Network Centric Operations (NCO) Case Study

The British Approach to Low-Intensity Operations:

Part II

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FOREWORD

Part II of the LIO Final Report presents the detailed research, by operation, conducted by King's College London and developed by PA Consulting.

Part II

Case Study 1 – The Malayan Emergency (1948-1960) - David Ucko

Historical Sketch of Operation

Historical Sketch

Origins of emergency
The 'Malayan Emergency' was declared by the British High Commission in Malaya in 1948 in response to attacks by Malayan communists on colonial labourers and planters. The declaration of a state of emergency saw the introduction of armed forces to counter the emerging communist rebel threat and gave the police added powers of arrest, detention and curfew. From then on, the British military and police launched a counterinsurgency campaign to root out what became known as 'communist terrorists' (CTs) from the countryside and jungle. Despite initial setbacks, the campaign was ultimately a success and the Emergency was declared over in 1960.

The Malaya area had been under effective British rule since 1874, when the British government finalised a series of treaties with local Malay rulers. In 1896, some of these areas were merged to form the Federated Malay States. In April 1930, the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) came into being, stating as its main objective the creation of a Soviet Republic of Malaya. Following early setbacks, the MCP was able to rebuild its resources and organisation during the late 1930s. Nonetheless, the sway of the organisation remained limited to sections of the ethnic-Chinese population of Malaya, whilst attracting scant interest from either the Malay or ethnic-Indian communities.

During the Japanese invasion of Malaya in World War II (WW2), the MCP sought to establish itself as a local resistance movement, fighting for Malayan independence. Pushed out of Malaya by the Japanese, the British government backed the MCP's initiative and – mostly from 1944 onwards – supplied what became known as the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA) with arms and equipment. With the Japanese surrender in 1945, however, the MPAJA never engaged in full combat and therefore remained an armed and trained jungle-based force inspired by a particular blend of nationalism and communism.

Within days of the Japanese surrender, the MPAJA had assumed control of swathes of Malaya. The Allies were able to coax the MPAJA into a disarmament agreement, whereby some (but by no accounts all) of their weapons were collected, the organisation was formally disbanded and the MCP legitimised. Britain reacted quickly to the new status quo by establishing a British Military Administration (BMA), which was to run the country on a temporary basis. Nonetheless, the hiatus in British control had radicalised the Malayan communists and led to British rule being increasingly questioned. So far, MCP activity was limited to strikes and various disruptive activities targeting Malaya's economy. While the BMA sought to clamp down on such activities, the MCP retained a shadow network of formally disbanded MPAJA militants that could be activated when necessary.

It was Britain's intention to work towards Malayan independence following WW2. However, the details of the transfer of authority and the British post-war strategy in Malaya set the foreign administration on a collision course with the MCP and other Malayan associations. The BMA was accused of corruption and of self-serving mismanagement, complaints that alienated large sections of the Malay population. Furthermore, British attempts to structure a Malayan nation were ignorant of the ethnic-Malay animosity toward the ethnic-Chinese community – while the Chinese were politically disenfranchised, they were financially dominant and threatened 'Malay jobs'. It should therefore have been unsurprising that the ethnic-Malay community would boycott the UK-brokered 'Malay Union' of 1946, which enfranchised the Chinese. Seeking to learn from its mistakes, the subsequent formulation of nationhood – the 1948 'Federation of Malaya' – again disenfranchised the ethnic-Chinese, who were effectively barred from acquiring Malayan nationality. While this reversal satisfied the Malays, it did nothing to soothe the radicalism of the Chinese communists. Months later, the former-MPAJA member Chin Peng activated the Malayan People's Anti-British Army (MPABA) and launched an armed struggle against the British administration. MPABA was later renamed the Malayan Races Liberation Army (MRLA) in an ultimately unsuccessful bid to appeal to the non-Chinese communities of Malaya.

Early phase of emergency

By the end of 1948, High Commissioner Sir Edward Gent and his successor, Sir Henry Gurney, had announced Emergency Measures that were to help the security forces combat the insurgency while operating within the law. The launch of the armed campaign caught the British authorities by surprise and – until 1950 – the counterinsurgency campaign was largely ineffective. A shortage of intelligence assets and experience combined with a lack of familiarity with the ethnic-Chinese communities and resulted in a counterinsurgency campaign that was more focused on 'bandits' and criminal activity than the political and economic factors fuelling the rebellion. Meanwhile, the military *modus operandi* was predicated on large-scale sweeps. These sweeps achieved some limited results in the early days of the Emergency, when the rebels were still operating in large units and from camps holding up to 300 rebels. Nonetheless, the sweeps were noisy, high-profile affairs, which made it virtually impossible to catch the communists by surprise, particularly as the latter begun operating in smaller units. Furthermore, the use of overwhelming force was likely to convert new recruits to the MRLA cause. During these early years, the security forces were also plagued by an unclear chain-of-command, uncertain leadership and inadequate training. Due to a lack of interaction with the Chinese community, there was no real understanding of what motivated the rebellion or how to undermine its appeal. Progress was therefore at best slow and frustration ensued.

During this period, the MRLA launched several attacks on the British security forces and the local population; the incidence of violent attacks rose from 1,274 in 1948 to 6,092 in 1951. Armed predominantly with rifles from the MPAJA campaign and whatever they could steal from the police force, the MRLA tended toward ambushes and generally avoided prolonged battle. Lacking external backing or a state sponsor, the MRLA often

attacked unarmed civilians, whom they would intimidate for supplies and support. Rubber estates and tin mines were also popular targets.

Despite the clear advantage afforded to the MRLA during this early phase of the campaign, it was unable to establish territorial control as intended. This stalemate prompted the MRLA to withdraw to the jungle to rethink its strategy. The result was a directive, released in October 1951, which ordered the MRLA to desist from indiscriminate attacks on civilians. In response to the expansion of security forces in the countryside, the MRLA was also directed to withdraw deep into the jungle and disperse into small platoons so as to avoid the large-scale sweeps then characteristic of the British counterinsurgency campaign. The effect of this directive on the subsequent course of the counterinsurgency campaign should not be understated.

Evolution of emergency

The MRLA benefited from close relations with the Chinese 'squatters' – a group of around 500,000 ethnic-Chinese Malayans who lived in camps and villages and provided a ready source of material, intelligence and recruits for the rebel group. The course of the British counterinsurgency campaign therefore changed radically in 1950, when Lieutenant General Sir Harold Briggs was appointed Director of Operations and implemented a plan to divorce the squatters from the MRLA. The plan urged close cooperation between the civil administration, the police and the military, but the most radical proposal suggested the establishment of 'New Villages' in which the Chinese squatters were to be relocated and thus isolated from the rebel group. The Home Guard, formed in the early months of the Emergency, was deployed to provide security in the New Villages. Surveillance was also facilitated by the introduction of identity cards and the registration of each adult living in every village – measures adopted in the early days of the Emergency but whose effectiveness was now greatly enhanced.

Overall, the resettlement was a success. Though the squatters were given no warning of their impending relocation (a means of limiting interference by MRLA cadres), the process was generally organised so as to minimise disruption to the locals. Despite inevitable complaints and protests from understandably aggrieved workers and families, the welfare and the political and economic opportunities of the New Villages helped to compensate for some of the hardship. Such measures were appreciated by the squatters, whose support for the MRLA was often a result of general poverty, political disenfranchisement and landlessness.

As a result of the new policies, the MRLA gradually found it more difficult to interact with the squatter population, its source of recruits and materiel. Not only did the rigorous registration policies prevent the MRLA from infiltrating the settlements, but their residents were also screened upon leaving the New Villages to limit the supply of materiel to the now jungle-bound rebels. The countermeasures adopted by the MRLA inevitably carried a greater risk of exposure to the British security forces.

Under Briggs, the British counterinsurgency campaign was made more coherent. Interagency War Executive Councils were established in each state and district, enabling

smoother interaction between the civil administration, the police and the Army. Decision-making was pushed down this network so as to adapt general policy to local circumstances and achieve a level of decision-making autonomy at the district level. Briggs also set up a Federal Joint Intelligence Advisory Committee, which coordinated the collection, analysis, and distribution of intelligence on MRLA locations, activities, and plans.

Militarily, more emphasis was put on small-unit operations. Closer coordination with Special Branch provided these units with increasingly accurate and timely information on rebel whereabouts, which enabled the setting up of effective ambushes and attacks. Whilst in operation, the small-unit patrols were more discrete and could therefore surprise and outfox the guerrillas. Furthermore, the network of interagency committees ensured the wider coherence of these operations within the larger politico-military strategy; the aim was not always to achieve higher kill-ratios but to identify the enemy's support network, infiltrate his communications and acquire more actionable or useful intelligence on the nodes holding the movement together.

On 7 October 1951, the MRLA ambushed and assassinated the British High Commissioner, Sir Henry Gurney. In 1952, Lieutenant General Sir Gerald Templer succeeded Gurney and, as both High Commissioner and Director of Operations, was able to consolidate on Briggs' achievements. Templer also emphasised that the British forces were fighting for Malayan independence and pledged to withdraw as soon as the insurgency had been defeated. To that end, he increased the participation of local Malay leaders in the war effort and gave ethnic-Chinese nationals the right to vote. These policies were deliberately publicised and shifted the image of the counterinsurgency from one of colonial-era repression to a struggle for independence. From here on, the perceived legitimacy of the counterinsurgency forces resulted in greater cooperation with the population and the gradual marginalisation of the MRLA.

Following Templer's arrival in Malaya, the Emergency became increasingly dominated by the acquisition and exploitation of information and intelligence. Templer reformed the Special Branch and made it the lead agency for intelligence-gathering, analysis and dissemination. Because the New Villages had been organised so as to give the squatters 'something to lose', Templer's 'hears and minds' campaign provided the squatters with every incentive to cooperate with the government forces, resulting in a steady flow of intelligence on MRLA whereabouts and activities. Templer also placed great emphasis on turning rebel cadres over with rewards and using them as sources of valuable intelligence. The benefits of this setup were cumulative and self-reinforcing: better intelligence yielded better operations, which in turn resulted in better security, thus generating fresh sources of support and information. Using surrendered enemy personnel (SEP) and turned MRLA suppliers to penetrate the guerrillas' communications network proved particularly effective: not only did it allow for targeted ambushes but it also threw the rebels off-balance and disrupted their activities and standard procedures.

As Templer's inspired leadership bore fruits, the British counterinsurgency was further helped by the side-effects of the Korean War, which had a hugely positive effect on the

Malayan economy, and by the introduction of new military equipment and technology. Most important was the greater availability of aircraft and helicopters, which were used mostly for mobility, air supply, surveillance and medical evacuation rather than air strikes, which were often ineffective.

Operationally, Templer institutionalised the small-unit approach. With a distinct commitment to operational analysis and a willingness to learn from the units most experienced in jungle warfare, Templer helped disseminate the best practices through the publication of a campaign-specific field manual. Increasingly, the Commonwealth forces were learning how to out-guerrilla the guerrillas.

Conclusion of emergency

By deploying a higher concentration of troops to the areas most affected by violence, Malaya's various districts were gradually cleared of rebel cadres. 'Swarming' one area allowed the forces to monitor the population, survey any infiltration by the MRLA or collaboration with the rebels, acquire intelligence through agents and deserters, and gradually target rebel locations and activities. With a combination of psychological operations, the effective exploitation of SEP and the carefully calibrated use of force, the British security forces soon gained control of the area. In this way, Malaya's most troubled districts were soon declared safe, and the resources and men were redeployed elsewhere, leaving a reinforced security framework behind to guarantee security.

Underlying these military victories lay a sophisticated political strategy of ethnic reconciliation. From the early 1950s onwards, the Malayan sultans were pressed to accept the enfranchisement of the ethnic-Chinese population as the unavoidable cost of political stability. Meanwhile, representatives of the country's three main ethnic communities were brought together and urged to negotiate a joint vision for a future, independent Malaya. These processes resulted in regular elections that, while mostly symbolic, led the way to Malayan independence and to the simultaneous marginalisation of the MRLA.

As the rebel organisation was compromised, the government offered generous terms for their surrender, including an amnesty and an opportunity at social and political reintegration. Those who would not accept these terms were either detained or deported to China. Eventually, the security situation in Malaya was sufficiently stable for Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman to declare Malayan independence on 31 August 1957. At this point, the MRLA campaign lost its remaining momentum and *raison d'être*. The last serious engagement occurred in the Telok Anson marsh in 1958 and resulted in the large-scale surrender of MRLA militants. The remainder – including Chin Peng – fled abroad. On 31 July 1960, the Malayan government declared the Emergency over.

Chronology

1874	The British government finalises a series of treaties with local Malay rulers.

1896	Formation of the Federated Malay States involving some, but not all Malay states.
1930	
April	The Malayan Communist Party (MCP) comes into being and states as its main objective the creation of a Soviet Republic of Malaya.
1940s	British forces support ‘Malayan People’s Anti-Japanese Army’ with arms and supplies.
1946	‘Malay Union’ proposed – boycotted by Malays as it enfranchised the Chinese.
1948	‘Federation of Malaya’ proposed – appreciated by Malays but resented by Chinese, who are again disenfranchised.
16 June	Following a wave of violence, the murder of three European planters finally prompts the British High Commission in Malaya to declare a ‘state of emergency’. The status change gives the government forces greater powers and authority.
1948-1949	Home Guard, Village Guard and other security formations stood up to free the military from static-defence duties. British authorities form a Communities Liaison Committee to provide an inter-ethnic forum for discussions and negotiations on the future of Malaya.
1949	
6 September	Promulgation of surrender terms for MRLA militants. Henceforth, increased focus on exploitation intelligence of surrendered enemy personnel (SEP).
1950	Lt-Gen. Harold Briggs appointed Director of Operations. Briggs establishes ‘New Villages’ and interagency committees on the federal, state and district level.
April	Malayan Committee formed in UK Cabinet.
May	Briggs creates the Federal Joint Intelligence Advisory Committee.
25 June	The Korean War breaks out and lasts until 27 July 1953. Though some materiel is diverted from Malaya to Korea, the war boosts the Malayan economy, contributing to a more effective hearts and minds campaign.

1951

October	The MRLA issues directive to desist from attacks on civilian targets and to fragment into small units and disperse deep into the jungle. It took some 12 months for the directive to be intercepted by British troops.
7 October	The MRLA assassinates High Commissioner Sir Henry Gurney.
21 October	General election in Britain: Winston Churchill defeats Attlee's Labour government.
27 November	With his tour in Malaya over, Briggs leaves his post and the country.

1952

7 February	Lt-Gen. Gerald Templer arrives in Malaya as High Commissioner & Director of Operations. He initiates a 'hearts & minds' campaign to gain support and intelligence from Chinese. Templer also emphasises the goal of Malayan independence.
March	Municipal elections in Kuala Lumpur, involving both Malay and Chinese parties. Having agreed not to field candidates against one another, the United Malay National Organisation (UMNO) and the Malay Chinese Association (MCA) win nine of 11 seats and together form the Alliance Party. This multi-ethnic party was to play an important role in the run-up to and years following Malayan independence.
April	Reports cite the presence of MRLA base camps in Thai territory.
1 May	Following a decline in terrorist incidents, Templer issues a $250,000 reward for Chin Peng (if caught alive), $200,000 rewards for members of the Politburo and $120,000 rewards to regional committee secretaries. Being 'caught alive' could also mean arranging the voluntary surrender of a known terrorist.
29 August	Meng Lee, the MRLA courier and communications director, is arrested following a protracted Special Branch operation.
1953	Troop-carrying helicopters are introduced to Malaya.
	Political alliance formed by coalition of ethnic-Indian, Chinese and Malay parties.
Summer	Formation of Special Operations Volunteer Force (SOVF), a fighting unit consisting of SEP.

14 September	As a result of a breakthrough in the negotiations of the Communities Liaison Committee on the issue of Malayan nationality, 60% (1,200,000) of the Malayan Chinese are made Malayan citizens.
1954	
30 May	Templer leaves Malaya and is replaced as High Commissioner by his former deputy, Donald MacGillivray, with Lt-Gen. Sir Geoffrey Bourne assuming the post of Director of Operations.
1955	
31 July	The Alliance party, comprising Indian, Malay and Chinese representation, wins a landslide victory in Malaya's first general election (turnout at 85%).
December	Chin Peng, leader of MRLA, holds negotiations with British government with a view to settle the conflict. Britain refuses certain key demands and the talks collapse.
1957	
31 August	PM Tunku Abdul Rahman declares Malayan independence
1958	Last serious engagement occurs in the Telok Anson march, resulting in large-scale surrender of MRLA militants
1960	
31 July	'Emergency' declared over

Defence Lines of Development

Training

The training afforded to the British and Commonwealth forces in the early phase of the Emergency was generally inadequate for the task at hand. Despite experiencing jungle warfare as late as 1945, the British Army had lost much of its acquired expertise by the time of the Malayan Emergency amid post-war demobilisation and the declaration of Indian independence in 1947, which affected several of the Gurkha regiments. A Jungle Warfare Training School established in Saugur in 1944-5 had by 1948 been shut. The centre had offered three-week courses in jungle warfare geared towards company-based operations and emphasising the importance of 'jungle-craft' and of good communications (through wireless communications and the use of coloured smoke grenades to signal the location of dropping zones to the overhead aircraft).

This institutional amnesia notwithstanding, the British forces were helped by those individuals who had previously experience with jungle warfare.[1] Retaining individual

[1] Interview with Lt Ian Rae, by KCL, 16 November 2005

(rather than institutional) awareness of the tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs) best suited to jungle warfare, these individuals accelerated the bottom-up relearning process that marked the early years of the Emergency.

An important step in this learning process was the opening of a jungle-warfare training centre in 1948. In July of that year, HQ Malaya District had authorised Lieutenant-Colonel Walter Walker to form the 'Ferret Force' – an *ad hoc* unit composed of and led by veterans of the Special Operations Executive unit that had operated in Malaya during World War II.[2] This force also included Malayan guides and a number of Gurkha volunteers with appropriate skills and experience. Operationally, Ferret Force proved to be an overall success, presaging some of the best practices arrived at years later by the conventional forces. The Training Centre was established so as to provide jungle-warfare training to the future members of Ferret Force. Somewhat ironically, the training anticipated through this school sealed the fate of Ferret Force, which increasingly came to be seen as a prototype losing its uniqueness and, with it, its relevance. It was subsequently disbanded.

The training centre, whose formal name was the Far-Eastern Land Forces (FARELF) Training Centre (FTC), was established in Tampoi Barracks. The FTC's mandate included 'studying, teaching and perfecting methods of jungle fighting [and to] raise the standard of jungle warfare among the Armed Forces in FARELF'.[3] The barracks could accommodate two battalions at any one time and 'several hundred students might be trained during any one quarter'.[4] Operating with time constraints, Walker tapped the existing experience in jungle warfare and codified it into curricula for two courses, one for officers and the other for NCOs.

The FTC was predicated on the rapid and efficient dissemination of best practices. 'When a cadre's level of training met Walker's approval, it then returned to its battalion which was then put through the same course the cadre had just passed'.[5] Much of the training took place in the jungle, resulting in occasional encounters with enemy forces during training patrols.

The achievements at FTC nonetheless took some time to produce results. In the meantime, the Army's traditional training militated against restraint, with several early incidents of abuse, brutality and excesses in the use of force.[6] It was only really around 1951 that the training of the Commonwealth forces began reflecting the jungle experience of the less senior ranks. Henceforth, the training emphasised long-term jungle immersion, discretion, jungle-craft and small-unit operations. It was also around this time that Briggs established a Jungle Warfare School at Kota Tinggi in Johore. This school was 'to train the advance parties of all units arriving in the theatre on a cadre basis, besides appraising

[2] Raffi Gregorian, "'Jungle Bashing' in Malaya: Toward a Formal Tactical Doctrine", *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, 5, 3, Winter 1994, p.346
[3] Public Records Office / War Office 268/1116 (1949), p.2
[4] Gregorian, p.347
[5] *ibid.* This section also includes a detailed break-down of the training courses.
[6] Richard Stubbs, *Hearts and Minds in Guerrilla Warfare: The Malayan Emergency 1948-1960* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp.73-74

weapons and equipment, and developing new tactics and operational methods'.[7] With time, the remit of the FTC expanded and it began offering specialist courses in all aspects of jungle warfare, including wireless communications, weapons evaluation etc.[8] Training in skills applicable to the jungle environment subsequently became routine. The FTC curricula and précis also came to be the foundation of subsequent jungle-warfare doctrine.

Much like the military, the level of police training was also inadequate in the early phase of the counterinsurgency campaign. New police recruits from Palestine and Europe were 'put into service with only a minimal training in professional police work, no knowledge of the Malay, Chinese, or Tamil languages or the customs of the country, and little appreciation of the standard of work and conduct expected of them'.[9] With a High Commissioner emphasising numbers rather than training, the untrained recruits tended towards corruption and brutality, the latter arising out of a lack of knowledge, understanding and an overriding sense of suspicion.[10] The police training was at this point the responsibility of mobile Army teams. With time, these were replaced with a 500-strong team of British police sergeants that had recently been demobilised from the Palestinian police force. From then on, the quality and availability of training improved.

An important milestone in the evolution of police training was the establishment of an Intelligence (Special Branch) Training School in 1952. The school was an initiative of Lt-Gen. Sir Gerald Templer, who had always emphasised the importance of effective intelligence. It provided specialist courses on intelligence-gathering for Special Branch along with select personnel from the Army, police force and the civil service.[11]

Equipment

At the outset of the Emergency, the available police and military equipment was largely inadequate to face the threat at hand. The police force was lacking the required hardware: radios were in short supply, available weaponry was often antiquated (or borrowed from the Army) and there was a notable lack of armoured vehicles, a deficiency whose effects were also felt by the Army.[12] The arrival of the 4th Hussars and their armoured cars at the end of 1948 went some way to remedying this gap in capabilities. Nonetheless, inadequate supplies marred the counterinsurgency effort well into the 1950s, forcing

[7] Donald Mackay, *The Malayan emergency, 1948-60: the Domino that Stood* (London: Brassey's, 1997), p.128
[8] Gregorian, p.347
[9] Stubbs, p.72
[10] In a note, dated 8 January 1949, from High Commissioner Sir H. Gurney to the Secretary of State for Colonies, Mr A. Creech Jones, the High Commissioner explains that 'basic [police] recruit training has been reduced to a minimum in order to get the greatest number of men on duty as soon as possible. No higher training is in fact taking place, nor is it possible to provide any at the present time'. Copy of note available in A. J. Stockwell, ed., *Malaya: Part II: The Communist Insurrection, 1948-1953*, British Documents on the End of the Empire (London: HMSO, 1995a), pp.102-112
[11] John Nagl, *Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam: Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002), pp.91-92
[12] Mackay, p.36-7

Templer to lobby his personal contacts in Whitehall and elsewhere for additional shotguns, radios and armoured cars.[13]

Network-related equipment included radios, telephones and wireless sets. The effectiveness of the radios was limited in the jungle.[14] They were also heavy and it was quite common for smaller patrols to forsake the radio altogether and prioritise food and ammunition instead.[15] Fixed assets, such as police stations, were linked by telephone, which were installed at outlying posts to create a network of sorts. 'From the start of the emergency, the main police district headquarters had standing orders to telephone the outlying posts every hour, and if there was no reply to act at once'.[16] This system resulted in quick communications in spite of lacking technology.

Much like the police and Army, the Royal Air Force (RAF) was initially beset by equipment shortages. There is some discrepancy in the exact number of squadrons available to the RAF at the onset of the Emergency. Whereas Donald Mackay claims that the Air Officer Commanding could in 1948 deploy one squadron of *Spitfires*, a squadron of *Sunderland* flying boats and a handful of *Auster* photo-reconnaissance aircraft and *Dakota* transport planes,[17] Robert Jackson offers a slightly higher estimate of 11 squadrons with just over 100 aircraft concentrated on Singapore Island.[18] Jackson also cites the presence of *Tempests* and a number of *Beaufighters* with the latter the preferred choice for bombing operations (following a mishap with a *Spitfire* in mid-1948 in which faulty wiring resulted in the accidental release of a bomb).[19]

With time, the number and types of aircrafts available increased. In March-April 1950, eight *Avro Lincoln* bombers and eight *Brigands* were deployed to RAF Tengah in Singapore. Jackson explains that the *Lincolns* were 'well-suited to the medium-bomber role in Malaya' and that it could 'deliver seventy 1,000 lb. bombs in the Federation of Malaya by day or by night'.[20] A further six *Lincolns* were deployed in June 1950. According to Jackson, 'in mid-1950, the air-strike force had a strength of sixteen Spitfires, sixteen Tempests, sixteen Brigands, fourteen Lincolns and ten Sunderlands'.[21] These aircraft were updated, replaced and rearmed during the remainder of the Emergency. In tandem, the navigation systems were also upgraded: initially, 'navigation

[13] *ibid.*, p.128
[14] Dennis Edwin Ryan, British private served with D Coy, 1st Bn Suffolk Regt in Malaya, 1950-1952, Imperial War Museum Sounds Archive, Accession No. 18006 (5 May 1998)
[15] Conversation with Lt Ian Rae, 25 April 2006
[16] Richard L. Clutterbuck, *The Long Long War: The Emergency in Malaya 1948-1960* (London: Cassell, 1967), p.49
[17] Mackay, p.67
[18] Robert Jackson, *The Malayan Emergency: the Commonwealth's Wars 1948-1960* (London: Routledge, 1991), p.65
[19] *ibid.*, p.67
[20] *ibid.*, p.69
[21] *ibid.*, p.70

was mostly [done] by dead-reckoning and by map-reading… later we did have a radio transmitter homer, which was of some value to the smaller aircraft'.[22]

The RAF was to provide a valuable contribution to the Emergency in terms of surveillance, recce and psychological operations (PSYOPS). Most importantly, perhaps, the RAF provided air supply and thereby allowed Army patrols to remain in the deep jungle for weeks on end. Such long stays helped penetrate the most secluded guerrilla hide-outs and increased the Army's physical and cognitive 'reach'. Air-ground cooperation was further refined with the deployment of Short Take-Off and Landing (STOL) *Lancer* aircraft, which were used in the later stages of the Emergency to supply the troops' jungle forts. The RAF also conducted offensive raids, but despite devising rudimentary means of ensuring missile precision, such raids would most often be of limited utility; the rebels were alerted to the sound of an incoming plane and the bombs would often miss their designated target. Bombing was instead more effective in harrying rebels out of a certain area of jungle and into the arms of an awaiting Army patrol.

May 1951 saw the formation of a flight of three *Dragonflies*, a recently developed helicopter that had been earmarked for the Royal Navy. Though the introduction of *Dragonflies* enabled the evacuation of casualties from deep jungle and a number of other operations, this helicopter experienced several setbacks in Malaya.[23] Some of these were overcome with training and better instructions on coordination between the air and the ground. Others, primarily the helicopter's limited potential for troop movement, were only solved when the United States were persuaded to supply Sikorsky S-55s, which begun operations in early 1953. These troop-carrying helicopters greatly boosted the armed forces' speed and tactical mobility, important attributes in a conflict centred on remote places and marked by inaccessible jungle. They also enabled the Special Air Service (SAS) to play its vital role in the counterinsurgency campaign (see 2.1.B.3.).[24]

All helicopters were initially stationed in Singapore and later moved to Kuala Lumpur. As Colonel Sutcliffe explains, 'many flying hours were lost by having all the helicopters centrally located. Every task required hours of positioning time. It would have been preferable to disperse the helicopters… there were never enough [helicopters], so it wasn't possible'.[25]

Personnel

At the onset of the Emergency, the police force in Malaya numbered 10,000. The force had suffered during the Japanese invasion and was lacking both equipment and training. It was also a force beset by pervasive poor health and low morale, split as it was between

[22] Air Commodore P.E. Warcup, CBE, as cited in A. H. Peterson, G. C. Reinhardt & E. E Conger, eds., *Symposium on the Role of Airpower in Counterinsurgency and Unconventional Warfare: The Malayan Emergency* (Santa Monica, CA: The RAND Corporation, 1963), p.25
[23] See Mackay (1997), p.137
[24] Douglas Johnson-Charlton, British selection and training officer with 22nd Special Air Service in Malaya, 1951-52, Imperial War Museum Sound Archive, Accession No. 18006 (12 April 1995)
[25] Interview with Lt-Col M. W. Sutcliffe, British Army, as cited in Peterson, Reinhardt & Conger, p.40

those who continued to serve during the Japanese occupation in WW2 and those who had simply melted away or endured those difficult years in prison camps.[26] During these early years, the police force would frequently surrender rather than resist.[27] The issue of morale would require a long-term solution, but in the meantime, it was important to boost the size of the force. To this end, a detachment of several hundred policemen was swiftly transferred from Palestine, with Colonel W. Nicol Gray, the former inspector-general of the Palestinian Police, appointed commissioner for the Malay Federation Police. An unfortunate side-effect of this redeployment was the rivalry and antagonism that developed between the already-split Malayan police force and the newly arrived reinforcements from Palestine. These splits were not fully addressed until 1952.

Jackson illustrates the gradual increase in police forces: 'by the beginning of 1949 the number of Regular Police had risen to 12,767; a year later it was 16,220; in 1951 it reached 16,814; in 1952 it rose to 22,187; and in the following year it reached a peak of 36,737'.[28] By March 1953, the total strength of the police force, regulars and specials included, stood at 71,500.[29] Though this rapid influx of police – from Palestine, India, Europe and Hong Kong – did bolster the security presence in Malaya, the newly arrived officers were often untrained and naturally ignorant about the local situation and mission. This unfamiliarity notwithstanding, the police was by 1951 able to assume many of the security and static-defence roles that had initially been forced onto the Army.[30] At the peak of the insurgency, the police was also involved in a significant number of ambushes and patrols, though participation in these engagements waned with the insurgency.

The rapid growth of the police had brought a number of benefits. By 1952, however, the police had become 'too big and unwieldy … it lacked any sense of direction, had no clear idea whether it ought to be a paramilitary gendarmerie or a traditional colonial Police force concerned to maintain law and order (or both), it was poorly led and trained and in consequence suffered… from low self-esteem and morale'.[31] In 1952, measures were put in place to split the force into one paramilitary branch and one traditional police branch – the former would augment military units in operations in villages and on the fringe of the jungle, the latter conduct regular police tasks.[32] The same year, a Police Training College was opened.[33]

Much like the regular police, Special Branch – responsible for intelligence-gathering and dissemination – was also in a bad state in 1947-48. Following some restructuring in

[26] Conversation with Lt Ian Rae, 25 April 2006
[27] Mackay, p.39
[28] Jackson, p.17
[29] This figure was reduced by 23,000 by the end of 1954. See correspondence from High Commissioner Donald MacGillivray to Secretary of State for Colonies, dated January 1955, in A. J. Stockwell, *Malaya: Part III: The Alliance Route to Independence, 1953-1957*, British Documents on the End of the Empire (London: HMSO, 1995b) p.86
[30] R. W. Komer, *The Malayan Emergency in Retrospect: Organization of a Successful Counterinsurgency Effort*, R-957-ARPA (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 1972) p.39
[31] Mackay, p.131
[32] For more detail on this measure, see Mackay, p.131
[33] Komer, p.49

previous years, the Malayan Special Branch was re-established under the Deputy Commissioner of Police in August 1948.[34] During this early phase of the Emergency, the military relied mostly on its own intelligence, which – given the Army's lack of familiarity with police work – was not always suitable for the task at hand.

According to R. W. Komer, a total of 30,000 troops were stationed in Malaya and Singapore in March 1948. Only 11,500 of these were in Malaya itself and only 5,784 were combat troops.[35] There were a total of ten battalions in Malaya in June 1948: six Gurkha battalions, the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the Malay Regiment and two British battalions (the 2nd King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry (KOYLI) and the 1st Seaforths).[36] All of these battalions remained under-strength for some time. Moreover, many Gurkha battalions had been lost to the Indian Army following the declaration of Indian independence in 1947.[37] Support staff tended to equate to approximately half of a 700-strong infantry battalion, meaning that the insurgents and security forces were evenly matched in actual fighting forces.[38] This problem was compounded by the initial lack of a Home Guard, forcing many troops onto static-defence duties.

The British forces were reinforced by regular deployments during the initial few years of the Emergency. The 2nd Guards Brigade, composed of the 3rd Grenadier Guards, the 2nd Coldstream Guards and the 2nd Scots Guards, arrived in August 1948. The 1st Battalion the Queen's Royal Regiment (West Surrey), the 1st Battalion the Royal Lincolnshire Regiment, the 1st Battalion the Devonshire Regiment, and the 1st Battalion the Suffolk Regiment followed.[39] This increased the number of battalions from ten in 1948 to 15 in 1949 and to a peak of 23 in 1953, corresponding to a personnel increase from 10,000 in 1948 to a maximum of 30,000, half of whom were 'non-operational'.[40] The battalions were augmented by a number of supporting units: in early 1949, these amounted to 'two armoured car regiments, each containing up to six squadrons, one or two field batteries and one field regiment of artillery, two field engineer regiments, one Commando brigade, three squadrons of the 22nd Special Air Service Regiment and an Independent Squadron of the Parachute Regiment. Also operating in the infantry role was the Royal Air Force Regiment (Malaya), a locally-recruited force which fielded five rifle squadrons'.[41]

By the early 1950s, each British battalion was composed of four rifle and one support company, representing a total of approximately 800 men.[42] Nonetheless, a force retained a large administrative tail: 'in bayonet strength… the forces on each side never differed

[34] *ibid.*, p.42
[35] *ibid.*, p.11, 46
[36] Mackay, p.36. Nagl breaks the ten battalions into 'two British, five Gurkha, and three Malay', p.65. Komer cites 11 battalions, adding a British one to the above ten, p.46.
[37] See Mackay, p.159 fn2.
[38] Nagl, p.65
[39] Jackson, p.18
[40] *ibid.* Stubbs notes that in early 1952, 22,000 of the 30,000 troops were combat troops, p.159. Komer has a ratio of 28,000:22,000 for March 1952 (excluding Singapore), p.20.
[41] Jackson, p.19
[42] Komer traces the number of British battalions in Malaya throughout the Emergency, p.47.

by any significant amount until the insurrection collapsed in 1957/8'.[43] Moreover, many of the battalions remained severely under-strength. One major difficulty in sustaining troop levels related to the rotational scheme in place to ensure that no individual soldier serve more than three consecutive years overseas (this applied to the British regiments, not to the Gurkhas). This schemed, termed 'Python', resulted in many battalions remaining at two-thirds of their full strength, with the most experienced troops missing due to rotation.[44]

In these circumstances, the battalions found some relief through the National Service (conscription). Such tours were however limited to 18 months, which, when accounting for transport and training, translated to a mere 12 months in operation, a short time to familiarise oneself with the campaign. The situation was partially remedied with the extension of the National Service commitment to two years in 1950.[45]

The National Servicemen brought doctors, surveyors and other types of specialists to the Malayan theatre, but their military training remained vital. Lack of such preparation had in the early years of the Emergency resulted in alleged massacres and the abuse of power. This problem was gradually addressed as FTC training was made more readily available. By 1952, the image of the National Servicemen had improved considerably. By that time, 'many of the British Army battalions serving in Malaya… were virtually National Service battalions. The majority of subalterns were National Service officers, and in some battalions 90 per cent of lance-corporals and 50 per cent of corporals were National Servicemen. About 60 per cent of the private soldiers were conscripts'.[46]

As seen, the Army had lost much of its jungle-warfare experience through the rapid demobilisation of the Far Eastern Forces following WW2. Individual members of certain regiments did retain personal experience and familiarity with jungle warfare, but – most commonly – the approach was driven by 'the dominance of the Western European experience in the careers of most regular soldiers', resulting in 'a "conventional" attitude to the war' in Malaya.[47] This deficiency had wide-ranging ramifications. Trained for conventional warfare, the soldiers initially placed great faith in large-scale sweeps of the jungle, even though 'the major effect of these mass movements of troops was to telegraph their advance so that the guerrillas were alerted well before the troops arrived'.[48] At this point, however, there was little or no experience of how to conduct small-unit operations in the jungle, how to collect intelligence on guerrillas or how to conduct psychological operations.[49] Intelligence-gathering was further complicated by the general lack of Chinese representation in either the police force or the military.

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[43] Mackay, p.150
[44] This section drawn on Mackay, pp.93-94
[45] Yet as William Stothard Tee, chief instructor at the Jungle Warfare School from 1948-1951, explains, even 'two years in Malaya… is not really a sufficient time to become acclimatised, to become trained and become used to the circumstances and the enemy'. See William Stothard Tee, Imperial War Museum Sound Archive, Accession No. 16397 (6 January 1996)
[46] Jackson, p.45
[47] Nagl, p.66-7
[48] Stubbs, p.71
[49] Nagl, p.93

As seen, a notable exception to these trends was the Ferret Force of Lt-Col Walter Walker, formed in 1948. This force was predicated on experiences from the WW2 jungle campaigns, both in Burma and in support of the MPAJA in Malaya. As described by Tom Pocock, the Ferret Force would value local information and full immersion with the local environment. It would typically be 'led by a British volunteer with local knowledge, would consist of four teams, each consisting of a British officer, twelve volunteers from British, Gurkha or the Malay Regiment, a detachment of the Royal Signals, Dyak trackers and a Chinese liaison officer'.[50] This force was subsequently disbanded (see 2.1.B.1), but it did provide the groundwork for successful innovations to come.

One such innovation was the formation of Special Air Service (SAS) teams, following their official disbandment shortly following WW2. With his experience of jungle warfare in WW2, Brigadier Michael Calvert was put in charge of assembling a special-forces team that could take the lead against the MRLA. In 1950, the Malayan Scouts were stood up as an elite jungle-fighting unit able to penetrate and conduct sustained patrols in deep jungle. The initial batch of recruits were for the most 'canteen cowboys, drunkards and lay-abouts' – 'volunteers' that the other units in the Far East wanted rid of.[51] The early incarnation of this special force was accordingly disappointing: it was only when Calvert started recruiting from units back in Britain that the Malayan Scouts achieved notable results. The SAS were also aided by the arrival of troop-carrying helicopters in 1953. Until then, the Scouts dropped into the deep jungle from airplanes, a risky practice known as 'tree-topping': 'you drop from the aircraft with a hundred foot of rope wrapped around your waist. To land, you'd pick the nearest bushy-top tree and crashed into it… the casualty rate was quite fantastic'.[52]

With the help of helicopters, the Malayan Scouts provided a valuable contribution to the counterinsurgency campaign. Their special training and spirit allowed for prolonged stays in the jungle, enabling deeper immersion, greater familiarity and a more effective pursuit of MRLA cadres in areas beyond the reach of conventional Army and police units. The SAS was also able to construct jungle forts in inaccessible areas, thus establishing ties with the aborigine tribal populations that had been pressured to provide support and assistance to the then jungle-bound insurgents.

Supporting the police and Army during the Emergency was a series of civil defence and constabulary forces stood up during the first few months of the Emergency. From the outset, Field Marshal Montgomery had stressed that increasing the number of British troops and policemen would not be an adequate long-term solution to the security threat in Malaya. Instead, he proposed the establishment of a Home Guard. Approximately 24,000 Malays were enrolled in various constabulary units during the first three months

[50] Tom Pocock (1973), *Fighting General: The Public and Private Campaigns of General Sir Walter Walker* (London: Collins) p.87

[51] Douglas Johnson-Charlton, British selection and training officer with 22nd Special Air Service in Malaya, 1951-52, Imperial War Museum Sound Archive, Accession No. 15256 (12 April 1995)

[52] *ibid*. Johnson-Charlton explains that because 'bamboo … splits very easily and when it splits it is like a razor. It was lacerating people's backs, stomachs, thighs. There were broken backs galore, there was broken legs galore, it was pretty, pretty hopeless. If ever there was a need for helicopters it was then'.

of the Emergency, which helped free the military from village defence, traffic control and other such duties. The guards were recruited from self-defence forces stood up by tin miners and rubber planters in 1947-48 to protect themselves from rebel attacks. It is difficult to arrive at a clear picture of the strength of the constabulary forces – not only are the names of the different units used interchangeably, but the available estimates of troop numbers often differ substantially. By most estimates, however, the British forces had by 1953 stood up a combined total of close to 250,000 men. The force was boosted by the introduction of ethnic-Chinese guardsmen in 1951 – this measure had positive security and political implications.

Despite their varied performance, the establishment of the local protection forces was essential for the prosecution of the eventual counterinsurgency campaign. As Director of Operations, Briggs wanted to see the police do police work in the villages and on the fringe of the jungle, and the Army penetrate the jungle itself to hit the guerrillas in their own territory. This division of labour was however unrealisable so long as deficient police numbers forced many police tasks onto the military. When Briggs was deployed to Malaya, the Army was still 'doing cordon and search work in the squatter *kongsis* and New Villages, implementing food denial programmes, and, in particular, patrolling and ambushing the jungle edge in the hope of killing CTs [communist terrorists] as they moved between their jungle bases and supply sources'.[53] Meanwhile the morale and motivation of the Home Guard was plummeting: having expanded too quickly and insufficiently armed, its effectiveness was often suboptimal. To remedy this problem, Templer decided in 1952 to equip the Home Guard with shotguns, a leap of faith considering the large number of ethnic-Chinese thus armed.[54]

As personnel issues were addressed during the early years of the Emergency, so was the chain-of-command linking these forces. The chain-of-command had initially been muddled and overly complex, resulting in confusion and inactivity. Rather than answerable to the Acting High Commissioner, the Army was under the command of FARELF in Singapore, which was itself preoccupied by external regional threats rather than the troubles in Malaya. Similarly, the RAF had an exclusive chain-of-command, which hampered cooperation with the Army. Adding to these problems was the poor state of the various services. The Army was for example highly disgruntled to have to subordinate itself to the civil powers, as this effectively meant that the initially inefficient and badly organised police force was running the show.

The chain-of-command was subsequently streamlined. When Harold Briggs was appointed Director of Operations in 1950, he established a network of interagency committees at state, federal and district levels. This forced the various services to meet daily, coordinate their plans and operate in unison. The value of such interagency coordination was tied to the gradual improvement in the standard of the various departments. When appointed High Commissioner in 1952, Gerald Templer demanded control over both the political and the military dimensions of the Emergency. Thus made

[53] Mackay, p.102

[54] Stubbs, p.158. Stubbs also outlines other measures implemented by Templer to restructure the Home Guard, many of which had very promising effects on the overall security situation.

a '*supremo*' with unprecedented powers, Templer was able to streamline and systematise the coordination of civil-military affairs.

The initial counterinsurgency effort in Malaya was also plagued by poor and/or unprepared leadership. A week following the declaration of an Emergency, the High Commissioner, Sir Edward Gent, was effectively relieved of his duties and not replaced for three months. Throughout his tenure, Gent had been accused of being overly cautious in seeking to prevent an escalation in hostilities. Following his departure, the administration was left in the hands of acting officials with limited power, ability and motivation.[55]

General Officer Commanding (GOC) Malaya, General Boucher, had only been in his post for a number of days when the Emergency was declared. Boucher's experience was also confined to warfare in Europe, 'a characteristic he shared with nearly all his senior commanders, and one which would condition tactics and plans for many months to come'.[56] Furthermore, his experience against Greek guerrillas prompted unwarranted overconfidence and a misappraisal of the situation at hand.

Matters were hardly better on the side of the police force. H. B Langworthy, the Commissioner of Police in 1948, resigned within days of the declaration of the Emergency. His successor, Colonel W. Nicol Gray, had been brought over from Palestine and had little knowledge of Malaya. Furthermore, Gray was widely criticised for his obstinacy, which led to a number of quarrels and ultimate stalemate in the police and Army's attempts at coordination.[57] Sir William Jenkins was appointed in May 1950 as an adviser in the reorganisation of the Criminal Investigation Division (CID) and Special Branch. Despite improvements in the flows of information to both the Army and police forces, Gray had within short fallen out with Jenkins and the subsequent antagonism undermined the progress underway.[58]

The most successful leaders in the Malaya Emergency tended to have prior knowledge and familiarity with jungle operations. Harold Briggs had experienced jungle warfare in Asia during the WW2, Lt-Col Walker, the organiser of Ferret Force, was a Burma veteran, as was Brig. Calvert, who reformed the SAS for deep-jungle operations. Finally, Major F. E. Kitson, a champion in the handling of surrendered enemy personnel (SEP), had previous experience in Kenya where he had 'formed surrendered Mau-Mau into "pseudogangs" whom he accompanied… into the villages to terrify them into telling all they knew of other Mau-Mau gangs'.[59]

Though the appointment of Templer in 1952 was to prove highly rewarding, he was not a first-choice selection.[60] Nonetheless, Templer did bring a wealth of experience, as he had

[55] *ibid.*; Mackay, p.36
[56] Mackay, p.37
[57] *ibid.*, p.81
[58] *ibid.*, p.99
[59] Clutterbuck (1967), p.107 fn 4.
[60] Mackay, p.121, and Noel Barber, *The War of the Running Dogs: How Malaya Defeated the Communist Guerrillas, 1948-60* (London: Collins, 1971), pp.146-148

prior to WW2 served as a major and commanded 'A' Company of the Loyals in Palestine. Templer was also well versed in civil administration and business: in the aftermath of WW2, he had been the Military Governor of the British Zone in Germany and, as Vice-Chief of the Imperial General Staff, he had familiarised himself with the workings of government and bureaucracy.[61]

Information

In 1786, Penang became the first Malay state to come under British control (through the British East India Company). In the decades and centuries that followed, more Malay states fell under British control and, by the early 20th century, British officials were effectively running Malaya's various state governments, civil services, public departments and utilities. This relationship resulted in a familiarity with the 'area of operations' that was to assist the British forces in the eventual Emergency. Furthermore, Britain had its imperial history to learn from: 'long years of experience in India, with its communal disorders and nationalistic flare-ups, had created a body of law, precedent, and practice that determined the initial responses of civil administrators, police, and soldiers anywhere within the Commonwealth'.[62] This type of practice had engrained within the British government the principle that the military should act in support of the civil powers and that martial law was only to be imposed as a last resort.

Despite this experience and advantages, the early years of the Malayan Emergency were marked by an overriding misunderstanding of the nature of the mission. Many within the British authorities assumed that the brewing instability was the result of mere banditry and crime and that it would therefore be short-lived.[63] Advice or intelligence reports suggesting a more organised and politically-motivated rebellion were dismissed.[64] The government spent the early years of the insurgency referring to the insurgents as 'bandits', 'criminals' or 'bad hats', a practice that 'appeared not only to deny that the communists could be politically motivated but also to ignore the fact that the MCP had widespread support within certain sections of the population'.[65] This approach also gave the intelligence services a very narrow remit, concerning itself with crime rather than political subversion: 'little was done to assess the political, social, and economic conditions upon which these groups fed. As a consequence, the information passed on to the Government … was too often ambiguous and misleading'.[66]

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[61] Mackay, p.124
[62] Riley Sunderland, *Organizing Counterinsurgency in Malaya, 1947-1960*, RM-4171-ISA (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1964b), p.20
[63] In a note from M. J. MacDonald, Commissioner-General of the British territories in South-East Asia, to A Creech Jones, Secretary of State for the colonies, dated 30 June 1948, MacDonald suggest that 'barring accidents or a serious deterioration', the emergency 'should not last more than 6 months'. Copy of note found in Stockwell (1995a), pp.34-36.
[64] Barber shows how informed advice regarding the brewing situation was ignored by the senior brass in the years leading up to the Emergency, see pp.39-42.
[65] Stubbs, pp.68-69
[66] *ibid.*, pp.67-68

As a result, the direction emanating from the Colonial Office focused initially on 'restoring law and order' with no specific mention of what had caused the instability to begin with.[67] A Malayan Committee within the Cabinet was only formed in April 1950 and it was only following the subsequent visit to Malaya by Secretary of State for War John Strachey in June 1950 that one could 'read into the Committee's minutes a note of real apprehension that things might take a long time to get right and that there might be hard times still to come'.[68]

There had been other faulty assumptions at play. It was, for example, assumed that the Malay police would understand the culture and mindset of the ethnic-Chinese insurgents and sympathisers. There was also an implicit assumption that the crisis would unfold in a predictable manner without challenging the pattern established in previous, nominally similar contingencies. Neither of these assumptions was correct.[69] Indeed, the British policy of subordinating its military to the civilian powers was compromised by the stark ethnic animosity separating the Malays and the ethnic-Chinese. There was no real guarantee that the predominantly Malay police force would adopt the most optimal approach to deal with the ethnic-Chinese insurgents and supporters.[70] This points to the need to adapt even seemingly functional templates to the specificities and local complexities of each campaign.

The lack of understanding manifested itself in various ways during the early years of the insurgency. For one, the government failed to understand the predicament of the civilian Chinese population of Malaya.[71] Inadequately protected by the government forces, the squatters were at the same time expected to cooperate in rooting out the guerrillas. For purely pragmatic reasons, if nothing else, paying protection money to the MRLA often appeared to be a more attractive option. Such behaviour would automatically be interpreted as complicitous by the British security forces and punished. Within the first year of the insurgency, 15,000 people had been detained or banished, including 10,000 who were sent to China.[72] This policy of 'coercion and enforcement' was deliberate – it was perceived as a means of inciting fear in the Chinese and deterring them from joining the insurgents. Ultimately, however, such an approach alienated the Chinese population and, left unprotected, they therefore tended to cooperate with the guerrillas who at least offered a modicum of security.[73]

The intelligence available to the British forces improved in synch with the police force, the security situation in the 'New Villages' and the organisational coherence of the counterinsurgency structure. On this latter point, the restructuring of Special Branch

[67] Mackay, p.37
[68] *ibid.*, pp.94-95
[69] Sunderland (1964b), pp.20-21
[70] *ibid.*, p.21
[71] The distance between the ethnic-Chinese community and the British authorities is repeatedly raised in official correspondence between senior British officials in London, Malaya, Singapore throughout 1948. See Stockwell (1995a)
[72] Arthur Hugh Peters Humphrey, British Secretary for Defence and Internal Security in Federation of Malaya, 1953-1957, Imperial War Museum Sounds Archive, Accession No. 14960 (13 February 1995)
[73] Stubbs, pp.74-76

under Templer was catalytic in enabling a smooth-running network of information, with Special Branch acting as the lead agency. Intrinsic to this structure was the representation of military advisors at Special Branch, who could relay the intelligence in the manner most appropriate and useful to the military. Good intelligence resulted in a greater awareness of the political context of the counterinsurgency, which in turn led to measures geared toward co-opting the civilian populace through a hearts and minds campaign. In turn, this yielded greater intelligence.

Doctrine and Concepts

In the history of the British military, the passing-down of doctrine and concepts relating to counterinsurgency has often been informal. The institution can be said to have benefited from a tacit memory or knowledge, transmitted by individuals rather than through written documentation.[74] As such, there was no formal counterinsurgency doctrine available to British security forces in 1948. Indeed, the only relevant doctrine was that formulated during the jungle operations against the Japanese forces in WW2. In July 1943, the Infantry Company, India, had made several recommendations to improve the readiness of British and Indian infantry battalions, particularly for jungle warfare.[75] The recommendations resulted in the issuing of several Military Training Protocols (MTPs) in 1944-45. MTP No.51, *Preparation for Warfare in the Far East* and MTP No.52, *Warfare in the Far East,* stood out as offering appropriate advice and guidance on the particular conditions of jungle fighting and constituted the nearest thing to written doctrine for the troubles in Malaya.

Yet, as seen, the British Army lost much of its acquired expertise by the time of the Malayan Emergency. The two main factors behind this development were the post-war demobilisation of the units involved in jungle warfare and the declaration of Indian independence in 1947, which resulted in the loss of several Gurkha regiments. As a result, the dominant Army doctrine at the onset of the Emergency was inappropriate for the task at hand. 'The British Army was geared to fight a nuclear, or conventional, war in Europe and all the thinking at the Staff College and the School of Infantry was in that direction'.[76] The predilection for conventional war led to a period of squaring circles, where the British forces sought to apply its preferred approach against an unconventional adversary and in a highly unconventional setting, involving not only large swathes of jungle but a civilian population that required careful attention lest they be pushed towards embracing the insurgency movement. In several statements dating from the late 1940s, Gen. Boucher, GOC Malaya, revealed his faith in large-scale sweeps intended to clear entire areas of rebels. These sweeps yielded limited returns in the early phase of the insurgency when the rebels were still operating in large units. However, as the MRLA dispersed, the mass and unwieldiness of the sweeps made it virtually impossible to catch the guerrillas by surprise. The British forces therefore found it difficult to ascertain whether their adversaries had disappeared or simply melted away to return at a later date.

[74] Gregorian, p.339.
[75] *ibid.*, p.341
[76] Pocock, p.89

As the Emergency evolved, the British military gradually *recovered* its jungle-fighting skills. By force, the military adapted, breaking into smaller units that were more mobile and capable of autonomous decision-making. This adaptation was at first informal and helped by key individuals' personal recollection from previous jungle-based campaigns.[77] It also mirrored the best practices laid out by the Ferret Force – another initiative based on and geared toward the specific conditions of jungle warfare.[78] This *ad hoc* learning process was later institutionalised by Briggs and then by Templer, but remained contested by sections of the military brass well into the late 1950s.[79] Given the gradual and patchy nature of the learning-curve, it is debatable whether one can at this point speak of a monolithic or all-encompassing 'British approach' to low-intensity operations.[80]

In an effort to crystallise the lessons learnt, Templer mandated the publication of an Emergency-specific field manual, based on the bottom-up learning process of the units involved in jungle warfare. The manual was sized to fit a soldier's pocket and updated every six months as needed. Significantly, no formal field manual or doctrine was published as a result of the Malaya experience.

In contrast to the initial lack of counterinsurgency doctrine, the British military did have a conceptual understanding of the task at hand. As seen, experience in India and other colonies had culminated in the principle that the military be subordinated to the civilian powers during periods of civil disorder. This setup was implemented in Malaya from the start, but faced unpredicted setbacks due to the particular difficulties in coordinating police and military activity. Nonetheless, it did result in police authority over military operations, which had to be cleared by police before going ahead. This procedure was intended to ensure a coherent response and to minimise collateral damage. The Commonwealth troops were also explicitly warned about the destruction of valuable rubber plants and other civilian property.

Organisation

With the onset of the Emergency, the British authorities quickly established new organisations and procedures to manage the unfolding situation. Importantly, these measures were reactive, the pre-existing instruments having proved to be inadequate. Quick and imaginative adaptation was therefore required to gain the initiative.

The police had been responsible for security and intelligence in pre-Emergency Malaya. For the collection of intelligence, the police relied on the Special Branch, established in 1919. Due to restructuring and other factors, Special Branch was not prepared to carry

[77] See Interview with Lt Rae
[78] Mackay, pp.44-45
[79] *ibid.*, p.72; Clutterbuck (1967), p.51
[80] With regards to Malaya, such an argument would also have to account for the disparities between methods (*gradually*) adopted in Malaya and those employed in the simultaneous counterinsurgency effort against the Mau-Mau in Kenya.

out the intelligence work necessary to combat the insurgency. The service had been split during the short-lived Malayan Union into a Criminal Investigation Division (CID) and a political-intelligence arm. In August 1948, these two functions were merged to aid coordination between criminal and political intelligence. Yet, in 1952, Templer decided to once again separate the two branches so as to bestow Special Branch with a greater degree of autonomy.[81] Whatever the merits of previous arrangements, it was this last restructuring that saw Special Branch evolve as a truly competent, agile and imaginative intelligence service.

Prior to the Emergency, the police managed all security issues but was authorised to call upon the Army should it encounter uncontrollable or major unrest. Even during these early years, the Army FARELF HQ emphasised closer links between the Army and the police. On 30 June, a mere 13 days following the declaration of the Emergency, a series of joint committees were established, comprising police, military and civilian representatives. By August, each state had its own interagency intelligence commission. These committees did facilitate the exchange of information, but the substandard state of the various services impeded coordinated action. Indeed, the committees were not rendered truly effective until 1950, when Briggs established a network of interagency councils stretching from the federal, state to district level. 'Each committee was composed of the chief military, police, and government representative of the region, with the senior civilian as chairman, and was empowered to direct the counterinsurgent effort in its area of jurisdiction by giving orders to police, military, and civil organizations within those boundaries'.[82]

Because the British government was unprepared for the insurrection, there were no organisations or networks in place to deal with the mounting violence. Even when the seriousness of the situation had been grasped, the Colonial Office sought to postpone any decision-making until the formation of the Malayan Committee in the Cabinet in April 1950. When finally formed, this committee represented the various military services, the War Office and various other governmental departments.[83]

Despite this lack of direction, the British authorities in Malaya quickly implemented reactive measures to respond to the insurgency. On the day following the declaration of Emergency, the Printing Presses Bill restricted the publication of newspapers to license-holders in an attempt to control the flow of information in the country. 'Emergency Regulations' and various Acts and Bill were subsequently announced, authorising the police to implement collective detention and punishment (Regulation 17D), deport unidentifiable detainees and impose the death penalty for the carrying of firearms. These measures all targeted the Chinese community.[84]

The British authorities in Malaya also stood up a number of guard units, including the Special Constables, the Kampong Guards etc. (see 2.1.B.3.). Regulations for the

[81] Komer, p.42, Barber, p.162
[82] Sunderland (1964b), p.15, 27, vii
[83] Mackay, p.37, 87
[84] *ibid.*, p.51

formation of the Special Constables emerged a mere week following the declaration of the Emergency and swift recruitment followed.[85] In July 1948, HQ Malaya District authorised the formation of 'Ferret Force' – an *ad hoc* unit composed and led by veterans of the Special Operations Executive unit that had operated in Malaya during World War II. In 1950, the Malayan Scouts were formed as a special forces unit (see personnel)

Infrastructure

Four-fifths of Malaya was covered in thick tropical jungle. A mountain ridge runs down the middle of the country, reaching in places above 2,000 metres. Whereas the west side of this ridge is comparatively clear and benefited from good north-south communication links, there was scant infrastructure linking the east and west of the country.

The bulk of military operations in Malaya took place in the jungle. Operational success in this terrain required training and familiarity. By force, movement was slow and challenging – at best, a patrol might cover five to ten kilometres per day.[86] Chance encounters with the guerrillas were rare and would seldom result in open battle. Once engaged, the rebels would flee along jungle paths. Identifying these paths and anticipating the communists' escape routes became a critical component in the Commonwealth forces' eventual operational approach.

The British had a good understanding and knowledge of the workings of Malaya, stemming from centuries of interaction and links with this territory. Control over the Malayan states was formalised through a series of treaties signed with state sultans in the 1765-1800 period, which established British control over parts of Malaya in return for considerable sums of money. By 1825, British authority in Malacca had been consolidated. In the late 19th century, the British government sought to diffuse tension between various Malay states and managed, through treaties, to deploy a British Resident to Perak, Selangor and Sungei Ujong to guarantee law and order. This Resident framework was later emulated in other states, but at no time were the Malay states considered British territory. This setup resulted in significant economic and infrastructural development in Malaya.

This background clearly offered the British representatives in Malaya numerous advantages: there was a legacy of trust and familiarity, and the close association between the two countries generated an intimate knowledge of the networks, workings and culture of Malaya. Importantly, the British had been less successful in fomenting relations and understandings with the ethnic-Chinese community.

Logistics

[85] *ibid.*, p.47
[86] Conversation with Lt Ian Rae, 25April 2006

Functioning logistic links were critical to the manner in which the British forces fought the MRLA. Having identified long-term immersion in deep jungle as a successful means of pursuing and hunting down the guerrillas, it became critical that the flow of air supply was smooth, reliable and well organised. Precise and timely air drops would allow the troops on the ground relative autonomy in the jungle and increase their reach. The resultant lightness and flexibility contributed to more successful operations.

The airdrops were commonly carried out by *Dakotas*, which were apparently 'ideally suited' to the weather conditions.[87] Packs of approximately 80 kilograms were loaded in Kuala Lumpur and dropped by parachute through the plane's side door. The ground patrol commander would select a dropping zone – usually a $90m^2$ open area – and signal its location with a marker balloon.

The logistical chain into Malaya was less reliable. Most accounts of the Emergency cite a counterinsurgency campaign run on a shoestring and with minimal support from Whitehall. This situation no doubt improved with time but the UK and Commonwealth forces never benefited from the type of logistical and infrastructural support tended to the US troops in Vietnam.

Information and Networked Flow of Material and Awareness

The British counterinsurgency success in Malaya relied on the effective gathering, dissemination and use of intelligence. Operationally, the emphasis shifted from outgunning to outsmarting the guerrilla, requiring reliable and trusted information flows. More generally, the coherence of the overall campaign required coordination between the different services and agencies involved. Importantly, the information and networking mechanisms evolved *gradually* and in response to trial-and-error. Ultimately, however, they served to marginalise the MRLA physically as well as politically.

The information flows and their effect in Malaya are best captured by considering the evolving manner in which intelligence was acquired and disseminated (see 2.1.E. for an assessment of how the improved availability and quality of information affected the success-rate of military operations). Information flows and networking, in this context, centred on the development of sophisticated intelligence-gathering procedures and on achieving good communications between and within the different services. These two components – the acquisition and subsequent management of information – intertwine.

Initially, the military had, by force, relied on its own intelligence capabilities: they followed footsteps, learned to 'read' the jungle for signs of rebel activity and developed contacts that would provide a trickle of information. These methods were refined throughout the Emergency and helped the Army pursue the MRLA in the jungle.

[87] Air Commodore P. E. Warcup, CBE (cited in Peterson, Reinhardt & Conger), p.26. It is noteworthy that for its merits, the *Dakotas* could not do a sharp climb. Having made a drop at around 60m above the panoply, the pilot would have to spiral climb out of what would usually be a tight drop zone. It also had limited forward and downward visibility.

However, with time, the guerrillas became increasingly cautious. Following the October 1951 Directive, the MRLA also split up into smaller cells that were less readily located. More detailed information on rebel whereabouts and activities were required, which presupposed an effective working relation between Special Branch and the military.

Such inter-service cooperation had yet to mature: the police was in a bad state throughout the first years of the Emergency (see personnel.), Special Branch was still 'learning on the job' and there was no clear-cut division of labour between these different services and the Army. Though Briggs had in May 1950 created the Federal Joint Intelligence Advisory Committee, which was made responsible for all matters intelligence, the dissemination of intelligence remained hampered by inter-service antipathy. This resulted in information stovepipes: the police was reluctant to share its intelligence with the military and the Army had nothing but disdain for the generally under-performing police force. The two services also had widely differing conceptions of what constituted intelligence. Police intelligence tended to be based on estimates and a degree of speculation, whereas the military was more interested in hard facts and precise figures, even when these were not necessarily available.

In an attempt to improve the interagency process, Briggs set up the Federal War Council along with several state and district war executive committees (DWECs and SWECs).[88] These councils were organised into a horizontal and vertical network across the country. The committee system had three main benefits: first, the interagency representation resulted in a shared awareness and exchange of information that cut across the traditional stovepipes. As Sunderland puts it, 'this picture of police and military working together in the same room twenty-four hours a day, surrounded by fresh information and at the center of first-rate communications – an achievement for which Briggs was responsible – was very different from the informal, spasmodic, uncertain cooperation of 1948-1950'.[89] Second, the geographic dispersion enabled decentralised decision-making, as each committee could focus on the issues most relevant to its state or district, where it could also achieve more immediate effects. Finally, the committee system had also been structured so as to allow for the quick dissemination of lessons learnt and best practices between DWECs but also up and down the network.[90]

The flow of intelligence to the military improved considerably with the establishment of state and district committees. Initially, most of the information came from surrendered enemy personnel (SEP). MRLA defections had been encouraged from the outset: surrender terms were promulgated on 6 September 1949 and High Commissioner Gurney had early on announced amnesties and rewards for any information leading to the capture or killing of senior MRLA cadres. It nonetheless took some years before the use of SEP became sufficiently sophisticated to guarantee regular and reliable intelligence. In the early years of the Emergency, many soldiers preferred to punish rather than reward

[88] See Clutterbuck (1967), p.58, for a detailed table on the civil, military and police representatives in these committees.
[89] Riley Sunderland, *Antiguerrilla Intelligence in Malaya, 1948-1960*, RM-4172-ISA (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1964a), p.49. For information on the structure and workings of the operations rooms of the various committees, see Sunderland (1964b), pp.46-48
[90] Barber, p.99

former adversaries. Briggs himself was only persuaded by the benefits of using SEP when his director of Emergency Information Services, Hugh Carleton Greene, threatened to resign over the matter in 1950.[91] In the following years, the use of SEP became commonplace and more advanced. Once converted, Briggs sought to encourage defection by employing PSYOPS and propaganda, a dimension hitherto overlooked by the British authorities.[92] By 1952, Sir Arthur Edwin Young, the Commission of Police, had created an interrogation centre staffed entirely by ex-rebels who were particularly adept at convincing recently captured or surrendered cadres to speak.

Henceforth, intelligence assumed a more central place in the counterinsurgency campaign. Accordingly, the allegiance of the 500,000 ethnic-Chinese squatters became of paramount importance; they were the lifeline of the MRLA and held information regarding their activities and location. Partly for this reason, the New Villages were constructed not as concentration or labour camps, but as politically engaged and progressive communities, where the Chinese villagers could own land, work, engage in local politics and move freely (though certain restrictions and Emergency regulations were only dropped as the insurgency waned). It was of course politically crucial that the support of the villagers was maintained, but cordial relations would also motivate the squatters to cooperate with the security forces. The result was a steady flow of intelligence.

The New Villages also made it possible to monitor suspicious activity and control the supply of goods to the MRLA. From the outset, the entire Malayan population over 12 years of age had been forced to register at police stations and receive identification cards. These measures allowed the police to monitor the villages, judge who belonged where and establish an understanding of relations and social networks. Severed from its traditional support network, the MRLA guerrillas would be forced to take greater risks to find food, which would often compromise their location, contacts and activities. Together, the New Villages and the food controls cut the link between the guerrilla and the people, or, in Maoist terms, the fish and the sea.

Though the interagency committee system had helped to remedy the split in civil-military affairs, Briggs left Malaya in November 1951 complaining at his lack of influence as a Director of Operations. Constrained by Whitehall and unable to shake the police force out of its internal squabbling and mediocrity, Briggs urged Whitehall to bestow his successor with powers over the entire defence branch and the police.[93]

The civil-military disconnect was particularly troubling. In an attempt to avoid alarm and panic, the military and police had initially played down the seriousness of the violence, much of which was occurring in the rural countryside. Thus, as late as 1950, city-bound civil servants were still oblivious to the large-scale violence and bloodshed taking place in the jungle.[94] As a result, the civil authorities' understanding of the situation lagged

[91] Nagl, p.93
[92] Mackay, p.91
[93] Barber, p.141
[94] Clutterbuck (1967), p.56, Barber, p.124

considerably and undue resources and energy were instead spent on bureaucratic feuds and rivalry. To improve the level of civil-military coherence, Gen. Templer was offered both the role of High Commissioner and that of Director of Operations. Upon taking command, Templer issued a directive concerning this civil-military disconnect: 'Any idea that the business of normal civil government and the business of the Emergency are two separate entities must be killed for good and all. The two activities are completely and utterly interrelated'.[95] Soon after, Templer merged the Federal Executive Council with the Federal War Council, indicating a fusing of civil and military functions and concerns. With supreme control over the both of these spheres – and with a ruthless means of dealing with those who would not toe the line – Templer managed to achieve a more coherent and joined-up level of civil-military cooperation.

Templer was also directed to reorganise and improve the standard of the police force. In his final report to this successor in November 1951, Harold Briggs 'commented bitterly on the failure of Sir William Jenkin [the head of Special Branch] and Nicol Gray [the Commissioner of the Police] to co-operate in achieving a significant improvement in the flow of Intelligence'.[96] Prior to Templer's arrival, Colonial Secretary Oliver Lyttleton dismissed both men. In a plan delivered directly to Churchill and echoing the recommendations of the Briggs report, Lyttleton urged that direction of civil and military forces be controlled by one man and that the police be completely reorganised and given better equipment and training. The subsequent year, Gerald Templer spent more than £300,000 on the police and seconded Army majors to improve police training.[97]

Templer built on the successes achieved by Briggs in acquiring and disseminating information and intelligence. In May 1952, he increased the rewards for information leading to the capture of MRLA senior cadres. The amounts involved – $250,000 for Chin Peng, $200,000 for a Politburo member – were so staggering as to induce defection and betrayal. The surrendered combatants would be interrogated by Special Branch and often provide valuable intelligence, sometimes even physically lead the security forces to their former camp.[98] The SEP would also be used to prompt further defections: their good treatment was advertised, as were the business opportunities made possible through the payouts of rewards. In 1953, Templer distributed Safe Conduct Passes throughout the jungle, which promised good food and treatment for any MRLA cadres wishing to surrender.

While the effects of the SEP system were cumulative, it was also a victim of its own success: the guerrillas gradually became more paranoid and cautious, fuelling a mounting

[95] J. B. Perry Robinson, , *Transformation in Malaya* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1956), p.204
[96] Mackay, p.117
[97] Barber, p.143, 156
[98] Because the MRLA relied so heavily on indoctrination, a break of loyalty would often be absolute. Only a complete shift of loyalty could be psychologically manageable and the SEPs would often happily give away the position of his erstwhile comrades. See Lucian W. Pye, *Guerrilla communism in Malaya: Its Social and Political Meaning* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1956).

need for a more imaginative means of interference.[99] It became necessary to acquire intelligence on the *future* location of rebel cadres so as to ensure an encounter. Such an anticipatory intelligence capability would require the identification and covert turning of rebel suppliers, something that often involved lengthy police investigations. The police would first observe the suspected supplier and collect sufficient evidence for a foolproof case. Finally, the supplier would be approached – discretely – and accused of cooperating with the rebels. Presented with the incriminating evidence, the supplier would be given a stark choice: arrest, detention or covert recruitment as an agent. Blackmail and bribes were occasionally used to compel cooperation.

Although the availability and reliability of information had improved significantly in 1948-1952, the relation between the military and Special Branch remained uncertain. Templer created the post of Director of Intelligence and appointed J. Morton, a former MI5 officer, to coordinate the intelligence activities of these two services. Henceforth, intelligence was made the business of Special Branch – it was to coordinate, analyse and disseminate all intelligence matters for both the police and the Army. As a focal point for intelligence, its needs took precedence. Elements within the Army objected to the subordination of its operations to the intelligence activities of Special Branch.[100] This problem was partially remedied by the secondment of 30 Special Military Intelligence Officials to Special Branch, whose task it was to represent the various interests of the Army.[101]

This formalisation of the division of labour made the acquisition of intelligence the main thrust of the counterinsurgency campaign. Special Branch was now effectively running the show, with the military adopting a supporting role. Every military operation had to be cleared by a police authority and Special Branch also had the power to declare certain areas 'frozen', or barred from military activity for the sake of ongoing covert investigations. This clear division of labour allowed Special Branch to perfect its intelligence-gathering techniques.

The following years saw the implementation of new and inventive means of disrupting the enemy network. Noel Barber tells of the work of Special Branch radio experts who were constructing and leaking bugged radio sets to the enemy. 'Special Branch could be sure that sooner or later such a set would reach the jungle – and when it did, when the CT tuned into Peking or Radio Malaya, the set emitted a bleep-bleep homing signal that could not be heard in a jungle camp, but gave precise directions to the nearest monitoring team'.[102]

Through the effective harnessing of SEP intelligence, the security forces were eventually able to penetrate and disrupt the MRLA's communications network. Lacking in radios,

[99] In dispatch from Sir D. MacGillivray dated 26 Jan 1955, the High Commissioner notes a drop in the surrender rate from a monthly average of 31 in 1953 to a level of 17 in 1955. Dispatch found in Stockwell (1995b), pp.83-89
[100] Sunderland (1964a), pp.54-55
[101] *ibid.*, pp.19-24, 27-28
[102] Barber, p.163

the communist guerrillas relied on a complicated courier system to communicate.[103] To ensure secrecy and improve the speed of communications, each message was carried by a succession of couriers, each of whom would be responsible for a short section of the total journey. The couriers would meet at secret hiding places or use jungle-based mailboxes to pass on the message. Thus, 'even if one link were broken, [the communications chain] was still essentially secret'.[104] Though it took years before this system was cracked, Special Branch was through the interrogation of several SEP able to turn a key number of couriers and thus intercept several messages. Importantly, these messages were copied rather than confiscated to ensure that the breach in the communications system remain secret. By intercepting MRLA communications, Special Branch gained anticipatory knowledge of its future activities.[105]

The improvement in the work of Special Branch complemented the interagency committees set up by Briggs and allowed for detailed and timely information flows to the military. This new synergy was epitomised by the 'food-denial operations', launched jointly by the police, Special Branch and the Army with the distinct aim of identifying and turning rebel suppliers. The police force would designate an area and conduct a thorough investigation of its social networks. On a given day, the police would, without warning, arrest all suspected suppliers in the area. By thus interfering with the rebels' logistical flows, the MRLA would be forced to establish new suppliers elsewhere. The Army would then saturate-patrol all adjacent areas but leave the designated area comparatively unguarded, thereby harrying the rebels in that direction. There, the police would monitor the rebels' attempts to establish new suppliers, whom would later be contacted by Special Branch or police units. If turned, these suppliers would be used covertly as agents to acquire precise information on the guerrillas' future activities and movements.[106] This information would be fed back to the Army which would organise ambushes on the set location.

Through such practices, Special Branch was by the mid-1950s familiar with the MRLA order of battle, its leaders, their location and their movements. This apex was the culmination of an evolving approach that hinged first on basic policing and military intelligence, then on SEP and, finally, on agents. The information became more precise and, through the network of interagency committees, its dissemination would be timely and shared across the customary bureaucratic stovepipes. In these daily briefings, operations would be planned with an interagency mindset. Critically, this end-state was reached gradually and through the force of inspired leadership.

Some analysts have suggested that the very nature of British society helped it formulate an appropriate counterinsurgency strategy.[107] The class system, and the fact that most

[103] See Clutterbuck (1967), p.89, for more information on the MRLA's communications system.
[104] Barber, p.83
[105] Richard Joseph Wauchope Craig, Imperial War Museum Sounds Archive, Accession No. 10175 (11 April 1988)
[106] This process is explained in detail in Richard Clutterbuck, *Riot and Revolution in Singapore and Malaya, 1945-1963* (London: Faber, 1973), pp.212-214
[107] See Thomas Mockaitis, *British Counterinsurgency 1919-1960* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), p.175

officers were picked from a handful of public schools, are said to have resulted in a tight network where communications could be informal across ranks and therefore allow for more agile decision-making. This common background, it is argued, also produced a striking commonality in outlook and approach, reinforcing the overall direction of the counterinsurgency effort.[108] This last conclusion may however be premature, as there is no evidence that a shared view of a problem necessarily produces a constructive approach.

Perceptions of Quality of Information and Networking (Measures of Information Position)

The quality, timeliness and relevance of information and intelligence available to the individual soldier improved substantially under the leadership first of Briggs and then of Templer. Prior to the resettlement plan, prior to the establishment of the network of state and district interagency councils and prior to the restructuring of Special Branch, the available intelligence was often insufficient and too slow in coming. In April 1950, General Sir John Harding, Commander in Chief, FARELF, identified the problem at hand: 'Our greatest weakness now is the lack of early and accurate information of the enemy's strength, dispositions and intentions. For lack of information an enormous amount of military effort is being necessarily absorbed on prophylactic and will o' the wisp patrolling and jungle bashing and on air bombardment'.[109]

This sentiment is echoed in the statements of various commanders involved in the early phases of the campaign. The description of a 1948 operation by a Gurkha battalion commander is wholly representative: 'we had no information about anything in the area… apart from the generally-accepted fact that the haystack did contain a needle or two; then, to carry the simile a little further, the only thing to do was to disturb the hay and hope at least to get our fingers pricked'.[110] When interviewed, Lt Ian Rae, 1st Singapore Regiment Royal Artillery, who served in Malaya from 1950-1952, commented that most of the patrols in 1951 involved 'a lot of guesswork [and] were fruitless'; 'there was only really a remote chance of an encounter so it was more a matter of marching and looking while cutting your way through secondary jungle'.[111] Statements and recollections from the police force reveal similar intelligence shortages: Richard J. W. Craig, a British police officer who served in Malaya from 1948-64, notes that 'when I first went out to Malaya there was really no intelligence collecting machinery or apparatus on the ground. You were left very much to your own devices'.[112]

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[108] Nagl, p.196

[109] As cited in Anthony Short, *The Communist insurrection in Malaya, 1948-1960* (London: Muller, 1975), pp.229-230

[110] Sunderland (1964a), p.10 – based on Appendix C, Quarterly Historical Report, 1st Battalion, 2nd King Edward VII's Own Gurkha Rifles, 31 December 1948

[111] Interview with Lt Rae

[112] Richard Joseph Wauchope Craig, Imperial War Museum Sounds Archive, Accession No. 10175 (11 April 1988)

The recollections of another commander emphasises the lack not only of intelligence but also of basic tactical information. Writing in 1950, this commander complained that he was missing 'important information on the land and people of their areas of operation'. Furthermore, the maps in use 'were editions of 1943 and 1944 showing neither jungle tracks nor small villages; the available aerial photography were some eighteen months out of date; and the only information on the Chinese squatters used in 1950 was taken from the 1947 census'. Finally, the commander states that 'he did not know how the guerrillas obtained their food; which of the shops were guerrilla contact centers; who among the casual visitors to towns and villages were guerrilla agents; and which schoolteachers were teaching communism'.[113]

Moreover, the general feeling among the troops on the ground was that whatever information was available was not being properly disseminated. With an overly centralised command structure, the collection of information was done on federation and state levels rather than in the districts, where such information might be put to greater and more immediate use. This system reflected the favoured approach at the time, but it made it virtually impossible for the patrol leaders and junior officers to make quick decisions or act autonomously. 'The patrol leader who needed information had to visit some half-dozen people before he took out his patrol'.[114]

As seen, part of the problem related to the schism between the police force and the Army, which grew particularly intense in the years leading up to 1953. Though one of the first actions of High Commissioner Gurney was to make the police the lead agency for the Emergency, the legacy of institutional squabbling between the two services resulted in continued rivalry over the 'ownership' of intelligence – a conflict only resolved by the reforms to the intelligence structure imposed by Templer in 1952-53. This antagonism is reflected in public statements by members of both services. Most infamously, Major-General Boucher, GOC Malaya, frequently expressed his belief that the Emergency was 'just the job for an army' and that it was unthinkable that 'a bunch of coppers should start telling the generals what to do'.[115] The police was similarly predisposed. Neither service appreciated having to 'subject their plans to scrutiny in the interest of 'co-ordination', this in spite of regular occurrences of friendly fire'.[116] The two services also had widely differing conceptions of what constituted intelligence. Writing in 1956, J. B. Perry Robinson noted that 'it was very difficult in the early years for the Police to present the results of their Intelligence in a form the Army could use, and very difficult for the Army to appreciate the value of what the Police called Intelligence'.[117]

Much of the Army's criticism of the police during these early years was warranted. In his final report to this successor in November 1951, Harold Briggs 'commented bitterly on the failure of Sir William Jenkin and Nicol Gray to co-operate in achieving a significant

[113] Sunderland (1964a), pp.10-11 – based on Appendix A, Quarterly Historical Report, 1 Battalion, Devonshire Regiment, 31 March 1950
[114] *ibid.*, p.17 – based on Quarterly Historical Report, 1 Battalion, Devonshire Regiment, 31 March 1950
[115] As cited in Barber, p.62
[116] Mackay, p.79
[117] Robinson, p.23

improvement in the flow of Intelligence'.[118] Part of the problem was that the police force was itself split into four camps: those who had remained in the force during the Japanese occupation under WW2, those who had spent those years in prison camps, those who had simply melted away and returned following the Japanese surrender, finally, those who had been redeployed from Palestine to Malaya in the early years of the Emergency. There was little integration between these four camps, and the likelihood of any meaningful exchange between the police as a whole and the Army was therefore minimal. In the words of Colonial Secretary Oliver Lyttleton, intelligence between the military and civil authorities was in late 1951 'scanty and unco-ordinated'.[119]

Lyttleton's interest in Malaya was in and of itself something of a watershed, indicating a new level of interest in the Emergency on the part of the government. Civil-military cooperation and information-sharing had been poor in the first few years of the Emergency. By the time Briggs left Malay, he castigated the British government for having failed to support the counterinsurgency effort. According to Briggs' final report in November 1951, no improvement had been made since the establishment of the Malayan Committee and equipment was still slow to arrive in theatre. Briggs commented that 'the need to lobby so many decisions through State Governments slowed things down, approval for expenditure was still subject to peacetime procedures and paralysing bureaucratic delay, decisions were avoided while the buck was passed, and very few senior officials were seized of the need to put the Federation on a war footing'.[120] To Briggs, the British government, both in London and in Kuala Lumpur, did not seem to realise the full extent of the situation. It is telling that, three years into the Emergency, the then Colonial Secretary James Griffiths perceived the Malayan Emergency as 'a *military* problem to which we have not been able to find the answer'.[121]

As seen, part of the problem related to the security forces' attempts to avoid generating alarm and panic in the cities, which were isolated from the instability. Thus, city-bound civil servants remained largely oblivious to the large-scale violence and bloodshed taking place in the jungle.[122] The resultant civil-military disconnect was only addressed in 1952, when Templer was offered both the role of High Commissioner and that of Director of Operations. Whilst in command, Templer emphasised that 'there should be no separation between controlling the Emergency and controlling the ordinary civil affairs… he said this is all one war'.[123] Because Templer had been appointed by Churchill himself and because Lyttleton's visit to Malaya in 1951 had impressed upon him the urgency of the situation, Templer received an unprecedented level of support from London and was able to push through the desired changes.

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[118] Mackay, p.117
[119] *ibid.*, p.119
[120] *ibid.*, p.117
[121] As cited in Mackay, p.118 – my emphasis
[122] Clutterbuck (1967), p.56, Barber, p.124
[123] Arthur Hugh Peters Humphrey, British Secretary for Defence and Internal Security in Federation of Malaya, 1953-1957, Imperial War Museum Sounds Archive, Accession No. 14960 (13 February 1995). These words also paraphrase Templer's first circular to the Malayan government in 1951 – see Barber, pp.151-152

With a more functional interagency process and a reorganised intelligence structure, the information flows to the Army became increasingly regular and reliable, something reflected in the recollections of servicemen active in the post-1951 period. From this point, statements from both the police and the Army generally express satisfaction with the SEP system, the information provided by Special Branch and the awareness achieved through operational research and the dissemination of lessons learnt. Writing in January 1955, High Commissioner Donald MacGillivray, Templer's successor and former deputy, notes that 'most of the successful Security Force contacts with the terrorists have been the result of information, rather than chance encounter, and the best information has, in the past, come from surrendered terrorists'.[124] To Richard J. W. Craig, the police officer, 'the most important intelligence… was the surrender of a terrorist… You could use the tactical information he gave… The army always had a unit on immediate standby and if you got the intelligence you did in fact act within minutes'.[125] Commenting upon the effects of operational analysis, Lt-Col Robert Ian Hywel-Jones, who served in Malaya in 1955-1958 as part of the 1st Battalion South Wales Borderers, explains that 'by studying reports of terrorist incidents – and all of the papers that were available which were captured from terrorists up and down the peninsula – one developed really quite an understanding of what they were, and how they would do things'.[126]

Measures of Operational Success/Failure in relation to Information/Networking (Measures of Decision Superiority)

Information advantage

The jungle terrain combined with MRLA's reluctance to engage in open battle to turn the Malayan counterinsurgency into something of a 'shooting war', where only the first soldiers per patrol would actually be able to engage the enemy. A successful operation was therefore one in which the rebels were caught by surprise. In other words, locating the rebels was more important than outgunning them and *operational success therefore depended on achieving and maintaining information superiority*. One of the purposes of the interagency intelligence structure that developed in Malaya was to provide the military with the type of information that would guarantee an encounter with the MRLA. *Acquiring* such intelligence was however only half the battle: when in operation, it was equally vital that the Army *maintain* that information superiority. Patrols to locate the guerrillas therefore demanded remarkable discretion – it was a matter of gaining information without giving any away. Silence was of paramount tactical importance. Jungle-craft, tracking and the cooperation of indigenous jungle-based tribal populations also became foundational to Army operations. Sunderland illustrates the operational value of intelligence: 'In 1952, odds of achieving a contact on the strength of information

[124] Lifted from a despatch from the High Commissioner to Secretary of State for Colonies Lennox-Boyd, dated 26 January 1955, and found in Stockwell (1995b), pp.83-89

[125] Richard Joseph Wauchope Craig, Imperial War Museum Sounds Archive, Accession No. 10175 (11 April 1988)

[126] Interview with Lt-Col Robert Ian Hywel-Jones, as cited in Nagl, p.106

were 1 in 10 for an ambush and 1 in 17 for a patrol, and the absence of information reduced these odds to 1 in 33 and 1 in 88, respectively'.[127]

One measure of the operational impact of information superiority lies in the Army's shift from large and often ineffective sweeps to small-unit, intelligence-enabled patrols and ambushes. Again, this was a gradual process but one that illustrates the growing importance and effect of 'intelligence-enabled operations'. The narrative also reveals the initial difficulties that confronted the Army as it sought to transform itself for jungle operations.

In the late 1940s, the junior officers closest to the action realised that any operational success achieved through large-unit sweeps was based on chance encounters. Meanwhile, the likelihood of these encounters was severely diminished by the size of the sweeps, as a larger unit is less discrete, mobile and agile. This realisation generated a split, where the units most involved in jungle warfare adapted to the conditions on the ground rather than heed the advice of their superiors. This advice also became increasingly misguided as the insurgents split up and dispersed.

Sunderland cites Major E. R. Robinson, a rifle company commander, who in 1950 'spoke out bluntly against the large operation. The bigger operation … and the higher the level at which it was planned, the less its chance of success; the buildup and the preparations were impossible to conceal; it was difficult to control troops in the jungle, and the guerrillas simply vanished'.[128] By force and through frustration, the jungle-bound units gradually adapted to the operational circumstances. Henceforth, more emphasis was placed on small-unit operations, which required careful intelligence-gathering and patience. Rather than raiding large sections of jungle in the hope of eliminating guerrillas, the soldiers began laying ambushes at precise locations identified with the help of informants, SEP and through careful investigation. Intelligence and information channels were developed though 'long hours of tactful discussions with police officers, administrators, rubber planters, tin miners, and local community leaders'.[129] Additional tactical information was obtained through tracking and effective jungle reconnaissance, skills that were only gradually acquired as a result of trial-and-error.[130] With experience, the British forces spread out in company-sized camps throughout the jungle. The camps allowed the soldiers to increase their local intelligence and agility without establishing fixed targets or immobile forts. This was the 'framework' plan that gradually gained prevalence in Malaya.[131]

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[127] Riley Sunderland (1964c), *Army Operations in Malaya, 1947-1960* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND), p.145

[128] *ibid.*, p.133, referring to article by Major E. R. Robinson, 'Reflections of a Company Commander in Malaya', *Army Quarterly*, October 1950

[129] Clutterbuck (1967), p.52

[130] *ibid.*

[131] 'Under the 'framework' plan, battalions, companies and platoons were spread out in a network of locations, and, in theory, given time to get to know their areas, to build intelligence contacts and develop their own tactical plans to meet local needs, rather than being concentrated in special operations under the direction of Generals', see Mackay, p.166, fn. 2

The shift from large-unit guesswork to small-unit operations was thus a *process of replacing mass with information*. It was an *ad hoc* response to operational realities, but one that was no doubt accelerated through the dissemination of training received at the FTC. The response was however resisted: 'in mid-1949… General Boucher believed that his [large-unit sweep] tactics were working, and that he only needed more troops to finish the job completely'.[132] Even when the need for change became apparent, several senior officers were reluctant 'to upset the whole organisation and training of [a] battalion just to chase a lot of [rebels] around the jungle'.[133]

During Briggs' tenure as Director of Operations, the military leadership (including Briggs himself) gradually came to realise the benefits of the *ad hoc* small-unit approach that had evolved in the jungle. This is when the British military in Malaya became a learning organisation, willing to adapt on the basis of experience rather than preconceived operational procedures and personal preferences. Henceforth, some of the most constructive innovations in the evolution of the counterinsurgency campaign were 'top-down', but each built on the lessons drawn from the units on the ground. The leadership also continued to encourage this bottom-up adaptation: as Briggs commented in 1950, 'the brigadiers and battalion commander [will] have to reconcile themselves to war being fought by junior commanders down to lance-corporals who will have the responsibility to make the decision on the spot if necessary… Flexibility of operations in the jungle must be the keynote'.[134]

Once the shift to small-unit operations was in full effect, the British forces were quick to consolidate on the progress already made and perfect the technique. This was encouraged by Templer, who placed emphasis on operational analysis and formed an Operational Research Team for this purpose. From 1953 on, commanders were required to fill in a detailed form (Form ZZ) following every encounter. These were collated and analysed to identify the disadvantages and advantages of various approaches.[135] Many of the lessons thus learnt had already been implemented by the soldiers on the ground. Nonetheless, the operational analysis did contribute to the perfection of these techniques. 'Battle drills for assault through jungle terrain were devised. More efficient wireless techniques to improve communications were found. The heavy 'administrative tail' was eliminated by better rationing methods'.[136]

Most TTPs developed in this manner emphasised the importance of acquiring and using intelligence and information without giving any away. In recognition of the information advantage gained through jungle-craft, Templer activated a Sarawak Ranger Regiment in 1953. The Sarawak were Borneo tribesmen whose excellent tracking skills were used to 'out-guerrilla' the MRLA in the jungle. Around the same time, Lt-Col Walter Walker, then the commander of the First Battalion, Sixth Gurkha Rifles, begun deploying SEP to

[132] *ibid*., p.71
[133] Brig. J. M. Calvert, cited in Nagl, p.194-5
[134] Harry Miller, *The Communist Menace in Malaya* (New York: Praeger, 1954), p.72
[135] See Nagl, p.96
[136] Richard Joseph Wauchope Craig, Imperial War Museum Sounds Archive, Accession No. 10175 (11 April 1988)

evaluate each of his own companies, a practice that led to significant operational innovations designed to throw off the enemy and exploit its weaknesses.[137]

Even the cooperation achieved between air and ground troops was predicated on maintaining an information advantage. Comparatively little emphasis was placed on offensive air operations – despite devising a number of ways enhance bombing precision, aerial raids were deemed too slow, too indiscrete and, thus, too inefficient to produce results.[138] Instead, air supplies allowed for longer stays and deeper immersion in the jungle, generating greater familiarity and operational reach. In the final phase of hostilities, the introduction and use of STOL aircraft (most commonly *Pioneers)* became critical in supplying the jungle forts established in deep jungle. These allowed the Malayan and Commonwealth forces to pursue the MRLA cadres into deep jungle and win over the indigenous population, thereby depriving the guerrillas of one of their last sources of support.

Network in Operations

Networking – the sharing of intelligence between police, Special Branch and military – was fundamental to the defeat of the MRLA. Effective intelligence-sharing helped locate rebel cadres and camps, their planned activities, and disrupt their support and communications networks. This approach relied on the interagency network that had evolved since the early months of the Emergency and been formalised in the committee system under Briggs . This setup pushed decision-making down and enabled quick action that was informed by the specific local conditions.

In several ways, the campaign was also a struggle to disrupt your adversary's network. The central function of the New Villages was to separate the guerrillas from the people, thereby disrupting the rebels' supply-lines and isolating the guerrillas. This simplified the counterinsurgency campaign: henceforth anyone found in the jungle could reasonably be suspected to be a guerrilla, as the civilians were kept under close surveillance. By interfering with the rebels' supply lines, the British forces could also harry the rebels toward more vulnerable lines of communication, which could then be intercepted to glean new information and allow for future ambushes. As seen, the idea of network disruption is epitomised in the sophisticated food-denial operations mounted by the British military and police forces in conjunction with Special Branch.

A third dimension to the operational role of networks relates to Army unit connections. Clear channels of communication between units was emphasised from the outset; these practices subsequently evolved and became increasingly sophisticated. Already in 1948, the Army had installed telephones in each outlaying police post to create a rudimentary network. By placing hourly phone-calls between the posts, the units could react quickly to any disturbance or irregularity. Each base had a stand-by party for just such a contingency. Whilst in operation, the units were linked by radio, though these were cumbersome and deemed largely unessential to mission success.[139]

[137] Nagl, p.96-97
[138] Clutterbuck (1967), p.158
[139] Interview with Lt Rae

Rather than communicate during the operation, the networked planning between units tended to occur prior to deployment. As the MRLA would typically disperse when attacked, the Army needed to coordinate between various units to pre-empt and intercept the fleeing rebels. By studying the topography and the jungle terrain, the Army could anticipate the rebels' escape route and coordinate a two-part attack, whereby one unit would ambush and another would be poised to pick off the rebels as they fled along identified jungle paths. In other instances, one unit would patrol a certain area and others would mount ambushes along escape paths likely to be used by the insurgents. Pre-deployment planning and coordination also allowed various units to grant each other 'clearance', meaning that anyone encountered within a certain area was sure to be hostile. It is worth re-emphasising that these methods all depended on the effective separation of the people and the guerrillas through measures such as the construction and careful monitoring of the New Villages. Collateral damage, an inflammatory and counterproductive feature of most counterinsurgency campaigns, was thus effectively limited throughout the later years of the campaign.

Another dimension of unit-to-unit networking can be seen in the vital and exemplary level of synergy achieved between the air force and the ground troops. Smooth and reliable air-ground coordination and communications were essential for the provision of aerial reconnaissance, surveillance, troop insertion and medical evacuation. The delivery of supplies was particularly important and critical to mission success. 'A ground patrol could carry only seven days' supply on its back. Air supply made them completely independent; [it] allowed ground forces to operate in deep jungle and stay there as long as circumstances demanded'.[140] As a result, the soldiers were more familiar with the jungle and could maintain constant pressure on the adversary, wherever he sought to hide. The benefits inherent to this approach prompted the activation of the SAS, whose use of troop-carrying helicopters post-1953 allowed for prolonged deep-jungle operations.

Tactically, this air-ground coordination was achieved through radio links. But to ensure and emphasise mutual operational awareness, the aircraft crew would be taken out on ten-day jungle patrols with the Army – 'to impress upon us the necessity of accurate dropping'.[141] As Commander Garrison of the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) put it: 'crews came back from these ground tours in the jungle with a much better understanding of the problem. That helped cooperation a lot'.[142]

The introduction of STOL aircraft (most commonly *Pioneers)* was critical to the 'jungle-fort' phase of hostilities, in which the Malayan and Commonwealth forces pursued the insurgents deep into the jungle. The jungle forts, each of which was supplied by STOL, enabled a long-term presence in the deep jungle and allowed the British forces to win over the indigenous population, thereby depriving the MRLA of one of their last sources of support.

[140] Air Commodore P. E. Warcup, CBE, RAF, as cited in Peterson, Reinhardt & Conger, p.26
[141] Squadron Leader A. J. Fookes, RAAF, as cited in Peterson, Reinhardt & Conger, p.26
[142] Air Commodore A. D. J. Garrisson, OBE, RAAF, as cited in Peterson, Reinhardt & Conger, p.61

Protecting the Network

The MRLA did try to sever some of the links established by the British security forces, but it was unable to threaten the evolving network. During the early years of the campaign, MRLA cadres would be sent out to cut down telephone posts, thereby isolating individual tin mines or rubber estates. This delayed the ability of the security forces to protect the more remote sites. But, displaying ingenuity and flexibility, the Army responded by deploying armed protection to the targeted rubber estates from neighbouring towns.

During these early years of the Emergency, the MRLA would also attack village police posts, deemed a vital node in the British network. The idea here was not to kill or eliminate the policemen, many of whom were ethnic-Malays, but to obtain their covert assistance. A 100-strong group of guerrillas would surround the 10-12 policemen, who would be forced to surrender, then be disarmed and warned not to interfere with MRLA business in the village. Richard Clutterbuck, a member of the Director of Operation's staff in Kuala Lumpur, notes that the MRLA 'knew that the British could replace dead policemen but that policemen who had been frightened might stay discreetly inside the police compound at night, leaving the Communists free to deal with 'traitors' as they wished'.[143] An entire village could thereby become *de facto* MRLA territory without the British-Malay government's knowledge.

It was in counteracting this threat that the police stations were ordered to telephone outlying posts every hour and to act at once in case of no reply. This system heightened the reactions of the British soldiers and provided the Malay policemen with a modicum of protection. As reinforcement squads were on constant alert, it would not take long to reach the police station under attack and the MRLA would then most often disperse rather than fight.

The Emergency was marked by this co-adaptive evolution of networks: both sides were battling over reach of influence and control. One notable example of this struggle concerns the MRLA's attempts to disrupt the registration scheme put in place by Gurney. In a directive issued in 1948, Chin Peng ordered his cadres to destroy the identity cards of the villagers. Registration teams were attacked, as were unarmed villagers who would have their identity cards forcibly removed. Yet as Barber explains, this was also a psychological campaign: Chin Peng's top propagandist, Osman China, 'organized a brilliant propaganda offensive, insisting that men were being registered as a prelude to conscription, or to make it easier for the government to levy outrageous taxes'.[144] The pamphlets distributed by the MRLA also threatened the bearers of identity cards with death.

The period of 'registration card collecting' coincided with an increase in violence. A British countermeasure did not emerge until 1951, when the squatters were resettled in New Villages. From this point onwards, MRLA intimidation of villagers became less effective as access to each village was tightly controlled.

[143] Clutterbuck (1967), p.48
[144] Barber, p.75

The MRLA's network of influence and control was also weakened by its own decision in 1951 to desist from indiscriminate attacks on villagers. As part of the October 1951 Directive, Chin Peng acknowledged that the terror tactics employed in previous years had backfired and that the MRLA needed a more populist image to obtain the vital support of the people. From here on, 'no identity or ration cards would be seized. There would be no more burning of New Villages and coolie lines, no more attacks on post offices, reservoirs, power stations or any public services. Civilian trains were no longer to be derailed with high explosives' and greater care was to be taken when attacking a suspected traitor or enemy.[145] The new *modus operandi* would be based on progressive political policies mixed with continued attacks on police and Army personnel.

By curtailing its campaign of violence, the MRLA unwittingly lost one of its strongest networking assets: the fear and terror that it had engendered among civilians. The British authorities had hitherto found it difficult to glean information from civilians, who feared reprisals from the communists should they learn of the betrayal. Indeed, intimidation had been one of the main means of popular control. 'It did not matter whether the attacks were large or small – like wildfire the news sped along the Asian grapevine that if ordinary men and women wanted to stay alive they must do only one thing: obey'.[146] As the intensity of terror diminished, and as the security and opportunities provided in the New Villages improved, the MRLA's tight clasp on information slowly loosened.

Evaluation of Information and Networking Contribution to the Outcomes of the Operation (Measures of Campaign Effectiveness)

The value of networks in the prosecution of the Malayan counterinsurgency manifested itself in four different ways: the interagency network; the operational network; the disruption of the MRLA network; and the lessons-learnt network. Underlying these networks lay a solid commitment to the creation and maintenance of information superiority.

The evolution of an interagency network was a critical component in the marginalisation of the MRLA. It ensured smooth and timely sharing of intelligence as well as policy coordination. The daily briefings in the district and state committees, where information would be shared between agencies and services, resulted in a military that was aware of rebel positions, its activities and – even – its future movements. The regularity of information exchanges would also allow for day-to-day planning and pre-operational synchronisation, whereby two or more units could collaborate while in the jungle. Given the terrain and the MRLA's tendency to avoid open battle, harnessing this information network was the only means of guaranteeing an armed encounter with the guerrillas. The intelligence network also fed the PSYOPS and propaganda machines; by the mid-1950s, these instruments were used to target individual guerrilla leaders known to reside within a certain area of the jungle. It would be no exaggeration to conclude that operational

[145] *ibid.*, p.134
[146] *ibid.*, p.44

success hinged on effective networking between military units, Special Branch, the police and the Malayan committee representatives.

The operational network allowed different units to communicate whilst in the jungle. The value of this network is most forcefully illustrated by the smooth and exemplary level of air-ground communications achieved in Malaya. Such linkages were critical in enabling communications, reconnaissance, air supply, intelligence, tactical mobility and evacuation. In various ways, these benefits all resulted in longer and/or more fruitful immersions in the jungle. Aerial bombardment was also used to harry rebels in a set direction, where other units would be ready to ambush them.

Thirdly, it could be argued that the British counterinsurgency campaign in Malaya was largely an attempt to disrupt the MRLA network. Through the promulgation of Emergency Regulations to the food rationing and the construction of New Villages, the British forces were actively seeking to break the link between the guerrillas and their suppliers. This was also achieved by providing the ethnic-Chinese civilians with 'something to lose' – a stake in the evolving Malayan nation – which encouraged them to cooperate and, vitally, to provide information on the rebels' whereabouts and activities.

Finally, the British counterinsurgency effort was aided by the construction of a horizontal and vertical network for the propagation of best practices. The initially informal process of bottom-up learning and adaptation was under Briggs and then Templer systematised through operational analysis, resulting in the gradual crystallisation and refinement of context-specific doctrine and training. The committee system was organised in such a way as to allow the quick dissemination of lessons learnt between different district councils and up and down the network.

Underlying these four types of networks lay a solid commitment to the creation and maintenance of information superiority. The importance and centrality of information in the Malayan Emergency should not be underestimated. Operationally, every innovation of the British and Commonwealth forces was designed to gain more information without giving any away. Learning jungle-craft, tracking, the cooperation with tribal populations and the operational emphasis placed on silence and discretion were all measures that helped generate an information superiority vis-à-vis the enemy. To that end, the British and Commonwealth forces also underwent a gradual process of replacing mass with information, as they moved from clumsy and cumbersome large-unit sweeps to agile, discrete and intelligence-enabled small-unit patrols.

How to assess the influence of information-age concepts in the outcome of the Malayan Emergency? As seen, information and information flows were critical in coordinating an interagency response that could trump the guerrillas not only militarily (though this was in itself a remarkable feat) but also politically and psychologically. Yet the success in Malaya cannot be explained solely in terms of information flows. For starters, it must be remembered that the operational successes of the UK and Commonwealth forces relied on a wider political strategy that was attuned to the fears, aspirations and preferences of the different ethnic communities of Malaya. Indeed, the success in Malaya was not

military, but political. It is also doubtful what the military could have achieved without the standing up and training of an effective home guard, the political process of ethnic reconciliation, the hearts and minds campaign and the construction of viable and politically-progressive 'New Villages'.[147] Enveloping these efforts was the British government's policy of achieving Malayan independence; tactical and operational performance can only be fully assessed within this strategic context.

Ultimately, the success in Malaya was network-enabled but not network-centric; success could not have taken place without the interagency structure and the information superiority of the British troops. But at the centre of the counterinsurgency strategy lay an admixture of inspired leadership, sound political judgement, astute adaptation and the perceived *legitimacy* of the British and Commonwealth forces, who gradually came to be seen as genuinely working for Malayan independence.

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2. Paul William Humber
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Source: Imperial War Museum Sounds Archive
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3. Peter Eric Harry Maule-Ffinch
Description: British NCO served with 1st Bn, Royal West Kent Regt in Malaya, 1951. Civilian special constable and rubber plantation manager in Malaya, 1951-1968
Recorded: 16 February 1986
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4. Rowland Denys Guy Winn St Oswald
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Recorded: 6 April 1988
Source: Imperial War Museum Sounds Archive

5. Richard Joseph Wauchope Craig OBE MC
Description: British police officer served with Royal Federation of Malaya Police in Malaya, 1948-1964

[147] Analysis must also take into account the partially self-defeating effects of the MRLA's October 1951 Directive, which greatly limited the sway and influence of the organisation.

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6. John Charles Rolley
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7. James Llewelyn Niven
Description: British police officer served with Palestine Police in Palestine 1945-1946 and with Royal Federation of Malaya Police in Malaya 1948-1958
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Case Study 2 – Northern Ireland (August 1969 - March 1972) - Dr Rod Thornton

Historical Sketch of Operation

Historical Sketch

Ireland had been partitioned by the United Kingdom government in 1921, allowing the 'south' to achiev its independence as the (predominantly Catholic) Irish Republic (the 'Republic'). The 'north' (i.e. the six counties with a Protestant majority), became Northern Ireland (or Ulster, or the 'Province'), whose government maintained an allegiance to Britain.[148] Up to the late 1960s, the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland (population ca 1.6m) had remained fairly quiescent, despite the iniquitous anti-Catholic policies of the Protestant-dominated government in Belfast (Stormont).[149] Protests, however, did emerge in 1968 as, inspired by the Civil Rights movement in the US, Catholics took to the streets. Protestant mobs challenged the Catholic marches in several areas and by 1969 the protests and inter-communal rioting, principally in Belfast and Londonderry (the two biggest cities in Ulster[150]), had reached such a pitch that the police could no longer cope. In August 1969, the Army was called onto the streets by the government in London. The troops were drawn from the normally established garrison of 2,500 in the Province. The Army was successful in interposing itself between the two factions as a peacekeeper, but not before several hundred homes, mostly Catholic, had been torched and thousands of people had been forced to flee to their respective sectarian heartlands.[151] The Catholic community welcomed the Army, which was perceived as neutral and divorced from the Stormont government and its Protestant-dominated police force (the Royal Ulster Constabulary – RUC). The RUC now left policing in Catholic areas of Belfast and Londonderry entirely to the Army. The Army was thus the police force as well as the peacekeeper.[152]

The control of the troops became a significant challenge to th eGovernement. The government in London (Westminster) did not want the Northern Ireland government at

[148] The term 'United Kingdom' covers all of Britain including Northern Ireland. The term 'Great Britain' excludes Northern Ireland as it only covers England, Scotland and Wales.

[149] The gerrymandering of political boundaries was a favoured ploy. For instance, 14,000 Catholic voters in Londonderry could only return eight councillors to the city council while 8,000 Protestant voters could return 12. Discrimination at places of work was also evident: in Belfast, the shipyard that built the *Titanic*, *Harland* and *Wolff*, had 10,000 Protestant workers and only 400 Catholic. Peter Taylor, *Brits*: *The War Against the IRA* (London: Bloomsbury, 2001) p.17. In the Province as a whole, Protestants outnumbered Catholics roughly 2½ to 1.

[150] In the 17th century, Protestant immigrants from the British mainland had renamed the city of Derry as Londonderry. This became the official name and still is. The Catholic community refers to the city as Derry. Soldiers likewise, to whom the distinction means basically nothing, use the name Derry since it has two less syllables than Londonderry! Since the name Londonderry appears on all maps and in atlases, it will be used here.

[151] The government wanted troops to move in earlier but senior officers insisted on more time spent on reconnaissance. The delay meant several hundred more burnt houses and several deaths.

[152] Alun Chalfont, 'The Army and the IRA', *Survival*, 13, 6, June 1971, pp.208-211

Stormont to be giving orders to senior officers; Stormont was more likely to deploy the troops to keep the Catholics down rather than to keep the peace. Consultations over the use of the Army still had to be held with ministers from Stormont because London could not ignore what was a democratically elected government and one loyal to the Crown (hence the term 'Loyalist', which is commonly used to describe the Protestant community. The Catholics are traditionally referred to as 'Nationalists'). Moreover, if London had removed the government in Stormont (i.e. imposed 'Direct Rule'), it would prompt a Protestant rebellion of a far greater magnitude than that caused by the Catholics.[153]

The situation presented some difficult command and control issues. The General Officer Commanding (GOC) Northern Ireland, Lieutenant-General Sir Ian Freeland, was responsible to the Minister of Defence (MoD) in London. However, given the fact that the police force was in a state of near-collapse, Freeland was also initially told to 'command and task' the police.[154] But in being responsible for the police, he came under the direction of the Home Office in London. Thus the GOC was responsible to three masters: at Stormont, at the MoD, and at the Home Office (the respective departmental ministers, Denis Healey and James Callaghan, also did not see eye-to-eye over Northern Ireland).[155] It is important to note that it was the Army that was instructed by politicians to 'sort this mess out', but without being given either a plan to work toward or political support in terms of 'carrots' (as had been the case in Malaya).

Initially, British troops were used purely in a peacekeeping role in the two big cities. They kept the two communities apart while talks took place and while the police service was reformed and the RUC reservist force, the B Specials, disbanded.[156] The troops' main role was to prevent the 'pogroms' whereby Catholics and Protestants each tried to burn members of the opposing community out of the areas that they, respectively, believed to be 'theirs'. It needs be said that, at this stage, there was no problem from the Irish Republican Army (IRA) – the body the Catholics traditionally looked to as their guardians from the actions of Protestant mobs. The IRA was, indeed, an 'ally' of the Army since the desire of both was to halt Protestant incursions into Catholic estates.

Angry at the fact that 'their' police force was being reformed (and also disarmed),[157] Protestants took to the streets in October 1969 in the Shankill area of Belfast and tried to force their way into Catholic areas. The Army deployed three battalions to deal with the rioters.[158] Troops then came under fire for the first time in the Province – the one and

[153] See Caroline Kennedy-Pipe & Colin McInnes, 'The British Army in Northern Ireland 1969-1972: From Policing to Counter-Terror', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 20, 2, June 1997, pp.1-24

[154] This was later altered, in order to dilute police ire, so that Freeland 'coordinated' Army and police actions. The Sunday Times Insight Team, *Ulster* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1972) p.169

[155] David Charters, 'From Palestine to Northern Ireland', in David Charters & Maurice Tugwell, *Armies in Low-Intensity Conflict: A Comparative Analysis* (London: Brassey's, 1989), p.200

[156] The B Specials (almost exclusively Protestant) were especially despised by the Catholic community given their brutal record in riot situations.

[157] The RUC was the only UK police force to be routinely armed.

[158] To prevent confusion, the term 'battalion' will be used here instead of the more familiar British term of 'regiment' to describe a battalion-sized grouping.

only time from Protestant gunmen. Some 1,000 rounds were fired and 22 soldiers were wounded (one policeman was killed). No rounds were returned by the Army.[159] Troops had the right to open fire (when there was a threat to life) but they felt constrained by the fact that they were operating in the UK.[160] Eventually orders came from brigade (39 Bde in Belfast)[161] that fire could be returned (66 rounds, two gunmen killed). However, the troops returning fire had to operate under the guidance of nominated officers or NCOs.[162]

The Army tried to keep Catholic areas quiet. They began a 'hearts and minds' campaign that included opening Army-run community centres, taking children on trips to the countryside, running discotheques, etc.[163] These communities were quite content that the Army was protecting them, particularly as their traditional guardians, the IRA, would not use force to protect Catholic areas. As a Marxist organisation, it felt that it should not be interceding between two sets of working-class groups, regardless of their sectarian colour.[164] Indeed, the IRA's main enemy was the government, not the Protestants. This lack of action led to a split in the IRA's ranks: the 'Officials' (OIRA) remained true to their political cause, and a more aggressively minded faction formed a new organisation, the Provisional IRA (PIRA).[165]

All may then have remained calm between the Army and the IRA, and at this stage negotiations between officers and members of both OIRA and PIRA were common as they both tried to ease tensions in Catholic areas. They were both, however, competing to be seen as the arbiters of power and tensions between the two became inevitable.

The breakdown came in 1970. The main problem was that neither the government in Westminster nor that at Stormont – were it even inclined to do so – felt that it had the power to prevent Protestant marches. Marches are a feature of life in Northern Ireland. Many within the Protestant community felt that, despite the friction it would cause, it was their inalienable right to come out on to the streets with pipe and drums to 'celebrate' certain battlefield encounters of the distant past where Catholic armies had been beaten by Protestant ones (the Battle of the Boyne in July 1688, for instance). Banning such marches would mean that the prime minister of Northern Ireland would have to resign – his Protestant power base would no longer have supported him – and Stormont would be thrown into crisis.

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[159] The Sunday Times, p.165.
[160] In places such as Aden, which the Army had recently left (1967), troops were more willing to open fire (at the ring-leaders of riots, for instance).
[161] The other brigade in the Province at this time was 8 Bde based in Londonderry. In 1972 an extra brigade (3 Bde) was added to cover the border areas of Fermanagh, Tyrone and Armagh. H. M. Tillotson, *With the Prince of Wales's Own: The Story of a Yorkshire Regiment, 1958-1994* (Wilby: Michael Russell, 1995) p.110
[162] Antony Deane-Drummond, *"Exceedingly Lucky": A History of the Light Infantry*, (Bristol: Sydney Jary, 1993) p.39.
[163] David Charters, 'Intelligence and Psychological Warfare Operations in Northern Ireland', *RUSI Journal*, 122, 3, September 1977, p.25
[164] Taylor, pp.39-40
[165] The OIRA did not attack troops after July 1970 and declared a complete ceasefire in 1973. Tillotson, p.109

Come the beginning of the summer-long 'marching season' in the spring of 1970, tensions were inevitable. A Protestant march through Belfast in Easter of that year came close to a Catholic estate – the Ballymurphy – and troops were deployed to keep the marchers away from the young Catholic toughs who were intent on replying to the provocation.

There were two specific problems facing the Army as it interposed. First, which way were the troops supposed to face – towards Catholics or Protestants? In the end, they turned to face what seemed to be the most aggressive element: the Catholic youths. But this was not the action of an 'ally'. The second problem was a distinct lack of numbers. As governments do, the British government had withdrawn troops as soon as matters had supposedly calmed down in late 1969.[166] Lacking in troops and under pressure from two sides anxious to get at each other, the Army resorted to the use of the only internal security (IS) weapon they had – CS gas.[167] The gas drifted across the Ballymurphy, affecting all sections of the community from pensioners to young babies. Its effects 'radicalised' the areas in which it was used 'creating solidarity where there was none before'. The Army very suddenly became unpopular. The use of CS was a wonderful recruiting tool for PIRA and the organisation now began to put *itself* forward more earnestly as the protector of Catholic communities, not the Army.[168]

The marching season of 1970 continued. More trouble occurred in late June. The Army, dealing with rioting in Belfast on the west side of the River Lagan had no troops spare to protect the Catholic Short Strand enclave east of the river. PIRA took over defensive duties (shooting dead six Protestant 'invaders') and gained the popular support previous afforded to the Army. In early July, the Army's support dissipated further, as troops, acting on a tip-off, seized weapons in the Catholic Lower Falls district of Belfast. The incident prompted complaints that the Army was ignoring its responsibility to protect Catholics while at the same time also removing the means whereby they could protect themselves. Rioting immediately broke out in the Lower Falls. The troops involved in the initial weapons search tried to pull back but were surrounded. Other troops came to their rescue, and when they too were surrounded, they also resorted to CS. The results were the same as in Ballymurphy, although the riots that erupted had a new added factor as both OIRA and PIRA elements fired on troops for the first time. The Army shot dead four civilians (all non-IRA members).

Anxious to reassert authority – and with fresh troops landed that day (3 July), the Army clamped down on the Lower Falls, imposing a 36-hour curfew. With the streets clear, the Army applied time-honoured IS tactics to conduct a systematic house search – i.e. one not one based on intelligence. With battalions such as the Royal Scots in charge, it was never going to be done with discretion.[169] Weapons were recovered, but the greater

[166] When first deployed in August 1969, troops were supposed to be back in barracks 'by the weekend'. Thirty-six years later, they are still not back in barracks.
[167] In traditional IS tactics, one in ten soldiers carried a rifle, the rest were armed only with batons.
[168] Taylor, p.45
[169] Soldiers from the Royal Scots, an overwhelmingly Protestant unit, were ill-inclined to carry out such searches without leaving some degree of damage to Catholic homes. While in England and Wales, the

damage had been done: the good relations that the Army had tried so hard to build up had now been destroyed. For both wings of the IRA, the main enemy was now the Army and not the Protestants.[170]

With the IRA coming out so openly as opponents, the Army was pressed by Protestant politicians to respond and take action. Among other snipes, such politicians criticised the Army for its lack of intelligence on the IRA. In February 1971, in a seeming fit of pique to show that the Army did indeed have intelligence, the Commander Land Forces (CLF),[171] Major General Anthony Farrar-Hockley, publicly named the IRA leaders with whom the Army had been negotiating. This was supposed to impress the Protestants. It did, though, prove to IRA leaders that the Army could not be trusted. There would be no more talks with the Army for the foreseeable future. The day after Hockley's announcement, the first British soldier was killed in Northern Ireland (shot by an IRA sniper in Belfast on 6 February 1971).[172]

In 1971, the IRA launched a sustained bombing campaign. As the situation escalated, calls went up for Internment to be reintroduced. Internment – the incarceration without trial of suspected IRA members – had worked to stifle an IRA campaign in the 1950s.[173] It was successful then, however, because the Irish Republic had also taken part in the operation and arrested IRA members on its side of the border. The Army was now generally keen to avoid Internment because officers were well aware of its negative effects on the remnants of the Army's 'hearts and minds' campaign. They also knew that the Republic would never be party to any current Internment drive and that with suspects escaping over the border, its effectiveness would inevitably be diluted. A new Conservative government in Britain was however anxious to show its steel and felt that Internment was necessary.[174]

The operation was put into practice on 9 August 1971. Some 342 Catholics and not one Protestant were arrested.[175] Of those arrested, 105 were released within two days. Intelligence was mostly wrong and few of the newer PIRA members were picked up. The more important 'players' had gone to the Republic earlier, warned by the fact that the Army, in the weeks before, was obviously 'practising' swoop arrest techniques. Sure enough, the sense of injustice derived from Internment drew thousands onto the streets to protest. Even the Army was shocked by the degree of reaction. Relations with the Catholic community were in tatters and intelligence sources dried up. Fuel was added to the fire when some of the interrogation techniques (learnt by the Army from the North

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difference between Protestant and Catholic barely registers, there are still extant strong sectarian distinctions in Scotland.

[170] Sunday Times, pp.210-220

[171] In 1970 a new command level – CLF – was added so that the GOC was not weighed down by too many duties.

[172] David McKittrick, Seamus Kelters, Brian Feeney & Chris Thornton, *Lost Lives: The Stories of the Men, Women and Children Who Died as a Result of the Northern Ireland Troubles* (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 1999) p.64

[173] Taylor, p.64

[174] Sunday Times, pp.265-270

[175] RUC informers would have tipped off any Protestants who were slated for arrest.

Koreans) applied to 11 of the Internees were leaked. The UK's standing in the world went down considerably and many Americans, amongst others, were encouraged to support the IRA. Its coffers grew.[176]

Army casualties also grew (44 soldiers had died by the end of 1971 and 108 were to die the following year). Troops in Belfast (this was still predominantly an urban terrorist situation) clamped down hard on any manifestation of IRA power. Any barricades put up to create no-go areas were swiftly removed. It was different in Londonderry. No-go areas had been created in Catholic estates and senior Army officers there (of 8 Bde) had made no effort to remove them. With temperatures running high following Internment, the preference was, in this more Catholic-oriented city, to allow moderate Nationalist politicians scope to get locals to remove the barricades themselves. The way riots were dealt with was also part of this 'containment' strategy. Whereas units in Belfast would deal swiftly and harshly with outbreaks of rioting, units in Londonderry allowed rioters to let off steam and for riots to run their course, so long as there were no breakthroughs into the commercial heart of the city.[177]

The 'softly-softly' approach did not seem to dampen IRA violence in Londonderry. Behind the barricades, moreover, the IRA could recruit and train at leisure. At the end of 1971, it was decided that a tougher line was called for in dealing with the security problems in the city. This led to the Bloody Sunday incident of January 1972. Paratroopers brought in from Belfast to help police a march shot dead 14 civilians, none of whom could be proved to have been handling weapons. The fallout from this incident was immense. Troops were removed from the streets all over the Province as the Army adopted a low-profile that would not exacerbate tensions. Direct rule came into force in March 1972 as the UK government in Westminster had finally tired of the leadership in Stormont.

Chronology

1921	Independence for the South of Ireland.
1968	Growing number of Civil Rights marches. Many end in riots.
1969	
14 August	Rioting in Londonderry. Government orders troops onto streets of Northern Ireland.
October	B Specials disbanded and police disarmed. Protestant riots as result. First policeman killed. First time troops are fired on.
December	PIRA breaks away from OIRA.

[176] Charters (1977) p.24

[177] The brigade in Belfast, 38 Bde, was commanded by the well-known counter-insurgency expert, Brig. Frank Kitson. Taylor, p.83

1970	
2 June	Riots on Falls Road. Army use of CS gas.
31 October	First British soldier killed (by PIRA).
1971	
9 August	Internment introduced.
1972	
30 January	Bloody Sunday. Fourteen civilians shot dead by troops.
24 March	Direct rule of Northern Ireland established from London.

Defence Lines of Devleopment

Training

The Army had long experience of dealing with riot or IS situations. Thus, when it looked likely in the late 1960s that units would be deployed onto the streets of Northern Ireland, the only problem appeared to be that the riots would be on the streets of the UK. Troops, in particular, could not adopt the normal routine of shooting a single ringleader in a riot – '*pour encourager les autres*'.[178] They would have to be more restrained.

Units stationed in Northern Ireland in the late 1960s could see which way the wind was blowing. As early as March 1968, a full 18 months before actually deployment, some battalions began riot training at the instigation of their COs (for instance, 1 Light Infantry at Ballykinler).[179] Any infantry battalion in the Army could carry out such training at unit level. They would have NCOs with many years' experience of riot situations and they had, moreover, a manual, *Keeping the Peace*, *Vol II*.[180] There was neither, however, a dedicated urban-warfare manual nor an urban-warfare training area in the UK at this time.

When serious violence broke out and more battalions were being called on for service in Northern Ireland, the problem was one of mission priorities. Many units had to come from Germany where their role was mechanised infantry. Other units were dedicated to jungle fighting, Arctic warfare, the air portable role, or public duties (drill), and had to put aside their normal training. Those units in Germany chosen to go to Ulster lacked proper training facilities: they would be forced to improvise by using forest tracks to

[178] During 1970, a petrol bomber was shot dead in Londonderry. The furore this caused led to the issuing to every soldier of a Yellow Card, which detailed when it was lawful to open fire.
[179] Deane-Drummond (1993), p.25. All names given refer to battalion-size units commanded by a lieutenant-colonel.
[180] Even as recently as the 1960s, battalions would have had experience of riot control in recent hotspots such as Hong Kong, Guyana, Maritius, Borneo and Aden.

represent streets and hanging white tape from trees to signify houses. Initially, there were no visits or pre-deployment instruction from outside the unit, which instead had to imagine what the situation would be like and what tactics would be required. Other units, prior to deployment, would spend about ten days training for urban-warfare skills in their own barracks. In order to act in the infantry role in Northern Ireland, non-infantry units (artillery, armour, engineers, logistics, ordnance, etc.) were deemed to require about ten weeks training prior to deployment.

While there was no formal means of informing incoming battalions of the situation in Northern Ireland, the small-scale nature of the Army and the close-knit officer corps allowed for an information conduit. Personal relationships between COs were not uncommon and quick briefs by telephone could be conducted.[181] Occasionally, however, this worked the other way; the regimental system encouraged battalions to be competitive with one another and occasionally useful information was not passed on.[182]

Units which had sister battalions could swap personnel so as to maintain levels of experience. For instance, in March 1971, the 2IC of 1Light Infantry remained behind in Northern Ireland as his own battalion moved out. He then became the 2IC of the newly arriving 3 Light Infantry.[183]

Often, though, the degree of notice to be sent to Northern Ireland was woeful. One Corps of Transport unit in Germany was given ten days' notice to move to the Province while all its members were on leave. They were supposed to train on the new *Saracen* armoured car. As there was only one such vehicle in Germany, each man in the unit had only 20 minutes driving-time prior to deployment. The next time they were to drive the same model was in Northern Ireland as part of *Operation Motorman* (28 July 1972), on unfamiliar streets where there were no streetlights (all shot out), during night, in heavy rain and in vehicles which were closed down! It was a miracle that these drivers did not inflict great damage or cause deaths. One infantry battalion in Germany had three days' notice to deploy to Northern Ireland, again while its soldiers were away on leave.

The very earliest units going to Northern Ireland were given a briefing pack which contained lists of suitable background reading material of a general nature and the reports from some study periods. Later a booklet was produced, 'Notes on Northern Ireland'.

By early 1972, training for Northern Ireland had become more formalised with the creation of a training package by HQ UK Land Forces and NITAT (Northern Ireland

[181] British Army officers tend to come from the same backgrounds – same small stable of high-schools and universities and, by the 1960s, one officer-training establishment (Sandhurst). Most COs would personally know the COs of other battalions. See, for instance, Alex Alexandrou, Richard Bartle & Richard Holmes (eds), *Human Resource Management in the British Armed Forces* (London: Frank Cass, 2001); Hew Strachan, (ed.), *The British Army: Manpower and Society into the Twenty-First Century* (London: Frank Cass, 2000).
[182] See, for instance, Correlli Barnett, *Britain and Her Army: 1509-1970: A Military, Political and Social Survey* (New York: William Morrow, 1970), pp.278, 306; Henry Stanhope, *The Soldiers: An Anatomy of the British Army* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1979), p.28.
[183] Deane-Drummond (1993), p.51

Training and Advisory Team). A team would visit units (whether in Germany or the UK) about to be posted to Northern Ireland and provide a few days of briefings and training. An urban close-quarter battle range and a 'tin city' (to practise patrol techniques) were built at Hythe in Kent (opened 1 April 1972), both of which resembled the Belfast city-scape. Training courses for officers in IS drills were now also available. These were especially important for officers from non-infantry regiments. Other courses, covering IED and booby-trap recognition, were run in Northern Ireland and then later on the mainland.

Equipment

Troops originally arrived in 1969 with bayonets fixed, but soon realised that this was too aggressive. They also wore full webbing, but this could be grabbed in riot situations and only the belt and ammunition pouches were therefore retained. The troops started with 'no batons, no baton guns, no shields, just CS gas'.[184] The problems with CS gas have already been discussed and its use was discontinued in 1971. The use of helmets discontinued after a few weeks. Berets or glengarries (or whatever soft headdress) were worn – even when under fire. The Army had to look like a police force.

Shortages in equipment were soon made up for and some minor improvements were made. Within a year of 'the Troubles' starting,[185] normal four-foot riot shields had been replaced by far more effective six-foot ones. The original respirator that was prone to misting up was replaced by an improved model. Baton guns were made available. Water-cannon trucks (four per battalion) proved ineffective and their use was discontinued after a couple of years.[186]

Tracked vehicles could obviously not be used in a domestic urban environment and so wheeled armoured vehicles such as the *Saracen* and the *Pig* (Humber 1-ton, which were rescued from various scrap heaps and were in a 'sorry state'[187]) were put into service. Noisy *Saracens* were preferred to the quieter *Pigs* as they were more intimidating. *Pigs* could however be fitted with 'wings' that could deploy outwards to act as screens behind which troops could shelter during riots. The venerable *Pig* was however liable to breakdown, particularly when the extra weight of armour and anti-RPG wire mesh were added.

VHF A41 radios of the Larkspur range could only work in certain parts of the urban environment. They were also bulky. By 1972, UHF Motorola-style (Pye) radios provided much better communications. These, however, were insecure. This meant that a good deal of time was spent using codewords and phrases that sometimes slowed down message transfers.

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[184] Arthur, *Northern Ireland: Soldiers Talking* (London: Sidgewick and Jackson, 1987), p.12
[185] The conflict in Northern Ireland is normally referred to as 'The Troubles', see Chalfont
[186] Brig. K. Perkins, 'Soldiers or Policemen?', *British Army Review*, 45, Dec 1973, pp.7-10
[187] Lt-Col A. F. R. Evans, 'RCT Operations in Northern Ireland, 1969-72', *The Review of the Royal Corps of Transport*, 1, 14, November 1972, p.25

Troops initially suffered from a lack of good maps (resulting in the use of photocopies of maps bought from local service stations). The very useful coloured 'tribal' map (which marked Protestant and Catholic areas in orange and green) took only a few weeks to appear.[188]

No heavy weapons were employed in urban areas. The RUC had once fired some 0.3 Browning machine-guns in August 1969, but the rounds killed two people in a block of flats nearby (including a boy asleep in his bedroom – the round having passed through two brick walls). A police station two miles away was also hit and the police there thought that they were under attack. It was the last time a machinegun was fired by security forces in an urban area (though the IRA did employ M-60s).[189]

Very few helicopters (2-3) were initially available until the autumn of 1971. Regardless, no suitable role could be identified for the helicopters and demand was therefore limited. COs felt better being in HQs surrounded by their own staffs rather than hovering above.[190]

Personnel

During this period, troop numbers in the Province increased from an initial 2,500 to 8,500 in 1970 and to 10,000 in early 1971. For *Operation Motorman* in July 1972, numbers peaked at 23,000.[191] (Northern Ireland holds a population of 1.6m in an area of 5,000 sq miles). A lack of numbers did, on occasion, have strategic consequences. Outnumbered soldiers resorted more readily to excesses in the use of force; as one officer put it, 'minimum force requires maximum numbers'.[192] At other times, the lack of numbers meant that the IRA was able to step into the breach and thus gain popular support.

Evidence suggests that soldiers proved themselves 'very good' at community relations and initially tried hard to integrate with locals. While this may be true on the whole, there is another side to this story: several works written from the Irish side note that many soldiers were 'racist' in their treatment of the Irish population. There is a long-held English belief that the Irish are 'stupid' and this cultural stereotype seems to have affected the attitude of many soldiers toward the local people. As troops tended not to act in such a way in front of officers, a false impression may have been created regarding the relation between soldiers and locals. The IRA would nonetheless feed off such misbehaviour.[193]

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[188] Sunday Times, p.152
[189] *ibid*., pp.135-136
[190] Brig. G.L.C. Cooper, 'Some Aspects of the Conflict in Ulster', *British Army Review*, 43, Apr 1973, pp.71-77
[191] David Charters, 'The Changing Forms of Conflict in Northern Ireland', *Conflict Quarterly*, 1, 2, Fall 1980, p.32
[192] Perkins, p.9
[193] See, for instance, Malachi O'Doherty, *The Trouble with Guns: Republican Strategy and the Provisional IRA* (Dundonald: Blastaff, 1998) p.65. The separation between officers and other ranks in the British Army

Initially, officers would take it upon themselves to conduct negotiations with both sides – there was no-one else to do it, the Army were on their own. Battalion officers were very quick to act on their own initiative. The Peace Line or 'Irish Berlin Wall' in Belfast (which is still there today) between Catholic and Protestant areas was constructed on the orders of local battalion commanders in 1969. Talking to representatives of the IRA also generated fresh intelligence on the movers and shakers within the organisation. But officers needed support for what they were doing. For instance, Freeland was muzzled by the MoD when he started making comments about helping the lot of the Catholic community. He realised that the Army could not maintain its good relations with the Catholics in the absence of some political changes to support what the troops were doing on the ground.[194]

The Army was probably at its best ever in terms of IS situations in the mid- to late-1960s. With the end of conscription in 1962, the Army had by that time been reduced to a very professional hard-core of soldiers, many of whom would have experience from many different post-War IS situations.[195]

Information

The goal of the first military intelligence unit set up in Ulster in March 1970 was to investigate Protestant rather than Catholic extremists. However, IRA's 1971 bombing campaign shifted the Army's attention.[196]

In the early months, there was little cooperation between the police and Army (at low levels, however, there are many reports of a reasonable relationship – policemen would be living in Army barracks and *vice-versa*). Police Special Branch (somewhat equivalent to the FBI) was especially wary of sharing information with the Army. Special Branch was in Northern Ireland for the long haul and did not want to share information with Army battalions, which would only be in the Province for a 4½-month tour (see below). The temptation among Army officers was to use the available information to make a quick impact – arrests, weapons finds, etc. – and receive immediate credit. The police did not want to risk sources for a few arrests or the odd find of a rifle; they therefore kept things to themselves, vying instead for long-term benefits. This is not to say that there was no cooperation between Special Branch and the Army, but it was limited. Intelligence Corps personnel were seconded to Special Branch but without seemingly making much of an impact.[197]

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has always been more pronounced than in any other Western army. British officers tend to have very little idea how those in the ranks are behaving when they, the officers, are absent.

[194] Sunday Times, p.199
[195] Charters (1989). p.187
[196] Sunday Times, p.261
[197] Charters (1977), p.22

As the Army alone was present on the streets of 'hard' Catholic areas, it was uniquely placed to pick up snippets of information. Initially, however, the Army did not place much emphasis on intelligence, as it regarded itself as a peacekeeping rather a counterinsurgency force. But to keep the peace effectively, the Army soon realised it needed to know what was going on. In order to be an effective police force, most battalions thus went about building up their own intelligence database. The vast majority of information would be gathered from overt foot patrols. The normal means of gaining information about an area would be to 'p-check' (personality-check) people on the streets – i.e. random stopping and interrogation of individuals as they went about their business. Door-to-door censuses were also conducted by soldiers. The Army gradually built up a system of informers who would accompany patrols, hidden in the backs of vehicles, and point out 'players' on streets. (After direct rule was introduced, the Army momentarily kept off the streets and obtained its most of its intelligence from deep-cover operations).

The Army was thus merely scratching the intelligence surface. By 1971, when trouble began in earnest, the Army had substantial local intelligence but no real intelligence base, which reduced the scope for effective action. Meanwhile, the Loyalists were demanding *some* form of action. The Army, under pressure, did act and the only – and clumsy – thing it could do was to go through with Internment. Added to the problems caused by Internment itself was the furore over the North Korean interrogation methods used against some detainees. These were not authorised by the head of the Army.[198] In fact, these techniques were so sensitive that they were never written down but merely passed on verbally at the UK's interrogation centre. No physical abuse was involved, but rather sensory deprivation. The methods were effective, however.[199]

Even though Northern Ireland was part of the UK, the external security service – MI6 (or SIS) – was working in the Province and had good intelligence about the old IRA. The new PIRA, however, was a mystery. Two MI6 operatives, Howard Smith (later to become head of MI5 – the domestic security service) and Frank Steele (to be replaced later by Michael Oatley) were brought into the Province in late 1971. They were to do a lot of negotiating with the IRA.[200]

MI5 and MI6 had different approaches to the problem, which prompted Scotland Yard – who had sent anti-terrorist representatives to the Province – to complain 'bitterly' about their lack of cooperation. MI5, which had experience in facing communist insurgencies, was more interested in the Marxist Official IRA. MI6 was more interested in the Provisionals and saw them as the more dangerous threat.[201]

The Army thus had good low-level intelligence from their patrols, and MI6/MI5 had good strategic-level intelligence (especially from two informers near the top of PIRA),

[198] Michael Carver, *Out of Step: The Memoirs of Field Marshal Lord Carver* (London: Hutchinson, 1989), p.411
[199] Charters (1977), p.24
[200] Taylor, p.80
[201] Tim Pat Coogan, *The Troubles*, (London: Arrow, 1996), p.145

but there really appeared to be nothing in between to provide workable operational intelligence.

In attempting to protect its soldiers, the Army was often caught distorting the truth when commenting on various incidents to the media (and thus to the people of Northern Ireland). At other times, the Army made no comment on IRA false claims about 'brutality', etc., because they felt that 'the truth will come out naturally'. They thus let the propaganda settle and did not refute it; much to their loss.[202] Virtually all battalion reports of this period state that there was a distinct need for them to have their own Public Relations Officer (PRO); particularly one who could tell the media the truth and was not overly protective of the Army. A PRO was 'a vital operational requirement'. Just one untruth given out by the Army meant an overall lack of trust and confidence.

The public relations programme was stepped up at Army HQ at the end of 1971, with the establishment of an information policy cell. This was a 'PR think tank which studied trends in reporting and tried to keep one step ahead in the propaganda war'.[203] Very early in the campaign, a team from the Army's media centre at Beaconsfield would visit units to instruct them in TV interview techniques.[204] The Army was however still to make a huge mistake in the immediate aftermath of Bloody Sunday (January 1972) by claiming that all those shot by the Army were members of the IRA.

One of the crucial missing links in the Army's PSYOPS campaign was the fact that, before direct rule, there was no policy into which it could all fit.[205] Moreover, PSYOPS could only be conducted at unit level. Because it was part of the UK, any overall PSYOPS campaign could only be directed by the government and not by the military.[206]

With operational areas sometimes being very small, a battalion orders group could take place with all company commanders walking to the O Group site.

Initially, information was primarily being gathered from overt patrolling (the basic patrol group then consisted of 12 men and was only later reduced to the more flexible four-man unit in use today). Only later did the Army look more towards covert intelligence-gathering. This period saw the Army make a slow start in terms of creating an information advantage over the IRA. To begin with the Army and the IRA were 'allies', at least to a degree. Meanwhile, the police were not passing on information, MI5 and MI6 were not in a position to pass on anything useful, and the Army was caught unawares by the radicalisation of the PIRA, which led to the bombing campaign of 1971. The inability to stop the bombing campaign (and thus the admission that the enemy had the information advantage) prompted the introduction of Internment. From a position of

[202] Cooper, p.77
[203] Charters (1977), p.25
[204] Cooper, p.77
[205] Charters (1977) p.25
[206] Lt-Col D. J. A. Stone, '"Out of the Shadows…": The Re-emergence of the United Kingdom's Military Psychological Ops Capability Since 1945', *British Army Review*, December 1996, p.5

weakness caused by the lack of both numbers and intelligence, the Army was left with no alternative but to take part in an operation that most knew would be counterproductive.

Doctrine and Concepts

While there was an IS manual, *Keeping the Peace, Vol II* and various IS Pamphlets,[207] doctrine was not considered necessary for Northern Ireland since 'the British Army had an identifiable method for dealing with "small wars" which was accepted by and disseminated through the Army'.[208] As one lieutenant put it, 'it was the sort of rushed, primitive approach: we'd done it in Aden…so we'd do it in Belfast'.[209] As David Charters adds, 'Commanders traditionally were allowed a fair degree of latitude in the formulation of strategy, execution of policy and devising of tactics for local situations. A certain independent habit of mind was both required and permitted'.[210] Officers just got on with keeping the peace.[211]

The confidence behind this approach came from 'habit'. Many in the Army felt that given the experience of soldiers and battalions, habit would produce 'sound judgment and the power of discrimination'. Habit, it was felt, would enable gambles to be taken, *even if information is lacking*, because soldiers know from experience what is and is not likely to come off.[212] This philosophy may have worked to a degree and probably helps explain the proactive nature of what the Army was doing. However, it cannot possibly work in all places and all of the time.

Since there was no doctrine and since the teaching of counterinsurgency (COIN) in military colleges was 'rudimentary', troops just did as they saw fit.[213] Battalions realised that to be effective they would often have to adopt unconventional measures; in essence, to employ the same tactics as their opponents. This led to different battalions adopting their own novel policing/COIN techniques. But this individuality of battalions limited the cross-fertilisation of ideas, particularly as there was initially neither a central training establishment that all battalions attended nor a centralised 'lessons learned' capacity. Different units thus learnt different lessons and approached situations differently. What aided this 'difference' was the fact that the Army had been given no political goal to work towards – no centralising drive. The Army thus had their tried and trusted approach, which they felt could have worked if there had been some overall strategy into which it could fit. There was none.[214] The Army was aware, though, that it was 'fighting a

[207] Norman Dodd, 'The Corporals' War: Internal Security Operations in Northern Ireland', *Military Review*, 56, 7, July 1976, pp.58-68
[208] Kennedy-Pipe & McInnes, p.2
[209] Arthur, p.4
[210] Charters (1989), p.178
[211] See also Brian Holden-Reid, 'Is there a British Military Philosophy?' in Maj.-Gen. J.J.G. Mckenzie & Brian Holden Reid (eds), *Central Region vs Out-of-Area; Future Commitments* (London: Tri-Service Press, 1990), pp.1-3
[212] Capt. T. A. Coutts-Britton, 'Clausewitz on Ulster', *British Army Review*, 43, April 1973, p.11
[213] Kennedy-Pipe & McInnes, p.2
[214] Taylor, p.57

campaign where the political side-effects of the use of force could grossly outweigh any direct military benefits'.[215]

Experiences were initially passed on within the Army through informal communications between outgoing and incoming officers to the Province. Study sessions took place at senior levels. Other experienced officers were used as instructors once NITAT was established and the urban CQB range at Hythe was operational. The Army, though, had no real means of gathering written experiences. Battalions did write post-operational tour reports which circulated within Germany and at HQs in the UK, but these were not filed for long. They were only kept for posterity from 1971 onwards, when a tactical doctrine retrieval centre was opened at the Staff College 'to provide a central repository of papers and studies useful for professional development'.[216]

There were actually very few operational experiences committed to print in military journals since Northern Ireland was considered to be nothing out of the ordinary and therefore unworthy of space in such publications.

In the early months, troops were as dispersed as possible to ensure that they were always able to react quickly to any situation. Soldiers slept on streets and in such 'accommodation' as public lavatories and local schools. At certain points, vehicle patrols had to be discontinued because of the level of petrol bombing (petrol bombers were rarely shot and when they were the public outcry was enormous). Thus on occasion there were foot patrols only.[217]

Soldiers were constantly thwarted by the fact that they were acting under UK 'Common Law' and had taken over the role of policing. This meant that they could only act when a crime had been committed and could take no proactive action, such as roadblocks, house searches, etc. This was later cleared up by the Special Powers Act.

Organisation

Disorganisation rather than organisation defines the early months of the Northern Ireland campaign. The *de facto* separation of all three interest groups – Army, police, civil administrators – led to 'three different campaigns' being conducted simultaneously.[218] Indeed, there was no civil-affairs representative until September 1971 when a single civil-affairs civil servant came to Belfast. Soon, however, there was one at the level of each police division.[219] But the police divisions did not mesh with the Army's brigade boundaries, which was inevitably to cause some confusion.[220]

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[215] Kennedy-Pipe & McInnes, p.4
[216] Charters, (1989) p.181
[217] Arthur, p.72
[218] Robin Evelegh, *Peace-Keeping in a Democratic Society: The Lessons of Northern Ireland* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1978), p.110
[219] *ibid.*
[220] *ibid.*, p.200

The length of tours for battalions was an issue. In 1969, there were two resident battalions (two-year tours), with other battalions coming in for 4½ months (roulement battalions).[221] Tours were kept this short to maintain morale and normal training cycles (especially for the mechanised battalions from Germany). Moreover, a battalion returning to Northern Ireland every 8-10 months for another 4½-month tour would not have to engage in any training prior to redeployment. Thus battalions in Germany *could* be given, at times of increased tension, only three days notice to return to the Province – even during leave periods! However, the lack of continuity afforded by a 4½-month tour affected operational capabilities – especially intelligence-gathering. Partly for this reason, roulement battalions were paired with neighbouring resident battalions to help encourage an exchange of information.[222] Moreover, the first four weeks of a 4½-month tour would be spent getting to know the area and its people. This would leave six weeks for productive activity after which a sense of self-preservation would set in and little of worth would be accomplished.[223] Staff at brigade level were on two-year tours, which helped maintain continuity.

The Army, being short of infantry, re-roled other units as infantry in Northern Ireland: artillery, armour, logistics, etc. The first two soldiers killed in Northern Ireland (Belfast – February 1971) were both gunners (as were the first two soldiers killed in Londonderry – August 1971). Some artillery units appear to have been used in preference to available infantry battalions.[224]

Infrastructure

Troops were initially accommodated in an *ad hoc* fashion – in police stations, community centres, hallways of civic buildings, in hangars of a Royal Naval Air Station, in buses in Londonderry bus station, in tents, and in schools (during the holidays). Later the Army took over large buildings such as mills (sometimes still working), which could hold entire battalions. A submarine depot ship, *HMS Maidstone*, in Belfast harbour also provided accommodation. In Londonderry, a naval base became the main barracks (for two-year tours). Other purpose-built 'forts' were later constructed in the two big cities. Space in general would be at a premium, with three-bed bunks often placed in lines only 18" apart. However, the short length of the 4½-month tours (or even shorter 'emergency tours' – sometimes only amounting to a few days) helped compensate for the poor standards of accommodation. Troops were also required to guard radio rebroadcast sites. The police refused to do such tasks since it perceived the Army as having assumed such responsibilities as part of its takeover of police functions.[225]

There was a lack of suitable accommodation for prisoners. Troops could not arrest as many suspects as they would have liked because there were very few places to hold them.

[221] Carver, p.433
[222] Charters (1980), p.35
[223] Taylor, p.56
[224] J.D.M., 'Op Huntsman', *RUSI Journal*, 17, 3, September 1972, pp.25-30
[225] Coogan, p.145

HMS Maidstone was used for a time as a prison ship. Long Kesh was also built as a site to hold Internees.

Logistics

Logistics were not a major problem given the size of the Province and the proximity to bases of operations. Few battalions in the urban areas (which were the focus of operations in this particular period) strayed much more than a few hundred metres from their barracks. Ammunition re-supply was never an issue since rounds – both baton and ball – were never fired excessively. But the use of old, wheeled vehicles (such as the *Pig*) led to maintenance problems and a lack of spare parts. When water cannon were used, they tended to run out of water and were difficult to refill.

Information and Networked Flow of Material and Awareness

The gathering of information was considered crucial to the Army's mission in Northern Ireland.[226] IS training had always reflected this premise: of the 'five main aspects of internal security operations' the first one listed was 'the methods of obtaining, recording, analyzing and disseminating information and intelligence'.[227]

Originally the only outsider who had access to RUC Special Branch information was the prime minister of Northern Ireland himself.[228] Later, though, Special Branch gave information/intelligence to HQ Northern Ireland and the Army then passed it down to brigade and then battalion level. Naturally, since information is power, much was held onto at different levels. Brig. Kitson (at 38 Bde) wanted Special Branch to pass information straight to battalion Intelligence Cells, as they would often share bases and messes.[229] While the offices of the RUC and the battalion Intelligence Cell may be adjacent, they were never actually co-located given the sensitivity regarding the sharing of information. Often battalions, though, would report very good relations with both uniformed police and Special Branch. There was a tendency for the police to look down on the battalion intelligence officers as being unprofessional – they were, after all, infantry officers given a slot in their own battalion's orbat. This, again, limited the flows of information.

The IRA would play on the lack of intelligence. They would leak false information to Army sources so that they would arrest the wrong people. Such blunders suited the IRA since they generated a bad feeling between battalions and local communities. Conversely, the IRA generally resented the good community relations built up by battalions; bad relations with the Army meant better relations with the IRA.

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[226] Frank Kitson, *Low Intensity Operations: Subversion, Insurgency, Peacekeeping* (London: Faber, 1971) p.95
[227] Dodd, p.62
[228] Anthony Deane-Drummond, *Riot Control* (London: RUSI, 1975), p.60
[229] Taylor, p.56

Most battalion reports of this period point to the need for not just a battalion Intelligence Cell but also one at company level. Indeed, some battalions put forward the idea that certain groups of soldiers should do nothing but patrols, i.e. no static guards, vehicle checkpoints, etc. These would be the soldiers who would get to know everyone on the streets and provide the bulk of the information to the company/battalion intelligence people. From here intelligence was passed to brigade. Brigade would then pass on information to the police at their level though the police co-located with the battalion would also get the same information.

Battalions used cameras to obtain a photographic database of the local population. The best way of photographing civilians was to 'arrest' people and take them to a barracks, but to do so 'nicely' – with cups of tea, etc. An intelligence database could then be built up with the photos also being sent up the information chain. Once 'arrested' and taken out of the public eye, certain individuals would speak to the Army more openly. This method was also tried with wide-ranging house searches. If the searches were conducted with care and no damage done, soldiers found that, when unobserved, people in the houses would offer information. They could not do this if stopped on the streets; through fear of the IRA, they had to make it look as if they hated the Army.

Arrests and house searches also had to make use of the tactic of 'randomness'. If an arrest of an individual takes place or just one house is searched, it appears to local communities that someone must have given specific information to the authorities and it would not be difficult to work out the source of the tip-off. If, however, many arrests are made or many houses searched (when only one is in fact being targeted), the discovery of a suspect or of a weapons cache appears incidental rather than planned. On the other hand, a fair degree of ill-will is generated by large numbers of arrests or house searches.

Outgoing units would brief their incoming replacement on the information picture in the Province. Elements (i.e. recce parties) of the incoming battalion would visit the departing battalion beginning some 6-10 weeks before the changeover. The actual handover would be conducted during a three-day period when the best part of both battalions would be in situ and information could be shared basically on a one-to-one basis.

Perceptions of Quality of Information and Networking (Measures of Information Position)

Depending on the battalion – and its distinctive approach – the reports on the information received from police sources range from poor to very good. This also tended to depend on the quality of the policemen attached to battalions. The battalions, not surprisingly, tended to trust the quality of information generated by its own members – but only to a point. There appears to be a tendency to trust information from higher formations and the police, but little, of course, comes down to battalions. The information from MI5/MI6

was good for strategic purposes, but was of no real use on the ground. Such information will not lead to arrests, which was what battalions aimed for.

Incoming battalions generally trusted the information received from the Province, either via personal contacts and later through formal training packages.

Patterns of Operational Success/Failure in Relation to Information/Networking (Measures of Decision Superiority)

The network ensured that officers at all levels understood the general situation. It had always been drummed into them from colonial days that what they do at the tactical level can have strategic repercussions.

Battalions – and it was basically battalions both gathering and acting on information in this period – showed agility in intelligence-gathering. From sending soldiers dressed in plain clothes, to the contacts established in bars and pubs, and the ensconcing of soldiers in the roofs of people's houses, the battalions were generating their own information, which they then acted on and sent up the chain. Very little information was coming the other way from on high (MI6/Special Branch).

There was a tension between the Army wanting to take action and achieve 'successes' and the fact that in doing so they might destroy relationships and hinder overall intelligence-gathering. As one major in 1 King's Own Scottish Borderers put it, 'there was always a conflict between the short-term military goal, which could always be achieved, and the cost in the longer term'.[230]

For much of this period the IRA was not the 'enemy' and information was not gathered to use against it. The fact that the situation changed so rapidly from one of 'alliance' to one of opposition caught the Army off-guard vis-à-vis the gathering of intelligence. When the bombing campaign of 1971 started, the Army was well behind the curve in attempting to prevent it. It simply did not have sufficient information. The amount that can be picked up off the streets is limited and that coming down from higher up is unsuitable. MI5/MI6 might pick up on general strategies but could not identify the associated individuals. In attempting to stop the bombing, the need for more information was considered secondary to getting possible bombers off the streets. This latter approach – Internment – backfired, but it did usher in an era of less amateurish covert intelligence-gathering that proved more effective than relying on those used hitherto. It did prove effective, however, only in the long term. Once troops were off the streets, the Army lost any pretence of information dominance. No information was coming in and there was no pressure on the terrorists. Moreover, Internment had created a whole new batch of PIRA recruits who were completely unknown to the Army, which had not been around to monitor events.[231]

[230] Arthur, p.65
[231] Charters (1977) p.24

Evaluation of the Information and Networking Contribution to the Outcomes of the Operation (Measures of Campaign Effectiveness)

The *personal* networking contribution within the Army itself appears to have worked well. The main failings on the networking front appear at the government-Army and police-Army interface. Armies cannot conduct IS/COIN missions without a deep interaction with the civilian masters who set the agenda. Armies also cannot conduct IS/COIN missions when they lack both numbers and intelligence. Numbers can make up for a lack of intelligence, and good intelligence can make up for a lack of numbers; but when both factors are in deficit, the outlook will always be bleak. The Army had always, in most previous colonial IS situations, looked to use the information provided by the police. There was no real networking to speak of between the police, who resented the presence of the Army and their ephemeral commitment to the Province, and the soldiers. There was a fundamental clash of aims. The police basically wanted long-term success and did not want to risk their information on the type of short-term gains that appeared to be favoured by the Army.

The Army adopted more intelligence-gathering mechanisms following direct rule, when troops were taken off the streets. This leads on to successes later in the 1970s and 1980s. However, during that initial period when the troops were off the streets, PIRA had the luxury of being able to organise itself. It was not under pressure or under surveillance. PIRA was seen as a 'proper' security body by local people because it – and not the Army – was in charge in the 'hard' Catholic areas.

Allowing the IRA to dominate the propaganda war was to prove counterproductive. The PSYOPS effort was woeful. The mistakes the Army made could not be rectified because a suitably professional information campaign had not been put in place. PIRA did not really need to gain information about the Army and its doings; it merely had to wait for Army mistakes. PIRA seldom had to make outright efforts to gain the support of the Catholic population. They merely waited for a tipping point to be reached whereby the Army would, by its own actions, make itself so unpopular that people would naturally turn to PIRA as an acceptable alternative. The longer it waited, the better it looked.[232] It needs be said that virtually all of the Army's failings in this period can be put down to the lack of troop numbers. In 1970, the Army did not have mass; nor did it have an effective information campaign to counter the setbacks caused by this lack of mass. It all snowballed badly from there.

It should have been relatively easy to compromise IRA once it had started its bombing campaign in 1971. PIRA, after all, was a relatively weak and unprofessional organisation. It did not become professional, with a proper 'cell' structure, until the late 1970s under the stewardship of Gerry Adams.[233]

[232] O'Doherty, pp.65-68
[233] *ibid*., p.122

The robustness of the networks developed in this period was compromised by the short-tour nature of postings. This problem was partly addressed by the presence of 'two-year personnel' in places like Bde HQs and as resident battalions.

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Brig The Hon HBHE Monro

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2 PARA (220471-260871)

2 PARA (110272-110672)

2 Light Infantry (230671-281071)

1 Scots Guards (250871-291271)

2 Royal Regt of Fusiliers (191071-150272)

1 Queen's Lancashire Regt (011271-280372)

Part II

1 Light Infantry (230371-310771)

1 Green Howards (300771-301171)

Case Study 3 – Northern Ireland (1972-1976): The Army Takes Control - Dr Warren Chin

Historical Sketch of Operation

Historical Sketch

In this period, the Army continued to take the lead in trying to reverse the deteriorating security situation in the Province. This transfer in responsibility from the police to the Army was caused in part by the moral and organisational collapse of the RUC in the opening phase of the conflict. The position of the Army was legitimised by the Hunt Report, published in October 1969, which argued that the Army should take charge of the protection of the Province.[1]

The Army had three core aims: the destruction of the IRA; the establishment of a secure environment within the Province; and the prevention of a Protestant insurrection.[2] However, at this time, the political and strategic context of the campaign was fundamentally affected by the suspension of government in Northern Ireland and the imposition of direct rule from London in March 1972. Within this broader context, the Army devised new strategies and tactics to defeat the IRA or at least contain it, and by late 1974, the Army believed that it had achieved its mission and that the IRA was a spent force. However, the introduction of a ceasefire in 1975 prevented the Army from realising its goal. Frustratingly, no political solution was found and as a result the conflict continued until a new ceasefire was agreed upon in 1993. This case study provides an interesting snapshot of the British Army at work and provides some unexpected insights in terms of the Army's acquisition, processing and exploitation of information in the counterinsurgency campaign against the IRA.

The Labour Government (1966-70) had maintained a consistent position of non-intervention in the political apparatus of the state of Northern Ireland. At the time the troubles began, both the Prime Minister, Harold Wilson and his Home Secretary, Jim Callaghan, believed that the deployment of the British Army was a temporary measure and that once order had been restored a political solution would be found. The entry of a new Conservative government in the summer of 1970 did not result in a significant change in attitude on this matter, but events within the Province over the next two years were to bring about a fundamental re-think.

By spring 1972 the Protestant-dominated Stormont government's inept conduct of the war was more than evident, not least in terms of the mounting levels of violence and the deteriorating political and security situation within the Province. Despite the best efforts of central government to contain the problem, and optimistic expectations that a local

[1] Lt-Col Michael Dewar, *The British Army in Northern Ireland* (Arms and Armour Press, London, 1985), p.135
[2] Desmond Hamil, *Pig In The Middle* (London: Methuen, 1985), p.69

solution could be found to resolve the dispute between the Catholic and Protestant communities, it became evident that the government of Northern Ireland was actually an integral part of the problem. After some two years of civil war, all that had been achieved was the alienation of a large segment of the Catholic minority and the rise of both Protestant and Catholic paramilitary organisations. Confronted by this deteriorating situation, the Conservative government decided in March 1972 to suspend the Northern Ireland government in Stormont and impose direct rule. Northern Ireland was now to be administered from Whitehall and the newly created Northern Ireland Office, which was led by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, William Whitelaw.

The introduction of direct rule was interpreted as a victory for the IRA's campaign of violence and convinced its leadership that the 'Brits' were on the verge of defeat. In an attempt to capitalise on this development, IRA introduced a ceasefire and asked to meet government representatives to discuss a political solution to the problems of Northern Ireland. These talks involved Secretary of State William Whitelaw in face-to-face negotiations with key elements of the IRA leadership but failed to produce a meaningful settlement. What became very clear was how far apart the two sides were on what to do to end the conflict.

The IRA, convinced as it was that the British were demoralised, demanded the withdrawal of British forces and the creation of a United Ireland. From the perspective of the British government, these demands were unacceptable simply because they contravened the expressed wishes of the majority of the people living within the Province to remain part of the United Kingdom. As a result, the Province once again descended into an even more brutal phase of violence, as the IRA attempted to coerce the British government into accepting its demands. The IRA's bombing campaign climaxed with the detonation of 26 bombs in Belfast on 21 July 1972. The carnage caused by this act was so awful that the day came to be called 'Bloody Friday'. Eleven people were killed and over 130 people were injured.[3]

The response of the British government to this violence was to establish 'escalation dominance' over the IRA by concentrating the largest force ever assembled in the history of the conflict. *Operation Motorman* resulted in the deployment of nearly 30,000 British troops to remove barricades erected by the Catholic population and restore control of what had effectively become no-go areas in Belfast and Londonderry. These sanctuaries had been tolerated by the government as a demonstration of good faith to the IRA. However, the collapse of negotiations and the instigation of Bloody Friday convinced Whitelaw to take actions against these zones of IRA-controlled territory within the British state.[4]

The government proceeded to mobilise political support within Northern Ireland for a new fairer and more representative system of government for the Province. In November 1972, Whitelaw published a discussion paper: *The Future of Northern Ireland*. The document advanced two notable proposals. The first was an acknowledgement that

[3] David McKittrick & David McVea, *Making Sense of the Troubles* (London: Penguin, 2001), pp.76-97
[4] William Whitelaw, *The Whitelaw Memoirs* (London: Aurum Press, 1989)

Dublin had a legitimate interest in Northern Ireland and that any future government needed to recognise this fact. The second was the rejection of simple majority rule as a basis for creating a government. A future government in Northern Ireland had to recognise the interests of the minority elements within society. Subsequent negotiations between the major political parties over the future constitution for a new government culminated in the Sunningdale Agreement in December 1973. This agreement established a cross-border governmental body called the Council of Ireland and created a government elected on the basis of proportional representation.

The governmental structures created by Sunningdale were effectively stillborn. The majority of the Protestant population opposed Sunningdale and in national elections held in February 1974, all but one of the seats at Westminster were won by Protestant parties opposed to the implementation of the agreement. Opposition to the new government spread throughout the Protestant community and in the early summer of 1974 a series of strikes, organised by the Ulster Workers Council (UWC), brought the Province to a standstill. Through this campaign, the Protestant community demonstrated the power that stemmed from forming the majority of the population and having a monopoly on the key jobs. The government proved unable to deal with this strike in a direct and robust fashion. It was clear that unless the Protestant majority supported political change, no reform could take place. Moreover, the Army saw little point in taking direct action in ending the strike, fearing that this would escalate Protestant paramilitary action and result in the Army fighting a two-front war. It was then hardly surprising that with no support from central government or the security services, the new power sharing executive resigned.

Throughout the rest of 1974, the government continued talking to the paramilitaries and to facilitate this process, the political arm of the IRA, Sinn Fein, was legalised as a political party. Negotiations in late 1974 and early 1975 resulted in a ceasefire between the IRA and the British government which was to last for the better part of a year. However, this did not result in an end to the violence and the ceasefire was marred by a rise in sectarian killings between Catholic and Protestant paramilitary groups.

Chronology

1972

March	Imposition of direct rule and suspension of the Northern Ireland government.
April	Widgery Report on Bloody Sunday is published.
July	IRA meets the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, William Whitelaw, in London to discuss political reform in Northern Ireland. *Operation Motorman* launched
December	Diplock Report recommends end of trial by jury in troubles-related cases

1973

March	The government produces a White Paper setting out the framework for the future structure of the government of Northern Ireland (Sunningdale Agreement).
June	Elections are held for the Stormont Assembly
October	Inter-party talks begin in the creation of a power-sharing executive between Protestants and Catholics.
November	Agreement is reached on the creation of a power-sharing executive.
December	Debate in the Stormont Assembly on the principle of power-sharing degenerates into violence and is terminated before a vote could be taken. The Sunningdale Conference is held in the UK and agreement is reached on the creation of a new executive.

1974

January	Power-sharing executive takes office.
February	General election results in the fall of the Conservative government and the election of a minority Labour government under Harold Wilson.
May	UWC organise a national strike in Northern Ireland in protest at the creation of the new power-sharing executive. Protestant opposition to Sunningdale results in an escalation in Protestant terrorism in Northern Ireland and Eire. Power-sharing agreement is shelved in the face of Protestant opposition
October	IRA Guildford bombing (five killed and 54 injured).
November	IRA bombing in Birmingham (21 killed and 180 injured).
December	IRA meets with Protestant Clergy. The British government agrees to talks with the Sinn Fein and a ceasefire is called.

1975

February	The IRA announces an indefinite ceasefire
March	Stormont Assembly is dissolved and new elections called. Anti-Sunningdale Unionists win a majority of the seats in the new assembly.
August	Talks between Unionists and the Social Democratic and Liberal Party break down.

November	The Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) is banned after 11 people are killed in UVF attacks.
December	Internment ends.

1976

January	Six members of two Catholic families are killed by the UVF in County Armagh; ten Protestant workers are shot at Kingsmills in County Armagh by the IRA. Special Airborne Service (SAS) is officially deployed to end the sectarian killings in Armagh.
February	Republican prisoner Frank Stagg dies in England after a 52-day hunger strike in protest at the failure to provide political status to IRA prisoners imprisoned in England.
March	Special category status for paramilitary offences comes to an end.
July	The British ambassador to Ireland, Christopher Ewart-Biggs is killed by the IRA in Dublin.
August	Death of the three Macguire children leads to the emergence of the non-sectarian Peace People movement.
September	Roy Mason replaces Merlyn Rees as Northern Ireland Secretary.
October	Sinn Fein Vice-President Marie Drumm is murdered by loyalists while a patient in Belfast's Mater hospital.
November	Peace People leaders Mairead Corrigan and Betty Williams are awarded the Nobel peace prize.
December	The Fair Employment Act is passed, making it an offence to discriminate in employment on religious or political grounds.

Context of Operation (Starting Conditions)

Training

It appears that only the most basic and rudimentary training was provided to units deployed to Northern Ireland in the early 1970s, a good four years into the troubles. Officers received exposure to counterinsurgency whilst at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst (RMAS), however, there was little or no exposure to anything overly

sophisticated and the focus was mainly on riot control, which included the use of lethal force should a riot failed to disperse.[5]

The Northern Ireland Training and Assistance Teams (NITAT) were created in the spring of 1972 and set up in the UK and, more controversially, West Germany. The quality of training offered by NITAT improved with the Army's understanding of the IRA and familiarity with the conflict. Interestingly, the training package included a five-day educational programme in which soldiers learned about the history of the troubles and principal paramilitary organisations. Training also provided a detailed brief on the political situation in the area in which a battalion was being deployed.[6]

In 1972, a battalion going to Northern Ireland received training in the following areas: photography, sniper training, weapon handling and shooting, operating in urban areas, locating enemy snipers in an urban environment, patrolling in urban areas, manning vehicle checkpoints, crowd control and riots, maintaining security at bases.[7] An area of training that was not addressed properly in the view of some was the subject of law and its application to soldiers on operation in the Province.[8]

Training in surveillance improved once the Military Reconnaissance Force (MRF) was abolished (see below). With the creation of 14 Intelligence, all prospective candidates had to go through a rigorous selection process, which – should they pass – was followed by a further six-month training course.

Equipment

Whilst adequately equipped, soldiers frequently sought to supplement their kit by purchasing decent boots that were better suited to the conditions of fighting in an urban environment, and bergens, which were more ergonomic than the standard backpack used with 58 webbing.[9]

A significant problem facing the Army in Northern Ireland at this time was its lack of non-lethal weaponry. It did have a new plastic bullet, which was supposed to be non-lethal but was in fact nearly as lethal as a standard 7.62mm round! There were numerous calls for the issuing of a new rifle, something smaller and lighter than the self-loaded rifle (SLR) and capable of firing short automatic bursts as opposed to single shots. There was also a general request for more night-vision rifle sights like to the IWS to be made available to battalions whilst on tour. These were invaluable when setting up sharp shooters to cover patrols as they moved through their area.[10]

[5] Interview with Col David Benest, by KCL
[6] Hamil, p.140
[7] 1 Kings Regiment Post Tour Report, April-August 1972
[8] 1 Queens Post Tour Report, January-May 1973
[9] Interview with Lt-Col Patrick Crowley, by KCL
[10] Post Tour Reports

Radio communications were also inadequate. The standard man-portable radio, the A41, and the C4L vehicle-mounted radio both operated on VHF, which worked only infrequently in the urban environment. Equally important, the IRA was able to listen to radio traffic over the net.[11] New UHF radios were issued to the battalions. There were, however, some technical difficulties: the UHF radios had only three channels, which limited the tactical flexibility of the commander, and the radios were small and easy to steal.[12] Moreover, the UHF system interfered with television reception which caused security problems for the Army and antagonised the local population.[13] It also seems that both the IRA and Ulster Defence Association (UDA) became quite adept at jamming Army radio signals and listening to radio communications.[14] There were also calls for the issuing of throat microphones with a whisper device for covert surveillance.[15] A more basic problem was that there were insufficient numbers of pocket phones for each battalion: the allocation in 1973 was 67 per battalion, but a minimum of 85 were needed to ensure effective communications.[16]

The telephone network was also vulnerable to bugging and it seems the IRA succeeded in bugging the Army's phones in Headquarter Land Forces (HQLF).

Some battalions used a device known as the Anson machine. The equipment gave a speedy and accurate picture of the available information on a suspect and was easily operated. Its chief benefit was that it provided a straightforward means of obtaining and cross-referencing all information that was contained in the Personality and Vehicle cards. Information was stored on a series of cards, known as Anson Coincidence Feature Cards, in which holes were punched.[17]

Personnel

By the time the 'troubles' began in the summer of 1969, the British Army was a volunteer professional force of approximately 150,000 men. In the view of one British Army Officer, the average British citizen who signed up had a fairly good idea of what to expect and so too did his family. This created a soldier mindset that accepted low-intensity conflict as an important part of what the British Army did. Because recruits were aware of the high likelihood of a messy war before joining, there was also a fairly high degree of tolerance towards casualties.[18]

The officer corps of the Army was drawn primarily from the upper middle classes and over 90% of Army officers had gone to public school before enlisting – usually at the age of 18. A few officers were university graduates, but at this stage of the Army's evolution

[11] Interview with Col Benest
[12] 2 Para Post Tour Report, March-July 1972
[13] Scots Guards Post Tour Report, July-November 1972
[14] 40 Commando Post Action Report, June October 1972
[15] 1 Queens Post Tour Report, October-January 1973
[16] 3 Anglian Post Tour Report, March-July 1973
[17] 3 Anglian Post Tour Report, 1973
[18] Interview with Lt-Col Bob Bruce, by KCL

they represented a small minority in the officer corps. In contrast, the rank and file were generally recruited from the lowest socioeconomic strata of British society, though this varied, and the technical corps tended to attract better educated candidates from working class and lower middle class families.

The infantry generally attracted the least privileged and worst educated people. The social complexion of the Army was complicated further by the dominance of the regimental system. This framework for organising units created an Army dominated by sub-cultures. Regiment recruits from a particular part of the United Kingdom and, as a result, each has a strong regional identity and culture. Obviously, the sense of identity amongst the Welsh, Scottish and Irish regiments was even stronger. This colourful variation in the identity of the regimental system exerted a subtle but important effect on the campaign. For example, a Scottish regiment recruited from Glasgow would understand the division within Northern Ireland's society and would probably have had a degree of sympathy for the Protestant community. The areas from where soldiers were recruited could also have an important effect on the degree to which a battalion networked with the wider community. Thus, soldiers recruited from rural areas tended to be generally quieter, more polite and deferential when interacting with the civilian population in Northern Ireland. In contrast, regiments like the Royal Green Jackets, which recruited in West London, were frequently perceived to be a little too cocky for the liking of the many people in the Province.[19]

Adding to the already colourful complexion of the British Army in Northern Ireland, virtually all regiments – infantry, cavalry, supply, artillery air defence, and even the RAF Regiment – served in this theatre on a regular basis. This produced a definite variation in the skill and competence of units involved, which must have had some effect on the conduct of the campaign. This policy was not universally popular and there was particular criticisms of the deployment of British Army of the Rhine (BAOR) units to Northern Ireland, as their main focus – to train and prepare for the possibility of a major conventional war in central Europe – made them less suitable for operations in Northern Ireland.[20]

In the view of one observer, the deployment of such units marked a turning point in the conflict and resulted in the British letting go of a key opportunity to defeat the IRA militarily. As he explains:

> There was a time in the early 1970s when the Provisional IRA could have been defeated militarily. That opportunity was allowed to pass and when the Army began to rotate the British Army of the Rhine regiments through Northern Ireland the battle became unwinnable. They had never served anywhere but peacetime West Germany and the only thing they understood was Army bullshit: spit, polish, forms idents, parades and unproductive training.[21]

[19] Interview with Lt-Col Crowley
[20] 1 Queens Post Tour Report, 1972
[21] Ken Conner, *Ghost Force: The Secret History of the SAS* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1998), p.199

Within this period, this comprehensive commitment of forces to Northern Ireland was driven by two pressures. The first was the pervasive need to ensure that the rotation of battalions allowed for a sufficient gap for rest, recuperation and training prior to redeployment to Northern Ireland. The second and more immediate pressure stemmed from the need to react to the escalation of the IRA bombing campaign in the summer of 1972. Faced with this violent onslaught, the government decided that it could no longer accommodate the IRA. A particular concern was the way in which the IRA was establishing itself in Catholic no-go areas in Belfast and Londonderry. Seeking to address this problem, the Heath government made the decision to commit the largest concentration of troops ever sent to Northern Ireland, approximately 30,000 troops, to support *Operation Motorman*, which aimed to smash down the barricades and bring the no-go areas back under the control of the state.[22]

According to one analyst, the clearance of the no-go areas really hurt the capabilities of the IRA and limited its options in the military realm. The no-go areas had provided the IRA with a haven in which to plan and conduct operations and rest with little fear of being arrested. These areas had also allowed to IRA to maintain a constant cycle of low-level violence, which fed the perception of a province that was out of control. *Motorman* broke up hardcore IRA operatives in Belfast and Derry forcing them into the rural areas and even into Eire. Finally, the no-go areas had also given the appearance of being mini-states, which helped legitimise the IRA as a shadow government. [23]

An important aspect of British counterinsurgency in the past has been the significant effort made to create auxiliary forces to support the British Army. Northern Ireland was no exception and almost from the start, the Wilson government made a commitment to raise a locally recruited, mainly part-time force of soldiers to support the regular Army. To this end the Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR) was created in January 1970. Initially seven battalions were raised, but the size of the force was increased by a further four battalions in January 1972.

Information

The biggest problem confronting the Army in 1972 was a lack of intelligence on the IRA. RUC Special Branch had been discredited during the period of Internment and the RUC was in state of demoralisation and disorganisation.[24] In an effort to address the lack of intelligence, Brigadier Frank Kitson, commander 39 Infantry Brigade, implemented an array of measures designed to create a comprehensive intelligence picture of the IRA using only the resources of the Army. However, it is important to note that these measures were not fully implemented until 1975.

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[22] Hamil, p.147
[23] M. R. L. Smith, *Fighting For Ireland: The Military Strategy of the Irish Republican Movement* (London: Routledge, 1995), p.145
[24] Coldstream Guards Post Action Report, April-August 1973

In the first instance, soldiers played the key role of acting as the Army's 'sensors'. To this end, foot patrols were instructed to gather information about the community in which they were operating. Members of the public were now stopped routinely and questioned. Vehicle checks and house searches also became key activities in the Army's endeavour to create an information picture of the IRA. This mode of operation was firmly established in Belfast and Londonderry with the clearance of the barricades and re-establishment of government control of Catholic no-go areas in July 1972 (*Operation Motorman*). Once the barriers were removed, the Army began a detailed survey of the population to create what was described as a 'Doomsday' book. The aim of this exercise was to determine the pattern of day-to-day life in the Province and identify any changes in these patterns. Even trivial details like an increase in the quantity of milk ordered by a household from the local milkman might cause Army intelligence to focus their attention on that household. Kitson made it clear to all company commanders that they had to achieve a real understanding of the terrorist and the local population in their area and identify and destroy the terrorist structure. As a result, foot patrols provided a vital source of information, which was then recorded on file. Apparently each unit built up its card file, keeping track on all males in their area over the age of 12. The 'Kitson strategy' resulted in the Army taking on a more prominent role in the Province. Thus, the Army searched 17,000 homes in 1971, 36,000 houses in 1972 and a staggering 75,000 in 1973. Over four million cars were also searched in 1973-74.[25]

Kitson also encouraged an investment in covert surveillance and created the Military Reconnaissance Force (MRF) to watch and monitor suspected IRA terrorists. These units were composed of soldiers recruited from ordinary infantry battalions serving in Northern Ireland. As such, the quality and conduct of the MRFs varied considerably within the brigade's area of operations. In line with previous campaigns, Kitson also endeavoured to penetrate the IRA by persuading its members to desert. Such individuals provided intelligence and also joined 'pseudogangs', which had been used to good effect in Malaya, Kenya and Dhofar. In the case of Northern Ireland, these individuals were called 'Freds', were commanded by an Army captain and resided in an Army barracks at Lisburn.

It is important to note that the role and activity of 'Freds' in Northern Ireland remain unclear and controversial. However, it seems that the Freds moved around with the MRF and helped identify members of the IRA. The MRF itself became involved in a variety of controversial shooting incidents and rather exotic surveillance operations, which involved the use of a massage parlour and the creation of the Four Square Laundry Service, which were in the end compromised by a Fred who turned against the security forces and rejoined the IRA.[26]

It appears that the Army requested the deployment of the SAS in the early 1970s to support the Army's surveillance operations. However, the government feared that this would bring about significant escalation in the conflict and so the request was denied. It

[25] Thomas Mockaitis, *British Counterinsurgency in the Post Imperial Era* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1995), p.110
[26] Peter Taylor, *The Brits: The War Against the IRA* (London: Bloomsbury, 2002), p.132

was not until 1976 that formal units of the SAS began operating in the Province. Less clear is the role that individual SAS members played in training members of the MRF in Northern Ireland and it is argued that small teams of the SAS were definitely present before 1976.

The need to store and update the information gained from surveillance resulted in the creation of a bureaucratic and inefficient system of filing, which must have limited the usefulness of this facility or at least slowed the passage of information. As one battalion report explained:

> Currently there are 2 methods of keeping records, P cards and P files. Having 2 methods means duplication of work, usually to the detriment of one or the other. The P files tend to be amorphous masses of paper, with no specified layout for index, folio numbers or running traces. We have spent a disproportionate time bringing both systems up to date.[27]

The British Army also began using computers to good effect in their prosecution of the war. A computer database, 'Vengeful', was created to store the details of all cars in the Province. The Army also began compiling a computer database holding information on the Province's population, such as their names, descriptions, work places, criminal records, details of trials and political activity since 1969. Computers also played an important role in identifying the movement of IRA bombs in the Province. For obvious reasons, the IRA preferred to make their bombs in Eire before moving them across the border to their targets in Northern Ireland. Because of heavy traffic flows from Eire to the Province along the main routes, the Army realised that it would be impossible to check every vehicle physically. Instead, the Army relied on the use of terminals at each vehicle checkpoint (VCP), which were all linked to a central computer, to process the details of cars crossing the border on a particular road. If any of these vehicles travelled to Belfast, they would be identified as originating in Eire at another VCP near Belfast (itself linked to the computer) and would then be stopped and searched.

Computers really came into use after 1975. At this point, the computer system was linked to the operations rooms of the brigade headquarters and to control sections in each battalion. The battalions all had access to Visual Display Units (VDUs), equipped with transmitters and receivers, which created a secure form of communication. The military computer system also tapped into the computer systems used by the Northern Ireland Health Service.

Doctrine and Concepts

There is some controversy over the extent to which the main tenets of counterinsurgency doctrine were applied to Northern Ireland and over the importance of doctrine in containing and neutralising the IRA. According to some, the failure of Army in the early

[27] 3 Light Infantry Post Action Report, April-August 1975

years of the conflict was caused in part by its inability to apply its own doctrine.[28] In contrast, others argue that the early failures of Army were caused precisely because it was attempting to apply colonial COIN doctrine to the conflict.[29] Yet another school of thought has argued that in the post-1976 period, the Army and the government completely abandoned counterinsurgency in favour of what has been termed an internal security strategy, which drew heavily on German, Italian and Spanish experience in dealing with local terrorist groups within their own states.[30] What influence then did doctrine play in this conflict and how was it used as an enabler in the information war?

It is important to note that it was not until 1977 that the British Army articulated a formal written doctrine on counter-revolutionary warfare. This doctrine provided the intellectual and practical tools needed to fight terrorism during the troubles in the 1980s and 1990s. However, as David Benest explains, even if the main tenets of British counterinsurgency were not documented in a formal and explicit way, the basic tenets of that doctrine were effectively in place at the start of the conflict. The Army was familiar and well-versed with texts such as Charles Calwall's *Small Wars* of 1896, Charles Gwynn's *Imperial Policing* of 1934, Sir Robert Thompson's *Defeating Communist Insurgency*, written in 1966, Julian Paget's *Counter Insurgency Campaigning*, published in 1967 and Frank Kitson's *Low Intensity Operations*.

The collective thoughts of these 'theorists' formed the following tenets of counterinsurgency: the articulation of a clear political aim, the Army should operate within the law, and the grand strategic plan had to embrace all government agencies. In addition, there was a wealth of experience and knowledge of recent colonial operations within the officer corps, but more importantly, amongst the Army's NCOs. This last group represented the institutional memory of the battalion because they usually served their full term of service within their regiments.[31] Consequently, there was at least a common set of procedures that formed an informal or implied doctrine within the Army at this time.

The traditional or orthodox view of British counterinsurgency tells us that one of the key enablers used by the Army to obtain information was the application of a 'hearts and minds' strategy. Almost as important is the recognition and understanding that such conflicts have no military solution and that the centre of gravity lies in the political, economic and social domain.[32] An effective counterinsurgency campaign will seek to link these two areas and hence remove the motive for rebelling against the state. However, the experience of the British Army in the 1972-76 period forces a reassessment of this rather simplistic perception.

[28] See for example Mockaitis, pp.96-141
[29] Interview with Col Benest
[30] See John Newsinger, *British Counterinsurgency: From Palestine to Northern Ireland* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002)
[31] Interview with Lt-Col Bruce
[32] Mockaitis, p.113

According to David Benest, the view of 'hearts and minds' as the key strategic winner in British counterinsurgency is actually based more on myth than reality. He asks the question: what evidence is there to demonstrate that these measures actually worked in previous campaigns? Based on an examination of colonial campaigns, it is his view that with the possible exception of Malaya, there is little evidence that such policies won many converts amongst the targeted population. This was entirely understandable because of the range of punitive actions used by the military to control the people undermined the effect of a 'hearts and minds' campaign. In essence, in many examples of British counterinsurgency 'coercion was the reality – "hearts and minds" the myth'.[33]

This might explain why, during the period of Army primacy (1971-76), there appears to have been only the minimum effort invested in promoting hearts and minds. In crude terms one could argue that during the early years of conflict, the Army was entirely aware of its history in counterinsurgency and sought to apply those lessons against the IRA. However, those lessons did not really address what are normally perceived to be the more subtle and sophisticated aspects of British counterinsurgency, i.e. hearts and minds and the generation of political and economic lines of development. Or it may be the case that the Army – facing an escalating crisis – focused its initial energies on stabilising the situation in the Province and creating the secure conditions needed to promote a more benign environment.

However, this last option does not provide an entirely convincing explanation. The first point that needs to be made is that the application of the British principles of counterinsurgency were not viewed as a sequential programme, but were to be implemented in parallel and simultaneously.[34] The second and more compelling point focuses on the strategy adopted by the Army to deal with the terrorists in the 1971-76 period. As has already been said, the 'Kitson strategy' envisaged the creation of a massive system of surveillance that was tantamount to the creation of an 'Orwellian' state. The realisation of this strategy did not rely on a hearts and minds programme, but on the introduction of new equipment, such as computer databases, the creation of new forms of organisations, for example the MRF, and new processes and operating procedures that shaped the activities of Army battalions deployed in the Province. What is significant is the absence of any direct hearts and minds policy.

Newsinger also believes that the Army failed to introduce an effective hearts and minds programme and argues that this was a strategic error. The nationalist uprising resulted in the breakdown of law and order and local government in the Catholic areas of the Province. As a result, the Army was forced to assume responsibility for the day-to-day running of the community. However, there seems to have been a general reluctance for the Army to become too closely involved in the governance of local authorities and, as a result, the Catholic population became responsible for governing themselves.[35]

[33] Col David Benest draft paper 'Aden to Northern Ireland', p.118-119
[34] Discussion with Dr John Pimlott, Head of War Studies Department, Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, July 1996.
[35] Newsinger, p.168

The failure to build a government infrastructure was acknowledged by a battalion commander serving in Northern Ireland in 1972:

> We formed the lowest opinion of the working of the civil government and the corporation in both sections of our area. Action was slow when it came and there seemed to be a total absence of any authority which could be shown as an alternative to the babel of street committees, Sinn Fein groups or both varieties, CESA and UDA pressure groups, to say nothing of the IRA and UVF. The reluctant alternative increasingly becomes the Army, which cannot be good for either side.[36]

Newsinger also notes that the implementation of Kitson's strategy served to undermine whatever hearts and minds policy was in operation in the Province at this time. It is clear that, even if the Army was not directly involved in the development of a political and economic line of development, it was nevertheless being implemented by other agencies and that successive governments made a conscious effort to provide better housing, employment and legislation to prevent discrimination against Catholics in the Province.[37]

Using soldiers to harvest information reinforced the sense of oppression in the community and this served to antagonise the Catholic population; in the 1974-75 period, the Army conducted over 75,000 searches of homes and stopped and searched over four million cars.[38] This problem was compounded by the Army's efforts to create its own surveillance system via the MRF and 'Freds'. Both groups came to be shrouded in controversy because of the MRF's involvement in a series of shooting incidents in which innocent civilians were either killed or hurt.[39] More worrying from the perspective of the British were accusations that the MRF was used in a shoot-to-kill policy against innocent Catholics, which entailed employing Protestant paramilitary groups to conduct random killings. Whilst there is no evidence to support the argument that the British Army sanctioned a policy of murder, these rumours appeared to explain the rise in Protestant violence in 1972 and seemed entirely believable from the perspective of the besieged Catholic population.[40]

However, I think the views of Benest and Newsinger are overstated. The available evidence suggests that the regiments that served in Northern Ireland during this time clearly believed in the promotion of an effective hearts and minds policy and invested significant resources and time to promote better relations between the Army and the local community. This is demonstrated by the comments made by battalion commanders in their post action reports:

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[36] 40 Commando Post Action Report, June-Oct 1972
[37] Mockaitis, p.113
[38] Singer, p.169
[39] Taylor, p.130
[40] Roger Faligot, *Britain's Military Strategy in Ireland: The Kitson Experiment* (London: Zed Press, 1983), p.39

> I believe that this aspect (community relations) is very important and should be co-ordinated by a suitably senior officer. I attribute a lot of our success to the effort we put in making contact with the local community leaders.[41]
>
> The most important CR/PR (community relations/ public relations) operation was carried out by the Officers, NCOs and Marines themselves in the streets. This included helping on local committees and talking to leading citizens in the area, NCOs answering queries and complaints, and Marines talking to the locals, particularly the older people and children and winning their confidence. Much good will was also won after Bloody Friday and other bomb outrages … The IRA found that the hard military line combined with this humane psychological approach difficult to counter.[42]
>
> It was essential to have a field officer in the appointment of Community Relations Officer. This officer played a vital part in the battalion's secondary, but nevertheless very important, task of maintaining close links with the local population. He was in continual contact with representatives of the new Assembly, the newly elected Londonderry Council and other representatives of the people. By providing accurate and up to-date information he did much to dispel rumour. The CRO is a very useful barometer for local feeling.[43]

In the case of 40 Commando, they organised the following activities in an effort to win the support of the local population: trips to the UK for schoolchildren; a week of camping for local children; weekend camps for local children; day bus trips for children and pensioners; and trips to the swimming pool and parks in Belfast using service vehicles.[44]

Such comments are illuminating because they demonstrate that the default setting of British Army battalions serving in Northern Ireland was to establish links with the community. It is interesting that every battalion report surveyed for this period referred to some kind of hearts and minds policy being implemented at the battalion and company level. But where does the inspiration for such action come from? Is it a product of historical legacy stemming from a long involvement in imperial policing and counterinsurgency or is it a product of the social and political culture of Britain, which has fed into and helped create a distinct military/strategic culture that is conducive to the effective conduct of low-intensity conflict operations?

Furthermore, no account is taken of the contacts established between the battalion intelligence cell and informers. Although the success achieved in this area varied considerably, some of these contacts seem to have been fruitful. For example, a single battalion deployed in Belfast in 1974 had over 94 informers working for it. Over half of these contacts had close involvement with or were in paramilitary organisations.[45]

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[41] Scots Guards Post Tour Report, July-November 1972
[42] 40 Commando Post Tour Report, June- October 1972
[43] 3 Anglian Post Tour Report, 1973
[44] 40 Commando Post Tour Report, June- October 1972
[45] 3 Royal Green Jackets Post Tour Report, July-November 1974

Finally, it is clear that units which were conducting extensive and sometimes intrusive surveillance operations were aware of and tried to mitigate the adverse effects of this activity on the local population. This was one of the principal reasons why covert observations points were set up.[46]

It is also important not to exaggerate the effect of hearts and minds activities on the campaign. It did not result in overt support for the Army or greater legitimacy for the role of the British state in Northern Ireland. However, information was sometimes forthcoming from members of the local community, who would for example warn soldiers of a possible IRA ambush. Such information saved lives. Moreover, it did help limit the recruitment pool available to the IRA. In a survey carried out in 1980, approximately 60% of IRA recruits joined the movement because of a bad personal experience with the security forces.[47]

Organisation

The British Army employed a traditional military structure and organisation in Northern Ireland. HQ NI initially had two brigades, each with three or more battalions attached to it. There was an important difference between the resident battalions, which were in the Province for two years or more, and the roulement battalions, who were doing short tours of between four to six months. Resident battalions usually moved with their families and were therefore deployed to the quieter areas of the Province. They enjoyed better living conditions and were entitled to more leave. In 1969, there were two resident battalions but by the late 1970s the number had increased to six, which equalled the number of battalions on six-month tours. It is unclear whether the length of the tours affected the relative performance of the forces deployed, but there is some evidence that it did.

In February 1972, a third brigade headquarters was deployed to Northern Ireland. This was part of a general reinforcement of the Province. The new brigade was responsible for the security of the border and towns around the environs of Belfast and was based at Lurgan.

Battalions went through a process of reorganisation before deploying to Northern Ireland:

- Heavy weapons were left in the UK
- Platoons of 30 soldiers were broken up and restructured into multiples of 12 men, which were further divided into three bricks of four.
- The intelligence capability within each battalion was expanded significantly.
- An Intelligence NCO on a two-year deployment to the Province was usually attached to the battalion when first deployed to ensure continuity.

[46] 3 Light Infantry Post Tour Report, April-August 1974
[47] Mockaitis, p.115

- By 1974, approximately 80 soldiers were allocated to the battalion intelligence cell.[48]

The most important organisational change that took place in this time period was the implementation of direct rule. This decision resulted in the creation of the Northern Ireland Office, the import of a mass of British civil servants, an expansion of MI5 and the elimination of a divided command structure.

The period also saw a notable tactical shift from platoon- and company-sized operations to the four-man brick as the basic tactical unit.

In operational terms, the campaign was coordinated by a series of committees similar to those employed in Malaya. As in the case of Malaya, this organisation was designed to ensure that intelligence was disseminated as fast as possible and that security, political, economic and military lines of development were coordinated effectively.

The committee system used in Northern Ireland was not as effective as its predecessor. Its failings were attributed to the absence of a Director of Operations, the Army's generally poor relationship with the RUC and the lack of political representation at the lower levels of the committee structure.

Organisational effectiveness was also undermined by the use of different boundaries by the Army, the police and the civil authorities:

> All boundaries affect operations. In Belfast there are many; military, RUC, parish, etc. The urban terrorist like most enemies exploits boundaries. He does this by operating on, near or across them, hoping to exploit either indecision or lack of cooperation by commanders, own forced firing at each other or drawing one force towards a boundary and then ambushing it.[49]

Both M15 and MI6 had agents operating in Northern Ireland. In 1972, the position of Director Controller of Intelligence was created in an attempt to coordinate the intelligence services' activities. As well as combining the different services, the post was also designed to provide the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland with access to the latest information on the most recent developments in the Province. However, these actions were mere palliatives and failed to address the fundamental need for a central organisation to direct and coordinate the intelligence effort.[50]

In the absence of an effective intelligence capability or agency, the Army began developing its own covert surveillance units to monitor the IRA. The two notable developments on this front were the creation of the MRF and the pseudogangs. The members of the MRF were recruited from within the Army and conducted covert

[48] 3 Para Post Tour Report, February-June 1974
[49] 40 Commando Post Action Report, 1975
[50] See David Charters, 'Intelligence and Psychological Warfare Operations in Northern Ireland', *RUSI Journal*, 122, 3, September 1977

surveillance operations against the IRA. Their most notable success was the operation of the Four Square Laundry Service and the running of the Gemini massage parlour. The MRF relied on information provided by informers, the majority of whom were to be found in the pseudogangs. The pseudogangs consisted of former IRA men who had been 'turned' by a variety of means. Their most important function was in helping military intelligence build up an order of battle (orbat) of the IRA. They also moved around with Army units helping them identify IRA suspects.[51]

One of the most significant changes made by the Army was the creation of a new surveillance organisation called '14 intelligence Company'. The primary function of this unit was to watch the IRA and their Protestant counterparts. Recruitment began in 1973 and members from all the services were eligible to join. However, the selection process was extremely thorough; of the initial batch of 300 volunteer candidates in 1973, only 17 passed to go on to the six-month training course.[52]

The strength of the RUC increased from 3,500 personnel in 1971 to over 6,500 in the mid-1970s. Police stations were grouped into 16 divisions that corresponded roughly with Army battalions. A number of these divisions were then grouped into one of the three regions: Belfast, South and North. Each region was commanded by an assistant constable with the same authority as a brigadier. The three assistant constables reported to the chief constable in police headquarters, Knock, East Belfast.[53]

Infrastructure

There is nothing on this subject in the literature for this phase.

Logistics

A survey of battalion post-action reports indicates that all regiments were satisfied with the logistical support they received whilst serving in Northern Ireland. The only regular complaint concerned the poor provision for clothing, which tended to wear out very quickly whilst on operations.[54]

Information and Networked Flow of Material Awareness

In general, the flow of information went up a vertical stovepipe. Units on the ground had no sense of how significant this information was or how it was used by the intelligence

[51] See Faligot, pp.1-39
[52] Taylor, p.151
[53] Mark Urban, *Big Boys' Rules: The SAS and the Secret Struggle Against the* IRA (London: Faber & Faber, 1992), p.17
[54] Post-Tour Reports

services. Although frustrating, there was a general acceptance that information had to be passed on a need-to-know basis.[55]

It is important to note that information flows were affected by the wider political situation in Northern Ireland. In an effort to secure a settlement, the government agreed to a ceasefire between 1975 and 1976. Whilst this provided time and space for negotiations, the military found this period very restrictive in terms of its intelligence-gathering operations.

The normal intelligence-gathering system was severely hampered by the ceasefire restrictions. The cessation of screening was the most significant limiting factor, which not only reduced the acquisition of low-level intelligence but also denied the option of arresting potential sources. Before the ceasefire, over 50% of the unit's resources were interviewed in this manner. The restrictions also complicated the gathering of intelligence detail and source meetings.[56]

Perceptions of Quality of Information and Networking (Measures of Information Position)

The committee system that was been used to such good effect in the Malayan campaign was recreated in Northern Ireland. As such, it should have resulted in the rapid processing and dissemination of intelligence. However, the system did not work that well. Part of the problem was that the top level security meeting, which was attended by the General Officer Commanding (GOC), the Chief Constable and the Secretary of State was too big a venue in which to discuss the campaign; there were simply too many people involved.[57]

The Army-RUC relation relates directly to the nature of information flows and networking. In the early days of the conflict, the Army assumed the lead role for security; the RUC was at this time demoralised, partly by the termination of the B Specials and also by the Special Branch's failure during the period of internment. However, a combination of factors served to undermine this asymmetrical relationship and, with time, the RUC became more assertive, more demanding and at times more suspicious of the Army. As a result, organisational linkages and the effectiveness of these connections varied enormously from area to area. The personality of local Army officers and their RUC counterparts seems to have been most important factor determining if and how information was received.[58]

It is also important to note that there was a considerable degree of compartmentalisation and friction within the RUC itself. The Army encountered a situation in which Special Branch, Criminal Investigation Division (CID) and uniformed RUC did not communicate

[55] Interviews with Col Benest and Lt-Col Bruce
[56] 40 Commando Post Tour Report, February-June 1975
[57] Hamil, p.160
[58] Interview with Col Benest

or share information with one another. In one case, the Army battalion commander had to organise weekly meetings to ensure all elements of the RUC met and discussed matters relating to intelligence.[59] As one battalion commander explained:

> What is not apparent until one grapples with it on the ground is the patchy nature of the intelligence organisation available to the security forces in Northern Ireland. The military part is well constructed and directed at all levels but the same cannot be said for the all part of the Special Branch, which varies greatly in its quality, its interpretation of the aim of operations, and in some ways its understanding of the related roles of itself and the Army in fulfilling the aim.[60]

This contrast between the Army's capabilities and those of Special Branch were echoed by another battalion commander:

> In contrast the Army's own intelligence system seemed to be in a good state:
> We inherited a good intelligence organisation from our predecessors. At unit level this included orbats, personality files, street registers and subject files on subversive organisation and tactics. … These records were updated and improved throughout the tour.
>
> With the closure of PHCs (police holding cells), little intelligence was forthcoming from Special Branch, therefore we had to rely on intelligence gained on the streets. We formed Int Patrols of a SNCO and four men in each company areas. These patrolled the streets 12-14 hours a day in the early stages of the tour and soon became experts on the local geography and personalities. They briefed the patrol commanders and made the majority of arrests in their Coy areas. They compiled a detailed street census of all Catholic areas. These patrols provided the majority of our contact intelligence throughout the tour. [61]

There was some variation in this experience and one battalion, on an 18-month tour in Northern Ireland, concluded that of the four sources of intelligence available (Special Branch, the UDR, patrols, military sources), Special Branch provided the highest grade of intelligence. The key difference between this verdict and the experience of other battalions may relate to the closer cooperation with the police enabled by the longer duration of the battalion's deployment.[62]

A conscious effort was made to improve the Army's understanding of the IRA. To this end, NITAT employed a MoD scientific officer to debrief and interview soldiers regarding the information obtained while serving in Northern Ireland. This information would then be used to create a picture of the IRA to be used to inform training, tactics and strategy. The report provided a profile of the socio-economic status of the IRA terrorist, his daily routine, and their preferred mode of operation. In addition, the report

[59] 3 Para Post Action Report, 1974
[60] Queens Lancashire Regiment Post Action Report, December 1971-March 1972
[61] 40 Commando Post Action Report, 1975
[62] Duke of Wellington's Regiment Post Tour Report, May 1972-October 1973

explained how the IRA was organised and set out the main pillars of its strategic plan. A second report was prepared, which looked in detail at the attitudes of the Protestant and Catholic communities in Northern Ireland. This report was to help the soldiers gain a better insight and understanding of the levels of fears and anxieties dividing the two communities and the role played by the Army in exacerbating these concerns.[63]

Certain internal weaknesses in the Army's handling of intelligence were also identified and this impacted on the exploitation of information. One regiment identified the following weaknesses in intelligence organisation: poor training in file management of intelligence records, the need for military intelligence officers (MIOs), they saw a Special Branch officer once every two days, the need for more FINCOs and a more efficient system of intelligence banking and processing at HQ NI and or Brigade level.[64] Another battalion found that records were not up to date and that a lot of time and effort was therefore invested in reorganising paperwork.

Measures of Operational Success/Failure in relation to Information/Networking (Measures of Decision Superiority)

Although it is possible to question the claim that the Army had effectively won the war by 1975, there is no doubt that the situation in the Province began to improve after 1972. The most obvious indicator of this was the marked fall in casualties caused by terrorist attacks. In 1973, the number of people killed was half that of the preceding year.[65]

The Army's actions also had a significant impact on the capability of the IRA. By the time of the ceasefire in 1975, the Army had removed six IRA brigade headquarters.[66]

As Bishop and Mallie explain, greater success in identifying and arresting IRA members resulted in the IRA hiding its most important people and effectively taking them off the streets. Gerry Adams, as the Belfast Brigade Commander, returned from talks in London to lead a secret life that entailed a succession of moves to keep him safe. He was eventually captured in 1973 and was succeeded by Ivor Bell, who survived until 1974 before being arrested. He in turn was succeeded by Seamus Convery, who lasted a few weeks before also being arrested. His successor, Brendan Hughes, lasted only two months before being captured in May. This loss of leaders had a profound effect on the IRA. Although more volunteers were found, those who stepped in to replace men lost were not always as motivated and joined the movement because of family pressure and a sense of duty. The IRA was also forced to select from a wider and more heterogeneous base, which had a negative impact on the cohesion of the organisation.[67]

[63] Hamil, p.122-126
[64] Coldstream Guards Post Tour Report, April- August 1973
[65] See Appendix 1
[66] Hamil, p.151
[67] Eamonn Mallie & Patrick Bishop, *The Provisional IRA* (London: Corgi Books, 1987), p.242

British intelligence also experienced significant successes in this phase of the conflict. In March 1973, they warned the Irish Navy to stop and search a Libyan cargo ship, the *Claudia*, because they suspected that it was carrying arms supplies from Libya. The Irish Navy seized four tons of Libyan arms, including 250 assault rifles, 500 grenades and 100 anti-tank mines, and arrested six prominent members of the IRA. Apparently the ship was monitored by air by RAF *Nimrod* reconnaissance aircraft and by Royal Navy submarines.[68]

The IRA also had their successes. In 1972, a member of the pseudogang confessed to the IRA that he had been working for the British – his intelligence compromised the MRF's use of the Four Square Laundry and the Gemini massage parlour. The IRA also gained detailed intelligence on how the MRF used these businesses as front to hide their covert surveillance. On 2 October 1972, the IRA launched simultaneous attacks against the Four Square Laundry van and the Gemini massage parlour. One soldier died in the ambush on the van; the surveillance unit in the massage parlour was more fortunate and was able to escape when one of the IRA gunmen involved in the attack dropped his weapon, causing it to discharge. Both the MRF and the Freds were disbanded soon after this incident.

A second success against the British took place in 1973. Brendan Hughes, the Belfast Brigade Commander, set up a technical section within the IRA. One of the first actions of this unit was to bug the telephone of the Intelligence desk in the Army's main headquarters in Lisburn. They also managed to procure a descrambler so that it was possible to understand the tape recordings. This operation went on for several months, until the capture of Brendan Hughes by the RUC Special Branch accidentally unearthed a stockpile of tape recordings of the G2 Intelligence section's phone calls.[69]

Evaluation of the Information and Networking Contribution to the Outcomes of the Operation (Measures of Campaign Effectiveness)

If we assume that there is a British way of war in counterinsurgency, one of its distinguishing characteristics lies in the British Army's acquisition and exploitation of information to identify and neutralise the insurgent or terrorist. In this period, the Army's traditional approach to the acquisition and exploitation of information was limited by what had happened in the previous three years, i.e. internment and Bloody Sunday, which alienated the Catholic community; the fact that the Army operated under the authority of the Stormont government, which was not a comfortable relationship for the Army; and the failure of the RUC or indeed other security agencies like MI5 to provide useful intelligence on the threat. In essence, in 1972, the British Army was virtually operating in an information vacuum. Under these circumstances, Kitson's strategy provided a framework around which to organise the Army's resources and set out clear objectives, which allowed the Army to focus its activities.

[68] Tony Geraghty, *The Irish War: A Military History of a Domestic Conflict* (London: Harper Collins, 1998), p.181
[69] Taylor, p.30

The most important of these actions was definitely the acquisition of intelligence and it is clear that the Army had by 1975 achieved a great deal of success on this front. It had effectively penetrated the IRA and, by 1974, most of its key leaders were either in prison or on the run. This achievement was made possible through the Army's efforts to generate a vast amount of data on the activities in its area of operations, the creation of new covert forms of surveillance and the development of information systems and computers, which allowed vast quantities of data to be stored and processed at an unprecedented rate. The creation of this extensive surveillance network denied the IRA the freedom of action to which it had grown accustomed and which had previously enabled it to organise attacks against the security services and the wider population.

Less apparent in this phase was evidence of the traditional hearts and minds policy, which had been used in previous campaigns to allow the Army to network within the wider community. Obviously, in the case of Northern Ireland, overt surveillance sometimes complicated this effort, but it is clear that battalions operating in the Province at this time did not see these activities as mutually exclusive and tried to conduct both simultaneously. Although this activity did not provide significant dividends in terms of gaining information or winning the unconditional support of the community, it did help to contain the spread of disaffection within the Catholic community and hence contain the conflict. Moreover, it also reinforced the government's implementation of its own macro-economic hearts and minds programme within the Province.

The political-economic and military lines of development seemed to come into conflict over the degree to which surveillance and military action should be limited or even stopped to allow for the possibility of a political settlement. During this period, both the Heath and Wilson governments saw an opportunity to find a political solution to the troubles and this had a profound impact on the conduct of Army's operations during the 1972-75 period. There is some evidence that a large element within the Army opposed these efforts because it prevented them from doing their job, which was to destroy the IRA. According to Benest by 1974: 'amongst the military the belief that PIRA was finished was commonly expressed'.[70]

Smith also believes that the IRA was in trouble by 1974 and that this had motivated their acceptance of the ceasefire. Why did they agree to a ceasefire? In part, the decision was based on a desire to redeem itself in the eyes of the Catholic community after the horrors of the Birmingham bombing. The IRA also saw the ceasefire as a way of generating time and space. It was very clear that the group's military campaign was losing momentum: in 1973, 79 members of the security forces had been killed compared to 50 in 1974; the number of shootings in the same period also fell from 5,018 to 3,306 and bombings from 978 to 685. Finally, there were those in the IRA who were genuinely interested in negotiating a political settlement and wanted to know what the government was prepared to offer.[71] Under the favourable terms and conditions of the ceasefire, the Army was forced to watch as the IRA became stronger – not only did military pressure subside, but the end of internment also meant that all IRA prisoners were released.

[70] Col Benest, unpublished paper p.137
[71] Smith, p.129

It is clear that the Army was divided on the merits of this approach: some felt obliged to support the ceasefire, others regarded it as a cynical IRA ploy to 'get well'.[72] However, in spite of these differences, the long established traditions and culture of the British Army ensured that they did not challenge the government's policies either overtly or covertly, even though they regarded them as naïve and as undermining the Army's achievements.

It is worth reiterating the point that the success achieved by the Army in this phase was not simply due to the imposition of a hard and rather blunt strategy designed to meet the specific military conditions in Northern Ireland. The implication of this statement is that there is little evidence of a template being applied by the British in this campaign and hence no real evidence of a British way of war in low-intensity operations.

Scrutiny of what battalions were doing on the ground suggests that the Army endeavoured to work with the civil authorities and the community as a way of generating information. In essence the orthodox template of British counterinsurgency was alive and well in Northern Ireland at this time and the wider social networking undertaken by many of the battalions played a role in shaping the conflict. However, the significance of this action only became apparent in subsequent years.

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Case Study 4 – Northern Ireland (1976-1994): Police Primacy - Dr Warren Chin

Historical Sketch of Operation

Historical Sketch

The ceasefire of 1975-76 was used by Merlyn Rees, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1974-76), as a breathing space to create a dramatic shift in policy in Northern Ireland, one that apparently moved away from a traditional counterinsurgency strategy to an internal security policy.[1] This was to become informally known as 'Ulsterisation'. This concept was the product of a set of recommendations made by a Northern Ireland Office Study: *The Way Ahead*, which was set up in 1975 by Rees and his Permanent Under-Secretary, Frank Cooper.[2] However the concept was to come to fruition under the Roy Mason, who moved from the Ministry of Defence (MoD) to become the new Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in September 1976.

This new policy rested on two pillars: police primacy and the criminalisation of all terrorist acts. The profile of the Army was reduced because it was recognised that it was exacerbating state-community relations in the Province. Apparently, it was also believed that a traditional counterinsurgency campaign could not, for political reasons, be employed properly in the context of Northern Ireland. The Province was an integral part of the United Kingdom rather than some far away colony and it was deemed unacceptable to use some of the more direct and coercive elements of this approach against your own people. The impact of the media and organisations like Amnesty International also made it necessary to sanitise the ongoing war in the Province.[3]

It was now hoped that the police and the judicial process would contain the IRA and other paramilitaries. It is interesting that Rees did not think in terms of winning the war; in his view, there was no silver bullet on the horizon. The early implementation of Ulsterisation was, however, affected by the continuing sectarian violence between Catholic and Protestant paramilitary groups in the Province. A number of particularly brutal tit-for-tat killings between Catholics and Protestants in Armagh in January 1976 resulted in a public outcry and a demand that the government intervene. In response to this criticism, the government took the extremely unusual step of publicly announcing the formal deployment of the Special Air Service (SAS) to Armagh. This decision seemed to further militarise the conflict at a time when the government was emphasising the need for police primacy and a semblance of normality in the Province.

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[1] Peter Newsinger, *British Counterinsurgency: From Palestine to Northern* Ireland (London: Palgrave, 2002), p.179
[2] Merlyn Rees, *Northern Ireland: a personal perspective* (London: Metheun, 1985), p.277
[3] Newsinger, p.180

The reorganised Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) was now under the command of Kenneth Newman, a former member of the Palestine police force. Under the provisions of police primacy, Newman was to preside over the expansion and reorganisation of the RUC so that it could assume control of the war against terrorism in Northern Ireland. This process of police reform coincided with improvements in the Army's training, organisation and equipment. Together, these reforms gradually robbed the IRA of the initiative and forced it to focus increasingly on self-preservation. One of the most important outcomes of this increased pressure was the decision, made by the IRA leadership in 1977, to dispense with its overt military structure, featuring brigades, battalions and companies, in favour of the Leninist model of revolution, which emphasised the importance of security through the creation of the cell system.[4]

The policy of Ulsterisation was threatened by the IRA's actions in 1979. The murders of Lord Mountbatten and of Airey Neave, a close friend of Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, and the ambush at Warren Point, which resulted in the deaths of 18 soldiers from the Parachute Regiment,[5] produced enormous pressure from the Army to end police primacy and return to Army control. The government did not share the Army's profound lack of confidence in the RUC and instead responded to these attacks by expanding the size of the RUC by a further 1,000 police officers. The government also appointed a Director of Intelligence to review the existing intelligence setup in Northern Ireland and identify how the interface between the Army and the RUC could be improved.

For the next two years, the Northern Ireland conflict remained in the political background, which, according to one civil servant, is where all British governments aimed to keep it. By now, there was no political will in government to address the problems of the Province and actually no clear idea of how these issues might begin to be solved. In essence, the nature of the British political system and the fickleness of the electoral cycle produced a system of government that found it difficult to grapple with complex policy problems posed by Northern Ireland.[6]

However, the Hunger Strikes (1980-81) forced the Thatcher government once more to take notice of what was happening in the Province. Ironically, the cause of this action was the policy of Ulsterisation and, in particular, the policy of criminalisation, which denied all terrorists special category status in prison from March 1976. The implication of this new legislation was that all terrorists convicted after March 1976 were convicts rather than political prisoners. Almost immediately, this legislation resulted in IRA prisoners protesting at the denial of their rights as prisoners of war. A variety of different measures were taken to draw attention to their plight but to no avail. Finally, frustrated at the failure of their previous efforts to pressure the government, IRA prisoners began a hunger strike in the Maze Prison.

The Hunger Strikes touched the hearts and political consciousness of all Irish Catholics, both in Northern Ireland and across the border. This manifested itself in renewed rioting

[4] See Bard O'Neill, *Insurgency and Terrorism* (Washington DC: Brassey's, 1990)
[5] This was the greatest single loss of life suffered by the regiment since the end of the Second World War.
[6] See Hennessy, *Cabinet* (London: Pengiun, 1982)

each time a hunger striker died and an upsurge of support for the political wing of the IRA: Sinn Fein. Seeking to exploit this political success, Sinn Fein entered into electoral politics in 1982. Their initial success in the political domain and their marginalisation of the more moderate Catholic Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) indicated that the Hunger Strikes were radicalising even the middle ground of the Catholic community.

It was partly in response to Sinn Fein's political fortunes at the ballot box in Northern Ireland that the Thatcher government signed the Anglo-Irish Agreement on 15 November 1985.[7] Through this agreement, they hoped to pacify and reassure moderate Catholic opinion in the Province. However, they failed to anticipate the reaction of the Protestant community, which manifested itself in an increase in sectarian violence.

The military fortunes of the IRA also began to improve in the early 1980s, with Libyans agreeing to supply arms to the organisation. In total, it is believed that 100 tons of supplies were smuggled into the Province before the biggest shipment, carried in the *Eskund*, was captured off the coast of France in October 1987. However, this 'golden age' proved to be all too ephemeral and by the late 1980s it was clear that the IRA's political and military strategy was unravelling. In spite of the supply of Libyan arms, the IRA's military campaign had little effect. Certainly the security forces did not seem overstretched and Army and police casualties throughout the 1980s were actually smaller than the total number killed in 1972. In contrast, the IRA suffered heavy losses in a series of covert operations conducted by Army special forces and the RUC's own specialist units.

Unable to strike security force targets, the IRA resumed its bombing of the UK mainland and of British targets of opportunity in Europe. However, this campaign backfired and actions like the Remembrance Day bombings at Enniskillen on 8 November 1987 did little to improve the fortunes of the movement. Similarly, the bombing campaign in Britain between 1989 and 1993 was less discriminate than past attacks and achieved little in political terms.

The political fortunes of Sinn Fein were not much better and it was clear that there was virtually no support for the party in the Irish Republic. The electoral failure of Sinn Fein in the Irish elections in 1987 convinced Gerry Adams that the party could not win on its own and that it therefore needed to build a broad alliance with political parties like the SDLP. To this end, Sinn Fein and the SDLP entered talks and began to make overtures to both governments in Dublin and London. The fact that Sinn Fein managed to hold onto 35% of the vote in elections in the Province convinced the British government that this was not some aberration caused by the Hunger strikes and that they should enter into negotiations.

Perhaps in recognition of its deteriorating state, the IRA once again entered into unofficial talks with the government in 1989. However, the violence did not stop. In this context, the IRA's bombing campaign in the UK was used to strengthen their negotiating position. But the fortunes of the movement continued to decline in the 1990s. Between

[7] Newsinger, p.181

1991 and 1993, the IRA managed to kill only 11 British soldiers. At the same time, the IRA was forced to execute six of its own members in 1992 for acting as touts for the security forces.[8]

The last actions of the war revealed the desperation of the IRA. On 23 October 1993, the IRA placed a bomb in a fish shop; the intended target was the Ulster Defence Association (UDA) leadership, which the IRA thought was meeting there. However, nine civilians including two children were killed. UDA swiftly responded with an attack on a Catholic bar, which resulted in the deaths of eight people. The increasing effectiveness of Protestant paramilitary groups was also becoming more of a concern for the IRA. Rumours increasingly suggested a level of collusion between the security forces and these rogue groups, which gives some indication of the effect of these attacks.[9]

It was no surprise, then, that the IRA accepted the basic principles set out by both the Irish and British prime ministers in the Downing Street Declaration of 1993. The first ceasefire began in August 1994. Progress was however slow: by relying on the Unionists in Parliament, Prime Minister John Major was effectively strengthening the hands of those opposed to the ceasefire. Citing frustration with the lack of progress, the IRA broke the ceasefire in February 1996. The resulting campaign was a disaster for the organisation and this merely reinforced the pressure to find a peaceful solution. As such, it restored the balance to the Adams-McGuinness faction. At the same time, the British government was forced to take note of what had happened and take the process of negotiation more seriously. In July 1997, the IRA renewed its ceasefire, paving the way for the Good Friday Agreement on 10 April 1998. It is important to note that whilst the Provisional IRA remains committed to the Accords, splinter groups have since emerged. The two principal factions – Real IRA and the Continuity IRA – both remain opposed to the agreement or any sort of ceasefire.

Chronology

1977

March	Eight SAS troopers are arrested by the Gardai after straying across the border into the Irish republic.
April	The UDA announces plans for a loyalist workers' strike. The strike ends after only two weeks.
July	Conflict between the Official IRA and Provisional IRA results in violence and the killing over 19 people from both sides.
August	The Queen visits Belfast as part of the Jubilee celebrations.

[8] *ibid.*, p.192

[9] Evidence of such collusion was confirmed in the Stevens Inquiry. This report can be accessed at news.bbc.co.uk.

November	SDLP rejects calls for a British withdrawal
December	Five hotels are damaged by five IRA bombs.

1978

January	The European Court of Human Rights rules that the interrogation methods used on internees in 1971 did not constitute torture but did amount to inhumane and degrading treatment.
February	Twelve people die in the IRA bombing of La Mon Hotel outside Belfast
March	Maze prison dispute escalates when republican inmates begin spreading excrement around their cells.
May	Belfast elects its first non-Unionist mayor, David Cook of the Alliance Party.
July	Following the IRA Dirty Protest, the head of the Irish Catholic Church condemns the conditions the Maze Prison.
August	The De Lorean car company announces plans to build luxury sports cars in South Belfast, with a £56 million subsidy.

1979

January	The IRA detonates bombs across the Province on New Year's Day.
March	A police doctor admits that he has seen a large number of people who had been physically abused whilst in the Castlereagh interrogation centre. The British ambassador to the Netherlands is shot and killed by the IRA. Twenty-four IRA bombs explode across the Province. The Callaghan Government is defeated in a Commons confidence vote, which results in a general election.
April	Four RUC men are killed in an IRA bomb attack in Bessbrook, County Armagh.
May	The Conservatives win the general election.
27 August	Two IRA attacks result in the deaths of Lord Mountbatten whilst on holiday in the Irish Republic and 18 soldiers and a civilian at Warrenpoint in County Down.

September	The Pope visits Ireland and calls on the IRA to stop following the path of violence.
October	Northern Ireland Secretary Humphrey Atkins launches a new political initiative and invites the main parties to talks.
December	Charles Haughey is elected leader of Fianna Fail and becomes Prime Minister. An IRA landmine kills four soldiers in County Tyrone.

1980

January	The Ulster Unionist Party boycotts Atkins' conference.
March	The Atkins conference is brought to a close.
May	Thatcher and Haughey meet to discuss Anglo-Irish relations.
June	The European Commission rejects the case taken by a protesting Maze prisoner.
August	Three people are killed and 18 are injured in widespread violence on the anniversary of internment.
October	Seven H-Block prisoners begin a hunger strike in protest at the loss of special category status.
December	The hunger strike is called off when it appears that the British government is prepared to make concessions. Thatcher and Haughey meet again to discuss cooperation in security and economic areas.

1981

January	Bernadette Devlin and her husband are shot and wounded by UDA gunmen.
March	A second H-block hunger strike begins in support of special category status.
April	Bobby Sands wins the Fermanagh-South Tyrone by-election.
May	Bobby Sands dies after 66 days on hunger strike. Three other hunger strikers die this month, and six soldiers are killed by a bomb in Bessbrook.

June	Two H Block prisoners are elected to the Dail in the general election in Eire.
July	Two more hunger strikers die.
August	Four more hunger strikers die. Sinn Fein member Owen Carron (Bobby Sands' agent) wins the Fermanagh-South Tyrone seat left vacant by the death of Sands.
September	James Prior becomes the new Northern Ireland Secretary.
October	Hunger strike is called off. Prior announced that prisoners can wear their own clothes and makes concessions on other issues.
November	The Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council is set up by the two governments. Protestant protesters staged a day of action in protest.

1982

February	A general election in Eire returns Fianna Fial and Charles Haughey to power.
March	Three soldiers are killed in west Belfast.
April	IRA bombing campaign in the Province causes two deaths and 12 injuries. Prior calls for new elections for another assembly to be set up in a phased programme that would result in the ending of direct rule.
May	The DeLorean car plant closes with the loss of hundreds of jobs.
July	The IRA attacks military bands in London's parks and kills 11 soldiers.
October	Elections for the national assembly result in the Sinn Fein winning 10% of the vote on an abstentionist ticket.
November	Lenny Murphy of the UVF Shankhill butchers gang is killed by the IRA.
December	Seventeen people, including 11 soldiers, are killed by an Irish National Liberation Army (INLA) bomb at Ballykelly.

1983

April	Fourteen defendants are jailed on the evidence of a UVF supergrass.

May	A 1,000lb bomb explodes outside the Andersontown police station in Belfast.
June	Unionists win 15 of the 17 Northern Ireland seats in the British general election. Gerry Adams is also elected to Parliament.
July	Four UDR members are killed by an IRA landmine in County Tyrone.
	IRA supergrass, Christopher Black, gives evidence against 38 members of the IRA. Twenty two are convicted.
September	Thatcher and Garrat Fitzgerald meet. Adams is elected president of the IRA.
December	An IRA bomb at Harrods kills five people are injures 80.

1984

March	Adams is shot and wounded in Belfast by the UDA.
August	An Armagh coroner resigns after finding grave irregularities in RUC files relating to the shooting of two INLA men by police in 1982.
September	Douglas Hurd becomes Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. Seven tons of arms and ammunition intended for the IRA are recovered from the Marita Ann off the Irish coast.
October	An IRA bomb at the Conservative party conference hotel kills five people.
December	Private Ian Thain is convicted of the murder of a civilian while on duty. Thirty-five defendants convicted on the evidence of a republican supergrass are acquitted, along with 14 men jailed on the evidence of a UVF supergrass.

1985

February	Three IRA members are shot and killed by soldiers.
May	Sinn Fein wins 59 seats in local government elections. Four RUC officers are killed by an IRA bomb at Killeen, County Armagh.
September	Tom King becomes the new Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.
November	PM Thatcher and Fitzgerald sign the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

	100,000 Protestants gathered in Belfast to voice their opposition to the Agreement.
December	The first meeting of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference is held. All fifteen Unionist members of parliament resign.

1986

May	A Unionist day of action disrupts public services and halts most industry. RUC and Protestant rioters clash at Portadown after a ban on the Apprentice Boys parade. Loyalists attack the homes of the police and Catholics.
June	John Stalker is removed from the inquiry into the RUC shooting of six terrorists in 1982.
November	Sinn Fein decides to permit successful candidates to take their seats in the Dial. Thatcher refuses to allow three judges to be used in Diplock courts. The Ulster resistance is formed to destroy the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Four UDA bombs are planted in Dublin.

1987

January	The UDA published a political manifesto that calls for devolved government with a form of power-sharing.
February	The UDA plants incendiary bombs in the Republic. A petition is delivered to the Queen with 400,000 signatures asking for a referendum on the Anglo-Irish Agreement.
April	Lord Gibson and his wife are killed by an IRA car bomb in County Armagh.
May	Eight IRA members are killed by the SAS at Loughgall.
June	The Conservatives win a third election.
November	The French seize the *Eskund*, which was carrying Libyan arms to Ireland to supply the IRA. An IRA bomb at Enniskillen kills 11 Protestants during a Remembrance Day ceremony

1988

January	UDA members are arrested carrying a large quantity of arms purchased from South Africa.

	The Attorney General Sir Patrick Mayhew announces that, in the interests of national security, there will be no prosecutions over the Stalker Inquiry.
February	Sinn Fein approves talks with the SDLP.
March	Three IRA members are shot dead by the SAS in Gibraltar. In Miltown cemetery, UDA member Michael Stone attacks the funeral for the IRA members killed in Gibraltar. He kills three people and injures many more. Two plain clothes soldiers are attacked by a crowd and then shot dead at another IRA funeral in west Belfast.
May	Three members of the RAF are killed in IRA attacks in Europe. The IRA also bombed an Army base in Bielefeld, Germany.
June	An IRA bomb kills six soldiers at a Lisburn fun run.
July	It is announced that 20 RUC officers will be disciplined as a result of the Stalker-Sampson Inquiry.
August	An IRA bomb at Ballgawley hits a bus carrying soldiers, killing eight. The Prime Minister ordered a security review. The SAS kills three IRA members in County Tyrone.
September	Sinn Fein-SDLP talks end with nothing agreed. Home Secretary Douglas Hurd announces a media broadcasting ban on members and supporters of paramilitary organisations.

1989

February	An IRA bomb is planted at Tern Hill paratroop barracks in the UK.
March	Adams calls for a non-armed political movement to secure self-determination.
April	The Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference agrees to deepen and widen its work.
September	An IRA bomb at Deal in Kent kills 11 Royal Marines bandsmen.
October	The Guildford Four are released by the Court of Appeal.
November	Northern Ireland Secretary Peter Brooke admits that the IRA will not be defeated militarily and that the government would negotiate with the organisation if they call a ceasefire.

	Adams and McGuinness re-launch Sinn Fien's Scenario for Peace Document.
1990	
January	Brooke launches a major political talks initiative
February	Both Adams and McGuinness call upon Brooke to explain what plans the government had should a ceasefire be agreed upon.
April	Adams declares that a ceasefire would be possible if Britain entered into talks about leaving Northern Ireland.
June	The IRA places bombs at a Territorial Army base in London, at the home of leading Tory, Lord McAlpine, at an RAF base and at the Carlton Club in London.
July	The IRA plants a bomb at the London Stock Exchange. Ian Gow MP is killed at home by the IRA.
August	A bomb is found in the garden of retired Army General Sir Anthony Farrar Hockley, a former Commander Land Forces (CLF) in Northern Ireland.
September	An IRA bomb explodes at an Army recruiting office in Derby. The former Governor of Gibraltar is seriously wounded by the IRA at his home in Staffordshire.
November	Mary Robinson is elected President of the Republic of Ireland. Margaret Thatcher is forced to resign as Prime Minister and is replaced by John Major.
December	Cahal Daly, installed as the new Catholic primate, tells a congregation that the IRA has no rational or political justification for its campaign. For the first time in 15 years, the IRA declares a three-day ceasefire over the Christmas holiday.
1991	
Feb	The IRA fires three mortar shells at Downing Street. One man is killed by an IRA bomb at Victoria, another bomb was planted at Paddington.
August	McGuinness says that Sinn Fein is ready to set aside criticism of the UK and enter into talks on a peace agenda.
September	Adams says he is prepared to engage in open dialogue to see an end to violence.

November — Pat Doherty of Sinn Fein says the party does not support violence but does support the right of the IRA to exist.
Two members of the IRA are killed by their own bomb in England.

December — IRA bombs explode in Blackpool and Manchester.
The IRA announced a three-day ceasefire over the Christmas holidays and Adams calls for the British and Irish governments to develop a real peace process.

1992

January — The IRA declares that it has the will and the means to continue the fight. An 800lbs and a 500lbs bomb are detonated in Belfast.
A 5lb bomb explodes in Whitehall, London.
An IRA bomb kills eight Protestant workers at Teebane, County Tyrone. Adams condemns the attack and denies any link between Sinn Fein and PIRA.
Albert Reynolds becomes Irish Prime Minister.

February — Loyalists kill five Catholics in a gun attack on a bookmaker's office in Belfast.
An IRA bomb injured 28 people at London Bridge rail station.
Sinn Fein publishes *Towards a Lasting Peace In Ireland*.

March — The IRA plants bombs at Tottenham, Wandsworth Common and Liverpool Street rail stations in London.
A 1,000lbs bomb explodes in the centre of Lurgan, County Armagh.
A bomb explodes in the Belfast's city centre.

April — An IRA bomb explodes in the Baltic Exchange, killing three people and causing hundreds of millions of pounds' of damage. Another bomb damaged a flyover in west London.
The Conservatives win the General Election.
Sir Patrick Mayhew is appointed Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.
Adams calls upon the new government to make peace.
Members of the Protestant church meet with Adams.
The IRA plants a bomb at the Royal Festival Hall in London.
Sinn Fein announces that it understands that any British withdrawal would only be possible after a sustained period of peace in the Province.

August — Adams says he does not rule out a change in Sinn Fein's absentionist attitude to a Northern Ireland Assembly.

September — Sinn Fein announces that the Protestant people should not be coerced into a united Ireland against their consent.

	The IRA explodes a fire bomb at the Hilton hotel at Hyde Park. A 1,000 lb bomb destroys the IRA forensic centre in Belfast.
October	A number of IRA bombs explode in central London and five other bombs are found.
November	A one-ton IRA van bomb parked outside Canary Wharf is defused.
December	A 1,000lb IRA bomb is defused at Tottenham Court Road tube station. Two other bombs explode in Manchester city centre. Two other bombs detonate in bins outside a shopping centre in London. The IRA announces a 72 hour ceasefire
1993	
January	Mayhew calls upon the IRA to renounce violence and join all party talks.
February	An IRA bomb explodes at a gasworks at Warrington and 18 people are hurt in another attack near Camden market in London. A bomb is also found near the home of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Kenneth Clarke.
March	Two boys are killed in an IRA attack at Warrington. A UDA attack at Castlerock results in the deaths of four Catholics.
April	The IRA plants a bomb outside the Conservative club in central London. Albert Reynolds declares that he would talk to Sinn Fein if the IRA renounced violence. An IRA lorry bomb at Bishopsgate causes significant damage to the City of London. Hume and Adams release a joint statement rejecting a purely internal solution to the conflict in the Province.
May	Fine Gael leader John Bruton criticises Hume and the SDLP for entering into talks with Sinn Fein. A 1,000lb bomb explodes in Belfast and other bombs are detonated at five other locations in the Province.
June	Two IRA bombs exploded at a gasometer in Gateshead and a petrol store depot in North Shields. Hume and Adams declare that they have devised a strategy for lasting peace in Northern Ireland. The Irish President, Mary Robinson, visits Belfast and shakes hands with Adams.

July	Hume says he believes that the IRA wants to stop its campaign of violence.
August	The IRA declares that it is prepared to continue with armed struggle. Hume is again criticised for maintaining a dialogue with Adams and Sinn Fein.
September	Hume and Adams announce that they have reached agreement in their talks and would submit their ideas in a report to Dublin. Unionist MP John Taylor argues that the proposals could lead to civil war. Mayhew announces that he would look at the SDLP-Sinn Fein proposals for peace but insists that the solution to the problems lies within the Province and that the right to self-determination had to be viewed in that context.
October	The President of Sinn Fein calls the Adams-Hume plan a proposed surrender. Both John Major and Mayhew insist that the IRA renounce violence before being allowed to participate in any talks on the future of Northern Ireland. Irish unity is also rejected. Orange Order leader, Reverend Martin Smyth, says that Sinn Fein could be admitted to talks if there was convincing proof that the IRA had ended its campaign of violence. An IRA attempt to bomb the UDA HQ on Belfast's Shankill Road kills nine Protestant civilians and an IRA bomber. Adams announces that he would be able to persuade the IRA to end its campaign if the British government responded positively to the Adams-Hume proposals. The UDA kills seven Catholics in the Greysteel pub massacre.
November	John Major announces in the Commons that the government is rejecting the Adams-Hume strategy. The Protestants were also given a strong assurance that the government fully supports the view that only the people of Northern Ireland could determine their constitutional future. Details of secret contacts between the IRA and the British government are revealed.
December	The Irish government pledges its support for the continued existence of Northern Ireland, should that be the wish of the people in the Province. The Downing Stree Declaration is signed by Major and Reynolds. It includes a commitment that the people of Northern Ireland would decide their future and a demand that the IRA stop using violence to achieve its aims.

	US President Bill Clinton says he welcomes the Downing Street Declaration.

1994

January	IRA firebombs damage a number of stores in Belfast. Adams writes to Major seeking clarification of the Downing Street Declaration. Adams is granted a visa to travel to the United States.
February	US Vice-President Al Gore urges Adams to accept the Downing Street Declaration.
March	The IRA launches mortar attacks against Heathrow Airport.
May	Sinn Fein gives the Irish government a list of questions on the Downing Street Declaration.
July	The Libyan Foreign Minister makes it clear that Libya would not supply arms to the IRA.
August	The IRA calls for a complete cessation of its campaign.

Defence Lines of Development

Training

By the mid- to late 1970s, a formal and systematic training regime was fully in place. All battalions that were due to deploy to Northern Ireland were first processed through the Northern Ireland Training Team (NITAT). NITAT provided an educational programme on the history of the troubles in the Province and the errors committed by the British Army in the early years of the campaign. As a result, both officers and soldiers possessed a good knowledge of the causes of the conflict and why minimum and proportional force was fundamental to success. Equally important, NITAT also provided a comprehensive tactical training package to all units. As one former Army officer explained:

> The training for Northern Ireland run by NITAT had now become very sophisticated. First, the unit going over would retrain in all basic skills such as shooting, field-craft and patrolling. The second stage would be to go to a special training area at Smallcliff on the south coast, where the staff could reproduce almost any incident that had happened in Northern Ireland. Exact replicas of the areas where the unit was to go to would be reproduced, down to the correct numbers of lampposts along the streets. Here the troops would operated with ordinary weapons but scaled down to fire .22 rounds – as much for range safety aspects as anything else. Bomb explosions, vehicle ambushes, hi-jacking of petrol tankers, hostage taking – all such incidents had been carefully analysed and the

> troops put through them again and again. It was very concentrated, with seven or eight incidents a day – far more that would ever really occur.[10]
>
> The third stage would be more for the benefit of the officers, and particularly the company commander, who would spend two whole days in the "hot seat" handling a series of incidents and having everything recorded on to video. Some commanders were moved quietly aside after these sessions because they were found to panic or react badly, or because they were found not to have the necessary skills.[11]

This package was based on lessons learned from Northern Ireland and was frequently updated. All battalion post-tour reports and the brigade headquarters responses to queries raised in these reports were sent directly to NITAT.

Units were also assessed whilst going through this package and in some cases personnel were actually removed from the battalion because they were deemed unsuitable or unfit for the environment. On average, between two and three people were removed from their battalions during NITAT training. Company commanders saw these tests as an important milestone in terms of the skill and capability of the unit and their ability as a commander and leader.[12]

The level of training received by each member of the battalion varied according to rank and/or function. For example, people in the intelligence cell received more training than most ordinary infantry. In some cases, training could last up to a year, but the average duration was three months.[13] Additional pre-deployment training was needed to learn how to operate hardware like Crucible and the *Cougar* radio net.[14]

It appears that members of the RUC also became involved in training Army personnel passing through NITAT. What is not clear is when their involvement in the programme began.[15]

Equipment

Radio communications continued to cause some problems and units complained that the radio net was constantly breaking, which affected the conduct of operations in the battalions' tactical area of responsibility (TAOR).[16] There were also complaints that the electronic countermeasure (ECM) systems used to jam remote signals to detonate bombs also set off car alarms.[17]

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[10] Hamil, Desmond, *Pig in the Middle: The Army in Northern Ireland 1969*-84 (London: Metheun), p.196.
[11] *ibid.*, p.197
[12] Interview with Lt-Col Bob Bruce, by KCL
[13] *ibid.*
[14] *ibid.*
[15] 2 Royal Anglian Post Tour Report 1989
[16] Royal Green Jackets Post Tour Report, 1991-92
[17] Queens Own Highlanders Post Tour Report, 1990-92.

The British Army gradually deployed equipment designed to counter the terrorism in Northern Ireland. Most of this was at the high-technological end of the spectrum and focused on achieving improved surveillance and monitoring systems that would allow for the covert observation of suspected and actual terrorists. These systems were rarely made available to the ordinary infantry battalions. In some cases, this was because the kit was held as a brigade asset, for example the use of *Gazelle* helicopters using thermal imaging, which came into service in Northern Ireland in 1989.[18] However, more usually it was because there was no real need for the 'green army' to use this kind of equipment. With the introduction of police primacy in 1977, surveillance and intelligence gathering was conducted primarily by special forces and key units in the RUC Special Branch. Though CCTV was also used as means of watching the population, it did not prove to be a satisfactory substitute for the presence of troops on the street.[19]

According to one source, by the late 1980s, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher authorised the investment of a large sum of money in the acquisition of the latest technology to defeat terrorism in Northern Ireland. Thus, the towers constructed on the border with Ireland used enormously powerful cameras that enabled the observation of suspects at a staggering distance.[20]

14 Intelligence used video cameras that could transmit live real-time TV pictures. These live pictures could then be sent via microwave link to intelligence monitoring stations up to 50 miles away. Covert cameras were also used to monitor IRA activity across the border, which removed the need to deploy special forces across into the Republic of Ireland, an activity that had caused considerable embarrassment in the past. In one case, 14 Intelligence apparently had one IRA suspect based across the border under observation for two years and provided a live stream of information on the activities of this individual to the Tasking and Coordinating Group (TCG) South, which accelerated decision making. Equally important was the use of infrared, which ensured that the suspect remained under observation 24 hours a day. Microphones were also attached to cameras and these could pick up conversations taking place at a considerable distance.[21]

Close-up surveillance relied on the use of tiny remote-controlled cameras hidden in cars or disguised to look like part of the natural environment. These cameras provided a constant source of information on the activities of an IRA suspect. The massive improvement in surveillance made it unnecessary to deploy manpower on such risky operations and lessened the chance of the operation being discovered. The security services also made extensive use of bugging to obtain information on the IRA's plans.

According to one member of the IRA, the use of all this technology made it extremely difficult for the organisation to do anything without the British knowing. It effectively brought the IRA to a stand still.

[18] Interview with Col David Benest, by KCL
[19] Coldstream Guards Post Tour Report, 1992
[20] Interview with Col Benest
[21] Peter Taylor, *The Brits: The War Against the IRA* (London: Bloomsbury, 2002), p.300

The Army also continued to invest in computers to collate and sift through the massive quantity of data that was being generated via electronic and human surveillance. Nonetheless, the Vengeful system, which monitored the movement of cars through the Province by identifying numberplates, was by the early 1990s in need of an update and there were requests for the installation of automatic number-plate readers.[22]

A second computer database, Crucible, held information on individuals. Throughout the 1970s, the security services relied on the use of card indexes as the primary means of storing information on people. These cards listed suspects, houses and firearms. Such records were very detailed, even mapping out the layout of furniture in a house and whether it had a cellar or a blocked chimney. The card-index system was however very labour intensive and needed to be updated constantly. Wilson announced the purchase of a personal records computer in 1976, which was to provide a more efficient and targeted information-management system.

The computer was called 3072, but it was clear that it did not have the memory required to do the job and, as a result, police and Army bases kept their card indexes, which meant that the computer had little impact on their intelligence-collating activities. During the early 1980s, a new system was developed to replace 3072. The new machine, again called Crucible, was introduced in 1987. It had a much bigger memory capacity than 3072 and immediately raised the hopes of the Army. The system was operated by 125 Section, the data-processing department of 12 Intelligence and Security Company.[23]

This newer system collated the details of all known and suspected members of the various paramilitary groups in the Province. The actual files contained a personal profile of the suspect, a map and picture showing where s/he lived and details of immediate family.[24] It is estimated that at least one million names were on the Northern Ireland security services' computer files. At first glance, this does not seem particularly impressive, but note that the population of the Province is about 1.5 million and that, in contrast, the databanks of MI5, Special Branch and the National Criminal Intelligence Service hold only two million names for the 58 million residents of the rest of the UK.[25] Though Crucible became a key source of information for battalion intelligence cells, the system was not reliable and there were a number of software problems that limited its use. In general, its memory capacity was simply not adequate for the masses of information being processed.[26]

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[22] Queens Own Highlanders Post Tour Report, 1990-92

[23] Mark Urban, *Big Boys' Rules: The SAS and the Secret Struggle Against the* IRA (London: Faber & Faber, 1992), p.117

[24] The usefulness of the computers for the Army can be seen in its plans to upgrade and improve their existing computer systems in the mid- to late 1990s. The Army wanted to link Vengeful with cameras so that it could read number plates at many locations, and they also wanted to link this system to Crucible to create an open electronic prison. Automatic number-plate registration cameras were also introduced in 1997. Approximately 80 of these were switched on at various unidentified sites in the province. Plans were also in the pipeline to replace Crucible with a faster and smarter system capable of sifting through huge swathes of data to identify links between one suspect and another. See Tony Geraghty, *The Irish War: A Military History of a Domestic Conflict* (London: Haper Collins, 1998), p.159

[25] *ibid.*, p.133

[26] 1 Coldstream Guards Post Tour Report, October 1989

Information management of Vengeful and Crucible was handled by the Joint Surveillance Group and was staffed by the Army's Intelligence Corps. They organised the data in terms of sensitivity. Ordinary infantry battalions had access to the lowest level of information, which might note that two known IRA suspects met at a certain time and place. However, the most secret material was reserved for brigade headquarters and above. At the highest level, details of IRA-planned operations were fed to the Joint Action Unit Northern Ireland (JACUNI).[27] There were, however, problems relating to the soldiers' interaction with the computers. Crucible was found to be very unreliable and there were complaints that it was too slow.[28]

Both the security services and the IRA relied increasingly on technology to gain the upper hand. The IRA invested heavily in the development of more stable explosives, detonation and timing devices. In 1972, it began experimenting with radio-controlled bombs and by the late 1970s these became the most common method of detonation. Initially, the IRA used radio-controlled devices used to control toy airplanes and boats. However, it was not long before the Army discovered that it could jam the frequency used by these devices and thus stop the bomb from detonating. In response, the IRA incorporated new technologies and managed to code the signal being sent to detonate the bomb, which meant it could not be jammed. The government's R&D establishments responded by developing the 'inhibitor', a man-portable device that could stop the bomb from exploding. From 1985 onwards, the IRA discovered an area of the electronic magnetic spectrum where the inhibitors did not work. Subsequent attacks resulted in the deaths of a number of soldiers and members of the RUC. After a year, the R&D establishments came up with a countermeasure to address this flaw and the reaction of the IRA was to revert to old-fashioned but unjammable methods like the command wire.[29]

The IRA also succeeded in undermining *Operation Vengeful* (introduced in 1974). Initially the computer was used to check all vehicles that came into and left the Province. The approach however changed in 1977, when the system was made to focus only on suspect vehicles. In an effort to overcome this system, the IRA began searching the streets of prosperous areas to identify the car registrations of respectable Protestants. They would then steal a similar model of car and change the number plates, creating an exact copy of the original vehicle. The use of 'ringers', as the IRA called them, required time and effort and they were therefore only used infrequently.[30]

In 1973, the Reconnaissance Interpretation Centre (RIC) was established at RAF Aldergrove in Northern Ireland. The unit conducted aerial photography for the purposes of mapping. Such surveillance was also useful for detecting the movement of equipment in enclosed areas or the digging of large weapons storage pits. The Army Air Corps (AAC) also deployed *Gazelle* helicopters equipped with a specially stabilised TV camera mounting. These 'heli-telly' missions provided constant coverage of Belfast and

[27] Geraghty, p.159
[28] 2 Royal Anglian Post Tour Report, 1990
[29] Urban, p.113
[30] *ibid.*

Londonderry. Heli-telly pictures were used in 1989 in the prosecution and conviction of those involved in the murder of two corporals killed after they had been caught observing an IRA funeral.[31]

During the 1970s and early 1980s, the AAC also used infrared surveillance to detect command-wire bombs and arms caches. The equipment was too sensitive to work properly in a helicopter and was fitted into the Corps' *Beaver* spotter planes. These planes scouted the border areas where the IRA tended to mount wire-bomb attacks. This system was replaced in the late 1980s with thermal imaging.

Technology was also used to reduce the burden of surveillance and covert operations. Sensors were deployed to detect approaching footsteps, special movement-activated cameras were deployed in the border areas and cameras were fitted into the headlights of cars left parked opposite a suspect's house or an area of interest. Hi-tech bugging equipment – a practice known as jarking – offered new opportunities in dealing with arms caches. Planting sensors on firearms, which were activated when picked up, allowed the security forces to monitor the movement of these arms as they approached their target. Later, these sensors also incorporated microphones, which allowed the security services to listen in to conversations held in proximity to the jarked firearm. Each brigade HQ featured a joint Army-RUC 'Weapons Intelligence Unit', which was tasked with the fitting of these devices.

Jarking was used throughout the war, but by 1983the practice had been discovered by the IRA. In this instance, the organisation became suspicious of the weapons handler, a James Jas Young, and murdered him. This was the main problem with jarking: if the practice was discovered, it was easy to work out who was responsible, which allowed the IRA to attack the informer network. In 1985, the IRA once again discovered that one of its weapons had been jarked and became suspicious of the handlers: Gerard and Catherine Mahon. IRA investigated both handlers and, when it became clear that they were liaising with Special Branch, they were kidnapped and then killed.[32]

Emerging technology also had an effect on force structures in Northern Ireland. According to one source, troop withdrawals in the late 1970s and early 1980s became possible partly because of the deployment of sophisticated surveillance and monitoring systems throughout the Province. By 1982, force levels had fallen to 11,000 regular troops and the government was working to a target force of 7,000 men.[33] It is interesting to note that in December 1997, total Army strength, including six UDA battalions, stood at over 15,000, which suggests that the target figure was in fact never met.

Personnel

[31] *ibid.*, p.117
[32] *ibid.*, pp.118-121
[33] Hamil, p.264

The social composition and educational background of the Army officer corps changed significantly throughout this period. The number of officers from the state educational system increased from 10% in the 1970s to over 50% by the mid-1990s. Equally important, an increasing proportion of British Army officers were university graduates. Meanwhile, the proportion of officers recruited from the ranks increased, reaching one-third of the British Army's officer corps by the late 1990s.

The officer corps and NCOs retained a wealth of campaign-specific experience due to the constant rotation of battalions into the Province over the duration of the conflict. This trend was particularly noticeable in the officer corps, with many serving officers conducting as many as five tours in Northern Ireland. Equally important was the difference in perspective gained with each new tour as officers moved up from platoon to company command, from company to battalion command and from battalion to brigade command or higher. As a result, the Army possessed a very good tactical and operational awareness of the conflict.

The Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR) was also reorganised in 1978. The unpopularity of the unit and the fact that it was mainly manned on a part-time basis reduced its operational effectiveness, particularly in Catholic areas. It was therefore decided to increase the number of fulltime members of the regiment and to concentrate the force in certain areas rather than across the Province. The number of fulltime members increased from 844 in 1972 to more than 2,500 by the mid-1980s out of a force of approximately 6,000 personnel.[34]

The local security forces were unable to gain the confidence of the Catholic community. In part, this was caused by the low representation of Catholics in the RUC and UDR. After more than two decades of conflict, only 11% of the RUC and 3% of the UDR were recruited from the Catholic community.[35]

Information

As in the past, the 'green army' was used to collect a vast amount of data on the patterns of life in the communities they patrolled. The utility of this activity was limited, as few people in the Catholic community were prepared to share information with the Army. Furthermore, the IRA's shift to a cell structure in 1977 limited the intelligence that could be generated through this activity. However, as in the past, units reported that maintaining good community relations resulted in low-level intelligence that sometimes helped to prevent an ambush and save lives.[36] It is important to note that in at least one instance, the RUC's strict interpretation of police primacy meant that the Army's contact

[34] Michael Dewar, *The British Army in Northern Ireland* (London: Arms & Armour Press, 1985), pp.135-146.
[35] Thomas Mockaitis, *British Counterinsurgency in the Post Imperial Era* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1995), p.110
[36] Queens Own Highlanders Post Tour Report, October 1990-March 1992

with the local community was kept to the absolute minimum, which precluded the use of P checks at Vehicle Checkpoint (VCPs).[37]

Of much greater importance were the Army's special surveillance unit, 14 Intelligence Company, and the SAS. In addition, the RUC Special Branch and the special surveillance units it deployed also contributed to the creation of a detailed overview of terrorist activity in the Province. These specialist units relied on electronic surveillance systems and human intelligence provided by informers to monitor the activities of various paramilitary organisations.

The Army and the RUC only rarely shared intelligence. It seems that the RUC viewed the Army as an enormous sieve and were therefore reluctant to provide it with any real intelligence. This general mistrust was compounded by the fact that the Army and the police used different radios. The degree of cooperation achieved relied as much on the personalities involved as on the organisational structures and processes put in place. This factor became very apparent when discussing the problems that existed between the Army and RUC in Northern Ireland. One lieutenant-colonel explained that his promotion to the post of Continuity Intelligence Officer was entirely personality-driven. The post had been created to reactivate cooperation between the Brigade and Regional Headquarters of the Army and RUC; it would be filled by a liaison officer from the Army, who would be working within Special Branch and report directly to the Brigadier. Why was this lieutenant-colonel chosen for this post? It seems that his elevation was brought about because he played the bagpipes at a number of Special Branch dinners and became known to the Chief Superintendent and his colleagues on a social setting. When Lt-Col Bruce was asked whether the flow of information could have been achieved by some other means (for instance, via weekly committee meetings) he agreed that this was so, but suggested that the trust that existed between him and Special Branch allowed information to flow more freely than it might have done in a formal network. However, the very fact that this relationship relied so heavily on trust created new problems, as his bosses would occasionally confide in him and he would have to judge very carefully whether to share this information. Interestingly, when the post was first created, Capt. Bruce's boss was a Guards Officer who was also deployed to Special Branch. Unfortunately, his relationship with the other Special Branch officers was so bad that they refused to cooperate with him. Recognising this problem, the Brigadier ensured that Capt. Bruce report direct to him, thus bypassing his immediate superior.[38]

A survey of battalion post-tour reports indicates a mixed picture in terms of the quantity and quality of information provided by Special Branch to the Army. An interesting point made by the Royal Green Jackets when in the Province in 1992 concerns the way in which the intelligence cycle worked. As the report explains:

> The intelligence cycle does not work well: the present system serves only to produce poor Intelligence Assessments based on incomplete information and poor direction from Intelligence Agencies. There is a need for the cycle of direction,

[37] 1 Coldstream Guards Post Tour Report, October 1989
[38] Interview with Lt-Col Bruce

> debriefing and redirection to be improved by better direction from regional levels of command.[39]

It is also important to note the use made of the legal system and the courts as a way of generating information for the security services. Police interrogation of IRA suspects at Gough Barracks, Armagh and Castlereagh in Belfast began to deliver spectacular results in terms of confessions, which were then used to convict members of the IRA. This success stemmed from changes introduced as a result of recommendations made by the Diplock Report, which acted as the basis of the new Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act, 1973. In 1972, Lord Diplock headed a commission that concluded that trial by jury could not work in terrorist crimes. Invariably the jury and witnesses would be subject to threats from terrorist groups which would make them reluctant to issue a guilty verdict. In an attempt to address this problem, the government created Diplock Courts, which removed the jury and instead relied on the judge to decide whether the accused was guilty or not.

A further fillip to the security forces came in form of changes made to the admissibility of confessions as evidence in court. In the past, such evidence could only be submitted if there was proof that the confession was given voluntarily. Diplock again recommended changing this rule so that evidence could be used as long as the judge believed that it had been obtained voluntarily and not via torture.[40] The rate of successful convictions increased dramatically under this new and more ambiguous regime. Over a period of three years, 4,650 people were charged with terrorist crimes; apparently 94% of these suspects went on to be convicted.[41]

Finally, there was the passing of the 1974 Prevention of Terrorism Act, which gave the police the power to hold people without charge for up to seven days. According to Geraghty, the Act was primarily used as a means of gathering intelligence rather than punishing the guilty. Of the 5,500 people detained by the end of 1982, fewer than 2% were charged.[42]

According to a secret IRA document found by the Irish police in 1977, the results of this new legal framework proved to be devastating to the IRA. IRA volunteers were not trained or prepared for the regime of interrogation that they encountered and often cracked very quickly. Between 1976 and 1979, about 3,000 people were charged with terrorist offences, most of them on the basis of confessions obtained under interrogation. However, concerns were increasingly expressed over the methods used to obtain these confessions and eventually, in 1978, the government authorised an investigation to ascertain if torture was taking place during interrogations.

The inquiry, which took place under Crown Court Judge Harry Bennett, was only given the remit of how to improve the system. However, the judge found that the allegations of

[39] Royal Green Jacket Post Tour Report, July 1991-January 1992
[40] Taylor, p.200
[41] Geraghty, p.96
[42] *ibid.*

ill-treatment were not unfounded and that some injuries inflicted on prisoners had indeed occurred during interrogation. As a result of the Bennett Report, CCTV was installed, supervision of suspects being interviewed was strengthened and prisoners were given greater access to a lawyer and doctor.[43] This helped IRA suspects cope with the shock of interrogation; however, the group was still struggling with the risk that somebody might talk.

In the past, the IRA had sought to get around the existing process of interrogation by providing a false alibi. Initially this practice achieved some success, but with the rapid growth in Army and police surveillance and the massive quantity of information thus generated, it became easier for the RUC to check the suspects' alibis. Consequently, alibis became less useful as a means of protecting the suspect from interrogation. After 1978, the IRA instructed its volunteers to say nothing during interrogation.[44]

Faced by the dual challenges of a more efficient intelligence and surveillance system, and a legal system that allowed more intrusive interrogation, the reaction of the IRA was to reorganise. The principal architect behind this reorganisation was Gerry Adams. Under the previous organisation, men were formed into companies, battalions and brigades that emphasised the military nature of the struggle. However, such a set up was extremely vulnerable to the kind of covert attack that now formed the basis of the security forces' strategy. The most basic problem was that the IRA was too visible: far too many people knew who was in the organisation, which made it vulnerable to informers. In addition, as Urban points out, maintaining these large groups required the employment of too many people who could not be trusted.[45]

The new cell structure demanded far less people, required a lower level of popular support and was more difficult to penetrate. Under the cell system, the basic IRA unit would only have three or four members, all known to each other by pseudonym. Most importantly, they had no knowledge of the identities of their superiors and their orders were relayed via an anonymous controller. The size of the organisation fell significantly from about 1,000 members in the mid-1970s to as few as 250 people by the mid-1980s. Bishop & Mallie express scepticism regarding the effectiveness of this countermeasure. As they explain:

> The cell structure made sense to the middle-class ultra left guerrillas of the Red Brigades and the Baader-Meinhof gang but the interbred and overlapping worlds of West Belfast and the Bogside were a different matter. The large hauls of IRA men brought in by informers in the supergrass trials of the early eighties shows that in some areas, like the Ardoyne, the cell system never progressed beyond wishful thinking.[46]

[43] Taylor, p.202
[44] Patrick Bishop & Eamonn Mallie, *The Provisional IRA* (London: Corgi Books, 1987), p.323
[45] Urban, p.30
[46] Bishop & Mallie, p.322

In some areas, the cell system was adopted in a half-hearted manner and volunteers continued to be organised in companies that now supported small four-man Armed Service Units (ASUs). It is fair to say that IRA members frequently knew most of the people in their unit and in the local organisation of which they formed part. However, according to Taylor, the cell system worked and in 1978, there were 465 fewer arrests than the previous year.[47] Irrespective of this success, the RUC Special Branch continued to maintain an extensive network of informers; it is estimated that, by the 1980s, the number of informers ran into the low hundreds.[48]

An alternative means of defence adopted by the IRA was to assassinate those soldiers involved in surveillance operations. At least three soldiers from 14 Intelligence were killed by the IRA in the 1974-78 period. In spite of these dangers, the Army and the police continued to invest in the development of its surveillance capability as the principal means of defeating the IRA.[49]

The use of informer networks was a critical source of information for the security services. In theory, the promotion of police primacy should have made this area of activity the sole preserve of the RUC Special Branch. Moreover, the Army battalions did not have a particularly good record of maintaining and using locally recruited sources. However, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, CLF Major-General Glover decided to professionalise the Army's use of informers and expand its network of sources. Prior to becoming CLF, Glover had written a secret report on the IRA and he clearly recognised that changes in the IRA's organisation and tactics made them a more potent threat than before. He believed that the only way to neutralise this threat was through the creation of informers embedded within the IRA: that was their centre of gravity. In addition, it is also clear that the Army did not trust the RUC Special Branch and did not want to depend entirely on this source for information: it contained too many Protestant hardmen. MI5 took a similar position and both organisations were supported in this matter by Sir Maurice Oldfield who recognised that it would not be healthy for the Army to rely solely on the RUC Special Branch for intelligence.[50]

In an attempt to improve the Army's operation of informers, Glover stopped battalions running their own agents and transferred the responsibility to the brigades. Each of the brigades had a Research Office, which consisted of fulltime agent-runners. This arrangement was also quickly dispensed with and Glover introduced a centralised human-resource handling group, known as the Field Research Unit (FRU). The FRU joined 14 Intelligence and the SAS in forming a trinity of Army undercover operations. In the view of the Army, Catholics were happier dealing with the Army than the RUC and that justified their investment into this area of activity.[51]

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[47] M. R. L. Smith, *Fighting For Ireland: The Military Strategy of the Irish Republican Movement* (London: Routledge, 1995), p.145
[48] Geraghty, p.157
[49] Urban, p.45
[50] *ibid.*, p.110
[51] *ibid.*, p.109

A particular emphasis was placed on the recruitment of quartermasters in the IRA. They were important because they knew the location of the arms caches, which could then be watched, allowing the surveillance teams the chance to identify the cell members. Moreover since weapons had to be issued before an attack, the quartermaster could provide the security services with critical anticipatory intelligence.[52]

So important was this line of activity that the IRA created its own security department in 1980 to deal with informers, otherwise known as touts. The IRA Council was also aware that there was a growing war weariness among nationalists and it therefore boosted the political work of Sinn Fein to maintain its power base. The IRA recognised that the killing of informers might threaten the support of the nationalist community and amnesties were thus used as a way of bringing informers back into the fold. Articles would appear in the Republican Press announcing such amnesties and imploring those who had betrayed the organisation to repent.[53] This kind of generosity sometimes paid dividends; the collapse of the super grass trials in the 1980s turned on the ability of the IRA to get informers to deny the truthfulness of their original testimony.

The IRA tried to develop its own information systems, but these were generally technologically primitive. Initially, the IRA relied on women banging dustbin lids to warn when an Army patrol entered an estate. As the conflict continued, the phone system was also used to pass on cryptic messages. Sympathisers living in tower blocks would watch for the movement of patrols and hang towels over balconies or open certain windows to warn of security forces entering the area. Through this system of warnings, the IRA was able to move weapons around or stage attacks with little fear of being caught.

The IRA also attempted to intercept their opponents' communications. The small tactical radios used by the Army were easily intercepted and the IRA kitted out attics and spare rooms as listening posts. The basic code used by the Army was quickly broken, which allowed the IRA to initiate ambushes. A RUC operation in 1979 also resulted in the discovery of a successful attempt by the IRA to tap the phone lines of senior Army and police officers. The tapping of their communications led the Army to develop a more secure system, which was introduced in the early 1980s (Brinton) and designed to encrypt telephone and data lines running from the various HQs. Urban believes that this system was actually breached in 1989.[54] Finally, Information was also extracted either voluntarily or under duress from the Catholics working in the government bureaucracy who had access to the addresses of members of the RUC and UDR.

Doctrine

British COIN doctrine faced five challenges during this period:

[52] *ibid.*, p.107
[53] *ibid.*
[54] *ibid.*, p.114

- The failure to achieve a political settlement in 1975 and the recognition that the conflict was likely to continue for some time, which undermined the first and sixth principles of British COIN doctrine: political primacy and meaningful political reform.
- The recognition that existing British COIN strategy was not appropriate in a liberal democracy.
- The radicalisation of the Protestant community as a result of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.
- The changing *modus operandi* of the IRA.
- The media's coverage of the war.

Confronted by the recognition that there was no quick political fix, at least in the short-term, the Labour government settled in for a long war, which resulted in the formulation of a new strategy: Ulsterisation. This policy was borne out of the realisation that the presence of the Army was antagonising the local population and creating an environment that undermined the spirit and ethos of liberal democratic values.

It has been argued that this new strategy for defeating the IRA represented a significant watershed in the conduct of the war because it marked the end of the British Army's counterinsurgency and its substitution with an internal-security strategy. An undeclared, but equally important aspect of Ulsterisation was the emphasis placed on the use of special forces to prosecute the military campaign, which reinforced the impression that something new was being developed.

However, it is possible to challenge this view on the following grounds. Firstly, it could be argued that the changing role of the Army, brought about by the process of Ulsterisation, was entirely consistent with the British approach to COIN as applied in Malaya and that the 1969-76 period was an aberration simply because a coordinated approach had not been possible. During this period, the moral and intellectual bankruptcy of the Stormont government and the collapse of the RUC had prevented a broader and more coordinated response. Both problems were addressed with the imposition of direct rule in 1972 and the reorganisation of the RUC. However, these measures took time to take effect and in the interregnum the Army took on the main burden of the campaign. By 1976, both the Northern Ireland Office and the RUC were ready and wiling to assume a more prominent role in the conflict.

Secondly, it is also interesting that the Army does not recognise that such a shift took place in its doctrine or mode of operation in Northern Ireland. No real changes were made to the British principles of COIN during the 25 years of the conflict. To some, this demonstrates the validity of British COIN doctrine. Evidence to support this view can be found in the Army's Doctrine Publication: *Counter Revolutionary Operations.*[55] Significantly, this represented the Army's first official position on COIN and was not published until 1977, which coincided with the era of police primacy. This in turn raises

[55] MoD, *Land Operations Volume III- Counter Revolutionary Operations: Part 1 General Principles* (London: MOD, 1977)

the question of why the Army introduced a doctrine that was not followed in Northern Ireland. It should also be emphasised that this new doctrine was entirely consistent with our understanding of British counterinsurgency and sets out an approach that implicitly recognises what are now recognised as the six principles of COIN. As such, there is no evidence of a 'new approach' emerging from this doctrinal publication.

Thirdly, such studies have ignored the ongoing work being carried out by infantry battalions during the troubles. Consider, for instance, this comment from 1 Para when returning from a tour in Northern Ireland in 1988:

> It was impressed on our soldiers from the beginning of their training that they were to be involved in a long term campaign in Northern Ireland which will only be won if the terrorist is isolated from the community. Thus their profile with the public would be paramount and aggression would have to be controlled and reserved only for periods when in contact with the terrorist.[56]
>
> The much reduced level of terrorist activity in West Belfast has led to a noticeable reduction in tension amongst the local community, greater willingness to pass on low level information and warnings to patrols and even on some occasions active resistance to house take-overs. Everything possible should be done to ensure this trend continues and gathers momentum. Conversely any action by the security forces which might give rise to exploitable complaint should be carefully avoided.[57]

In essence, the vast majority of the British Army continued doing what it had been doing since at least 1972: winning hearts and minds, trying to get information on the terrorists and containing the IRA until a political settlement became possible.

Generally, although the role of the Army changed under Ulsterisation, infantry battalions did not operate all that differently to the way they had done previously. Where there appears to have been a disconnect between doctrine and military practice was in the erosion of the political and economic dimensions of the campaign. Platoon and company commanders who served in Northern Ireland in the 1980s had only a vague appreciation of the political picture and reasoned that the function of military activity was to hold the IRA in check until the political and economic lines of development kicked in, but they did not really know what was going on in these domains. Moreover, there was also deep-seated pessimism regarding the utility of the hearts and minds policy, another strong trademark of the British approach. However, they remained committed to this approach and believed that, whilst it did not prove to be as decisive as might have been hoped, it helped in the creation of an environment conducive to long-term success.[58]

Finally, those who view a radical shift in policy in the era of police primacy fail to recognise the actions of other agencies promoting economic and social lines of development. Thus, Mockaitis is convinced that, even in the era of Ulsterisation, the

[56] 1 Para Post Tour Report, 1988
[57] 1 Welsh Guards Post Tour Report, 1986
[58] Interviews with Lt-Col Patrick Crowley and Lt-Col Bruce, by KCL

historical legacy of British counterinsurgency continued to influence the conduct of the conflict in Northern Ireland. He points out that successive governments made a sustained investment in rebuilding the infrastructure of the Province and tried to improve the social and economic conditions for the huge majority of the Catholic population. Between 1971 and 1994, the Northern Ireland Housing Authority built over 17,000 new dwellings and spent £130 million on renovating 8,000 older properties in Belfast alone. In 1989, government legislation also toughened up existing employment laws making it more difficult to discriminate against Catholics. The state took the lead in promoting this policy and over 42% of the population employed in local government – which accounted for 40% of all employment in the Province – were Catholic.[59]

This raises important questions about how to win support in a conflict dominated by identity politics, a problem we are encountering more regularly today. An important aspect of this context was its effect on the generation of intelligence, as the local community in hardcore Catholic areas were simply not willing to provide information on IRA activities. This might explain why greater emphasis was placed on the use of covert forces to gather intelligence on IRA operatives.

However, in spite of this obstacle, units still made a concerted effort to harvest intelligence in their area of operation and the Kitson model remained alive and well. Moreover, it also helped the Army achieve one of its principal tasks under Ulsterisation, which was to counter the threat posed by IRA by suppressing the ability of the terrorist to move people and equipment to attack. This entailed maintaining a high level of activity on the ground.

The Army was also instructed to provide security for the police so that they were able to carry out their normal role as the guarantor of law and order in the Province. Again it is possible to see similarities with past campaigns such as Malaya. As in Malaya, the police and Special Branch relied on the Army to provide security so that they could do their work. Admittedly, in the case of Malaya this happened within the controlled environment of the strategic hamlets programme, a practice which did not exist in Northern Ireland, however, the dynamic symbiosis was the same.

Organisation

In 1977, the Army had 14 battalions in Northern Ireland. They were deployed in fixed areas known as tactical areas of responsibility (TAORs). Regular and UDR battalions were divided between three brigade headquarters: 28 Brigade in Belfast, 8 Brigade in Londonderry, and 3 Brigade in Portadown. The brigade commanders reported to the CLF who in turn reported to the General Officer Commanding (GOC) Northern Ireland. As the conflict progressed, the Army's commitment to the Province was also reduced. The number of regular battalions fell from 14 at the start of 1978 to ten by 1980. As a result, it was decided to remove 3 Brigade HQ from the Province. It is important to note that although the British government continued to support a significant deployment of troops

[59] Urban, p.113

to Northern Ireland, the green army was definitely playing a secondary role in the conflict. This can be seen in the available statistics. With only 150 troops, the SAS and 14 Intelligence killed some 18 terrorists in the mid-1980s; in contrast, a force of 12,000 troops constantly on the streets on Northern Ireland killed only two terrorists in the same period.[60]

The British Army's special forces also went through a process of reorganisation during this time. The SAS deployment of a squadron to Northern Ireland proved difficult to sustain. With only four operational squadrons, the regiment found it difficult to ensure that its soldiers had a sufficient period away from the Province. Moreover, the short length of their tours (4-6 months) resulted in a constant turnover in staff, which meant that soldiers did not get to grips with the complexity of the situation in the Province. In contrast, those in 14 Intelligence usually did a minimum tour of a year. Equally important, soldiers in 14 Intelligence could specialise; in contrast the SAS had to remain proficient in a range of different areas.

In an attempt to address the problems facing the SAS in the Province, CLF Major General Glover implemented changes that effectively brought the SAS and 14 Intelligence together into a single unit. The new operative group took the name Intelligence and Security Group (NI) and came into being after Glover departed (1980). The name itself was designed to be misleading. There were Int and Sys Groups in the UK and Germany that briefed the wider Army on the Warsaw Pact. The SAS commitment in Northern Ireland was reduced from a squadron of 70 to a troop of about 20 men. Eventually, the men were deployed to the Province for a year. All of this allowed for greater continuity and ensured that the squadrons could concentrate on their other areas of expertise. The Group now had a troop of SAS who were held in central reserve, ready to be deployed, and three surveillance detachments. The activities of the Group were to be integrated by the Special Branch's three Tasking and Coordinating Groups (TCGs).[61]

In its efforts to assume the lead in the anti-terrorist campaign, the RUC expanded from a force of some 3,000 to over 8,300 fulltime officers and 4,500 reservists.[62] At the same time, Newman made substantial changes to the organisation. The promotion of police primacy resulted in the intelligence-gathering process being shared between Special Branch and the Criminal Investigation Division (CID). This happened in part because Special Branch had been discredited as a result of the disastrous programme of internment, which was introduced in 1971. However, it was also driven by the need to demonstrate that the policy of treating all terrorists as criminals was being carried out at all levels. As a result, Special Branch focused its efforts on running its network of informers and CID assumed responsibility for interrogating terrorist suspects. This was hardly an ideal set up and Special Branch and CID failed to cooperate effectively.[63] In an

[60] Ken Conner, *Ghost Force: The Secret History of the SAS* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1998), p.191
[61] Urban, pp.138-140
[62] Bruce Hoffman & Jennifer Morrison Taw, *A Strategic Framework for Countering Terrorism*, RAND Corporation N-3506-DOS (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1992), p.22
[63] Urban, p.20

effort to promote better cooperation between these two divisions in the RUC, Newman established a new organisation: the Regional Crime and Intelligence Unit. There were three of these units – one for each of the RUC's regional headquarters.[64]

New specialist units were also created. The RUC imitated 14 Intelligence by creating a new surveillance team called E4A. E4A personnel were trained by the SAS and MI5 and were skilled in the provision of both human and electronic intelligence. The RUC also created the Headquarters Mobile Support Unit (HMSU), which was used to neutralise terrorist suspects. In spite of the opposition of the Army, Kenneth Newman also insisted that the RUC develop a surveillance capability along the border and, in 1979, he created the Bessbrook support unit.

Coordination of these different units was managed by TCGs and was under the control of the RUC. The creation of the TCGs built on the perceived success of the Regional Crime Intelligence Units in achieving better cooperation between Special Branch and CID. It was hoped that the TCGs would create a similar spirit of cooperation between the Army and the RUC.[65] The TCGs were also intended to prevent a repeat of controversial shooting incidents carried out by the SAS in 1978. Through such an organisation, it was hoped that better command and control could be exerted over the conduct of operations.[66] There were three TCGs, each covering one of the three operational areas of 14 Intelligence. During a major operation, the TCG would consist of members of the Special Branch, E4A, the HMSU, 14 Intelligence, the SAS and MI5. According to one Army officer, the TCG became the vital nodal point in decision-making on the terrorist threat. Such was its importance that it made the committee system that existed to coordinate military, police, and political responses irrelevant, as all terrorist matters were now being referred to the TCG.[67]

An important Army development was the continuing expansion of its surveillance capability in 1977. The then CLF, Major General Dick Trant, implemented a reorganisation of the Army's surveillance capability. As a result of an earlier reorganisation, which entailed the removal of reconnaissance platoons from each battalion, these units had lost their intelligence-gathering capability. These platoons appear to have been reallocated to the CLF and were called the Northern Ireland Patrol Group (this seems to have happened in 1976). However, Trant was unhappy with this force because the soldiers were deployed for only short periods and were not properly trained.

Trant decided to introduce a Close Observation Platoon (COPs) to each residential battalion and to the short-tour battalion serving in Armagh. The COPs would take the best soldiers from the battalions and train them thoroughly in aspects of intelligence-gathering and surveillance work. The CLF and brigade commanders could use these assets anywhere in the Province and they were therefore not tied to their parent battalion.

[64] *ibid.*, p.29
[65] *ibid*., p.83
[66] Taylor, p.253
[67] Interview with Col Benest

COPs numbered about 200 personnel in total and provided basic low-level intelligence, enabling the construction of a picture of IRA ASUs' general patterns of activity.[68]

At least in theory, the Army and RUC's activities were integrated from the top down. The existing committee system evolved and matured in the era of police primacy. A security coordinator in the Northern Ireland Office oversaw the committees and directed the intelligence-gathering effort. At the top of this structure was the Security Policy Group which met once a month and was attended by the Permanent Under-Secretary, the Chief Constable and the GOC for Northern Ireland. There were two additional forums below this committee: the Security Coordinating Meeting and the Operations Group. The first of these consisted of the Assistant Under-Secretary, the Head of the Law and Order Division, the CLF, and the Chief Staff. The Operations Group was attended by the Deputy Chief Constable, the CLF and various senior staff officers from the security services. Beneath these Province-wide committees were the regional, divisional and sub-divisional action committees attended by senior Army, RUC, and Special Branch Officers.[69]

Infrastructure

The border represented a significant challenge to the security forces. It was estimated that two million men would be needed to seal the border effectively. In 1973, the number of Army border patrols was substantially reduced in an effort to limit Army casualties. They were replaced with observation posts along the border area. A number of forts were also constructed; these housed battalions deployed to guard the border areas and were set up on or near likely IRA crossing points. Similarly, RUC police stations were literally made into forts in an attempt to minimise RUC casualties.

The fortification of the border area came to attract the attention of the IRA. In the 1980s, the group devised a strategy to clear the security forces from a border area and effectively create a liberated zone. To do this, it was first necessary to remove Army and police fortified buildings and they consequently came to be a focus of IRA attacks. Equally important, civil contractors used by the security services to repair and maintain this infrastructure were also attacked and murdered. Through such action, it was hoped that building firms would be deterred from repairing these facilities. The first evidence of this strategy was the attack against Newry police station in 1985.

One key infrastructural issue exerted a negative effect on the campaign: a number of requests were made to relocate Army headquarters in existing police headquarters, but this was rarely possible because of a lack of space or due to the prohibitive cost of adapting the existing building.

Logistics

[68] Urban, p.45
[69] Mockaitis, p 117

A survey of post-tour reports indicates a general satisfaction with the provision of supplies. However, there were complaints relating to certain shortages of equipment, for example wrist microphones and FAKIR torches. More worrying was the fact that after 17 years of operations in Northern Ireland, ordinary soldiers still had to buy supplementary equipment and clothing to ensure that they could carry out their duties in the Province.[70]

Information and Networked Flow of Material and Awareness

The flow of information within the Army was operated on a 'need-to-know' principle based on the protection of IRA sources from possible exposure. As a result, the Army was by this stage of the conflict both tactically and organisationally more proficient in intelligence-gathering and the battalions were reorganised so as to boost their respective intelligence cells significantly. The principal focus of information-gathering in the battalion was the intelligence cell and, in general, all information flowed through the intelligence cells and intelligence officer within the battalion. This process relied heavily on the battalion intelligence officer and a great deal of care was taken to choose the best of the battalion's senior captains to take charge of this post.[71] Such was nature of this post that the intelligence officer quite often had a more complete picture of what was happening than the commander of the regiment! The flow of information went from the company intelligence cells up through the battalion and then brigade HQ, UK land forces HQ. From there, it would be passed to the GOC HQ and the plethora of committees that supposedly ran the war. However, the committee system, as used in Malaya, was not useful for the dissemination of information. Its function seems to have been absorbed by the TCGs. Equally important, political representation was missing at the lowest levels of the structure, which made coordination difficult.[72]

Only the minimum of information and intelligence was passed down the chain-of-command to battalions and companies on operations. Usually, the information made available merely instructed the units to avoid activity in areas where special forces were operating. More general information about activities in the Province or the emergence of a specific threat was communicated via the Province Information Net (PIN).[73]

The relationship between Special Branch and the Army limited the information flows between the two organisations. In general, Special Branch was unwilling to release information even when it might have been of operational benefit to a company or battalion commander. Because the RUC was concerned with protecting sources, its warnings – when given – were often vague and largely meaningless. In general, all organisations focused on ensuring some degree of information flow within, but more problematic was the flow of information between organisations and in this sense the TCGs fulfilled an important role.

[70] 1 Scots Guards Post Tour Report, 1987
[71] Interview with Lt-Col Crowley
[72] Interview with Col Benest
[73] Interview with Lt-Col Bruce

Perceptions of Quality of Information and Networking (Measures of Information Position)

In an attempt to improve relations between the RUC and Army during the introduction of police primacy, Newman liaised closely with the GOC, Lieutenant General House, to produce a joint directive which set out the framework for cooperation between the two organisations. The document made clear that the police would now take the lead in fighting the IRA and that all Army activity would be governed by police requirements. As such, the document explained in considerable detail how searches, arrests and even patrols were to be carried out.[74]

Whilst the Army accepted police primacy, there were many who were sceptical as to whether its realism and feasibility. From the Army's perspective, the IRA was becoming more sophisticated and there was little confidence in the ability of the RUC which was seen as lacking a sufficiently large pool of experienced manpower – a problem exacerbated by the rapid expansion of the force undertaken before and during the introduction of police primacy.[75]

It is therefore not surprising that, in spite of this directive, the quality of cooperation between the RUC and the Army varied widely from one locality to the next. This friction was sometimes caused by a misunderstanding between the two organisations over their respective roles and the circumstances under which the RUC had the authority to order the Army what or even how to do a specific task.[76]

Army-police cooperation was to worsen in the late 1970s with the appointment of Lieutenant General Sir Timothy Creasey as GOC Northern Ireland in 1978. The appointment of Creasey is interesting because of the significant role he played in the British covert war in the Omani Province of Dhofar. This campaign is cited as a classic example of British counterinsurgency and as the best example of post-imperial COIN.[77] It is clear that Creasey was not content to let the RUC take the lead in the anti-terrorist campaign against the IRA. The ambush at Warrenpoint in August 1979 gave him the excuse he needed to attack the role of the RUC and request significant changes in the conduct of the conflict. In a briefing to the Prime Minister after Warrenpoint, Creasey requested that the government agree to the imposition of selective internment, that the Army be entitled to pursue terrorists across the border and into the Republic of Ireland and, most important, that a new position of responsibility be created in the hierarchy of command overseeing the Army and the RUC's intelligence operations.[78]

[74] Hamil, p.193
[75] *ibid.*, p.231
[76] *ibid.*, p.227
[77] Martin van Creveld, *The Transformation of War* (New York, NY: Free Press, 1991), pp.1-33
[78] Hamil, p.255

In contrast, the presentation given by the Chief Constable, John Newman, warned against the dangers of extrapolating too much from one experience in one area of Northern Ireland and emphasised the importance of maintaining a balanced approach that dealt with the root causes of the insurgency. In this sense, he demonstrated that the RUC were actively engaging the Catholic community by organising retreats for people from both sides of the religious divide to talk and discuss their problems, by organising holidays for children and even by organising discos for over 20,000 teenagers every weekend![79] In essence, the RUC appeared to advocate a traditional British counterinsurgency strategy.

More general sources of friction also helped to sour the relationship, even after Creasey's departure. Some members of the RUC resented the way in which the Army carried out its business. From the perspective of the ordinary police constable, the deployment of British troops on a 4-6 month rotation seemed to encourage a more aggressive attitude than was warranted, which clearly affected community relations. Unfortunately, it was the RUC, and not the Army, that had to live with the consequences of this attitude, which caused a degree of resentment that frequently influenced the RUC's general attitude toward the Army.[80]

There was also some disagreement between the Army and the RUC over where the latter should operate. The Army believed that it was simply too dangerous to have the RUC working in areas like South Armagh. In contrast, the RUC believed that it was imperative that they establish a presence in such areas if only because they formed a vital link in communication between the Army and the Gardai in the Republic of Ireland.[81] The Army's solution to this problem was to establish its own direct communication links with the Irish Army and Gardai.

Frictions also arose over the continuing failure to align Army battalion and RUC divisional boundaries. Army TAOR frequently included more than one RUC division and problems arose when Army assets had to be moved to another division. An additional problem was that the IRA tended to focus operations along these borders because they understood that the response of the security services would thus be delayed and more difficult to coordinate.[82]

One of the most important problems affecting the cooperation between the police and the Army and the flow of information between the two was the basic mistrust that emanated from both organisations. The Army remained suspicious of collusion between the RUC and Protestant paramilitaries and was consequently reluctant to share information. Similarly, the RUC Special Branch was unwilling to share information with the Army, because it feared that the Army would compromise its sources.[83]

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[79] *ibid.*, p.256
[80] Interviews with Lt-Col Bruce, Lt Crowley & Col Benest
[81] Hamil, p.233, 242
[82] Royal Green Jackets Post Tour Report, July 1991-January 1992
[83] Interview with Lt-Col Bruce

Interestingly, the information relations between different agencies during this war bring into question not necessarily the flow of information but the relevance or quality of that information. Thus, one post-tour report argues that:

> Many of the intelligence agencies, particularly the RUC, have very little understanding of military operations. They are therefore unlikely to be able to either to place intelligence assessments in their operational context or to suggest how operations might be directed to exploit intelligence. This should be a G3 function but the structure of the Northern Ireland intelligence organisations denies the G3 staff the familiarity with information that would be necessary to overcome the problem of not having operationally orientated individuals in all intelligence posts. There were several occasions when only very detailed questioning revealed that additional information was available but was being overlooked by those responsible for assessing it. It is recommended, therefore, that either G3 staff are given better access to intelligence and to allow them make balanced assessments or that the intelligence agencies are kept up to date with operations and operational methods.[84]

The creation of specialist units like 14 Intelligence and the official deployment of the SAS in 1976 also strained relations between the Army and the RUC. Chief Constable Kenneth Newman accepted these developments because he realised that, at the time, the RUC lacked expertise and manpower in this critical area. It was also recognised that surveillance operations were very labour intensive – a whole detachment of 14 Intelligence might be needed to track one individual – and the RUC therefore saw merit in expanding the Army's surveillance capability, even in the midst of police primacy. However, the involvement of the SAS in the ambush and killing of a number of IRA suspects provided political capital to the IRA, which claimed that a shoot-to-kill policy had been sanctioned by the state. Even worse was the fact that three innocent civilians were also killed by the SAS in pre-planned ambushes between 1976 and 1978. The RUC condemned these attacks and thought the Army was utterly incompetent. The politicians also became increasingly uneasy about having the SAS engage in such a provocative role and eventually the Army was forced to suspend the use of the SAS in ambushes.[85]

It is important to note that it was not just the RUC which resented the presence of the SAS in Northern Ireland. As a former member of the regiment explains:

> We found ourselves marginalised in the conflict, as the RUC Special Branch, Army Intelligence and MI5 all jealously guarded their own Territory. Even MI6, theoretically restricted by its charter to gathering intelligence outside the British Isles, used its previous operations and connections in the Republic to muscle in on the action north of the border.[86]
>
> The SAS, reliant on the fullest intelligence for success in any operation, did its best to encourage liaison between the other groups, but in such an atmosphere of mutual

[84] 1 Royal Anglian Post Tour Report, 1990
[85] Urban, pp.62-83
[86] Conner, p.182

> suspicion and mistrust much intelligence was never passed beyond the organisation that had obtained it.[87]

Conner comments on the private collections of touts maintained by the Army, RUC and the intelligence services, but notes that none of these operations were coordinated and rarely did one organisation have knowledge of the others. Possible operations were also prevented because one of the agencies would raise concerns about the protection of their informers and, as a result, terrorist operations were sometimes allowed to occur. In these situations, the green army was given a vague warning of possible activity in their area, but nothing too specific, resulting – at worst – in civilian and military casualties.[88]

The jealousy between Special Branch and the Army was also noted in a post-tour report of a regiment that served in South Armagh:

> For the first time in many years Special Branch have become active in South Armagh – in principle a most welcome step. In practice, however, there are teething problems. Special Branch wish to have exclusive control over the acquisition of intelligence, and to disseminate it only to those who need to know. To them, the "Green Army" by their sheer numbers and the scale of their operations gather large quantities of information, and have both the ability and desire to piece together significant parts of the jigsaw. Rightly or wrongly this is resented by Special Branch, and where possible they will ease overt troops out of potentially lucrative intelligence tasks or locations … This, of course, is resented by overt commanders who have no wish to become merely reactive pawns, and will thus take every step in their power to acquire their own intelligence.[89]

In this context, the creation of the TCGs was important because they locked together the intelligence from informers with the activities of surveillance and ambushing. Although they did not resolve all of the problems highlighted above, they did improve coordination. The Army's TCG Liaison Officer was almost always a captain or major and a veteran of the SAS or 14 Intelligence. His job was to act as the principal go-between and advise the police on Army capabilities. As a result of this initiative, the Regional Head's of the Special Branch, operating through their TCG, were able to eliminate duplication of effort by Army and police surveillance squads. They ensured deconfliction, declaring areas where covert operations were underway and out-of-bounds to prevent accidental confrontations with the green army. The new arrangement also reduced the possibility of the Army or police mistakenly arresting one another's informers.

The TCG was by no means perfect and there were potential problems. In particular, Special Branch was not forced to provide or disclose all information relating to an impending attack or incident. As a result, Special Branch officers sometimes held back information to protect its IRA informers, even when this carried a greater risk of military

[87] *ibid.*
[88] *ibid.*
[89] 1 Scots Guards Post Tour Report, 1988

casualties.[90] Nonetheless, the creation of the TCG made the processing of information more efficient and the allocation of resources more rational. As a result, there was a noticeable increase in the number of arms finds. Finds of guns and explosives fell in the 1974-78 period but remained stable in 1979, even though the number of searches fell by a third. [91]

Patterns of Operational Success/Failure in Relation to Information/Networking (Measures of Decision Superiority)

The successful exploitation of information in the Northern Ireland conflict enabled the seizure of IRA arms caches; forewarning (and occasional prevention) of IRA operations; the organisation of special operations, resulting in the arrest or 'neutralisation' of insurgents; and a number of successful convictions of those who sought to take up arms against the state.

But in truth it is more difficult to identify precise incidents where information superiority led directly to specific tactical, operational and strategic success in the era of Ulsterisation because of the heavy emphasis on covert operations. However, it is also clear that the combination of human and technical surveillance and the use of an extensive informer network did exert a more general, but still important effect on the campaign. For example, according to Brendan Hughes, former IRA commander of the Belfast Brigade, technical surveillance played a critical role in containing the IRA. He readily admitted that the proliferation of listening devices, cameras and sensors brought the IRA to a standstill and made it impossible for them to move anywhere in the Province covertly.[92] In essence, the omnipresence of technical surveillance reduced the IRA's ability to launch attacks.

An important success that has only been touched upon so far concerns the constant effort made by the 'green army' to create and maintain wider social networks within the local community. It has already been established that this sometimes produced good low-level tactical intelligence and at least ensured that the Catholic community was not further alienated by events on the ground. However, we generally assume that the conflict's grounding in religious identity limited what could be achieved through such action, and in fact some have even questioned the viability of existing counterinsurgency doctrine in wars based on ethnicity and or religion.[93] This rather pessimistic view was to some extent confirmed in the interviews conducted, especially by those who served in South Armagh.[94]

[90] Urban, pp.95-96
[91] *ibid.*, p.108
[92] Taylor, p.302
[93] Chaim Kaufmann, 'Intervention in Ethnic and Ideological Wars', in Robert Art and Kenneth Waltz, *The Use of Force* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999), pp.385-405.
[94] Interview with Lt-Col Bruce

However, I think there is cause to believe that the Army's effort to create wider social networks that went beyond the RUC and other agencies in Northern Ireland was worthwhile and actually exerted an important effect at the strategic level of the campaign. This success was due to two factors. First, Catholic and Protestant communities were not homogeneous monolithic blocs. For example, not all Catholics desired the end of British rule in Northern Ireland and were instead more committed to reforming the existing political order. The electoral success of the SDLP is evidence that such a constituency existed within the Catholic community. Further evidence of internal division can be inferred from the large numbers of people in the Catholic community who were prepared to inform on the IRA. A cynic might counter that this willingness to inform was based on mercenary motives. However, even regular informers were paid a pittance for the services they provided, perhaps £20 per week.[95] Moreover, the consequences if caught must have prompted these informers to question whether any financial recompense could ever be sufficient to justify the risks involved.

The second factor relates to the failure of the IRA to consolidate and build on the wider social support that emerged as a response to the brutal incompetence of the security services and, in the early 1970s, of the Protestant paramilitaries. During this phase, the Catholic population rallied around the IRA and looked to it as the sole protector of the community. It appears that the IRA took this support for granted and assumed, based on the pattern of history in the wars of Irish liberation, that military action alone would be sufficient to rally the people and bring about the end of British rule.

In essence, it was assumed that colonial rule was so corrupt that it had alienated the people and that political mobilisation and the construction of social and political networks within the community were therefore not necessary. As Smith explains, IRA strategy was dominated by an ideology of violence, a behaviour trait that was reinforced by the split between the Official IRA and the Provisional IRA over the importance of the political campaign in relation to the military campaign.[96]

However, military action was not independently able to win the war and, indeed, the IRA's escalation of its bombing campaigns backfired in the political domain and, even more significantly, alienated elements of the Catholic population in Northern Ireland. What became very clear in the 1970s and 1980s was that although the IRA claimed to represent the Catholic working class, this relationship was not a simple one and the support of the people was not unconditional. Indeed many people found the violence associated with the movement morally questionable.[97] The British were able to exploit the vacuum created by the failure of the IRA to develop closer and more effective political and social relations within the community and, as a result, the British government's hearts and minds policy probably enjoyed more success than it would have done had the IRA implemented a long-term political military strategy. Such a strategy did eventually emerge, but it took nearly 15 years before being implemented and, even then, political and military action was not always coordinated. Certainly actions like

[95] Taylor, p.303
[96] Smith, p.108
[97] Bishop & Mallie, p.228

Enniskillen in 1987 did little to endear the IRA to the Catholic population or the wider world.

According to Urban, a measure of the effectiveness of the intelligence war can be seen in the success of the security services in seizing firearms and explosives belonging to the IRA. He notes that in the mid- to late 1970s, the number of seizures declined:

1974	465 rifles; 53,214 lbs of explosive
1976	275 rifles
1978	188 rifles; 7,966 lbs of explosives

He blames this decline on the failure of the security services to share information and the improvements made by the IRA to hide its horde of arms.

This situation was checked and reversed starting in late 1977 because of the expansion of the Army's surveillance operations, which had started in 1976 and which coincided with the RUC's efforts to enhance its surveillance operations in the Province. The increased activity from both organisations in this area began to pay dividends.[98]

Information was absolutely critical when conducting special operations and both the SAS and RUC achieved significant successes in the initiation of ambushes against IRA suspects. Conversely, a lack of good intelligence sometimes resulted in ambushes being turned into political disasters. This, to some extent, explains the controversial ambushes carried out by the SAS in the first two years of their deployment to the Province and why they were subsequently stopped.

RUC efforts on this front were no more successful. The RUC's decision to develop their own special units to replace the Army in covert operations was undermined when HMSU officers shot and killed six people in three incidents between October and December 1982. Suspicion grew that the RUC had made no effort to capture these men alive and that there was indeed a policy of shoot-to-kill. This caused a political and media storm, which the IRA did its best to capitalise on. Such was the pressure generated by the failure to convict the police officers involved and the media circus surrounding the political fiasco that the government was forced to order an official inquiry into the RUC. Unfortunately, the Stalker Inquiry did little to allay peoples' fears or suspicions and instead reinforced the belief of a conspiracy within the RUC, as Stalker was removed prematurely from the investigation.[99] Chief Constable Colin Sampson completed the report. Although both men found evidence of a cover-up within the RUC, they could find no hard evidence that the RUC operated a shoot-to-kill policy. However, Stalker implied

[98] Urban, p.24

[99] Stalker was removed from the investigation because of his association with a Manchester businessman, Kevin Taylor, who was being investigated by the police because of apparent links with organised crime. Taylor insists that these trumped up charges were initiated to get at Stalker. The fact that Stalker was removed from the inquiry in 1986 and that the case against Taylor collapsed in 1990 suggests that something was wrong. Stalker resigned from the force in March 1987 and was convinced that there was a connection between the inquiry and Taylor.

that the culture of the RUC encouraged a mindset in which officers were made to feel that certain questionable actions were desirable.[100]

Irrespective of the outcome of the report, the shootings in Armagh produced grave doubts that the RUC could be trusted to execute specialist operations of the type performed by the SAS. The future of the HMSU came under review and its role was changed to one of support for the SAS and 14 Intelligence.[101] The most spectacular of these later ambushes took place at Loughgall police station in May 1987. Eight IRA men died in this attack, which was the worst loss of terrorist life since 1972. According to one analyst of British surveillance in the Province, the Loughgall ambush demonstrated that the security forces had by the late 1980s achieved a considerable measure of success in obtaining accurate and reliable high-quality intelligence.[102] The only downside to this attack was that the SAS ambush apparently resulted in the death of the informer who had warned the RUC of the IRA's plan to attack at Loughgall. An equally impressive intelligence feat was the successful operation to stop the IRA from carrying out a bomb plot against 1 Royal Anglian Regiment in the territory of Gibraltar in 1987.[103]

Operations such as these led many to question whether the terrorists could not been stopped and arrested without the resort to military means and the IRA was to make significant political capital from sewing this question in the minds of the Catholic population and the media. The IRA certainly focused a lot of energy on winning the public-relations war and endeavoured to demonise the SAS, claiming that every terrorist killed had been unarmed or that his weapon had not been loaded or, alternatively, that he was shot without warning or executed after he had been wounded. The problem was compounded by the rather inept way in which the Army handled the media and their occasionally clumsy efforts to cover up the details of an operation, which were then quickly exposed as a tissue of lies.[104] However, putting aside the moral and legal problems created by attacks such as these, there is no doubt that such action played a significant role in attritioning the IRA's manpower, which forced the group to consider alternative means of achieving its aims.[105]

Evaluation of the Information and Networking Contribution to the Outcomes of the Operation (Measures of Campaign Effectiveness)

The systemic and environmental conditions in which the IRA existed and operated made it inevitable that its strategy for defeating the British state would be based on urban guerrilla warfare, with a heavy emphasis on the use of terror. Under these conditions, the principal centre of gravity of the organisation was knowledge and information about its

[100] John Stalker, *Stalker* (London: Harrap, 1988)
[101] Urban, p.160.
[102] Bradley Bamford, 'The Role and Effectiveness of Intelligence in Northern Ireland', *Intelligence and National Security*, 2, 4, December 2005, p.596
[103] *ibid.*
[104] Conner, p.187
[105] Newsinger, p.192

membership and its activities. As the British Army's doctrine on counter-revolutionary war stated:

> Intelligence is the key to success in counter-revolutionary operations. Accurate and reliable intelligence saves lives by making it possible for effective action to be taken by the minimum number of troops in the shortest possible time.[106]

There is little doubt that under Ulsterisation, both the Army and the RUC refined and honed their information-gathering skills both at the tactical and strategic level via patrols, technical surveillance and the use of informers. The entire system, and even the legal system, worked to generate information on what the IRA was doing. Moreover, much of this was done in a way that did not antagonise the wider population.

Acquiring information is not, however, enough: knowledge and understanding are not synonymous. As the Army's doctrine explained:

> The success of intelligence and security activities in counter-revolutionary operations depends upon understanding and this applies to the language and the topographical, political, historical, ethnological and economic background. Understanding must be the basis for the evaluation of all information and the foundation on which the intelligence and security organization is built.[107]

In this sense, the British Army enjoyed the benefits of a long association with the Province going back to the time of Oliver Cromwell, which meant that personnel had at least a vague understanding of the history surrounding the conflict. More importantly, constant exposure to the troubles in Northern Ireland over many years and sometimes decades ensured that soldiers of all ranks possessed a good understanding of the contemporary conflict. To the Army's credit, this understanding was reinforced through the training programme organised through NITAT.

Specific and detailed information was acquired through both human and technical surveillance and there is no doubt that this Gaelic version of the Orwellian state contained and fundamentally affected the behaviour of the IRA. The improved surveillance and offensive abilities of the security services during this period forced the IRA to reorganise into cells, which had a profound effect on its decision-making cycle and tempo of operations. One of the most important effects that emerged from the reorganisation of the IRA was the further decentralisation of control The introduction of the cell system reinforced an already decentralised system of command and control and, as a result, ASUs, especially in the border areas, had considerable freedom to carry out operations. Decentralisation might also be interpreted as a loss of control and Smith believes that this was why the IRA's political and military strategy began to unravel in the 1980s. In essence, rogue elements who did not agree with the official strategy launched their own campaign to undermine the political process being followed by the IRA and Sinn Fein. Smith also believes that this reorganisation explains the growing incompetence of IRA

[106] MoD, p.53
[107] *ibid.*

attacks. The increased security surrounding the IRA made it more difficult to train recruits and test equipment. Financial constraints prevented it from obtaining the most up-to-date equipment. As a result, the organisation began making mistakes, which created the impression that they were undermining Sinn Fein.[108]

The pervasive threat presented by the security services also impacted on the tempo of the IRA. By the 1980s, the organisation consisted of 300 active personnel and, because of the need to operate in strict security, attacks could take weeks and sometimes months to plan. Even then, the chances of being detected were high. In the period between February and May 1983, the IRA planned 18 missions but was forced to cancel eight of them, either because the bombs failed to detonate or because plans were compromised by the security forces surveillance operations.[109]

The organisational structure adopted clearly limited the scale and frequency of the IRA's military operations. Moreover, it did not necessarily increase the security of the organisation. Reducing the number of active IRA personnel to the low hundreds made it easier for the security services to focus their surveillance against known operatives, which left the movement just as vulnerable to the loss of personnel as under the previous system of organisation. However, because of the lack of numbers now involved in IRA violence, the movement was very sensitive to attrition and found it difficult to replace losses incurred by the security forces. It was not just the numbers of personnel that were lost; equally important was the experience of these individuals which could not be replaced. Seen in this light, the attacks carried out by the SAS were significant. Between 1978 and 1988, it killed some 30 IRA members. In the most spectacular attack, the ambush at Loughall, the SAS wiped out the East Tyrone Brigade. In essence, the move to the cell system made even modest losses hard to bear.[110]

Finally, there is evidence to suggest that the successful acquisition and utilisation of information to create intelligence forced the IRA to change its strategy and in effect shift away from a military to a political campaign, which had always been the goal of Merlyn Rees, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, 1974-76. Thus, in the view of Gerry Adams, the British had proved that they could isolate and nearly destroy a military conspiracy; it was simply a question of finding and eliminating the individuals involved. By initiating a political campaign, the IRA hoped to mobilise society, which meant that to destroy the IRA, the government would have to attack that society.[111] The available evidence suggests that the IRA failed in this endeavour.

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[108] Smith, p.178
[109] *ibid.*
[110] *ibid.*, p.188
[111] Cited in Smith, p.146

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Case Study 5 – Bosnia (1992-1996) - Dr Rod Thornton

Historical Sketch of Operation

Historical Sketch

The British government's commitment to send troops to Bosnia in 1992 as part of *Operation Grapple* put the Army in a difficult position. While the Army was *au fait* with the basic tenets and practicalities of both peacekeeping and counterinsurgency (COIN), the mission to Bosnia was of a different order. UK politicians appeared to be sending the Army to 'do something' but without giving it any real guidance as to what that 'something' should be – and all this in a region, Bosnia, where the Army had never been before, which had no cultural links with the UK and which was, moreover, a land that many through history, including Bismarck, had warned should be avoided at all costs.[1]

A reinforced battalion group (1,800) was sent to form part of UNPROFOR (United Nations Protection Force). It was deemed powerful enough to look after itself, yet small enough to be pulled out in a hurry if need be.[2] A second infantry battalion was later added along with an armoured regiment (battalion) and a logistic and engineer battalion. A Brigade Headquarters was deployed to command this force, which became known as BRITFOR (3,200 personnel). In 1995, as part of the move towards a UN rapid reaction force, an aviation squadron and an artillery troop were dispatched. The size of BRITFOR then grew from 3,500 in April 1995 to 8,500 in September 1995.[3]

The battalion group that went to Bosnia (that of 1 Cheshire) had a rather vague mission statement.[4] Its main role appeared to be to undertake convoy escort duties. Once in situ, however, it was found that convoy escort was a minor task and British troops, without any specific orders, began to adopt a more general peace-support role. However, the Cheshires and the following battalions, 1 Prince of Wales's Own (1 PWO) and 1 Coldstream Guards, had to operate within an ongoing civil war. A Peace Accord was signed in February 1994 between the Coats and Bosnjaks of Central Bosnia and the situation became calmer for incoming British battalions. The mission was then gradually more geared toward overseeing a ceasefire rather than escorting aid convoys. In January 1994, the British forces felt that they were helped in their task by the arrival of

[1] See introductory chapters of Lt-Col Bob Stewart, *Broken Lives: A Personal View of the Bosnian Conflict*, (London: Harper-Collins, 1993)
[2] Gen. Sir Michael Rose, 'The British Army in Bosnia: Facing up to New Challenges', *Army Quarterly*, Spring 1995, p.1
[3] *Operation Grapple* 6 – HQ BRITFOR End of Tour Report, October 1995, p.4
[4] It was, 'to assist UNHCR in conveying humanitarian aid to those that need it within the Vitez Sector of Operations'. 1 Cheshire Post Tour Report, 13 July 1993: Notes for OPO/1 p.1. Later battalions going to Bosnia were given a fuller mission statement of sorts: 'To facilitate the development of a durable peace within the Federation, to enhance the humanitarian assistance to the peoples of Bosnia-Hercegovina, in order to assist all the peoples of Bosnia-Hercegovina to live in conditions of relative peace and security'. From *Operation Grapple* 6 Operational Tour Report (1 Devon and Dorsets), 20 November 1995, p.1

Lieutenant-General Sir Michael Rose as the overall UN commander in Bosnia.[5] He introduced measures which eased the command structures in one sense but also complicated them in others. In 1995, UNPROFOR adopted, under Lt.-Gen. Rupert Smith, a tougher attitude. Artillery and air power was readied to deal with Serb intransigence over the situation around Sarajevo. Finally, in December 1995, a NATO Implementation Force (IFOR) was deployed to support the implementation of the Dayton Agreement.

British troops in central Bosnia operated without any real kind of guidelines, let alone doctrine; there was none for this kind of mission. Operational modalities and SOPs were developed 'on the hoof' by officers on the ground. The commander of the Cheshires, Lt.-Col. Bob Stewart 'made up' the mission statement, which 'built on decades of COIN experience'.[6] Despite initial qualms over the task the Army had been given, troops were on the whole perceived to have performed well in an operation that, 'sadly…was to bear no resemblance at all to traditional "beach barbecue" UN soldiering'.[7]

The Army set up its own intelligence base from scratch. This was basically achieved through the use of liaison officers who became familiar with their area and the leading 'players' therein. Links were developed with indigenous commanders among the warring 'factions'. The Army established quite close relationships with a host of other bodies which were involved in the British area of operations (UN, UNHCR, UNICEF, Red Cross, NGOs, etc.) and other units such as special forces (SF).[8]

Links, too, between senior officers and politicians were important. Though a mere battalion group, the unit in Bosnia was visited by the most senior of generals and politicians (including the Prime Minister). The support and will to succeed were immense, but there seems to have been very little interference in the way the Lieutenant-Colonel (originally) in charge in central Bosnia operated; even from 'brigade' headquarters in Split. It was his show to run and his to get on with, despite the huge political ramifications should things go wrong.

The British battalion was, to begin with, centred on Vitez in central Bosnia (HQ BRITBAT). It had company outposts at Gornji Vakuf and Tuzla, and had various locations on the trunk route from Split up to Tuzla. Command elements were based at Split (HQ BRITFOR) on the coast and, on the UN side, at Kiseljak (HQ UN BiH Command) and Sarajevo (UNHQ). (This UN set-up came about because there had, for political reasons, to be a HQ in the capital, but as Sarajevo was mostly cut off, it made sense to have another HQ just outside the capital to enable freer movement). The fact that *both* Sarajevo and Kiseljak could be cut off by fighting (and snow) meant that they often had to concentrate more on their own situations and less on the running of UNPROFOR

[5] Col P. G. Williams, 'Bosnia: A Commanding Officer's Perspective'. Undated. Unsourced. Williams was the CO of the third battalion into Bosnia – 1 Coldstream Guards.
[6] P. G. Williams, 'Liaison – The Key to Success in Central Bosnia', *Army Quarterly*, June 1995
[7] Col P. G. Williams, 'Tactical Command in Bosnia: *Operation Grapple* 3 – Nov 1993-May 1994', Lecture to Staff College, Camberley, 22 September 1994
[8] See 1 Cheshire Group Post Operational Tour Report, 13 July 1993

in the rest of Bosnia. This left local commanders with much latitude, which actually 'proved to be an adequate method of command and control'.[9]

As the UN mission progressed, more troops were sent into Bosnia and, by 1995 and under the stewardship of Lt.-Gen Smith, the rules of engagement began to harden. IFOR replaced the UN command structure in December 1995 and British forces took command of Multinational Division South-West (MND(SW)). This division included six battlegroups of which three were non-British. The original IFOR mission was to oversee compliance by the 'factions' with the Dayton agreement. This changed, however, in June 1996 and moved more towards reconstruction activities. Such activities were very much facilitated by funding from the Overseas Development Agency (ODA – now known as the Department for International Development (DfID)).[10]

The operation in Bosnia was quite intense. The Cheshires faced a situation where there was 'rarely…a day when a British callsign ha[d] not come under fire'.[11] The second battalion group (1 PWO) reported killing 'about 70' in defending their convoys. Even the third battalion group (1 Coldstream Guards) was engaged by the 'factions' on over 200 occasions.[12]

Chronology

1992

14 September	UN authorises peace troops for Bosnia.
October-November	Move of 1 Cheshire Group to Bosnia.

1993

31 March	*Operation Deny Flight* authorised.

1994

25 February	Peace Accord between Croats and Bosnjaks.
April	Air attacks on Gorazde.

1995

11 July	Massacres at Srebrenica.
14 December	Dayton Accords.
20 December	NATO takes over from UN. IFOR comes into play.

[9] Williams (Undated)
[10] HQ MND SW Post Operational Tour Report – *Operation Resolute* 2, 26 June-17 Dec 1996. January 1997) p.1
[11] 1 Cheshire Group Post Operational Tour Report, 13 July 1993, p.A-1-2.
[12] Williams (1994)

Defence Lines of Development

Training

Northern Ireland experience provided a basis for dealing with the situation in Bosnia. But the foundations of the approach were built much earlier and relied on the general 'character' of British troops: peace support was not a 'dark art' since it resembled much that the Army had been already doing for decades.

The first unit going to Bosnia (1 Cheshires) could do little mission-specific training prior to the operation because the operation was something of a mystery. Basic Northern Ireland skills were brushed up. Follow-on battalions were able to note what the Cheshires had to do and therefore concentrated on liaison work, operating with interpreters, vehicle checkpoint (VCP) drills, mine drills, etc. These battalions tended to undergo a very focused and efficient training package; because of the small size of the British Army, there was, as one commander in Bosnia put it, a 'close link between those who are building up the operational experience, the training organisation that needs to communicate the lessons from the operational experience, and those needing to learn those lessons as they prepare for operations'. 'We are very quick', he went on, 'at turning tactical experience into techniques and adjusting the way we operate'.[13]

As in Northern Ireland, lessons were passed on by members of the battalion serving in Bosnia. These would leave the operational zone and visit the incoming battalion in order to provide briefings. Battalions seem to have been sending their best people on these visits to ensure that the incoming unit receive the best possible preparation. This was seen as due to 'moral pressure' to do well by fellow soldiers – who, in such a small army, would doubtlessly be acquaintances or future acquaintances. Key personnel from the incoming battalion would also conduct reconnaissance visits to the theatre.[14]

Some saw that this British way of operating stood in contrast to US methods of training. The latter appeared to train so that they could get things right (i.e. for testing purposes) while the British concentrated on training for the specifics of operations without anyone ever testing them.

In Army terms, the training regimes would be quite straightforward and built on decades of experience. In essence, not much training was required (just as battalions based in Germany were sometimes only given three days' notice to deploy to Belfast). In other services, though, the process was not quite so smooth. *Sea Harrier* pilots, for instance, who were called on to support troops on the ground in 1994, were given insufficient training time prior to their mission. They had three weeks' notice but most of that time was spent on board ship transiting to Bosnian waters. When employing multi-role combat

[13] Brig. A. Denaro, 'Peacekeeping with the UN: Some Thoughts Post-UNPROFOR', *British Army Review*, August 1996
[14] Rose

aircraft, pilots had to practice all the possible roles of the aircraft prior to deployment. They therefore had to work at both their close air support (CAS) and air interdiction skills. This left insufficient time to iron out glitches in CAS procedures and meant that problems cropped up, not in training, but when the *Harriers* were on bombing runs against Serb tanks and facing a surface-to-air missile (SAM) threat. When the *Sea Harrier*'s bomb-aiming system malfunctioned in operation at Gorazde in 1994, the pilots had to make more than one run at their targets. They thus exposed themselves too often to ground fire. One *Harrier* was shot down. Moreover, on peace-support missions, pilots naturally want to carry out bombing with a high degree of accuracy and therefore hold back when situations are not 'optimal'. Such hesitation also contributed to the *Harrier* loss.[15]

The very uniqueness of the Bosnia situation bears comment. There was no doctrine and, as one CO commented, 'I was unaware of anything that I had learnt here [at the Staff College] that was of much help to me in Bosnia'.[16]

Equipment

Bosnia saw the first operational use of the *Warrior* armoured personnel carrier/fighting vehicle (APC/FV) – 45 were issued to per battalion group. It proved to be very effective and robust (95% availability) and 'superbly reliable'[17] (although performing badly in icy conditions).[18] Lighter tracked vehicles (*Spartan*, *Scimitar* – 90% availability) were also useful in that could use roads inaccessible to the heavier *Warriors* not. A mix of tracked vehicles was thus very useful. The 432 range of APCs (from the 1960s) were largely unreliable and a major consumer of spares. The huge track mileage accumulated by vehicles – and unplanned for in terms of movement in Germany – led to a general shortage of spares.

The best liaison vehicle proved to be the standard unarmoured land-rover. There was an overall shortage of such vehicles given the multifarious demands of liaison duties (so different from the mission in Germany). The RB44 truck was a failure.

The radios proved to be unfit for purpose. There were 'chronic communications problems'.[19] Officially, they were 'poor but workable'[20] or 'difficult'.[21] One OC said that his CO, only 50 miles away at Vitez, 'might as well have been in a different country'

[15] The *Harrier* pilots from *HMS Ark Royal* had three weeks' notice to move. They had not practiced CAS for a year prior to the mission. They had not been told why they were going to Bosnian waters and had to practise all forms of combat. Nick Richardson, *No Escape Zone* (London: Little, Brown and Co, 2000), p.7
[16] Williams (1994)
[17] This was reported by several battalions. See, for instance, *Operation Grapple* 6 – HQ BRITFOR End of Tour Report, October 1995
[18] 1 Cheshire Post Tour Report, 13 July 1993, p.2
[19] Williams (1994)
[20] 1 Cheshire Post Tour Report, 13 July 1993, p.A-1-2
[21] 1 Royal Regiment of Fusiliers Post Tour Report, 29 February 1996, p.3

such were the communications difficulties.[22] The VHF and HF systems were designed to operate in Germany where short distances between units and sub-units would be the norm and where the country would at worst be 'rolling'. In Bosnia, sub-units were actually very far apart and the terrain was 'difficult'. Communications were thus quite poor when normal radios were being used. Moreover, the troops often lacked the skills necessary to set up HF antennae.[23] (Later battalions made extensive use of re-broadcast to improve radio communications). The situation was somewhat ameliorated with the use of Satcom systems such as MENTOR and MAPPER. MENTOR had limited availability of lines and actual conversation was difficult. MAPPER provided only data communications and required high levels of maintenance and manpower. Moreover, it provided no link within Bosnia (the UN at Kiseljak did not have MAPPER or MENTOR). The Inmarsat system was insecure and access was again limited. It was also affected by atmospherics. Moreover, satellite systems were themselves hindered by the terrain and by wooded country. Also the bouncing around of vehicle-mounted satellite systems on the difficult roads of Bosnia caused malfunctions. Euromux was suggested early in the operation as a means of widening access to satcom assets and it was deployed in the IFOR period.[24]

There was no real need to maintain secure communications since there were no secrets to keep from any of the 'factions'. In fact, monitoring of nets seemed to be welcomed since it would show that UNPROFOR had nothing to hide and was trying to be impartial.

Communications improved in the IFOR period when the Ptarmigan system was removed and replaced by secure commercial radios (SCR) and by Euromux.[25] Communications with the International Police Task Force (IPTF) improved when their Motorola telephones were altered so as to be compatible with the Army net.

However, a unit that experienced the change from UN to NATO command complained that they could not do their job properly as almost all their telephones were removed during the changeover, along with all their Motorola telephones, VSAT and PTT. Thus any messages that needed to be sent over a secure network had to be physically delivered by hand, involving a six-hour round road trip! In many ways, the change from UN to NATO was a big step backwards in terms of operational efficiency.[26]

Lack of GPS caused many difficulties and occasionally led some vehicles to drive into front lines and thereby attract fire. Less high-order items such as photocopiers are vital in peace support missions – especially given the degree of liaison that is essential. But as photocopiers had not been 'standard issue equipment in Germany, the Army lacked the personnel to maintain and repair these machines, which caused some difficulties.

[22] Interview with Brig. Graham Binns (then OC of B Coy 1 PWO), by DCBM/J6/PA Consulting
[23] *Operation Grapple* 6 Operational Tour Report (1 Devon and Dorsets), 20 November 1995, p.5
[24] 1 Cheshire Group Post Operational Tour Report, 13 July 1993, p.A-1-2
[25] HQ MND SW Post Operational Tour Report – *Operation Resolute* 2, 26 June-17 Dec 1996, Januar 1997, pp.13-14
[26] 1 Royal Regt of Fusiliers Post Tour Report, 29 February 1996, p.6

Some mix and matching of equipment had to take place. During the late UN/IFOR period, when 105mm artillery pieces were deployed, they needed to be towed by a vehicle which had some protection. The original *Steyr* trucks were replaced by *Saxons* (light, wheeled APCs) and then finally by 432s (heavier APCs). These changes caused severe logistical difficulties.[27]

The ability of the British Army to deploy a reinforced battalion group with all adequate provisions was occasionally called into question. With the Cheshires, 400 troops had to spend a winter under canvas because accommodation units took so long to reach Vitez. The Devon and Dorsets lamented the inability, compared to the French Foreign Legion, of British forces to outfit locations with electricity generators, mobile lavatories, etc.[28] [The French appeared to have better everything – from toilets to communications].

Personnel

The original troop strength of 1,800 increased to 3,500 by 1995, and to 8,500 by the end of that year. Each battalion in Bosnia served for six months and the meantime between operational deployments was regulated. However, skilled personnel within the combat service support role, such as engineers, often found themselves serving virtually back-to-back tours, with a six month tour following on from another within three months.

The quality of personnel was vital in terms of building up the information networks that came to be established (see below). As the CO of the Coldstream Guards (the third battalion into Bosnia) put it, 'Like everything in Bosnia, success or failure was personality-driven'.

The increased level of reporting to the various command elements and agencies involved meant that there was always a shortage of clerks. There was also an overall lack of trained personnel to handle MAPPER and PAMPAS GRID. Many had to be trained in situ.[29]

Information

To begin with, the Army had no information regarding the interior of Bosnia. Initial reconnaissance parties arrived in Croatia and merely drove off into Bosnia to meet people and ask who the local leaders were. The Army had to liaise with the UN itself, with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), with DfID (previously ODA), MI6/SIS, various official aid agencies (UNHCR, ICRC, etc) and numerous unofficial NGOs. Where Bosnia was concerned, the FCO and DfID had different agendas and their

[27] *Opponent Grapple* 6 – HQ BRITFOR End of Tour Report, October 1995
[28] *Opponent Grapple* Post Tour Reports of 1 Cheshire and 1 D and D
[29] *Opponent Grapple* 6 – HQ BRITFOR End of Tour Report, October 1995

relationship was strained (FCO more hands off, DfID more hands on: 'FCO wanted protection of convoys, DfID wanted protection of people').[30]

UNHCR and UN Civil Advisory cells were situated in all major military HQs (not just the British one) and UN representatives would attend all military briefings and conferences at each level of command (above company). The Cheshires established a system of liaison officers (LOs) who would talk to all parties in the conflict so that aid could be delivered more easily, but also so that political links were maintained. The battalion CO's LOs would work with major agencies such as UNHCR, ICRC, etc., while the OCs' LOs would talk to whoever was in a company area: commanders of local militias (sometimes of all three sides), mayors and dignitaries, and local representatives of aid agencies. The battalion would be officer-heavy so that company operations would not suffer unduly given the need to provide LOs. In truth, though, the ongoing operational activities would normally involve only small packets of vehicles and would thus not require officer input.

COs and OCs would pick their LOs carefully. They had to be effusive, with charm, and a capacity, it needs be said, for 'alcoholic intake'. The best information would come and the best relationships would be established when all concerned were suitably inebriated. (This was mentioned and commented on at the ICTY at The Hague).[31] Here, female interpreters were very helpful because (given the Slav culture) no-one expected them to drink and be able to operate effectively. Females also reduced tension. Yet, as with male interpreters, liaising was most effective when the 'locals' (i.e. non-military staff) did not belong to the 'wrong tribe'. LOs also had to be very aware of local customs and could not afford to offend. However, with sufficient charm, officers could often overcome inadvertent *faux pas*. The point here is that for information to flow freely the ambience must be right and much of that ambience is created by choosing personnel very carefully.

In this vein, the Army was lucky in that the CO of the Cheshires was a larger-than-life figure whose energy and very presence across a large swath of central Bosnia put people – from Serb to UNHCR – at their ease. He was a 'natural'.[32] The amount of information he was able to acquire was extremely helpful. He went everywhere and met everyone of note. He also invited local commanders and dignitaries to dinners within the British camp. He cut corners, he 'pushed the envelope', but his communication skills were a vital asset. The networks he established were invaluable both for his own battalion and for subsequent units.

The officers of the Cheshires were also well served by the character and timbre of the soldiers of that particular battalion. They were happy-go-lucky, easy-going and quick to engage with locals. They reflected their CO in many ways. They undertook individual and collective acts of kindness that went totally against orders but which endeared them to the locals (Bosnjak and Croat in this case). Much of their '*laissez-faire*' attitude was

[30] Interview with Gilbert Greenall, DfID
[31] www.un.org/icty/transe14/981102it.htm accessed 15 Nov 2005
[32] Monty Woolley, *Cleanse Their Souls: Peace-Keeping in Bosnia's Civil War 1992-1993* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword, 2004), p.35

due to the planned disbandment of the battalion, which made its soldiers feel as if they had nothing to lose (the battalion was later 'reprieved').[33]

One respondent referred to the CO of the Cheshires as being 'totally out of control'.[34] And, to a degree, so was his battalion. But this was probably no bad thing given the task faced by the troops. Once his troops realised that their intended task of escorting convoys was not really required, they adapted as British soldiers tend to do and began looking around to see what they could do: they see a void and would fill it. They took an interest in protecting local communities from the depredations of opponents, they sought to fix essential services in both central Bosnia and Sarajevo; they tried to help the likes of orphanages and asylums, and generally enhance living conditions in their areas. Once this process had started there was no stopping it. Troops began to engage in *de facto* peace support without ever being given any orders to do so. Despite senior officers in London saying the troops' sole mission was to escort convoys, events on the ground were actually taking it in another direction.[35]

The handover to the follow-on battalion (1 PWO) took about a week. The incoming IO and AIO had been given the 'milinfosums' (military information summaries) for the past three months prior to deployment.

It bears noting that with the Cheshires, '*all* information collected was based on human intelligence (HUMINT) sources'. Despite being promised information from technical sources, this did not materialise.[36]

1 PWO lacked the same effusiveness and were very much geared to doing their job in a disciplined fashion. In part, this reflects the attitude of their CO, who seems clearly to have been told to adopt a less high-profile role (i.e. in not appearing on the TV news every night as his predecessor seemed to do). He had a 'media plan', which Stewart did not.[37] In part, it also seems to be a reflection of the recruiting ground of this particular battalion – Yorkshire – where dourness may be seen as coming as standard.[38]

While this may seem a trivial matter, the attitude of the PWO had negative effects on the degree of networking and communication passage across central Bosnia. Local militia leaders, so used to dealing with one type of soldier and commander, were suddenly faced with a different and less endearing group following the battalion changeover in May 1993. Moreover, the fact that the PWO kept a low profile meant that they were less Bosnia-savvy. They tended to get into more scrapes than the Cheshires because they had less of a 'feel' for the place – they lacked information. This was most evidently reflected in the fact that the CO of the PWO, who spent most of his time in barracks out of the media spotlight, was unaware of some operational subtleties. Called out to deal with a

[33] Personal recollection of author
[34] Interview with Gilbert Greenall, DfID
[35] See Stewart, Woolley
[36] 1 Cheshire Group Post Operational Tour Report, 13 July 1993, p.C-2
[37] Col Alistair Duncan, 'Mixing with the Media: Guidelines for Operational Commanders', *British Army Review*, 110, August 1995, pp.17-25
[38] Personal recollection of author (who was also from a Yorkshire regiment)

recalcitrant road-block, he decided to put negotiation aside and force his way round it in his *Warrior*. Soldiers who had spent more time on the ground would have told him that any roadblock would be protected on its flanks by mines. Sure enough, mines were struck and the *Warrior* badly damaged.[39] This act also had strained relationships and, thus, hindered the free movement of aid convoys.

Information-sharing also comes from respect. Troops can gain respect from aid agencies by proving themselves efficient and, more importantly, from 'opponents' by occasional uses of force (e.g. returning fire when targeted, but remaining restrained in the level of that fire). Negotiating is always best done from a position of strength, but not from one of overwhelming power. Here the *Warrior* armoured vehicle was especially useful. It was big enough to command respect but not so big as to be destructively intimidating (tanks, for instance, tended to produce vibrations which damaged homes and which lost much goodwill).[40]

Relations between the Serbs and the British battalions consisted mostly of exchanges of fire, but near Travnik proper contact was established. The contact was enabled by the personal acquaintance between the BiH (Moslem) commander in Travnik and his Serb opposite number across the front lines. As a result, the BiH commander became a conduit for liaison between British and Serb forces. With contact made and a ceasefire agreed, British forces could cross the lines and conduct negotiations with Serb commanders. This contact led to many more and to significantly reduced animosities between Serbs and Moslems in that particular region.[41]

The communications system between British camps was run by groups of Dutch signallers. They also maintained communications with other UN units – of whatever nationality – across Bosnia, who would also have Dutch signallers attached. This very much simplified radio communications across the UN in Bosnia. British communications with their own sub-units was patchy, given the terrain and the fact that the equipment operated poorly (VHF Clansman). Links with both command elements in Split (HQ BRITFOR) and Kiseljak (HQ UN BiH) were often down. Communications between battalion HQ in Vitez (BRITBAT) and company locations were also bad and were often reliant on vulnerable phone lines. This lack of communications meant a lack of direction, which actually often played to the benefit of commanders anxious to do the 'own thing' within their locations. One battalion (1 Royal Regiment of Fusiliers) actually welcomed the fact that communications were difficult since it meant more 'mission command'. However, they lost some degree of this latitude once they became part of IFOR, on 20 December 1995, and changed from UN to NATO control.[42]

In purely military terms, information-sharing outside BRITBAT always worked best with Anglophone officers attached to the UN (US, Canadian, Australia, New Zealand). Their presence at UNHQ in Kiseljak and at UNHQ in Sarajevo, especially, eased the

[39] *ibid*
[40] *ibid*
[41] See Woolley and from personal recollection.
[42] 1 Royal Regiment of Fusiliers Post Tour Report, 29 February 1996, p.3

relationship between the UN and the British. Because the British battalion COs were often of a similar age and rank (lieutenant-colonel) as their Anglophone counterparts, they often enjoyed a better rapport with them (despite their nationality) than they did with those of their known army at HQ BRITFOR in Split. Split was set up as a conventional brigade-level HQ (with majors in situ) and not to 'provide a peer groups of SO1s'. Thus the 'kindred spirits' were in Kiseljak and not Split. The ability to 'schmooze' led to an 'excellent' relationship between Kiseljak and the British battalions.[43]

Battalion 'O' Groups hardly ever happened. Road communications were so bad that it was deemed too time-consuming to gather OCs together. Moreover, companies focused mostly on their own area tasks and therefore felt that there would have been little to be gained through coordination. Companies generated their own intelligence and acted on it. The companies did not really need any intelligence from higher formations but merely sent what they had acquired up the chain. This changed, of course, in the IFOR period when the monitoring of the Dayton Accords required information from other assets.

In the UN period, companies would get information from HQ in Split and from the UN in Sarajevo. This latter information would be sent from Sarajevo to Kiseljak and from there to Split, to Vitez and then to company locations. But most local information would come from the activities of liaison officers and patrols. There tended to be patrols of convoy routes rather than the actual escorting of the convoys themselves. In patrolling the routes, likely flashpoints could be covered *and* contact made with locals on an *ad hoc* basis; this meant that British troops would not just sail through regions stuck to their convoy duties but instead make contact with the locals. The knowledge gained from such patrols would help target subsequent G5 missions.[44] Other information would come from members of the European Community Monitoring Mission (ECMM, 4-8 man teams), SF, UK Liaison Officers (UKLOs), UNHCR representatives, UN Military Observers (UNMOs),[45] from convoys passing through (British bases would be on trunk routes), from the media and from representatives of NGOs. The ICRC representatives would also talk to the Army, but in private and never in public gaze.

The current G5 capability within the British Army was actually developed from experience in Bosnia. Bosnia led to creation of a G5 Group (50 personnel) over a period of 13 months. To act in a 'holistic' manner, G5 has now come to be part of the operational modalities of the Army. The British Civil Affairs teams are similar to those in the US military, though smaller and driven by a different philosophy: 'the US regard as specialist many of the functions we expect of the general staff'.[46] In the British Army, 'double-hattedness' has to be present given the size of this army and its desire to take on many tasks.

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[43] Williams (undated)

[44] Lt T. E. Crowfoot, 'A Day in the Life of a Subaltern: Op Grapple – 1PWO Group', *British Army Review*, 106, April 1994, pp.18-21

[45] The UNMOs were independent and controlled by HQ UNMO in Zagreb with intermediate Mission HQs. Lt-Col J. D. Deverell, 'The Role of United Nations Military Observers in a Peace Support Mission', *British Army Review*, 115, April 1997, pp.12-20

[46] Maj. C. G. Nobbs, 'G5/Civil Affairs: A Short Term Fix or a Long Term Necessity?' *British Army Review*, 115, April 1997, p.55

The time spent in Bosnia also meant that a relationship was formed for the first time on operations with DfID. This had not existed before.

There was a 'combined and unified approach' with MI6. MI6 could not operate without information from the military so MI6 handed over information themselves. There is however no evidence that such information ever reached company locations. SF worked closely with battalion officers but initially had very poor communications back to Hereford in the UK (home base). Their satellite dish set up in the back of their trucks (RB44s) rarely worked.

It was the Army that was generating the vast majority of the information from their liaison contacts all across central Bosnia. Very little was coming from the top down. And, in essence, all the Army needed was general information that would make its task easier at a low level. It was not overly concerned with the 'big picture'. According to most sources, receiving imagery from technical sources would in this context have been 'nice', but not essential. Again, this changed in the IFOR period, when more intelligence assets, especially US, were made available.

The media were a good source of information and had to be cultivated. Lt.-Col Stewart called them a 'very useful adjunct to our armoury'.[47] The press was often invited for drinks in mess bars in British camps. This meant that while good information could be obtained from media personnel who had been out 'on the ground', it also meant that 'loose talk' in the bar from officers occasionally made its way into the press. The press was often invited to film meetings and to the agreements made with local 'factions', mostly as witnesses, which was seen to make such agreements 'more binding'. While relationships with the media were very good on the whole, troops on the ground suffered when the government in London decided that it needed to take certain measures to make itself look good in the face of media pressure. One such measure was the escorting of sick children out of Sarajevo for medical treatment in 1994. Troops on the ground were then left with anxious parents all over central Bosnia wanting their sick children taken for treatment abroad. Impartiality was thus lost. Governments and troops in situ have to coordinate actions. Moreover, if the media pick up on any lack of coordination, they will widen the breach through negative reporting.[48]

There was much thought put into disseminating information to the home or UK audience in order to put the right message across. A Public Information (P INFO) cell was established within the Battalion Group. Little thought, however, went into getting the message of UNPROFOR across to *local* audiences – which, in terms of mission accomplishment, was more vital. Examples of success had to be shown and explanations put forward as to why things were sometimes going wrong. This would have backed up the general goal of 'persuading' people to accept what UNPROFOR was doing rather

[47] Stewart, p.323.
[48] Duncan. Each soldier on *Opponent Grapple* was issued with a one-page guide to media "dos and don'ts". (Aide Memoire, Operation GRAPPLE and Operation HANWOOD, Army Code 71537 Rev 2/93, HQDT/18/35/98. p.28-1).

than forcing them to do so. There was little use of TV, radio, newspapers, and leaflets in the UNPROFOR period.[49]

However, following the UN-NATO changeover in December 1995, the UK deployed 15 (UK) Psy Ops Group to MND(SW) – a first in UK operations. Representatives were established at SHAPE, Theatre HQ, HQ ARRC (Allied Rapid Reaction Corps) and HQ MND(SW) at Gornji Vakuf. Only 12-14 personnel were however sent. They formed part of IFOR's Information Campaign (IIC). The focus was on reassurance rather than persuasion. Coordination was carried through with the P INFO people who were already in theatre and both – PSYOPS and P INFO – were brought together under the command of a colonel. A more sophisticated operation thus took shape with the help of US and other NATO partners. However, the creation of new newspapers, radio and TV programmes naturally caused problems with the indigenous purveyors of news, who were used to controlling the media. Tensions resulted.[50]

The British PSYOPS conducted in the IFOR period were considered to be too 'unstructured' since there was no doctrine to cover such operations. Proper doctrine was called for. In contrast, the US PSYOPS approach was seen as too 'top down'. With two very different systems in operation 'conflict between the two was unavoidable'.[51]

The MND(SW) (or divisional) level lacked HUMINT, signal intelligence (SIGINT) and imagery intelligence (IMINT) assets. But theatre assets were made available to the division since the mission now was to keep an eye on the 'factions'. These assets consisted of an EW troop, US airborne video imagery capabilities, HUMINT support from the Joint Field Intelligence Unit (JFIU) and later the Allied Military Intelligence Battalion. But still the 'majority of information and intelligence…came from sources at the tactical level', including outside agencies such as the ECMM and NGOs.[52]

Correct formats for information flow were occasionally seen to break down under pressure in Bosnia. Although ground forces were rarely under heavy pressure, the air environment of *Operation Deny Flight* during the UNPROFOR period revealed a breakdown in procedures that had worked in training but were less effective in operation. The lack of correct voice procedures, which can be a nuisance in training, becomes a crucial failing when 'opponents' (i.e. the Serbs) may be trying to break into voice communications. In the NATO environment, where the accents of many nations are on the net, correct voice procedures were seen as vital to maintain radio discipline.[53] Information flow was also lacking as two Royal Navy (RN) *Sea Harriers* were told by a NATO AWACs to engage two unidentified aircraft. These turned out to be Royal Air

[49] Maj. R. M. Lyman, 'Civil Information in Peacekeeping: Lessons from Bosnia, 1992-94', *British Army Review*, 110, August 1995, pp.71-74
[50] Lt-Col D. J. A. Stone, '"Out of the Shadows…": The Re-emergence of the United Kingdom's Military Psychological Operations Capability Since 1945', *British Army Review*, December 1996, pp.3-12
[51] HQ MND SW Post Operational Tour Report – *Operation Resolute* 2, 26 June-17 Dec 1996 (Jan 1997) p.23
[52] *Ibid*, pp.26-35
[53] Richardson, p.137

Force (RAF) *Jaguars* who were in an operational zone allegedly without clearance. Missiles were not fired only because visual contact confirmed the nature of the aircraft.[54]

Moreover, when a RN *Sea Harrier* was being called in by SF personnel under fire in Gorazde in 1994 to engage Serb tanks, the issuing and verification of authentication took and the response was delayed. Such tardiness helped contribute to the loss of one *Sea Harrier*, as it held position over targets for too long and itself became a target.[55] The 'nine-line brief' normally given by a Forward Air Controller (FAC) to an incoming aircraft also had to be dispensed with, given time constraints. As the *Sea Harrier* pilot who was shot down put it: 'When it's your troops who are on the ground, when there's someone there crying out for help in your own language, the rule book goes out of the window'.[56]

Doctrine and Concepts

There had been no doctrine for Bosnia in 1992, but this did not cause any real concern. As one battalion CO put it, 'Whatever else, what we did was not consciously driven by doctrine'. The 'doctrine' that later came to be written (*Wider Peacekeeping*), based on the Bosnia experience, was actually very cautious in tone. There was a general concern that the Army was in 1992-1993 being sucked into a task – peace support – that had the capacity of becoming actual war-fighting. *Wider Peacekeeping* sounded a warning note in this regard and stressed general peacekeeping principles of consent, impartiality and the avoidance of the use of force in any strength. This doctrine, once published, was also widely disseminated to the public (a first for a military doctrine), as if the Army wanted to explain to those who advocated the greater use of British troops in worldwide PSOs why missions such as Bosnia were so dangerous. *Wider Peacekeeping*, indeed, had 'significant influence' on UN peacekeeping approaches as its caution reverberated with a general reluctance in the UN to do any more operations like Somalia and Bosnia.[57]

There was something of a disconnect between writers of doctrine back in the UK, who wanted to stress caution, and those in the field who felt that such missions could be accommodated within the basic British approach to low-intensity warfare. Indeed, the MND(SW) post-operational tour report makes specific mention of *Wider Peacekeeping* as being 'too prescriptive'.[58] *Wider Peacekeeping* was very soon scrapped and then replaced by the less cautious doctrine, *JWP 3-50, Peace Support Operations* in 1996.

Concepts of operation are considered elsewhere.

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[54] *ibid.*, p.123
[55] *ibid.*, pp.136-40
[56] *ibid.*, p.233
[57] Rod Thornton, 'The Role of Peace Support Operations Doctrine in the British Army', *International Peacekeeping*, 7/2, Summer 2000, pp.41-62
[58] HQ MND SW Post Operational Tour Report – *Operation Resolute*, 2, 26 June-17 Dec 1996, Januar 1997, pp.2-11

Organisation

The UNPROFOR Battalion Group had main positions at Vitez and Gornji Vakuf, with widely spread outposts on the road from Split to Tuzla. These were later expanded to include Zepce and Gorazde. MND(SW) operated at various locations in south-west Bosnia with a HQ at Gornji Vakuf.

There was a problematic C^2 structure. While organisation was patently complicated by the communications difficulties, more profound differences were also evident. Basically, there was no unity of command. HQ BRITBAT was at Vitez and under the control of a British brigadier at HQ BRITFOR in Split. This British chain of command had to compete with a UN one – HQ BiH Command at Kiseljak and HQ UNPF in Sarajevo. When Gen. Rose arrived to take command of UNPROFOR in early 1994, he simplified the structure by removing the HQ at Kiseljak so that there was only one UNHQ. As more troops were arriving in theatre, he also streamlined command arrangements by setting up two one-star commands centred on Gornji Vakuf (Sector South West) and Tuzla (Sector North East). This was actually unpopular with battalion commanders as it created another layer of command between Rose and his COs on the ground 'adding spurious nuances to perfectly clear directions from Gen. Rose'. Choosing such an unimportant town as Gornji Vakuf as a HQ also complicated the liaising with aid agencies since none of them bothered to co-locate there.[59]

The tension between British and UNHQs over control of the British troops in Bosnia was always evident. It was actually easier, for instance, for the UN to have control because the HQ at Vitez was only 30 miles from Kiseljak (Split was 250 miles away). The communications were often so bad that this physical proximity allowed for more liaising with the UN than with the British HQ. Thus more control was established. Kiseljak also appeared to have a more 'hands on' feel for the local situation and contain more 'kindred spirits' than Split.

Engineers were vital. They did not just enhance aid delivery (building roads, etc.) but they also helped relationships with locals – they dug wells, built structures, removed mines and obstacles quickly – so that 'normality' was enhanced. The engineer assets were under British control and not UN (as were medics, logisticians, signallers and a medium reconnaissance squadron (*Scimitar* light tanks)). But this also meant that they were under the control of Split and not the CO of the battalion in whose area they operated[60] This led to some friction as the both the UN and the CO were fully cognizant of the importance of such elements in creating a positive image. Engineers were always in short supply since they were being asked, in peace support mission, to do far more than they would as part of their 'normal' Cold-War procedures.

The regimental system and the shared operational experience of the units involved resulted in generally high levels of confidence. This confidence breeds trust, which works up the command chain and down it.

[59] Williams (Undated)
[60] Williams (1994)

In the later IFOR mission, the multinational make-up of MND(SW) was 'not problem free'. Language difficulties arose and procedures (especially amongst non-NATO members) were significantly different. This led to the 'ineffectiveness of multi-national HQs'.[61] Thus while the general intent of the division was maintained, 'mission command was shackled by multinationality'.[62] There were comments that the logic of mission command was not appreciated by MND(SE) – French-led, and MND(N) – US-led. US forces were especially noted as needing detailed orders for taskings. The British maintained that there were still too many HQs for comfort: HQ 1(UK) Armd Div in Banja Luka, HQ ARRC in Split and HQ LANDCENT in Sarajevo. This contributed to an overall 'lack of coherency'[63] or 'unity of purpose'.[64]

Infrastructure

Troops were accommodated in schools or factories. Houses were rented, at least initially, at way above market rates, which caused some friction and helped destabilise local economies. Troops were widely and thinly spread so as to extend their presence to as many locations as possible.

Roads were generally poor and inaccessible to heavier vehicles, causing a number of communications difficulties.

Logistics

The geographic spread of British units forced a substantial investment in logistic capacity (the weekly requirement in 1995 included 200,000 litres of fuel, 25 tonnes of food, 60 tonnes water). These requirements created difficulties, as the Army's logistics assets were designed to operate on the short Cold-War logistics route from Antwerp to the Central Front. Moving cargoes over long distances put severe pressure on available assets. The DROPS system proved to be very effective as did the help of the Dutch and Belgian transport battalions who were working to NATO standards. Terrain also made movement difficult. Originally, for instance, a road had to be built by Royal Engineers across the Herzegovian mountains to allow adequate ingress into central Bosnia.

Experience with logistic movements counted for little in Bosnia. One CO noted that 'unsurprisingly, experience gained running 10,000 trucks in the Gulf War was only marginally applicable to a Bosnian winter civil war scenario'. He noted that while his

[61] 1 Royal Regiment of Fusiliers Post Tour Report, 29 February 1996, p.4
[62] HQ MND SW Post Operational Tour Report – *Operation Resolute* 2, 26 June-17 Dec 1996, January 1997, pp.2-11
[63] *ibid.*
[64] 1 Royal Regiment of Fusiliers Post Tour Report, 29 February 1996, p.4

men in central Bosnia understood the difference, those in HQ BRITFOR in Split did not, and their attempts at micromanagement were therefore counterproductive.[65]

Information and Networked Flow of Material and Awareness

The Army was quick to generate its own information. This was very helpful to military activities and many civilian agencies also benefited from the information supplied by the Army. Even the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) would ask – discretely – for information that would help its cause. It has been pointed out that 'the quality of liaison and, as a result, of military information on which sensible operations could be based was literally second to none in BRITBAT's area'.[66] But there tended to be flies in the ointment whenever other 'liaison' actors – UNMOs, UKLOs, etc – tried to operate in the same areas as battalion LOs. There would then be competing rather than complementary activities.

The flow of information depended on being in as many places as possible: on the streets; jointly manning checkpoints with 'factions'; being present on police and local government committees; restoring power and water supplies, etc. As one CO put it, his soldiers 'got under the skins of the locals' and, in doing so, information dominance was created. There was therefore very little that the troops did not know about and they therefore had the capacity to deal with issues as and when they arose. Problems were addressed early and decisively.

There seemed to be little 'evolution of practice'. Information passage was sufficient and companies content that they did not receive more information and guidance from above. As one OC put it: 'As far as direction and the British approach is concerned, the key tenet was freedom of action and I think it was our freedom of action that allowed us to succeed'.[67]

The regimental system had a positive influence on the campaign. Someone with little or no experience of being on operation could always ask someone else at dinner or at the bar (officers' mess, sergeants' mess, etc.). And they would be told, moreover, how to do things in a way that fitted in with the *modus vivendi* of the rest of the battalion. They would then end up knowing how the battalion operated and they would therefore conform to expected norms of behaviour. This would mean less friction and greater efficiency on operations. As one interviewee put it, 'an informal evening in the mess, or conversation in the NAAFI [other ranks' mess], were often even more valuable than the more formal training and exchanges of information'.[68]

NATO aircraft as part of *Operation Deny Flight* had no idea what UN forces on the ground were doing. Such aircrafts' occasional desire to 'buzz' Serb HQs created

[65] Williams (1994)
[66] *ibid*
[67] Interview with Brig. Binns
[68] *ibid.*

problems. On at least one occasion, UN personnel conducting negotiations with Serb leaders in such HQs were told to leave by Serb commanders when their 'NATO friends' buzzed the building.[69] In fact, NATO's *Operation Deny Flight* was, overall, viewed with 'deep skepticism [as]…an expensive and pointless exercise'. When NATO did finally take offensive action against Serb aircraft, it proved counterproductive on the ground since the Serbs made sure that 'all humanitarian activity ceased abruptly', meaning the UN could not do its job. And when aid did cease, it was always the UN that got the blame for not keeping up deliveries of aid.[70]

It was a clear goal of UN forces by 1994 to gain the 'information initiative'.[71] But this goal was directed purely at making the UN look better; there was no sense of trying to prevent any dissemination of information by any of the 'factions'.

Information flow in areas such as between NATO aircraft partaking in *Operation Deny Flight* relied very much on authentications. The range of accents involved (and thus the possibility that Serb elements could break into traffic) made confirmations especially pertinent. This tended to slow down operations. There was a poor appreciation among NATO aircraft of the difference between training codewords and phrases and those designed for use in actual operations.[72] *Deny Flight* also had the problem of the 'dual-key' approach, whereby both NATO and the UN had a say on operational activities. The lack of unity of command again slowed down response times and required layers of liaison at various command levels.[73] The restrictions imposed by the dual-key system meant that little action was taken.[74]

The constant availability of US EC-130E Airborne Battlefield Command and Control Centre (ABCCC) aircraft was crucial in allowing communications in certain instances, such as around Gorazde in1994. Here, SF troops on the ground could talk to the UN ground commander Gen. Rose in Saravevo, to NATO headquarters in Italy and to strike aircraft.[75]

One point is worth making here. Battalions that were part of UNPROFOR uniformly report that the overall job they did was very good. The battalion present at the changeover from UN to NATO reports that this was a backward step in terms of operational efficiency. The battalions who worked purely in the NATO period report that the UNPROFOR mission was a failure and that they are now doing a good job!

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[69] From personal recollection of author
[70] Williams (1994)
[71] UN: 'A Campaign plan for Bosnia Herzegovina Command', 25 February 1994, p.3
[72] Richardson, p.137
[73] Dean Simmons, 'Air Operations over Bosnia', Proceedings' 123/5, May 1997, pp.58-63
[74] Col Robert Corsini, 'The Balkan War: What Role for Air Power?', *Airpower Journal*, 9/4, Winter 1995, pp.53-68
[75] Tim Ripley, 'Balkan Picture', *Flight International*, 6-12 July 1994, pp.26-27. See also Mark Buckman, *Responsibility of Command: How UN and NATO Commanders Influenced Airpower over Bosnia* (Maxwell. Ala: Air University Press, 2003)

Perceptions of Quality of Information and Networking (Measures of Information Position)

The information generated from the ground up was usually sufficiently good for those doing the generating. They would seek information that aided their particular mission in a particular area and would not normally be reliant on outside information. The timeliness was good because information generated at low levels was then used at low levels and did not have to travel far. The information thus garnered would come from liaison officers (very well-trusted) and from patrols (reasonably well-trusted).

The quality of personal networking depended to a large degree on the abilities of liaison officers, diplomatic skills, cultural similarities (Anglophone, etc.) and shared procedures (NATO). Even these, though, showed a lack of robustness under pressure.

Overall 'big picture' information was desirable but not particularly necessary. Better surveillance assets were sometimes seen as needed; it is for example important to observe whether a 'faction' is sticking to its agreements or misbehaving. This was particularly pertinent in the IFOR period.

There were poor technical networks in evidence. These were brought about by equipment that was unfit for purpose (designed for other operational theatres), unsuitable terrain, lack of capacity, cost and a lack of trained personnel.

The gaining of low-level information in places such as Bosnia was perhaps less due to a prior understanding of the local culture than to an attitude of adaptation to that culture. This must be done, even if it involves drinking very thick coffee or eating sheep's eyeballs or drinking alcohol. In Bosnia, as in all Slav countries, bonds are created when men drink together to excess. These 'in vino' bonds provided information that sometimes saved lives. One officer, having drunk, on successive days, copious amounts of some local alcoholic beverage realised that he could not carry on the same way. But as he could not afford to refuse the alcohol served in successive meetings, he said that he was using antibiotics so as not to offend.[76] Information gathered in such a way was also more 'trusted' than that given in more sober surroundings.

When NATO took over operational command in December 1995, its regarded the information gathered by UN units as generally unusable. All of the intelligence gathered by the UN over several years (and kept in Sarajevo) was 'thrown away' (to quote one source).[77]

Patterns of Operational Success/Failure in Relation to Information/Networking (Measures of Decision Superiority)

[76] ICTY
[77] Interview with Captain formerly in Intelligence Corps (name withheld)

Because communications links were often weak, the technical network was lacking. This led to situations where control was occasionally lost – e.g. with convoy movements. There was also no unity of command with British, UN and NATO elements often having uncoordinated inputs. These shortcomings at higher echelons were overcome by the success of the liaison contacts established at lower levels with warring 'factions' and with NGOs. This was the main conduit of information and it circulated well where it had to.

Troops however required more information on the location of vehicles, both military and NGO. Some sort of tracker system would have been very useful. Luckily there were few situations that could not be handled by the forces present. The pressure applied by the 'factions' was not of such an order that it put inordinate strain on the information system. But this is not just about luck; the lack of pressure from 'factions' was a direct result of the good relationships established with the leaders of those 'factions'.

The patterns of operational success came from the ability to create effective personal networks; both with 'the opposition' and with 'allies' and within both the military and the civilian sphere. The intimacy of relationships came from a shared sense of danger/mission in regard to British/UN/NGO personnel and from a willingness to engage with the 'factions'.

The lack of a positive mission statement was not really an issue. This was because there was a natural, obvious and common goal to which all agencies and parties were aiming. Thus the Army could go along with what was intuitively the right thing to do without being constrained by a stated mission goal. This helped enormously in liaising with aid agencies especially. The only breakdown in relationships seems to have occurred with the FCO-DFiD split, and here, difficulties grew out of the fact that both had mission statements that differed. These agencies lacked flexibility because of it.

Evaluation of the Information and Networking Contribution to the Outcomes of the Operation (Measures of Campaign Effectiveness)

The situation in Bosnia was controlled by having a general 'presence', rather than by ensuring 'presence' in certain instances. Thus the idea was to protect convoys and bring reassurance to war-ravaged areas by low-level confidence patrolling, rather than by having troops move with convoys or being held back in order to be sent to particular trouble spots. This was the timbre of the operation for much of its duration – certainly during the UN period. There was no sense, as in Northern Ireland, of getting force elements quickly to an area to calm down situations. Therefore information was not needed in that respect. The type of information needed related to the requirements for and distribution of aid. And such information would often be provided by the 'factions' themselves. Thus, there was no real competition for information because all actors – UN and 'factions' – were working towards the same end. The operation was therefore all about personal networking; it could not have happened without the level of human networking between the British forces and 'opposition' 'factions'.

All agencies in Bosnia were also working towards the same end. There seems to have been no real withholding of information since the operations relied on symbiosis. The aid agencies could best operate when they had information from the Army and the Army could best operate when it had backing from aid agencies; information was therefore shared. The desire to gather information had the side-effect of building up good relationships with the holders of that information. Making 'friends' with as many parties as possible very quickly eased situations and helped negotiations in other places and at other times. Relationships came under the most pressure once the situation calmed down, when most civilians were safe and when NGO and military bureaucracies began to build their 'empires'. The nature of the operation thus affected the quality and robustness of information sharing.

The main means of passing information in Bosnia appeared to be face-to-face meetings, not just between the various non-military players but also within the military itself. Personal contacts and social networks appear to have been key. Within the military, these networks were facilitated by commonalities in rank, language, shared procedures, etc.

The poor level of technical communications meant that personnel were given license to employ greater use of independent action. This provided for greater job satisfaction. Indeed, one CO said that one of his main priorities was to ensure that his soldiers had 'fun', as he put it.[78] The fact that the general ambience of the operation was quite relaxed also helped information exchange. Much of the 'robustness' of the information exchange system actually came from the informal atmosphere. This requires a level of latitude: when information exchange is best done in a relaxed environment, 'sticking to the rules' can be counterproductive.

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[78] Williams – Staff College Lecture

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Part II

Case Study 6 – Sierra Leone (2000) - Dr Andrew Dorman

Historical Sketch of Operation

Historical sketch

As the British deployment to Sierra Leone began in May 2000, *The Economist* described Sierra Leone thus:

> At the start of the 19th century, Freetown was remote and malarial, but also a place of hope … At the start of the 21st century, Freetown symbolises failure and despair … The United Nations' peacekeeping mission had degenerated into a shambles, calling into question the outside world's readiness to help end the fighting not just in Sierra Leone but in any of Africa's many dreadful wars. Indeed, since the difficulties of helping Sierra Leone seemed intractable, and since Sierra Leone seemed to epitomise so much of the rest of Africa, it began to look as though the world might just give up.[1]

Sierra Leone is on the west coast of Africa with Freetown as its capital. It has a population of fewer than five million people, similar to that of Norway or Croatia and is approximately the same size as Scotland. The indigenous population is made up of some 18 ethnic groups, with the largest being the Temne in the north and the Mende in the south. It has a largely agricultural economy, but is relatively rich in raw materials including diamonds, bauxite and rutile.[2]

Historically, Sierra Leone was the scene of some of the first European contacts with West Africa. In 1652, the first slaves destined for North America were brought from the area that is now Sierra Leone and, in 1787, Britain helped 400 freed slaves return to Sierra Leone and the settlement that resulted became known as Freetown. In 1792, Sierra Leone became one of Great Britain's first colonies in West Africa and served as the base for British rule in the region. The port of Freetown was a valuable stopover point. In World War II it served as the assembly point for convoys travelling to the United Kingdom from South America and East of Suez.

A constitution was established in 1951 to provide the framework for independence, which was granted on 27 April 1961. Sierra Leone opted for a parliamentary system within the British Commonwealth and Sir Milton Margai became the first Prime Minister as head of the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP). Following elections in 1967, a series of military coups culminated in Siaka Stevens, head of the All People's Congress, becoming Prime Minister in 1968. He remained head of state until 1985, when Major-General Joseph Momoh succeeded him with the title of President. Momoh's rule was marked by increasing abuses of power and corruption.

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[1] 'Hopeless Africa', *The Economist*, 13 May 2000, p.17

[2] A natural form of titanium dioxide – it is a major ore of titanium, a metal used for high technology alloys. It is also an important element within the gemstone market. www.minerals.galleries.com/minerals/oxides/rutile/rutile.htm.

In March 1991 a small band of men led by Foday Sankoh, a former corporal in the Sierra Leone Army (SLA) who had been trained in Libya, formed the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and began to attack villages in eastern Sierra Leone along the border with Liberia.[3] Fighting continued for several months and the RUF gained control of the diamond mines in the Kono district, pushing the SLA back towards Freetown. Arms and diamonds began to flow across the Sierra Leone-Liberian border. In April 1992, another coup sent Momoh into exile and established the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC). The NPRC proved equally ineffective in dealing with the RUF and by 1995 the RUF controlled most of the countryside and had arrived at the outskirts of Freetown. To try to retrieve the situation, the NPRC hired several hundred mercenaries from the firm Executive Outcomes.[4] Within a month, they had successfully driven the RUF back to a number of small enclaves on the Sierra Leone-Liberia border.

Following international pressure, the NPRC agreed to hand over power to a civilian government. After presidential and parliamentary elections, Ahmad Kabbah, a relatively little known Sierra Leone diplomat in the United Nations (UN), was elected President in 1996, and his party, the SLPP, won 27 out of the 64 seats.[5] Kabbah subsequently signed the Abidjan Peace Agreement with the RUF in November 1996.[6] This sought to end the civil war and included a general amnesty. However, the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), led by Major Johnny Paul Koroma, soon overthrew Kabbah's government. In response the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), led by Nigeria, deployed forces to oust the AFRC and Kabbah was reinstated in March 1998. The following January, the RUF again attempted to overthrow the government. The ensuing fighting reached Freetown, where thousands were killed, maimed and wounded before Nigerian-led forces were again able to drive the RUF into retreat. The brutality on both sides was horrific.

Under strong international and domestic pressure, Kabbah signed the Lomé Peace Agreement with the RUF in July 1999. The agreement represented a capitulation to the RUF: it gave the rebel leaders immunity from prosecution and four out of the 22 posts in an expanded cabinet. These included the key post of Minister for Strategic Resources, responsible for the diamond mines (which were largely in RUF controlled territory). The Lomé agreement called for the UN to oversee a new Disarmament, Demobilisation and Rehabilitation (DDR) process. To that end, the UN agreed to establish the UN Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) through UN Security Council Resolution 1270, approving an initial force of 6,000 peacekeepers.[7] In February 2000, a further resolution – 1289 - gave UNAMSIL a more robust mandate under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, expanding its

[3] www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/ruf.htm
[4] See P. W. Singer, *Corporate Warriors: The Rise of the Privatized Military Industry* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2003); FCO, 'Private Military Companies: Options for Regulation', *HC.577*, session 2001-02 (London: The Stationery Office, 2002), www.fco.gov.uk/Files/kfile/mercenaries,0.pdf
[5] Kabbah had previously worked for the UN for over 20 years.
[6] Abiodun Alao & Comfort Ero, 'Cut Short for Taking Short Cuts: The Lome Peace Agreement on Sierra Leone', *Civil Wars*, 4, 3, Autumn 2001, pp.119-20
[7] For further information on the UN involvement in Sierra Leone, see the UN website at www.un.org

authorised strength to 11,100, including 260 military observers (UNMOs).[8] This force was supposed to lead to the deployment of an additional six infantry battalions between May and June to offset the withdrawal of the experienced ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) in April.

On 30 April 2000, ten RUF combatants surrendered their weapons to a UN team at Makeni and entered the disarmament process. There followed, however, a violent reaction by the RUF, leading to the seizure of a number of UNMOs and UN peacekeepers. UN mediators sent to resolve the situation were also taken hostage. Amongst those seized at Giema was a British UNMO, Major Andy Harrison, whilst three more British UNMOs and a Department for International Development (DfID) team were surrounded at Makeni along with 70 Kenyan peacekeepers.

On Wednesday 3 May, the UN Secretariat called an emergency meeting of the Security Council to brief its members on the seizures. By 4 May, it was believed that the RUF was once again on the offensive. The UN mission had clearly suffered casualties and a number of its personnel were being held captive. All that appeared to stand between the RUF and Freetown was a weak SLA, which had been significantly reduced as part of the DDR process, and what remained of the UNAMSIL peacekeeping force. The leader of the RUF, Foday Sankoh, remained at large in Freetown and suggested that the situation could be resolved politically. His reliability was however doubted both within the British government and elsewhere. The situation appeared entirely favourable to him and, by the early hours of Friday 5 May, it became apparent that the Zambian battalion of UNAMSIL had been defeated and that the RUF had now gained control over the town of Kambia.

Initially, the British government looked to the UN to coordinate international action and dispatched a team of logistical advisors to the UN to advise on the deployment of the additional forces pledged as part of Resolution 1289 (and which the UN now frantically sought to deploy). As the situation rapidly deteriorated, ministers recognised that relying solely on the UN might not be sufficient and that they would have to take a lead. While urgent efforts to support the UN continued, the UK government began considering what type of action it might carry out on its own.

On Thursday 4 May, Robin Cook, then Foreign Secretary, set out a plan to Geoff Hoon, then Secretary of State for Defence, for the immediate evacuation of the UN personnel and the strengthening of UNAMSIL's overall presence. The UN Security Council made it clear that the United Kingdom – as the former colonial power – should take the lead in resolving the situation.[9]

On the morning of Friday 5 May, a meeting was held in the Cabinet Office, involving representatives of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), the Ministry of Defence

[8] UN Security Council Resolution 1289 (2000), 7 February 2000, daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N00/283/50/PDF/N0028350.pdf?OpenElement.
[9] Richard Connaughton, 'The Mechanics and Nature of British Interventions into Sierra Leone (2000) and Afghanistan', *Civil Wars*, Summer 2002, pp.72-95

(MOD) and DfID. It was agreed that the UN requests for assistance were uncoordinated and three Non-combatant Evacuation Operation (NEO)[10] options were discussed:

1. Rapid deployment of air transport with special forces (SF) support into Lungi or Hastings. This was viewed as fastest option with a notice to move (NTM) of 24 hours.

2. Deployment of regular troops to Lungi Airport in a slower form of option 1.

3. Deployment of Amphibious Ready Group (ARG). The concern was that this action would take approximately ten days and could not be done covertly.

These options had been considered overnight by the Permanent Joint Headquarters (PJHQ) in discussion with the relevant units and their representatives at PJHQ. What was lacking was an appreciation of the specific situation on the ground. The meeting recommended the dispatch of an Operational Reconnaissance and Liaison Team (ORLT) from the PJHQ to assess the situation in Sierra Leone. The team, led by Brigadier David Richards, departed the same evening by Royal Air Force (RAF) transport and arrived the following morning. The ORLT was tasked to make a rapid assessment of the situation, assist the UNAMSIL commander Major-General Jetley, and prepare for a NEO. It would then feed its assessment back into the decision-making process via PJHQ. The ORLT was a new concept and this was effectively its first trial.

That afternoon, the MoD's Crisis Management Organisation (DCMO) examined the available military options and the units that might be required, pending the report of the reconnaissance team. They focused on the requirement to support a NEO as the likely minimum deployment. This was immediately identified as problematic; the overland routes to neighbouring states all went through potentially hostile territory and were not considered viable. Entitled Personnel (EP) could therefore only be evacuated by air or sea.[11]

The air option required an assembly area where evacuees could be processed and a relatively secure airport. The only airport in Sierra Leone known to be available at the time was the international airport at Lungi, separated from Freetown, where most evacuees were located, by five miles of water. The overland route to the airport involved a horseshoe-shaped road leading clockwise from the airport via Lungi Lol, Port Loko, Rogberi Junction, over the Rokel Bridge, Masiaka, Waterloo and then to Freetown. As the safety of this route could not be guaranteed, this option called for helicopters to ferry

[10] A Non-combatant Evacuation Operation (NEO) is defined in British parlance as 'an operation to relocate designated non-combatants threatened in a foreign country to a country of safety'. 'Non-combatant Evacuation Operations', *Joint Warfare Publication* 3-51, Joint Doctrine and Concepts Centre, August 2000, p.Glossary-6

[11] The UK has responsibility for: British nationals including dual nationals. The UK may also have responsibility for unrepresented EU nationals, unrepresented Commonwealth nationals and/or American nationals. All other nationalities are included on a 'space available' basis and subject to guarantees from their respective governments to repay any evacuation costs. 'Non-combatant Evacuation Operations', *Joint Warfare Publication 3-51*, p.5-1

evacuees from Freetown to the airport. The sea option posed similar problems, requiring an assembly point and either a secure route to the sea where boats could pick up the evacuees or somewhere to land helicopters if they were to be flown out to ships offshore. It also necessitated the appropriate ships to be located within range of Sierra Leone. Given the estimated timelines in which UK forces would have to operate, Lungi International Airport was therefore identified as the vital ground; whoever controlled the airport effectively controlled Sierra Leone.

The United Kingdom maintains a number of military units at high alert as part of the UK's Joint Rapid Reaction Force (JRRF), developed out of the Strategic Defence Review.[12] These include the Spearhead Battalion and the Airborne Task Force (ABTF). Both are based on an infantry battalion of ca. 650 personnel (a parachute battalion in the case of the ABTF), together with differing supporting assets related to their varying roles. Both are supposed to be capable of deploying anywhere in the world at short notice by air for a limited duration. At the time of the crisis, the 1st Battalion of the Parachute Regiment (1 PARA) was covering both roles with differing sub-units attached depending on the task.[13] By chance, other elements of the JRRF were closer to Sierra Leone. These included an Amphibious Ready Group (ARG), carrying 42 commandos (Cdo) of the Royal Marines on exercise ashore in the vicinity of Marseilles[14] in the Mediterranean and the aircraft carrier *HMS Illustrious* on exercise in the Eastern Atlantic.

With the situation clearly deteriorating, the operation was given the name *Palliser* and Geoff Hoon, the British Defence Secretary, agreed to a number of measures to be taken on the Friday night, pending the advice from Brigadier Richards and the ORLT.[15] Firstly, it was agreed that the ARG should leave Marseilles on Sunday 7 May and sail westwards. Secondly, *HMS Illustrious* and her battle group were alerted to prepare to detach themselves from their exercise and deploy further south. Thirdly, the frigate *HMS Argyll*, a Type 23 frigate, was ordered to sail directly for Sierra Leone. All these measures could be undertaken covertly. Fourthly, RAF transport aircraft were also brought off other tasks in readiness to support a possible deployment. Fifthly, authorisation was also given to deploy the first two SF CH-47 *Chinook* helicopters from 7 Sqn to Gibraltar and divert a further two *Chinooks* from 27 Squadron en route to the Balkans so that they would be nearer to the region.[16] The speed of the deployment meant that the permission from various governments to allow these helicopters to fly over their territory had to be obtained while they were in the air. Agreement was reached with the governments of France and Senegal to use a French airbase at Dakar as a possible staging point, if required. Dakar was therefore designated the forward mounting base (FMB).[17]

[12] 'The Strategic Defence Review', *Cm.3,999*, (London: TSO, 1998)
[13] Interviews with Maj. Nick Champion & Maj. Liam Cradden, by KCL
[14] Similar in size and composition to an Army infantry battalion like 1 PARA, the battalion was then on exercise trialling a new company structure. Interview with Maj. Andy Muddiman, by KCL
[15] NTMs are defined times by which a unit will be ready for deployment
[16] Interview with Wing Commander Rich Mason, by KCL
[17] 'Forward Mounting Base': a base (also deployed operating base) established within the operational area, to support operations at forward operating bases. It will be resourced to a greater level than a forward operating base, including C2, logistics and administration support elements'. JWP 0-01.1

It was, at this point, decided not to reduce the NTM of 1 PARA. Nevertheless, the battalion began preparing for a deployment. For 1 PARA, this meant recalling personnel from home and alerting its accompanying support assets. As A Company of 1 PARA was away on exercise in Jamaica, a request was made to the unit covering this task and also the artillery battery earmarked to support the battalion. However, neither of these units proved to be available and instead D Company from 2 PARA was used to bring 1 PARA up to full strength. Other assets were drawn from 5 Airborne Brigade including a battery of 7 Royal Horse Artillery (RHA) and the Pathfinder Platoon. At the same time, the Defence Secretary delegated authority to reduce the NTM of the Spearhead battalion and other assets to DCDS(C) and the Chief of Joint Operations (CJO), with Director, Special Forces, (DSF) having similar authority with regard to SF.

The FCO also took a series of steps. It dispatched additional assets to the British High Commissioner to support information gathering. It supported the UN in mobilising the additional contribution to UNAMSIL and assisted in obtaining the necessary diplomatic clearances for the various military deployments. Meanwhile, unknown to the British, their three UNMOs at Makeni escaped and headed for the nearest UN force at a place called Mile 91.[18]

On arrival on the morning of Saturday 6 May, Brig. David Richards met the British High Commissioner, Peter Penfold, who had been in the post for only a week, to assess the situation and coordinate subsequent action. Fortunately, Brig. Richards had made a number of previous visits to the area and knew the main players in Sierra Leone. He also felt that he knew the view of the ministers in London, having had an important meeting with the then Foreign Secretary Robin Cook in Australia prior to the deployment to East Timor. Within Freetown there was considerable unease. The UN had begun the evacuation of its civilian agency staff. UNAMSIL had moved its headquarters to the Mammy Yoko Hotel, near the beach, and was trying to locate its missing personnel.

Richards was immediately concerned about the fragility of the UNAMSIL force. He discussed the situation with the UNAMSIL commander, Major-General Jetley, and the UN Special Representative. In his report back to London, Brig. Richards provided an adverse assessment and expressed his concerns about the situation rapidly deteriorating further.

After discussing the situation with the British High Commissioner, Brig. Richards requested the dispatch of the lead elements of the JRRF to the FMB at Dakar, Senegal, in order to reduce their response time. The PJHQ/DSF approved the deployment of the lead element of the Spearhead Battalion, based around one of its companies with ca. 200 personnel, and of the Standby SF squadron, together with the move of the *Chinook* helicopters to Dakar from Gibraltar and the Canary Islands. In reality, the whole of 1 PARA and its accompanying units had already begun to move en masse to the Air Movements Centre at South Cerney in preparation for the call forward. They therefore

[18] For a full account of the three British UNMOs at Makeni see Maj. Phil Ashby, *Unscathed: Escape from Sierra Leone* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Publishers Ltd, 2002)

began loading on RAF *Tristars* on the evening of Saturday 6 May and arrived in Dakar the following day.[19]

By the Sunday, however, the situation had deteriorated further with UNAMSIL's leadership in complete disarray and in effect deferring to Brig. Richards. Following discussions with the United States, Nigeria, the UN and others in New York, the British government agreed that the situation should be stabilised and that UNAMSIL needed time to be brought up to its mandated strength and reorganised to make it more robust.

The paralysis within UNAMSIL's military command discouraged any idea of placing British forces under UN command. The MoD and FCO agreed that if British forces were deployed for an evacuation operation, they should remain in place until UNAMSIL was reinforced, otherwise it would look as though the UK was abandoning UNAMSIL, which could cause panic in Sierra Leone.

On the Sunday morning in Sierra Leone, the ORLT was re-tasked to become the Joint Task Force Headquarter (JTFHQ) for the British deployment and began to expand utilising staff officers then on detachment to Ghana and also reinforcements from the UK. Full political and military decision-making powers were delegated to the British High Commissioner and the Commander of the Joint Task Force (CJTF), as Brigadier Richards was now designated, to carry out an evacuation operation if they judged it appropriate and to give what assistance they could to UNAMSIL and the government of Sierra Leone.

All this increased the importance of Lungi International Airport as the only evacuation and reinforcement route into Sierra Leone by air. With the agreement of President Kabbah of Sierra Leone, the decision was therefore taken for British forces to discretely deploy and secure the airport. As soon as the SF standby squadron and lead company of 1 PARA arrived at Dakar on Sunday, they were forward deployed aboard SF C-130s and landed at Lungi just before dusk on the Sunday evening, where they were met by a liaison officer (LO) from the JTFHQ and the resident Nigerian UNAMSIL force. They secured the terminal and awaited reinforcements from 1 PARA the following morning before the RUF arrived.[20]

1 PARA would have to remain in place until UNAMSIL had been reorganised but would only be able to sustain itself for a limited time in the field. As a result, the ARG was ordered to sail directly to Sierra Leone to provide support. Within the ARG, preparations were made and it sailed from Marseilles on the Sunday calling in briefly at Gibraltar to collect additional assets.

The aircraft carrier, *HMS Illustrious*, was also detached from Exercise Linked Seas and ordered to Sierra Leone. She had a combined RAF/Royal Navy (RN) *Harrier* force

[19] Interview with Maj. Champion
[20] Interview with Lt-Col Ben Baldwin, by KCL

embarked to test out the new Joint Force Harrier Concept as well as the JFACC and offered the option of offensive air operations if required.[21]

With fear rising in Freetown, a violent demonstration occurred on Monday 8 May against Foday Sankoh and the RUF with around 10,000 Sierra Leoneans marching on his house.[22] As tension grew, several of Sankoh's bodyguards opened fire; 21 people were killed in the ensuing fighting, and Sankoh fled. By early afternoon, the British High Commissioner, with responsibility for the political lead, asked Brig. Richards to undertake a NEO of all entitled personnel (EP).

The evacuation centre was established near the beach at the Mamy Yoko Hotel. All evacuees were told to make their way to the evacuation centre to be ferried across the bay to Lungi Airport by the recently arrived RAF *Chinook* helicopters for onward transport by RAF aircraft to Dakar.

The evacuation centre was secured by D Company, 2 PARA which had arrived with the rest of the battalion at Lungi International Airport on the Monday morning. Other elements of 1 PARA secured the airport and pushed out their screen towards Lungi Lol to ensure no RUF mortar presence was located within range of the airport.[23]

The British High Commission (BHC) had estimated that there were 550 Britons, 200 EU and 50 Commonwealth citizens in Sierra Leone. Within a few days, 499 people had been evacuated;[24] a number of personnel chose to stay once the British forces arrived and the situation rapidly began to stabilise.

That same day (8 May), news reached the JTFHQ that the three British UNMOs had reached the UN garrison at Mile 91. A *Chinook* helicopter was dispatched to pick them up and they were brought back to Freetown. A discrete effort was also initiated to locate Major Harrison, the remaining British UNMO held captive by the RUF. This was strictly speaking a UN responsibility and the British government did not want to increase the vulnerability of the other UN prisoners held by the RUF. However, it also wanted the option of freeing its UNMO if the situation deteriorated further.

In the House of Commons, the Foreign Secretary Robin Cook announced the deployment:

> In view of the limited commercial opportunities to leave Sierra Leone and the current insecurity, we have taken the precautionary measure of deployment of a number of British military assets to West Africa …

[21] *HMS Illustrious Millennium Commission*, (London: Stacey International, 2002)
[22] Brig. David J. Richards, 'Operation Palliser', *Journal of the Royal Artillery*, CXXVII, 2, Autumn 2000, p.11.
[23] Interview with Lt-Col Baldwin
[24] Maj.-Gen. David Richards, 'Expeditionary Operations: Sierra Leone – lessons for the future', *World Defence Systems*, 3, 2, July 2001, p.135

> Those measures have been taken to ensure that we are best placed to respond quickly to safeguard the security of British nationals. Our forces will ensure the security of the international Sierra Leone airport. Not only is that a matter of utility for the evacuation, but it is also valuable in allowing the UN forces to continue to build up …
>
> I want to make it clear to the House and to the people of Sierra Leone that Britain will not abandon its commitment to Sierra Leone. Britain has done more than any other country outside the region to restore legitimate government in Sierra Leone. We are the largest national donor to the peace process; we hosted the international donors' conference earlier this year; and we are in the lead in training the new army for Sierra Leone.[25]

1 PARA's deployment to Sierra Leone was therefore divided between protecting Lungi Airport and securing the assembly area in Freetown. D Company, 2 PARA secured Freetown, B Company remained at the airport as the reserve and C Company was used to push out the defences from the airfield. It was this later move that initially caused some friction with DfID personnel in Whitehall, who had assumed that the military deployment would remain in immediate proximity to the airfield. They failed to appreciate the range of some of the RUF's military capabilities and the need to ensure that these did not come within range of the airport.

With this phase effectively resolved within the first two days of the deployment, Richards began to focus almost immediately on how to counter the RUF and stabilise Sierra Leone in the longer term. The choice was either to restart the Lomé Peace process with a reconfigured UNAMSIL or to abandon Lomé and militarily defeat the RUF. The view of those on the ground was that the former might still work if UNAMSIL was significantly reorganised and reinforced. The latter was thought to carry higher risks, requiring a significant British deployment, assessed at a brigade plus, tasked with war fighting and with the expectation of significant casualties.

It was therefore agreed to support the UNAMSIL option and the British mission was formally widened to include support for the UN peacekeeping operation, the provision of assistance to the SLA and preparations for humanitarian tasks. From a military viewpoint Brig. Richards recognised that UNAMSIL would never have the capability to take on the RUF but that it could secure ground. He therefore suggested that the SLA be rebuilt into a manoeuvre force that could confront and push back the RUF and that UNAMSIL take care of securing the territory thus liberated. Such a policy required the rearming of the SLA, a significant training effort being put into the partially demobilised SLA and the creation of an operational headquarters so that future operations could be properly planned and conducted. The FCO began diplomatic efforts to lift the UN arms embargo on Sierra Leone so that the SLA could be rearmed.

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[25] Robin Cook, *House of Commons Parliamentary Debates*, Statement to the House 8 May 2000, 349, 1999-2000, cols.518-9, www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm199900/cmhansrd/vo000508/debtext/00508-11.htm#00508-11_spmin0

However, in the short term, the key lay in securing the position of UNAMSIL around Freetown and freeing its prisoners from the RUF. As 1 PARA had secured the airport, the UN was able to fly in reinforcements and Brig. Richards began the process of enhancing UNAMSIL by providing advice on its deployments. To support the peacekeeping mission, the British government gave permission for RAF *Chinooks* to ferry Jordanian reinforcements forward from Lungi Airport.

British forces conducted a series of demonstration flights and live-fire exercises to dissuade the RUF from any offensive action and demonstrate their presence and commitment to Sierra Leone. These measures included the ARG anchoring in Freetown's harbour within sight of the city, the dispatch of a frigate up the Sierra Leone River and the use of illumination rounds and overflights by fixed-wing and helicopter assets. This campaign was accompanied by extensive radio- and leaflet-based Information Operations to convince RUF fighters to surrender and enter the DDR process.

At the same time, British forces engaged in other types of tasks to reassure the civilian population and bolster UNAMSIL and the government of Sierra Leone. These tasks included arranging football matches and entertaining at the BHC, the active patrolling of the streets of Freetown and the reinforcement of UNAMSIL's defensive positions.

Whilst all these measures gave an impression of the British commitment, they may in reality have overstated how far the British government was prepared to go. British forces were directed to avoid getting embroiled in any conflict but to use their presence to reinvigorate UNAMSIL, reassure the local civilian population and sow seeds of doubts in the minds of the rebel leadership about their precise role. The aim was to deter the RUF from continuing its advance whilst UNAMSIL and the SLA were rebuilt.

Not surprisingly this led to a debate about mission creep at home, which directly reflected the deliberate ambiguity of this operation. The danger of becoming directly involved in the defence of Freetown was obvious. With a major ongoing deployment to Kosovo, the Army did not believe that a further substantial commitment was possible without significant problems, especially with the additional requirements imposed by the upcoming marching season in Northern Ireland.

In a statement to the House of Commons on 15 May, Geoff Hoon hinted at the delicate path that the government sought to tread:

> Although we have made it abundantly clear UK forces will not be deployed in a combat role in support of UNAMSIL, the presence of UK troops on the ground has helped stabilise the situation in Sierra Leone and we are providing technical advice to the UN as to how matters might be further improved.[26]

[26] Geoff Hoon, *House of Commons Parliamentary Debates*, Statement on Sierra Leone, 15 May 2000, 350, 15-25 May 2000, col.23, www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm199900/cmhansrd/vo000515/debtext/00515-05.htm#00515-05_spmin2

Nevertheless, while individual RUF fighters were surrendering, the rebel group continued to press westwards towards Freetown. This resulted in an RUF attack on the Parachute Regiment's Pathfinder Platoon at the village of Lungi Lol on the morning of 17 May. Lungi Lol was of strategic importance because it lay on the land route between Freetown and Lungi Airport. The Pathfinder Platoon had been in the village for some time and was alerted to the RUF presence by civilians passing through Lungi Lol.[27] As the RUF force attempted to push through the British position, they were repulsed in a short but intense fire-fight. The RUF regrouped and made one further attempt but suffered heavy casualties and withdrew. This successful engagement had a far wider impact, underpinning the desire of local civilians to retain British forces in the country to protect them. According to Brig. Richards:

> The psychological impact of this brief engagement was immense in deterring the RUF and further enhancing our status in the eyes of the UN and Sierra Leoneans.

It proved to be a turning point when, only a few hours later, the RUF's political leader – Sankoh – was found and taken to the Guardroom at Cockerill Barracks. Once news spread of his capture, a hostile crowd gathered and the Sierra Leone Police Inspector General became concerned for Sankoh's safety. This posed a problem for British ministers, who had so far sought to avoid becoming too obviously involved. Nevertheless, a RAF *Chinook* was dispatched, collecting Sankoh and his police escort and taking him to a place of safety in Sierra Leone. Legal advice prompted commanders to insist that he remain in Sierra Leone and in the custody of the Sierra Leone police.

The capture of Sankoh and the defeat of the RUF at Lungi Lol led to heightened concerns about RUF attacks on British forces. The decision was therefore taken to deploy a 105mm battery of light guns ashore from the ARG to 7 RHA, who had deployed with 1 PARA but without their own guns.

However, over the next few days, internal feuding rapidly diminished the threat posed by the RUF, which allowed the MoD to conduct the first roulement of forces. 1 PARA was quietly replaced by 42 Cdo from the ARG in late May and flew back to the UK.

Meanwhile the UN Security Council passed a Resolution 1299, which increased UNAMSIL's authorised strength to 13,000. The focus remained on peacekeeping, despite calls from ECOWAS and others for a shift to peace enforcement.[28] The resolution also removed the restrictions on the supply of arms to the government of Sierra Leone so that the SLA could be re-equipped and retrained to deal with the RUF itself and in the longer term.

In Sierra Leone, negotiations between the UN and the RUF led to the release of a number of UN personnel via Liberia. Indian forces, however, including Britain's Maj. Harrison and a number of other UNMOs, remained trapped at Kailahun.

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[27] Interview of Maj. Rich Cantrill, by KCL

[28] Philip R.Wilkinson, 'Peace Support under Fire: Lessons from Sierra Leone', *ISIS Briefing Series on Humanitarian Intervention*, 2, June 2000, p.2

As a result, British forces developed the capability to extract Maj. Harrison by force if necessary but decided against doing so, with his agreement, to avoid bringing further danger to the rest of the Kailahun garrison and other hostage groups.[29]

The United Kingdom's longer-term objectives for Sierra Leone were formally agreed at a ministerial meeting on 23 May as:

> The establishment of sustainable peace and security, stable democratic government, the reduction of poverty, respect for human rights and the establishment of accountable armed forces. We also want the UN's engagement to enhance its reputation in Africa and more widely. In the shorter term we want to prevent another humanitarian disaster in Freetown, see the UN detainees freed unharmed, avoid UK casualties and devise an exit strategy for UK forces which does not undermine either the Government of Sierra Leone (GOSL) or the UN but demonstrates our ability to avoid mission creep.

In a further report to the House of Commons, Geoff Hoon confirmed that:

> British troops are in Sierra Leone to get British nationals out and help get UN reinforcements in. That is what our troops were sent to do and it is what they will carry on doing as long as is necessary. They are doing that job exceptionally well. British forces in Sierra Leone have secured Lungi airport while UN Forces are building up. Following the attack on the Parachute Regiment last week, they moved light guns ashore and conducted reconnaissance flights to assist in that task.
>
> Separately, British officers are providing military advice to UNAMSIL, the Government of Sierra Leone, and the UN in New York. Our aim is to help the UN create a more effective UN force in Sierra Leone, which can restore peace and order in Sierra Leone and help the Government there re-establish stability.
>
> That strategy is making significant progress. In the past week, we have seen the arrival of capable and effective UN reinforcements through Lungi airport. The Revolutionary United Front has been pushed back by the forces of the Government of Sierra Leone. We have seen Foday Sankoh, the RUF leader, arrested and detained by the Sierra Leonean authorities.[30]

UNAMSIL remained unwilling to move outside its existing defensive positions. It continued to focus its attention on its forces held hostage by the RUF. It was therefore decided to use the SLA and associated militias with British support as the manoeuvre force that would push the RUF back. According to Brig. Richards:

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[29] 'Return to the War Zone: Interview of Major Andy Harrison', *Soldier*, September 2000, pp.4-5

[30] Geoffrey Hoon, *House of Commons Parliamentary Debates*, 23 May 2000, Statement on Sierra Leone, 350, 15-25 May 2000, col.863, www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm199900/cmhansrd/vo000523/debtext/00523-06.htm#00523-06_spmin2

> We provided a team to pull the factions together and sort out their appalling logistic and communications problems. We built them an operations room and much more. Through this support and the influence we had with UNAMSIL, we found ourselves de facto directing the SLA campaign and heavily influencing the UN's.[31]

Since the SLA could not both advance and hold ground, the tasks were split between the SLA and the UN forces respectively. This involved getting UNAMSIL to move its forces eastwards. The success of the first deployment raised the morale of the SLA and UNAMSIL and further undermined the RUF.

In a background brief to journalists on Hoon's speech, it was pointed out that:

> On the Sierra Leone Army, the conscious policy choice here is really to try and fill the vacuum well. If you don't do anything you are going to find factions running about jockeying with each other trying to take positions, and if Sierra Leone is going to develop in the way it was intended under Lome we need it to have an effective modern well trained Armed Forces operating in accordance within international humanitarian standards and therefore we need to take action to do that, and what yesterday's statement was about was a sort of two pronged dimension to that, the first is the training team which was announced originally by the Prime Minister on 27 March, but which we now see as having an important role in trying to create the right type of armed force for the government of Sierra Leone and helping them in that direction.
>
> Unless we provide training on a substantial scale, and we are talking about up to 90 people, British led but we are hope involving a number of other countries, unless we tackle that in a systematic way we are not going to make progress towards the sort of army we would like to see, but it is I think a two or three year project.

Following the initial success in pushing back the RUF, there was a setback on 1 June. A probing attack by RUF forces at Lunsar, 50 miles north-east of Freetown, led the SLA and the Jordanians to abandon their positions and retreat. It pointed to poor coordination and revealed the major weaknesses in the capabilities of both forces, in particular in terms of leadership. The SLA needed to be retrained as well as re-equipped.

The British government continued to pursue the establishment of an international training team as the longer-term solution to the development of democratically accountable armed forces.[32] In the short term, 42 Cdo began to refurbish the Benguema Training Centre, a former British barracks, as the base for a Short Term Training Team (STTT) – initially based around 2nd Battalion, the Royal Anglian Regiment – and 40 Sierra Leone officers were identified for staff training at a British-run course in Ghana.[33]

[31] Richards (2001), p.135
[32] Hoon, Geoffrey, 23 May 2000, col.864
[33] Dennis Barnes, 'Anglians in Africa', *Soldier*, September 2000, pp.14-5

The Royal Anglians arrived at the Benguema Training Centre at Waterloo, approximately 30 miles south-east of Freetown on 15 June, just as the ARG withdrew. The STTT began training the first 1,000 recruits. The training programme was designed to improve unit cohesion and individual skills over a six-week period. It included instruction on the Geneva Convention and was made conditional on the ending of the SLA's use of child soldiers. On 22 July, the first two battalions passed out and a second STTT was started.

Meanwhile, the build-up of UNAMSIL continued. A battalion from Kenya was used to relieve 42 Cdo at Lungi Airport, which was withdrawn first to offshore RN ships in mid-June and then altogether following the lack of a RUF response. On 16 June, Vice-Admiral Garnett, the UK's CJO, who oversaw *Operation Palliser* from the United Kingdom, issued a communiqué:

> Op Palliser has been the largest national operation since the Falklands Campaign in 1982 and the largest ever run from my headquarters. The speed with which the initial deployment by the spearhead elements was effected effectively saved the day. You rescued UK EPs and without your swift action we would not see the relatively stable situation that we have in Sierra Leone today. We have seen the first operational deployments of the Amphibious Ready Group, the Harriers of JF2000 and the JFACC and his staff. Throughout this has been a truly joint operation involving important elements from all services and specialisations.
>
> Much has been achieved in Sierra Leone since early May and you can all be justly proud of your contribution towards improving the future of Sierra Leone – a job well done.

After a month of frustrating negotiations, the UN commander in Sierra Leone developed plans for the forcible withdrawal of Indian forces from Kailahun and Kuiva to the battalion headquarters at Daru. Given that they were co-located with the UNMOs, including Britain's Maj. Harrison, a request was made to the United Kingdom to provide assistance.

The Defence Secretary was briefed in early June that three RAF *Chinooks* might be needed – two to pick up the UNMOs and wounded UNAMSIL personnel, and one to deploy Indian forces on the extraction route. This was approved, but the operation was put on hold pending the release of the other remaining UN hostages, including those from the Kuiva garrison. This was achieved by 30 June and the RUF then began to block re-supply convoys to Geima. The UN commander therefore decided to act with the support of the British. In a coordinated operation on Saturday 15 July, two RAF *Chinooks* were dispatched to rescue the UNMOs and 19 injured Indian troops and a third *Chinook* assisted the remaining Indian troops who broke out from their garrison base and, with artillery and gunship support, escaped losing one killed and several injured.[34]

In the aftermath of the breakout, both sides took stock. Neither side wanted to initiate further combat during the summer rainy season. For the government of Sierra Leone, this

[34] 'Return to the War Zone', pp.4-5

window of relative calm allowed it to put a further two battalions through the second STTT. Meanwhile, the Royal Anglians were replaced by the Royal Irish Regiment. For UNAMSIL, it meant confirming the deployment of the existing force whilst discussions continued within the UN Security Council about further expanding its force size and mandate.

Chronology

1961	Independence granted.
1967	Democratic government overthrown.
1991	
March	Revolutionary United Front formed under Foday Sankoh.
1992	Further coup leaves NPRC in control.
1993	NPRC hires Executive Outcomes – achieves quick success against RUF.
1996	Civil elections won by Ahmad Kabbah.
1997	Kabbah's government overthrown.
1998	
March	ECOWOG reinstates Kabbah.
1999	
January	RUF attempt to seize Freetown – thrown back but heavy civilian casualties.
July	Lomé Agreement signed between government and RUF.
October	UNAMSIL set up under Chapter VI of the UN Charter.
2000	
February	UNAMSIL given Chapter VII mandate.
30 April	Ten RUF soldiers enter DDR process.
1 May	RUF begin seizing UN personnel.
3 May	Emergency UN Security Council meeting.
4 May	DBHC with US Ambassador meet Sankoh.

5 May	UK puts forces on alert dispatches ORLT to Sierra Leone.
6 May	ORLT lands in Senegal, forward deploys to SL. British forces called forward to Senegal. ARG and CV diverted.
7 May	Control divested to British High Commissioner and Cdr ORLT ORLT who becomes CJTF. B Sqn, SAS and C Company 1 Para land at airport.
8 May	Protest outside house of Foday Sankoh results in violence. NEO declared: British forces begin evacuation. British UNMOs reach Mile 91.
17 May	Skirmish between 1 PARA and RUF Lungi Lol. Foday Sankoh arrested.
23 May	UK agrees plans to rebuild SLA and establish a STTT.
June	42 Cdo withdraw and replaced by STTT.
25 August	Eleven members of the Royal Irish Regiment and a SLA liaison officer taken hostage by WSB.
30 August	Five hostages released.
10 September	Operation Barras Rescue.
November	Display of Force by ARG.
14 November	Thirty-day ceasefire signed between government of Sierra Leone and RUF.
2001	
7 May	Diamond embargo on Liberia.
15 May	UNAMSIL force moves into RUF area around Lunsar.
2002	
December	BHC advised by Chief Prosecutor of plans to make 15 significant arrest.
2003	
March	SLE deployment in support of arrests. Arrests made.

Defence Lines of Development

Training

No specific training had been undertaken for this operation as it occurred literally overnight and since Sierra Leone had not been identified as a location for a potential deployment of British forces. Subsequent deployments, post-*Operation Palliser*, involved some training for preparation for the STTT, which falls outside the remit of this study.

This does not mean that there had been no training in this type of scenario. Elements of 16 Air Assault had conducted a series of exercises in the NEO role and it was seen as a likely task for the brigade.[35] Moreover, the interaction of many of the units deployed on the ground was helped by their often being drawn from 16 Air Assault Brigade; they had for the most conducted this type of exercise previously. There was therefore a collective understanding within the land component. Similarly the ARG had also exercised in this role.

There was interim NEO doctrine in operation at the time. This was replaced virtually straight after *Operation Palliser* by *Joint Warfare Publication 3-51*, which drew heavily on this operation.[36] In general, the forces deployed tended to fall back on their Northern Ireland experience and the rules of engagement (ROE) where there was any lack of knowledge.[37]

The construction of the deployment from within 16 Air Assault Brigade (Bde) rather than from the Spearhead Orbat clearly helped the operation. During the initial deployment phase, use was made of social networks to obtain D Company 2 PARA and supporting units such as the Pathfinder Platoon and the artillery battery from 7 RHA. One of the lessons from this experience was that, in future, all Spearhead elements would engage in collective training before they are declared to the Spearhead role. This was not applicable to the ABTF role because its component elements were drawn from within 16 Air Assault Bde.

A number of units had substantial experience with command-group training. For example, the command team for 1 PARA had been largely together for over a year and, apart from the various exercises they had conducted, they had also been deployed to Kosovo as part of the initial Allied Rapid Reaction Corps (ARRC) deployment into that territory in June 1999.[38] The ARG had been on a series of exercises testing the ARG concept of operations, which included a number of operations culminating in a live-fire exercise in France. They were used to working with each other and, in the case of ARG, had the support of the command infrastructure aboard the accompanying ships.

[35] Interview with Lt-Col Baldwin
[36] 'Non-combatant Evacuation Operations', *Joint Warfare Publication* 3-51
[37] Interview with Lt-Col Baldwin
[38] Interview with Maj. Champion

Two elements had relatively little experience. The JFACC was being trialled aboard *HMS Illustrious* and was in the process of being stood up. In this case, it proved less successful than hoped for, partly because it added an extra command level where there was little need for a coordinated air picture to begin with.

The other inexperienced force element was the ORLT, deployed with Brig. Richards in command. At the time, this deployment was seen as a test of the concept and all those interviewed agreed that it had worked. The ORLT formed the basis for the JTFHQ with additional staff deployed from London and from the peacekeeping centre in Ghana, which hosted a British training team. The ORLT had conducted a number of exercises prior to the deployment and thus drew upon a relatively experienced team. Any weaknesses were partially compensated for by Brig. Richards' familiarity with the key participants in Sierra Leone and with 16 Air Assault Bde. Indeed, DSF was content to subordinate the SF component to the JTFHQ after inserting his own team under the command of CO 22 Special Airborne Service (SAS). The ORLT/JTFHQ concept worked well because the idea had been appropriately thought through, resourced and contained an experienced core team. It ensured that the operation could be conducted at the operational level from the beginning and also highlighted the benefit of local expertise – in this case that of Brig. Richards. The key to the success was Richards' ability to employ his knowledge to strengthen the available network. In other words, the network built on existing strengths and acted as a force multiplier.

It is also worth noting that both the Royal Marine (RM) and Parachute Regiment communities are relatively small and have strong links into the SF community, partly because the SF community draws significantly from them. This meant that both 1 PARA and 42 Cdo RM were at ease working with SF, which was also reciprocated. Moreover, the core land units – SF 1 PARA and 42 Cdo – were highly motivated and prided themselves with coping in difficult situations. It is worth remembering that the level of operations was less intense at this time and that many units therefore felt a desire to be involved. This meant NTMs were radically reduced and, in a number of cases, forces took the initiative to prepare and deploy prior to formal notification. For example, the whole of 1 PARA plus its accompanying assets went to South Cerney FMB rather than just the Spearhead Lead Element (SLE).

Training to familiarise the troops with the peculiarities of the region was poor. Some units had trained in East Africa, where the British Army retains strong links (particularly in Kenya).[39] However, there was a definite lack of knowledge of how to operate in West Africa. The one area that received particular prominence in the press was that of Tropical Medicine. But the issue was more widespread. Some residual knowledge remained through various Defence Attachés and those who had served as UNMOs but they had not been debriefed to help provide a context. It is worth noting that 42 Cdo liaised with the Nigerian Battalion of UNAMSIL to gain a firmer understanding of local customs, behaviour, etc.[40]

[39] www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/DefenceNews/TrainingAndAdventure/UkkenyanAgreementABoostFor ArmyTraining.htm
[40] Interview with Maj. Muddiman

Brig. Holmes emphasised that *Operation Barras* would have been substantially more difficult and risky without the experience gained from *Operation Palliser*.[41] The experienced gained was widespread and ranged from the challenges of operating helicopters in the given environment to the levels of workload that could be expected from individuals given the tropical climate.

Equipment

As with training, the limited timescale of the deployment meant there was no equipment specifically acquired for this operation – even under an Urgent Operational Requirements (UOR). The interviews undertaken by KCL revealed a general expectation that the communications equipment would not work in Sierra Leone. This shortfall, it was felt, would have to be addressed while in theatre but would be less than critical given the limited capabilities of the RUF.

In terms of communications, a number of 'get arounds' were used: the use of LOs was highlighted as important and, to a certain degree, the SF and their communications provided the glue that held the system together. Moreover, the proximity of many of the units at Lungi International Airport meant that recourse could be made to face-to-face communications. In the short term, 1 PARA also 'borrowed' a number of sat phones from UNAMSIL and the general provision of satcoms was increased at both this level and at JTFHQ following the operation.

The overall communications capacity provided by government satellites was insufficient and recourse had to be made both to US military and commercial operators to provide the necessary capacity. There have been a number of steps taken to improve this capacity with the most recent being the PFI contract for Skynet 5.[42]

Secure communications to the senior civilian defence leadership were problematic. At the time, the Secretary of State for Defence lacked secure mobile communications. This caused some problems, as he was in his constituency when the crisis began and the Ministry did not think it was wise to make the public move of returning him to Main Building.[43]

However, the worse communications were across government, with DfID officials having to move to other departments to conduct secure meetings. This led to some delays in information exchange as people had to travel to the MoD or other secure facilities to communicate on secure lines.

[41] Interview with Brig. John Holmes, by KCL
[42] www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/DefenceNews/EquipmentAndLogistics/ThirdBritishBuiltCommunicationsSatelliteWillGoIntoOrbit.htm
[43] Interview with Lt-Col Nicky Moffat, by KCL

There was an interesting difference in the capacity of 1 PARA and 42 Cdo in developing the information picture. 1 PARA was more directly dependent on the JTFHQ for the intelligence picture. As part of the ARG, 42 Cdo was directly linked to the NTG information network, with which it retained a rear link for additional information.

Overall, a good information network was created. Interviews revealed positive appraisals of the availability of assets, ranging from LUTE team to *Nimrod* R1s, which enabled a significant picture to be built up. Nevertheless, there were some capacity constraints: R1 support was initially lacking because of other ongoing operations and the *Harrier* GR7s were not deck qualified and unable to engage in a recce role. Alternative solutions were provided for the operation: FA2s provided a limited capacity, as did the use of handheld digital cameras from *Gazelles*.[44] Such solutions were possible due to the lack of a significant surface-to-air missile threat, which allowed for the relatively free forward deployment of helicopters, including SKAEW2s, off the coast.

More generally, Brig. Richards could take a number of risks because of the equipment interoperability of 1 PARA and 42 Cdo and the picture he had of what was happening. For example, 7 RHA 105mm guns were not deployed to Sierra Leone because of the amount of space they and their accompanying ammunition took up within a constrained air bridge. Instead, when Richards called for artillery to be deployed to Lungi International Airport after the attack on the Pathfinders at Lungi Lol, the battery deployed with the ARG was lifted ashore and handed over to 7 RHA, much to the annoyance of 29 Royal Artillery (RA).

The need for airlift posed limitations and the lack of C-17 capabilities was evident.[45] This meant that reliance had to be placed on chartered *Antonovs*. Fortunately a number of Ukrainian *Antonovs* were available but their use did place limitations on what equipment could be moved forward. The other limit was self-imposed. Lungi International Airport could take wide-bodied aircraft and the UN had itself used such aircraft. However, the RAF insisted that, given the threat environment, the air-bridge between Dakar and Lungi International Airport would be limited to appropriately configured C-130s, thus precluding the direct access of VC-10s and *Tristars* to Sierra Leone. This restriction delayed some equipment and capabilities entering the area of operations (AO). It also raised issues about what could be transported on commercial rather than Service transport.

Added to this was a degree of confusion over the prioritisation of deployment, signalling a need for improved clarity between the component elements. For example, the SLE of 1 PARA deployed on light scales and there was some delay in their rucksacks catching them up. The commanding officers (CO) of 1 PARA and 42 Cdo were both held in high esteem by their own personnel and acted in the LCC role.

In one key respect, the weakness of the strategic lift was offset by the self-deployment of the *Chinook* force. A number of interviewees saw the *Chinooks* as a force multiplier,

[44] Interview with Maj. Muddiman
[45] www.raf.mod.uk/equipment/c-17.html

capable not only of supporting UK forces in terms of lift but also potentially in close air support (CAS) and other roles. They facilitated the evacuation of EPs during the early phase of the operation, when the road route was not secure, and later supported the reinforcement of UNAMSIL units forward. This was viewed by all as a big plus. Their one weakness lay in their inability to be air-to-air refuelled.[46]

The availability of equipment was generally very good. Added to this was the fortunate close proximity of both the ARG and *Illustrious* groups. This highlights the value of training in the Mediterranean as a halfway house to the Gulf and also part way towards Africa. This allowed the ARG to serve as a one-stop shop using interoperability of much of the land component to best advantage.

Personnel

All those interviewed praised the leadership of Brig, Richards. He clearly understood and conducted the campaign at the operational level, recognising the political constraints affecting himself and the British High Commissioner and achieved a successful outcome. He created a network that enabled him to maximise his advantages and put his opponents at a disadvantage. He demonstrated the value of the commander knowing the region and the key players, particularly on the political side. He was able to develop an appropriate force package and engage all lines of operation to achieve the desired end state of Her Majesty's Government. This raises the question for the UK of whether the on-call two-star generals should be made to specialise in a specific region.

There was a high level of trust between the various commanders and their units. For example, 1 PARA was familiar with the SF community and content to rely on these forces for information distribution.

In general, motivation was extremely high, with everyone wanting to take part in the operation and make it happen. To a degree, this was an aspect of the mindset of both the Parachute Regiment and RM.

The ORLT was effectively trialled and came through as a clear plus. It has been used on a number of subsequent operations. There is a clear value in having a team of experienced officers capable of making a rapid assessment as instrument for facilitating an operation.

It is important that such a team has an appropriate SF component to develop an early picture. DSF highlighted the lack of time between SF and 1 PARA deployments and felt that there is generally a need for an earlier SF deployment to assist in the construction of the information picture prior to deployment.[47] In this case, this was partially compensated for by Brig. Richards but only to a certain extent. More importantly, the initial focus on the NEO by 1 PARA gave SF some time to begin to build this picture.

[46] Interview with Gen. Lord Guthrie, by KCL
[47] Interview with Brig. Holmes

The experience in Sierra Leone revealed a cross-department lack of understanding as to how military operation works. The other government departments of government, particularly DfID, had no appreciation of MoD SOPs and requirements. For example, it tried to insist that the land component stay on the runway to protect it and was concerned to find them over 20 miles inland. Moreover, at least in DfID's case, they had no provision for dealing with highly classified material and lacked the secure communications of other departments. This meant that they had to leave their building to attend secure meetings and to read secure information, which was inefficient and caused some delays.

Information

The initial information picture was very sparse. In some respects the timing could not have been worse with, for example, the *Chinooks* deploying from RAF Odiham lacking maps of the region, let alone of Sierra Leone. The maps that did exist were dated. The ARG was fortunately able to use its initial pause phase off the Sierra Leone coast to conduct a hydrographical survey of the harbour and the Sierra Leone River, which facilitated later operations. The lack of maps has now been partially overcome by the creation of an online database with rapid printing facilities. However, their accuracy cannot be guaranteed without regular updating, which illustrates the importance of elements such as the hydrographic ships.

The operation did show how quickly a picture can be built up in a relatively cooperative environment. This was facilitated by the comparatively large and disparate nature of the collection-assets available. It also demonstrated the value of having both technical and human sources. On the human side, information sources included surrendering RUF members who had elected to enter the DDR process. They provided valuable information on the RUF, its mode of operations and its internal tensions.

The local population had often suffered severely from previous RUF attacks. They perceived the physical presence of the British forces as reassuring, and were therefore keen to provide information on RUF advances and activities. Firstly, they were able to identify some RUF members who had infiltrated through British forces. Secondly, they gave warning of the RUF advance towards Lungi Lol and thus allowed the Pathfinder Platoon to win a highly significant tactical battle that proved to be a turning point in the campaign.

Elements of UNAMSIL also provided an invaluable source of information. UNAMSIL had been in Sierra Leone for some time and therefore understood how the place worked and could place events in context.[48] Most UNAMSIL battalions had built up a good picture of what was happening, but the level of interaction with British forces depended on personal interaction with respective battalion information officers (IOs).

[48] Interview of Maj. Murriman

Signal and Communications intelligence (SIGINT and COMINT) came in through a variety of different sources and played an important part. In contrast to 1 PARA, 42 Cdo was linked to the NTG and benefited from the capabilities provided by the fleet. The case study also highlighted the value of SIGINT deployment by the Government Communications Headquarter (GCHQ) to the British High Commission (BHC).

The British forces were often able to intercept and, to a degree, jam the RUF's network. The RUF used basic codewords, but the system was not very secure, for which its operators were frequently lambasted. The LUTE team employed locals to listen in on RUF communications and provide translation. This enhanced the early-warning network and ensured that, at Lungi Lol for example, the RUF received an appropriate reception. There were a number of other forward deployments in response to this communications capability but no contacts followed.

Brig. Richards emphasised the importance of the information campaign from the beginning and saw it as one of his lines of operation.[49] He used a variety of means:

- Firstly, great importance was placed on the local radio network, which was the principal source of communication across the country. Richards was regularly interviewed on it and a series of programmes were run.[50]

- A series of leaflet drops was undertaken. These proved successful in getting some RUF to enter the DDR process.[51] The surrendering fighters often arrived at various UK units clutching the leaflets.

- A series of overt coercion messages were sent. These included sending frigates up the Sierra Leone River to conduct a live-firing exercise and the use of fixed-wing and helicopters to provide an air presence. The *Chinooks* were also used to provide live-fire demonstrations using their onboard mini-guns. The mortar teams with 1 PARA regular engaged in live-fire exercises and used illumination rounds to show their presence.

However, there was a degree of tension within the information campaign between the messages being sent within Sierra Leone, internationally and to the domestic audience in the United Kingdom. The inconsistency was partly intentional. Although the British government had a restrictive vision of what it was prepared to countenance, it was content for Brig. Richards to exaggerate this locally to help deter the RUF. The problem occurred when the international press picked up on these different messages and, through their own networks, exposed the differences, leading to questions being raised regarding mission creep in the House of Commons. This highlights one of many challenges posed by a joined up and effectively networked media.

[49] Interview of Lt-Gen. David Richards, by KCL
[50] news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/761701.stm
[51] www.army.mod.uk/15psyops/_sierra_leone.htm

Overall, the KCL interviewees stressed that the emphasis was on knowledge, not on information flows: information went up the command chain and knowledge came down. All seemed content with the picture they had and, where there were gaps, they felt confident in either the early-warning chain or their own abilities to react. All highlighted the value of face-to-face communications and of the regular O Groups as a mechanism for knowledge transfer. The involvement in O Groups varied depending on who you were and what you were doing.

In general, this was a well resourced intelligence picture that exceeded the expectations generated through training. There was at least one hint that the picture was not always trusted as training had instilled a general scepticism regarding the quality of the emerging information system. Another problem-area related to the occasional short supply of information assets. For example, the R1s were not immediately deployed because of operations elsewhere.

Doctrine and Concepts

As previously stated, there was an interim NEO doctrine in operation that was almost immediately replaced after the operation by *JSP 3-51*. Knowledge of NEO had been built over a series of exercises prior to the operation but the troops adopted the 'Northern Ireland model' for the conduct of patrols, etc.[52]

More broadly, CJTF could maintain escalation dominance and was able to control the battlespace. Some concepts and elements of doctrine were developed in situ. For example, the concept of operations for the Information Operations campaign was developed from scratch; there was no established doctrine for this area, which, from a British perspective, was still in its infancy.

Brig. Richards identified the confidence of the local population and UNAMSIL forces as critical vulnerabilities and he sought to consolidate both once the NEO had been completed. Meanwhile, he also sought to undermine any cohesion within the RUF and succeeded in paralysing its decision-making structure, as far as it existed.

Overall, this was an effects-based campaign that remained focused at achieving the strategic and operational goals.

Organisation

The British system for managing operations via Cabinet Office, DCMO and PJHQ had been developed over the previous decade and drew on the experience gained from both the 1982 Falklands Conflict and the 1991 Gulf War. On the ground, the BHC and CJTHQ effectively acted as the political and military leads and worked hand-in-glove with one

[52] Interview of Lt-Col Baldwin

another. The availability of the BHC as a facility proved invaluable, as did the facilities at Dakar.

This operation was the first practical test of the ORLT/JTHQ concept. It clearly worked and enabled Brig. Richards to engage at the military-strategic and operational levels from the outset rather than build up from the tactical level. In particular, the inclusion of a SF element was an invaluable means of developing an early information picture.[53]

A number of weaknesses were identified, which have since been addressed. The main organisational weaknesses were threefold. Firstly, the control of the air bridge could have been improved, particularly in terms of prioritising incoming loads. There were clear weaknesses in coordinating the various elements deploying by air and deciding the order in which they should be deployed. Here, the links between JTFHQ forward and rear, PJHQ and No.2 Group needed to be improved. This process was complicated by the degree of ad hockery that permeated the deployment. A number of units deployed well within their NTM in order to meet the needs of Brig. Richards. This meant that a number of shortcuts were taken, which resulted in a degree of confusion as to who and what had been deployed and at what time.

The second weakness lay in the use of the JFACC. By chance, JFACC was on board *Illustrious* when the operation began and, when it arrived in theatre, it sought to take over and manage the air picture.[54] In most operations, this would have been important. However, the relatively small number and types of air assets in use – mainly helicopters – and the need to coordinate with other assets – the UN and the Sierra Leone government – made the activity an overly bureaucratic exercise that was effectively abandoned after a few days. The key point here is that although there is a need for templates to conduct operations, it is at times necessary for these to be adapted to suit the particular circumstances of an operation.

The third weakness relates to the lost knowledge regarding Sierra Leone and the conduct of operations in West Africa. The issues relating to tropical medicine in the region have since been identified and acted upon. However, the reasons behind this lost knowledge have far wider pertinence for the MoD, especially when both civil servants and military person are frequently rotated between tasks. Brig. Holmes summed up the situation by stating that *Operation Barras* would have at a minimum been extremely difficult without the working knowledge developed during *Operation Palliser* and *Operation Silkman*.[55] The experience gained related to the performance of helicopters in the specific environment, the performance of soldiers in the given weather conditions, and the cultural context of the operation. Retaining this knowledge is the challenge within an organisation that inherently focuses on what is going on today and tomorrow and suffers from resource scarcity.

[53] Interview with Brig. Holmes
[54] Interview with Wg Cdr Rich Mason
[55] Interview with Brig. Holmes

Overall, the operation was facilitated by the familiarity of many of those involved with one another. This also partly explains the success of the ORLT concept, which allowed for shortcuts to be made in the command chain. For example, the deployment of C Company 1 PARA on Sunday 7 May was facilitated by the SF community's knowledge of 1 PARA's personnel. In this case, the CO SF Standby Squadron and the CO SLE were friends, having served in the Parachute Regiment together.[56]

There was also a shared mentality within the land assets deployed. They expected to go and act at short notice. For example, the command group of 1 PARA had together shared the experience of the operational deployment to Kosovo. This mentality was evident in the ability of various units within 16 Air Assault Bde to backfill at short notice when other units proved to be unavailable. This mentality was also shared by the ARG. It also highlighted the flexibility of their respective organisations. For example, 1 PARA was able to absorb D Company from 2 PARA into its midst without any apparent problem.

Infrastructure

The infrastructure can be divided into four localities:

United Kingdom

It is standard operating procedure to use South Cerney as the air movement centre for land forces being deployed by air. Its proximity to both Brize Norton and Lyneham was important, but it also helped transition mindsets from peace to the operational environment. Moreover, it proved useful in bringing different elements together. In this case, it worked well with 1 PARA and its accompanying assets meeting at South Cerney, where they were able to draw on pre-positioned equipment prior to flying out.

FMB Dakar

This French base in Senegal was an invaluable means of forward deploying forces to within range of Sierra Leone before they were called forward. Moreover, as there was concern about which air assets could be landed at Lungi International Airport, the RAF were able to use some of its other aircraft, such as its *Tristar* and VC-10 fleet, to bring forces forward and maximise the use of the appropriate *Hercules* aircraft into Lungi.

For the maritime dimension, FMB Dakar provided a useful means of linking resources in the UK to the ARG (via a shuttle service run the *Fort* class boat). Thus a number of personnel who did not embark at Gibraltar were forward deployed by air to Dakar and then helicoptered onto the *Fort* boat for onward dispatch to the ARG.

Both the local authorities and the French forces were very helpful and the relationship was also helped by the British Defence Attaché who was able to smooth over ruffled

[56] Interview with Lt-Col Baldwin

feathers as needed. The Defence Attaché was also able to provide an important conduit between British forces and the Senegalese and French governments/militaries.

ARG

The self-sustaining capability of the ARG proved vital for this operation for a number of reasons. Firstly, it allowed Brig. Richards to run calculated risks with 1 PARA's deployment. He knew that in travelling light, they could seize the initiative but that this would leave them vulnerable. The ARG deployment allowed him to provide logistical backup. This was reinforced by the use of a *Fort* boat in the shuttle supply role.

Secondly, the ARG was also used as a means of providing rest and recuperation for forces deployed ashore. Once the situation had begun to stabilise, 1 PARA's companies were all rotated through *Ocean.*

Thirdly, the ARG also allowed for a reduced ground footprint. This had a number of advantages. As the RUF at one point seemed keen to capture a British soldier, it helped minimise the number available for capture. At home, the political leadership were also keen to minimise the deployment for the domestic audience and the ARG allowed them to talk in terms of troop numbers in country while maintaining a nearby back-up in case of trouble.

Fourthly, the ARG was able to compensate for the very poor infrastructure ashore that had been crippled by lack of investment and civil war. By its very construction, it contained all the appropriate logistical back-up. For example, once the *Chinooks* were deployed, there was an element of downtime between their standard spares packages being used and the system for replenishment getting underway. In the case of the ARG, all the *Sea King* HC4s had full serving support and, as they were not deployed ashore, their tempo of operations could be sustained at a higher level. More significantly, the crews arrived in theatre fresh and not tired after a long self-deployment.[57]

Sierra Leone

The availability of the BHC was a very important asset. For example, it meant that a team from GCHQ could deploy quickly and operate from a base prepared with secure communications. It could thus serve as an initial base for the ORLT/JTFHQ without the need for them to start fully from scratch. It also served as a venue for a series of functions that supported the emphasis on a return to civil society.

The importance of Lungi International Airport has already been stated. It provided the key entry/exit point until other airfields could be improved.

Logistics

[57] Interview with Wg Cdr Mason

In some respects this operation played to the relative advantages of both air and sealift. The rapid deployment by air ensured that Lungi International Airport could be secured, which allowed the British forces to stay indefinitely and UNAMSIL to be reinforced.

There were however a number of logistical problems. The speed of the operation and the limits of the United Kingdom's then airlift capacity combined with constraints placed on what assets could be used where, resulting in bottlenecks and delays getting personnel and equipment in theatre. The lack of a strategic lift capability (this was pre-C-17 or A400 days) forced reliance on contracting from the civil market. Fortunately, during the first week, a number of *Antonovs* were available for use. If the RAF had possessed its four leased C-17s, the airlift would have been significantly faster. The situation was compounded by a degree of loss of control of the airlift, as elements competed to get their people and equipment deployed. This meant, for example, that when it came to the return of equipment, more vehicles were found to have been deployed than originally envisaged. This was particularly the case with the supporting assets, who all wanted to take their own Land Rovers etc.

The airlift also confirmed that the inappropriateness of some equipment to air transport. For example, the light guns of 7 RHA actually reached Dakar but were not deployed forward. The problem lay in transporting the accompanying ammunition which, because of its weight, quickly filled the aircraft. Using 29 RA light guns was far more efficient.

The ARG provided a self-contained and much needed back-up for the air deployment. The use of the *Fort* boat to shuttle extra provisions ensured a maximum forward presence without overly stretching the logistical arrangements. However, it is worth noting that if, as was first thought, the RUF had been within two days of Freetown and the airport and had intended to take control, the ARG would not have been able to carry out a successful NEO in time.

Information and Networked Flow of Material and Awareness

There was a general feeling that the operation was extremely successful. The interviewees felt that information was available and timely. In other words, there were no unforeseen surprises. However, the sample size of those interviewed is neither large nor scientifically determined and this assessment therefore needs to be qualified.

It is not clear from the available evidence whether the positive appraisals relate to a successful network or the lack of an actual threat. Doubts remain regarding the intentions of the RUF. A number of those interviewed would question whether the RUF even had an OODA loop to get inside. Instead their actions depended on how they were feeling on a particular day. This in itself raises questions regarding how to deal with such an adversary and the need to react sufficiently quickly to offset this vacuum. In this operation, it is clear from the experience of Lungi Lol and elsewhere that British forces were in the ascendancy and retained escalation dominance throughout.

Having said this, it is also clear that a significant information network was created that drew on a wide variety of sources and formed part of the information campaign. This was particularly impressive given the speed and lack of notice. The JTFHQ also appears to have been able to bring all the different information facets together. This process was facilitated by the use of the BHC infrastructure and the co-location of many assets at Lungi International Airport. Such practices were enabled through the effective use of LOs and O Groups at all levels to ensure knowledge transfer. Where information was not passed, there seems to have been a contented acceptance that appropriate information was being passed.

Troops appear to have been aware of the weaknesses affecting the operation, for example the initial constraints on the aerial reconnaissance capability resulting from concerns over escalation and RAF restrictions on the use of the GR7s. Nevertheless, the picture was gradually developed through a range of measures, such as a comprehensive riverine operations package aimed at providing the requisite surveillance and intelligence picture.

By way of contrast, the RUF were not co-located and tended to be led locally. The British were at times able to jam their limited communications capabilities and were also able to monitor what was being said via the use of local speakers.

Equally, UNAMSIL information was chaotic, partly as a result of limitations in its capabilities but more so as a result of its disparate elements. Whilst it was deployed under a Chapter VII mandate, many of its component parts were more suited to Chapter VI-type operations.[58]

Perceptions of Quality of Information and Networking (Measures of Information Position)

As stated earlier the initial information position was very limited. The report to the UN Security Council by the Secretary-General emphasised a confused picture.[59] The dispatch of the ORLT and the GCHQ team on the Friday and the BHC's discussions with some of the political leaders provided the first measurement of the information position and resulted in the initial call forward of assets to FMB Dakar and the subsequent decision to secure the Lungi airport.

After this, a number of measurements can be detected although it is not clear from the information available whether these were articulated as such. These can be defined in terms of the mission tasks.

Firstly, with the support of the BHC, the JTFHQ was able to oversee the processing of almost 500 EPs and their evacuation to Dakar. This was achieved within the planned 48-hour timeframe of the initial evacuation.

[58] Connaughton (2002), p.
[59] daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N00/417/77/PDF/N0041777.pdf?OpenElement

Secondly, whilst not all the infiltrations by the RUF were detected, the forces deployed were able to build up a network that enabled them to detect the movement of the main RUF advance on Lungi Lol and prevent any other significant approach to the airport or Freetown.

Thirdly, partly as a result of the successful escape of three of the four UK UNMOs from the RUF, British forces were able to locate all missing DfID and British military personnel and ultimately bring them all safely back to the UK. The only major delay was that of Maj. Andy Harrison, who was not released until July 2000. However, this represented a conscious decision and the option of a rescue operation was worked up and forces stood ready.

Fourthly, British forces may have been able to alter significantly the perception of the RUF leadership. Through a concerted information campaign matched to actual movements on the ground (including live-fire demonstrations, overflights, etc.), CJTF was able to give the impression of a much more significant British commitment to Sierra Leone than was actually the case. In comparison, UNAMSIL, which represented ten times the ground personnel, failed to deter the RUF and may well have evacuated the country but for the arrival of British forces.

Fifthly, British forces were able to provide a calming influence over the civilian population and restore law and order. This could be seen in the return to quasi-normality within Freetown and the beginnings of a return to civil society.

Patterns of Operational Success/Failure in Relation to Information/Networking (Measures of Decision Superiority)

In measuring decision superiority, it first needs to be recognised that it remains unclear whether the RUF even had an OODA loop to compare with the British forces. Three key turning points can be identified during this phase of the operation. These show that if the RUF did represent a threat, the United Kingdom did indeed have decision superiority.

The first point was the decision to secure Lungi International Airport. When Brig. Richards landed with the ORLT, he quickly identified the airport as a potential critical vulnerability both for his forces and also the UN. He therefore called for the deployment of the Spearhead/ABTF group to FMB Dakar on the Saturday and, on the Sunday, ordered the forward deployment of a company from 1 PARA and the Standby Squadron of SF to secure the airfield. By Monday morning, the ground was effectively secured.

The second turning point relates to the rapid deployment of 1 PARA, *Chinook* helicopters and C-130s to Sierra Leone to conduct the NEO at short notice and upon the BHC's request. The timing of the deployment meant that those EPs who wanted to leave were effectively evacuated within two days. More significantly, the presence of British forces in and around Freetown rapidly stabilised the situation. It gave confidence both to the local population and to UNAMSIL. The result was a much smaller NEO than originally

envisaged, as a significant number of EPs felt it was now safe to stay. This meant that a number of key people remained in-country as the subsequent moves towards enhancing civil society gained momentum.

Thirdly, the ambush of RUF personnel at Lungi Lol followed a few hours later by the capture and imprisonment of Foday Sankoh proved to be a key turning point. It showed that the RUF could be defeated and indicated that the British were committed to the defence of the government of Sierra Leone. The impact was maximised by the information operation and could be seen through individual RUF members entering the DDR process.

Evaluation of the Information and Networking Contribution to the Outcomes of the Operation (Measures of Campaign Effectiveness)

The actual success of the campaign remains debateable depending on individual interpretations regarding the RUF's intent and coherence. Clearly Brig. Richards had a number of effects he wished to achieve and these can be considered within the context of the information position.

Firstly, he successfully conducted a NEO. The initial information picture was very limited, relying on a variety of sources such as the UN and BHC. Once deployed, the ORLT began to build on the available information and, on the Saturday morning, Richards was rapidly able to assess that a NEO was likely and to then set in train the deployment of the appropriate assets to achieve this mission.

Secondly, as already stated, a clear picture of the RUF is not possible without recourse to a wider range of evidence. Nevertheless, it is clear that British forces were able to take control of the Aberdeen peninsula area and monitor what was going on beyond this immediate region and were thus in a position to act accordingly. After the successful ambush of the RUF at Lungi Lol, the British forces retained the initiative in the campaign without challenge, except for the brief seizure of personnel from the Royal Irish Regiment in August 2000.

Thirdly, the British action served as a means of reinvigorating UNAMSIL. Instead of evacuating from Sierra Leone, the UN was able to remain in the country and would ultimately see the RUF enter the DDR process. The role of UNAMSIL has now been brought to an end and the country has the hope that it may have escaped the long civil war and begun to rebuild itself.[60]

Fourthly, the British forces were able to assist in the return of civil society. For example, troops from 42 Cdo supported the local police force in conducting a series of arrests against various groups engaged in banditry, robbery, etc.

[60] www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=16996&Cr=sierra&Cr1=UNAMSIL

Fifthly, the British were able to rebuild the SLA into a manoeuvre force capable of taking on the RUF and slowly extending government control over the country. This involved diplomatic efforts at the UN to allow the lifting of the arms embargo, the use of STTT to train battalions and supporting assets to conduct operations and the building of an operation headquarters to manage a campaign.

Sixthly, although the majority of UN personnel were released by the RUF through UN-led negotiations, the British provided significant support to the UN and actively supported the breakout of Indian garrison in July 2000, providing intelligence and three *Chinooks* to deploy Indian troops and fly out the wounded.

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Major Andy Cantrill	Screen Force Commander, 42 Cdo
Maj Liam Cradden	1 PARA Ops Officer
Maj Nick Champion	1 PARA Air Adjutant
General Lord Guthrie	Chief of the Defence Staff
Vice-Admiral Ian Garnett	CJO, PJHQ
Brigadier John Holmes	DSF
Geoff Hoon	Secretary of State for Defence
Wg Cdr Rich (‘Spiv’) Mason	7 Squadron, Chinook Force 2IC
Lt Col Nicky Moffat	APS, SofS
Maj Andy Muddiman	Intelligence Officer, 42 Cdo
Stephen Pollard	Head Sec (O)
Lt Gen David Richards	CJTF
Paul Rimmer	Sec (O)
SF personnel	Identities not given

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Case Study 7 – Iraq – Dr Stuart Griffin with Dr David Whetham

Historical Sketch of Operation

Historical sketch

The period of operations under consideration has been expanded considerably since the initial scoping study. Originally, the intention was to examine the period between May 2003, after the cessation of formal hostilities, and early 2004. By this stage, UK operations in Multinational Division South East (MND(SE)) had witnessed several spikes in insurgent activity and general instability from which tentative lessons may be drawn. However, there was a major peak in organised violence against British forces in and around the southern town of Al Amarah between March and August 2004. This occurred during the final weeks of the Light Infantry (LI) tour and throughout the tour of the Princess of Wales Royal Regiment (PWRR), which engaged in significant operations against various insurgents and armed groups. Members of both regiments described these operations as a combination of counterinsurgency (COIN) and Peace Enforcement (PE), contrasting them with the less robust aspects of Peace Support Operations (PSO) that they were expecting and that the LI had performed throughout most of their tour.[61] The doctrinal distinctions (or lack thereof) between PSO and COIN activity have been an interesting theme throughout the interviews conducted as part of this study, especially at brigade (Bde) level and below. It emerged that doctrine was perceived as useful for framing activity in a general sense but did not specifically dictate tactical actions. Drill, training, initiative and simple common sense were most often cited as key. Above Bde level, doctrine appears to have had a stronger direct role, though, again, the stress was placed on adaptability.

There are three principal reasons for a further expansion of the timeframe well into 2005. First, interviews with successor units seem to indicate the existence of cycles of violence in MND(SE) that relate to a complex combination of local politics, tribal loyalties, weather (there is an apparent trend of increased violence during summer), Islamic radicalism and the ways in which these factors influence the relative approaches of different British units. This last point is interesting because it is a reminder that any discussion of a peculiarly British approach to low-intensity operations (LIO) or COIN is premised upon two assumptions: that UK forces have a common organisational culture and that unique conflict environments nevertheless share sufficiently similar characteristics to be resolved in broadly similar ways. These assumptions are challenged by some of the participants in this study.

[61] Interview with Maj. K. Hickman; interview with Maj. J. Coote, both by KCL

Second, and more ominously, recent experience indicates that there is a strong possibility that a more sinister, externally backed insurgency is developing. Prior to 2005, this type of insurgency was rarely witnessed in southern Iraq, largely because its roots lie in a combination of both internal and external Sunni radicalism and frustration at the fall from power of the Sunni-dominated Ba'athist party. The overwhelming Shia domination of southern Iraq has generally allowed British forces to operate in a more permissive environment than US forces based in the so-called 'Sunni triangle', though this trend has been undermined by increasing Shia frustration at the perceived slowness of political and economic progress and the periodic activity by Shia followers of Moqtadr-al-Sadr. If the 'occasional glimpses of something darker'[62] have become more frequent, this would clearly have serious repercussions for future British activity. Operations during 2005 may indicate that a more coherent externally-sponsored insurgency is complicating pre-existing challenges.

Finally, in November 2004, the Black Watch (BW) Battle Group deployed out of area to a forward operating base (FOB) on the eastern bank of the Euphrates in support of US forces. *Operation Bracken* placed the Black Watch firmly in the highly volatile US sector and under the authority of a US Marine Corps (USMC) Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU).[63] The opportunity to compare Black Watch operations in MND(SE) with its experience of operating with US forces in a US sector makes *Bracken* an important case study in its own right. In fact, the experiences of other British officers operating within US force structures have also been used to inform this study, as they often provide interesting counterpoints to British military perspectives from MND(SE).[64] Two of the most interesting questions requiring further investigation are whether numerous US units naturally employ very similar tactics and techniques to the British and whether the US concept of network-centric warfare (NCW) and the British concept of network-enabled capabilities (NEC) are fundamentally dissimilar. If the US forces' heavier reliance on firepower is a response to the environment they find themselves in rather than a cause of that instability (which is often the accusation), US forces probably think of NCW in different terms to the way UK forces think of NEC primarily because of better relative capabilities rather than any substantive doctrinal or conceptual differences.[65]

However, others disagree, seeing quite fundamental differences in approaches to operational command and the relationship with NEC/NCW. In this regard, the concept of mission command is illustrative. The majority of British interview subjects perceived a distinctly British approach to LIO based on past experience and how they conceptualise 'mission command'. Subjects often drew a clear distinction between British and American approaches to mission command, citing it as a significant strength of British tactical and operational activity in LIO. This often related to a perception of the British forces as emphasising informal, social networks more than the Americans; a distinct

[62] Interview with Brig. David Rutherford-Jones, by KCL
[63] 1BW/BHQ/321 (08/12/04) – 1 BW Post-Operational Report (hereafter POR) For Operation Telic 4.1 (Draft)
[64] Interviews with Maj. M. Shervington, Maj. J. Roddis, Capt N. Tomlin, Col J. Cowan, Maj. M. Ewing, Lt-Col C. R. Stickland, Lt-Col J. Bourne, all by KCL
[65] Interview with Maj. Shervington

advantage, it was argued, in the conduct of operations in Iraq. Both militaries recognise the current limitations of the technological aspects of NEC/NCW in LIO in urban environments, making the British emphasis on informal and social networks especially interesting for this study.

Methodologically, the paucity of secondary sources for ongoing operations in Iraq has required a greater focus on interview-based evidence than found in the other case studies represented in this report. The danger of such an approach is that conclusions could be drawn from highly flawed anecdotal evidence and it should therefore be emphasised that conclusions are *tentative only*. For this reason, the interview list has been greatly expanded (see bibliography). In order to lend this study coherence, these interviews are largely based around the experiences of successive British battalions deploying into the same area, primarily as components of the Maysan Battle Group. However, they also draw on expertise at Brigade (Bde), Divisional (Div) and Corps level and even at the strategic-operational interface. Extensive use has been made of Post Operation Reports (POR) and battalion war diaries. Inevitably, for an ongoing operation, numerous sources remain classified and are therefore only referred to indirectly in the main body of the chapter. All sources used appear in the bibliography.

Chronology

2003

January	*Telic* 1 begins.
19-20 March	Invasion of Iraq by allied forces begins with missile attack .
9 April	US forces advance into central Baghdad. Saddam Hussein's grip on the city is broken. In the following days, Kurdish fighters and US forces take control of the northern cities of Kirkuk and Mosul. There is looting in Baghdad and elsewhere.
1 May	President Bush declares end of major combat operations.
May	United Nations (UN) Security Council backs US-led administration in Iraq and lifts economic sanctions on Iraq. US administrator abolishes Ba'ath Party and the institutions of the former regime.
June	*Telic* 2
24 June	Six Royal Military Police (RMP) killed in an incident at Al Majar Al Kabir.
July	The US-appointed Governing Council meets for the first time. The commander of US forces says his troops face low-intensity guerrilla-

	style war. Saddam's sons, Uday and Qusay, are killed by US forces during a gun battle in Mosul.
August	Deadly bomb attacks hit the Jordanian embassy and the UNHQ in Baghdad. Saddam's cousin, Ali Hassan al-Majid, or Chemical Ali, is captured. A car bomb in Najaf kills 125, including the Shia leader Ayatollah Mohammed Baqr al-Hakim.
November	*Telic* 3
14 December	Saddam Hussein is captured by US forces in Tikrit.
2004	
February	Attacks on the offices of the main Kurdish factions kill more than 100 people in Irbil.
March	Suicide bombers attack Shia festival-goers in Karbala and Baghdad, killing 140 people.
April	*Telic* 4
April-May	Shia militias loyal to radical cleric Moqtada Sadr take on Coalition forces. Heavy fighting occurs during the month-long US military siege of the Sunni Muslim city of Falluja.
June	US hands sovereignty to interim government headed by Prime Minister Iyad Allawi.
August	Fighting in Najaf between US forces and the Shia militia of radical cleric Moqtada Sadr.
October	*Telic* 5
November	Major US-led offensive launched against insurgents in Falluja. BW deploys to Dogwood.
4 November	A suicide bomber kills three British BW soldiers and their interpreter and wounds eight.
2005	
30 January	An estimated eight million people vote in elections for a Transitional National Assembly. The Shia United Iraqi Alliance wins a majority of assembly seats. Kurdish parties come second. A Royal Air Force (RAF) C-130 *Hercules* crashes, killing ten UK service personnel.

28 February	At least 114 people are killed by a massive car bomb in Hilla, south of Baghdad. It is the worst single such incident since the US-led invasion.
May	*Telic* 6
April	Amid escalating violence, parliament selects Kurdish leader Jalal Talabani as president. Ibrahim Jaafari, a Shia, is named as prime minister.
May onwards	Surge in car bombings, bomb explosions and shootings: Iraqi ministries put the civilian death toll for May at 672, up from 364 in April.
July	A study compiled by the non-governmental Iraq Body Count organisation estimates that nearly 25,000 Iraqi civilians have been killed since the 2003 US-led invasion.
August	A draft constitution is endorsed by Shia and Kurdish negotiators, but not by the Sunni representatives. More than 1,000 people are killed during a stampede at a Shia ceremony in Baghdad. A suicide bomber detonates a fuel tanker, killing 90 people in Musayibb.
September	182 people are killed in a series of attacks in Baghdad, including a car-bomb attack on a group of workers in a mainly-Shia district.
October	Saddam Hussein goes on trial on charges of crimes against humanity. Voters approve a new constitution, which aims to create an Islamic federal democracy.
November	*Telic* 7
November	Suicide bombers target mosques in Khanaqin, killing at least 74 people.
15 December	Iraqis go to the polls to choose the first, full-term government and parliament since the US-led invasion.

2006

4-5 January	More than 150 people are killed in suicide bombings and attacks targeting Karbala, Ramadi, Miqdadiya and Baghdad – the worst upsurge in violence since December's elections.
20 January	The Shia-led United Iraqi Alliance emerges as the winner of December's parliamentary elections, but fails to gain an absolute majority.

31 January UK forces suffer 100th Iraq death.

Defence Lines of Development

Training

Adequate time for good training was considered an essential prerequisite by all. The opportunity to practise core skills of weapons handling, tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs) were stressed as the foundation for everything else.[66] According to the POR for 1 Mech Bde, 'Individual preparedness is the fundamental building block on which collective performance rests. For demanding deployments on which all individuals are stretched mentally and physically and where insurgents show no discrimination between cap badges, minimum standards must be achieved for all personal in skill at arms…, medical training and fitness'.[67] The ability to train adequately was variable, with several contingents being deployed at short notice and without the full training package available to their peers.[68] In these circumstances, they were heavily reliant on in-theatre training packages, conducted largely at the discretion of Bde HQ, and even more so on basic training in core skills. These conditions applied to the Black Watch redeployment for *Operation Bracken:* 'the deployment occurred in a challenging timeframe, but there was little choice given the requisite political process and 1st/4th Bde RIP. 1 BW's training was further complicated by their role as Brigade Reserve meaning they would be a reactive force to whatever was required in a changing environment. This meant training for specific tasks was difficult and also that, because they were not formally attached to the parent brigade package, they were left to their own devices. The 2IC believes that this was actually an advantage as it meant training could be delivered in a 'short and sharp' manner, thus avoiding 'training fatigue'.[69] However, maintaining that high state of readiness while waiting for specific tasks proved challenging.[70] In spite of the potential problems, the training worked, testament to common doctrine and training, underpinned by a period of mutual education'.[71] Again, the relationship with other units was crucial, with newcomers relying on informal social networks to benefit from the experiences of 'veterans', especially where training time had been curtailed.

All agreed that UK forces must predicate training on the assumption that operations will be high intensity at some stage of the deployment. However, the relative emphasis that should be placed upon training for high-intensity operations in general and the unique difficulties of operating in Iraq's urban environment in particular were debatable. Some argued that increased emphasis on war-fighting and the effective use of firepower in general training at British Army Training Unit Suffield (BATUS) and during Bde level

[66] See for instance interviews with Brig. Rutherford-Jones & Maj. Coote
[67] 1 Mechanised Bde POR, *Operation Telic* IV, 1X/G3/1005/9, Jan 2005, p.5
[68] 20th Armoured Bde POR, *Operation Telic* III, 20X/G3/3028/9, 04/07/04
[69] Interview with Maj. Ewing
[70] *ibid.*
[71] 1 BW POR, p.2

pre-deployment training was most important because of the (commonly held) belief that the ability to conduct high-intensity operations always affords the opportunity for scaling down. When the LI faced an increasingly hostile environment at the end of their tour and the PWRR were forced to operate in very difficult circumstances for much of theirs, the continued emphasis on war-fighting and firepower elements was demonstrably justified.[72] Similarly, when the BW was required to transition to higher-intensity operations, 'as a result [of the superior enemy in the north] BW became far more aware of its own offensive capabilities and tactics'.[73] Finally, the increased incidence of better directed and executed insurgent attacks throughout 2005 has clearly required more robust activity.

However, the majority also felt that emphasis on strong skills and drills alone would be inadequate. Specialist training on the unique challenges of operating in Iraq, especially on the necessity to transition rapidly between postures and on the cultural intricacies of operating in the Middle East, was considered an essential prerequisite.[74] Without it, soldiers operating predominantly on the tactical level would have been significantly under-prepared[75] and capable of accidentally undermining the whole mission.[76] The concept of tactical action impacting heavily at a strategic level is a strong theme in both UK PSO and COIN doctrine and despite tactical level commanders' assertions that doctrine did not explicitly influence decision-making (see 2.7.B.5.), it appears from their responses that its basic tenets actually influenced them very strongly. For instance, even when the environment is perceived as becoming increasingly hazardous, a heavy emphasis remains on engaging with an indigenous population that is both culturally and ethnically alien to the majority of UK forces and therefore supposedly more problematic to understand. Continued emphasis on the necessity for rapid transitioning between postures is allied to this determination to engage and has its basis in considerable past experience of LIO in unfamiliar environments. This experience is embodied in both PSO and COIN doctrine and pre-deployment training. There was a strong feeling among British junior leadership that increasingly well-balanced pre-deployment and in-theatre training packages gave them a distinct advantage over their Coalition colleagues, and US forces in particular whose training they perceived as less responsive. However, British officers operating with US forces sometimes queried this observation and its validity should therefore be viewed with caution. The main issues concerning the balance of the UK training packages are discussed below.

Increased focus on the use of heavier firepower during general training proved extremely important because of the volatility of the situation on the ground and the necessity for rapid changes in force posture. Experience showed that it was critical for the maintenance of Coalition forces' credibility that they could escalate to the highest levels of intensity and back down again in a matter of minutes. Though well coordinated insurgency is less common in the UK's main area of operations, MND(SE), violence is unlikely to recede in the short to medium term so the ability to mount robust and agile military responses to

[72] Interviews with Maj. Hickman & Maj. Coote
[73] Interview with Capt Tomlin
[74] 1 PWRR BG POR Lessons Report
[75] Interviews with Brig. Rutherford-Jones & Maj. C. Antelme (by KCL)
[76] Interview with Brig. Rutherford-Jones

attacks will remain at a premium. If a more dangerous insurgency continues to develop, this may require a change of approach, with a very robust force posture as standard and force protection at a premium. This would not be dissimilar to the current situation in the US sector and could lend further authority to the comments of British liaison officers (LOs) about the dangers of drawing blanket comparisons between British and American 'approaches' that use the relative success of British activity in MND(SE) as incontrovertible evidence of the superiority of a peculiarly British approach to LIO. However, the potential requirement to alter fundamentally its stance *does* go against British instincts about how to approach LIO, even in more dangerous environments. Interviews, battle diaries and PORs reveal a general adherence to the very traditional view that heavier emphasis on force protection comes at the expense of wider 'hearts and minds' activities and is therefore ultimately self-defeating.[77] There is also anecdotal evidence that British units are prepared to back themselves in this respect by making conscious decisions to patrol on foot or in less well-protected vehicles whenever possible (see below).

Without more specialist training directed at the challenges of operating in such an uncertain asymmetric environment, there was concern that over-reliance on firepower could lead to disproportionate or inappropriate responses. After a slow start, the Iraq-specific training was widely seen as increasingly responsive to lessons learned on the ground. The general perception is that it was decent at the beginning but has evolved well throughout. This is due to a good feedback loop, formally instituted early in the post-conflict phase, which progressively incorporated lessons from Iraq into pre-deployment training. All interviewees stressed that a good cultural-awareness package and historical-background briefings on Iraq were very important aspects of pre-deployment training. Several units noted that effective cultural training and awareness was essential to support information operations, though simple people skills were often sufficient as most Iraqis did not actually expect a detailed understanding of cultural subtleties. Col Cowan, 1 BW, banned the wearing of dark glasses throughout the Battle Group, though left the choice of helmet or berets to individual company (coy) commanders (cdrs).[78] This cultural dimension was viewed as initially weak but as improving from then on.

Ideally, a three-month period should be dedicated to pre-deployment training. This training would normally include a bespoke package from the Operations Training and Advisory Group (OPTAG), standard battalion-level skills and drills, ideally Bde-level exercises and Div-level scrutiny of Bde HQ. OPTAG's largely technical and legal training packages were regarded as integral to pre-deployment training and its own evolution deserves closer examination elsewhere. OPTAG evolved out of the old Security Operations Training Advisory Teams (SOTAT) and Northern Ireland Training Advisory Teams (NITAT), which may help explain the comparative weakness of its cultural elements in the early *Telics*. There is also an interesting case study in knowledge transfer as OPTAG has conducted small-scale training exercises with US forces in Iraq (for platoon cdrs and senior NCOs). Relevant aspects have apparently since been incorporated

[77] For instance, interviews with Brig. Rutherford-Jones, Maj. Antelme & 1 BW (by KCL)
[78] 20 Brigade POR; Interview with Col Cowan

in the training packages of the US Joint Readiness Training Centres.[79] One interesting finding concerns the perception by some troops of a credibility gap in some of the OPTAG briefings, often generated by their own previous familiarity with the theatre. When 1 BW returned from Basra, its personnel tended to believe that they understood the situation on the ground even though the training rightly emphasised that the situation had changed and was a lot less benign that when 1 BW had left in 2003. It was not until 1 BW was actually patrolling around Shaibah that some soldiers actually realised the realities of the new situation. It very quickly adapted following this realisation.[80] This may have implications for the perceived integrity of information and the difficulties of taking some information 'on trust' and also raises the intriguing notion that previous experience of a theatre can in some respects be disadvantageous.

Brigade Commanders are afforded considerable latitude to design and run the rest of the training programme themselves and have increasingly taken on responsibility for providing cultural and social aspects as well as the core martial skills necessary for operational readiness.[81] All considered it correct that responsibility for the balance of activities in training packages remain with the commanding officer at Bde level.[82] This raises interesting questions about how best to balance centralised training for the sake of consistency with decentralised training to preserve commanders' authority. There is evidence that Bde level pre-deployment training has now evolved to find a natural balance, with best practices from previous handovers making its way into subsequent training. For example, it is now common practice for outgoing Bdes to take an active role in working up incoming Bdes with senior Bde HQ staff (Bde Cdr, Chief of Staff (COS), Deputy COS (DCOS), etc.) acting as mentors for their successors during exercises. 4 Bde helped train 7 Bde during *Exercise Desert Dragon* and 20 Bde underwent a similar process.[83] Bde HQs can themselves expect to be 'run absolutely ragged' by Div.[84]

Ultimately, realism was perceived as key to good pre-deployment training. Once core skills were worked up and legal and technical aspects addressed, interviewees saw no effective substitute for tough exercises. Subordinate officers and men *must* be put under intense pressure for limited periods. Brig Rutherford-Jones, formerly CO 20 Bde, emphasised the need to design 'clever vignettes' based on real experiences in order to briefly push subordinates to the absolute brink. This training should be replicated all the way down to section level in order both to test soldiers' mettle and to allow them to learn from their mistakes in stressful but ultimately benign environments. The Brigadier recalled Div HQ doing exactly the same to him over a four-day period and regarded it as an invaluable experience.[85] Some interviewees expressed a concern that time and financial constraints may curtail proper exercises. There was also a general sense that US training may not replicate realistic scenarios as effectively and that this could be problematic. However, this is based purely on anecdotal evidence and therefore requires

[79] Interview with Maj. Shervington
[80] Interview with Capt Tomlin
[81] Anonymous, 3 Div HQ staff officer interview by KCL; interview with Brig. Rutherford-Jones
[82] KCL interviews
[83] Anonymous
[84] Interview with Brig. Rutherford-Jones
[85] *ibid.*

deeper analysis of the relative strengths and weaknesses of UK and US training programmes. It is also a generalisation, as there are significant differences in training within the UK's much smaller force structure, and the same is almost bound to be true in US work-ups. A detailed comparative analysis of US Army, USMC and British Army pre-deployment training would be very useful here.

Finally, good advance reconnaissance, properly conducted unit handovers and continual in-theatre training were considered essential. All interviewees stressed time for proper recces as vital. Coy cdrs normally conducted two-to-three week recces just prior to deployment, usually operating alongside their immediate predecessors (see below). Ideally, the Bde Cdr and COS, all Battle Group (BG) cdrs, coy cdrs and even platoon cdrs should also make extended visits to theatre, preferably in coherent groups, before they begin specific training. Linked to time for advance recce was the necessity for appropriate handover procedures. The opportunity to learn from predecessors was considered vital. The necessity for good communication with all relevant officers in theatre in the month or so leading up to a handover was obvious from descriptions of the challenges faced during and immediately after a new deployment (most notably the tendency of Iraqi insurgents to test newcomers during their opening weeks in theatre). Regular situation updates and advice on appropriate behaviour in widely divergent circumstances were heavily dependent on social networks, with officers who had built up strong relations with their predecessors enjoying considerable advantages over colleagues denied similar opportunities by more rapid deployments. Once deployed, in-theatre training must continue and performance must be periodically reviewed. All levels of command recognised the necessity of conducting regular refreshers and to design good miniature training packages for late arrivals and replacements.

It has become common practice for incoming coy cdrs to develop strong personal contacts with their predecessors over a period of months leading up to the deployment. For example, Maj. K. Hickman (OC D Coy, Light Infantry) was in regular contact with his predecessor, Maj. (now Lt-Col) G Deakin, for over two months prior to deployment.[86] Maj. Deakin provided Maj. Hickman with regular situation updates, invaluable local knowledge and advice about possible challenges. When the various LI command teams visited Iraq in September 2003, Maj. Hickman accompanied Maj. Deakin on operations for a week, learning the ground and getting a feel for the environment. This allowed Maj. Hickman to acquire a 'good handle on the environment because you can't beat being there and getting situational awareness'.[87] Another week's experience just prior to deployment in October allowed Maj. Hickman to write well-informed initial operational orders pre-deployment. Accordingly, his men were 'good to go' and the tempo of British operations in his area (detached with Queen's Royal Hussars (QRH) BG in northern Basra) did not change markedly during the handover period. Maj Hickman commented that this had a significant impact upon his coy's tour because, after the expected initial testing from various potential belligerents, they were not seriously taken on until towards the very end, when the general environment deteriorated badly.[88] For his part, Maj.

[86] Interview with Maj. Hickman
[87] *ibid.*
[88] *ibid.*

Deakin was keenly aware of his responsibility to help prepare his successor,[89] again a common theme in interviews.[90]

During handovers, joint patrolling was seen as important tactical preparation and introductions to all key local contacts was frequently cited as crucial for the pursuit of longer-term strategic objectives. When the PWRR took over from the LI during the Sadr uprising, there was no opportunity for an orderly handover. Effectively, the PWRR conducted a relief-in-place, a highly dangerous manoeuvre that was made easier by a two-week period of operating alongside one another, first with the LI in command, then with the positions reversed. Maj. Coote, PWRR Armoured Infantry Coy Cdr, spent a week as gunner for his predecessor before reversing roles,[91] an experience replicated by many others.[92] Six months later, when the PWRR handed over to the Welsh Guards (WG), the situation had begun to stabilise somewhat and the WG was able to exploit the other key element of handovers: introductions to local social networks. While the PWRR tour was necessarily characterised by a heavy emphasis on COIN and counter-disorder activities (with force protection a major concern), the WG tour began in more promising circumstances, enabling it to take advantage of existing local contacts and develop new ones.[93] Nevertheless, this did entail taking considerable calculated risks with its own safety, a trait common in British LIO discussed below.

Essentially, when opportunities have presented themselves, UK forces have remained keen to engage in longer-term peace-building activities despite significant periods of instability and increasing concern about the future security situation. Thus, the inculcation of tactical flexibility, especially for those operating at BG level and below, was commonly held to be at the heart of a successful operational tour. Doing the basics right was a common theme, especially with regard to the skill of patrolling. In this respect, past experience was also regarded as important (if not vital), with Northern Ireland and Bosnia frequently cited as particularly informative. However, officers frequently commented that patrolling in Iraq was an altogether different proposition because of the requirement to engage more deeply with the local population whilst simultaneously being on a higher state of readiness for a sudden and serious escalations of violence. Interviewees felt that it was crucial to instil this tactical flexibility and initiative down to the very lowest levels. In this respect, the concept of mission command proved invaluable.

Equipment

UK equipment has received mixed reviews from British forces operating in Iraq. Overall, the standard of British equipment remains high and has put UK forces at a considerable comparative advantage over belligerent groups. According to 40 Cdo Royal Marines

[89] Interview with Lt-Col G. Deakin, by KCL
[90] KCL interview list
[91] Interview with Maj. Coote
[92] Interviews plus numerous Regimental and Bde PORs detailed in the bibliography
[93] Interview with Maj. Antelme

(RM): 'Individual equipment issued for *Operation Telic* IV/V was first class; notably better than anything experienced hitherto in any environment…. As such, continuing media criticism in this area is unfounded'.[94] However, as expected, insurgents continue to employ asymmetric tactics (ambushes, bombings, terrorism) that target conventional forces' weaknesses. Further, they remain difficult to identify and attack. If a well-coordinated, more sophisticated insurgency is now developing, clearly it will present more problematic challenges, notably in respect of identification, responsiveness and battlespace management. These are key areas where enhanced networked capabilities are perceived as being most vital, especially with regard to the dissemination of accurate and timely intelligence, the gaining of situational awareness and the seizure and retention of operational and tactical initiative.

At the tactical level, communication was sometimes a source of frustration. During engagements, units struggled to coordinate their activities and keep Bde informed. The PWRR, for instance, were engaged on a regular basis and experienced significant difficulties, being forced on several occasions to rely on mobile-phone conversations communicated via London.[95] Other units also found the need to rebroadcast and relay messages as standard practice if they wished to achieve effective communications.[96] On *Telic* IV and V, 40 Cdo RM and 1 BW struggled with tactical comms. 40 Cdo found that most Clansman VHF frequencies were ineffective due to their own electronic countermeasure (ECM). VHF only worked outside their own ECM bubble causing some difficulties and forcing the unit to take unnecessary risks in order to communicate.[97] Again, mobile phones were used extensively, overloading the network and making comms difficult.[98] 1 BW employed rebro stations to ensure that tactical comms could get through, prompting Col Cowan to express a strong interest in *Bowman* and assured tactical-level comms.[99] Strategic comms were described as 'brilliant', featuring e-mail and telephone links to Basra and London, but they could not link Operating Base Kelsu with 24 MEU.[100] HF comms were reliable when static but the range was restricted by unreliable antenna mounts.[101] A number of PORs noted the need to improvise the mounting of some equipment and the associated reduction in efficiency.[102] The size of the operational area also meant tactical comms were 'a constant struggle'.[103] Troops on *Operation Bracken* always had HF and VHF radios, but re-broadcasting and relaying messages were standard practices.[104] Rebro units were employed in the middle vehicle of convoys to ensure that the rear vehicle would remain in contact, but this required practice and discipline, as the method involved the use of a different frequency. It also meant that

[94] 40 Commando RM POR
[95] 1 PWRR BG POR Lessons Report
[96] B Sqn 1st Queen's Dragoon Guards Op Bracken Post Operation Report, TELIC V, 09/01/05 & Interview with Col Cowan
[97] 40 Commando RM POR
[98] 40 Commando RM POR
[99] Interview with Col Cowan
[100] *ibid*.
[101] 40 Commando RM POR
[102] For example, ECM equipment used by 1 Mech. See 1 Mech POR.
[103] B Squadron, 1st QDG, Op *Bracken* POR
[104] *ibid.*

the convoy needed to return to the original frequency to communicate with the combat net.[105] This problem was sometimes replicated at the operational level, where interoperability issues between UK and US systems caused communication breakdowns. For instance, the Corps Joint Operations Centre in Baghdad operated using the standard Coalition information system, CENTRIX, but many US Major Subordinate Commands (MSC) preferred their own SIPRNET, making it necessary to introduce an intermediate interface between US and other Coalition forces.[106] Likewise, the gateway between CENTRIX and the UK system in Basra, UK I-Net, regularly crashed, making information-sharing between Corps and MND(SE) problematic.[107]

The Personal Role Radio (PRR) was seen a simple, cheap and highly effective networked capability.[108] In a confused urban environment with insurgents and innocents intermixed, the PRR is deemed extremely useful because it allows instantaneous situational awareness at the tactical level and gives the well-trained cdr the ability to react quickly and effectively. It is therefore a vital capability, enhancing tactical flexibility and agility of force posture if used properly. However, it clearly had physical limitations and one unit in particular noted that despite heeding warnings, a disproportionate number of PRR headsets were exchanged as damaged.[109] Other problems stemmed from the limited range of combat net radios in relation to the extended areas over which operations were spread and the lack of alternative systems available at that time. This was particularly a feature for the unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) squadron.[110] However, other units also noted a need for UHF comms instead of VHF.[111]

Given the role of poor comms in limiting the situational awareness, some form of Blue Force Tracker was deemed highly desirable by most of the subjects interviewed from Divisional level down. 1 BW noted that when under indirect fire, the Acoustic Sound Ranging Programme had been particularly effective for providing a grid reference and directing counter-battery fire within a minute of first contact.[112] It was noted that the presence of Blue Force Tracker would significantly enhance the ASP capability by removing one of the elements of doubt when employing unobserved fire. The extent of a BG's ability to exploit NEC in LIO was queried by many of the subjects but a common theme was the potential utility of any capability that could give accurate and immediate intelligence concerning friendly dispositions. Together with a simple but effective comms technology such as the PRR, Blue Force Tracker could give a substantial tactical edge (and even an operational edge in combating more significant insurgencies and coordinating decentralised activity). In circumstances such as the tragic loss of the six RMPs, Blue Force Tracker would have been invaluable. Further, the prospect of greatly enhanced 'Red Force' tracking was of obvious interest, though subjects were sceptical of its utility in an environment such as Iraq, where enemy forces are usually

[105] Interview with Maj. T. Elliott, by KCL
[106] Interview with Lt-Col C. R. Stickland, by PA Consulting
[107] Interview with Lt-Col Stickland, by KCL
[108] Interview with Brig. Rutherford-Jones
[109] 1 BW POR
[110] 57 Bty (UAV) POR, TELIC III, 18/04/04
[111] 1 BW POR
[112] 1 BW POR, Interview with Col Cowan

indistinguishable from the indigenous population (see 2.7.F. for more details). Subjects were therefore generally wary of the prospect of relying on technology for full situational awareness, partly because they were unsure whether UK forces could develop or buy such capabilities, but mainly because they were concerned it would actually slow decision-making by inducing indecisiveness and even command paralysis. This provides an interesting divergence from the US perception of the UK decision-making capability as already being comparatively slow.[113] Whether this is across levels of war is unclear though it seems that UK forces are confident that their tactical decision-making is every bit as fast and effective as that of their US counterparts, if not faster.

A good example of the difference in approach was provided by a senior British officer who witnessed a coy-level action during his initial recce to Baghdad. As more and more units became engaged in firefights, the coy cdr appeared to rely heavily upon information received through the computers in his mobile command centre rather than reports from his men on the ground. The officer made it clear that this was *not* a criticism, as he felt it was highly unlikely that the engagements would have evolved much differently with an alternative approach. Indeed, perceived differences between US and UK tactical responses to engagement could simply reflect American forces' much enhanced ability to apply the advantages of NCW on the ground, gaining better battlespace awareness via technology. However, the experience left an impression on the officer, making him reflect upon the value of NEC/NCW: 'I'm not such a dinosaur to say that it's all a load of rubbish but the nub is the friction between technology and pragmatism'.[114] No matter how far the technology for NEC advances, the key is its utility as an enabler for more effective action. Though a supporter of better NEC, General Ridgeway comments that 'any sort of automated kill-chain should be challenged. We have now learned insurgents in Iraq, when asked by US interrogators to give them the location of their homes and safe houses, regularly provide the locations of houses belonging to rival tribes, knowing they will be destroyed or raided hours later'.[115] Intelligent human interpretation will always be necessary, placing a natural limitation on NEC.

This perspective resonated strongly with more junior leadership, especially at coy level and below. It was common opinion that there is no such thing as the 'silver bullet solution', especially in LIO in urban environments where technology appropriate for the conventional battlefield was deemed to be of more limited utility. Officers were not anti-technological solutions *per se*, but wary of the dangers of assuming all NEC/NCW assets would be equally useful across the conflict spectrum. In COIN/LIO, 'keep it simple, stupid' was still a common motto, especially in Iraq where problems of intelligence-gathering (discussed below) placed a premium on rapid reaction. Where windows of opportunity were narrow, simple technologies, procedures and C^2 structures were vital. Officers displayed a general concern that over-reliance on NEC would be inappropriate in such unique circumstances though they did *not* dismiss its utility or potential if it could be rapidly integrated into their operations.

[113] Interview with Maj. Shervington
[114] Anonymous, interview with KCL
[115] Interview with Gen. Ridgeway, by PA Consulting, 5 August 2005

Armour retains an important role in LIO in Iraq; *Warriors* and ultimately *Challengers* were found to send a very strong statement whereas the use of *Snatch* vehicles (less well-protected armoured Land Rovers) sent an entirely different message. During difficult periods, having such impressive physical capabilities greatly enhanced the ability to ramp up and down between stances, maintaining British credibility as a serious fighting force. While the PWRR were forced to 'go heavy' because of a rapid and sustained escalation of violence during their tour, their successors in the WG adopted a different approach, taking a calculated risk by relying mainly on *Snatch* vehicles instead.[116] This was a response to the stabilisation of Al Amarah but also part of a wider effort to encourage a better atmosphere. Though there were several other reasons why the WG tour was less volatile than that of the PWRR (notably deploying during winter and the fact that local militias were exhausted by the robustness of the PWRR's response to their hostilities), their use of *Snatch* vehicles is a good example of how the use of equipment impacts upon the environment. It also raises interesting questions concerning whether behaviour is fundamentally affected by the *availability* of particular types of equipment or whether there are distinct organisational cultures that shape the nature of units' responses even within the relatively small UK forces. Maj. Elliott, for instance, noted that there were subtle cultural differences between different regiments that could lead to differences in the way similar operations might be conducted. For example, different SOPs and slightly different attitudes led to a different character of operation. While these different approaches could prove equally successful, different regiments do operate in different ways.[117] Maj. Antelme made a very similar point with regard to the differences between the PWRR and WG approaches mentioned above.[118] If true, this would clearly have wider implications for the utility of NEC for British forces (the British Army in particular). For instance, is the instinctive reluctance of junior officers to rely heavily on technology to assist in their tactical decision-making based on ill-founded conservatism or on a justified concern with how it may adversely influence their instincts? Further exploration of differences in the approaches of UK regiments and a comparative analysis of the tours of different US units would be another useful addition to the research here.

With regard to C^4ISTAR, the key concern (certainly below Bde level) was whether UK forces have the infrastructure and budget to buy, develop and exploit these capabilities properly. When the BW BG deployed on *Bracken*, 'B squadron…had a vast superiority in firepower over the enemy. Unfortunately, firepower is irrelevant without the capability to bring it to bear at the right place and the right time…Although Divisional ISTAR assets were made available to the BG, the initial intelligence to cue the ISTAR assets did not exist'.[119] Maj. Ewing expressed a common sentiment when he described information management as shocking: '[at Dogwood] it should have been possible to access files from Shaibah [the original operating base]'.[120] There were issues with the MR2 down link, which made image transfer problematic.[121] Problems with image transfer were also

[116] Interview with Maj. Antelme
[117] Interview with Maj. Elliott
[118] Interview with Maj. Antelme
[119] B Squadron, 1st QDG, Op *Bracken* POR
[120] Interview with Maj. Ewing
[121] 1 BW POR

highlighted by the UAV squadron[122] though the interview material also stresses the great utility of the increased use of UAVs.[123] Though further research will be required to assess the matter fully, it may be that the declared purpose of NEC – to offer 'decisive advantage through the timely provision and exploitation of information and intelligence to enable effective decision-making and agile actions'[124] – is of greater value at the strategic and operational levels rather than the tactical. The recent introduction of new capabilities such as *Bowman* may provide a strong indicator that such a conclusion would be premature and that current scepticism is related more to issues of short- to medium-term practicability rather than long-term utility. Analysis of the impact of *Bowman* since deployment is the obvious next research step here. C² is discussed below.

Personnel

All primary and secondary sources universally praised the high quality of service personnel across the spectrum of activities and role specialisations. Quality was linked directly to the strength of both generic and specific training (detailed above) and to recruitment (which is not the focus of this study). According to both operational- and tactical-level commanders, their subordinates showed both 'mental and physical agility; two key attributes required of forces operating in LIO/COIN environments'.[125] According to all the coy cdrs interviewed, junior ranks displayed flexibility and initiative, instilling their superiors with considerable faith in the technical capabilities and professional judgement of their subordinates.[126] The themes of tactical flexibility, enabling rapid transitions between postures, and mission command, allowing responsive but focused decision-making, were constants; both are discussed in detail below. Despite media speculation to the contrary, morale has not been perceived as problematic to date. British forces have maintained high levels of motivation throughout their tours, largely founded on strong *esprit de corps*. This spirit appears partly inculcated by the regimental system but mainly sustained by high levels of professionalism and of confidence in the quality of leadership.

Another important personnel aspect is the necessity for uniformly high standards of recruitment and training for both combat and supporting arms. In COIN/LIO environments, it is vital that all personnel realise that they are effectively frontline. In Iraq, 'there is no front. The battle-space is 360% at all times'.[127] Experience taught that all deployed personnel needed to develop a flexible mentality and good situational awareness but commanders felt it was sometimes quite difficult to get this across to non-combat forces. All personnel therefore need a good grasp of the environment and how they can impact upon it both positively and negatively. Training is again crucial in this respect as is timeliness of deployment. Officers felt that sufficient forces were usually

[122] 57 Bty POR
[123] Interview with Maj. Elliott
[124] JSP 777 Edn 1, D CBM J6, MOD 2005
[125] Interview with Brig. Rutherford-Jones
[126] See, for example, Interview with Maj. Coote
[127] Interview with Brig. Rutherford-Jones

provided in a timely and effective manner though their level of preparedness varied. Due to resource constraints, not all units were afforded adequate work-up time, with some force elements deploying at very short notice and without the same level of training as the majority of the others. For instance, the MND(SE) Bde Reserve Company (1 BW) deployed in June 2004 at less than a month's notice (see above).

An information-related personnel issue concerns the variable knowledge of different units' respective capabilities. As BGs are composites of multiple units, a firm grasp of their relative strengths and weaknesses is essential. This is not usually a significant problem given the small size of the British armed forced and the frequency with which they operate together, but there were instances in which assets were not fully utilised due to a lack of knowledge regarding their competencies. For instance, RM mortar platoons operated at one rank below their Army counterparts despite having completed a command course over and above them. As a result, the Marines felt that a lack of knowledge constrained their contribution to *Operation Bracken.*[128] This may or may not be the case; as 1 BW noted, RM mortar units are not armoured infantry, which complicated their deployment, and indirect area effect fire was not always the correct tool anyway.[129] The wider issue is however illustrative of potential missed opportunities that could easily be overcome by a simple, integrated database capturing such information. Given that UK forces most often operate in a joint and, more significantly, combined environment, the proper communication of capabilities both within and between components and contingents is vital. However, overall, personnel issues were not cited as a major factor, with the notable exception of the fairly common and significant concern with potential overstretch.

Information

'If there is one aspect of military operations which has taken a pounding in recent months in terms of its credibility, it is intelligence'.[130] Secret intelligence-gathering remains problematic. This is due to a combination of factors that are difficult to overcome in the short term. First, the complex nature of insurgency (or insurgencies), socio-political inspired violence, terrorism, lawlessness and criminality makes it hard to build a complete intelligence picture. Second, Iraqis were always culturally unlikely to prove particularly responsive to the attempts of outsiders, especially non-Muslim 'Westerners', to create a strong intelligence network. Until a strong Iraqi national intelligence network is re-established, this constraint will be difficult to overcome. Third, many incidents are simply the immediate result of a highly volatile environment rather than any longer-term planning, and intelligence is therefore bound to be last minute and sketchy. In combination, these factors can substantially affect a military's ability to prosecute a coherent campaign, especially when they constrain initiative. Due to the problems of obtaining and processing good advance intelligence in a timely fashion, and the narrowness of the windows for COIN operations, BG level commanders and below often

[128] 40 Commando RM POR
[129] Interview with Maj. Elliott
[130] Capt Sandford, BW, *The Red Hackle*, No.042, Nov 2004, p39

perceived their activity as reactive rather than proactive. 'Despite significant support from a variety of intelligence agencies at different levels, it was rare that actionable intelligence led to real success. The best means of defence was deterrence and disruption'.[131] This was a sentiment that was echoed by 1 BW on *Operation Bracken*, where, for a number of reasons, there was no intelligence picture on arrival at Dogwood, prompting the POR to state: 'never before has a battlegroup had so many intelligence assets and so little intelligence'.[132] The available information and that generated was difficult to turn into actionable information because of the lack of framework and context. There were no local security forces, police or liaisons, which complicated even comparatively simple tasks, such as retrieving the local names for surrounding neighbourhoods.[133] Further, there was also frustration that more general intelligence pictures were not always available in pre-deployment training, let alone in theatre.[134] However, the veracity of this criticism is hard to assess due to the understandably limited access to the intelligence community and special forces (SF). Further, officers operating higher up the command chain frequently perceived things differently, arguing that their subordinates were not aware of how often tactical operations were informed by good advanced intelligence. Certainly, theatre-level intelligence was regarded as fairly good and as vital for achieving the soldier-diplomat function. For instance, 20 Bde HQ was knowledgeable of the agendas of different political parties and factions, making its job considerably easier.[135]

With technology-based intelligence-gathering regarded as less effective for stabilisation operations in Iraq, the emphasis was placed very heavily on human intelligence (HUMINT). Again, until a strong indigenous intelligence capability could be developed, cultivation of open information was imperative. In the perceived absence of a substantive intelligence picture, engagement with the local community was stressed by all subjects as probably *the* key source of information. Social networks were therefore prized assets. British forces went to great lengths to establish and preserve these networks, even when they were strained by intensified hostilities. Coy cdrs had little or no knowledge of how NEC may assist them in this regard and were interested in capabilities developed to improve the effectiveness with which they cultivate and retain local support. At the very least, the development of robust, integrated databases of contacts and social networks would be extremely useful and reduce the risk of losing key local knowledge during handovers. At present, successor units are heavily reliant on their own relationships with predecessors for the dissemination of this intelligence. Likewise, units stressed the immense value of well-directed information operations, which should be fully integrated into a comprehensive campaign plan and could benefit from NEC.

Information flows were described as variable. Between levels within MND(SE), they were generally good (with the exception of the tactical problems described above), though a lack of appropriate IT at Bde and BG level sometimes resulted in problems

[131] 20th Armoured Brigade POR
[132] 1 BW POR; interviews with Maj. Ewing & Col Cowan
[133] Interviews with Capt Tomlin, Maj. Ewing & Col Cowan BW
[134] 1 Mech Bde POR for Op Telic IV – Lessons Extraction, COS Fd Army/3189/2
[135] 20 Brigade POR

receiving and disseminating classified intel.[136] Interviewees felt generally well-informed and kept in the picture by their superiors. Similarly, Bde and Divisional staff felt they received information from the ground quickly and coherently. Likewise, horizontal information-sharing went generally well, though, as seen, there was some concern about the potential loss of invaluable local intelligence during handovers. Some tactical commanders voiced concern that their grasp of any overarching strategic plan was limited and that this was dangerous in an environment such as Iraq, where their actions could have such profound strategic consequences. Given that both Bde- and Div-level interviewees felt sufficiently in the loop on broader issues, this could be a shortcoming in vertical flows within MND(SE) or a conscious decision not to burden lower level commanders with unnecessary information. Information flows in all directions worked best when social networks complimented formal infrastructure. The ability to combine formal and informal information networks is desirable but its effectiveness may at least partially be a function of size. Important questions, therefore, are whether US forces establish similar social relations and, if not, whether this is because the British 'model' is simply not applicable to operations of a greater scale.

Information flows between contingents and areas presented mixed results. Clear, robust and responsive C^4 infrastructure and networks are essential prerequisites of a coherent approach to complex multinational operations. These prerequisites were not always in evidence, more often because of technological difficulties than personal ones. One notable exception was C^2 arrangements for the passage of convoys through different areas, which was regarded as unclear, leading on at least one occasion to an avoidable ambush of US forces transiting through Maysan province in MND(SE).[137] Similarly, an RAF C-130 shot down on 30 January 2005 had been flying at low level, unaware that there had been two attacks on US helicopters in roughly the same area on the same day.[138] More usually, C^2 was unambiguous. Certainly, British liaison officers working with US forces felt that their personal relations with US colleagues and superiors were generally excellent.[139] The earlier example of communication difficulties between Corps and Div HQs – resulting from the reluctance to move over to CENTRIX and frailties in the US-UK net interface – is in this context valid. Further, it was inevitably complicated by a perennial problem of coalition operations: variable security clearance. While the UK has almost complete access to US information, and *vice versa*, others do not. Thus, the '4 Eyes Nations', of which the UK is one, are granted access to so-called 'SIPRNET Lite' while non-cleared nations have to rely on US operators to compile their pictures for major incident reporting.[140] This is a problem that is difficult to overcome and that once again illustrates the symbiotic relationship between technological and social networks. Coalition partners lacking full access can only be kept fully engaged if they trust that they will receive critical information. This 'trust cannot be surged'[141] and has to be developed and maintained over time. In this respect, the Land environment may well have much to

[136] 1 Mech Brigade POR
[137] Interview with Maj. Coote
[138] news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/uk_politics/4510324.stm accessed 8/12/05
[139] Interviews with Maj. Shervington (by KCL) and Lt-Col Stickland (by PA Consulting)
[140] Interview with Lt-Col Stickland, by KCL
[141] Harris, Stephen

learn from the Maritime one, where both problems of interoperability and classification have been commonplace for decades and have traditionally been overcome by flexible naval operators. The US Department of Defense (DoD) and the UK Ministry of Defence (MoD) are currently funding a multinational research project looking at exactly this issue. Expensive as it is, continued compatibility with US systems should be a given of British defence spending if UK forces wish to remain an integral and often disproportionately influential coalition partner. Likewise, rapid US technological advances must take into account the ability of key allies to remain interoperable, if the US wants to operate effectively within a coalition framework.

Doctrine and Concepts

As discussed, a key ingredient of success at the tactical level has been the ability of UK forces to engage with the local population one minute, escalate force rapidly to meet emergent threats the next and re-engage with the innocent majority of the local population almost immediately. This ability to 'smile, shoot, smile'[142] is a classic element of 'hearts and minds' in the British approach to COIN and the consistency with which it was emphasised by interviewees and in PORS is a strong indicator that its continued advocacy is more than rhetorical.[143] Likewise, the firm belief that this tactical flexibility was produced through good basic skills and drills, training for high-intensity operations and more case-specific packages was clearly *not* motivated by unquestioned doctrinal purity. In fact, doctrine *per se* was not a major theme in interviews or PORs at any level. In this respect, there are striking similarities between the British approach and the old USMC adage that 'doctrine's what you fall back on when you run out of common sense'. Brig. Rutherford-Jones voiced a balanced attitude that seems to pervade British forces' mentalities, stating: 'doctrine is a useful handrail but it's not the law. The law is in the circumstances'.[144] This sentiment had great resonance with officers operating at BG level and below, who consistently emphasised the value of several key concepts (mission command, manoeuvrist approach and main effort) that underpin much of British doctrine but do not represented an explicit application of doctrine itself.

There was thus no formal delineation between COIN and PSO doctrine at a tactical level. None of the interviewees felt that they had consciously used doctrine to determine their actions. Once again, the common theme was *tactical flexibility engendered through good training in core soldiering skills*. However, depending upon when they were deployed, different regiments did admit to entering theatre with different perceptions of the general nature of the environment. The LI, for instance, perceived their tour as PSO-based whereas their successors in the PWRR very definitely viewed theirs as COIN-based. After the PWRR's protracted struggle to quell the al Sadr rebellion drew toward a successful close, its successor regiment, the Welsh Guards, seized the opportunity to restore more harmonious relations. This pattern has been repeated despite increasingly unsettling spikes since, perhaps illustrating the value of doctrine as a useful frame of

[142] CO PWRR
[143] See interviews and PORs
[144] Interview with Brig. Rutherford-Jones

reference. There is a stronger sense of this mentality at Bde and Div level, where doctrine played a larger, yet definitely not prescriptive role. Formal COIN and PSO doctrine were viewed variously as useful handrails, good framing principles to help guide operational planning or as helpful checklists.[145]

Doctrine's value in fluid environments was therefore seen as directly proportional to the degree to which it was adaptive to those circumstances. This is fairly obvious, but illustrates an important point about British COIN and PSO doctrine. Both are inherently broad, framing principles rather than narrowly prescriptive rules based on specific lessons gleaned from previous experiences. This reflects an acknowledgement of both the value and limitations of learning from history. Many officers currently training on the Land Component Phase of the Advanced Command and Staff Course (ACSC), UK Joint Services Command and Staff College (JSCSC), have enjoyed a wide range of operational experiences in LIO (including Northern Ireland, Bosnia, Sierra Leone, East Timor, Democratic Republic of Congo, Afghanistan and Iraq) yet remain cautious about drawing too many parallels between operations. To their minds, the utility of current UK COIN doctrine lies in the Six Principles that remain at its heart, precisely because those principles are generic and their application so flexible.[146] The uniqueness of each experience provided good repeated tests of COIN doctrine's adaptability. The danger of incorporating too many Iraq-specific lessons into doctrine should be obvious.

At the strategic level, doctrine appears to have influenced planning to a greater degree. At least, debate about the direction of the post-conflict campaign took doctrinal issues into consideration. This is a tentative conclusion only, but revolves around a military-strategic discussion of how best to conduct operations in the immediate aftermath of the conflict and subsequently, as the insurgencies took hold and the situation destabilised. This debate occurred both within and between national contingents, especially with regard to the need to shift to a COIN-based strategy in 2004. Further, the debate about post-conflict strategy also provided a useful forum for exploring different national approaches to doctrine, with UK and US forces showing particular interest in each other's COIN/PSO mentality. The problem of coming to grips with the challenges posed by LIO in Iraq has demonstrated strong institutional links between the UK and US that have encouraged a cross-fertilisation of doctrine. US forces have once again been exposed to UK COIN and PSO approaches while UK forces have learned from concepts such as US Security and Stabilisation Operations (SASO) and emerging USMC concepts.[147] This is important because it is indicative of forward-thinking, responsive approaches to the challenges posed by post-modern wars. It is apparent that US and UK thinkers must find a healthy balance between moving doctrine forward to reflect the changing face of war and resisting the temptation to make drastic change in response to quite specific circumstances. Despite academic assertions to the contrary, it would therefore appear that doctrine remains evolutionary rather than revolutionary, even if that evolution is

[145] *ibid.*
[146] For instance, S. E. Griffin and Lt-Col I. Thomas, Seminar on the Principles of COIN Doctrine, ACSC, 23/02/06
[147] For instance, USMC Concept Paper, 'Countering Irregular Threats: An Updated Approach to Counterinsurgency', Draft v_1.6, 22/11/05

occurring rapidly. British interest in more integrated, broader approaches to conflict management, all variants of the much-vaunted Comprehensive Approach, and numerous US concept papers exploring similar themes are testament to innovative, sometimes radical, but not inherently revolutionary thinking. In both the UK and the US, there has been increased discussion of how stronger joint doctrine could better employ the full potential of NCW/NEC. This relates to practical considerations concerning the potential utility of NEC in LIO in urban environments but also more philosophical issues such as how NEC/NCW could inform or even reshape doctrine.

One area where the value of doctrine was self-evident was the way in which core concepts directly informed action at the tactical level. Principal among these concepts, from the UK perspective, were the manoeuvrist approach, maintenance of the aim and, most important, mission command. Certainly at BG level and below, manoeuvrism was a guiding principal that informed action. Junior leadership felt that its ethos encouraged flexibility of mind and initiative. In many ways, the manoeuvrist approach is especially relevant in fluid LIO that require multiple lines of operation in support of multidimensional (or comprehensive) political, military, social and economic conflict-resolution strategies. In support of this, a consistent understanding of main effort was crucial to the maintenance of focus. Its clear articulation was deemed an essential prerequisite for the larger guiding concept. Good mission command was perceived as crucial to both. The emphasis on decentralised decision-making and delegated authority (in the sense of exactly *how* units achieved their objectives) was greatly appreciated at all levels, especially the tactical, where it encouraged all to shoulder significant responsibility and consistently revaluate the wider impact of their decisions in the process. Once commanders had confidence in their subordinates; they felt that the delegation of this level of responsibility was hugely beneficial, encouraging exactly the right mixture of physical and mental agility required to operate effectively in the Iraqi environment. At the tactical level, coy cdrs would initially often plan and lead patrols personally for the first few weeks but then rapidly thrust subordinates to take on more responsibility.[148] It was a common perception that this approach to mission command stood in marked contrast to the more tightly controlled, and consequently less adaptable, US concept and that this difference placed British forces at a distinct advantage in COIN and PSO roles.

Finally, the overarching concept of the Comprehensive Approach was viewed as potentially extremely important but as failing at present. Traditional problems of cooperation with NGOs remain in Iraq, though the UK's broad approach to, and considerable experience of PSO has helped, with British tactical commanders often going out their way to build strong working relationships with other agencies.[149] Coordination between government departments also remained problematic though considerable improvements were being made. Initially, getting other government departments (OGDs) into theatre and integrating their responses to Iraq's multidimensional challenges was delayed by uncertainty about the future security situation.[150] As that situation

[148] Interview with Maj. Antelme
[149] Interview with Maj.-Gen. Dutton, by DCBM/J6, 27 October 2004
[150] Interview with Brig. Cowlam, by DCBM/J6

deteriorated, problems intensified.[151] Many officers expressed frustration at their inability to coordinate activities with the Department for International Development (DfID) in particular.[152] With Security Sector Reform (SSR), social welfare and economic regeneration high on the list of prerequisites for long-term stability, development issues were a consistent theme,[153] illustrating UK forces' genuine commitment to the principal of comprehensive solutions. This principal is another core tenet of doctrine and the clear commitment to it from grass-roots unit level up is very promising. The newly created joint Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO)-MoD-DfID Post-Conflict Reconstruction Unit (PCRU) has considerable potential to bridge the gaps between the responses of major UK government respondents[154] but will need significant political and financial investment.[155] Once again, NEC, in the sense of creating stronger cross-department information-sharing and the development of better social networks, could be extremely helpful here.

Organisation

The organisation and command and control arrangements for large-scale multinational operations are always complex. This is especially the case when, as in Iraq, the Coalition is an *ad hoc* arrangement comprising diverse national contingents with different levels of experience of working together and variable degrees of interoperability. While NATO forces have largely compatible equipment and practices, non-NATO forces do not always share the same advantages. Problems therefore manifest themselves in several related areas: technological compatibility, common understanding of working practices and trust. Being more specific, the UK's physical ability to work with the US, in terms of C^4ISTAR, is rarely replicated in other coalition forces and the pace and price of change is making it problematic even for the UK to keep up. Likewise, years of experience in operating alongside the US military gives UK forces a good insight into their ally's mindset and *vice versa*. Finally, these commonalities and long history of mutual support engender trust, allowing unparalleled access to each other's intelligence apparatus and decision-making forums. The Coalition's organisation in Iraq naturally reflects this.

Overall, the organisation of Multinational Force – Iraq (MNF-I) works well with the US as the major contributor, taking primary responsibility for the majority of the country, and the UK as the senior supporting partner, acting as the interface with the other Coalition contingents placed under its command in MND(SE). Coalition forces have expressed their satisfaction with this arrangement if not always with the degree of access to information about military-strategic policy or even tactical intelligence. Clear articulation of a coherent strategy has not always been apparent to those operating at the tactical level, not least in MND(SE) where strong awareness of US domination is not matched by a firm grasp of the core aspects of the US approach to stabilisation operations

[151] 1 PWRR BG POR Lesson Report
[152] See for instance, interviews with Maj. Antelme, Maj. J. Coote, Maj. Hickman, plus numerous PORs.
[153] Interview with Maj. Antelme
[154] Interviews with Gen. Sir Timothy Granville-Chapman, by PA Consulting & Maj.-Gen. Dutton
[155] Interview with Gen. Ridgeway

in Iraq. As both Bde and Div in MND(SE) were content that they knew the overall picture sufficiently well (see 2.7.B.4.), this may be a conscious decision not to overburden tactical forces with unnecessary knowledge. Equally, it could be interpreted as indicative of the lack of a genuinely viable strategic plan and an attempt not to damage morale. Given the volatility of Iraq, tactical action can have strategic effect (witness the backlash after the pictures of Abu Ghraib or, more recently, after the footage of LI soldiers allegedly beating innocent Iraqis). This suggests a strong case for improving MNF-I's vertical downwards flow of generic strategic guidance. Brig. Rutherford-Jones gives another good example of the necessity for soldiers to understand the strategic consequences of their actions. One month into 20 Bde's tour, a patrol was ambushed while on a routine patrol. Engaged from two directions and with one man down, it applied minimum force in returning fire, thus preventing escalation or harm to civilians. Though this was a bold decision that put soldiers at risk, it was the right one. However, as the assailants made their escape, the patrol gave chase, eventually entering a mosque still bearing arms. This was the wrong decision, undoing the previous good work in seconds. The wider impact was significant, sparking major demonstrations against British forces. 20 Bde was forced to spend three weeks repairing the damage to local relations after suffering a 'nightmarish loss of cooperation'.[156] The fact that this occurred despite cultural-awareness training and a grasp of the volatility of Iraqi society demonstrates the ease with which PSO or stabilisation operations can be derailed, even when the mission is clearly understood and the troops are sensitive to the potential impact of their actions.

Communication between sectors, contingents and even units has also been variable throughout MNF-I. However, organisational shortcomings have usually been overcome once exposed. As mentioned, C^2 of convoy movements was sometimes problematic during the early post-conflict operations. This caused unnecessary dangers, particularly when convoys were transiting between US and multinational sectors. For example, in April 2004, only a few hours after a major engagement between the PWRR and insurgents in Al Amarah, a US convoy was ambushed as it went through the town.[157] No prior notification of movement had been given (or at least had not been communicated to the relevant units) and US forces were unaware that they were transiting hostile terrain. As a result, inter-contingent communication and logistics C^2 mechanisms were rapidly improved, demonstrating organisational flexibility. With regard to C^2, it is an interesting vignette that when the BW BG deployed on *Operation Bracken* in November 2004, it remained under overall command of General Officer Commanding (GOC) MND(SE) but was placed under temporary tactical control of CO 24 MEU (USMC). There was a lack of clarity about what this actually entailed, with CO 24 MEU under the false impression that 1 BW was his to task as any other asset. This was not the case, with 1 BW's tasks articulated and carefully circumscribed prior to its deployment.[158]

From the British perspective, the continued employment of liaison officers in US and multinational HQs is essential for the promotion of coordination and common understanding. The UK contingent has definitely benefited from its willingness to embed

[156] Interview with Brig. Rutherford-Jones
[157] Interview with Maj. Coote
[158] Black Watch POR

as many officers as possible within the US force structure and hopefully this is reciprocated. From the very highest military-strategic level down, liaison officers have provided valuable conduits for disseminating information, exchanging ideas and further enhancing trust. In this study, it has been noticeable how officers with experience of working closely with their US counterparts have most often tempered and sometimes rejected entirely the perceptions of compatriots lacking similar experience.[159] This serves as an important reminder that, however useful the comments of interviewees, they must be placed in proper context. The opinions of British officers operating in MND(SE) concerning the capabilities and working practices of US forces operating entirely separately and in a far more unstable environment have validity but are inevitably partial. Organisationally, the employment of liaison officers can reduce cognitive dissonance between contingents and enhance coherence. Liaison officers are therefore one of the best examples of how social networks can, and should, compliment formal institutional networks.

More parochially, force structures within MND(SE) seem to work well, with no substantial criticisms emerging from this study. As discussed above, C^2 arrangements are generally adequate though technical problems persist at the tactical level and operational interface. Responsiveness from the strategic level with regard to subjects as sensitive as changing rules of engagement (ROE) was initially slow, but increasingly well-developed feedback loops appear to have accelerated this difficult process significantly. For instance, 1 BW had some difficulties with the initial ROE on *Operation Bracken*, as the requirement not to fire until fired upon denied them the opportunity to engage proactively in a predominantly hostile environment. Some of these situations were clearly ridiculous, such as when 1 BW was constrained to merely observe the setting up of a complex attack combining improvised explosives devices (IEDs), mortars, heavy machine guns and rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs). In this particular case, the attempted ambush could not be disrupted until those involved had fired upon 1 BW and a *Warrior* was therefore instructed to advance until engaged, thus allowing a full response. The engagement led to the discovery of a weapons cache, several arrests and a significant drop in insurgent activity for at least a week.[160] Post-action engagement was also not allowed, , which meant that retreating forces could not be pursued aggressively even though they would clearly regroup and return within short. Indirect fire was also initially excluded. However and much to the COs surprise, the ROE were altered within 24 hours of the request and this led to an immediate change in the situation on the ground.[161] Morale improved immediately and the insurgents also backed off instantly.[162]

The use of Battle Groups is seen as inherently flexible, allowing a relatively small force (comparative to the terrain it occupies) to respond rapidly and dominate its battlespace when necessary. True to mission command, deployment strategies have varied from Bde to Bde, raising interesting questions about the relative strengths and weaknesses of thinner deployments across wider areas or concentration of force on key terrain and vital

[159] Interview with Maj. Shervington
[160] Interview with Maj. Elliott; the Red Hackle, No. 051, May 2005, p.39
[161] Interview with Col Cowan
[162] Interview with Maj. Elliott

ground. For example, while 19 Bde took the decision to spread itself as widely as possible, 20 Bde focused its forces more narrowly around the oil infrastructure, Basra, Route 6, the various waterways and the Iranian border.[163] Other Bdes have also deployed in dissimilar fashions with varying degrees of success, illustrating that there may be no ideal solution in the Iraqi LIO environment. The variation in approaches perhaps also indicates that one must be careful in ascribing a monolithic organisational culture to British forces. Some of the PORs (for instance, 20 Armd Bde) set out the lines of operations and focus. They are often notable for their considerable disparity, demonstrating diversity in commanders' views of the situation and informing varied tactical activities (via the communication of the commander's intent). Variances are usually ascribed to mission command and are therefore perceived as natural, but they still prompt reflection on the ability of even a relatively small armed force to provide continuity. The impact of this phenomenon on the concept of an overarching and distinctly British approach to LIO is impossible to gauge without a far more detailed comparative analysis of British units.

Putting philosophical considerations aside, there are obvious benefits and drawbacks to both general deployment strategies. Wider deployments send a strong signal of omnipresence and offer a more obvious sense of security to the population, but the inevitable thinning out of forces can make the troops more vulnerable to attack and thus ultimately undermine that security. Concentration of force enables better protection of key assets and makes insurgents come to you, but simultaneously cedes more freedom of movement to those insurgents. The potential of NEC is again obvious. If insurgents could be more reliably tracked and intelligence about their whereabouts could flow faster, the concentration of force would not carry the drawback of ceding freedom of movement, provided military assets were sufficiently mobile to respond in time. Special forces have traditionally enjoyed a central role here and will continue to do so, though the enhancement of flexible air and sea mobile spearhead forces would add considerable weight to their COIN activities. As always in Iraq, the difficulty in identifying insurgents and separating them from the population remains the major stumbling block to COIN. A case could perhaps be made that wider deployments make more sense in more benign PSO environments while heavier concentrations of force apply in more problematic COIN scenarios. However, throughout the country, the possibility of the environment moving from permissive through (or straight past) semi-permissive to non-permissive and back again in a matter of minutes continues to render distinctions between PSO and COIN impractical, hence the continued evolution of UK and US doctrine (see 2.7.B.4.).

Infrastructure

Infrastructure, as defined in the UK Defence Lines of Development,[164] is not the focus of this study.

[163] Interview with Brig. Rutherford-Jones
[164] JDCC, Concepts to Capability: Defence Lines of Development, (MOD: Shrivenham), 13 April 2005

Logistics

Post-conflict operations in Iraq have fairly predictable requirements. They are therefore not prone to the same degree of logistical pressure as the build up to, and sustainment of, high-intensity war-fighting. However, the long-term requirement to provide logistical support not only for the immediate physical needs of deployed troops but also in support of wider reconstruction efforts has its own attendant problems and will eventually buckle under the strain if not properly addressed. This is an important point as the logistics chain for LIO is usually least heralded and often under-resourced, despite the fact that no long-term commitment is sustainable without it. According to Brig. Cowlam, Assistant Chief of Staff (ACOS) Logistics (Land), 'the military are but one line of activity, which may be the main effort for a while, but must however be part of a wider, longer-lasting and possibly more important campaign'.[165] In this context, 'the logistic challenges of supplying "bombs and bullets" are relatively straightforward, much harder is the requirement to look after people'.[166] Thus, logistical support for the full spectrum of activities required for comprehensive post-conflict operations does place a strain on UK capabilities. Meeting requirements for larger-scale comprehensive operations such as Phase IV of the USMC operation in Fallujah could be very problematic for UK forces. From the UK perspective, Iraq has confirmed the efficacy of the Joint Force Logistic Concept, which has increased supply agility but, according to Brig. Cowlam, the extent to which NEC may assist future logistical operations remains unclear. Though it definitely has potential to greatly assist asset visibility (here, the addition of a simple tracker would do), Brig. Cowlam was sceptical of the heavy focus on technology, regarding it as a 'distraction'.[167] In essence, 'behavioural aspects are more critical and the softer areas more significant – conflict remains an art rather than a science…. The supply chain was conceptual as much as physical'.[168]

Information and Networked Flow of Material and Awareness

As discussed above, information flows through the MNF-I command structure were generally perceived to work well, though the quality of that information was variable. The organisation was thus perceived as flexible with clearly delineated authority. Internally, the quality of information (as opposed to specific advanced intelligence) flowing through MNF-I was generally good, though technical and human networking problems, especially between levels and national contingents, sometimes undermined the speed, accuracy and relevance of its delivery. For instance, while communication with the various multinational contingents within MND(SE) is good, communication with Corps HQ and US forces are perceived as more variable, not because of any lack of trust but because of networking and, occasionally, C^2 difficulties. Thus, though the strategic-operational interface in Baghdad is excellent, with US commanders and their UK deputies traditionally enjoying close working relationship (and liaison officers proving

[165] Interview with Brig. Cowlam
[166] *ibid.*
[167] *ibid.*
[168] *ibid.*

invaluable),[169] there are perceived inconsistencies in downward flows of strategic intent and operational guidance and problems establishing clear operational pictures due to differences in the ways upward flows of tactical information are managed (see sections below). Mixed information flows meant that UK forces tended to watch developments in US areas for trends rather than receive coherent information about them. Likewise, US forces transiting MND(SE) have sometimes experienced unnecessary difficulties due to communications failures. This may be more due to the nature of the environment and problems gaining good and timely intelligence than any specific networking failure, though Gen. Ridgeway emphasises that the 'development of the 'Single Intelligence Battlespace', with the concept of information being passed to all levels as quickly as possible is the way ahead'.[170] Outside of MNF-I's formal infrastructure, social networking has proved invaluable. This is a common theme in UK LIO (see other case studies) and was once again cited as a crucial aspect of British operations in Iraq. Though handover procedures were increasingly formalised, the personal relationships between outgoing and incoming officers are vital components of continuity and coherence in the British approach to their areas of responsibility and, arguably, place UK forces at a comparative advantage over coalition partners, especially US forces, whose size may preclude such close bonds.

The evolution of pre-deployment training packages is indicative of strong and well-directed feedback loops that quickly incorporate lessons from the field. For instance, weaknesses in the cultural-awareness elements were rectified. Equally important, incoming Bde training is now routinely conducted with participation from the outgoing Bde, greatly enhancing its ability to hit the ground running. Enhanced NEC could significantly improve the ability to disseminate lessons learned and ensure all the appropriate elements of training are covered without undermining Div and Bde commanders' ability to nuance their own training packages appropriately. Below this level, BGs and battalions have benefited enormously from handover routines, which have become increasingly well-institutionalised. In this context, the importance of strong social networks should not be underestimated, as it was a major theme running through coy-level interviews. Ideally, handovers should allow sufficient time for deploying forces to operate alongside their predecessors in theatre and be introduced to their local networks. This can be formally institutionalised in the setting aside of appropriate recce time, but, ultimately, the amount of additional value newcomers receive is heavily dependent upon the relationships they form with their immediate predecessors. In this respect, UK forces are at a distinct advantage over their US counterparts simply because of their relative size and frequent previous social links within the officer corps. However, NCW/NEC, if properly directed, could ease the process of developing strong social networks within larger organisations by capturing and filtering data appropriately. By implication, if the British approach to LIO is relevant to US intervention, the ways in which lessons from the field are exploited requires further examination. Accordingly, a comparative analysis with the US lessons-learned infrastructure would be valuable, as would closer examination of how lessons are disseminated between US services (most notably the USMC and US Army). As the USMC has acquired a good reputation for

[169] Interviews with Capt Tomlin & Maj. Ewing
[170] Interview with Gen. Ridgeway

forward-thinking COIN and LIO doctrine based on its own recent experiences, perhaps its model would provide a useful starting point for further analysis?

Perceptions of Quality of Information and Networking (Measures of Information Position)

As discussed in 2.7.B.4., a common criticism concerned the comparative lack of specific intelligence in Iraq, though this was partly perceived as an inevitable constraint of operating in Iraq and the Middle East. Few, if any, of the sources expected anything other than generic information or intelligence in theatre. In the largely hostile Sunni Triangle, US forces have found intelligence-gathering especially difficult but even in the Shia-dominated south, it remains unlikely that Coalition forces will be able to develop any powerful intelligence network using local sources until a significant indigenous intelligence capability is redeveloped. The quality of specific intelligence was therefore usually viewed with caution. Events in Najaf and, to a lesser extent, Fallujah, together with reports on *Al Jazeera* were deemed useful generic indicators of 'what was coming our way'.[171] As a consequence, British officers operating at battalion level and below generally regarded their COIN, counter-terrorist and PSO activities as largely *reactive* rather than *proactive* and focused on developing good relations with the community in order to achieve their mandate.

Officers perceived natural limitations to the value of technology-based ISTAR assets for COIN operations in urban environments. Intelligence-gathering in Iraq is therefore heavily reliant on HUMINT with all the attendant problems discussed earlier. Many of the interviews and PORs contend that the best ISTAR asset is, and will continue to be, the British soldier on the ground. All stressed the importance of cultivating friendly relations with the population by engaging with the wider community. In this regard, both Security Sector Reform (SSR) and economic and educational rehabilitation were seen as core activities. There was a widespread sense of frustration with the lack of progress in these areas. Wider engagement enabled UK forces to build strong social networks with the local populations and, crucially, acquire a 'good general feel' for the environment. Enhanced situational awareness followed, to some degree making up for the lack of detailed intelligence. For the most part, intelligence-gathering has therefore taken on a more general aspect and British officers accept this as largely unavoidable at present.

Likewise, tactical commanders felt generally well-served with information from Bde HQ, though they did often express concerns that they were not well-informed about the overall strategic plan, an oversight that they felt undermined their ability to pursue a properly joint and combined campaign. At the tactical level, persistent communications problems were perceived as adversely affecting the quality of information, especially when that information was time-sensitive. The speed of information flows was therefore a major factor in perceptions of its quality .

[171] Interview with Maj. Coote

Patterns of Operational Success/Failure in Relation to Information/Networking (Measures of Decision Superiority)

Given that Iraq is an ongoing operation, it is at present difficult to determine patterns of operational success or failure with any degree of certainty. The lack of intelligence on insurgent groups further complicates this task as it denies us the opportunity to make meaningful comparisons. However, there are some general patterns that emerge from the above analysis of the Defence Lines of Development.

There are concerns about the UK's ability to fully utilise its existing ISTAR assets. The issues require further analysis, but some argue that the UK's capacity to analyse and integrate the information acquired through ISTAR is currently outstripped by the capabilities themselves. Better and faster analysis of such information may require some organisational restructuring with enhanced NEC at Bde and Div levels, notably the expansion of their intelligence infrastructures. Any enhancement of formal capabilities for specific or general intelligence data capture and dissemination that could improve situational awareness is to be welcomed. Gen. Ridgeway once again stresses the relation between organisational, technical and human elements: 'It is the norm in a British Divisional or Brigade HQ to select a generalist to drive the G2 (Intelligence) machine. This must be looked at. It was OK in the days when they were all working in a larger, overarching Intelligence Corps-led system, but now that a Brigade is the British Army's standard deployable element, and they deploy regularly as individual, or semi-autonomous formations, this particular approach needs to be reviewed'.[172]

At a tactical level, problematic communications was a common criticism, especially when units were put under pressure during engagements. A lack of robust, secure tactical communications was cited as significantly inhibiting the attainment and maintenance of decision superiority. An enhanced ability to communicate both horizontally and vertically during combat would be hugely beneficial. Current trialling of *Bowman* in Iraq was viewed as an exciting prospect. Assessing the full extent of danger presented by fragile comms is problematic due to the lack of available intelligence on 'the enemy'. At present, insurgents do not appear to have employed sophisticated jamming techniques during attacks. If tactical comms are as vulnerable as sometimes implied and decision-making higher up is impaired by networking problems, there is clearly an imperative to further enhance NEC. However, it is also possible that these negative assessments relate at least in part to inadequate training in the full extent of comms and networking capabilities. As Gen. Ridgeway puts it,

> 'I have a little test I give operational commanders. When I talk to them in theatre I ask them how much bandwidth they have. They all know how much fuel they have, or how many tanks, but many don't have a clue how much bandwidth they have or how to use it efficiently. They don't know how to conserve it or focus it, or the difference it can make to collaborative planning. And how would they know? There is no training in this area, so you either have a good Commander Communications who is doing this

[172] Interview with Gen. Ridgeway

> for the Commander, or briefing him in words he can understand, or else it remains a black art and underused'.[173]

Col Cowan, 1 BW, further proves the point. When asked about some of his officers' suspicion that insurgents had occasionally been able to jam them during ambushes, Col Cowan considered it far more likely that a combination of tactical comms frailties and inefficient use of the troops' own equipment had been the source of problems.[174] Higher up, information flows did suffer from technical problems such as breakdowns between different national networks (CENTRIX and UK-I-NET, for instance) and discrepancies between preferred systems (CENTRIX and SIPRNET) that slowed access to key information. Overall, the strategic-operational interface worked well, though network frailties and incompatibilities can, and do, affect information flows. Likewise, the inevitable problems of trust, common understanding, interoperability and different operating procedures continue to impact upon multinational operations.

UK attempts to operationalise a Comprehensive Approach have suffered from a lack of genuinely joined up governance. The lack of proper interagency cooperation was a source of frustration and was definitely regarded as a networking failure. Ultimately, the campaign in Iraq has to be multidimensional to be successful and officers perceived a lack of joined-up governance as a serious drawback. While the advent of the PCRU was seen as a major step forward, there was wariness about its impact without proper funding and genuine commitment from OGDs. Efforts at economic regeneration were generally regarded as poorly resourced, badly coordinated and inflexible. Tactical commanders felt that their own efforts were severely undermined by slow decision-making, variable interagency engagement and lack of disposable funds. By way of example, there was a perceived lack of commitment and interest from DfID and the FCO in the Maysan region relating to their lack of representation. This combined with a failure to delegate a sufficient level of financial authority, or provide the support needed by the BG CO, to make up for the shortfall created by this absence. This demonstrated what was perceived by the local population as a lack of long-term commitment, which only added to the instability and hampered the stabilisation of the security situation.[175] In the long run, lack of progress in this vital area was seen as a potentially fatal weakness in stabilisation efforts and a source of instability. Relationships with key NGOs were also variable, though officers had lower expectations of their ability to coordinate activities. The inculcation of good personal relations was emphasised in order to enhance cooperation, if not coordination.

Evaluation of the Information and Networking Contribution to the Outcomes of the Operation (Measures of Campaign Effectiveness)

Laid out below are the primary factors that have contributed to ongoing British operations in Iraq as they relate to information and networking. Discussion of these

[173] *ibid.*
[174] Interview with Col Cowan
[175] 1PWRR BG POR Lessons Report.

themes as 'measures of campaign effectiveness' is obviously problematic given that *Telic* is an ongoing deployment and statements on its level of success are highly subjective. With this in mind, this conclusion asks as many questions as it attempts to answer.

The potential of NEC to improve markedly information management was a recurrent theme with British units operating in Iraq. This was not just with regard to the gathering, analysis and dissemination of specific intelligence about insurgents (though that was a major concern) but in relation to the handling of the large volumes of information relating to the campaign; from lessons making their way into pre-deployment training, to the retention of local knowledge during handovers, right up to the clear articulation of strategic intent. There was a common perception that UK forces currently lacked the requisite capabilities to fully exploit intelligence gleaned from their own and US ISTAR assets. During *Telic* I, '[AVM Sir Brian] Burridge thought he was fighting effects-based warfare but he soon realised he didn't have an effects-based network'.[176] Regardless of whether technological assets have as much utility in COIN/PSO in Iraq as HUMINT, many regarded the management of the information provided by such assets as inadequate. Similarly, HUMINT gained through contact with local communities was invaluable but its retention was often heavily dependent upon UK forces own social networks rather than the formal ones. British forces became very adept at passing on this type of local knowledge during handovers but there were still occasions where vital information was lost. Thus, even simple, secure, networked databases would be of great use. Crucially, any capability must be readily accessible, fast, secure and robust if it is to be of value in highly fluid urban LIO environments. Gen. Granville-Chapman comments that 'NEC should allow better risk-taking',[177] a sentiment that resonates with British operational and tactical cdrs, who continue to stress engagement with local communities as a central pillar of LIO – even in highly unpredictable environments. Even when the BG deployed into very hostile terrain, the benefits of cooperation with the local population far outweighed the risks and led the BG to conclude that an even longer deployment would have had a positive effect.[178]

As stated earlier, more fundamental changes to British Land HQs' ability to manage information may be required and MoD is already looking at ways to restructure deployable HQs to better utilise ISTAR (such as *Project Roberts*). However, despite the perceived necessity for enhanced information-management networks, participants in this study were keen to emphasise that this *should absolutely not be achieved at the expense of UK forces' distinct approach to LIO*. Past experience has taught British forces the intrinsic value of joined-up approaches to COIN/PSO, of maximising tactical flexibility, of non-kinetic 'soft' responses and of the importance of social networks regardless of technological 'alternatives'. It seems an obvious point that the technical aspects of NEC could and should compliment the human dimension, but it is nevertheless a point worth repeating. Many officers voiced serious concerns that the focus on technological innovation may increasingly frame NEC not as an enabler for strengthening the ability to conduct LIO, but as the answer to new challenges. They did not believe that it could

[176] Tim Ripley, *Major Flaws in UK's Iraq War Communications,* 7 January 2004, www.jdw.janes.com
[177] Interview with Gen. Sir Granville-Chapman
[178] Interviews with Col Cowan & Maj. Elliott

achieve this objective in and of itself and often drew a distinction between the more limited British concept of NEC and the more ambitious US concept of NCW, which they regarded as implying a more fundamental doctrinal shift; perhaps even a revolution in military affairs (RMA).

UK officers who had worked in US HQs or closely with US forces were often sceptical of the presumption that US approaches to LIO were radically different from our own, arguing that US colleagues often operated in very similar ways but simply used more advanced NCW to their advantage (and in much more difficult circumstances). To compare the British approach in MND(SE) with the US approach in the Sunni Triangle was thus unintentionally disingenuous. Others disagreed, arguing that there was quite a fundamental difference in attitude that inclined US forces towards technology, the heavier use of firepower and force protection, and British forces toward traditional 'hearts and minds' approaches. Perceived differences in the key concept of mission command, with UK forces given more latitude to decide how to pursue their objectives than their US counterparts, was frequently cited as central to this divergence. This assertion is controversial and cannot be denied or confirmed by the present study, but if there is a distinctly British approach to LIO that is relevant to US forces, a deeper comparative study of US-UK mindsets would be an obvious area for follow-up research.

Again, the BW experience at Dogwood may be instructive, at least from the UK perspective. The compressed timeframe of the deployment, together with the markedly more insecure environment into which it was deploying, severely hampered 1 BW's ability to conduct intelligence-led operations. More often than not, patrols simply did not have time to generate the information that could have been turned into credible and actionable intelligence, meaning force protection generated the majority of operations.[179] This lack of any actionable intelligence led 1 BW to go out and seek information. This was conducted in a number of different ways including 'recce by fire', where local forces were provoked into revealing themselves.[180] However, traditional British methods remained in evidence. Information-gathering expeditions with patrols among the local population were conducted whenever possible and, with time, locals proved willing to talk so long as they were not seen by others.[181] Following a suicide bombing, 1 BW adapted its 'cordon and search' procedures and adopted a 'cordon and talk' system, by which an area would be secured so that locals and soldiers could talk without either fearing being targeted by a suicide bomber.[182] Nonetheless, 1 BW was out on foot patrol talking to the locals the day after a suicide bomb had killed members of the BG, prompting considerable surprise from US colleagues.[183] Numerous other examples of this calculated risk-taking are given in PORs and interviews and there remains a definite reluctance amongst British forces to adopt a different force posture despite the current deterioration in the security situation in southern Iraq. Instinctively, most British units appear to believe that 'softly, softly' should be the default setting, though attacks must be

[179] B Squadron, 1st QDG, Op BRACKEN POR
[180] Interviews with Maj. Ewing & Col Cowan
[181] Interview with Maj. Elliott
[182] 1BW interviews
[183] Interview with Maj. Elliott

met with robust, well-directed responses before returning rapidly to a strategy of engagement. If enhanced NEC could provide enough accurate and timely information to enable British forces to be more proactive and agile, it would be a tremendous asset.

Finally, the question of NEC's value in helping to understand and target the enemy (or enemies) in Iraq is worthy of examination, even if it ultimately poses more questions than it answers. Taking as our starting point the premise that we currently do not know our enemy, we can either accept, as many have, that this is the nature of the beast or reflect further upon why we lack this understanding. It is interesting that many of the interviews, PORs, battle diaries, etc., cry out for greater situational awareness yet do not analyse the enemy closely. Some form of Blue Force Tracker is a regular and valuable request but, as Maj.-Gen. Melvin states: 'I believe the current NEC work to be too focused on blue forces and the blue force picture. The evidence from recent operations demonstrates that our armed forces have operated effectively despite the lack of, rather than due to the presence of, good intelligence on red forces'.[184] Gen. Granville-Chapman echoes the sentiment, believing that 'we in the UK are … intellectually engaged in discovering who our enemy might be, and how his cause has come about, and how it develops over time' but that such analysis does not always make its way into multinational COIN operations.[185] Overemphasis on intelligence training against GENFOR (the UK's generic training enemy) is illustrative of internal red cell shortfalls[186] let alone problems in transferring knowledge into a coalition operation. This is a weakness that makes us vulnerable to the kind of intelligent, asymmetric challenges posed by insurgents.

Even though the insurgencies in southern Iraq do not appear particularly well coordinated at present, the BW's experience in the US sector sends a warning. During *Operation Bracken*, insurgents targeted locals who were perceived as cooperating with Coalition forces, using an area near Camp Springwood as an execution ground.[187] The execution of 'collaborators' sent a powerful message to the local population and the systematic punishment was 'effectively a denial operation, the equivalent of jamming comms'.[188] Such brutal methods are not particularly sophisticated but can have profound effects if left unchecked. Further, if the insurgents were smarter, they may well be able to exploit the frailties in Coalition networks discussed earlier. Ever-increasing media intrusion is an additional challenge. 1 BW noted that the media scrutiny under which it was placed added significant pressures. Reuters reporters were on the route as the BW convoy left Shaibah for Dogwood meaning that the info was 'on the wires' in minutes.[189] Embedded journalists reporting on the degree of accuracy of the indirect fire 1 BW was coming under at Dogwood was also of concern.[190] Further, the degree of interest in the deployment also focused insurgent activity on the BG: 'at times it was like living in a lethal version of Big Brother'.[191]

[184] Interview with Maj.-Gen. Melvin, by PA Consulting
[185] Interview with Gen. Sir Granville-Chapman
[186] Interview with Gen. Ridgeway
[187] Interview with Maj. Elliott
[188] Interview with Col Cowan
[189] The Red Hackle, No. 051, May 2005, p.32.
[190] Interview with Col Cowan
[191] 1BW POR

As a result, many analysts speculate that a more intelligent insurgency would seriously test Coalition capabilities. As it is, the drip effect of casualties is already taking a serious toll on Coalition unity and will almost certainly affect morale and domestic support in the long run. A proactive, extended COIN campaign with a strong information operations element is therefore a must if Coalition forces are to leave behind a stable Iraq; this end-state will also require a much better grasp of 'Red' forces. Ideally, NEC would be able to provide a red picture of similar resolution to that soon to be offered for blue forces, but this is likely to remain hugely problematic in LIO based in urban environments in general, and in as hugely complicated an insurgent environment as Iraq in particular. At the very least, its benefits should be exploited to the full with regard to the generation and dissemination of solid information on the nature of insurgencies, coupled with any generic picture of their activity that can improve situational awareness. With proper support, it is likely that NEC could achieve far more than this, assisting with the kind of information superiority that is almost always required for successful LIO.

In conclusion, NEC has tremendous potential but also natural vulnerabilities and boundaries. Quoting General Ridgeway once again,

> 'NEC is unfunded, unpopular and is not a platform, so will remain vulnerable to single service acquisition models. The problem is, what is NEC? Who can believe the hypothesis that we can have smaller forces because NEC will allow us to achieve better effects, when no one has successfully or convincingly articulated what NEC is or what it will actually bring. I met with VCDS the other day and warned him of the emperor's new clothes. To be a little more helpful, I would say that the central hypothesis is good, but man needs to be in the chain, and the decisions have to be good, and decision has to sit in the right place…. You see what I am saying? It is important that the decision lies with people who have wisdom not just information. And there is a difference, knowledge is knowing that a tomato is a fruit, wisdom is knowing not to put it in a fruit salad!'[192]

Such sentiments lie at the heart of both the British approach to LIO and its reluctance to embrace NEC in the same manner as US forces have accepted NCW. Certainly, the British Army's experiences reflected in this study of post-conflict operations in Iraq have reinforced most soldiers' opinions that the way they do business is not only still relevant but best. Thus, if NEC is to be fully embraced, its capabilities must be seen to substantially enhance British forces' capacity to do what they already do better, faster and safer, *not* to require them to fundamentally alter their approach.

[192] Interview with Gen. Ridgeway

Part II

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