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The Effectiveness of Intelligence Gathering Techniques

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Abstract

Since the beginnings of humankind, actionable intelligence gathering has and will be an inherent part of warfare, whether it is between warring tribal clans or armies. Intelligence gathering techniques differ between the ethical and moral beliefs between countries. Some countries, such as France in 1950's Algeria, use torture while some countries, such as the U.S. today, refrain from physical torture. The U.S. spends billions of dollars in advanced technology and on detention centers where suspected and convicted insurgents are kept in good conditions.

Outline

1. Thesis Statement: Even though there is currently much debate on today's intelligence gathering techniques, today's intelligence gathering techniques provide the best actionable intelligence compared to past conflicts and wars because there is much less collateral damage than before and timely actionable intelligence will undoubtedly save American lives.
2. Main Body:
 - A. Analyze French techniques in Algeria
 - B. Analyze current U.S. techniques
 - C. Contrast the differing times in history and how the media and technology has affected the differing techniques.
3. Conclusion: Since the beginnings of humankind, intelligence gathering is an inherent part of warfare and the legal and moral manners to acquire actionable intelligence should always be exploited and furthered because this will save American lives.

The Effectiveness of Intelligence Gathering Techniques

Even though there is currently much debate on today's intelligence gathering techniques, today's intelligence gathering techniques provide the best actionable intelligence compared to past conflicts and wars because there is much less collateral damage than before and timely intelligence will undoubtedly save American lives. Various techniques are highly scrutinized in the press today and this paper will contrast two different eras in history and two different counter-insurgency conflicts. Techniques that might have been the norm in past conflicts no longer are normal in the mainstream populations of most westernized and modern countries.

France fought a bloody counter-insurgency conflict in Algeria from 1954 through 1962. This conflict led to Algeria's independence following the conflict, but the main factor of the conflict was that France considered Algeria to be sovereign French soil. This led to many of the decisions in how the French government and French Army prosecuted the war. Not always did the French Army and Police have the same views on the prosecution of the war. This led to distrust between the two services within Algeria. The French Army's way of dealing with suspected insurgents is very ruthless compared to modern times. By the end of 1956, the situation had worsened throughout Algeria, especially within the main urban center of Algiers, which was experiencing almost daily attacks. French Major Paul Aussaresses was given the mission by General Jacques Massu (French Army Commander in Algeria) to crush the terror network using all available means. (Aussaresses, 2002, vii)

This mission is a broad mission statement and the then Major Aussaresses took full advantage of the broad mission statement. His job was to serve the French people and even though Algeria was, at that time, French soil, this conflict then reflected on the fact that it was taking place on "home" soil. Culturally, Algeria was two different main cultures, the local Arabs

and French nationals. The Arabs are mostly second-class citizens, but they are still French citizens, with limitations. This scenario can be roughly comparable to the relationship between the United States and Puerto Rico as far as citizenship and territorial rights. The reasons for the insurgency are many, but this paper will concentrate on the intelligence gathering techniques carried out by the French Army and Police.

The French philosophy during this conflict is to take out the head of the insurgency. Under orders from General Massu, Major Aussaresses, who is then part of the Intelligence service, interrogated insurgents and then helped them disappear. Sites were located for torture, executions and burials. One of the most high profile cases is the capture of Algerian insurgent leader Ben M'Hidi. Ben M'Hidi was caught in the sector of LTC Bigeard's 3rd RPC (Regiment of Colonial Paratroopers). Bigeard created a friendly atmosphere and made his prisoner feel very comfortable (Aussaresses, 2002, 133/15). Bigeard knew that if the prisoner did not cooperate with the authorities he would die at the hands of an interrogator soon. Ben M'Hidi refused to cooperate and undoubtedly knew his eventual fate. The police wanted Ben M'Hidi and Bigeard knew that they would torture him since Ben M'Hidi is responsible for the carnage in Algiers. However, the Army did not want to risk Ben M'Hidi going to the judicial system, because there is always a chance that he could be released or given a light sentence due to sympathizers in the French society. General Massu decided that the risk of leniency or freedom was too great and ordered then Major Aussaresses to take care of the situation.

On March 4th, 1957, Major Aussaresses took control of the prisoner, Ben M'Hidi. The Major and a small group of trusted paratroopers escorted the prisoner out of town to an isolated farm and summarily hung the prisoner. The paratroopers then drove Ben M'Hidi's body to a hospital and dropped it off with suicide the reported cause of death from the paratroopers

(Aussaresses, 2002, 138-140/15). This is just one technique for gathering intelligence during this counter-insurgency. Since the prisoner would not talk, he was executed. Instances like this are numerous. Hundreds and hundreds of suspected insurgents died at the hands of the French Intelligence Service, regardless if they reported intelligence or not. Reported torture techniques are numerous. Physical and mental torture techniques were widely used by both the police and military.

By the end of the 1950's the insurgent groups in Algeria were basically crushed. The French had won militarily, but lost the war politically and Algeria moved towards independence. During the insurgency, both suspected insurgent men and women were tortured and killed. This partly came about from the indiscriminate killings of French citizens.

After September 11th, 2001 (9/11), the attitude of the United States drastically changed in regards to counter-terrorist intelligence gathering. Beyond the previous French techniques, by 2001, the U.S. has modern technology to aid in the intelligence gathering, but in comparison, the U.S. was just savagely attacked on U.S. soil. This changed the attitude of the Department of Defense (DOD), Department of Justice (DOJ), Department of State (DOS), and the presidency. The war on terrorism is no longer on foreign soil so principles and policies changed, almost immediately. Shortly after 9/11, an example of a policy change is the introduction of the Patriot Act. One aspect of the act enables law enforcement to use technology and listen in on incoming calls into the U.S. This critical law enforcement tool is useful by the fact that most worldwide calls placed are routed through the U.S. by fiber optic lines emplaced years ago. Annually, the Patriot Act is fought over, within the walls of congress, and remains controversial. Primarily it pits the conservatives against the liberals. The liberals consider the Patriot Act an infringement

on personnel liberties and rights. The conservatives consider this piece of legislation critical to protecting the home front and protecting American lives.

The Patriot Act is a tool designed to obtain actionable intelligence. Intelligence is key in the current Global War on Terrorism (GWOT). Actionable intelligence can mean the difference between saving thousands and thousands of lives or failure on the part of intelligence, as witnessed on 9/11. The French used all techniques imaginable. One difference between the French in Algeria and the United States is the advances in technology for the media in regards to reporting. Nowadays the media can be found anywhere on the battlefield. They report from within friendly lines and sometimes within the enemy camps. With today's media organizations and technology, the French would probably not have had the liberties that they had in dealing with the insurgents. The United States also places higher moral ethics for human life, even though our enemies do not.

Intelligence gathering in Operations Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Enduring Freedom (OEF) is critical to keeping the fight away from home soil and saving lives of U.S. service men and women throughout the world. In the current war on terrorism, technology plays a vital role. The U.S. uses a variety of means from face to face human intelligence, to satellites for imagery and eavesdropping. Most means are classified and this again is a fight between the current administration, congress, intelligence services, the public and the media. The current administration is trying to maintain some sense of secrecy around the legal and illegal interrogation techniques. By making the techniques public, the enemies of the U.S. will know exactly what the U.S. can and cannot do to obtain actionable intelligence. This will directly hamper intelligence gathering because the enemy will then be able to train against and thwart

these techniques. This will lead to a dramatic decrease in intelligence gathering and could directly lead to more loss of American lives.

In most cases, suspected terrorists will divulge information, which can then process into intelligence, without physical torture. Physical torture is the most brutal technique used and is usually an unreliable technique. Under conditions of physical duress, most humans will talk and say just about anything to stop the pain. Nevertheless, as seen in Algeria, the French did gain valuable intelligence by using physical torture. Physical torture has its roots to the beginnings of humankind and the techniques have only become more brutal in time.

When most people think of actionable intelligence gathering techniques, they think of physical torture. The U.S. has advanced past the days of human torture. Human torture still finds itself in isolated instances, but it is not general policy. The problem is the definition of torture. Most Americans would agree that in instances of imminent danger, torture should commence, to prevent a major attack or catastrophe. In OIF and OEF, there are techniques routinely used that not only stop attacks against U.S. or coalition forces, but do not physically or permanently harm the insurgents. In fact, most insurgents in OEF and OIF, in stark contrast to Algeria in the 1950's, live very well in prisons and detention centers. The high-level terrorists move to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, for incarceration. If the terrorists touch U.S. soil, then they will gain the rights of the U.S. judicial system and not the military tribunal system. This compares to Algeria in the 1950's, where there was distrust between civilian judicial system and the military, in the handling of terrorists. However, all of the current terrorists are treated in accordance to the Geneva Convention.

Since the beginnings of humankind, intelligence gathering is an inherent part of warfare and the legal and moral manners to acquire actionable intelligence should always be exploited

and furthered because this will save American lives. The U.S. cannot forget how to exploit with human intelligence gathering, but with the continued advance of technology, actionable intelligence gathering techniques will only improve.

Reference

Aussaresses, P. (2002). *The Battle of the Casbah* (first English Language Ed.). New York, New York: Enigma Books.