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14. ABSTRACT

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Since the manual describes military actions and imperatives at the tactical, operational, and strategic level, this paper seeks to "extract" the enduring themes or principles that are relevant today to the operational commander. After presenting relevant themes, this paper proposes the method and effect of their application to current operations in Iraq.

This paper finds that the *Small Wars Manual* does contain relevant lessons that could be applied to current operations in Iraq as well as tomorrow's battlefield.

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THE <u>SMALL WARS MANUAL</u> AND CURRENT OPERATIONS IN IRAQ: TEACHING A NEW DOG OLD TRICKS?
$\mathbf{B}\mathbf{y}$
Tyler J. Zagurski
Major, USMC
A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.
The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College of the Department of the Navy.

February 9, 2004

Signature:_____

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INTRODUCTION

[B]ut there always have been and ever will be other wars of an altogether different kind, undertaken in very different theaters of operations and requiring entirely different methods from those of the World War. Such are the small wars which are described in this manual.

<u>Small Wars Manual</u> (1940)

When President Bush declared an end to major combat operations in Iraq in May of 2003, the U.S. led coalition entered into seemingly unfamiliar territory. The subsequent weeks and months would be marked by guerrilla style ambushes and terrorists attacks against U.S. and coalition forces designed to thwart U.S. efforts at post-conflict transition in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). Since the declaration of an end to major combat operations, U.S. forces have found themselves conducting a wide range of operations from basic services and security, to limited attacks and nation-building. The range of military activities U.S. forces have engaged in are what is typically referred to today as Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW), and include such activities as counter-insurgency, peace operations, and nation-assistance. For the purpose of this paper I will refer to the range of operations being conducted in Iraq as MOOTW. Despite a gradual flow of positive news and progress with respect to rebuilding Iraq's infrastructure and establishing a competent, stable Iraqi government, the overarching focus of political and media attention has been the security of U.S. and coalition forces in the region. As isolated attacks have evolved into what appears to be a comprehensive insurgency effort, U.S. forces have adopted a "get tough" policy to counter the insurgents. LtGen Ricardo Sanchez, the top military commander in Iraq announced the new policy in November of 2003 and in December noted that; "We've considerably

pushed back the numbers of engagements against coalition forces,...We've been hitting back pretty hard. We've forced them to slow down the pace of their operations."

With U.S. counterinsurgency efforts assuming a hard-line stance, there has been no lack of commentary from political, military, and "armchair" analysts as to the efficacy of this or any other strategy for counterinsurgency. The prevailing attitude is that the U.S. military's focus on the Cold War Soviet threat for the past fifty-plus years has left it woefully unprepared for these types of operations. These apparently "uncharted waters," however, should not seem so foreign to the U.S. military. The U.S., in fact, has had a long history of successfully conducting what we now refer to as MOOTW. The Marine Corps in particular was extensively involved in what they considered "Small Wars" between 1898 and 1934. During these years Marines conducted numerous interventions, including occupations in Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and Nicaragua. Lessons learned from these operations were compiled and published by the Marine Corps in 1940. The Marine Corps' *Small Wars Manual* was written by a group of Marine officers in the 1930s and was intended as a definitive guide to military intervention in the affairs of a foreign state.²

The Small Wars Manual was written as the culmination of nearly four decades of experience in fighting small wars. Although the manual was all but forgotten with the outbreak of World War II and the new emphasis on amphibious operations, it is worth study as a potential guide to current operations in Iraq and future operations in other unstable regions. The central research question, therefore, is: Does the Small Wars Manual provide relevant lessons for current operations in Iraq? The answer is yes.

Despite being published nearly sixty years ago, the Small Wars Manual provides a relevant construct for conducting modern-day MOOTW.

THE MANUAL AND IRAQ; APPLES AND ORANGES?

Anyone who is familiar with the Manual may not immediately see its relevance to Iraq, or may argue that, although the Manual provides some minor insights to current operations, it is more akin to comparing apples to oranges. At first glance I would agree, but would argue that apples and oranges are both fruit and that careful analysis is the key to the Manual's relevance. A simple description from the Small Wars Manual highlights the similarities between "Small Wars" and current operations:

[I]n campaigns of this nature [Small Wars/MOOTW] the Force will be exposed to the action of this young and vigorous element. Rear installations and lines of communications will be threatened. Movements will be retarded by ambuscades and barred defiles, and every detachment presenting a tempting target will be harassed or attacked. In warfare of this kind, members of native forces will suddenly become innocent peasant workers when it suits their fancy and convenience. In addition, the Force will be handicapped by partisans, who constantly and accurately inform native forces of our movements. The population will be honeycombed with hostile sympathizers, making it difficult to procure reliable information. Such difficulty will result either from the deceit used by hostile sympathizers and agents, or from the intimidation of friendly natives upon whom reliance might be placed to gain information.³

The resemblance of this description to the current situation in Iraq is obvious.

THE MANUAL AND "ENDURING THEMES"

The Manual is not presented in the format or sequence we have become familiar with when reading current service and joint doctrine. Additionally, it presents lessons and techniques that apply to the tactical, operational and strategic levels of war.

Therefore, the analysis required to establish relevance involves "extracting" the primary

or enduring "themes", at the appropriate level, that are consistent throughout the manual. This study will focus on the enduring themes that emerge as guiding principles and that are applicable to current operations and the modern operational commander. The Manual defines a small war as "operations undertaken under executive authority, wherein military force is combined with diplomatic pressure in the internal or external affairs of another state…"⁴ The Manual also describes five basic phases typically undertaken during a small war:

- Phase 1. Initial demonstration or landing and action of vanguard.
- Phase 2. The arrival of reinforcements (sic) and general military operations in the Field.
- Phase 3. Assumption of control of executive agencies, and cooperation with the Legislative and judicial agencies.
- Phase 4. Routine police functions.
- Phase 5. Withdrawal from the Theater of Operations.⁵

The Manual points out that all phases may not occur and some may occur simultaneously or out of order. As such, comparisons with current operations in Iraq will focus on phases 2-5 as they are representative of the actions required after major combat operations have ceased. There are three primary principles, or enduring themes, that this study will focus on. They are: (1) Military actions should be subordinate and in support of political or diplomatic efforts; (2) a phased approach with a defined endstate is required; (3) and MOOTW (counter-insurgency, nation assistance, and peace operations) require a multi-faceted approach.

MILITARY ACTIONS SUBORDINATE TO POLITICAL GOALS

The Small Wars Manual plainly articulates the need for military actions to be subordinate to, and combined with, diplomatic efforts. As stated in the earlier definition,

the opening section of the manual prescribes the combining of military force with diplomatic pressure. That same section further articulates the relationship:

There is mutual dependence and responsibility which calls for the highest qualities of statesmanship and military leadership. The initiative devolves upon the statesman.⁶

The manual identifies the State Department as official U.S representation in foreign states and refers to the need for its "constant and controlling influence over the military operations." This subordination of military action to political objectives has been a basic tenet of warfare since the writings of Clausewitz, but the key distinction of this relationship as described in the manual is that the political/diplomatic efforts are ongoing, and in coordination with military efforts. The military actions are not the final resort of an exhausted diplomatic effort. The purpose and utility of political/diplomatic primacy is "...the desire to keep the war 'small,' ...and to deprive it, insofar as may be possible, of the more outstanding aspects of 'war'."

As applied to Iraq, this would propose that the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) should be a political and administrative entity fully independent of, but senior to, any Department of Defense (DoD) organization as represented by military forces.

Although Combined Joint Task Force 7 (CJTF7) (conducting post-hostility operations in Iraq) has a direct support relationship to the CPA, the CPA itself answers to the Secretary of Defense (SecDef). One could argue that this relationship is only semantics and politics at the highest level, but the fact remains that the entire scope of operations should derive its nature and methods from a political body and strategy, not the SecDef. This relationship would be a flawed one per the manual; a point not lost on General Anthony Zinni, the former Commander, U.S. Central Command who said: "Why the hell would

the Department of Defense be the organization in our government that deals with the reconstruction of Iraq?"¹⁰ United States Government officials, too, have noted the discrepancy in this structure. As Senator Lugar, head of the Foreign Relations

Committee stated, "I'm not quite sure how to interpret the organizational charts or the dynamics of this."¹¹ Successful transition in an operation of this scale will require a more clear separation of political and military functions to provide an effective framework for military actions. This separation will also help to shape international perceptions and acceptances of our objectives in Iraq.

Beyond command relationships, current operations in Iraq stand in violation of the spirit and intent of the manual's insistence on political primacy as illustrated by the CPA's lack of resources and effectiveness. To date, military actions have clearly dominated all coalition efforts in Iraq. According to a Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) assessment of post-war Iraq, the CPA has made progress but lacks the resources, personnel and flexibility to fully implement their programs. The assessment succinctly identifies the fundamental problem when it states,

The "hearts and minds" of key segments of the Sunni and Shi'a communities are in play and can be won, but only if the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) and new Iraqi authorities deliver in short order. To do so, the CPA will have to dramatically...augment its operational capacity...while there are still significant numbers of coalition forces in Iraq to provide maximum leverage over those who seek to thwart the process. ¹³

Clearly, the CSIS assessment recognizes the lead role of the political/diplomatic effort. Its use of the term "leverage" in describing the military's role in supporting political/diplomatic efforts is an insight that wholly supports the *Small Wars Manual*'s persistent clarity in this relationship. To draw an analogy, the CPA's inability to

effectively institute its programs is tantamount to diplomatic failure in the *Small Wars Manual*. The impact of this political/diplomatic discord on military operations is addressed in the manual. When describing strategy, the manual prescribes:

The application of purely military measures may not, by itself restore peace and orderly government because the fundamental causes of the condition of unrest may be economic, political, or social.¹⁴

I would argue that in the underlying causes of unrest in Iraq are exactly those. Military actions in response to this condition "...must be of secondary importance and should be applied only to such extent as to permit the continuation of peaceful corrective measures." One might think these are strategic issues, not relevant to my operational topic. But, to examine the operational level of war as that essential link between tactics and strategy, it's important to examine this flawed condition. In the context of the Small Wars Manual, unless the CPA can effectively pursue political and diplomatic solutions to the fundamental issues in post-war Iraq, military actions will continue a never-ending pursuit of security and counter-insurgency operations.

PHASED APPROACH WITH DEFINED ENDSTATE

The Small Wars Manual clearly describes the general endstate to be pursued in any small war situation:

[I]ts purpose is friendly and it wishes to accomplish its objectives with as little military display as possible with a view to gaining the lasting friendship of the inhabitants of the country.¹⁶

It also prescribes a phased-approach to operations that requires certain conditions to be met prior to reaching an endstate. As noted earlier, Phases 2-5 are representative of the actions required in a post-hostilities situation like Iraq. This paper will not dispute that there is a defined endstate to current operation in Iraq, or that it is in accord with the

altruistic purposes described above. As stated in the CPA's official overview, the CPA will temporarily assume government functions for Iraq until "...such time as Iraq is politically and socially stable enough to assume its sovereignty." CJTF7's mission statement appropriately complements the CPA's by seeking to "...support the establishment of government and economic development to set the conditions for a transfer of operations to designated follow on military or civilian authorities." The distinction this study will make, however, is that the *Small Wars Manual* clearly describes certain conditions that must precede others in pursuit of a given endstate, and that the CPA's insistence of achieving milestones per a stated schedule may not allow certain preconditions to be met.

Phase 2, of the *Small Wars Manual* is the beginning of general military operations, while Phase 3 includes assumption and control of the government.

Operations in Iraq are clearly in Phase 3 at this point and should strive to set the conditions for Phase 4 which would reduce coalition involvement to providing routine police functions. The conditions required to move to Phase 4 are the restoration of order and return of responsibility to local police and military forces. As stated in the manual, "After continued pressure of the measures in phase three, it is presumed that sooner or later regular forces will subdue the lawless elements." The clear implication concerning Iraq is that coalition forces would, at a minimum, subdue the majority of insurgent activity before gradually phasing control back to Iraqi security and police forces. The CPA, however, seems insistent on turning control back to Iraqi forces and police as quickly as possible, despite the continued presence of significant insurgent activity. CPA top administrator Paul Bremer told reporters in November of 2003 that he

plans for "...faster Iraqification of security forces, with accelerated training and equipping of Iraqi police, soldiers, and border guards. Bremer said "...that 200,000 Iraqis would be involved in securing the country by September." Clearly this runs counter to the principle of regaining order with regular forces prior to turning responsibilities over to indigenous police and military forces. The sole determining factor for turnover in Iraq seems to be how quickly native forces can be trained. The manual does prescribe the early training and introduction of indigenous forces, but does so with the presumption that lawlessness and insurgency will be nearly eliminated by the actions initially applied by U.S. forces. If we seek to accelerate a turnover timeline for the political sake of getting U.S. casualties out of the headlines, we have failed to address or fix the underlying problems which might well leave Iraq in an unstable condition. Under such conditions, there is the risk of an equally brutal and roguish regime replacing the one that we have deposed.

The counter to this point is that the CPA's plan is simply a detailed approach to the "gradual" turnover articulated in the Small Wars Manual. When viewed in the context of other time-driven goals, however, the overarching plan appears to be "accelerate turnover" regardless of meeting appropriate conditions. Scheduled elections are a case-in-point. Apparently bowing to internal and external pressure, the CPA has stated its intention of holding elections and turning over authority to a Transitional National Assembly (TNA) no later that June of 2004. On this subject, the *Small Wars Manual* warns that, "A free, fair, and impartial election cannot be held in a country torn by civil strife." A cursory review of headlines in Iraq, particularly in the larger urban centers, would reveal that the country is not free from internal strife. Additionally, this

strife-free condition is related to the first point with regards to native forces, as "...the larger portion of the military and police duties required to guarantee an impartial election should be provided by the native military organization."²³ So while the sequencing of events for turnover is in consonance with the manual, the underlying conditions required for success in each step of the sequence are not being addressed.

There are obviously many dynamics involved that may not allow for a well-defined and orderly transition. The general principles of a phased approach and defined endstate, however, are perfectly valid. The manual describes the sequence and interdependence of these conditions:

The initial problem is to restore peace...Peace and industry cannot be restored permanently without appropriate provisions for the economic welfare of the people. Moreover, productive industry cannot be fully restored until there is peace. Consequently, the remedy is found in emphasizing the corrective measures to be taken in order to permit the orderly return to normal conditions.²⁴

By insisting on a sequence of events driven by arbitrary timelines, the coalition risks failing to achieve the conditions they seek to implement.

A MULTI-FACETED APPROACH

Perhaps the most important and relevant theme from the *Small Wars Manual* is that operations like those encountered in post-hostilities Iraq require a flexible, multifaceted approach. This requirement is derived from the fact that there are multiple type-operations being performed concurrently, and that the major obstacle to restoring order and self-rule is the allegiance and support of the people.

The manual describes the requirement for a different methodology and attitude than that found in more conventional warfare. This is the essence of a multi-faceted approach and is described in the introductory section:

[O]ccupations are usually peaceful and altruistic. Accordingly, the methods of procedure must rigidly conform to this purpose; but when forced to resort to arms to carry out the object of the intervention, the operation must be pursued energetically and expeditiously in order to overcome the resistance as quickly as possible.²⁵

What the manual describes is a "mindset," or philosophy, that should permeate the occupying force and guide methods and actions. At its simplest level, this multi-faceted approach is designed to isolate and defeat any insurgents or military remnants while winning the allegiance of the remainder of the population. This is an important point as it relates to the endstate discussed earlier.

There is plenty of support found in the manual for the "get tough" policy in Iraq. The manual continually directs the offensive use of force to "...give them no peace or rest, or time to make further plans." The obvious need for offensive action notwithstanding, the manual gives equal, if not greater, attention to the importance of pacification and the need to avoid antagonizing the local populace. In fact, while the manual prescribes the strengthening of U.S. forces during general military activities, it concurrently describes the need to "...break the resistance to law and order by a combination of effort of physical and *moral* [emphasis mine] means." Support for this multi-faceted approach appears throughout the manual. This paper will not address the requirement for offensive action, but will focus on two relevant principles that constitute *moral* means; respect for the local populace, and the conduct of U.S. forces.

Hatred of the enemy has long been a basic instinct in warfare and has, rightfully, been allowed to foster as a necessary byproduct of battle. This natural tendency is perhaps the single greatest obstacle to succeeding in a small wars situation as it will dictate the conduct of your own forces, thereby affecting the manner in which they treat

the local populace. The manual advises that "...in major warfare, hatred of the enemy is developed among troops to arouse courage. In small wars, tolerance, sympathy, and kindness should be the keynote of our relationship with the...population." The manual further admonishes that the "...aim is not to develop a belligerent spirit in our men but rather one of caution and steadiness." The manual is replete with examples of such insights. The prevailing thought is simple, small wars situations require a "...mixture of combined peaceful and warlike temperament."

If we examine current operations in Iraq in the context of the manual's guidance on troop conduct, we may find need for improvement. There is already evidence that the "get tough" policy has decreased the number of attacks on U.S. and coalition troops, but perhaps at the long term cost of losing, or never gaining, the allegiance of the people. I will not argue the need for offensive action when required and do not wish to secondguess commanders on the ground, however, the underlying temperament of forces involved may indicate future problems. Just after the announcement of tougher tactics, a company commander in Iraq was quoted as saying: "You have to understand the Arab mind...The only thing they understand is force – force, pride and saving face." ³¹ While pride and saving face can be readily understood, insistence on force implies that it is the only, or preferable, method of influencing the population. This sentiment was equally represented in the comments of a battalion commander who was quoted as saying, "With a heavy dose of fear and violence, and a lot of money for projects, I think we can convince these people that we are here to help them."³² Opinions such as these from leaders must inevitably influence the attitudes and actions of junior troops. Based on the guidance from the *Small Wars Manual*, such attitudes are to the detriment of the mission. Respect for the local populace is really a byproduct of troop conduct. The manual advises that:

[C]are should be exercised not to humiliate the natives. They are usually proud and humiliation will cause resentment which will have an unfavorable reaction. Nothing should be said or done which implies inferiority of the status or of the sovereignty of the native people. They should never be treated as a conquered people.³³

There is a great deal of information in the manual devoted to proper treatment and respect for the local populace. In general, the manual provides a framework for interaction with local populace that stresses respect and praise, while avoiding criticism and humiliation at all costs. These basic principles of interaction are required because the "...motive in a small war is not material destruction. It is usually a project dealing with the social, economic, and political development of the people." The interrelation of troop conduct, respect for local populace, and mission accomplishment is obvious but merits description because it is so vital to the spirit and intent of the *Small Wars Manual*. The more properly your forces conduct themselves and show respect, the more likely they will be to achieve an allegiance with the people and allow for the political/diplomatic corrections to the underlying social, economic, and political conditions.

With that interrelationship in mind, another examination of current operations in Iraq indicates more potential for friction. There is a great deal of anecdotal information that suggests our "get tough" policy has brought U.S. forces back to aggressive tactics such as air-strikes, leveling suspected structures, and cordoning of entire villages and towns. Local populaces in suspected areas have found their homes partitioned off and guarded by U.S. troops who require coalition-issued identification to enter. These efforts stand to alienate the neutral and supportive portions of the populace and degrade our

efforts at transition. A local school teacher is quoted as saying, "This is humiliating...we are caged like birds." For every military success with offensive operations, there is a potential backlash in antagonism toward U.S. forces and their mission. This is exactly the situation in which the manual warns, "...fear of political subjugation causes violent opposition to any movement which apparently threatens political or personal liberty."

The counter to this argument is that this entire study is based on dynamics that occurred on a much smaller scale, against a much less sophisticated opponent, and without the glaring scrutiny of global media coverage. Although there is some validity to this counter, the basic dynamics of human nature are the driving factors to these types of military actions and they have not changed. This disparity in "scale" is the reason to focus on the relevant themes from the manual and not specific tactics, techniques, or procedures.

THE ROAD AHEAD

Many of the ideas presented in this paper are self-evident, while some are observations beyond the scope of this paper to suggest the appropriate implementation. With a large turnover of forces planned for the near future, however, it would be useful to address potential implementation of the relevant themes from the *Small Wars Manual*.

Although political primacy over military actions is not a new idea, the close and continuous interaction and interdependence suggested by the *Small Wars Manual* is not entirely familiar to more conventional operations. Additionally, the idea that the current political/military structure in Iraq is flawed, or that the CPA lacks the resources and expertise to quickly and efficiently achieve the conditions required for stability and peace in Iraq are not exclusive to this paper. That being said, I will restate the obvious in that

the current political/military structure should be changed to clearly delineate the political and military chains of command, with the inclusion of a non-DoD entity vested with authority for U.S. actions. If for no other reason, this should be done to mitigate the persistent international and domestic perception that OIF is a military-driven conquest for hegemonic purposes. The more pragmatic reason to ensure political primacy is to negate the escalatory influences inherent in warfare as the manual suggests.

As stated earlier, there is an appropriately stated endstate for current operations in Iraq. The phases required, with appropriate conditions met, are what the manual suggests is the key to success. This paper suggests that the current milestones for transition and their timelines appear arbitrary and risk failure if the underlying conditions are not addressed. The urgency to set and meet transition timelines is probably attributable more to domestic politics and public pressure than to political and military realities in Iraq. Domestic politics aside, it's imperative that the CPA clearly articulate the sequence and purpose of objectives designed to achieve their endstate. This, of course, will allow military commanders to effectively plan the critical tasks required to set the conditions appropriate to the transition milestones. It is important to note the interrelationship of the themes presented here. The political primacy is what guides an operational plan clearly focused on meeting the conditions articulated in each phase to achieve the desired endstate. The final piece of this interrelation puzzle is the conduct of military actions, which should be reflective of the multi-faceted theme presented earlier.

The most appropriate theme for implementation given the current situation in Iraq is a multi-faceted approach that combines "...peaceful and warlike temperament." With major force rotations occurring soon, commanders have an opportunity to imbue

their units with the "mindset" or philosophy articulated in the *Small Wars Manual*. In addition to the vital training required to conduct operations in Iraq, units should receive cultural and religious training to the extent possible. Language skills should be introduced at the small unit level, focused on the basic courtesies that patrols should exchange with local inhabitants. Local and regional customs and taboos should be taught to every member deploying to theater. In addition to troop conduct, employment of forces should be carefully considered. Maximum personal presence should be the norm. Troops patrolling on foot vice parked in armored vehicles can help to foster a sense of trust and reliability with local inhabitants. Offensive actions, based on sound intelligence, should be swift and focused with maximum consideration for avoiding collateral damage. All forces should be taught and reminded that this type of operation in this type of theater may require more tolerance and patience than boldness and aggressiveness. This is at the heart of the "...entirely different method" described in the *Small Wars Manual*.

CONCLUSION

There's an old adage that if you want a new idea, read an old book. *The Small Wars Manual*, published over 60 years ago, provides relevant themes that are applicable to current operations in Iraq as well as tomorrow's battlefield. It recognizes that in the vast realm of operations that lie between peace and war, military operations must have a purpose beyond merely destroying enemy forces. As operations in Iraq continue, it would appear that the opportunity to affect real, lasting change in that country is fleeting and depends on political and military actions capable of winning the allegiance of the Iraqi people while building effective institutions of statehood.

The manual reminds us that, "Small wars are conceived in uncertainty, are conducted often with precarious responsibility and doubtful authority, under indeterminate orders lacking specific instructions." With military actions in Iraq dominating popular media and professional publications, there is no question that the task is extremely large and complex. There is no simple formula or method that can be applied with guaranteed success. It will require maximum effort and ingenuity from our political and military leadership, and must prescribe to the immutable truths that we usually seek in doctrine. If these truths are not found in doctrine, they can certainly be found in history.

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²¹ Coalition Provisional Authority, "Agreement on Political Process", 15 November 2003. http://www.cpa-iraq.org/audio/20031115 Nov-15-GC-CPA-Final Agreement-post.htm

²⁵ Ibid., chap. I, p. 10.
²⁵ Ibid., chap. I, p. 13.
²⁶ Ibid., chap. I, p. 29.
²⁷ Ibid., chap. I, p. 7.
²⁸ Ibid., chap. I, p. 32.
²⁹ Ibid., chap. I, p. 18.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Filkins, "Tough New Tactics by U.S. Tighten Grip on Iraq Towns".

Ibid.
 Small Wars Manual, chap. I, p. 30.
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