect-deliver-assess (D3A) approach. SOF used the F3EAD approach in HVI targeting against insurgents, and over time this TTP was increasingly used by GPF in their targeting operations as well. This TTP proved effective against enemies who did not wear uniforms and hid among the population. As host-nation judicial systems matured, forces adapted their targeting toward a warrant-based approach in order to reinforce rule of law and model law enforcement for the host nation. Another new organizational structure, fusion cells, provided an institutional structure through which this TTP could be learned. Other tailored and adaptive TTP in Iraq and Afghanistan included KLEs, sensitive site exploitation (SSE), and CIVCAS battle damage assessments (BDA) (geared towards identifying the presence and scope of civilian harm).

The fielding of new equipment aided the innovative TTP described above. For example, forces employed new ISR assets and capabilities to augment intelligence collection. As these ISR assets were fielded in increasing numbers, they could then be provided to lower echelons to better find and fix terrorists/insurgents, minimize civilian harm during engagements, engage with the population, and pursue reconciliation efforts. Other equipment was fielded to provide enhanced force protection against asymmetric threats (e.g., mine resistant ambush protected vehicles [MRAPS] and electronic countermeasures). While providing needed capability rapidly, challenges with accelerated development and rapid fielding included forces not being able to train on these capabilities prior to their deployment, as well as the possibility that vulnerabilities, interoperability problems, and maintenance issues were not identified until capabilities were already fielded.

Leaders blended historical good ideas with current, successful adaptation by tactical forces to modify their overall approaches. One example was the reconciliation initiatives in Al Anbar Province, Iraq. After then-LTG Odierno heard of the successes coalition forces were having in Al Anbar, he broadened and adapted their reconciliation efforts into an Iraq-wide movement. Underlying this expansion was the recognition that success required a change in focus from understanding the threat to understanding the environment. This broader understanding was necessary for success across the range of coalition force missions, including providing security, pursuing reconciliation, mentoring host-nation security forces and ministries, influencing the population to support the host-nation government, and targeting insurgent and terrorist networks.

Sometimes, adaptation led to the discovery that the old model was preferable. For example, SOUTHCOM adapted a functional organizational model that departed from the previous J-code structure. This new model was not successful in dealing with the crisis of the Haiti earthquake response in 2010, so SOUTHCOM quickly reverted back to its original J-code organization, confirming the value of this organizational construct.

While units learned and adapted to their operating environments, their experiences, best practices, and lessons were not always shared, either within theater or with the larger DOD institutions. Although there were many Service lessons learned organizations with active data collection efforts operating in theater, their efforts tended to stay in their respective stovepipes and were rarely integrated across the joint force. Service lessons learned efforts generally supported adaptation at the Service tactical level, which was their chartered mission, but joint

tactical, operational, and strategic-level lessons were often unaddressed unless specifically requested by commanders. The smaller, more agile, and better-resourced SOF lessons learned organizations tended to be more focused and their processes were designed for a quick turnaround to forces in theater. A number of ad hoc mechanisms were established to improve the effectiveness and timeliness of the lessons learned process, including the Army's Operation ENDURING FREEDOM (OEF) Lessons Learned Forum and the Joint Staff CIVCAS Working Group. These mechanisms helped provide focus and sharing of lessons for key operational challenges.

### **Way Ahead:**

**Plan to adapt:** Continually challenge assumptions and requirements; put mechanisms in place to adapt quickly.

**Foster adept leaders:** Develop and promote leaders who remain flexible, question existing paradigms, assume risk, and foster interorganizational collaboration.

**Capture successful adaptation:** Identify the best examples of adaptation over the past decade and incorporate them into doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel, and facilities (DOTMLPF).

**Sustain doctrine's relevance:** Ensure doctrine remains pertinent; increase knowledge and use of its principles through training and education.

**Broaden solution sets:** Develop SME networking capabilities to augment adaptation in the field; involve experimentation and concepts in solving time-sensitive problems.

**Energize the lessons learned process:** Mandate, codify, and execute a standard process to collect lessons from current operations; rapidly disseminate and incorporate those lessons, making them available to a worldwide audience.

## Lesson Six: SOF-GPF Integration

In Iraq and Afghanistan, **multiple, simultaneous, large-scale operations executed in dynamic environments required the integration of SOF and GPF, creating a force multiplying effect for both.** The relationship between SOF and GPF elements developed over time:

- Initially SOF and GPF were not well coordinated and sometimes were working at cross purposes
- Localized efforts to integrate SOF and GPF capabilities proved successful, creating a blueprint for a synergistic approach to targeting
- SOF-GPF integration were also critical to large-scale development of host-nation security forces in Iraq and Afghanistan
- This integration was promoted by SOF leaders and their commitment of personnel and resources

While SOF and GPF initially experienced friction operating together, through deliberate efforts and experience they developed means of effective integration that enhanced the collective mission sets of both.

In post-2003 Iraq, SOF operations were not always well coordinated with GPF. This led to situations where GPF, as the battlespace owners (BSO), were left managing the second-order effects of SOF targeting operations. GPF complained about not receiving notice of impending operations, not receiving intelligence that came from SOF operations, and significant disruption of their battlespace in the aftermath of those operations. Similar complaints were made by GPF in Afghanistan through 2008. For Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force (CJSOTF) forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, one factor for poor coordination was the Theater Special Operations Command (TSOC) being unable to provide effective representation at senior levels. This was later addressed in Afghanistan through creation of an in-theater, flag-level command, Combined Forces Special Operations Component Command – Afghanistan (CFSOCC-A), to better integrate SOF activities into an overall strategic campaign.

Over time, SOF and GPF elements worked to integrate and take advantage of SOF capabilities and GPF capacities. An early example of this integration was among Task Force Freedom and SOF operating together in Mosul, Iraq in 2005. These elements combined assets and target lists to create an integrated force to combat the enemy. This approach was later expanded into other areas of Iraq and institutionalized into Intelligence Fusion Cells. These fusion cells allowed expansion of the total set of actionable targets—a set that was too large to be handled by a single force—as well as a synergistic approach to actioning those targets. By the end of 2008, dramatic progress in security had been made: attack levels were the lowest since the summer of 2003. The integrated targeting effort between SOF elements and GPF were a significant component of this success.

In Afghanistan, SOF and GPF integration improved considerably from 2009-2010. SOF operations were better coordinated with BSOs, and SOF provided support to consequence management when necessary. At the same time, communication increased regarding targeting, and SOF

focused more on targets that hindered BSO freedom of maneuver. In 2011, SOF elements began conducting pre-deployment training with GPF in order to accelerate integration when in theater.

SOF and GPF also collectively contributed to developing host-nation security forces in Iraq and Afghanistan. All forces moved to a partnered approach to operations, collectively boosting host-nation capability and providing enhanced freedom of action. GPF focused on the regular army and police forces, while SOF focused on host-nation Special Forces and army and police counterterrorism units. Collectively, again, SOF and GPF combined to address training and partnering requirements that were beyond the scope of what was manageable by either force independently.

While an early example of progress (i.e., Mosul 2005) was accomplished through cooperation at the working level, many of the later improvements were driven by SOF senior leaders as they emphasized the importance of integration with GPF. The creation of fusion cells in Iraq involved a commitment of SOF personnel and ISR resources, and additional personnel were devoted to initial reconciliation efforts as well. In both Iraq and Afghanistan, SOF also used their resources to create a network of LNOs to provide a direct conduit between SOF and GPF in order to improve communication and collaboration.

### **Way Ahead:**

**Expand leader understanding:** Provide SOF-GPF leaders with an expanded understanding of each force's capabilities and limitations.

**Establish habitual training and mission relationships:** Maintain events that allow SOF-GPF to train together, expand those events beyond pre-deployment training, and develop GPF with a regional focus and a habitual relationship with corresponding theater special operations commands.

**Institutionalize best practices for optimal ISR use:** Capture TTP and best practices for ISR employment developed by SOF and GPF during operations over the past decade.

**Institutionalize collaboration best practices:** Promote policies and mechanisms for rapidly sharing information and enabling SOF-GPF collaboration based on best practices from the past decade.

**Codify collaborative targeting approach:** Document and maintain a methodology for collaborative SOF-GPF targeting.

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**Improve rapid fielding of capabilities:** Maintain the GPF's ability to rapidly obtain and field capabilities (weapons, equipment) to promote integration with SOF.

**Improve joint manning processes:** Ensure GPF force manning processes are tailorable and responsive, and personnel are properly prepared.

## Lesson Seven: Interagency Coordination

In the wide range of operations conducted over the previous decade, **interagency coordination was uneven due to inconsistent participation in planning, training, and operations; policy gaps; resources; and differences in organizational culture.** Similarly, the military was challenged in working with NGOs, a type of organization that interacts frequently with some elements of the interagency but less commonly with the military. Overall, during the previous decade: The US interagency was unable to harness the full extent of national capabilities to meet requirements early on

- Over time, military and civilian organizations learned to better leverage each other's strengths and capabilities, despite institutional barriers to cooperation
- Interagency action plans were created for some missions, but the interagency lacked an overall blueprint for unified action
- Coordination with NGOs was also generally beneficial, though relationships were challenged by a mutual lack of understanding

Initially in Iraq and Afghanistan, interagency unity of effort was a resounding failure.<sup>21</sup> DOD partnering with other US departments and agencies during the first half of the decade consistently failed to harness the strengths and resources of the respective organizations. In fact, several JCOA studies reported that the biggest lesson for the US from the first five years of war in Iraq was “the inability to apply and focus the full resources and capabilities of the US in a concerted and coherent way.”<sup>22</sup> Despite the criticality of unity of effort among elements of the US government for these operations, it was slow to develop and was largely personality-dependent. In fact, in Iraq, the notable unity of effort that was finally achieved was largely because of deliberate efforts of both military and civilian leaders.

Over time, military and civilian staffs learned to leverage each other's strengths and communicate more effectively, lessening the need for leadership to be a forcing function for collaboration. In the early years of the decade, successes were more commonly seen at the tactical level between elements that were forward-deployed. Later, civilian and military senior leaders embraced the need to integrate and became forcing functions for integration within their respective staffs. Nevertheless, these deliberate efforts had to overcome institutional barriers to cooperation such as:

- **Disparate organizational cultures and visions:** Differences between the planning and action-oriented military and the collaborative and longer-term thinking Department of State (DOS) and US Agency for International Development (USAID) personnel, each with different missions, led to friction.

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<sup>21</sup> The challenge of interagency operations is not a new lesson. A Joint Staff memorandum from 50 years ago pointed out this lesson: “In the past it has been extremely difficult to achieve interdepartmental planning... these inhibitions of other governmental agencies must in some way be overcome.” Joint Staff Memorandum, 20 March 1961.

<sup>22</sup> “Transition to Sovereignty, Joint Lessons Learned for Operation IRAQI FREEDOM,” JCOA Report, April 2007.



- **Different levels of resources:** The military’s budget and manpower pools were usually considerably larger than those of DOS, complicating partnering efforts and clouding responsibilities for areas where DOS had overall organizational primacy.
- **Different lexicons:** Differences in language and the absence of interagency “doctrine” complicated joint collaboration.
- **Security:** There were differing abilities to deploy and operate in challenging security environments.
- **Training:** Military training focused on traditional warfighting and produced personnel with strong planning skills; civilian training and education focused on their respective tasks, not in collaboration with the military.

Despite these challenges, an increasingly expeditionary mindset became resident in a number of interagency organizations over the past decade. This progress may be temporary, however, since it is based on experiences and personalities and not on any institutional imperative for integration derived from US law or policy.

For some specific missions such as counterterrorism, the US government created action plans that described roles and missions for specific elements of the interagency. While these were useful for laying out how different departments and agencies interacted in general, they lacked specificity. Overall, there was a lack of interagency “doctrine.” Service/department/agency doctrine and TTP were not necessarily applicable during interagency operations. Joint Interagency Task Force – South (JIATF-S) provides a model for how such interagency guidance could be created: over time, JIATF-S developed common TTP across its components by bringing together a group of personnel from different organizations, each accustomed to its own terminology and approach. JIATF-S then created a standing operating procedure (SOP) for the organization that established common terminology and TTP to be used by all interagency team members.<sup>23</sup> This SOP also clearly delineated existing authorities, rules of engagement (ROE), and restrictions that needed to be considered in the interagency and multinational context. Similar efforts for the interagency could provide a foundation for unified effort in future operations.<sup>24</sup>

Another set of organizations that were present during operations were NGOs. While some elements of the interagency routinely work with NGOs, the military often lacked experience working with those organizations, further complicating DOD coordination efforts. Coordination between the US military and NGOs was generally beneficial for US efforts.<sup>25</sup> At the same time, these relationships were challenged by a mutual lack of understanding, the military’s tendency to try to be directive with regard to NGO activities, and the desire of some NGOs to retain an air

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<sup>23</sup> Military units and embedded Provincial Reconstruction Teams (ePRTs) in Iraq also created joint action plans called Unified Command Plans (UCPs) to guide their collective actions. The development of such interagency plans is a best practice, whether in the field or in support of larger institutions.

<sup>24</sup> At the same time, JIATF-S is a special case. All participants have both a common mission and statutory authority to accomplish that mission—elements that are not always present in other interagency efforts.

<sup>25</sup> Note that this cannot be said for Israeli military efforts—there are documented cases where NGOs worked against Israeli interests during military operations.

of neutrality and maintain humanitarian space to conduct their operations. For Iraq, NGOs provided important contributions for reconciliation and aid to the Iraqi people.

One helpful contribution of NGOs was improving civilian protection during combat operations. In Iraq, Afghanistan, and Libya, NGOs highlighted instances of civilian harm and brought them to the attention of the military. In Iraq, these were largely instances of escalation of force against civilians from military convoys. The military made adjustments and significantly decreased civilian harm from this cause starting in 2005. Similarly, NGOs and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) highlighted instances of civilian harm from airstrikes in Afghanistan, which prompted ISAF leadership to adjust overall guidance to compensate. Some NGOs continue to work with ISAF, serving as a community of interest to advocate for the reduction of civilian harm. Consequently, recent reporting of ISAF has become more positive, reflecting progress in this area. In Libya, NGO inputs calling for assessments of civilian casualties after airstrikes were not addressed. This lack of response had a lasting negative impact on the battle for the narrative.

A common challenge in working with other interagency partners and NGOs was information exchange, where unity of effort was often hindered by those other organizations having limited or no access to DOD networks. The use of a non-DOD network to facilitate needed information exchange helped to overcome this. One example was the use of Harmonieweb in the response to the tsunami in 2004. A collaborative network was established on a non-DOD domain that could be accessed by all organizations contributing to the disaster relief effort. Similarly, SOUTHCOM employed All Partners Access Network (APAN) during disaster relief operations in Haiti in 2010. These IT solutions fostered information exchange and collaboration between the USG (including, but not limited to, DOD) and any external country, organization, agency, or individual that did not have access to established DOD systems and networks.

### **Way Ahead:**

**Develop senior-level support:** Ensure senior leaders stress the necessity and value of interagency coordination at all levels of operations.

**Make interagency coordination mandatory:** Pursue development of a Goldwater-Nichols-type act to mandate and develop a framework for increased interagency coordination for a whole-of-government approach.

**Properly resource the interagency:** Prioritize budgets to appropriately resource the interagency to ensure a whole-of-government approach for contingencies. Continue to use DOD personnel to meet near-term requirements.

**Operationalize the interagency:** Develop policies for greater inclusion of interagency involvement in planning, training, and execution to increase interagency contributions, including expansion of their expeditionary capabilities.

**Routinely test interagency integration:** Plan for instances where interagency integration is critical, and evaluate policies, approaches, and information technologies to be used that address identified lessons and challenges. Ensure these lessons can be shared effectively with appropriate elements of the interagency.

**Improve understanding of roles and responsibilities:** Initiate DOD-wide programs (e.g., interagency exchange tours) to expose military and civilian personnel to a range of interagency organizations to better understand organizational cultures, equities, traditional roles, capabilities, and limitations.

**Promote and improve interagency and NGO participation in training and education:** Promote and improve incorporation of interagency partners into training and education to increase effectiveness of USG efforts and build relationships within the interagency. Key NGOs should also be invited to participate when appropriate.

## Lesson Eight: Coalition Operations

In the past decade, the US was involved in a number of coalition operations. **Establishing and sustaining coalition unity of effort was a challenge due to competing national interests, cultures, resources, and policies.** Critical challenges when operating with coalition partners included:

- National caveats
- Interoperability
- Training and TTP
- Resources
- National interests
- Culture
- Information sharing and inclusion in planning

Despite these challenges, the US learned to operate more effectively with coalition partner militaries over time, promoting US objectives.

National caveats were a significant challenge in coalition operations over the past decade. Different nations limited their potential actions and missions based on policy decisions in the form of national caveats. Collectively, national caveats became a patchwork of rules that both confused forces and limited overall unity of effort. For example, aircrews cited the difficulties in providing air support when aircrews from different nations had different caveats limiting what actions they could support. Some restrictions were formal policy caveats, while others were effective differences in how a nation operated but not captured as a caveat. One illustration of this was the US self-defense criteria in the Standing Rules of Engagement (SROE) in Afghanistan. This policy effectively served as a national caveat, since it was a departure from ISAF ROE, but it was not reflected in compilations of national caveats.

Interoperability was another challenge within coalitions. Use of different and non-interoperable systems limited the utility of available capabilities. For example, digital data links in Iraq did not consistently exchange information among coalition nations, leading to incomplete operating pictures, reduced battlespace awareness, and increased risk to forces. Friendly fire was observed to result in cases where information on friendly force location was available but not presented to operators due to lack of interoperable systems.

Another challenge to coalition operations was differing training and TTP. Coalition forces often used their own unique TTP and approaches, so that coalitions did not interface with host-nation militaries or populations uniformly. For example, in Afghanistan, different nations employed differing escalation of force (EOF) TTP, which could lead to civilian casualties; Afghan civilians, used to TTP from one ISAF nation's forces, would travel to a different area of Afghanistan where another nation employed different TTP and were often confused and uncertain how to respond. Compensation policies for civilian harm were also different for different nations, resulting in nonstandard treatment and frustration among the population.

Disparate resources also complicated coalition operations. Different nations had different and uneven levels of capabilities. For example, in Libya operations, the US had the majority of certain valuable types of ISR assets as well as precise, low collateral damage weapons. The lack of these assets in other coalition countries limited their scope of contributions and/or increased risk of negative second-order effects. Similarly, in Afghanistan, some partner nations lacked ISR capabilities and air power which limited both mobility and responsiveness to threats.<sup>26</sup>

Coalition operations were also influenced by the national interests of participating nations. Different nations had differing interests that affected the missions they chose to conduct, as well as how they conducted them. For example, France had financial interests in Iraq that were a disincentive for their involvement in major combat operations in 2003. Similarly, Japan and Norway chose roles in Afghanistan that focused on reconstruction vice the larger counterinsurgency mission because of their national interests.

In addition to national interests, participating nations had cultural differences that influenced both the roles they would take and the way they would conduct their given missions. In Afghanistan, individual nations valued different elements of the overall campaign strategy. The effect was the conduct of differing sub-campaigns in different geographic areas, limiting complete implementation of the entire theater strategy. In addition, some nations were more willing than others to conduct offensive operations. Since offensive targeting of malign elements was an integral element of the campaign plans for Iraq and Afghanistan, this uneven approach within the coalition impacted the conduct of these campaigns.

Poor information sharing hindered effective coalition operations. Non-US members of coalitions frequently cited poor information sharing as a limitation to their inclusion in planning and execution. Classification issues and lack of coalition-wide secure information systems limited the ability to share needed information and intelligence. Over-classification and slow foreign release of classified information contributed to these challenges.

Even with these challenges, the US learned to operate more effectively with coalition partner militaries over time. Working within a coalition provided the US with multiple benefits:

- Enhanced force levels and resources
- Political credibility and legitimacy from having multiple countries with a united position on the use of military forces<sup>27</sup>
- Different sets of ideas on how to confront problems and the ability to leverage the respective strengths of different nations. For example, the UK brought a wealth of experience from its experiences in Northern Ireland which informed reconciliation efforts

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<sup>26</sup> In some ways this situation reinforces itself, since many nations plan on operating within coalitions and deliberately develop their own capabilities to be complementary, rather than duplicative, of US capability.

<sup>27</sup> In some cases, coalition nation roles were based on political imperatives rather than practical considerations. For example, in the Haiti earthquake response, Guatemala provided limited airlift capability compared to other contributors. From a military logistics perspective, their contribution did not necessarily make sense, but their involvement was desirable from a strategic perspective.

in Iraq as well as their counterterrorism operations in Helmand and Basra. Similarly, Italy led the development of the Afghan police due to its experience with its own *Carabinieri*

- Increased experience and proficiencies of national partners. For example, the Georgian military gained considerable combat experience from their deployments in support of ISAF

These benefits are compelling reasons that suggest the US will continue to operate in a coalition environment in the majority of future operations.

### **Way Ahead:**

**Refine DOD's contribution to the interagency approach to building and sustaining coalitions:**

Develop policies and processes to better coordinate interagency efforts to build and maintain coalitions for a range of military operations.

**Increase engagement and training:** Identify key potential partners and increase the level of engagement and frequency of training; build relationships and opportunities for influence through theater security cooperation initiatives.

**Accommodate and anticipate national caveats and rules of engagement:** Understand, acknowledge, and plan for differences in national caveats and ROE, including US SROE for self-defense.

**Resolve knowledge management and interoperability challenges:** Develop policies, procedures, and systems to rapidly and effectively share information and intelligence across the spectrum of coalition partners.

**Build common basis for action:** Sustain efforts to develop common doctrine, TTP, and policies with the spectrum of coalition partners.

**Avoid over-classification:** Classification policies should be realistic in terms of the potential harm of sharing information, with leaders proactively sharing needed information with partners.

**Expand language and cultural expertise:** Increase foreign area, language, and cultural expertise in all Services.

## Lesson Nine: Host-Nation Partnering

Partnering between the US and host nations was essential for the US to achieve its strategic goals and promote a number of key objectives. First, partnering enabled the host nation to develop a sustainable capacity to provide security and counter threats. This provided an exit strategy for the US and offered an alternative to sustaining a large US footprint on the ground. Second, partnering enhanced the legitimacy of US operations and freedom of action. Finally, partnering built connections between the US and host-nation security forces, increasing opportunities for influence both within respective militaries and with other sectors of government and society. Partnering offered the US a way to advance its objectives through influence rather than through direct action.

In many of the operations over the past decade, **partnering was a key enabler and force multiplier, and aided in host-nation capacity building. However, it was not always approached effectively nor adequately prioritized and resourced.** The past decade featured some critical lessons for partnering and building host-nation capacity:

- Inadequate planning, prioritization, and resourcing of partnering and capacity building slowed progress, jeopardizing the sustainability of gains made during US operations
- Partnering with host-nation security forces presented both opportunities and pitfalls
- Relationships and requirements for working with host-nation forces changed over time
- Working with host-nation security forces, despite challenges, improved host-nation effectiveness and advanced US objectives

While security force assistance (SFA), foreign internal defense (FID), and building partner capacity were essential to strategic goals and offered alternatives to a large US footprint, these activities were not adequately planned, prioritized, or resourced. Partnering was an inherently interagency activity, but there was an overall lack of unity in these efforts. In Iraq, the scope and mission of SFA needed in light of the CPA's decision to disband the Iraqi security forces were not anticipated in planning. Sufficient institutions to address the SFA requirements were not established until the following year, and resources were slow to be provided, both in terms of trainers and needed equipment. For example, weapons for the Iraqi forces were difficult to procure because of US export legislation that did not consider large-scale urgent SFA requirements.

Host-nation security forces brought both strengths and challenges for partnered operations. Host-nation forces tended to have an increased awareness of cultural cues that helped them to discriminate between threats and noncombatants. In addition, they tended to excel at SSE, tactical questioning, and communication with local nationals in general. Local nationals tended to be more responsive to host-nation forces and gave them more deference in conducting operations. Host-nation forces were force multipliers, augmenting US forces on the ground. Challenges encountered with partnering with host-nation forces included a lack of proficiency and experience, as well as corruption, infiltration, lack of accountability to international norms for the use of force, and resource constraints. In Afghanistan, the possibility of green-on-blue incidents undermined trust in some cases, hindering partnering efforts.

The US also had challenges that complicated partnering. One challenge was a propensity for the US to shape host-nation institutions after its own image, rather than allowing the host nation to make such decisions consistent with its own history, culture, and traditions. Another was a lack of strategic patience, where a desire for quick results at times drove the US to lead the partnering relationship, rather than operating by, with, and through host-nation forces to build long-term capacity. Thirdly, general purpose forces did not always respond positively to cultural differences of the host nation, leading to reduced effectiveness due to less positive partnering and advisory relationships. However, in spite of existing challenges for both the host nation and the US, partnering was an essential element of a viable exit strategy as well as critical to maintaining freedom of action.

Partnering relationships tended to change over time as host-nation capabilities matured. For example, partnering in Iraq and Afghanistan transitioned from US-led operations, with Iraqi or Afghan forces being mentored during those operations, to partnered operations where host-nation forces participated in planning and execution alongside US forces. This then transitioned to host nation-led operations where the US or coalition provided key enablers that the host nation did not possess, such as air support, logistics, or ISR capabilities. Similarly, in the Philippines, early US partnering focused on tactical operations and later transitioned to operational-level support as Philippine security forces became more tactically proficient.

Resourcing for FID and SFA was complicated by a number of different and partially overlapping authorities and funding streams. In Iraq and Afghanistan, myriad elements of building partner capacity were conducted by different organizations with distinct missions and little integration of their efforts.

Though partnering between the US and host nations helped to promote US objectives, narrowly defined missions limited the utility of US efforts and caused friction with the host nation. For example, in Operation Enduring Freedom – Philippines (OEF-P), the mission was limited to targeting terrorist organizations that were affiliated with Al Qaeda (e.g., Jemaah Islamiyah [JI] and the Abu Sayyaf Group [ASG]). US support did not extend to Philippine efforts to address the foremost threat to the Philippine government, the Communist Party of the Philippines New People’s Army (CPP-NPA), because they were not affiliated with al Qaeda. This created friction between host nation and US forces and also limited the ability of the US to promote the host nation’s capacity to achieve long-term security.<sup>28, 29</sup> Similarly, in Plan Colombia, helicopters supplied by the US were only authorized to be used against counter-narcotics targets. This created frustration and confusion about their use, since many targets were tied to counter-narcotics objectives in some way. This limitation was evident in a high profile Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia (FARC) attack on Colombian police, where several police were killed because they ran out of ammunition. US-supplied helicopters were nearby but not employed

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<sup>28</sup> This friction was mitigated through personal relationships and multiple training events.

<sup>29</sup> COL(R) David Maxwell, “Foreign Internal Defense: An Indirect Approach to Counter-Insurgency/Counter Terrorism, Lessons from Operation ENDURING FREEDOM – Philippines (OEF-P) for dealing with Non-Existential Threats to the United States,” Paper, 6 December 2011.



to protect the police because of US-imposed restrictions on their use. This incident surfaced the nature of the restrictive guidance, and procedures were put in place to allow more flexibility in their use.<sup>30</sup>

Despite these challenges, SFA, FID, and building partner capacity improved the host nation's ability to provide security and advance US objectives. In Iraq and Afghanistan, these tasks were essential both to provide near-term security in order to set the conditions for longer-term stability and to develop host-nation security forces that could sustain security in the absence of US and coalition forces. In other countries such as the Philippines, small investments of US Special Forces served as enablers to enhance host-nation effectiveness through FID. In Colombia, a combined US-Colombian investment in the form of Plan Colombia helped to turn the tide of Colombia's dire internal security situation. The US partnered with Colombia to develop their security capacity to the point where Colombia is now a provider of training for others in the region. US presence and partnering also helped to focus attention on target sets that were US priorities while avoiding the requirement for US unilateral operations.

## Way Ahead:

### Continue theater security cooperation activities:

- **Strengthen existing relationships:** Build on existing political, military, and economic relationships in order to strengthen relationships, sustain influence with key partners, and build capacity.
- **Develop new relationships:** Identify key potential partners, initiate engagement, and routinely train with them.

**Re-establish training for effective partnering and advising:** Re-establish a Military Assistance and Training Advisory (MATA) course to promote effective partnering and advising. This course should capitalize on recent lessons and Special Forces expertise with regard to FID and SFA operations.

**Promote and enhance SFA and FID training and expertise:** Develop a framework to improve SFA and FID training effectiveness across the spectrum of host-nation requirements. This should include considerations for developing the accountability and legitimacy of host-nation forces.

**Plan for an SFA surge:** Develop plans for an effective SFA surge capacity to support a large-scale capacity-building mission, including needed resources and authorities.

**Shape public opinion:** Develop a communication strategy that emphasizes the positive aspects of partnering, increasing support and legitimacy for the US and host nation.

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<sup>30</sup> David E. Spencer, et al, "Colombia's Road to Recovery: Security and Governance 1982-2010," Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies, 17 June 2011.

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**Assess efforts:** Employ a comprehensive framework for conducting assessments of relevant US and host-nation variables to understand conditions, requirements, and progress necessary to meet national security objectives and promote needs of the host nation.

**Streamline authorities for FID and SFA:** Consolidate and streamline the many authorities and funding mechanisms to better support FID and SFA activities.

## Lesson Ten: State Use of Surrogates and Proxies

After the US demonstrated its ability to quickly and effectively conduct major combat operations in Afghanistan and Iraq in 2001 and 2003 respectively, **states sponsored and exploited surrogates and proxies to generate asymmetric challenges**. Surrogates and proxies opposed US interests and objectives by leveraging:

- The resources provided from state sponsors
- The nexus of criminal, terrorist, and other interests
- The use of inexpensive, asymmetric approaches to counter US capabilities

Surrogates and proxies gave nation-states options for opposing US interests and objectives without direct action. For example, one nation deliberately funded and supplied insurgent groups in Iraq with significant capabilities beyond what they had organically, challenging the coalition and causing greater US casualties. In order to oppose Israel, Hezbollah was similarly supplied with advanced capabilities, such as a missile inventory that rivaled that of many nation-states. Other nations similarly oppose ISAF in Afghanistan by providing resources and support to terrorist and insurgent groups operating in the country.<sup>31</sup>

The overlap of crime, terror, and non-state actors continued to increase and empower all parties. The movement of money and contraband, a specialty of criminal elements, also had applicability for terror groups acting as proxies, and the latter could leverage these criminal elements at the right price. Successful efforts considered this overlap: for example, JIATF-S focused on countering narcotics trafficking, but it also included countering terrorist activities because of the significant overlap between drug and terrorist networks and finances.<sup>32</sup> However, despite the global importance of law enforcement and non-military organizations in combating proxies and surrogates, the military lacked authorities to train or provide information to these non-military entities. In addition, a regional focus on these issues—especially when different departments and agencies used differing geographic boundaries—created gaps and seams that the enemy could exploit.

Because of US overmatch in military capability, the enemy tended to shift to the use of inexpensive, low-technology approaches and/or TTP (often provided by sponsor nations) to foil high-technology US capabilities that had been designed to counter conventional peer-on-peer threats. One example was the wide use of IEDs against coalition forces in Iraq and Afghanistan. While coalition armored vehicles were designed to resist significant damage even when fired upon by similarly designed vehicles, they were vulnerable to IEDs exploding underneath the

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<sup>31</sup> For example, “Extremist organizations serving as proxies of the government of Pakistan are attacking Afghan troops and civilians as well as US soldiers.” Statement of Admiral Michael Mullen, U.S. Navy, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff, before the Senate Armed Services Committee on Afghanistan and Iraq, 22 September 2011.

<sup>32</sup> “JIATF-S focuses on the planning and execution of operations to interdict narcotics smuggling and human trafficking *as well as terrorist-related activities*.” Emphasis added. JINSA Group Visits U.S. Southern Command and the Joint Interagency Task Force South, 3 September 2008, <http://www.jinsa.org/events-programs/regional-programs/florida/jinsa-group-visits-us-southern-command-and-joint-interagen>, accessed 9 February 2012.

vehicle; with simple tools and at a low cost, insurgents and terrorists could cause significant casualties and damage to US vehicles.

In some cases, the US successfully worked with partner nations to develop their capability to counter internal and regional threats. In effect, this amounted to the creation of US proxies to combat threats. Through training, provision of key enablers, and through additional measures such as the Rewards for Justice Program, partner nations were increasingly effective at countering threats to US objectives.<sup>33</sup> These efforts are discussed in more detail in Lesson Nine, *Host-Nation Partnering*.

### Way Ahead:

**Improve targeting of threat finance and other support:** Work with international partners, and increase US military authorities, to disrupt states' ability to finance and support proxies.

**Expose sponsor/proxy relationships and promote fissures:** Use communication to expose state/proxy relationships, and foster and exploit state/proxy differences (e.g., ideology, culture, sectarianism, operational approach).

**Align geographic regions and plans:** Encourage alignment of the DOD, DOS, and intelligence community (IC) geographic regions of responsibility and planning efforts to facilitate improved coordination and unity of effort.

**Build and/or strengthen external partnerships:** Identify, prioritize, and authorize the exchange of intelligence and other support between partners, including host-nation non-military organizations.

**Anticipate asymmetry:** Proactively anticipate asymmetric approaches and identify means to mitigate their impact.

**Combine the direct and indirect approaches.** Oppose proxies and surrogates through a global campaign that combines direct action and law enforcement with indirect approaches that address the factors that fuel support for terrorism.

**Increase internal coordination:** Solidify integration within the interagency and others (e.g., law enforcement agencies) to enhance unity of effort.

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<sup>33</sup> This is a program operated by the Department of State's Bureau of Diplomatic Security. This program offers "rewards for information that leads to the arrest or conviction of anyone who plans, commits, or attempts international terrorist acts against U.S. persons or property, that prevents such acts from occurring in the first place, that leads to the location of a key terrorist leader, or that disrupts terrorism financing." [http://www.rewardsforjustice.net/index.cfm?page=Rewards\\_program&language=English](http://www.rewardsforjustice.net/index.cfm?page=Rewards_program&language=English), accessed 21 May 2012.

## Lesson Eleven: Super-Empowered Threats

Terrorism has long featured individuals or small groups exerting disproportionate influence through their actions. However, in the past decade, **individuals and small groups increasingly exploited globalized technology and information to expand influence and approach state-like disruptive capacity.** This was largely due to:

- Commercially available technologies with the capability to create mass casualties
- Transnational criminal networks, terrorist groups, and nation-states enabling small groups or individuals to execute attacks with global impact
- Technology enabling enhanced communication and information operations
- The internet facilitating recruiting, training, financing, and command and control

Commercial technologies made weapons of mass effect achievable by small individuals or groups—for example, DNA sequencing equipment to create lethal viruses such as smallpox or the Spanish flu. Critically, the cost of these technologies has decreased by orders of magnitude over time, and access to these technologies is much easier to obtain. Coupled with transnational criminal networks, both to obtain necessary equipment and to allow terrorists or materials to slip in unobserved into the US or other areas of concern, these technologies could enable individuals or small groups to generate mass casualties and disruption.<sup>34</sup>

As discussed in the previous section of this report, the risk is compounded by external sponsors, either national sponsors or other terror groups, providing advanced technologies and capabilities to insurgent groups and terrorist organizations. For example, one national sponsor provided advanced IED technology to terrorist organizations in Iraq and Afghanistan, allowing them to penetrate armored vehicles and cause casualties beyond their organic capabilities. Hezbollah also benefitted from support from a national sponsor, thus approaching the disruptive capabilities of a nation-state. Similarly, the Abu Sayyaf Group in the Philippines benefitted from members of Jemaah Islamiyah who provided material support for terrorist attacks.

Information operations and media manipulation were significant combat multipliers, adding to the super-empowerment of non-state entities. These groups excelled in rapidly transmitting images to the media as well as their own forums. Rapid transmission allowed these groups to make the first impression on the world stage, which proved effective as the first impression often became the version many believed. At the same time, these groups were largely unconstrained by the truth, and could adapt the facts to further their cause.<sup>35</sup> In fact, some groups manufactured evidence or doctored images (“fauxtography”) to further their own information operations. One example was Hezbollah during the 2006 Lebanon war, using a single

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<sup>34</sup> One example is the Aum Shinrikyo subway attack in 1995. This organization had over \$1 billion in assets and developed its own capability to manufacture sarin and other biological agents. The mailing of anthrax bacterium in the US in 2001 also displayed the disruptive effect the use of such materials can have.

<sup>35</sup> In fact, an Al Qaeda manual provides guidance on using information: “spreading rumors and writing statements that instigate people against the enemy.” Al Qaeda manual, Manchester police, United Kingdom.

corpse and taking it to different Israeli strike locations to provide “evidence” of Lebanese civilian casualties and a disproportional response by Israel.<sup>36</sup>

The internet was another enabler for super-empowerment, facilitating recruiting, training, financing, and command and control for terrorist individuals and groups. Recruiting was achieved through forums that tended to be sympathetic to their causes. Insurgent websites offered propaganda, training materials, and guidance to direct and encourage other attacks. Financing was accomplished both through Internet sites and other nontraditional banking mechanisms. Video clips posted on terrorist websites also tended to be used in mainstream Arab media.

## Way Ahead:

**Geographic Combatant Commands, in conjunction with other organizations, develop capabilities to:**

- **Define the network:** Identify the links between terrorists, insurgents, criminals, and governments, among others
- **Exploit friction points:** Identify and exploit fissures where found or created
- **Maintain pressure:** Sustain operational tempo to limit the threat’s ability to organize, assess their activities, train, perform planning functions, and conduct operations

**Leverage law enforcement as an aspect of national power:** Promote a common understanding of existing authorities for action among US interagency and foreign partners; combine this with effective fusion of intelligence, law enforcement information, and private industry data.

**Disrupt enemy information operations:** Disrupt the threat’s ability to conduct information operations (e.g., propaganda, media manipulation, fauxtography, and internet forums). Provide an effective competing message by being first and not wrong.

**Leverage local knowledge and expertise:** Operate by, with, and through partners with localized knowledge of the grievances, conflicts, and drivers of stability.

**Deny sanctuary:** Contest ungoverned spaces, to include the Internet, and enable local populations to deny safe havens.

**Improve response to the threats:** Deconflict, coordinate, validate, and exercise federal, state, local, and private sector authorities/plans to preempt and/or respond to attacks.

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<sup>36</sup> “The Israeli-Hezbollah War of 2006: The Media as a Weapon in Asymmetrical Conflict,” Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics, and Public Policy at Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government, 18 February 2007.

## **Conclusion**

This report describes the eleven strategic themes derived from the enduring, joint lessons from the past decade of war, as culled from the 46 studies conducted by JCOA since its inception in 2003. This product was refined using additional inputs from the combatant commands and Services, including a collaborative process before and during the Joint Staff J7-sponsored Decade of War Lessons Learned Working Group in May 2012. The process will continue with additional lessons being developed and discussed in future efforts. The goal is to continue to identify key lessons and recommendations that can help guide joint force development to promote mission effectiveness of the US military in the next decade and beyond.

## Appendix A: JCOA's Body of Work

### Iraq

- 2004** Joint Combined Combat Operations
- 2005** Synchronizing Counter-IED Efforts in Iraq
- 2006** Task Force Freedom, Mosul, Iraq: A Best Practice  
Transitions of Authority  
Stabilization, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction in a Counterinsurgency
- 2007** Operation IRAQI FREEDOM: Transition to Sovereignty  
Emerging Solutions: al Anbar Best Practices  
Operation IRAQI FREEDOM: Counterinsurgency Operations  
Operation AL FAJR: Fallujah II
- 2008** Counterinsurgency Targeting and Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance  
Joint Tactical Environment  
Command and Control Transformation
- 2009** A Comprehensive Approach: Iraq Case Study  
Iraq Information Activities  
Strategic Communication Best Practices
- 2010** Transition to Stability Operations in Iraq

### Afghanistan

- 2006** Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan
- 2008** Combined Security Transition Command – Afghanistan Police Reform Challenges
- 2009** Civilian Casualties in Counterinsurgency
- 2010** Joint Civilian Casualty Study
- 2011** Village Stability Operations/Afghan Local Police: Now and Future  
Adaptive Learning for Afghanistan
- 2012** Civilian Casualties Update Study

### Other Combat Operations

- 2004** Joint Lessons Learned: Kosovo
- 2011** Operation ODYSSEY DAWN



## Irregular Warfare

- 2005 Modern Irregular Warfare
- 2007 Second Lebanon War: Applied Lessons on Irregular War  
Global War on Terrorism II
- 2008 Georgia – Russia Conflict  
Techno-Guerilla: The Changing Face of Asymmetric Warfare
- 2009 Irregular Warfare in Gaza: Operation CAST LEAD  
The Super-Empowered Threat  
Sri Lanka: Perspectives on Counterinsurgency Operations  
The Mumbai Techno-Guerilla Terrorist
- 2011 Partnered Counterterrorism Operations in the Philippines

## HADR

- 2006 Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Operations in Pakistan  
Guatemala Disaster Relief
- 2007 International Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Operations
- 2009 Haiti Stabilization Initiative
- 2010 Operation UNIFIED RESPONSE: Haiti Earthquake Response

## Homeland Security

- 2006 National Response to Catastrophic Events: Hurricane Katrina
- 2008 National Response to Biological Contagion
- 2010 Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction, Improvised Nuclear Device Baseline Analysis

## Emerging Threats

- 2011 Emerging Threats Study: al-Houthi  
Emerging Threats Study: al-Shabaab  
Emerging Threats Study: The Taliban

## Appendix B: Abbreviations

AOR	Area of Responsibility
APAN	All Partners Access Network
ASG	Abu Sayyaf Group
BDA	Battle Damage Assessment
BSO	Battlespace Owner
C2	Command and Control
CIVCAS	Civilian Casualties
CFSOCC-A	Combined Forces Special Operations Component Command – Afghanistan
CJSOTF	Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force
CJTF	Combined Joint Task Force
COIN	Counterinsurgency
CPA	Coalition Provisional Authority
CPP-NPA	Philippines New People’s Army
CT	Counterterrorism
D3A	Decide, Detect, Deliver, Assess
DOD	Department of Defense
DOS	Department of State
DOTMLPF	Doctrine, Organization, Training and Education, Materiel, Leadership, Personnel, and Facilities
EOF	Escalation of Force
F3EAD	Find, Fix, Finish, Exploit, Analyze, and Disseminate
FARC	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia
FID	Foreign Internal Defense
FSEC	Force Strategic Engagement Cell
GPF	General Purpose Forces
HADR	Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief
HTT	Human Terrain Team
HUMINT	Human Intelligence
HVI	High Value Individual
IC	Intelligence Community
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
IO	Information Operations
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
ISR	Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance
IT	Information Technology
JI	Jemaah Islamiyah
JIACG	Joint Interagency Coordination Group

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JIATF-S	Joint Interagency Task Force – South
KLE	Key Leader Engagement
LNO	Liaison Officer
LOAC	Laws of Armed Conflict
MATA	Military Assistance and Training Advisory
MNF-I	Multi-National Force – Iraq
MNSTC-I	Multi-National Security Transition Command – Iraq
MRAP	Mine Resistant Ambush Protected Vehicle
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OEF	Operation ENDURING FREEDOM
OEF-P	Operation ENDURING FREEDOM – Philippines
OPSEC	Operations Security
PICC	Presidential Information Coordination Cell
PIR	Priority Intelligence Requirement
PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Team
ROE	Rules of Engagement
SFA	Security Force Assistance
SME	Subject Matter Expert
SOF	Special Operations Forces
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
SOUTHCOM	US Southern Command
SROE	Standing Rules of Engagement
SSE	Sensitive Site Exploitation
TSOC	Theater Special Operations Command
TTP	Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures
UCP	Unified Command Plan
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
US	United States
USAID	US Agency for International Development
USG	US Government
VSO/ALP	Village Stability Operations/Afghan Local Police
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction