

# JFQ

Issue 56, 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2010

## Complexity in **AFGHANISTAN STRATEGY**



**U.S. Special Operations Command**

**Global Insurgency: Point/Counterpoint**

JOINT FORCE QUARTERLY

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# Inside

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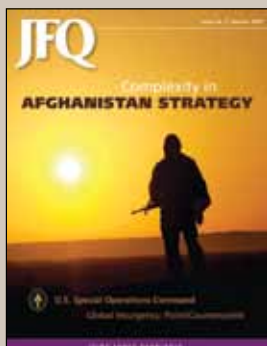
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Front cover shows Afghan National Army soldier standing guard at western observation post used to conduct counterinsurgency operations with U.S. Marines and Afghan National Security Forces, October 14, 2009 (U.S. Marine Corps/Artur Shvartsberg).

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DOD (Chad J. McNealey)

ADM Mullen addresses the Center for Strategic and International Studies, July 2009

*Joint Force Quarterly* is grateful to have received a cascade of correspondence in response to several of the articles appearing in the last issue. Foremost among them, the essay penned by Admiral Michael Mullen on the topic of strategic communication produced dozens of letters and nearly a dozen article submissions. In lieu of the Chairman's essay in this issue, *JFQ* is presenting the following three thought-provoking essays that complement Admiral Mullen's observations in "Strategic Communication: Getting Back to Basics."

—Editor

# Ambassadors to the World

## A New Paradigm for Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication

By ROBERT D. DEUTSCH

**P**olitical communication is no different than any other form of communication.

In *Joint Force Quarterly* 55 (4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2009), Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Michael Mullen eloquently stated not only a political truth, but also an axiom of any effective communication: “[W]e need to worry less about how to communicate our actions and more about what our actions communicate.” People have a general sensitivity to things inauthentic.

The fact is, whether the venue is international relations or interpersonal relations, people are now exposed to a great number of channels and messages, including hearsay and propaganda. All inputs that get through the initial gatekeeper of “personal relevancy” are put through a Cuisinart-like cognitive process wherein ingredients are modified by the receiver’s preexisting beliefs and current emotions. Action and talk are given roughly equal weight.

What strategic communication with the Muslims of the world requires is talk that is experienced by the receiver as an action, as a behavior. How can this be done?

The core task for U.S. public diplomacy is not persuasion, but evoking the bond of identification in the service of people’s sense of self-expansion. People—all people—possess a story about themselves that they tell to themselves, involving aspects of their lives that are latent and not fully constituted. If we can show that we understand them and the stories they have about themselves, their attachment to and regard for us will grow. This kind of connection can only be achieved if Americans relate to foreign publics in terms of the paradoxes, existential dilemmas, core narratives, and self-images that are the most important aspects in all our lives.

If practitioners of U.S. public diplomacy are ever going to understand how we have

come to our current impasse with much of the world and move beyond it, we must first listen and comprehend the *emotional-logic* of people’s subjective experience of events. In our current situation, we lack the mutual sense of connectivity and trust with the rest of the world necessary to achieve that. Instead, a different focus and bold shift in direction are needed.

To boost our public diplomacy efforts, the United States should appoint a dozen or so “ambassadors to the world” who would be responsible for representing American views to foreign peoples, not governments. *Their writ should also run in the opposite direction.* They should also be responsible for explaining the emotional-logic of foreign attitudes to the American public and representing these perceptions within the counsels of our government.

The United States needs not only a new bureaucratic mechanism for making sure the perceptions of foreign publics are taken into account by policymakers, but also a better way to understand foreign states of mind.

### Pay Attention to the Mind

A large part of the problem is that current models of persuasion—in government as well as the corporate world—date from the 1950s. They have not incorporated the latest insights from modern research about what causes people to embrace ideas. What we need is a new paradigm for U.S. strategic communication and public diplomacy that draws on the latest discoveries about human nature and the nature of the mind.

The “push-down” theories of persuasion—public diplomacy strategies that rely on logic and facts, and even the concept of “winning hearts and minds”—are all obsolete models of communications. People cannot be persuaded of something that they do not instinctively believe.

Modern research shows that people reason “emotionally,” often see the world in the contradictory terms of paradox, and crave the respect and satisfaction that only comes when they feel their *identities*—more than their interests—are understood and valued.

In turn, the power to influence others emanates from displaying understanding, insightful empathy, and inclusive leadership—not a recitation of the merits of one’s position or reasons why others should be grateful, which often generates resistance and resentment.

Indeed, U.S. public diplomacy must develop better ways to understand, listen, and talk to “the Other.” This will be difficult because America has never been inclined to know the Other; it never had to.

### Knowing the Other

Perhaps the central misguided assumption in public diplomacy is the notion that people are rational actors who, if they can just be pragmatic, basically think as Americans do—that the world is a mirror image of us. This is a *dangerous failure* of imagination.

People are guided by an emotional-logic composed of symbolic associations, images, narratives, metaphors, and mythologies. Despite the fact that logic and rational arguments barely influence actual decision- and perception-making processes, they are the mainstay in the present paradigm of public diplomacy. This must change.

People are not moved by “top of mind” rationalistic arguments. Instead, strategic communication campaigns require a more

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complex approach that must include the following implicit messages:

- I am like you (there is something about you that is familiar)
- I like you (I understand you, you can trust me, you can participate “in” me)
- I am not you, but our differences can help us expand our selves.

First, audiences must be approached in terms of their familiar, with which they are comfortable, utilizing communications that evoke their core narratives and metaphors about the world and themselves. Novel ideas are offputting; they are dislocating and require too much effort.

Second, we must communicate that we understand the target audience. By showing we understand them, we make them feel safe. In response, they will not feel threatened. If they feel threatened by us, or by our advocacy of what is novel and unaccustomed, they will reject the messages we send.

Third, we must make the audience’s familiar novel by outlining a grand narrative in which we offer a way that, working together, both we and the target audience renew and expand our senses of self. We must communicate the sense that we have

the power, through our insights and capabilities, to help the target audience become more authentically itself. Thus, a “war on terror” or

### *the United States needs a better way to understand foreign states of mind*

a “war on al Qaeda” narrative does not communicate to foreign audiences that we understand and value them and can help them become more authentically themselves.

Research over the past decade shows that audiences from every part of the globe—including the United States—feel that the third millennium is the world of “too”—“too fast, too complex, and too competitive.” A participant in one focus group articulated what is perhaps modernization’s core paradox: “Things are always advancing and getting better—sometimes for the worst.” There is great power in being able to demonstrate that U.S. leaders understand and share this core feeling.

In addition, U.S. leaders must articulate a vision or grand narrative that demonstrates how America can lead the way forward to a world that preserves the best of the past, respects and values differences, and embraces

and manages the challenges of the inevitable, fast-approaching future.

To begin to know the Other in his full human authenticity—paradoxes, ironies, illogicalities included—is an urgent necessity for U.S. public diplomacy. To achieve this, research on foreign attitudes must go beyond polls and instead utilize in-depth, one-on-one interviews and group discussions in which the core narratives and stories of self, of others, and of how the world “works” can be heard and explored. People from different tribes, religious affiliations, and levels of activism *must* be listened to.

### **Knowing Ourselves**

To regain the world’s trust, the United States must do a better job of understanding the blindspots in how it perceives the world and creates narratives about it.

Writing 57 years ago, Christian theologian Reinhold Niebuhr argued in *The Irony of American History* that “a weakness of our foreign policy” is that:

*we move inconsistently from policies which would overcome animosities toward us by the offer of economic assistance to policies which would destroy resistance by the use of pure military might. We can understand the neat*



Carla Bruni-Sarkozy, first lady of France, addresses UN meeting on HIV/AIDS prevention in New York, September 2009



Actress Charlize Theron, as UN Messenger of Peace, addresses press conference on violence against women





**President Obama called for new beginning between the United States and Muslims during speech in Cairo, June 2009, declaring cycle of suspicion and discord must end**

*logic of either economic reciprocity or the show of pure power. But we are mystified by the endless complexities of human motives and the varied compounds of ethnic loyalties, cultural traditions, social hopes, envies and fears which enter into the policies of nations, and which lie at the foundation of their political cohesion.*

The sobering accounts of the missteps of the occupation authorities in Iraq illustrate the dangers that arise when Western paradigms of behavior and attitude are presumed to operate in very different cultures.

In the wake of the Iraq misadventure, one of the first steps in the way ahead for the United States lies in showing the world that we are coming to grips with our blindspots as a culture and that we have a dawning sense of the unconscious assumptions that have historically led us into blind geopolitical alleys. In short, it is time for us as a nation to face our shortcomings, without succumbing to sentimentality or excessive self-flagellation.

President Barack Obama has demonstrated a superb capability, in Cairo and elsewhere, to speak to foreign audiences about their dreams and aspirations and how they intersect with American values. But the role of a “tribune of the world’s people” is too large for any one man, no matter how talented.

This is why we need ambassadors *to* the world and *from* the world. Like the court jesters of old, their special role would be to speak truth to the powerful—and to everyday people—and speak in a way that ordinary court denizens or bureaucrats cannot. Unencumbered by bureaucracy and the tyranny of everyday programs and projects, the job of these “Perceivers General” would be to give

voice to different stories on how people’s identities around the world are being given by the challenges of modernization and globalization.

We should appoint one or more ambassadors to the main groupings of peoples in the world today, which can be imperfectly but crudely divided into those from

Europe and countries composed mainly of European settlers, such as Canada, Australia, and New Zealand; Latin America; sub-Saharan Africa; the Middle East; the former Soviet Union; South Asia; and East Asia. In addition to regional ambassadors, we could

*missteps in Iraq illustrate dangers when Western paradigms of behavior and attitude are presumed to operate in very different cultures*

also appoint ambassadors responsible for perceptions about important global issues, such as the environment and nuclear issues.

These ambassadors should stand outside the normal bilateral, programmatic-oriented bureaucratic chain of command in the executive branch. As virtual ambassadors to peoples, not governments, their main responsibilities should be to report back to Washington—and to the rest of the country—on the emotional-logic of foreign attitudes, and to represent America to foreign peoples, not governments.

As has been the case throughout history, to know ourselves and to know others is the essence of leadership. Being mindful of ourselves and others is the urgent task of public diplomacy in today’s world. **JFQ**



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## Strategic Forum 250

### *North Korea: Challenges, Interests, and Policy*

Recently North Korea has made conciliatory gestures to the outside world. As James J. Przystup points out, in this rapidly changing and complex environment the United States should not lose sight of the challenges posed by the Kim Jong-il regime: its nuclear weapons program and potential instability after a transfer of power in Pyongyang. The author reviews three broad alternatives to current U.S. strategy: a military strategy, a policy aimed at regime change, and diplomacy, but outside the Six-Party Talks structure. In the end, he recommends staying the course of the current strategy—keeping the door open to the North’s return to the Six-Party Talks and to denuclearization and stabilization of the Korean Peninsula.

## Strategic Forum 249

### *Burma in Strategic Perspective: Renewing Discussion of Options*

Lewis M. Stern, George Thomas, and Julia A. Thompson examine the problematic relationship between the United States and the hard-edged ruling junta in Burma. The authors point out that the exigencies occasioned by Cyclone Nargis compelled a limited opening in relations, allowing some U.S. humanitarian aid. Although this was not a watershed event signaling a major shift by the junta toward the West, it did represent instances of change. The authors explore several gambits that the United States and the West might take to build on the tentative lines of communication that have been opened.

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# Public Engagement 101

## What Strategic Communication Is, Isn't, and Should Be



Secretary of State Clinton speaks to press about meeting on Iran at UN headquarters

By KRISTIN M. LORD

**W**e need to get back to basics." With these words, Admiral Michael Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, called for a hard look at U.S. strategic communication in *Joint Force Quarterly* 55 (4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2009). Admiral Mullen rightly noted that actions speak louder than words, that credibility and trust are key, and that the United States undermines its own power when our government fails to live up to its promises and our nation's values. He called on Americans to be better listeners and to engage foreign audiences, not to arrogantly fire off messages like so many verbal missiles.<sup>1</sup> On all these points, Admiral Mullen is correct. His serious consideration of strategic communication is a welcome contribution to an often stale debate.

This article builds on the Chairman's recent articles and speeches, arguing that public engagement is a powerful instrument of statecraft that can advance our country's broader national security strategy in concert with diplomatic, economic, and military instruments. It can be used to amplify and reinforce the messages sent by our actions. It can also build critical long-term relationships, increasing the odds that the messages we intend our actions to send are actually the messages received.

Strategic communication can realistically accomplish these objectives. Yet to get back to basics, we must also recognize strategic communication's limits and when failure is a result of the application, not the tool. Like any instrument of policy, strategic communication has not always been used well. This is an indictment of the craftsmen, not the craft.

**Dr. Kristin M. Lord is Vice President and Director of Studies at the Center for a New American Security.**

UN (Sophie Paris)

We need to rethink, not reject, public engagement as an instrument of national security policy.

### What Strategic Communication Is—and Isn't

Strategic communication—or as my colleague John Nagl and I prefer to call it, *strategic public engagement*—is the promotion of national interests through efforts to inform, engage, and influence foreign publics.<sup>2</sup> Its importance is growing due to the spread of pluralistic governance, increasing importance of transnational challenges such as transnational crime and terrorism that require global cooperation, widespread availability of cheap and instantaneous information and communications technologies that devolve power to individuals, and limits of force in theaters where the application of violence actually mobilizes support for our enemies. The use of armed force and traditional diplomacy will always be critical. However, they must be bolstered by a comprehensive effort to engage publics, who hold the ability to confer legitimacy and tangible support.

Increasingly, foreign publics have the power to facilitate or block the achievement of American national security interests. Whether the United States seeks to undermine support for various Taliban groups, convince allies to devote more resources to Afghanistan and Pakistan, build global pressure on Iran, or place a new command in Africa, public support is crucial. Engaging foreign publics is also essential to counter-insurgency strategies, whose success hinges on popular legitimacy. Not unlike the Cold War, ideas and ideologies are central to current security threats. Then, as now, the ability to win support for a political ideal, attack competing visions, and undermine the people and networks that hold those competing visions is necessary for success. Military might remains critical, but engagement, persuasion, and the power of an appealing vision are also essential to achieving national security objectives.

Actions speak louder than words, but they are interpreted in a highly contested marketplace of ideas. As public diplomacy guru Marc Lynch points out, “Everything is subject to spin, framing, and interpretation.”<sup>3</sup> Even verifiable facts are interpreted differently by different audiences. For instance, was the death of an Afghan interpreter during the recent rescue of a *New York Times* reporter a

tragic and unintentional event or yet another sign that allied troops value Western life over Afghan life? Viewed in the aftermath of a German bombing that killed many civilians, many Afghans perceive the latter—and no amount of additional information may sway that view.<sup>4</sup> If the United States must indeed overcome what President Barack Obama calls a “trust deficit” with the Afghan people in order to accomplish its mission there, these

strategic public engagement is and should be for. Strategic communication should not be about gussying up unpopular policies for public consumption, trumpeting the superiority of America or American values, or making the United States more popular in opinion polls. It is not about the means—whether broadcasting or Web sites—but about aligning the means of public engagement to policy ends. Most importantly, it should advance

Voice of America reporter conducts interview with Afghanistan national



Voice of America

perceptions of American intent hold broader consequences. They will influence whether or not Afghans choose to support the counter-insurgency campaign roiling their country, support that Generals David Petraeus and Stanley McChrystal view as essential to their success.

strategic ends. The desire for tactical wins has produced strategic losses all too often, and in the process it has sullied the reputation of strategic communication. Paying Iraqi journalists to plant favorable news stories while at the same time arguing vociferously for independent media, for example, undermined

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*armed force and diplomacy must be bolstered by a comprehensive effort to engage publics, who confer legitimacy and tangible support*

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In short, we live in a world where legitimacy and perceived intent, not just actions or raw capabilities, matter. As a result, our country needs to understand how others view our actions, effectively present our view of what we are doing and why, build relationships with opinion leaders, and create a climate of trust in which understanding and cooperation are more likely. This is what

both America's strategic credibility and its broader foreign policy interests in Iraq and the Middle East.

### Objectives

Public engagement can be used to accomplish five key national security objectives.<sup>5</sup> First, the United States has a legitimate need to inform, engage, and shape foreign



public opinion in support of specific policies. A key requirement is simply to provide quick and accurate information about what U.S. policies and actions actually are (as opposed to what our opponents say they are). Though knowing our policies may not lead to loving them, it is also the case that pure misstatements of fact about American policies abound. It is in our interest to correct them and help foreign audiences see where and how our interests are aligned with theirs. Highlighting areas where interests overlap is an equally important element of public engagement. If foreign publics see how and when their own interests and values are advanced by cooperation, our public engagement strategies can facilitate win-win outcomes.

Second, it is in U.S. national interest for foreign opinion leaders and mass publics to understand *America*, including its institutions, values, and people in all its national complexity. Contrary to common belief, the goal of such actions is not primarily to increase the appeal and attractive power of America (though that is a nice side benefit) but rather to help foreigners place information

about the United States in proper context. For instance, Muslim societies need to understand how to weigh the statements by the President versus xenophobic talk show hosts versus law enforcement officials versus Hollywood actors. All of them represent America, but not all of them represent official U.S. policy or even majority opinion. The ability to understand our vibrant marketplace of ideas, and the fact that the loudest or most extreme voices are not always the most representative, adds valuable perspective without distorting the truth.

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*the goal is to help foreigners  
place information about  
the United States in proper  
context*

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Third, the United States needs to create a climate of mutual understanding, respect, and trust in which cooperation is more feasible. That requires building relationships not only with current and future leaders, but also between civilians and military leaders, and between military and govern-

ment leaders and key counterparts in the nonprofit and private sectors. Military-to-military exchanges and young leaders programs have been doing this productively for years, but these efforts need to be expanded and reconceptualized to meet current and future challenges.

Fourth, U.S. national interests are well served when foreign publics embrace values that Americans also share—for instance, support for free markets, representative governance, environmental protection, and the illegitimacy of suicide bombing. We also have a strong moral interest in the promotion of human rights and opposition to scourges such as human trafficking and slavery. The United States has long encouraged the spread of these values, whether through official government actions or indirect support for exchanges and visitor programs, private partnerships, and grants for capacity-building for foreign individuals and organizations.

Fifth, American national security benefits from the strengthening of dense networks of personal relationships between current and future societal leaders, which open channels of communication, create



**Marine speaks with residents of Betaka while surveying river for proposed bridge in Helmand Province, Afghanistan**

U.S. Marine Corps (James A. Burks)



opportunities for collaboration, and facilitate the achievement of common goals. The U.S. relationship with China looks profoundly different than it did 30 years ago thanks to an extensive commitment to build military, educational, scientific, governmental, and business relationships. Though U.S.-China relations are complex and hardly free of conflict or contention, our worldviews are undoubtedly far closer together than they would have been without this web of relationships and the large cadre of Chinese leaders who have studied or spent significant time in the United States. Though it is difficult to quantify the number of conflicts averted by these relationships, both China scholars and government leaders attest to this fact. If the United States began now to build the same fabric of relationships with the Arab world that we now have with China, in 30 years perhaps that relationship would be transformed as well.

## Ways

Achieving these objectives will be far easier if the United States is viewed as a credible actor on the world stage. To protect America's moral authority as well as the trust and even power that authority conveys, American policies should be in line with our highest ideals. They must be constructed to advance U.S. interests, taking into account the full range of costs and benefits, including foreign public opinion and its implications. As General McChrystal has observed about the U.S. mission in Afghanistan, "You're going to have to convince people, not kill them. Since 9/11, I have watched as America tried to first put out this fire with a hammer, and it doesn't work."<sup>6</sup>

To engage foreign publics effectively, it is imperative to understand them. Our goal should be to listen and understand foreign cultures and societies, how people communicate, which voices they trust, where they get their information, and why. We should recognize that others do not see the world as we do and may interpret our words or actions in ways we never intended. We should also recognize the diversity of foreign audiences and tailor the means of engagement to the task at hand.

Though much of today's discussion about strategic communication is focused on combating violent extremists and rebuilding relations with predominantly Muslim societies, our strategic aperture should

be wider. American public diplomacy in the Cold War focused at least as much on pulling allies closer as it did on countering enemies. That is a lesson worth relearning today. The United States needs the support of European allies to counter Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons, pursue pirates off the coast of Somalia, and bolster Pakistan against extremists. We need our allies in Japan and South Korea to help us manage the threat posed by North Korea. In all of these cases, the support of publics in allied nations is crucial.

Finally, the United States could be far more effective at engaging respected voices outside of the government and military. Whether they are found in universities, nongovernmental organizations, private businesses, the scientific community, or diaspora groups, these voices hold the potential to build new relationships and change minds in communities where official U.S. spokespeople never could.

## Methods

The United States should employ a wide variety of means appropriate to the place, time, audience, and objective. Social networking technologies may be the best means to reach Egypt's Facebook-loving youth, but radio may be more appropriate to Afghanistan's less literate, less connected population. An interview on a Southeast Asian equivalent of MTV may be the right venue to spark dialogue in one instance, but a serious news interview may be more suitable in another. A senior U.S. Government spokesperson may be the most persuasive voice on one occasion. On another, a Pakistani scientist may be more effective. A well-timed speech today may impact opinion tomorrow, with effects lasting for days or weeks. The relationships and mutual understanding gained through military and educational exchanges take longer to bear fruit, but may have more enduring impact.

The available tactics are countless, involving town hall meetings or broadcasts, flyers or Web sites, dialogues or speeches, or photos or books. Many of these tactics are tried and true, long used by the United States in support of national security policies. They must be adapted to new purposes. But new methods are also necessary, as the United States and likeminded partners compete for attention and legitimacy in the midst of an information maelstrom.

The final step in getting back to basics is to reintegrate strategic public engagement into a broader national security strategy. Presidents from Dwight Eisenhower to John Kennedy to Ronald Reagan understood the need to engage foreign publics in concert with diplomatic, economic, and military means. Although these Presidents served in different times, that fundamental philosophy remains sound. The challenge—and opportunity—today is to engage all of these instruments and more. It is to engage partners from around the world and from a wide variety of backgrounds, along with America's government and armed forces, to achieve desired goals. As the scholar and newly appointed director of policy planning at the Department of State, Anne-Marie Slaughter, notes, power in today's world derives from connectivity.<sup>7</sup> The ability to engage others, in pursuit of common objectives, is now a potent means to achieve American national interests. This connectivity, in pursuit of national objectives, is the ultimate purpose of strategic public engagement. Using it wisely will require us to get back to basics, in words as well as deeds. **JFQ**

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Michael Mullen, "Strategic Communication: Getting Back to Basics," *Joint Force Quarterly* 55 (4<sup>th</sup> Quarter, October 2009).

<sup>2</sup> Kristin M. Lord, John A. Nagl, and Seth D. Rosen, *Beyond Bullets: A Pragmatic Strategy to Combat Violent Islamist Extremism* (Washington, DC: Center for a New American Security, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> Marc Lynch, "Mullen's Strategic Communication," *Foreign Policy.com*, August 30, 2009.

<sup>4</sup> Pamela Constable, "After Rescue, Recriminations," *The Washington Post*, September 10, 2009.

<sup>5</sup> For a discussion, see Kristin M. Lord, *Voices of America: U.S. Public Diplomacy for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, November 2008).

<sup>6</sup> Peter Spiegel, "Commander Maps New Course in Afghan War," *The Wall Street Journal*, June 12, 2009.

<sup>7</sup> Anne-Marie Slaughter, "America's Edge," *Foreign Affairs* 88, no. 1 (January-February 2009).

# "Strategic Communication" Is Vague Say What You Mean

By CHRISTOPHER PAUL

**T**he *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* tells us that *strategic communication* consists of "[f]ocused United States Government efforts to understand and engage key audiences to create, strengthen, or preserve conditions favorable for the advancement of United States Government interests, policies, and objectives through the use of coordinated programs, plans, themes, messages, and products synchronized with the actions of all instruments of national power."<sup>1</sup> This definition causes some problems. Although

it is generally reflective of prevailing thought on strategic communication, it is vague and imprecise. It is not always clear what is and what is not part of strategic communication. Worse, this definition belongs only to the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD); the rest of the interagency community does not subscribe to (nor does it explicitly reject) this definition. None of the relevant interagency partners (including the U.S. Department of State, National Security Council, Broadcasting Board of Governors, U.S. Agency for International Development, and potentially others) has a formal published definition of

strategic communication (or strategic *communications*, pluralized as it is often used outside DOD). Many individual scholars and specialists have offered definitions, but these vary considerably.<sup>2</sup>

Despite this lack of an agreed definition of the term, there is a vague impression of consensus that when one of us says "strategic communication," we all know what we are talking about, and we know that it is important. This perception of mutual meaning is in some sense correct, but the lack of a precise and agreed lexicon is preventing deeper shared understanding and making it harder to identify specific problems and solutions in this arena. The solution is simple: when talking about strategic communication, *say what you mean*.

Elsewhere, I have argued for a broad and inclusive definition of strategic communication.<sup>3</sup> What I offer here is not in contradiction to it. At the enterprise level, I maintain that all of the actions and utterances of representatives of the U.S. Government contribute potential information and influence, and that those activities can be harnessed and synchronized in support of national or theater strategic objectives. Where I am breaking new ground is in identifying discrete elements of the strategic communication enterprise and advocating that those employing the term *immediately specify which element or elements they are talking about*.

## Five Elements

I find that the term *strategic communication* is usually meant to denote one or more of five things:

- enterprise level strategic communication
- strategic communication planning, integration, and synchronization processes



U.S. Navy (William Selby)

GEN Petraeus explains his leadership strategy at National Press Club

**Dr. Christopher Paul is a Behavioral/Social Scientist at the RAND Corporation.**

- communication strategies and themes
- communication, information, and influence capabilities
- knowledge of human dynamics and analysis or assessment capabilities.

*Enterprise level strategic communication* was touched on above and is “capital S, capital C” Strategic Communication. This is the commonly shared understanding of the term, and it embraces a potentially broad range of government activities and encourages their coordination toward national or theater strategic ends. This term is useful only to indicate what general activity domain a discussion is targeting and to remind everyone that all actions and utterances have information and influence potential—and that this potential can be harnessed and aligned in support of national or theater goals. Any deeper discussion of strategic communication requires a more careful specification of what, exactly, we intend to talk about.

Current DOD strategic communication cognoscenti regularly expound that “strategic communication is a process.”<sup>24</sup> The community, however, would be better served by specifying this as *strategic communication planning, integration, and synchronization processes* and by leaving the broader umbrella term in place and inclusive of other elements. “Strategic communication is a process” recognizes that enterprise level strategic communication is too broad to be meaningfully discussed as a discrete set of activities and responds to that challenge by winnowing what is included in the term to something quite specific. The problem is that others in the interagency community (and in DOD) do not understand this exclusion. They continue to talk about strategic communication more broadly (or just differently) and to be confused by this apparently narrow usage by some in DOD. Another problem is that constraining strategic communication to being *just* a process allows that process (and the term) to be used for *any* application of that process, whether that application fits within the appropriate bounds of enterprise level strategic communication or not. (This problem is discussed in greater detail below.)

As an element of the strategic communication enterprise, strategic communication planning, integration, and synchronization processes constitute a discrete set of activities and require distinct organization, procedures, and personnel. How are general national and

theater strategic goals translated into information and influence goals? How are the potentials inherent in communication capabilities incorporated into campaign plans? How are agreed communication objectives disseminated, deconflicted, and synchronized across the joint force and the interagency community? A whole host of important questions can be meaningfully asked and answered by specifying this element of strategic communication as the topic of discussion.

*despite lack of an agreed definition, there is a vague impression of consensus that when one of us says “strategic communication,” we all know what we are talking about*

*Communication strategies and themes* are the strategic communication element that concerns content and involves both the inputs and outputs from the strategic communication planning, integration, and synchronization processes. This includes the national or

across the joint force, especially to and for communication, information, and influence capabilities.

A focus on this element of strategic communication leads either up, demanding scrutiny of strategic goals and the communication objectives they imply, or down, considering defined objectives and candidate themes in specific operational contexts to be coordinated with and communicated by various communication, information, and influence assets.

These *communication, information, and influence capabilities* are the broadcast, dissemination, and engagement elements of strategic communication. Communication, information, and influence capabilities certainly include public affairs, psychological operations, defense support to public diplomacy, and civil affairs. These capabilities might include broader elements of the force, such as maneuver elements conducting civil-military operations or military police operating vehicle checkpoints abroad. They might include the interactions of any element of the force with foreign populations or the prevalence of language and cultural awareness training across



Secretary Gates meets with Vietnamese minister of defense during Shangri-La Dialogue

campaign goals or objectives (inputs) that planning processes will translate into communication goals and themes (outputs) and incorporate into plans. Content outputs, such as communication objectives and themes, are the elements integrated and synchronized

the force. They might include every action or utterance of every deployed Servicemember. Wherever we bound this element of strategic communication, by first specifying that we are talking about communication and engagement capabilities and then indicating which of

U.S. Air Force (Jerry Morrison)



them we wish to discuss, we will have framed the conversation in such a way that everyone understands what we are talking about.

Discussions surrounding this strategic communication element focus on the ability of various assets to design and disseminate messages and engage foreign populations in different cultural contexts, as well as the different forms of communication available to the joint force, given that actions speak louder than words. What training in language skills, cultural awareness, and influence do these force elements have? What doctrine guides their employment? What is the broadcast reach and range of available media? How rapidly can adversary mis- or disinformation be countered? Which needed capabilities are organic to the joint force and which must be contracted out?

audiences specifically and human dynamics generally is critical to identifying themes, messages, and engagement approaches that will lead to desired outcomes. Data collection and assessment contribute the feedback that allows two-way communication and engagement (rather than just broadcast) and that also makes it possible to demonstrate and report impact or effect from communication activities.

These five specifications connect to each other logically. Within the broader *strategic communication enterprise*, national or campaign level goals and objectives constitute the inputs to the *strategic communication planning, integration, and synchronization processes*. Based on *knowledge of human dynamics and analysis or assessment capabilities*, these processes transform and incorporate

*communication, information, and influence capabilities are the broadcast, dissemination, and engagement elements of strategic communication*



Supporting all of these specified activities are *knowledge of human dynamics and analysis or assessment capabilities*. These capabilities include media monitoring, media use pattern research, target audience analysis, and social, historical, cultural, and language expertise, along with other relevant analytic and assessment capabilities. Cultural knowledge and audience analysis are critical for translating broad strategic goals into information and influence goals. Understanding

the *communication strategies and themes* and provide them to commanders who employ the various available *communication, information, and influence capabilities* in pursuit of desired objectives. The planning, integration, and synchronization processes and knowledge, analysis, and assessment capabilities continue to be useful to force elements as they broadcast or disseminate their themes and messages or otherwise engage and appraise the impact of these activities.

Should these five specifying elements *not* cover the aspect of strategic communication we want to talk about, that is okay. Just be sure to be specific what we *are* talking about more precisely than simply “strategic communication.” Unless, of course, we really mean something else.

### Resist Degeneration of the Term

Unfortunately, much gets called “strategic communication” that should not. When I say that I am an advocate of a broad, inclusive interpretation of strategic communication, I mean that I prefer an expansive view of the things that should be considered communication, information, and influence capabilities, *not* that I am open to a broad interpretation of the types of goals and objectives strategic communication can be used to support. While the *communication strategies and themes* element does include the goals or objectives to be supported, the goals must always be related to national or theater campaign goals. While the vague definition from the DOD dictionary is of little help in making this explicit and clear, the host of reports, discussion, and predoctrine on the subject do make the purpose of strategic communication perfectly unambiguous: “to harness information to protect and promote *national* interests [emphasis added].” Strategic communication is intended to be a whole-of-government approach to challenges faced by the Nation, not a generic term for thoughtful planning and coordination of communication in pursuit of parochial interests.

Many in the broader defense community have begun to harness the processes of (and the term) strategic communication in pursuit of their narrow organizational interests. I have now seen several military Service-specific “strategic communication plans” that lay out communication goals related to informing Servicemembers and their families, protecting the reputation of the Service, telling the Service’s “story,” and maintaining public (and congressional) support for the Service. Similarly, several subordinate defense organizations and offices now have strategic communication plans that focus on communicating effectively with and generating support from other offices and entities in DOD.

I reject this misuse of the term *strategic communication*, and I urge everyone to do the same. This is not to say that being thoughtful about communication in a broader range of

Broadcasting Board of Governors

contexts is bad—it is not. Nor is it to say that the Services and other defense organizations should not organize and coordinate communication efforts in pursuit of their institutional interests—they should. What they should *not* do is call that pursuit strategic communication. Communicating strategically is not the same as strategic communication.

Part of the problem is that “strategic communication” is sometimes used in this diluted way in the business world, where the term *strategic* is regularly attached to a multitude of other terms without really adding any meaning. Part of the problem also stems from the vague DOD dictionary definition, which, while intended to point toward national level objectives, simply specifies “United States Government interests, policies, and objec-

tives.” This could be narrowly interpreted as the interests of any part of the U.S. Government rather than all of it, thus encompassing the parochial interests of any government office or organization. Furthermore, the assertion that “strategic communication is a process” does nothing to prevent this degeneration because it implies that any effort to plan, integrate, and synchronize communication could follow a strategic communication–like process and thus *be* strategic communication.

In industry and in other defense establishments around the world, these not-strategic communications are called “corporate communications.” This set of activities is sometimes productively divided into internal and external corporate communication to indicate whether the organiza-

tion is communicating inside itself or with external stakeholders or publics. This term is completely appropriate for planned and coordinated communication activities in pursuit of the institutional goals of a Service or other defense office or organization. One could even have a corporate communication strategy laying out the goals and planning guidance for the organization—only it should not be called strategic communication.

When in doubt as to whether a set of goals might be legitimately conceived as serving national or theater objectives and thus belong under the rubric of strategic communication, try the following test. If we were to try to coordinate or synchronize our communication related to this goal with a partner outside our organization (in the interagency, say), would they share our goal? If not, the goal is probably below the objective threshold implied by strategic communication.

At the end of the day, remember that all communication is *not* strategic communication. Do not be afraid to assert, “That’s not strategic communication that you are talking about!” It may be communication, it may require planning or coordination, and it may be important to an organization. We can still talk about it. Say what you mean, but please don’t call it strategic communication if it isn’t.

JFQ

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Joint Publication 1–02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Washington, DC: The Joint Staff, April 12, 2001, as amended through March 17, 2009), 524.

<sup>2</sup> See the discussion in Christopher Paul, *Whither Strategic Communication? A Survey of Current Proposals and Recommendations*, OP–250–RC (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.; and Todd C. Helmus, Christopher Paul, and Russell W. Glenn, *Enlisting Madison Avenue: The Marketing Approach to Earning Popular Support in Theaters of Operation*, MG–607–JFCOM (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2007).

<sup>4</sup> For formal documented examples of this line of thinking, see Charles S. Gramaglia, “Strategic Communication: Distortion and White Noise,” *IOSphere* (Winter 2008); and Dennis M. Murphy, *The Trouble with Strategic Communication(s)* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College Center for Strategic Leadership, January 2008).

<sup>5</sup> Jeffrey B. Jones, “Strategic Communication: A Mandate for the United States,” *Joint Force Quarterly* 39 (4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2005), 108.



Strategic communication director for Combined Joint Task Force–Horn of Africa in Tanga, Tanzania, speaks at dedication of renovated medical clinic funded by task force and U.S. Africa Command



# Open Letter to JFQ Readers



When *Joint Force Quarterly* readers see or hear the words National Defense University, they are most likely to think of the Joint Forces Staff College, the Industrial College of the Armed Forces, or perhaps the National War College. But NDU is much larger and more diversified than most realize. It is comprised of colleges, research centers, and regional centers that cover the waterfront of national defense and international security studies, and each is staffed by some of the most accomplished national security professionals in the world. Perhaps the most important thing that you should know about NDU is that the overarching mission binding its components together is supporting the combatant commands as they address the challenges of the day.

NDU's five colleges and four research centers have all contributed in some way to the International Security Assistance Force efforts in Afghanistan, as well as to U.S. combat forces throughout the theater. These contributions involve the full spectrum of academic enhancement to theater analysis, from deploying military faculty members to the Joint Strategic Assessment Team, to planning collaboration with interagency counterparts in the National Capital Region, to refining joint professional military education. Requests and requirements come in nearly daily, with varying direct and indirect potential for NDU support.

NDU is an enterprise chartered to support the joint warrior. I invite you to tap into the functional and regional skills and resources that you may not have previously realized were at your disposal here at NDU. This is an opportunity for you to access a professional cadre of national security experts who can take your well-framed inquiries to a level of analysis and other assistance that may be unavailable locally. My chief of staff, Colonel Mike Cannon, USA, can be reached at [cannonm@ndu.edu](mailto:cannonm@ndu.edu).



Ann E. Rondeau  
Vice Admiral, USN  
President

# LETTERS

**To the Editor**—I can commiserate with the *JFQ* editor and staff, having served as editor of a professional military journal. We ran award-winning dialogue vetted out by review panels as well—sometimes to our chagrin. I received that same sad feeling reading Colonel Om Prakash's article on "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" ("The Efficacy of 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell,'" *JFQ* 55, 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2009). His assertion that everyone has just been emotional on this and it's time we just get over it is fundamentally flawed. He lists enough references to make an apple pie, but looking closely at his words reveals something we tried to avoid years ago in the professional journal of the Air Force: agendas.

He cites inconclusive scientific studies and notional opinion polls to support his "I see nothing here against repeal" thesis. Too bad that he won an award for this work and *JFQ* had to run it. To suggest the existence of a "gay gene" in a National Defense University (NDU) paper is remarkable in itself but fails to include relevant support from the American Psychological Association that says there is no proven genetic connection. The larger question is, what relevance is there to any unsupported assertions in advancing the professional military dialogue?

I served for nearly 29 years with many honorable and brave people who may have been homosexuals. I just didn't know who they were. I didn't have to spend 1 second wondering about whether the people next to me were actually interested in the mission. They were there because they cared about the mission, not themselves. They served with distinction. The military is supposed to fight and win our nation's wars. They fight as a team. I don't want any defender in the heat of battle to question the mission motivation of his wingman who demands to be self-identified by any individual, personal label. That detracts from the team. Regardless of your views on homosexuality, "Don't Ask Don't Tell" is *not* about sexual—but rather *is* about mission—orientation.

Call me emotional, but apparently articles advancing the subject of *mission* orientation are not similarly awarded these days in the halls of NDU. And if I was truly

a dedicated member of the profession of arms—and gay—I'd want no part of it. My service to country would never be about "me." Keep the current law; it supports the mission, *all* Servicemembers, and the warrior ethos. And it's working.

—Colonel James W. Spencer, USAF  
(Ret.)  
Past Editor, *Airpower Journal* (now  
*Air & Space Power Journal*)

**To the Editor**—As Colonel Om Prakash's article on the efficacy of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" has been in the news, I would like to share with your readers some of the conclusions that I drew from my service on the 1993 Defense Readiness Council on Gays in the Military.

First, despite the colonel's comparison of 10 United States Code §654 with the integration of the Armed Forces in 1948, racism is *not* relevant to this issue. Similarly, this issue is *not* about sexual orientation; it is about personal conduct.

Second, in our discussions on the council, the Air Force was less concerned than the Army or Marine Corps, whose personnel fight for each other in combat units as intimate as the squad level. Each Service has a unique culture, and consequently the relative sensitivity to aspects of open homosexuality is uneven.

Third, this issue is complex because, like abortion, people are divided over the fundamentals of morality and social priorities. We must keep in mind that the military is a unique culture whose effectiveness is optimized through discipline and individual responsibility. Social issues are necessarily secondary to good order and discipline, and this critical context demands a different perspective than one that may be suitable for the civilian world.

—Lieutenant General Bill Ginn, USAF  
(Ret.)  
Former Commander,  
U.S. Forces Japan and Fifth Air Force



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## Strategic Forum 248

*Unity of Effort: Key to Success in  
Afghanistan*

Christopher J. Lamb and Martin Cinnamond ascribe lack of progress in Afghanistan more to forces and donors working at cross-purposes than to insufficient resources. Calling for an indirect approach that emphasizes working through indigenous forces, the authors cite U.S. special operations forces (SOF) failure to support counterinsurgency objectives as an example of military units working at cross-purposes. They recommend three ways to improve unity of effort: all Operation *Enduring Freedom* forces (except SOF) should be merged into one common mission with international forces; decisionmaking authority between U.S. military and civilian leaders should be clarified; and SOF operations must focus on the indirect approach.



# Executive Summary

*Afghan tribes always have and always will resist any type of foreign intervention in their affairs. This includes a central government located in Kabul, which to them is a million miles away from their problems, a million miles away from their security.<sup>1</sup>*

—Major Jim Gant  
U.S. Army Special Forces

In this issue, *Joint Force Quarterly* delves into two realms of inquiry that are mutually dependent upon legitimacy for U.S. success. Presented up front is a wholly unplanned return to the topic of strategic communication precipitated by the large reader (and media) response to Admiral Mullen's essay in the October issue. When informed of the numerous letters and essays that *JFQ* had received, the Chairman consented to acknowledge these complementary essays in lieu of his January installment. Similarly, the October Forum's examination of strategists and strategy led to a cascade of submissions examining the strategic context of the 32-year Afghan civil war. Continuing joint professional military education via *JFQ* benefits immeasurably from the dialectical method of reader interaction. This journal, more than most, boasts a heavy percentage of articles from a readership of current practitioners in the field (literally). Should this issue provoke another unexpected bounty of manuscript submissions, the April edition shall continue to accommodate unplanned excursions in readership contributions.

On October 27, 2009, the Asia Foundation, with funding from the U.S. Agency for International Development, released findings from its fifth public opinion poll in Afghanistan, which covered 6,406 adult Afghans in all 34 provinces. Seventy-one percent of the respondents were found to support the government's attempts to address the security situation through negotiation and reconciliation with armed antigovernment elements. According to the report:

*The high level of support for this approach is likely to be influenced by the fact that a*

*majority of respondents (56%) say they have some level of sympathy with the motivations of armed opposition groups. Support for consultation with religious leaders in government decision-making and to resolve local problems continues to rise, with the highest levels of support in the East (82%), and South West (72%) of the country. There is little variation between ethnic groups, but there are significant regional differences. Around two-thirds of respondents have some level of sympathy with such groups in the South East and East, but this is true for less than half of respondents in the Central/Kabul and Central/Hazarajat regions.<sup>2</sup>*

Against this backdrop, the Forum begins with a unique essay in which General Volney Warner explores the fundamental assumptions underlying military strategy in Afghanistan with an experienced foreign area officer presently serving there. Presented as an interview, the authors begin by disabusing readers of the notion that Afghanistan can be profitably regarded as a nation. They dispute the efficacy of employing population-centric counterinsurgency strategies to obtain U.S. military objectives in a civil war that has been waged for more than three decades. Emphasizing that Afghans want nothing so much as to be left alone, the authors advocate a strategy that promotes internal stability and a near-term redeployment of coalition forces without further alienating the Afghan people. Surveying the contextual elements of Pakistan's security concerns with India and the strategic sanctuary of its Federally Administered Tribal Areas, the authors review demographic data to reinforce their message that Afghanistan is a territory that contains people, not a nation-

state with an effective central government. The article concludes with a menu of strategic options tailored to the authors' estimate of the situation and admonishes the reader: "It is high time the American people were faced with the reality of what Afghanistan is not and what it will cost."

During the course of its fact-checking of the first article, U.S. Central Command suggested another perspective from the Forum's second author, Colonel Christopher Kolenda, USA. While COL Kolenda agrees with elements of General Warner's essay, he equates the attendant recommendations with a counterterrorism (CT) approach that, given the social, economic, and political context, is "dangerously misguided." He laments that until recently, our approach in Afghanistan focused primarily on directly targeting enemy leadership and building capacity from the top down, when we should have been investing in the root causes of the insurgency. The author argues that we must win "the decisive battles for the sentiments and perceptions of local communities." He goes on to assert that most Afghan insurgents operate not from Pakistan but within a finite distance of their villages and communities and that placing U.S. forces along the border would be futile, ceding population control to the insurgents. COL Kolenda's "concept for success" requires proper resourcing, effective governance, incorporation of traditional village and district shuras, public access to social services, an end to corruption, and local dispute resolution mechanisms. As COL Kolenda states, "This will not be easy. But difficult is not impossible."

In our third Forum entry, Dr. John Nagl outlines a military strategy for Afghanistan

that shares many of COL Kolenda's prescriptions while adding connections to grand strategy and policy. He begins with the classic strategy fundamental of connecting ends, ways, and means to obtain his definition of the U.S. policy objective: "Over the next 5 years, we want to create an Afghanistan from which al Qaeda has been displaced and from which it continues to suffer disruptive attacks." Beginning with the endstate, he surveys U.S. policy in Afghanistan over the last 8 years and addresses U.S. relations with Pakistan. He opines that "building a rudimentary state, even a flawed one that is able to provide a modicum of security and governance to its people, is the American exit strategy from Afghanistan." Acknowledging an insufficiency of coalition forces, he advocates "oil spot" security, where the most important population centers can experience national-to-local governmental reconciliation that will spread over time as Afghan forces are trained. Dr. Nagl argues for a renewed U.S. commitment to funding grassroots development and governance as trained troop levels increase. He concludes with the obvious resource question of "whether America has the stomach to do what is necessary to achieve its objectives."

The fourth essay, by Drs. Christopher Lamb and Martin Cinnamond, explores the friction between two military mission sets in Afghanistan, their combined effect upon unity of effort, and steps to resolve the dis-

sonance. The authors juxtapose CT special operations in Afghanistan and the extent to which they support or undermine the population-centric counterinsurgency effort (the "indirect approach") championed by General Stanley McChrystal. Citing a former senior U.S. military commander who observed that unity of effort is the most serious problem in Afghanistan today, the authors add that there is limited time for unity of effort to be restored and measurable progress to be demonstrated. The tension between the two missions is framed as a question of priorities: the importance of targeting individual enemies relative to the risk of incurring civilian casualties and damaging relationships with local communities; and the importance of working with Afghan authorities and forces relative to the risk that doing so will compromise efforts to target enemy leaders. Eliminating the tension between Operation *Enduring Freedom* forces targeting enemy leadership and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) pursuing stabilization and population security efforts is the single most important requirement for better unified effort. The second most important requirement is improved civil-military collaboration. Special operations forces kill/capture operations should continue, but only in support of counterinsurgency objectives. As the authors point out, "Progress in Afghanistan is not possible until the strategic objectives cur-

rently under debate are resolved and priority is assigned to either counterinsurgency or counterterrorism."

The Forum concludes with an article that traces unity of effort to a fundamental principle of war, unity of command. Navy Lieutenant Joshua Welle argues for a unified civilian-military structure with clear command and control systems aligned with the government of Afghanistan and ISAF. The author believes that the U.S. Armed Forces are not trained to enhance governance in conflict zones and to create long-term development strategies. Accordingly, civilian expertise in a counterinsurgency is critical to coalition success in "armed nationbuilding." Lieutenant Welle identifies three layers within the Afghan government and ISAF structures that define command and control: the national, provincial, and district levels. He observes that separate reporting and coordination mechanisms for national civilian and coalition military efforts are not working because the counterinsurgency can be won only by joint civilian-military efforts and "through the sweat, blood, and tears of the Afghan people, who dream of a country free from tyranny." The author concludes that integrating these resources into the ISAF structure under a single civilian-military command structure is the key to success.

The dilemmas and conundrums resident in these five essays encapsulate the larger issue confronting decisionmakers regarding Afghanistan and Pakistan. National security professionals shall debate the competing "ways" and "means" of military strategy in South Asia on an equal footing until the question of "ends" is better defined. Those ends and the resources required to attain them need to be placed within a wider strategic context and national strategy. The answer to this grand strategic question is at once simple and elusive. What better state of peace in South Asia can be delivered at a price that we and our partners are willing to pay? **JFQ**

—D.H. Gurney



U.S. Special Forces worked with local tribal leadership in village of Mangwel, Konar Province

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Jim Gant, *One Tribe at a Time* (Los Angeles: Nine Sisters Imports, Inc., 2009), 8.

<sup>2</sup> The Asia Foundation, *Afghanistan in 2009: A Survey of the Afghan People* (Kabul, Afghanistan: The Asia Foundation, 2009), 8, available at <<http://asiafoundation.org/resources/pdfs/Afghanistan2009.pdf>>.

# AFGHANISTAN

## Context and What's Next

In my view, there are situations in the world that the United States cannot resolve militarily. Vietnam was one of them. Iraq is another. Neither war was ours to win and both were theirs to lose. We always have been very poor at making distinctions between military and political victories and losses, and prone to supporting the losing side on civil wars—except for our own.

Throughout the 2003 campaign to oust Saddam Hussein and the subsequent insurgencies, and even more so with the ongoing 2001 Afghanistan campaign, I have worried about whether we choose the right wars, enter them fully understanding why, and prosecute them in ways that will satisfy our objectives. Do these wars truly reflect our national interest? Do the locals support our actions? Do we understand the culture of these countries sufficiently to sense when we have worn out our welcome? Have we considered whether our intervention is a long-term positive for the United States and for stability in the region in

our absence? I have no boots-on-the-ground experience in either country, do not speak the languages, and, most importantly, do not understand the Arab, Kurdish, and Persian cultures and their nuances, or the relationships among the peoples and their tribes.

However, my boots have been on the ground since first enlisting as a Navy Seaman in World War II and subsequently leading infantry combat units in Korea and Vietnam and later commanding at division and corps with final assignment as commander in chief of U.S. Readiness Command in 1981. We need to husband the valor and dedication of our volunteer force and make certain our leaders do not turn to them for quick solutions by applying force to international problems that are better left to political resolution—such as Afghanistan/Pakistan.

Through a social network comprised of senior-level defense, military, and intelligence professionals, I was introduced to an individual with 30 years of in-theater experience and

By VOLNEY F. WARNER



U.S. Army (Tia P. Sokimson)

Soldier provides security from tower at Forward Operating Base Lane, Zabul Province



familiarity with the languages and cultures of Afghanistan. He has an extensive background in the Intelligence Community, Department of Defense, and the defense industry.

As one who believes in preemptive peace more than preemptive war, I have over the past months peppered him with questions that would enable me to better comprehend the nuances of the war in Afghanistan. Do we have a clear understanding of what “winning” means? What does it mean to the region? What does it mean to the Afghan people? What would be the consequences of negotiating a political settlement enforceable by the region’s interested powers?

With this subject matter expert’s permission, I have transcribed our question-and-answer dialogue and agreed to withhold his name, position, and organizational affiliation. The subject of this interview is presently active in actions that are politically, militarily, diplomatically, and operationally sensitive and therefore, for the purpose of this interview, I refer to him simply as “C.”

**General Warner:** You have over the past 30 years acquired convictions regarding our strategic interests in Afghanistan and how the Afghans regard us after almost 8 years of this latest conflict. Please share some of your insights.

**C:** Thanks for this opportunity. I am very appreciative because this Afghan/Pakistan business troubles me deeply, as does the burgeoning body of experts who pontificate about Afghanistan without complete appreciation for the Afghan culture or even a cursory understanding of the highly nuanced Pashto or Dari languages.

Afghanistan is a country in the sense of real estate, but it is not a nation and has rarely been one except under a few periods of autocratic rule that extended out of Kabul a few hundred kilometers. With the cultural makeup of families and tribes driving any sense of cohesiveness from the bottom up, it is not likely to ever be a Westphalian nation-state, perhaps contrary to the imaginings of absentee academicians and wishful politicians. Many on the ground here have come to realize that.

The last thing that the United States needs is to be sold into continuing an

unwinnable war in a non-nation against a religious confederation that belongs to no nation and is very adept at strengthening its ranks by playing the anti-Westerner theme. George Santayana’s observation that “those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it” applies to Iraq, but even more so to Afghanistan and western Pakistan’s Federally Administered Tribal Areas [FATA]. The Afghanistan-Pakistan region plagues the world like King Tut’s curse—except in this case, it has repeatedly proven true.

**General Warner:** What about the Afghan people? What do they think? You seem to have captured a comprehensive understanding of their culture.

**C:** There is a huge difference between what we *think* we see through Western eyes and the reality of the Afghan culture. Even more today than a mere 2 years ago, I hear anti-West cries across Afghanistan and throughout the FATA and northern Pakistan. The Afghans are beginning to liken U.S. occupation to that of the Soviets—not in our

close quickly and in a manner that gives some hope of future stability without further alienating the Afghans.

Over these many years, I have come to care for the Afghan people, their way of life, and their compelling desire to be left alone to their form of civilization. I appreciate how they settle disagreements and how personal rights and wrongs from many generations ago have colored their outlook today. Whether they are termed tribal leaders or “warlords,” the government they gave is largely the government they know and want. This is a point that those who attempt to judge without understanding the culture mostly miss. It is akin to the facile view of too many academics prone to believe that Afghanistan is a conventional nation-state. It is not!

Some of us who have lived with the Afghans know it only qualifies as a *country*, defined as a parcel of real estate with people. These are people who have little desire for social or economic intercourse with strangers because history has convinced them that such interchanges only benefit the stranger. Occasional travelers bemoan the lack of improved roads and imagine that a COIN priority is

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*Afghanistan is a country in the sense of real estate, but it is not a nation and has rarely been one except under a few periods of autocratic rule*

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practices, but simply in our presence. They are quite willing to accept the Taliban as a political party, despite the strictures of Wahhabi Islamic fundamentalism, if that is the price of everyday security.

A point that evades the COIN [counter-insurgency] aficionados and the neophytes in the new U.S. administration is that we do not have an insurgency in Afghanistan; rather, it is a civil war. The Afghan-Pashto tribes cannot be separated from those in the FATA, but the United States continues to believe the Afghanistan/Pakistan border is inviolate—not militarily, but politically. The posturing by the Marine Corps commandant and the MARSOC [U.S. Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command] commander is reminiscent of the goat rope that doomed Iranian hostage rescue Operation *Eagle Claw* because all Services claimed a piece of the action. And “policy foundations” fan the flames of continued involvement, not for reason of national objectives but to perpetuate their COIN cause. We need to bring our Afghan enterprise to a

to build them—a thought I have ruminated over a number of times when in the more desolate parts of the country. Consider that there are no roads because the Afghans are a private people and do not want to share land or be imposed upon to offer Islamic hospitality to strangers. What would visitors bring besides disruption to a lifestyle practiced over thousands of generations? History confirms this. This critical point about privacy and the Afghans is one that author Stephen Tanner continually makes in his excellent history of Afghanistan.

**General Warner:** What are your thoughts about the Afghanistan/Pakistan relationship?

**C:** How do we get the point across to the American leadership that the problem is not so much Afghanistan as it is the fragility and corruptness of Pakistan and the failure to clean up the FATA? I see this error multiplying as we ratchet up the resentment

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**General Volney F. Warner, USA (Ret.), was Commander, U.S. Readiness Command, from 1979 to 1981.**

of the Afghans by moving in more troops and limiting indigenous control over their own destinies. I am comforted to see these concerns echoed by members of the U.S.-led alliance.

There are no “maybes” about the Pakistanis. The training grounds for what became the Taliban are the madrassas, Pakistani schools funded by the Saudis in the 1980s that continue today. In earlier times, commencing with the 11<sup>th</sup> century, the madrassas taught subjects both religious and secular including law and medicine. This emphasis shifted in the 1980s to religion, notably political Islam.

Too many in the United States cannot—or do not want to—distinguish between al Qaeda and the Taliban because an enemy, any enemy, is good for business and provides fodder for Washington advisory organizations who thrive on strategic challenges and joint, interagency operations for their continued relevance and existence.

**General Warner:** What are your views on the U.S. and coalition strategy for waging the global war on terror in the Middle East and South Asia?

**C:** That is too broad a question to cover in summary fashion. I have to go back to events after 9/11 to answer, if there *is* an answer.

In Afghanistan in March-April 2002, we were detoured from the original objective declared by the President of punishing the 9/11 terrorists and defusing recurrence by destroying their organization. We exploited the public's 9/11 outrage and fears to pursue other political agendas that enveloped counterinsurgency, asymmetric warfare, WMD [weapons of mass destruction] proliferation, and the overthrow of selected dictatorships—all under the rubric of a “war on terror.” Our politicians morphed the pursuit of Osama bin Laden into this war, and we included the Taliban in our definition of enemies.

In Afghanistan, the impact of this agenda resulted in (1) not augmenting the few troops and paramils [paramilitary forces] that we had in-country to finish off the militant elements of the Taliban and (2) letting Pakistan seemingly off the hook by not pursuing the al Qaeda/bin Laden organization into the northern FATA. According to the President, we had other, more important, fish to fry in Iraq.

I will not go into the “why” of Iraq beyond saying—as one within the Intelligence Community—I was convinced, and remain so, that Saddam's WMD program, both research and manufacturing, were dead-ended within 2 years following *Desert Storm*.

When the administration again was compelled to pay attention to Afghanistan because the Taliban had recaptured much of the territory that we had chased them from, the objective had morphed from defeating the menaces of militant Islam of the Taliban and al Qaeda to a nationbuilding odyssey for the United States. It has escaped and continues to escape the idealists and the new COIN practitioners who are eager to prove their convictions that Afghanistan has only exhibited the characteristics of a nation when it was under autocratic rule. At all other times, the tribes lived their own lives; plied their trades; swapped foodstuffs, raw materials, and products; and made some AFAs [*afghanis*, the unit of currency] off of tourists. This is their way of life, even with the Taliban present in some of the provinces.

**General Warner:** We seem to be experiencing difficulty in identifying sufficient Afghan security folks to augment U.S. forces now in country. Additional U.S. interagency representatives are sorely needed to “embed”

Going into Iraq was a terrible miscalculation; Iraq is not a national entity, but another Yugoslavia cobbled together as a quick and dirty solution by Western interests—and it will balkanize after we leave.

We continuously fail to realize that combating terrorism requires reacting to our enemies in terms they can understand and fear. Appeasement is the path of least resistance for those with weak minds and base incentives. These behaviors devolve rapidly to the fundamental war equation of win or lose. The Soviets had the right solution to terrorism when four of their diplomats were kidnapped in Lebanon by Hizballah 23 years ago. The KGB kidnapped six fundamentalists and sliced off a few fingers, sending the severed digits to the fundamentalist leadership with the message “release our people or you'll get yours back piece-by-piece and more to follow.”

In the early 1970s, when terrorists attempted to skyjack a Royal Ethiopian Airlines flight, they were overcome by the flight crew and first-class passengers. They were moved to tourist class, and the skyjackers were beheaded. The crew radioed Addis Ababa to call the world press, and upon landing the pilot walked out with the heads of the terrorists and kicked them down the stair ramp, saying, “This is how we handle terrorists.”

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*too many in the United States cannot—or do not want to—distinguish between al Qaeda and the Taliban because an enemy, any enemy, is good for business*

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governance at the provincial level, if security eventually permits. Do you subscribe to the COIN population-centric approach in the current situation in Afghanistan?

**C:** Let me digress a moment to welcome you to the wonderful new world of population-centric COIN—the “feed your enemy and kiss his kids and he'll be yours for life” strategy. I was in and out of Afghanistan between 1979 and 1984, I have many mujahideen friends to this day among those who did not go to the madrassas and turn Taliban, and I have spent the lion's share of time since in mid- and Southwest Asia—Syria, Iran, Iraq, Kurdistan, and Afghanistan/Pakistan. I reject COIN as a workable solution over the long run unless the United States wants to rent Arabs and Pashtun for the foreseeable future. I say “rent” because we cannot buy them.

**General Warner:** But then why did we not eliminate the Taliban and pursue bin Laden and company into Pakistan when we had the chance?

**C:** The U.S. Government's paramils and special ops [special operations] folks, with the paid assistance of the Northern Alliance leaders, nearly cleaned out the Taliban in Afghanistan in 2002, then we turned the mop-up over to the organized military, tasking them to build an Afghan National Army [ANA]. But you need a nation to have a national army, and this nation only existed in Kabul and immediate environs. Nonetheless, BG McChrystal [Brigadier General Stanley McChrystal, USA] did yeoman's work until his forces were pulled out for Iraq on that ill-conceived and unplanned venture. I am a firm believer

in counterterrorism warfare up-close, personal, and quietly.

One can assign many reasons to why the Afghan Taliban was not eliminated in 2002, most of which had to do with American politics and shifting of the “strategic threat vision” to Iraq, the line-walking of Pakistani President [Pervez] Musharraf who sheltered them in the FATA, and the myopic way we left in 1992 with no view of, nor concern for, Afghanistan’s future. My personal knowledge begins in 1979 when only CIA [Central Intelligence Agency], not just surrogates, U.S. SOF [special operations forces], and USAID [U.S. Agency for International Development] were on the scene. Many of the mujahideen became fast friends, particularly those of the Northern Alliance. Those who did not attend the madrassas and become Taliban have similarly remained friends over the years. I have mourned the loss of many of these friends. In 2001–2002, we warmly welcomed the U.S. special operations forces, wishing that they had been with us during the previous 20 years.

**General Warner:** Can you give us a historical context that will let us better understand the motivation and loyalties of the Afghan people?

**C:** The tribes were very loosely united in 1747 under Ahmad Shah Durrani and thereafter served as a buffer zone between British and Russian interests, until the Brits relinquished notional control in 1919. A military coup in 1973 ended a very brief period of some democracy. The coup was overthrown by the Soviets in 1979, and they, in turn, were evicted in 1989 by the Afghan mujahideen supported by the United States and some

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*I am a firm believer in counterterrorism warfare up-close, personal, and quietly*

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Pakistan Pashtun. When the United States precipitously withdrew support following the departure of the Soviets, many of the mujahideen, now unemployed, unsheltered, and unfed in a decimated country, attended camps and schools financed by the Saudi Wahhabis and operated by the Pakistanis under the strictures of the militant Taliban to obtain shelter and food for their families and themselves.

Keep these demographics in mind: the 39 million Afghans have a median age of under 18; 44 percent are under 15, and 53

percent are 15 to 64; less than 25 percent live in cities, the rest in scattered tribal settlements; and fewer than 28 percent of the population can read and write. The infant mortality rate is the third highest in the world at 152 per 1,000—so high, in fact, that many Afghans do not give names to their children until age 5. Life expectancy is under 45 years old. And beneath Afghan ethnic divisions—42 percent Pashtuns, 27 percent Tajiks, 10 percent Hazaras, and minority Uzbeks, Turkmen, Baluchi, and Nuristanis—are the loyalty hierarchies commencing with family, clan, village, tribe, and, at the bottom of the list, national identity as citizens of Afghanistan.

**General Warner:** Why do you contend Afghanistan is a country but not a nation?

**C:** First, because of the social hierarchy that I have just noted and particularly the ordering of it with the national identity being least important. We are not dealing with a nation that has—as much as we would like to believe—an effective government. The Afghan government is in evidence only in Kabul, and elsewhere only on police and military paydays. It is more a license for



Afghan boy watches Marines patrol in Madrassa area of Helmand Province

U.S. Marine Corps (Robert Piper)



extortion than a functioning central government. The Morrison-Knudsen [Corporation] in the late 1950s and early 1960s built some dams and buildings with money from the Asian Development Bank and other international financing, and it was a peaceful place, not part of a nation but peaceful because people were left alone to pursue the life they had “since Alexander.” And then the Taliban emerged and saw the profits of poppies that the Soviets and we—believing commerce was more important than simply raising food for local consumption—inspired, and voilà, we have today’s Helmand Province where the Taliban has bogged down U.S. forces.

Western puppet. Whatever he embraces, they will not.

This is not to say that they cannot think or are too immature to master their own future. It is just that—as I have found in living with them—they focus on what will happen tonight, what they will eat tomorrow, who is tomorrow’s enemy, and how they can avenge the wrongs done to their family last month, last year, or a generation ago. Given their history, this is a predictably short and narrow view. One can fondly remember the “green hills of Afghanistan” from the 1970s, but that existed until 1979 because the people wanted to live in peace and harmony, not because some central governmental authority mandated it.

Waziristan, where they are still working the problem. They have moved some troops into South Waziristan, but that is primarily a holding action until they create some breathing room in the north and can free up men and munitions for actions in the south. Their claims and media reports notwithstanding, it is still not a full-scale offensive in either North or South Waziristan. Part of the problem was and is that the Pakistani ISI [Inter-Services Intelligence] was so involved in supporting the Taliban that the government has had to sort out what they want to do and who is going to do it—a seriously muddled situation. The recent aggressive moves by the Pakistani government reflect a major schism between the Taliban and the ISI, who have been their under-the-table patrons. If the ISI responds, it will help cement the Pakistani government’s response against the militants. It will be interesting to see the effect this has on India and whether it too will rise against the Taliban. To date, the only really successful efforts may continue to be support mounted by our paramils, who are not legal authorities there.



Afghan minister of foreign affairs listens to injured Afghan soldier talk about suicide attack near International Security Assistance Force Headquarters

*most of the Afghans I speak with barely acknowledge, if at all, President Karzai as other than a Western puppet*

**General Warner:** What are your thoughts on handling the Taliban problem in the FATA?

**C:** I believe, since the Pakistanis do not control the FATA, that sooner or later someone will have to recognize the Taliban as a political presence. If—a *large* if—U.S. forces can rid most of Afghanistan of the Taliban, notably in the South around Kandahar and in the Helmand Valley, and can block them from coming in from Pakistan, our paramils, with increased Pakistani army support, can perhaps winnow down enough of them in the FATA to stabilize most of the area. We might then be able to isolate the Taliban and reduce their numbers. The key is the a priori conditions the United States could—or even should—impose on the electoral process. Do not make our Western sense of justice or government a precondition; virtually all Afghans I have spoken with want us out

I am very pessimistic about attempts to bring about a unified national entity in Afghanistan that most Afghans would place above their village and tribes. The best I can see is a federation of tribes—a kind of medieval Poland—where borders, land, and water-sharing are clearly spelled out. To make a federation of tribes work, I think Pakistan would have to cede some FATA land—perhaps Kurram and three of the Frontier Regions to be administered by UN [United Nations] buffers. And this has to be done by agreement among Muslim states, without the United States or other Western powers in the mix. Most of the Afghans I speak with barely acknowledge, if at all, President [Hamid] Karzai as other than a

**General Warner:** Do you consider Afghanistan as home base for those plotting, guiding, and directing global terrorism?

**C:** No, not hardly. While Afghanistan and Pakistan are indistinguishable as hosts to terrorism, the FATA is the locus of problems. I do not believe that anyone in contemporary times, short of historians, recognizes in any way the Zero or Durran Line—certainly not the Afghans or Pakistanis I have spoken with. Perhaps we should leverage Pakistan’s abdication of governing the FATA to bring the FATA issue to the UN Security Council?

True, the Pakistani military has been effective finally in the Swat Valley, and with those successes they have moved to North



and that means Western influence, not just troops. Maybe we could arrange to establish this under the auspices of non-U.S., largely Muslim-nation UN oversight and remove all U.S. presence except for requested USAID projects to rebuild or improve the physical infrastructure.

As a further complication, Pakistan is not much concerned with the Taliban, except as a threat to the Pakistani government, and this is increasing because their focus is on India. Officials of the Pakistani government must draw permissions from the FATA tribes to enter the area, and these are only good for a specific agency or frontier region.

As for most of Western Pakistan, we are not much involved except to provide money, materiel, and political words. The Pakistani army is 20 percent Pashtun—the Taliban is mostly Pashtun with some non-Pashtun Afghan conscripts—and 80 percent Punjabi, discounting minor fringe players, and Pashtun and Punjabi have been fighting for years, I think before partition. As I said earlier, the Pakistani ISI is the direct conduit from the Pashtun elements to the Taliban, and these elements increasingly swing toward an alliance with the Taliban.

**General Warner:** Seizing terrain with the raw courage of soldiers without the application of supporting firepower is an unpardonable sin to an old infantry commander who has been permitted “to comb gray hair because of it.” On the other hand, aerially delivered ordnance without the benefit of ground observation too often causes unacceptable collateral damage and loss of civilian lives. How do we reconcile this?

**C:** The surveillance birds are invaluable—particularly those with high resolution and extended station time. I have to waffle a bit here because of the open forum that we are using. The Predator/Hellfire system is an incredibly effective weapon. The Pakistanis seem to be in favor of it so long as they are in control of the tasking and the missile releases. If not, they cry “collateral damage!” For well over a year and frequently since, I have fed you observations on the effectiveness of our UAS [unmanned aircraft system] hits on the Taliban in the FATA, how this was countering the Taliban threat and damaging Taliban organizations, logistics, and morale, and enabling us, in many instances, to corral them

where we wanted. A recent *Wall Street Journal* article discussed our successes succinctly and accurately. We have had the assets to call some strikes across this border that have clobbered some Taliban training centers and depots, but the successes are too few and each one has to be argued. We have spotlighted many more than we have been able to hit.

down from their 25,000-foot perch and out of their labs and analysis centers and explain to a mother why the United States leaves “toys” to maim her kids. I have held and bandaged so many kids and tried to comfort so many mothers that I refuse to distinguish between their use and the atrocities of murdering militant Muslims. And yes, they do look to kids like

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*those satisfied with the status quo of cluster-bombs need to come down from their 25,000-foot perch and out of their labs and explain to a mother why the United States leaves “toys” to maim her kids*

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Marine hands out school supplies in Helmand Province



U.S. Marine Corps (Artur Shvartsberg)

Not that UAS and ground-directed strikes by covert forces are the total answer to keeping the Taliban in check, but as long as we can subdue them in southern Afghanistan and keep those in the FATA from finding refuge in Afghanistan, we might achieve some level of stability.

I should interject a word of caution regarding some U.S. and other Western technology. While we continuously exercise bragging rights over our advanced technology, we cannot seem to build bomblets with timed fuses to self-detonate or become inert if they do not impact targets within minutes after delivery. We cannot color-code or mark the bomblets that do not explode on delivery. Those satisfied with the status quo of cluster-bombs need to come

MRE [meal, ready-to-eat] packs with candy. We damage our standing with the Afghans and Pashtuns far more with these munitions than by any of the UAS strikes. Believe it.

**General Warner:** I understand your readings on the Afghans, Taliban, and Pakistanis. So where do we go next in terms of strategy?

**C:** My suggested options are all worthy of objective critique and winnowing to the balance that are acceptable to the Afghans and Pakistanis, even if only marginally so to the U.S. political establishment. The ordering of these recommendations does not connote any prioritization.

1. Immediately initiate a three-pronged PSYOP [psychological operation] program using all media—Internet, radio, television, and discussion forums:

a. PSYOP #1: Explain in Islamic terms and context why we are in Afghanistan. The objective is security for the United States and for Afghans and not to reform Afghanistan in a Western image. We must emphasize the U.S. desire to leave as soon as possible; our desire to help the tribes maintain their own security; and our intention to render infrastructure rebuilding and construction where requested, on a dollar-matching basis with the Pakistanis and coalition members. Far from historical vestiges, tribes are more the focus of security than police or the much-vaunted ANA, the deployable size of which is far less than advertised by the Afghans or the United States. If there is to be a “government” in any form, it must be of the Afghans’ making.

**Caution:** There is a potential downside to showing the “Afghan face,” and this makes it a balancing act. The more the police presence looks Afghan, the more we look like an occupying force, and the Afghans will want us out even more urgently. Also, there is a social as well as civil discipline in policing that, absent generations of a police legacy, may well lead to militia-like abuses—a lesson to learn from Iraq—and demands for *baksheesh*—extortion—for protection. I use the term “Afghan face” to connote an impression, not a nation, as there are many, many Afghan faces. My point addresses the increasing Afghan view that the United States has become an occupying power. In my discussions, the local administration is bifurcated, anointed by Kabul and local tribal leaders, and the latter pay little loyalty to the central government.

b. PSYOP #2: Counter al Qaeda and Wahhabism-Koranic spin with teachings by moderate and accepted Arabic scholars selected from across Islamic countries—Arab and other.

c. PSYOP #3: State firmly our intent to decimate al Qaeda and its supporters in the FATA to protect noncombatants.

2. Appoint Pakistani, Afghan, and Iranian ambassadors, businessmen/scholars conversant with the diversity of Islamic culture and history. Embassy staffs need to include persons with backgrounds in this and in agriculture, civil engineering, and communications.

Repeatedly in people’s homes I have heard—politely expressed because in the

Islamic tradition of *Pashtunwali milmastia*, I am a guest—wishes that we would tangibly help, not merely promise, to improve sanitation and water facilities, but with a not-so-hidden wish that we would leave as soon as that was done. To them, these are local issues with no “national” significance.

3. Open a private dialogue with Iran, initially working toward NASA [National Aeronautics and Space Administration] partnership to assist Iran in gaining recognition and respectability in the Middle East.

4. Encourage Iranian and Tajik economic exchanges, even fund them if necessary, to further fence and contain Afghanistan.

5. Encourage cultivation of foodstuffs, biofuel, and plants for fabrics and industrial uses as alternatives to cocaine poppies and drug production.

6. Encourage mutual interests of Tajikistan, China, and India to diplomatically squeeze Pakistan.

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*the primary U.S. objective  
should be the elimination of  
terrorists and their networks  
that present threats*

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7. Enlist China’s aid to cool off Kashmir and further politically squeeze Pakistan.

8. As a political—not military—statement, increase significantly the number of armed Predator and Hellfire strikes on Taliban strongholds and movements in the FATA. Do not deploy and definitely forbid others the use of Hermes 450, Eitan, or any UAS being used by Israel in the Gaza to avoid adverse propaganda.

9. Treble the covert action special operations and paramilitary forces we have operating in FATA forward and deploy also into the rear areas of North and South Waziristan and Tribal Agencies of Kurram, Khyber, Mohmand, and Bajaur. These operations should primarily be conducted after dark.

10. Accept no logistic routes offered through or controlled by [Vladimir] Putin and company. Recognize that he remains KGB/Federal Security Service with the burning ambition to restore the Soviet hegemony.

11. Secure the Afghan eastern “border” in Afghanistan with U.S. combat troops but allow no incursions by them into the FATA.

I have omitted COIN from these recommendations, not to dismiss its value as a tool, but because, in Afghanistan or more correctly the total Afghanistan-Pakistan theater, we are not confronted by the same type of insurgency that we saw in Iraq where the revision to FM [Field Manual] 3–24, *Counterinsurgency*, found its genesis. Let’s not continue to blindly accept the COIN bumper sticker without realizing how the acronym needs to be practiced in the Afghanistan/Pakistan theater. The term has taken on so many colorations to attract the broadest possible constituency that it is virtually without value as a prescription for specific actions.

There is an offensive aspect—covert COIN—reputed to be used successfully in the FATA that I cannot discuss in any detail in this forum. It has apparently been practiced with safeguards and checks against becoming another Vietnam-era Operation *Phoenix* and seems to effectively employ proactive PSYOP and “legend building.”

The primary U.S. objective should be the elimination of terrorists and their networks that present threats: the Taliban and—separate but related—al Qaeda and whatever other decentralized organization networks Osama bin Laden has and can create. This should not be conflated with nationbuilding.

To eliminate these terrorists requires denying organizations recruits and destroying those aligned with them. To stifle their recruiting, we need first to provide the population a measure of security from Taliban threats, and the most effective way to do this is to eliminate the militant Taliban elements. Only then does the building of infrastructure become relevant or even possible. As Brigadier [Justin] Kelly [Australian Army, (Ret.)] said in his recent *Quadrant* magazine essay, “No one places their life and the lives of their families at risk by rejecting Taliban authority merely because they have, or are promised, more electricity or cleaner water.”

My experiences living with the Afghans yield a totally different take than the news media’s pro-Karzai attitude and what we face in “nationbuilding.” It’s high time the American people were faced with the reality of what Afghanistan is not and what it will cost in national resolve, blood, and treasure to realize their politicians’ idealism. Alice’s wonderland is a closer reality, and I say this knowing and loving the Afghan people. **JFQ**

Afghan Border Police wait to receive certificates of completion for training in entry-control points, road blocks, vehicle maintenance, and infantry patrol



ISAF

# Winning Afghanistan at the Community Level

## A Rejoinder to Volney F. Warner and “C”

By CHRISTOPHER D.  
KOLENDA

**T**he editor of *Joint Force Quarterly* asked me to respond to the thought-provoking interview conducted by General Volney F. Warner with “C.” I do so as a Soldier serving in Afghanistan. The sentiments here are entirely my own and should not be attributed in any way to the leadership of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF).

### Initial Observations

C argues that “we need to bring our Afghan enterprise to a close quickly and in a manner that gives some hope of future stability without further alienating the Afghans.” In so doing, we must deny recruits to terrorist organizations and destroy those aligned with them. I could not agree more, in principle.

The assessment of the problem and the prescriptions for the way ahead, however, are where we differ.

C characterizes Afghanistan as a country in the sense of real estate but not as a nation. The confederations of tribes, notions of identity that center on the family, and desires for local autonomy make Afghanistan unworkable as a state in any modern sense. State- or nationbuilding, therefore, is a futile enterprise. Afghans do not want a government and resist any attempt to impose one upon them.

Counterinsurgency, therefore, is the wrong approach—particularly the “population-centric” type that C equates with

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Colonel Christopher D. Kolenda, USA, is a Soldier serving in Afghanistan.



“feed your enemy and kiss his kids and he’ll be yours for life.” The conflict is more civil war than insurgency. U.S. forces are seen as occupiers, similar to the Soviets. Afghans, he asserts, want us out; but they will take our money to build facilities in their villages.

C recommends a counterterror (CT) approach, combined with a focus by current U.S. forces on the ground to “secure the Afghan eastern border” against Taliban invasion from Pakistan and to provide population security by eliminating militants. A psychological operations campaign should explain why we are in Afghanistan, counter Wahhabist spin, and state our intent to “decimate” al Qaeda and its supporters.

The CT approach, coupled with reliance on tribal strongmen, is becoming in vogue among those frustrated with the state of our efforts in Afghanistan, and who look for a less costly solution to securing our interests. These sentiments are entirely appropriate and should be debated fully.

### Questions

A number of problematic assumptions and tensions exist within this argument that deserve exploration. First of all, is Afghanistan truly ungovernable, or must it be governed in an Afghan way? Afghan history from the 1930s through the early 1970s suggests a reasonable degree of governance is entirely possible.

Second, does one’s identity as a Suk-dari clan, Kom tribe, or Nuristani, for instance, exclude identity as an Afghan? Or can one hold *several* identities at once? If not, where does the exclusion begin—between clan and tribe, between tribe and ethnicity, or between ethnicity and national identity? To argue that one’s identity can be the first three and not the last is tenuous at best. Afghans I know have little problem holding multiple circles of identities—not unlike most Americans. According to the International Republican Institute survey released on June 16, 2009, 78 percent of respondents considered themselves “Afghan” first.<sup>1</sup> While individual surveys should be used with great caution, identity remains an interesting theme for additional analysis.

What evidence do we have that the insurgent forces invade from Pakistan rather than being resident within Afghanistan itself? If protecting the population means that we must target and destroy Taliban militants, and we have been doing just that for the past 8 years, why is violence rising? Will doing more of the

same really lead to a successful outcome? Can we truly kill our way out of this?

Is government by warlords or tribal strongmen actually feasible in Afghanistan? Afghans *roundly reject* warlord empowerment. The Taliban, in fact, received tribal support against them in the 1990s after years of civil war. They do not want to see a return to those times. Community leaders remain alienated from the culture of “commanderism,” repression, and criminality that threatens both their ways of life and hopes for the future. Thirty years of warfare and social atomization have crippled the large traditional structures so badly that rule by tribal strongmen is no longer possible. But certainly the governance that will work in Afghanistan must be one that enfranchises, builds on, and adapts traditional systems in appropriate ways.

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*according to the International  
Republican Institute survey,  
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“Afghan” first*

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Is a CT approach feasible without basic law enforcement, governance, and security institutions, or is it just another example of playing “whack-a-mole” to no enduring effect? If we counter Wahhabist “spin,” will that have any effect in Afghanistan? The Taliban are, in fact, Deobandi Hanafis—not Wahhabis—as someone with C’s experience should know. And he should also know that Hanafis generally do not enroll in Wahhabi madrassas. Nonetheless, supporting moderate madrassas inside Afghanistan as alternatives is critically important.

### Many Afghanistsans

Like C, I have grown to love the Afghan people, having spent the better part of the past 2½ years in-country working closely with elders and villagers. That I see things differently than C is not surprising. There are *many* Afghanistsans—the rich tapestry of the society and culture conveys different meanings to different observers depending on their perspectives, biases, and agendas. Too often, observers see the Afghanistan they *want* to see and ignore the others that do not conform. This complexity is part of what makes Afghanistan so fascinatingly difficult and so potentially perilous. Afghanistan is one place where the so-called wisdom of crowds can help strate-

gists and policymakers come to conclusions and recommendations that are about right, and avoid those that are desperately wrong. This is likely part of the reason General Stanley McChrystal brought so many diverse voices to his initial assessment.

Coming to a reasonable degree of understanding of the complexity is critical. To paraphrase Carl von Clausewitz, the most important determination that a strategist must make is to understand the *nature* of the war—not mistaking it for or attempting to turn it into something alien to its nature.

The emerging “CT plus tribal warlords equals victory” (or good enough) thesis needs to be carefully examined. Analysis of social, economic, and political dimensions of the conflict illustrates that such an argument is dangerously misguided.

### Brief Thoughts on the War

Afghanistan is beset by five destabilizing and mutually reinforcing factors: (1) localized violence, struggles for power, and social unrest fomented by indigenous militants who are exploited by (2) larger insurgent groups whose senior leadership resides in Pakistan, such as the Taliban, Hezb-e-Islami Gulbuddin, and the Haqqani network that are enabled by (3) al Qaeda and affiliated with transnational terrorist networks, all supported and sustained by (4) narcotraf-ficking, criminality, smuggling, and international financiers. These four symptomatic factors coexist within an ongoing (5) socio-economic upheaval and political disaffection that form the root causes of attraction to insurgency.

Until recently, our approach in Afghanistan focused primarily on directly targeting enemy leadership and building capacity from the top down, with increasingly mixed results. We have not invested as deliberately in addressing the root causes of a growing insurgency. Too often, we have left the arena of the people wide open to extremist influence. We have cleared without holding and building. Kinetic strikes, although disruptive, are ably spun by insurgent information networks, driving negative feedback that often creates more militants while expanding sanctuary. Despite 8 years of individually effective tactical actions, levels of violence have increased and the insurgencies have strengthened. We are not winning the decisive battles for the sentiments and perceptions of local communities.

## Root Causes

The socioeconomic dislocation and political disaffection over the past 30 years of violence have created conditions ripe for insurgent activity. Pashtun society has fragmented; the fabric of village and tribal life is unraveling. Inter- and intra-tribal conflicts abound and are exacerbated by the insurgents. Economic deprivation creates vast unemployment outside the subsistence farm. Roughly 80 percent of the population is illiterate in rural areas. Many seek social and economic opportunities and outlets for addressing political grievances by joining insurgent groups; others are forced to choose. Poverty and disenfranchisement are guaranteed in the status quo.

While specifics varied greatly from tribe to tribe and clan to clan, in traditional stratified Pashtun society powerful families

*kinetic strikes, although disruptive, are ably spun by insurgent information networks, driving negative feedback that often creates more militants while expanding sanctuary*

formed tribal elites that governed local affairs, much as C suggests. The maliks, mullahs, and malims (tribal elders, religious leaders, and teachers, respectively) controlled the politics, religion, and education of village and tribal life. The poor remained subsistence farmers with little social or economic opportunity.

After 30 years of conflict, an economy has developed in which money is exchanged for fighting. Violence has created the most viable path to social and economic mobility and political influence. Those who prove skilled and demonstrate leadership qualities can advance in the ranks, increase their local power, and grow wealthy. Many insurgent leaders are from traditionally poor families who would otherwise have remained outside the local governing structures.

At the risk of historical anachronism, it is fair to say that an element of class warfare forms an important subtext to the insurgencies. The rise of this violent, well-funded warrior middle class has attracted the poor while undermining traditional tribal aristocracy. As one elder stated, “The big rocks become little rocks, and the little rocks become big rocks.”

A peaceful middle class cannot develop within the violent social, economic, and political dysfunction. Poor and uneducated boys grow up to be young men with little vision for building their communities. Those who show promise attend extremist madrassas and become radicalized, or they escape to larger cities for school or work and rarely return.

The lack of functional, credible, and accountable governance adds to the frustration. Corrupt officials, protected from accountability by political benefactors, exploit the population and extort aid and development dollars for their own ends while the people see no benefit in return. These socioeconomic and political upheavals incubate violent extremism, providing the necessary conditions in which insurgent and terror groups can grow and thrive.

control of the youth, carefully undermining the traditional authority figures, and using money and violence to retain popular control. The collapse of social cohesion is the Taliban’s most powerful enabler. And their operations and methods are deliberately designed to exacerbate it.

Insurgent leaders play on the lack of economic opportunity, local feuds and grievances, resentment of outsiders (even Afghan officials are deemed to be outsiders), and religious and warrior narratives to attract young men. Extremist madrassas, training camps, and group dynamics strengthen identity.

Insurgent and terrorist leaders, meanwhile, subtly undermine traditional authority. They are careful not to openly challenge the control of the elders in the early stages until they gain a critical mass of

U.S. Soldiers patrol near Forward Operating Base Baylough, Zabul Province



U.S. Army (Tie P. Sokinson)

## Insurgent Social Strategy

The various insurgencies are not held together by a coherent political ideology or compelling theory of social organization that attracts broad popular support. Instead, the insurgencies gain coherence through “negative integration”—they are defined more by a sense of common enemy rather than common vision. Their military efforts during the so-called fighting season mask the more important year-round efforts in governance, propaganda, and social control.

The more subtle—and more powerful—component of their strategy is the effort to exacerbate social atomization by gaining

popular control. Most elders do not support radicalism and retain the belief that they control their people. They often see the government and foreign counterinsurgents as a greater threat to their power and control than the local radicals, and will often passively support insurgent activity against the government to retain power. Over time, they grow increasingly incapable of competing with the radicals, but rarely detect the threat until it is too late. The insurgent leaders are well positioned to intimidate—or eliminate—elders who resist.

As the social strategy comes to fruition, charismatic radical leaders use violence

to secure their positions and deny competing forms of opportunity. Supported by armed enforcers, these leaders assert their authority in decisions affecting everyday village life. They use informal justice systems, for instance, to rapidly adjudicate land disputes and violations of social norms. They control movement and collect taxes through checkpoints. Although it is not

### Feedback

The power of this strategy becomes evident as violence escalates despite individually effective coalition tactical actions. In too many areas, the government is seen as an outside and corrupt influence, even an actively predatory force that directly threatens the authority of the elders and fails to serve the people. Perceiving threats to their

*as the social strategy comes to fruition, charismatic radical leaders use violence to secure their positions and deny competing forms of opportunity*

popular, enough find harsh yet predictable justice preferable to the chaotic incompetence of untrustworthy government officials and constant, unpredictable violence. The poor, moreover, can be attracted to this system of justice because their rights are upheld against former powerbrokers and tribal elites.

authority from the coalition/government and the insurgents/local youth, elders naturally assume that they have a better shot at controlling their own people.

Kinetic operations inside villages confirm to most that the greater threat comes from the state and the coalition, not local extremists. The grievous affront taken from

opportunity, and social anger enable foot soldiers to be replenished easily and provide a cadre ready for upward mobility if leaders are killed or captured.

Violence, and even poorly executed development, therefore, can enable the Taliban's social strategy if the socioeconomic and political conditions that make an insurgency attractive remain unaddressed. The problem is particularly acute if the actions of the government and coalition are seen as undermining, rather than supporting, the needs and interests of the people. Absent attention to such root causes, our tactics can create reinforcing feedback that undermines the government and the elders while increasing the hold of the radicals.

### Problematic Thesis

The collapse of social cohesion and fragmentation of tribal integrity in the Pashtun areas make any silver-bullet solution to govern Afghanistan by tribal strongmen and powerbrokers a dangerous anachronism. Many of these individuals have been included in the government in an attempt to gain support among their populations. The fact that their tribal brethren are still involved in the insurgency speaks volumes about the waning power of the so-called strongmen and powerbrokers.

Although specific areas experience cross-border insurgent movement and attacks, most Afghan insurgents operate not from Pakistan but within a finite distance from their villages and communities. In a Venn diagram with a large circle depicting the community and a smaller circle the insurgents, most of the smaller circle would fit inside the larger one. The limited portion outside the community represents external leaders, supporters, and facilitators. Placing U.S. forces along the border would not only be futile, but it would also further cede population control to the insurgents.

The bottom-up approach to social control militates against stability through a CT-only campaign, or the more conventional approach of protecting the population by killing militants. The Taliban and other insurgent networks generally do not travel about in large formations that present inviting targets to coalition firepower and CT strikes. Most have learned that painful lesson over the past 8 years, so the insurgents have adopted a more subtle approach of violent intimidation, attraction, and population



Afghan children play in classroom, Wardak Province

U.S. Air Force (Ryan Crane)

The larger insurgent groups work from the bottom up to gain power and destabilize the government. They appropriate local militants and connect them into a larger geographic framework to build both sanctuary and control of the population. In Afghanistan, they expect ongoing violence will exhaust the government and counterinsurgents. When foreign forces leave, the insurgents expect the government to collapse.

the violation of a man's home, damage to his property, and injury or death of members of his family or tribe inspires more radicalization of the youth and more support for the insurgents.

Local developmental projects contracted to "outsiders," which are often seen to benefit government cronies or wealthy businessmen, feed into the same underlying logic. Youth demographics, poor economic



control. Doing so enables them to hide in plain sight.

The social fragmentation and lack of opportunity combined with the large 18- to 25-year-old demographic makes the attrition strategy that C and others advocate counterproductive. Put simply, we can kill 10 and the insurgents can recruit 10 more. We can kill 100 and the insurgents can recruit 100 more. Attrition simply does not matter when the underlying social, economic, and political logic makes insurgency more attractive than peaceful existence. When kinetic strikes involve civilian casualties or damage to homes and property, insurgent recruiting becomes easier. Simple attrition of militants is a losing battle. Targeting is most effective when insurgent and terror leaderships are isolated from the local population as a complementary effort to the counterinsurgency strategy.

For a CT approach to be truly effective, the state requires a functional security and intelligence apparatus and a basic level of law enforcement. Absent these prerequisites, CT strikes are at best disruptive, at worst counterproductive. A withdrawal of ISAF forces would leave vast swaths of the country under insurgent control. The prospect of sufficient intelligence emanating from such environs to permit precise CT strikes is minimal. Much of the reporting and targeting will almost certainly involve blood feuds and local disputes masked as intelligence, which would ultimately heighten rather than diminish insurgent control.

The administration of Barack Obama rejected a CT approach to Afghanistan during the Afghanistan-Pakistan Strategy Review for good reason. The conditions have not changed sufficiently since then to justify the approach as having any strategic merit. Perhaps the person most qualified to understand the capabilities and limitations of the CT approach is General McChrystal; if he thought such an approach would work in Afghanistan, he would have advocated it.

## Governance

The notion that Afghans are incapable of forming a government is as false as it is narrow-minded. Afghanistan has always included elements of a mediated state—some periods more than others. As Clare Lockhart, the director of the Institute for State Effectiveness, argued in her September 17, 2009, testimony to the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, throughout much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century

Afghanistan had a reasonable degree of public administration that met the basic expectations of the people. These expectations are not vast and can certainly be met once again.

The current state of weak and bad governance is at the heart of political dissatisfaction, not the existence of government itself. Although several institutions have made significant progress and many national level

ministers have proven quite capable, the same is not true at the subnational levels where the government meets the people.

Weak governance is the lack of capacity to perform the basic competencies of security, rule of law, and limited services that people expect, such as jobs, education, and health care. Traditional governance systems, such

Bad governance—the abuse of power for personal interest—is a greater problem in the eyes of Afghans. Nearly every conversation I have with rural Afghans aligns with myriad surveys and analyses—corruption and abuse of power are at or near the top of themes cited as major drivers of instability.<sup>2</sup> To be sure, if such problems were considered “normal,” Afghans would not resent them so much. The

*targeting is most effective when insurgent and terror leaderships are isolated from the local population as a complementary effort to the counterinsurgency strategy*

levels of popular discontent suggest powerfully that Afghans view them as antithetical to their expectations.

The discontent with the current state of weak and bad governance does not imply that Afghans reflexively reject government or that Afghanistan is ungovernable. In fact, they suggest the opposite: Afghans expect a



U.S. Marine Corps (Philip Ejje)

Men prepare meal for shura attended by members of Afghan National Army, Afghan National Police, and U.S. Marines in Helmand Province

as village and community shuras (councils), are too often disenfranchised by subnational government officials. The breakdown of social cohesion exacerbates the problem; authoritative councils often do not exist that are capable of resolving local disputes or enforcing basic social contracts. The official system is corrupt and inefficient. The armed justice by local militant leaders is the only functioning system in these communities.

responsive and accountable government that meets their basic expectations.

## Concept for Success

“What is of supreme importance in war,” remarked ancient Chinese military theorist Sun Tzu, “is to attack the enemy’s strategy.”

To defeat their strategy, we must take from the insurgents what they cannot afford to lose: control of the people. We do so by



addressing the underlying logic that provides the local conditions necessary for the insurgency to fester, while crushing the militants in every fight. There is nothing more demoralizing than getting clobbered for a cause that people no longer support.

We need to combine direct action against hardcore insurgents and terror networks with an indirect approach that targets the sources of their strength. The critical weakness in the insurgents' strategy is their reliance on popular disaffection and their inability to muster public support (the Taliban consistently polls in the single digits). The breakdown in social cohesion, particularly in Pashtun areas, requires mobilization at community rather than tribal levels.

The community level will be decisive—and that support is entirely up for grabs. Communities have been neutral thus far, in part out of a survival psychology that has emerged over the past 30 years. Moreover, the sentiment of many community leaders is that they have not taken a side in this conflict because no one has taken *their* side. As several elders have remarked, “We are robbed by our government, bombed by international forces,

and beaten by the Taliban.” The side that mobilizes their support will tip the balance.

Addressing the underlying conditions enables us to earn local support, disaggregate the enemy, and then apply appropriate means to coopt and reintegrate local fighters, while isolating and destroying the ideological hard-core in detail. Effective security, governance, and development that enfranchise local communities are existential threats to the insurgency.

First, the mission must be properly resourced in both military and civilian capabilities. While sufficient numbers alone will not ensure success, insufficient resourcing significantly increases the risk of failure. Just as a poorly trained and prepared force with sufficient numbers is likely to fail, so will a highly trained force with a sound plan that is improperly resourced.

The security force must be of sufficient size to create contiguous security footprints for the population in key geographic areas. The argument that increasing ISAF presence risks a popular backlash against occupation is a well-noted caution, but it is the *style* of the footprint rather than the *size* that matters

most. Afghans know what will happen if we leave before the major insurgent groups no longer pose a threat. Although they do not want foreign forces permanently, they also do not want a return to civil war. While we are there, they want us to act as good guests.

Partnering with and protecting the population must be the focus of ISAF rather than chasing militants. This approach is not, as C suggests, feeding the enemy and kissing his kids. It is the product of a thorough analysis of the nature of the conflict and the requirements to be successful in this culture. Certainly C acts as a good guest with his Afghan hosts. Why should ISAF act any differently?

An ISAF force must also be of sufficient size to partner with an expanded Afghan National Security Force (ANSF). We tried in Iraq to stand down our forces while the Iraqi Security Forces stood up. What we found was the Iraqi forces possessed neither the competence nor the confidence to stand on their own at the beginning. Building ANSF is not a matter of simply cranking out more recruits. Building combat effectiveness and self-reliance will require a partnership in which

Soldier speaks with Afghan woman in Khost Province during Operation *Champion Sword*



*the sentiment of many community leaders is that they have not taken a side in this conflict because no one has taken their side*

our forces live together on the same outposts, train, plan, and execute operations together, and share information and capabilities. There is no better trainer for an Afghan battalion commander and his staff than an ISAF battalion commander and his staff.

Second, the problems of weak and bad governance must be addressed appropriately, particularly at subnational levels. Effective governance is decisive. We must facilitate the development of governance capacity that serves the interests of people. Until the government is seen as less hostile to those interests, it will never gain trust and respect. Supporting the technical assistance requests by the Afghan Ministry of Finance and increasing the numbers of technical experts at provincial and district levels will help develop basic public administration systems while providing necessary oversight to ensure accountability. Key sector roadmaps and transparent public finance are necessary com-

U.S. Army (Christopher Nicholas)

ponents of credibility. The government should champion the interests of the poor as its ethos to balance tribal elites and powerbrokers that often remain wedded to benefiting their peers.

Third, the concept of official governance should be expanded by incorporating traditional structures such as village and district shuras to provide an effective check and balance to district officials. The National Solidarity Program Community Development Councils, District Development Assemblies, and similar representative bodies should be expanded into the fabric of the Afghan government. Such efforts to link the central government to local communities and provide local control and responsibility hold the potential to be a self-organizing alternative to local insurgent governance. The combination of local shuras and councils with a government that demonstrates service to all people will begin to provide governance attractive to rural Afghans.

Fourth, increasing access to education, health care, and economic opportunity provides powerful and visible asymmetries that the government can provide and that insurgents cannot match. The government must outperform the insurgents in the delivery of basic services and the fostering of economic opportunity.

Local education is critical in keeping young men under the control of their families and out of Taliban clutches. Educating girls decreases infant mortality and reduces social violence. Young men generally seek permission from their mothers prior to going on jihad. Educated women tend not to give that blessing; young men with viable opportunities tend not to seek it in the first place. The persistent attacks on girls' schools indicate the threat of women's education to the Taliban strategy.

Concurrently, investing locally in infrastructure development, security, governance, and legitimate economic opportunity will bolster community councils in the eyes of their people and give them a reason to support the government. Although big development projects are important, projects controlled and owned by the local population are often more critical to stability and progress. As the Afghans say, "If you sweat for it, you protect it." The National Solidarity Program and Greg Mortenson's Central Asia Institute operate on this principle.

Fifth, active measures must be taken to thwart corruption and abuse of power. Deliv-

ering aid and development funding directly to village and community councils, as programs such as the National Solidarity Program and the National Area Based Development Program do currently, bypasses corrupt officials and ensures all of the money goes directly toward the project. The U.S. Agency for International Development and Commander's Emergency Response Program projects should employ a similar methodology.

Oversight and accountability structures must also be emplaced to protect U.S. assets—our aid and development dollars—from theft or misappropriation by corrupt officials or powerbrokers. That only 10 to 15 percent of aid and development money has local economic impact, while an estimated 40 percent goes back to donor countries in the form of profit and consultant fees, is scandalous.<sup>3</sup>

Finally, effective local dispute resolution mechanisms must be developed that can outmatch the rough justice meted out by extremists. With effective and trusted courts decades away, local shuras and jirgas can provide legitimate alternatives for conflict resolution, provided they serve the poor as well as the local elites.

Winston Churchill famously intoned that Americans generally find the right strategy *after* they have exhausted the alternatives. After 8 years, there is a credible strategy for Afghanistan.

Targeting sources of popular disaffection is an important part of the way forward. Doing so alters the socioeconomic and political landscape and provides alternatives to insurgency. Once the population is actively supporting the government and resisting insurgent influence, the effort reaches a tipping point at which we can transition to Afghan-led counterinsurgency with ISAF in overwatch. Special operations forces-led, enemy-centric actions can then finish off isolated insurgent and terrorist leadership without negative feedback. The battle is as much about whom we win over as whom we go after. We need to focus on winning allies as well as destroying enemies.

The Obama administration's strategy and the implementation approach outlined in General McChrystal's initial assessment set the right direction but must be resourced and implemented properly to have the intended effects. Defeating the Taliban's strategy, and preventing the return of al Qaeda to Afghanistan, requires a bottom-up

approach toward governance, security, and development to complement renewed and more effective efforts at the national and subnational levels.

Success in Afghanistan does not require the development of a modern European state. A reasonable degree of security in which insurgents no longer pose an existential threat to the state, and the country can protect its sovereignty, will suffice. Governance needs to meet the basic expectations of people in terms of political enfranchisement, justice, and economic opportunity. This will not be easy. But difficult is not impossible. The administration's strategy and the ISAF plan provide a more plausible range of outcomes that support our national interests than the alternatives. Implementing them stands the best chance of attaining C's well-articulated goal to "bring our Afghan enterprise to a close quickly and in a manner that gives some hope of future stability without further alienating the Afghans," while denying recruits to terrorist organizations and destroying those aligned with them. **JFQ**

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> International Republican Institute (IRI), *Afghanistan Public Opinion Survey*, May 3–16, 2009. Forty-six percent of those surveyed were Pashtuns. Ten percent referred to themselves as Pashtuns first.

<sup>2</sup> Clare Lockhart, testimony before the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, September 17, 2009; Sarah Ladbury, in collaboration with the Co-operation for Peace and Unity, *Drivers of Radicalization, Independent Report for the Department of International Development*, August 14, 2009, 7; Thomas Ruttig, *The Other Side: Dimensions of the Afghan Insurgency: Causes, Actors, and Approaches to "Talks,"* Afghan Analysts Network, July 2009, 2, 6; Gilles Dorronsoro, *The Taliban's Winning Strategy in Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2009), 12, 17–19. In the IRI survey released on June 16, 2009, 81 percent of respondents cited corruption as a somewhat serious (26 percent) or very serious (55 percent) problem.

<sup>3</sup> Matt Waldman, *Falling Short: Aid Effectiveness in Afghanistan*, Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR) Advocacy Series (Kabul: ACBAR, March 2008), 5, 11.



# A Better War in Afghanistan

By JOHN A. NAGL

**D**uring the 2008 U.S. Presidential campaign, it was common for then-Senator Barack Obama to portray Afghanistan as a necessary war in comparison to the misguided “war of choice” in Iraq.<sup>1</sup> But what was once considered the “good war” has not been looking so good lately. Amid increasing violence and rising American casualties in Afghanistan, Americans are expressing more doubt and confusion about U.S. objectives in that country and uncertainty about whether those goals can be achieved at a reasonable cost in lives and treasure. An increasingly heated debate over U.S. strategy in Afghanistan and Pakistan has overshadowed the post-Sep-

tember 11 national consensus on the need to ensure stability and security in that region.

A few short months ago, President Obama announced a new strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, supported by additional civilian and military resources. The President made the case that the nexus of al Qaeda and the Taliban in these two countries presents a serious threat to American security and outlined a more integrated and better resourced political-military approach to the conflict.<sup>2</sup> Less than 2 months later, he authorized the replacement of International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) Commander General David McKiernan with General Stanley McChrystal.<sup>3</sup> With these

breaks from the previous administration, the war in Afghanistan has come to be seen as “Obama’s War.”<sup>4</sup> At the very least, this campaign will be a central part of this administration’s foreign policy agenda and, perhaps, its legacy.

However, there is no unanimity that the administration’s commitment to Afghanistan is either absolute or correct. Critics point out that it is not for nothing that Afghanistan is known as a “graveyard of empires”; that the current U.S. campaign is overly ambitious, excessively costly, and doomed to fail; and that U.S. interests there could be more effectively addressed with more limited means.<sup>5</sup> Skepticism is undoubtedly on the

**Marines and Afghan Border Police patrol in Helmand Province**



U.S. Marine Corps (Pete Thibodeau)



rise: *Newsweek* ran a lurid cover proclaiming Afghanistan as “Obama’s Vietnam” a mere 3 weeks following the President’s inauguration.<sup>6</sup> Public opinion has increasingly soured on the war effort: a *Washington Post/ABC* News poll released in August 2009 found that 51 percent of Americans “now say the war is not worth fighting,” a 10 percent increase over March 2009.<sup>7</sup> There is decreasing confidence in the body politic that America has a strategy in Afghanistan worthy of the name, that the United States can achieve its goals in Afghanistan at a price in proportion to the expected gain, or that it even knows what it is we are trying to achieve there.

In this light, a more thorough explication of ends, ways, and means in Afghanistan is necessary. Achieving success requires a careful appraisal of what America is trying to accomplish and an appreciation for the resources needed to get there—people, money, and time. Understanding the war in Afghanistan, maintaining domestic and international support for it, and prosecuting it well call for three things: a clear articulation of U.S. interests, a concise definition of what the coalition seeks to achieve, and a detailed strategy to guide the effort.

### The Ends<sup>8</sup>

American policy in Afghanistan over the past 8 years has suffered from the most fundamental of all strategic errors: insufficient resources to accomplish maximalist goals. Building a liberal democracy there may or may not be possible, but after 30 years of war, the country simply does not possess the human capital and institutions democracy requires. Creating that human infrastructure would be a noble long-term enterprise for the international community, but in the meantime, the United States is focusing on the more pressing challenges to international security: maintaining pressure on al Qaeda on both sides of the Afghanistan/Pakistan border, ensuring that transnational terrorists do not regain a sanctuary on Afghan territory from which to launch attacks on the United States and its allies, and preventing the Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan from

further destabilizing its neighbors, especially fragile, nuclear-armed Pakistan.

America’s neglect of its relationship with Afghanistan and Pakistan in the wake of the Soviet defeat facilitated the rise of the Taliban and al Qaeda’s subsequent establishment of a safe haven there that helped enable its global operations, most notably the September 11 attacks. The efforts of the past 8 years have largely eliminated al Qaeda’s sanctuary in Afghanistan, and the country should not be allowed to lapse into the condition it was in on September 10, 2001. The problem, however, has become even more complex: collusion among al Qaeda, the Taliban, narco-traffickers, and criminal gangs presents a real and growing threat to the region.

progress is weakening popular support for the mission in many North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) nations, and even in the United States, site of the most vicious attacks launched from Afghan soil by al Qaeda. But the fact that progress has been hampered by confused strategy and insufficient resources is an indictment of the conduct of this war, not its objectives. It does not mean that the campaign in Afghanistan is fruitless or that America’s interests in this part of the world are unimportant.

The primary objective of American efforts in Pakistan and Afghanistan remains the elimination of al Qaeda–associated sanctuaries and, if possible, top leaders who support transnational terrorist operations.

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*American policy in Afghanistan over the past 8 years has suffered from the most fundamental of all strategic errors: insufficient resources to accomplish maximalist goals*

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Coalition forces invaded Afghanistan in the fall of 2001 with the objective of toppling the Taliban government and defeating al Qaeda. The Bonn Agreement and subsequent accords expanded Afghan and coalition aims far beyond these original objectives. After 8 years of strategic drift, coalition efforts have failed to persuade many Afghans that it is wise or safe to commit themselves and risk their families’ lives to defy the Taliban.<sup>9</sup> Just as ominously, the lack of demonstrable

Many in this shadowy alliance, which was originally based in Afghanistan but squeezed by allied military operations, have shifted to Pakistan’s cities and frontier areas beyond easy reach of the coalition. American efforts now focus on Pakistan as a launching pad for militants fighting in Afghanistan. But the problem runs both ways: a failed Afghanistan would become a base from which Taliban and al Qaeda militants could work to further destabilize the surrounding region. Al Qaeda

U.S. Army (David Alvarado)



GEN McChrystal surveys suicide bomb damage near ISAF Command Headquarters with Afghan minister of foreign affairs

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and the Taliban have served as an inspiration for and sometime-ally of violent extremist groups targeting the resource-rich states of Central Asia.<sup>10</sup> More dangerously, they also have ties to the insurgents seeking to overthrow Pakistan, and the ultimate prize in that contest would not be another ridge or valley, but possibly access to the Pakistani nuclear arsenal. An unraveling of Pakistan in the face of the Taliban insurgency, whether gradual or unexpectedly rapid, could spark a cascading regional meltdown and lead to nuclear arms falling into the hands of a terrorist group that would use them against the United States or its allies. This is, to be sure, widely considered a low-probability event, but the security of Pakistan's nuclear weapons is hardly clear, and U.S. visibility into events there is fairly low.<sup>11</sup>

Because these threats of terrorist sanctuary and regional instability emanate from territory shared by Pakistan and Afghanistan, Pakistan must be encouraged to confront terrorism within its borders and curtail its military's clandestine support for extremist factions. Stepping back America's commitment to the theater would be a particularly odd choice at the present time, given the recent improvement in Pakistani efforts to conduct counterinsurgency against its own radical elements and in American-Pakistani intelligence-sharing. The course of 2009 saw dramatic changes in the Pakistani willingness to wage war against insurgents who increasingly threatened the survival of the government. In that sense, the alarming advances of Taliban-aligned forces in Pakistan during the early months of 2009 proved something of a blessing in disguise: the militants' attacks into heartland provinces such as Swat and Buner galvanized a previously indifferent Pakistani public and military to stand up to the militants and drive them back.<sup>12</sup> The United States should seek to encourage this momentum while working to overcome decades of Pakistani mistrust of an America that has not been perceived as a reliable or supportive partner.

Following the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in the late 1980s, the United States curtailed virtually all of its assistance to Pakistan and was perceived by a generation of Pakistani leaders as having abandoned the region. In sharp contrast to the close security relationship that prevailed for the preceding decade, Washington quickly moved to distance itself from engagement and support of Pakistan, culminating in

decisions to impose sanctions and ban military-to-military exchanges with Pakistan over its nuclear weapons programs and tests. Pakistani leaders, military officers, and policy elites have not forgotten these events, and our actions ensured that U.S. policymakers lost one of our most significant sources of understanding and levers of influence over events in the region for a generation.<sup>13</sup> The improving but still fragile relationship of cooperation on counterterrorism and counterinsurgency would be damaged by an American pull-back now: the Pakistani leadership would be further convinced that the United States cannot be relied upon for support and would be encouraged to maintain its ties to Islamist militant groups as a strategic hedge—both dangerous developments from a U.S. national security standpoint.

Preventing the Taliban's return of control to Afghanistan, maintaining stability in Pakistan, and keeping up the pressure against al Qaeda are objectives worthy of American effort. U.S. policymakers must, of course, weigh all strategic actions against America's global interests and possible opportunity costs. But in Afghanistan and Pakistan, low-cost strategies do not have an encouraging track record since the initial success of Operation *Enduring Freedom*. After the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001, the United States sought to limit its own involvement by working by, with, and through militia or tribal commanders to provide security and mop up the remaining al Qaeda presence. But in many cases, this approach empowered these commanders to act abusively and unaccountably, which alienated an Afghan population that had been promised a new "Marshall Plan" by the United States and thereby facilitated the Taliban's reemergence as an insurgency against the new government and international presence.<sup>14</sup> Drone attacks, which have been highly touted for their ability to eliminate Taliban and al Qaeda leaders,<sup>15</sup> have certainly killed numerous terrorists and insurgents. But they have not prevented militant forces from making threatening advances in both Afghanistan and Pakistan, and they rely heavily on human intelligence and support facilities that may not be available without the current ground presence. This is not to say that drone strikes or alliances of convenience with tribal and militia commanders should not have a role in the U.S. campaign, but neither forms an independent basis for our strategy going forward. The "light footprint"

option has failed to secure U.S. objectives. As the Obama administration and the U.S. military leadership have recognized, it is well past time for a different approach.

### Toward a "Better War"

Preventing Afghanistan from again serving as a sanctuary for terrorists with global reach and keeping it from acting as the catalyst for a broader regional security meltdown are the key objectives of the campaign. Securing these objectives requires helping the Afghans build a sustainable system of governance that can adequately ensure security for the Afghan people—the keystone upon which a successful exit strategy depends. The United States, the Afghan people, and their coalition partners must agree on an achievable endstate, determine the intermediate objectives required to meet it, and allocate the resources necessary to achieve those objectives. This endstate should be something more realistic than a prosperous and modern representative democracy: it should be a sustainable system of governance that can effectively combat the insurgency, and in doing so prevent a reemergence of transnational terrorist safe havens.

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### *in Afghanistan and Pakistan, low-cost strategies do not have an encouraging track record*

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To achieve this objective, the coalition and its Afghan partners must seek to build a state that reconciles some degree of centralized governance with the traditional tribal and religious power structures that hold sway outside Kabul. An internal balance between centralized and traditional power bases—not central government control everywhere—is a practical basis for assuring the country's stability, much as it was in the years prior to the Soviet invasion. Achieving these minimal goals will be hard enough; it will require not only more military forces, but also a much greater commitment to good governance and to providing for the needs of the Afghan people where they live. The coalition will need to use its considerable leverage to counter Afghan government corruption at every level.

While an expanded international commitment of security and development forces can assist in the achievement of these goals in the short term, ultimately Afghans must

ensure stability and security in their own country. Building a rudimentary state, even a flawed one, that is able to provide a modicum of security and governance to its people is the American exit strategy from Afghanistan. The successful implementation of a better resourced effort to build Iraqi security forces, after years of floundering, is now enabling the drawdown of American troops from that country as Iraqi forces increasingly take responsibility for their own security. A similar situation will be the definition of success in Afghanistan some years from now.

The classic “clear, hold, and build” counterinsurgency model was relearned over several painful years in Iraq, but at present there are insufficient Afghan soldiers and police to implement that approach by holding areas that have been cleared of insurgents. As a result, American troops have had to clear the same areas repeatedly, paying a price for each operation in both American lives and the support of the Afghan public, which suffers from Taliban reprisals whenever we “clear and leave.”

These lessons are well understood, but the question remains whether U.S., NATO, and Afghan forces can execute them. The paucity of Afghan security forces relative to U.S. Marines involved in the summer 2009 offensive in Helmand Province was troubling and indicative of a security force assistance effort that has not been taken seriously enough for much of the past 8 years.<sup>16</sup> After an area is cleared of insurgents, it must be held by Afghan troops supported by American advisors and combat multipliers, including artillery and air support. These operations are intended to create the conditions that facilitate Afghan central government reconciliation with traditional local power structures to establish better secured communities that “freeze out” future Taliban infiltration. Since the additional troops

we deployed in 2009 will not be enough to secure the whole country, ISAF and Afghan commanders will have to select the most important population centers, such as Kandahar, to secure first. These “oil spots” of security will then spread over time as more Afghan forces come on line and gain more competence.

Of course, all of this is substantially harder than it sounds and requires changes from how the United States prosecuted this campaign in years past. First and foremost, U.S. and allied forces must ensure that their uses of force are not counterproductive to the operational necessity of population security and gaining local support against the insurgency. As in the early years of the Iraq War, U.S. troops have sometimes tended toward heavy-handed tactics that have served to

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*U.S. and allied forces must ensure that their uses of force are not counterproductive to the operational necessity of population security and gaining local support*

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DOD (Chad J. McNeelley)



President Obama's changes in strategy for war in Afghanistan have led some to call the conflict "Obama's War"



Afghan men work on road construction project in  
Mahmood Rahqi



U.S. Army (Teddy Wade)

alienate the Afghan population. One assessment from early 2007 argued that:

*the United States is losing the war in Afghanistan one Pashtun village at a time, bursting into schoolyards filled with children with guns bristling, kicking in village doors, searching women, speeding down city streets, and putting out cross-cultural gibberish in totally ineffectual [information operations] and [psychological operations] campaigns—all of which are anathema to the Afghans.<sup>17</sup>*

More recently, U.S. forces have attracted substantial criticism for excessive and insufficiently discriminating use of airstrikes, which have caused significant loss of civilian life.<sup>18</sup> While the new American command in Afghanistan has taken steps to rein in counterproductive uses of force, these incidents have left a legacy of Afghan mistrust that will be difficult to overcome.

Second, while much of the focus is now on the direct counterinsurgency role of U.S. forces, more attention and resources must be devoted to developing Afghan security forces. More U.S. Soldiers are required now to implement a clear, hold, and build counterinsurgency strategy, but over time responsibility must transition to the Afghans. If the first requirement for success in a counterinsurgency campaign is the ability to secure the population, the counterinsurgent requires boots on the ground—and plenty of them.

The long-term answer is a significantly expanded, and more effective, Afghan security apparatus. The preexisting numerical targets for the development of Afghan security forces are not based on the actual security requirements for the country. The current end strength targets for the Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police are 134,000 and 82,000 men, respectively—not nearly enough to provide adequate security in a war-torn country of over 30 million people with very rough terrain. The Obama administration's interagency policy review team recommended a substantial expansion of the effort to build these forces up to those prescribed end strengths, but that will not be sufficient.<sup>19</sup> Some argue that the international community should not develop an Afghan security force larger than what that country's economy can support. Under peacetime conditions, that concern would be important, but basing our security force assistance efforts on the Afghan economy rather than a realistic estimate of the

numbers needed to impose a reasonable level of security is not the appropriate course of action now. The United States should initiate a greater international effort to expand the Afghan national security forces. If that means the U.S. Government and international community have to help pay for them, that is what should be done—it will still be far cheaper than maintaining substantial numbers of American and international forces in Afghanistan for an even longer period to do the jobs that Afghans should do.

Unfortunately, the advisory mission has long been treated as a low priority in practice if not in rhetoric, with advisory teams being assembled in an ad hoc fashion and provided with insufficient training and resources before deploying.<sup>20</sup> The Obama administration has bolstered the effort with the deployment of 4,000 additional troops to serve as advisors.<sup>21</sup> But it remains unclear whether the U.S. military—and our government as a whole—have truly cracked the code on effectively developing host nation security forces. It is as important to address the qualitative problems with the current security force assistance program as it is to solve the quantitative ones. Combined Security Transition Command–Afghanistan must be reviewed to ensure that it has the best organization and sufficient capacity to do its job. The advisory effort must have access to the most talented and experienced personnel available—not just those left over after the regular units have picked first. It must be structured in a way that incorporates best practices for security force assistance and is most suited to the specific demands of the Afghan operating environment—not simply assembled in the fashion that is most convenient for America's existing unit structure. It must focus on developing an Afghan security force that can fulfill the mission of countering the insurgency and providing a sufficient, if imperfect, level of internal security—not on mirror-imaging the force structure of a more advanced Western army dedicated to external defense. And ultimately the entire effort must be judged on the quality of its outputs—professional, competent, reliable Afghan forces—rather than simply how many armed men in uniform come out of its training centers, an approach that clearly produced poor results in the first 4 years of the Iraq War. The United States and ISAF also need to get smarter about the way they engage Afghan communities. Insurgencies can be won or lost at the local level because securing the support of the population requires understanding the

specific issues that cause it to sympathize with one side or the other. Additionally, insurgencies are rarely monolithic; they comprise numerous local factions and individuals fighting for personal gain, revenge against real or perceived slights, tribal loyalties, or other reasons that may have little to do with the insurgency's professed cause. The Afghan insurgency is no different in this regard.<sup>22</sup> The Taliban is an amalgam of local fighters and mercenary and criminal elements around a hard core of committed jihadists. According to Antonio Gius- tozzi's detailed study, 40 to 50 percent of the insurgency is made up of "local allies" fighting for tribal causes or opportunism.<sup>23</sup>

Based on such analyses, U.S. commanders are interested in trying to "flip" less ideological factions and promoting the development of local self-defense militias to encourage the tribes to defend against Taliban infiltration.<sup>24</sup> Exploiting divisions within an insurgency paid dividends in Iraq, where the emergence of the Anbar Awakening and Sons of Iraq played a major role in crippling al

insurgents did not turn against the extremists until they were sufficiently alienated by AQI's brutal tactics and disregard for local customs.<sup>25</sup> The Taliban's leadership may not make the same mistakes.

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*targeting militant leaders and foot soldiers and then leaving will not solve the problem because local populations know the insurgents will just go underground*

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This experience suggests that emphasizing tribal engagement or flipping less committed insurgents is not a panacea that will enable the United States to achieve a modicum of security on the cheap. Local communities are unlikely to turn in favor of ISAF and the Afghan government until these entities demonstrate that they are fully willing and able to drive out the Taliban and provide

**Soldiers take firing positions on rooftop in reaction to mortar attack at Forward Operating Base Baylough, Zabul Province**



U.S. Army (Tia P. Sokinson)

Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) and dramatically reducing violence. Again, this is a simple concept that is much harder in practice. Thus far, the insurgency has proven less susceptible to cooptation than its fragmented nature might suggest, partly because U.S. overtures have been limited and partly because the Taliban still holds some legitimacy in certain areas. Even in the case of Iraq, the more secular

some level of lasting security and competent (less corrupt) governance. They will not resist the Taliban or help the security forces as long as the insurgency appears to hold the upper hand and the government remains weak at best and abusive at worst.

Seizing the initiative from the Taliban and reestablishing the political order's legitimacy require securing the population and



developing a sophisticated, nuanced understanding of local communities, particularly the conflicts within them that insurgents can exploit to their own ends. Simply targeting militant leaders and foot soldiers and then leaving will not solve the problem because local populations know the insurgents will just go underground to avoid U.S. strikes and then reemerge to take vengeance on those who collaborate with the government once the security forces move on. Security forces that just pass through on sweeps and patrols will not gain the local knowledge necessary to understand the particular drivers of the insurgency within the community or the ability to identify when that community is being infiltrated by outside militants. Meanwhile, attempts to reassert central government authority without a clear grasp of local power structures and relationships will only engender more popular resentment against Kabul that plays directly into the hands of the Taliban.

In short, until the Afghan government, the United States, and ISAF get their approach to local communities right, those communities will not decisively turn against the insurgency. That means, of course, that

while developing anti-Taliban tribal militias and coopting nonextremist elements of the insurgency will be aspects of the new Afghanistan strategy, they cannot be its primary components.

Cultivating an Afghan state that is legitimate in the eyes of its citizens and works with rather than against local communities is therefore a necessary element of the American approach. A renewed U.S. commitment to funding grassroots development and governance must accompany the influx of troops. The Afghan government's National Solidarity Program (NSP) and programs like it deserve much more American support.<sup>26</sup> The NSP has become one of the government's most successful rural development projects. Under the program, the Afghan Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development disburses modest grants to village level elected organizations called Community Development Councils (CDCs), which in turn identify local priorities and implement small-scale development projects. A limited number of domestic and international nongovernmental organizations then assist the CDCs. Once a CDC agrees on a venture, \$200 per family (with a ceiling of \$60,000 per village) is distributed for project

execution. Afghans contribute 10 percent of project costs through cash, labor, or other means.

Under this model, the NSP has built schools for thousands of children, constructed village water pumps that have saved many hours of labor, and assembled irrigation networks that have enabled far higher agricultural yields. More than 12,000 village development councils have been elected, more than 19,000 project plans have been approved, and nearly half of these projects have been completed. The NSP is the only government program functioning in all 34 provinces, and it has affected nearly two-thirds of Afghanistan's rural population. Moreover, women—whose inclusion is a mandatory component of the program—constitute 35 percent of the elected CDC representatives.

The NSP provides one example of how to establish positive links between the Afghan people and the government in Kabul, and there are undoubtedly other models that might offer success stories of their own. The point is that the insurgency and the international security threat it represents will not be defeated simply with armed force, drone strikes, and alliances of convenience with



Community development council member lays commemorative stone during groundbreaking ceremony for health clinic in Kapsi

DOD (courtesy of Khalid Shahzad)



certain insurgent factions, although all of those things will play a part. It will ultimately be defeated when the Afghan people see tangible evidence that a non-Taliban political order can offer them a modicum of security and governance.

### Learning from Mistakes

The United States played a role in creating the Taliban and al Qaeda: they grew and thrived amid the chaos that followed the Soviet withdrawal and subsequent international neglect. Saint Augustine taught that “the purpose of war is to build a better peace,” but America built nothing in Afghanistan after the Soviet withdrawal, and the Taliban filled the vacuum that U.S. inaction allowed. Afghanistan became the viper’s nest in which al Qaeda grew, and the United States paid a price for its strategic neglect of the region.

After the success of a lightning campaign that overthrew the Taliban and chased al Qaeda out of Afghanistan, American policy toward the country returned to benign neglect. Too few soldiers to secure the population, too little development assistance poorly coordinated, and too little attention to the Pakistan side of the Durand Line allowed the Taliban to regroup, gain strength, and return to threaten the young Afghan government that we created but did not adequately support, particularly in the development of an Afghan army large enough to secure itself from its (and our) enemies. Over time, the realization grew that the Taliban had stolen a march on us.

The objectives of American policy in Afghanistan are clear, although they have not been as well articulated as they should have. Over the next 5 years, we want to create an Afghanistan from which al Qaeda has been displaced and from which it continues to suffer disruptive attacks. Its government should be able, with minimal external help, to secure itself from internal threats such as the Taliban or the return of al Qaeda. It should have the support of its people, earned through the provision of a reasonable level of government services (particularly security) and reduced corruption, and be determined to never again provide a safe haven for terror.

The question now is not how to achieve our goals in Afghanistan and Pakistan; we know the answer to that question. It is whether America has the stomach to do what is necessary to achieve its objectives, or

whether we are again determined to abandon an “unimportant” region in the hope that this time, it won’t blow up in our face. **JFQ**

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### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, “Remarks of Senator Obama: The War We Need to Win,” August 1, 2007, available at <[www.barackobama.com/2007/08/01/remarks\\_of\\_senator\\_obama\\_the\\_w\\_1.php](http://www.barackobama.com/2007/08/01/remarks_of_senator_obama_the_w_1.php)>; “Remarks of Senator Barack Obama: Response to the State of the Union,” January 28, 2008, available at <[www.barackobama.com/2008/01/28/remarks\\_of\\_senator\\_barack\\_obam\\_43.php](http://www.barackobama.com/2008/01/28/remarks_of_senator_barack_obam_43.php)>; “Remarks of Senator Barack Obama: A New Strategy for a New World,” July 15, 2008, available at <[www.barackobama.com/2008/07/15/remarks\\_of\\_senator\\_barack\\_obam\\_96.php](http://www.barackobama.com/2008/07/15/remarks_of_senator_barack_obam_96.php)>.

<sup>2</sup> The White House, “Remarks by the President on a New Strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan,” March 27, 2009, available at <[www.whitehouse.gov/the\\_press\\_office/Remarks-by-the-President-on-a-New-Strategy-for-Afghanistan-and-Pakistan/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-by-the-President-on-a-New-Strategy-for-Afghanistan-and-Pakistan/)>.

<sup>3</sup> Elisabeth Bumiller and Thom Shanker, “Commander’s Ouster Is Tied to Shift in Afghan War,” *The New York Times*, May 12, 2009; Rajiv Chandrasekaran, “Pentagon Worries Led to Command Change,” *The Washington Post*, August 17, 2009.

<sup>4</sup> Milton Bearden, “Obama’s War,” *Foreign Affairs* (online only), April 9, 2009, available at <[www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/64925/milton-bearden/obamas-war](http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/64925/milton-bearden/obamas-war)>.

<sup>5</sup> See, most notably, Andrew J. Bacevich, “The War We Can’t Win: Afghanistan and the Limits of American Power,” *Commonweal*, August 14, 2009, available at <[www.commonwealmagazine.org/article.php3?id\\_article=2609](http://www.commonwealmagazine.org/article.php3?id_article=2609)>. See also Steven Simon, “Can the Right War Be Won?” *Foreign Affairs* 88, no. 4 (July–August 2009).

<sup>6</sup> John Barry and Evan Thomas, “Obama’s Vietnam,” *Newsweek*, February 9, 2009.

<sup>7</sup> Jennifer Agiesta and Jon Cohen, “Public Opinion in U.S. Turns Against the War,” *The Washington Post*, August 20, 2009.

<sup>8</sup> This section draws upon Nathaniel C. Fick et al., “Tell Me Why We’re There? Enduring Interests in Afghanistan (and Pakistan),” Center for a New American Security Policy Brief, January 22, 2009; and John A. Nagl, “Surge in Afghanistan Can Work, with Right Resources, Enough Time,” *U.S. News & World Report*, February 23, 2009.

<sup>9</sup> Ann Scott Tyson, “In Helmand, Caught between U.S., Taliban; ‘Skittish’ Afghans Wary of Both Sides,” *The Washington Post*, August 15, 2009.

<sup>10</sup> See Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil, and Fundamentalism in Central Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001); and Ahmed Rashid, *Jihad: The Rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia* (New York: Penguin Books, 2003).

<sup>11</sup> See David Sanger, “Obama’s Worst Pakistan Nightmare,” *New York Times Magazine*, January 11, 2009.

<sup>12</sup> See Haider Ali Hussein Mullick, “Lions and Jackals: Pakistan’s Emerging Counterinsurgency Strategy,” *Foreign Affairs* (online only), July 15, 2009, available at <[www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/65191/haider-ali-hussein-mullick/lions-and-jackals](http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/65191/haider-ali-hussein-mullick/lions-and-jackals)>.

<sup>13</sup> See, for example, Hussain Haqqani, *Pakistan: Between Mosque and Military* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2005), 282–299.

<sup>14</sup> See Antonio Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop: The Neo-Taliban Insurgency in Afghanistan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 15–21.

<sup>15</sup> Greg Miller, “U.S. Missile Strikes Said to Take Heavy Toll on Al Qaeda,” *The Los Angeles Times*, March 22, 2009.

<sup>16</sup> See Rajiv Chandrasekaran, “A Fight for Ordinary Peace,” *The Washington Post*, July 11, 2009.

<sup>17</sup> Thomas H. Johnson and M. Chris Mason, “Understanding the Taliban and Insurgency in Afghanistan,” *Orbis* 51, no. 1 (Winter 2007), 88.

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, Miles Amore, “U.S. Air Strikes in Afghanistan ‘Kill Dozens of Women and Children,’” *Telegraph* (United Kingdom), May 6, 2009; Abdul Waheed Wafa and John F. Burns, “U.S. Airstrike Reported to Hit Afghan Wedding,” *The New York Times*, November 5, 2008.

<sup>19</sup> The White House, “White Paper of the Inter-agency Policy Group’s Report on U.S. Strategy toward Afghanistan and Pakistan,” March 27, 2009, 3.

<sup>20</sup> See Daniel Helmer, “Twelve Urgent Steps for the Advisor Mission in Afghanistan,” *Military Review* (July–August 2009), 73–81.

<sup>21</sup> The White House, “Remarks.”

<sup>22</sup> See Ganesh Sitaraman, “The Land of 10,000 Wars,” *The New York Times*, August 16, 2009.

<sup>23</sup> Giustozzi, 42–43.

<sup>24</sup> See Fontini Christia and Michael Semple, “Flipping the Taliban,” *Foreign Affairs* 88, no. 4 (July–August 2009).

<sup>25</sup> See John A. McCarty, “The Anbar Awakening: An Alliance of Incentives,” *The Washington Quarterly* 32, no. 1 (January 2009), 43–59; David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 158–176.

<sup>26</sup> This discussion of the National Solidarity Program draws upon John A. Nagl, Andrew Exum, and Ahmed A. Humayun, “A Pathway to Success in Afghanistan: The National Solidarity Program,” Center for a New American Security Policy Brief, March 16, 2009.

# Unified Effort Key to Special Operations and Irregular Warfare in Afghanistan

By CHRISTOPHER J. LAMB *and* MARTIN CINNAMOND

**T**he U.S. Government strategy for success in Afghanistan unveiled by President Barack Obama on March 27, 2009, emphasized a classic population-centric counterinsurgency approach. The novelty of this approach can be debated, but clearly the emphasis has shifted under the Obama administration. Securing the population and reducing civilian casualties are now the focus of attention. This approach should be more popular with North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Allies, who prefer stabilization operations to offensive operations against insurgents, and with the Afghan government, which has vocally objected to operations that produce

inadvertent civilian casualties. The possibility of greater support from Allies and the Afghan government increases the likelihood that the strategy can be executed with better unity of effort. The architects of the new strategy recognize that it puts a premium on better collaboration and that they have limited time for demonstrating progress. In these circumstances, taking every reasonable step to strengthen unity of effort is necessary.

The Obama administration already has taken important steps to improve unified effort among the diverse actors working to promote stability and defeat the Taliban insurgency. Even so, more needs to be done. To make the case for this assertion, we first

Secretary Gates and ADM Mullen brief press on continuing emphasis to prevent civilian casualties in war zones



DOD (Robert D. Ward)

review what has been done to improve unity of effort. Next, we summarize generally why unified effort is so important and yet so difficult to achieve. We illustrate those points by examining the case of special operations in Afghanistan and the extent to which they support the indirect approach championed by General Stanley McChrystal, commander of U.S. and NATO forces there.<sup>1</sup> Because they benefit from an authoritative chain of command and a common culture that values unity of command, military operations should be easier to execute with unified effort than more complex politico-military endeavors. However, the record to date demonstrates that special operations serve conflicting objectives in Afghanistan. We offer an explanation for this incongruity to underscore just how difficult unity of effort is to achieve, and to establish some baseline requirements for remedial action. We then make recommendations designed to improve unity of effort in military operations, civil-military cooperation, and among international and Afghan partners.

### New Strategy and Leadership Team

The new strategy had to address the relative priority of dislodging al Qaeda from the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region versus pursuing broader counterinsurgency objectives in Afghanistan.<sup>2</sup> The tension between the two objectives was a point of contention as the strategy was being prepared and remains one today as the strategy is being reassessed. Some senior leaders focus on attacking al Qaeda, while others favor defeating the Taliban as a means of denying al Qaeda its sanctuary over the long term.<sup>3</sup> When President Obama unveiled the strategy, the stated goal was “to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al Qaeda in Pakistan and Afghanistan,” as well as “prevent [al Qaeda’s] return to either country in the future.” The focus on al Qaeda may be interpreted as giving priority to counterterrorism, but the goal of denying al Qaeda a future sanctuary from which to operate justified a wider counterinsurgency effort to defeat the Taliban in both Afghanistan and Pakistan.<sup>4</sup>

The commitment to pursue counterinsurgency as an indirect means of isolating and weakening al Qaeda was not open ended. Thus, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates’ description of Afghanistan in 2008 as “the longest campaign of the long war” gave way to an informal deadline of 1 year in which

measurable progress needs to be demonstrated.<sup>5</sup> As Secretary Gates noted, “It’s my view—and, I think, the President’s—that if we can show we are making progress, if we’re headed in the right direction, then the American people and the Congress will sustain this effort. But if in a year or so, it appears that we are in a stalemate and we’re taking even more casualties, then patience will wear thin pretty soon.”<sup>6</sup> Secretary Gates’ assessment now appears optimistic since the administration is currently debating whether there is sufficient political support for providing the resources required by the strategy.

Thus, military commanders now understand that “the trend lines better start swinging in our direction or we’re going to lose the international community and we’re going to lose Washington.”<sup>7</sup> With the clock ticking, senior leaders such as General David Petraeus, commander of U.S. Central Command, emphasize that success in implementing the new strategy will require unprecedented unity of effort: “Addressing the challenges and threats . . . requires a comprehensive, whole of government approach that fully integrates our military and non-military efforts and those of our allies and partners. This approach puts a premium on unity of effort at all levels and with all participants.”<sup>8</sup>

### *senior leaders emphasize that success in implementing the new strategy will require unprecedented unity of effort*

Better unified effort in turn requires clear strategic guidance, which senior military leaders provided when they insisted that the population-centric counterinsurgency approach take precedence over counterterrorism operations. General McChrystal is unequivocal on this point: “If we win this effort it will be because we protected the population. . . . Going after the high-value enemy targets will just be a supporting effort to do that.”<sup>9</sup> General Petraeus similarly affirms that counterinsurgency is the priority, noting that whether Allied forces are involved in counterterrorism or counterinsurgency, “their actions and operations must adhere to basic counter-insurgency principles.” Ambassador to Afghanistan Karl Eikenberry also stresses that the new strategy “depends upon protecting the Afghan people” and requires

integrating civilian and military strategies and capabilities.<sup>10</sup>

Thus, absent a major change in strategy, those executing operations in Afghanistan will follow classic counterinsurgency doctrine, which views the population as the key center of gravity. The new approach emphasizes the need to *shape, clear, hold, and build*: shape the environment through intelligence and information operations, clear areas affected by insurgent presence, hold the areas cleared to ensure that insurgents will not reassert their authority, and build national and local institutions that improve living standards.<sup>11</sup> Assuming the strategy is reapproved and resources are provided by Congress, the key to success will be getting all the disparate components of the international effort in Afghanistan to work well together in implementing the strategy. This will not be easy.

As a former senior U.S. military commander noted in early 2009, unity of effort is the most serious problem in Afghanistan today: “It’s not the Taliban. It’s not governance. It’s not security. It’s the utter failure in the unity of effort department.”<sup>12</sup> Getting the multiple international organizations, dozens of nations, numerous development organizations, myriad U.S. departments and agencies, and even diverse U.S. military units to pull in the same direction is a monumental challenge.

One common recommendation for improving unity of effort is to select compatible personalities for key leadership positions. Another way is to add command structures dedicated to coordination activities. Both these expedients were proposed at the April 3, 2009, NATO summit, and were subsequently approved. Secretary Gates suggested that the four-star commander of NATO’s International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) focus on strategy and high-level “cooperation between civil and military efforts.” Among other key issues, the new command could help improve the disjointed international aid effort and training of Afghan national security forces.<sup>13</sup> Secretary Gates proposed, and

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NATO accepted, a new subordinate three-star command to oversee the day-to-day battle to ensure that all the diverse U.S. (and Allied) forces in Afghanistan are in synch. He introduced NATO leaders to his handpicked choices for the new commands: General McChrystal and Lieutenant General David M. Rodriguez, USA, respectively. McChrystal and Rodriguez are counterinsurgency experts with close ties to Secretary Gates, and have a personal friendship spanning several decades. General McChrystal, perhaps best known for leading the special operations forces<sup>14</sup> (SOF) special mission units that tracked down Saddam Hussein and Abu Musab al-Zarqawi in Iraq, more recently led a Pentagon task force that reviewed strategy alternatives in Afghanistan. General Rodriguez was selected

important positions in the Pentagon, which should ensure good communication between the field and headquarters in Washington.

Secretary Gates gave General McChrystal 60 days to tour Afghanistan, size up the situation, and make a detailed report on how best to implement the new strategy and layered commands. McChrystal's August 30 report emphasized the importance of unified effort and identified additional ways to improve it. To assess whether the urgent, well-conceived, and collectively unprecedented reorganization of command structures and leadership would ensure unity of effort, it is first necessary to understand why collaboration in pursuit of common objectives is such a challenge in irregular warfare in general and in Afghanistan specifically.

of operations and the challenge for unified effort. Some examples illustrate this point.

One strategy objective is to turn over military operations to Afghan forces rapidly, but if done too quickly, they may not have the capacity to respond effectively to the insurgency. Conversely, delaying handover for too long and relying on international forces (meaning all non-Afghan forces in Operation *Enduring Freedom* [OEF] and ISAF) risk alienating a population increasingly critical of those forces. Another difficult implementation issue is promoting good governance, not only in Kabul but also in the provinces. The United States wants to strengthen the legitimacy of the central government and reinforce Afghan national identity by improving the government's capacity to deliver basic services



GEN McChrystal and LTG Rodriguez talk with Deputy Secretary of Defense William J. Lynn III at ISAF Headquarters in Kabul

U.S. Air Force (Jerry Morrison)

*the situation-dependent nature of counterinsurgency strategy implementation increases the complexity of operations and the challenge for unified effort*

to the population. Yet Kabul's ability to extend its authority and provide services across the country is weak, and Afghans often attach greater significance to local relationships. Thus, support for the central government must be balanced with support for good local governance without alienating Kabul and the local populace from one another.

Many other difficult tradeoffs can be identified: the timing and extent of political reconciliation with insurgents, how boldly to attack sanctuaries in Pakistan, how much intelligence to share and with whom, which areas of the country should receive the main focus with a limited number of troops, and so forth. Such strategy implementation issues must be resolved in complex and shifting circumstances—including rapid adaptation by the enemy—that vary greatly from one province to another. With so many issues to coordinate, the entire effort can easily lose coherence. When counterinsurgency elements work at cross-purposes, political and moral capital is squandered. The population is likely to conclude the government and its allies are incompetent, untrustworthy, or both. Since the center of gravity is the support of the population, insufficient unity of purpose and effort in a fast-moving situation

by Secretary Gates as his personal military assistant after Rodriguez's previous tour in Afghanistan was widely acknowledged as a model for successful counterinsurgency efforts.<sup>15</sup>

In another move calculated to improve unity of effort, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Michael Mullen invited General McChrystal to handpick his subordinates, and McChrystal chose several flag officers from the Pentagon. In addition, McChrystal is having Brigadier General Scott Miller, USA (a SOF veteran), assemble "a corps of 400 officers and soldiers who will rotate between the United States and Afghanistan for a minimum of three years" to provide deep expertise and continuity. When not serving in Afghanistan, officers will fill

### Unity of Effort in Irregular Warfare

Arguments about the need for a whole-of-government approach to counterinsurgency (one form of irregular warfare) are commonplace, yet the need is rarely satisfied for several reasons. First, counterinsurgency is a multidimensional enterprise that requires the integration of diplomatic, informational, military, economic, and other elements of power. Thus, a nation's multiple national security bureaucracies must work well together to succeed in counterinsurgency. Second, counterinsurgency strategy must be implemented flexibly as evolving circumstances dictate rather than be determined a priori by the strategy. The situation-dependent nature of counterinsurgency strategy implementation substantially increases the complexity

is often the critical shortcoming in a counterinsurgency campaign.

The third obstacle to unified effort is the sheer number and competing objectives of players and activities involved. Currently, over 40 countries, three major international organizations (United Nations [UN], European Union, and NATO), and scores of other agencies and nongovernmental organizations are working in Afghanistan. Moreover, these diverse actors are more or less aligned in support of one of two different missions with competing priorities that have evolved over time: NATO's ISAF mission, and the U.S.-led OEF mission. ISAF has evolved from a small security force concentrated in Kabul to a country-wide "stabilization" effort driven by classic population-centric counterinsurgency objectives, including "the extension of government authority across Afghanistan; the development of the Afghan Government structures necessary to maintain security across the country without the assistance of international forces . . . and the promotion by the Afghan Government of democracy, human rights and the rule of law."<sup>16</sup>

However, a core strategic objective of the OEF mission is the disruption of terrorist activity by killing or capturing al Qaeda leaders.<sup>17</sup> OEF operations have expanded to support counterinsurgency by targeting Taliban insurgent leaders.<sup>18</sup> Each mission involves organizations from many nations and the international community, and each mission can be pursued with more or less emphasis on cooperation with the Afghan forces and populace. In addition, the diverse military forces operating in Afghanistan include General Purpose (or conventional) Forces and special operations forces that do not always cooperate well.

For all these reasons, unity of effort is a critical but difficult challenge in irregular warfare, especially in Afghanistan. Using special operations as a cardinal example, we can illustrate that unified effort is difficult to achieve even when all the organizations pursuing an objective share a common chain of command and consider unified effort a core organizational value.

### SOF in Afghanistan

Special operations forces typically are trained specifically for counterterrorism and counterinsurgency and often approach those missions with different tactics than those employed by conventional forces. Even within

the SOF community, units may approach counterterrorism and counterinsurgency missions differently for historical and cultural reasons. Thus, SOF are in the middle of the debate over the relative priority of counterterrorism against al Qaeda and counterinsurgency against the Taliban.

Theoretically, the two missions can complement one another. Counterterrorist kill/capture operations can disrupt insurgent operations, produce intelligence on the insurgency, and buy time for other population-centric counterinsurgency efforts to bear fruit. Similarly, counterinsurgency efforts can generate good intelligence for targeting terrorists and alienate them from sympathizers who otherwise would provide support for their activities. In practice, however,

tance of targeting individual enemies relative to the risk of incurring civilian casualties and damaging relationships with local communities; and the importance of working with Afghan authorities and forces relative to the risk that doing so will compromise efforts to target enemy leaders. Only a clear strategy and unified effort can minimize the tension between these two missions. Hy Rothstein provides a compelling account of how the original focus on killing terrorist leaders and destroying Taliban forces in 2002 needed to shift to counterinsurgency when the Taliban

*in practice, counterterrorism and counterinsurgency missions tend to clash*

**Afghan National Police indicate possible enemy routes to U.S. Marines in Helmand Province during counterinsurgency operations**



U.S. Marine Corps (Pete Thibodeau)

counterterrorism and counterinsurgency missions tend to clash. With their emphasis on nighttime raids, counterterrorist operations can produce inadvertent civilian casualties that anger the population and complicate attempts by counterinsurgents to win popular support. Resentment runs even higher when counterterrorist operations are carried out by foreign forces that appear insensitive to local communities. Counterinsurgents working with Afghan authorities and forces may compromise a counterterrorist operation if the Afghan counterparts warn the enemy, or if those operations are carried out less skillfully than would be the case if they were conducted by international forces.

The tension between the two missions is thus a question of priorities: the impor-

adopted insurgent tactics.<sup>19</sup> Instead, conventional forces and headquarters pushed aside Army Special Forces that had developed close working relationships with their Afghan counterparts. Unilateral search operations by conventional forces caused increasing resentment, particularly in Pashtun communities. Eventually, new U.S. leadership put the effort back on track:

*Between late 2003 and early 2005, we were moving on the right path in Afghanistan. Under Ambassador [Zalmay] Khalilzad and Lieutenant General David Barno, the United States completely overhauled its strategy for Afghanistan. We increased the number of American forces in the country, expanded nonmilitary assistance to the Afghan government and—most*

importantly—abandoned a counterterrorism-based strategy that emphasized seeking out and attacking the enemy, in favor of one that emphasized counterinsurgency and the protection of the population. All of this was overseen by an integrated civil-military command structure, in which the Ambassador and the coalition commander worked in the same building, from adjoining offices. The result was that, by late 2004, governance and reconstruction were improving. . . . Entrenched warlords were being nudged out of power. . . . [N]ational elections were conducted successfully [and] the Taliban showed signs of internal dissention and splintering. Rather than building on these gains, however, we squandered them. Beginning in 2005, our integrated civil-military command structure was disassembled and replaced by a balkanized and dysfunctional arrangement. The integrated counterinsurgency strategy was replaced by a patchwork of different strategies, depending on the location and on which country's troops were doing the fighting.<sup>20</sup>

U.S. Government policy statements at the time emphasized counterinsurgency and close cooperation with allies. However, the Embassy turned its attention to other matters, and General Karl Eikenberry, USA, who succeeded General Barno, returned the military emphasis to kill/capture operations. The result was an increasing number of incidents producing civilian casualties, which led to a steep decline in popular support.<sup>21</sup> Civilian casualties are not the only factor alienating the Afghan population,<sup>22</sup> but they are the main one.

This historical overview suggests that it will not be easy to ensure that operations give priority to protecting the population, even though the new strategy requires it. There are several reasons why this is true. The main one is the reliance on air support to compensate for the inadequate number of U.S., Allied, and properly trained Afghan forces. Airstrikes that result in major civilian casualties can occur in support of conventional forces. However, over the past several years, 80 percent of the major civilian casualty incidents where ground forces could be identified involved U.S. SOF (see table 1). Operating in small teams, SOF often make contact with enemy forces, find themselves outnumbered, and require close air support that occasionally results in high civilian casualties.

Most Afghans' experience with bombing is "strongly correlated with negative attitudes

towards the U.S., towards the Afghan central and provincial governments, and regarding Afghanistan's direction."<sup>23</sup> The Taliban are working hard to exploit this popular resentment in order to counter the tactical advantage that international forces enjoy.

Insurgents quickly capitalize on the issue of civilian casualties with a more agile and dynamic communications capacity than the international military forces. They sometimes succeed in pressuring local officials to inflate estimates of civilian casualties. However, it

**Table 1. Major (>10) Civilian Casualty Incidents, 2006–2009**

Date	Location	Estimated Civilian Fatalities*	Military Forces/Type of Incident
June 14, 2009	Kirjan District, Dai Kundi Province	NA/13	International forces†/targeted airstrike
May 4, 2009	Bala Boluk, Farah Province	26/86	U.S. special operations forces (SOF)/troops in contact (TIC)**
February 17, 2009	Gozara District, Herat Province	13/13	U.S. forces†/unspecified airstrike
November 5, 2008	Shah Wali Kot District, Kandahar Province	37/37	Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) forces† and Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF)/TIC
August 21–22, 2008	Shindand District, Herat Province	33/78–92	U.S. SOF/TIC**
August 9, 2008	Tagub District, Kapisa Province	NA/11–12	North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) airstrike/targeted
June 6, 2008	Dela Bala District, Nangarhar Province	NA/47	OEF airstrike†
May 8, 2008	Sangin District, Helmand Province	NA/21–80	U.S. SOF/TIC**
January 23, 2008	Ghazni Province	11/11	U.S. SOF/TIC**
June 26–27, 2007	Greshk District, Helmand Province	12/45–65	U.S. forces† and ANSF/TIC
June 22, 2007	Greshk District, Helmand Province	NA/25	NATO forces†/TIC
May 8, 2007	Sangin District, Helmand Province	NA/21	U.S. SOF/TIC**
May 1, 2007	Maruf District, Kandahar Province	NA/13	U.S. forces†/TIC
April 29, 2007	Shindand District, Herat Province	NA/42	U.S. SOF/TIC**
March 4, 2007	Jalalabad District, Nangarhar Province	16/16	U.S. SOF/road convoy**
November 1, 2006	Kandahar Province	NA/31	U.S. SOF/TIC**
October 26, 2006	Panjwayi District, Kandahar Province	12/40	NATO forces†/TIC
October 18, 2006	Greshk District, Kandahar Province	NA/13	NATO forces†/TIC
May 21, 2006	Panjwayi District, Kandahar Province	17/34	U.S. forces†/TIC

Sources: Air Strike Tracker Web site (<http://ourbombs.com/striкетracker>); United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA) Mid Year Bulletin on Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict (2009); UNAMA Annual Report on Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict (2008); and Human Rights Watch "Troops in Contact" Airstrikes and Civilian Deaths in Afghanistan (2008), which include details of specific incidents.

\* Casualty figures are often disputed. The first figure is the international military forces estimate; the second figure is either an Afghanistan government or a public media estimate. NA: not available.

\*\* Incidents involving SOF troops.

† Indicates military forces involved or type of incident is disputed.



is also evident that international military estimates of civilian casualties can err. Afghan public resentment is compounded when international military forces resort to blanket statements denying or contesting the number of civilian casualties without an adequate investigation. The emergence of video footage showing dead civilians prompted a review of initial findings that just seven civilians were killed during August 2008 airstrikes in Shin-dand District, Herat Province. The investigation determined that at least 33 civilians were killed during the operation.<sup>24</sup>

Although they receive less media attention, civilian casualties incurred during house raids—the vast majority conducted by SOF—also cause resentment among Afghans (see table 2). Many such operations produce benefits never made public for security reasons. Yet their cumulative political effect may turn tactical successes into a strategic failure, a point repeatedly highlighted by Afghan authorities and increasingly by U.S. military officials as well. For example, in December 2006, in the aftermath of a SOF operation in Khost Province, the U.S. military claimed four suspected terrorists had been killed. However, then-Governor Arsala Jamal, with whom the U.S. military had developed a strong working relationship, contested the statement, stating that the raid mistakenly targeted a pro-government village. Four of the five brothers living in the compound worked for the government, and Jamal asserted there was “little reason to suspect them of being anti-government elements.”<sup>25</sup> In March 2008, in response to two SOF operations that led to the deaths of several Afghan women and children, Jamal complained to Richard Holbrooke that “this undermines everything we are trying to do here.”<sup>26</sup> On a subsequent visit to the White House in April 2008, he argued to President George W. Bush that “special operations is the biggest, biggest challenge and [they have a] negative impact on the people’s mind in regard to coalition forces. There is no single bigger issue than that.”<sup>27</sup> President Hamid Karzai and Afghan Defense Minister Abdul Rahim Wardak also have called for an end to uncoordinated SOF raids.

Karzai has long been extremely critical of airstrikes and house raids. In July 2002, following an American airstrike by a SOF AC-130 that killed scores of people celebrating a wedding, Karzai stressed the importance of procedures to prevent future

**Table 2. Major (>5) Civilian Casualty Incidents (House Raids), 2006–2009**

Date	Location	Estimated Civilians Killed*	Military Forces
April 9, 2009	Gurbuz District, Khost Province	4/5	U.S. special operations forces (SOF)**
March 22, 2009	Kunduz Province	NA/5	U.S. forces†
March 13, 2009	Charkh District, Logar Province	NA/5	U.S. and Afghan SOF**
March 6, 2009	Sabari District, Khost Province	NA/4	U.S. forces†; Afghan forces present†
February 12, 2009	Uruzgan Province	5/3	North Atlantic Treaty Organization Australian forces†
January 23, 2009	Laghman Province	NA/16	U.S. SOF**
January 19, 2009	Kapisa Province	NA/14	U.S. SOF**
January 7, 2009	Laghman Province	NA/13	U.S. SOF**
September 1, 2008	Kabul Province	NA/4	International and Afghan forces†
April 28, 2007(?)	Nangarhar Province	2/5	U.S. forces†
December 12, 2006	Mandozai District, Khost Province	5/5	U.S. SOF**

\* In some of these cases, the Department of Defense asserts that combatants and not civilians were killed. The first figure is the international military forces estimate; the second figure is either an Afghanistan government or a public media estimate. NA: not available.

\*\* Incidents involving SOF troops.

† Indicates military forces involved or type of incident is disputed.

**Royal Marine Commandos participate in stabilization and security operation with Afghan National Security Force and ISAF troops, Helmand Province**



tragedies. He has repeatedly called for an end to airstrikes and to international forces entering Afghan homes without permission from Afghan authorities, and his rhetoric has escalated over the years. He has lamented the inability to stop “the coalition from killing our children” and accused foreign forces of “extreme” and “disproportionate” use of force. In September 2008, Karzai protested the continued killing of Afghan civilians before the UN General Assembly. Shortly thereafter, he announced: “This is my first demand of the new president of the United States—to put an end to civilian casualties.” More recently, Karzai has campaigned on the promise of bringing international military forces under control.

Karzai’s stridency may be calculated to garner popular support, but it also reflects the public mood. An increasing number of mass demonstrations against civilian casualties testify to serious public discontent, and evidence suggests civilian casualties are one

civilians.<sup>29</sup> General Barno has summarized the dilemma posed by SOF operations that alienate Afghans:

*the tolerance of the Afghan population for foreign military forces [can be described as] a bag of capital that has to be spent very slowly . . . every time we kick down doors in the middle of the night, every time we create some offense to Afghan cultural sensibilities, we spend that bag of capital—that toleration for foreign forces—more and more quickly. And we’ve been spending that bag of capital at an extraordinarily fearsome rate, here, in the last two years, in part because of civilian casualties and in part because of, simply, the tactics that we’ve been using.*<sup>30</sup>

General McChrystal’s recent report on the situation in Afghanistan also concluded that “civilian casualties and collateral damage to homes and property . . . have severely damaged ISAF’s legitimacy in the eyes of the

and ratings of NATO/ISAF forces were just as bad. Civilian casualties are a key irritant: “77% of Afghans call such strikes unacceptable, saying the risk to civilians outweighs the value of these raids in fighting the Taliban.” Ominously, 25 percent of poll respondents now say attacks on U.S. or NATO/ISAF forces can be justified—twice the level in 2006.<sup>31</sup> Even though international forces are aware of these trends and want to avoid civilian casualties, the number of civilian casualties produced by coalition operations continued to climb throughout 2008, increasing somewhere between 39 and 54 percent.<sup>32</sup>

Several steps were taken to address the civilian casualty issue. First, in a memorandum to Admiral Mullen in October 2008, Secretary Gates directed a change in communications posture from “investigate first, make amends later” to “make amends first, investigate later.”<sup>33</sup> The new approach includes refraining from making initial statements contesting casualty estimates, responding more quickly to allegations, conducting joint investigations with Afghan authorities, and apologizing publicly where civilian casualties are confirmed as a result of international military operations.<sup>34</sup>

Second, in late 2008, General David McKiernan, USA, former commander of U.S. and ISAF forces, directed that all searches and house raids should be led by Afghan security forces except when there was a “clear and identified danger” coming from a building. McKiernan’s directive did not apply to SOF special mission units, and it is unclear whether it applied to other SOF. Nevertheless, SOF leaders independently suspended special mission unit activities for 2 weeks in February 2009 to review procedures to reduce civilian casualties. The problem did not disappear, however. In June 2009, in a rare departure from diplomatic protocol, Kai Eide, the Norwegian head of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, publicly declared an “urgent need to review” SOF activities in Afghanistan, asserting the political costs of SOF raids were “disproportionate to the military gains.”<sup>35</sup>

Shortly thereafter, General McChrystal issued a tactical directive that curtails the use of airstrikes to “very limited situations” where forces are in imminent danger. The directive emphasizes that “Commanders must weigh the gain of using [close air support] against the cost of civilian casualties, which in the long run make mission success more difficult and turn the Afghan people against us.”<sup>36</sup> This

*Karzai has lamented the inability to stop “the coalition from killing our children” and accused foreign forces of “extreme” and “disproportionate” use of force*

reason some Afghans take up arms against international military forces.<sup>28</sup> In Herat Province in April 2007, villagers reportedly took up arms against SOF in response to a series of raids that resulted in the deaths of several

Afghan people.” This contention is supported by early 2009 polls, which indicate that the number of Afghans who say the United States has performed well in Afghanistan was cut in half, from 68 percent in 2005 to 32 percent—



Kai Eide, special representative of the Secretary-General and head of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, addresses Security Council on situation in Afghanistan

UN (Paulo Figueiras)



approach has not been without criticism, but General McChrystal has said that he “cannot overstate” his support for operating in ways that limit civilian casualties.<sup>37</sup> The directive is also consistent with the approach some NATO military forces already use in Afghanistan, which bodes well for better unified effort within the Alliance.

McChrystal’s directive and his priorities reflect the indirect approach to SOF operations historically embraced by Army Special Forces, one that gives priority to working by, through, and with indigenous forces and populations.<sup>38</sup> This means the relationship with local forces and population is determined to be more important than the effects that U.S. forces can achieve against targets unilaterally. For example, in 2001 a Special Forces captain routinely deferred to the judgment of the Afghan leader he worked with, who happened to be Hamid Karzai, the current president of Afghanistan: “Hamid was very careful. If there was any doubt, we wouldn’t bother killing it. I could afford to let a few guys go if I wasn’t sure. Hurting the populace hurt our own cause.”<sup>39</sup>

*McChrystal’s directive gives priority to working by, through, and with indigenous forces and populations*

The spirit and challenge of implementing the indirect approach was captured recently by an Army Special Forces colonel who answered his own rhetorical question about which of the many overlapping forces in Afghanistan own any given battle space: “The correct answer is the Afghans own the battle space and we are there in support of them. But [the] mentality that we own the battle space in a sovereign country . . . can cause us to operate in ways that are counterproductive.”<sup>40</sup>

To reiterate, the new population-centric counterinsurgency strategy requires the indirect approach traditionally championed by Army Special Forces. This means it is necessary to build the capacity of indigenous forces that know the populace better, even for kill/capture operations. However, U.S. forces operating under the OEF mandate have focused for years on the direct approach to special operations, targeting individual enemy leaders unilaterally. This is true not only for SOF special mission units that specialize in

Soldier assesses security of village



U.S. Air Force (Sarah R. Webb)



direct action, but also increasingly for Army Special Forces, who now often accord equal or higher priority to unilateral kill/capture operations than the indirect approach.<sup>41</sup> Ironically, whereas in 2002 conventional forces such as the 82<sup>d</sup> Airborne conducted counterinsurgency sweeps that damaged relationships carefully cultivated by Army Special Forces, today the reverse is true. It is now common for SOF kill/capture operations to disrupt relationships with local Afghans cultivated by conventional force commanders who, after 8 years of learning in multiple theaters, are increasingly attentive to counterinsurgency principles.

### Disunity in Command and Control

There is broad agreement among the U.S. national security community, the leadership of U.S. Special Operations Command, and many individual SOF personnel that the indirect approach to counterinsurgency should take precedence over kill/capture operations. However, the opposite has occurred. Understanding why is important if unity of effort is to be improved. One reason for the undue emphasis on direct action is that resources have been disproportionately allocated to targeting insurgent and terrorist leaders rather than to indirect SOF activities in support of counterinsurgency. An explanation for the discrepancy between these operations and national policy was the overlapping and ad hoc command and control arrangements extant in Afghanistan to date.<sup>42</sup>

In OEF, civilian casualties resulting from operations may not be viewed as detrimental to the core mission of destroying terrorist organizations. However, civilian casualties are a critical issue for ISAF and its counterinsurgency mission. Most Afghans cannot distinguish between OEF and ISAF forces, and relationships painstakingly developed by ISAF are adversely affected when OEF kill/capture operations incur civilian casualties. Despite procedures to deconflict missions, lack of coordination between SOF and conventional forces is all too common. For example, in Nangarhar Province, the Army brigade commander who ostensibly controlled the battle space was aware of only 5 of the 30 operations conducted by a SOF unit in the area and had no knowledge of the one in which 17 civilians were killed and 50 injured.<sup>43</sup>

The problem is exacerbated by the fragmentation of SOF command and control.

Special mission units conducting direct action against terrorists do not report to the same chain of command as other SOF units. From early on in OEF, SOF operated under the command of multiple joint task forces. Task Force Sword, comprised of SOF special mission units, reported directly to the combatant commander while other SOF such as Task Forces Dagger and K-Bar reported to a Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force (CJSOTF) component commander.<sup>44</sup> A new SOF headquarters established in February 2009 layers a one-star command on top of the CJSOTF command. Ostensibly, the purpose is to enhance coordination between SOF units and conventional international military forces, but many in Army Special Forces worry that the net effect of another layered headquarters will be less, rather than more, unity of effort.<sup>45</sup> In any case, special mission unit forces remain outside this command structure, so the potential for working at cross-purposes remains. The same point holds for other U.S. organizations conducting kill/capture operations, such as the Drug Enforcement Administration. Their operations targeting individuals linked to drugs and the insurgency are increasing and need to be coordinated with military operations, so they will not undermine broader counterinsurgency objectives.<sup>46</sup>

The disproportionate emphasis on kill/capture operations also can be attributed to organizational culture and reward systems that reinforce the different objectives embraced by OEF and ISAF commands. Americans in general, the military in particular, and SOF especially are results-oriented. The capture or elimination of enemy leaders is a measurable, concrete, and energetic activity that is easily rewarded in individual and unit performance assessment. Making a contribution to population security is passive, difficult to measure, often ambiguous, and therefore less likely to be rewarded. Within the subgroups of SOF, there are different cultural propensities toward the indirect approach to operations, but in general, the military ethos provides all SOF commanders incentives to give priority to kill/capture operations instead of population security. This is particularly true now that SOF units have built up a remarkable capability to conduct such operations frequently and for sustained periods.<sup>47</sup>

Unity of effort is difficult in irregular warfare, even within the military and within

SOF organizations that embrace unity of command as a core value. Unified effort is even more difficult among U.S. departments and agencies, and between Allies that lack common organizational values and do not share a single, hierarchical chain of command. Disunity of command within the military, the U.S. Government, and among the United States and its Allies unfortunately is the norm, not the exception. Yet the architects of the current strategy recognize that it requires “clear unity of effort at all levels and with all participants.”<sup>48</sup> The administration therefore needs to take every possible step to improve unified purpose and effort.

### Observations and Recommendations

News reports suggest the Obama administration is evaluating the option of giving precedence to counterterrorism over counterinsurgency, and concentrating on relatively low-cost “surgical” strikes.<sup>49</sup> While this strategy alternative should be evaluated in detail, several observations based on the research offered here are in order. Effective kill/capture operations require political support and intelligence from indigenous

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*making a contribution to population security is passive, difficult to measure, often ambiguous, and therefore less likely to be rewarded*

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populations, which are more easily obtained when the population has confidence in the government and its forces. For this reason, General McChrystal’s indirect approach to irregular warfare<sup>50</sup> is more likely to produce effective kill/capture operations than attempts to strike surgically from afar. In addition, a strategy shift to give precedence to counterterrorism would not reduce the irregular warfare requirement for greater unity of effort, as kill/capture operations in Iraq demonstrated.<sup>51</sup> Whether the emphasis is on counterterrorism or counterinsurgency, the requirement for improved unity of effort is a constant in irregular warfare.

If the United States does decide to stick with its current strategy and provide the additional resources it requires, it can and should take some more steps to improve unity of effort, particularly with NATO allies. Eliminating the tension between OEF

forces targeting enemy leadership and ISAF forces pursuing stabilization and population security efforts is the single most important requirement for better unified effort. Toward this end, almost all of the U.S.-led OEF forces should be consolidated under the NATO ISAF mission, to include most SOF forces and all U.S. training command forces that support Afghan force development and employment programs.<sup>52</sup> Only SOF special mission units (and their support elements) would continue to operate under the OEF mandate. Taking this step would solidify the strategic direction from General Petraeus and General McChrystal that nests counterterrorism within a wider counterinsurgency mission.<sup>53</sup> More importantly, it would improve the legitimacy of the international effort in Afghanistan and reinforce European support for the endeavor. The NATO ISAF mission is operating under a UN Security Council resolution and has a broader base for popular support than the U.S.-led OEF mission. Finally, the consolidation under NATO would be consistent with the administration's focus on multilateral solutions.

Merging the two missions is more practicable than might be assumed. The missions

have been converging for several years. The OEF counterterrorism focus has broadened to include disrupting the Taliban insurgency by targeting its leadership. More importantly, since 2006 the OEF mission has included a nationbuilding component in the form of the Combined Security Transition Command–Afghanistan, which is charged with training and equipping Afghan National Security Forces. General McChrystal's report indicates the OEF training component command will be subsumed under ISAF, a positive step that is consistent with the decision announced at the April NATO summit to form an Alliance training mission and have it led by a single commander who also would control the U.S.-led Combined Security Transition Command–Afghanistan under OEF.<sup>54</sup>

At the same time, the ISAF mission has broadened as well. After NATO assumed command of ISAF in 2003, the UN Security Council authorized the extension of the ISAF security and stabilization mission to cover the entire country, an expansion that ISAF completed by late 2006. ISAF experienced more combat when it moved into the south and east

where insurgent activity is concentrated. In this environment, the practical distinctions between “security and stabilization” and classic population-centric counterinsurgency missions almost disappear. The terminology remains politically important because NATO does not refer to ISAF's mission as counterinsurgency but rather prefers the euphemism “the comprehensive approach” to emphasize the full range of civil-military activities required to stabilize Afghanistan. Some NATO forces will continue to avoid offensive operations against the Taliban, but the current strategy emphasis on population security and the indirect approach underscores the need to have Afghan forces take the lead in such operations anyway. Thus, this limitation is not a severe handicap.

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U.S. Army (Matthew Freire)

Soldiers secure detainee during joint operation with Afghan National Security Forces and ISAF in Khowst Province

Moreover, past NATO reluctance to consider merging elements of the two missions appears to be dissipating. Until 2005, Britain, France, and Germany all opposed merging ISAF and OEF because they believed the United States wanted to dump the mission on NATO and concentrate on Iraq, and because they thought the U.S. focus was on fighting the Taliban and al Qaeda rather than population security and nationbuilding. Since 2006, however, some Allies (or particular political parties within NATO countries) have recommended merging the missions; Italy explicitly did so with the rationale that the merger would reduce civilian casualties by ramping down OEF operations.<sup>55</sup> Since the ISAF stabilization mission now includes the full range of activities necessary to execute the new U.S. population-centric counterinsurgency strategy, NATO should be more amenable to seeing the ISAF mission absorb the bulk of OEF forces and activities if the United States emphatically renews its commitment to success in Afghanistan.<sup>56</sup>

Many observers would be hesitant to give the lead to ISAF because European countries have demonstrated a marked reluctance to use lethal force. But the new U.S. strategy deemphasizes the attrition of insurgent forces, the type of operations Europeans could not support.<sup>57</sup> In addition, NATO troop-contributing states are relaxing their opposition to having their forces involved in combat operations when such operations are an unavoidable byproduct of stabilization operations.<sup>58</sup> The French, for example, now express frustration with national caveats that limit combat by NATO troops, and recently, a European Parliament report made the argument that national caveats are counterproductive. On the ground, more nations are finding combat unavoidable and a necessary means of pacification.<sup>59</sup> Even German forces, with arguably the most restrictive national caveats, now routinely are involved in combat.<sup>60</sup> ISAF forces also can rely more heavily on NATO SOF when combat operations are necessary. Many Allies have been willing to allow their SOF to conduct combat operations with a low profile.

Where fighting is heaviest, U.S. forces and likeminded Allies will have to bear the brunt of the operations until Afghan forces are ready. However, that is the case today and not an argument against rolling OEF activities under ISAF. Any U.S. concerns over the future direction of the ISAF NATO mission

could be assuaged by the provision that the commander of ISAF would always be a U.S. flag officer, which is entirely reasonable given that the United States provides the majority of forces and support to the mission.

The second most important requirement for better unified effort is improved civil-military collaboration. Since, as argued above, successful irregular warfare requires rapid resolution of innumerable implementation issues, mechanisms for authoritative civil-military decisionmaking are imperative. The United States must lead the way for NATO in this area by ensuring close collaboration between General McChrystal and Ambassador Eikenberry. In this regard, McChrystal's plan is insufficient. It calls for parallel chains of command with coordination at every level. Historically, however, the

levels of organization, as the experience with the civil-military Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan attests.<sup>62</sup> Great Ambassador-military commander teams are the rare exceptions that prove the general rule that such leaders typically respond to the demands of their own organizations and cultures, as do their subordinates. As a recent report from the House Armed Services Committee (HASC) concluded, "While senior leaders should get along in the interest of the mission, history is replete with examples where they have not. Rather than depending exclusively on personalities for success, the right interagency structures and processes need to be in place and working."<sup>63</sup>

The optimum means of ensuring unified effort would be a formal decision to integrate the civilian and military chains

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way to ensure civil-military cooperation is to formally integrate the military and civilian chains of command, as occurred when General Douglas MacArthur was given authority over all U.S. activities in Japan and when the Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support Program in Vietnam was instituted. These rare experiments in formally integrated civil-military chains of command produced good results that more than justify their broader use in complex politico-military contingencies. The standard practice, however, has been to proclaim the importance of civil-military integration while doing nothing to facilitate it, which, typically and not surprisingly, produces unsatisfactory results.<sup>64</sup>

Occasionally, a pair of extraordinary personalities will mesh and develop a noteworthy rapport, as was the case with Ambassador Robert Oakley and Lieutenant General Robert Johnston in Somalia (1993), Ambassador Khalilzad and Lieutenant General Barno in Afghanistan (2003), and General Petraeus and Ambassador Ryan Crocker in Iraq (2007). The fact that Ambassador Eikenberry is a retired Army lieutenant general may improve the odds that he and General McChrystal will collaborate, but it does not guarantee it. Even if they do, their positive example will not ensure cooperation down the line through subordinate

of command for the purpose of complex contingency operations such as counterinsurgency, but this would require changes to laws that mandate a dual civil and military chain of command at the country level.<sup>64</sup> The more immediate solution would be an informal agreement between Eikenberry and McChrystal to work collaboratively. Such a relationship can be hoped for, but the more prudent route would be for the administration to take steps to ensure a collaborative relationship.

General McChrystal and Ambassador Eikenberry have developed a joint plan for Afghanistan,<sup>65</sup> as should be the norm in complex civil-military operations. They should also exchange key staff members and make decisions collaboratively whenever possible, in keeping with the best practices of our most accomplished Ambassador-commander teams. However, as the HASC recommends, they also should be given some procedural rules of thumb for collaboration. When diplomatic and military needs sharply conflict—as they must on occasion in irregular war—who has the final say should be a function of the security situation, which could be determined on a province-by-province basis. Ambassador Eikenberry would have the last say for the few contentious issues that could not be resolved collaboratively in those provinces where security was good enough to allow progress



toward political objectives to take priority—generally the northern half of the country at the moment. In provinces where the security environment is so poor that progress toward security objectives must take precedence before political progress can be realized—generally the southeast and southern half of the country—General McChrystal would resolve the issue at hand.<sup>66</sup> Knowing in advance who has the final say will minimize the conflict, tardy decisions, stalemates, and least common denominator solutions that are frequently the deleterious results of forcing equal authorities with competing mandates to cooperate.

As for unified effort within the military and SOF community, General McChrystal's plan calls for improved SOF command and control, and it hints that some SOF will be realigned under ISAF, as recommended here. Improved coordination between OEF and ISAF SOF will be provided by enhanced "SOF operations and planning staff, SOF advisors, and liaison officers to the Regional Command Headquarters."<sup>67</sup> McChrystal has the credentials to reorient the SOF focus in Afghanistan so that population-centric strategy objectives take precedence over kill/capture operations. He is a veteran of both Army Special Forces and special mission units who recognizes that decapitation of the enemy leadership will not work, but that a focused effort to keep the insurgency on the defensive is valuable if conducted properly. Offensive operations against insurgents must be informed by the kind of interagency intelligence fusion McChrystal pioneered in Iraq.<sup>68</sup> In-depth knowledge of local personalities and politics increases the odds that kill/capture operations will improve security and reduces the likelihood that local information sources might manipulate international forces for their own objectives.<sup>69</sup> To improve intelligence and political awareness, General McChrystal's new command and control guidance for SOF should pair Army Special Forces with Afghan units that have graduated from basic training and are ready for employment, and with local irregular forces generated through the Afghan Public Protection Force program (if that controversial pilot program continues).<sup>70</sup>

SOF kill/capture operations should continue, but only in support of counterinsurgency objectives. In some cases, conventional units integrate SOF kill/capture operations into their counterinsurgency efforts in a way that strengthens rather than weakens

relationships with local Afghans.<sup>71</sup> However, this must be done systematically and not be left to chance. Layering of headquarters that constrains the latitude SOF traditionally exercise is not the preferred way to achieve this objective. Instead, SOF must be subject to the culture change on the issue of civilian casualties that General McChrystal is advocating.<sup>72</sup> Several steps already taken or currently under way should help ensure the change in perspective extends to all SOF.

Moving Army Special Forces from OEF to the ISAF counterinsurgency mission would underscore national mission priorities for SOF. Collaboration between SOF and Afghan army units working on counterinsurgency objectives should be the norm, and it is more likely to happen if SOF are working under the ISAF mission mandate. Making ISAF the main effort in Afghanistan would also make it easier to eliminate irregularities that complicate unity of effort, such as different OEF/ISAF target lists of key enemy leaders.<sup>73</sup> General McChrystal's emphatic statements about the need to limit civilian casualties and the subordinate importance

General McChrystal will have to personally attend to setting SOF special mission unit priorities within the OEF mandate. They do not formally report to him, and they would continue to operate under different rules of engagement than ISAF forces. Historically, special mission units report directly to combatant commanders. If the plan to realign all SOF to the commander of ISAF does not include special mission

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*special operations forces must be subject to the culture change on the issue of civilian casualties that General McChrystal is advocating*

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units, General McChrystal's past experience should at least allow him to exercise an informal veto over their operations should they threaten counterinsurgency objectives. If this kind of informal oversight relationship proves insufficient, SOF special mission units could be further constrained to operate in a geographically limited area and by a very



GEN McChrystal and Ambassador Eikenberry visit Konar Province to meet with district governors and see U.S.-funded reconstruction projects

U.S. Department of State

of targeting enemy leadership effectively communicate commander's intent to all SOF forces, including the special mission units he knows so well.<sup>74</sup> McChrystal's priorities and plan should also help reinforce the traditional Army Special Forces indirect approach, which emphasizes the critical importance of the Afghan population and forces.

precise list of high-value targets and cost-benefit procedures. In the past, the frequency of SOF special mission unit operations grew without sufficient accountability until they were targeting less important leaders and with unacceptably higher risks, and the same could easily happen in Afghanistan.<sup>75</sup> In Iraq, General McChrystal successfully executed

high-value human target operations in a manner consistent with counterinsurgency principles, so there is reason to believe the same can be done in Afghanistan. Once he has established the priorities and procedures informally, the informal coordination relationship with special mission units should be transferred to General Rodriguez, who is going to coordinate the day-to-day military operations in Afghanistan. Rodriguez could emulate McChrystal's success in Iraq and ensure the coordination procedures for direct action are not so laborious as to preclude successful kill/capture operations with few civilian casualties.

Progress in Afghanistan is not possible until the strategic objectives currently under debate are resolved and priority is assigned to either counterinsurgency or counterterrorism. Paraphrasing the Cheshire cat's point in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*: "If you don't know where you are going, any road will get you there." Choosing among competing paths is only relevant in the context of clear objectives. But it is equally true that "if you can't stay on the road you choose, no road will get you where you want to go." Choosing the best ways to achieve strategic objectives is relevant only to the extent that we can implement a strategy with unified effort. The general U.S. experience with counterinsurgency illustrates this point well. U.S. military doctrine often accurately codifies rules for winning counterinsurgency warfare, but the organizations implementing the doctrine ignore it with comparable regularity.<sup>76</sup> The same point holds true for unified effort across the government and among allies. We know it is critically important, but we seldom achieve it. With so much at stake and so little time to reverse a deteriorating situation, the administration must clarify its strategy and then go the extra mile by taking additional steps to improve the odds that everyone will stay on the same road to success. **JFQ**

## NOTES

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<sup>2</sup> Fred Kaplan, "CT or COIN? Obama must choose this week between two radically different Afghanistan policies," *Slate.com*, March 24, 2009.

<sup>3</sup> Bill Gertz, "Afghanistan Debate," *The Washington Times*, March 26, 2009, B1.

<sup>4</sup> Richard Holbrooke, testimony on Afghanistan/Pakistan before the House Foreign Relations Committee, May 5, 2009, available at <[www.cfr.org/publication/19322/](http://www.cfr.org/publication/19322/)>.

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<sup>6</sup> Jim Garamone, "Gates Says New Command in Afghanistan Will Look to NATO," *American Forces Press Service*, June 11, 2009; see also Julian E. Barnes, "Americans won't accept 'long slog' in Afghanistan war, Gates says," *The Los Angeles Times*, July 19, 2009.

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<sup>8</sup> David Petraeus, statement before the Senate Armed Services Committee, April 1, 2009.

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<sup>11</sup> Anthony H. Cordesman, "More Troops, Fewer Caveats. Let's Get Serious," August 10, 2009, available at <[www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/columnists/guest\\_contributors/article6789136.ece](http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/columnists/guest_contributors/article6789136.ece)>.

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<sup>13</sup> David W. Barno, testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee, February 26, 2009.

<sup>14</sup> In this paper, the term *special operations forces* (SOF) refers to all forces under the command of U.S. Special Operations Command. When delimiting SOF to subcomponents of the command, they are identified as such (for example, Army Special Forces or special mission units).

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<sup>16</sup> ISAF Theatre Strategic Communications Strategy, 2008. Copy on file with author.

<sup>17</sup> "Press Conference with General Tommy Franks," available from <[www.centcom.mil/news/press\\_briefings/fran1030.html](http://www.centcom.mil/news/press_briefings/fran1030.html)>, Internet>.

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<sup>19</sup> Hy S. Rothstein, *Afghanistan and the Troubled Future of Unconventional Warfare* (Annapolis, MD: U.S. Naval Institute Press, 2006), 7.

<sup>20</sup> John McCain, remarks at the American Enterprise Institute, February 25, 2009, available at <<http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/2009/02/john-mccain-winning-the-war-in/>>. Emphasis added.

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<sup>22</sup> Gilles Dorronsoro, *The Taliban's Winning Strategy in Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2009).

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<sup>24</sup> "U.S. Probe: Afghan Airstrike Killed at Least 33 Civilians," *CNN News*, October 8, 2008.

<sup>25</sup> See Jason Staziuko, "Afghan Mess Up: Crossed signals lead each side to mistake the other for the enemy," *Associated Press*, January 13, 2007.

<sup>26</sup> See Richard Holbrooke, "The Longest War," *The Washington Post*, April 1, 2008.

<sup>27</sup> See "U.S. President Gets an Earful from Afghan Governors," *Agence France Presse*, April 9, 2008.

<sup>28</sup> A study by the Centre for Conflict and Peace Studies cites revenge against international forces as a key motivation for joining the insurgency. See Hekmat Karzai, "Is the West losing the Pashtuns?" *Al Jazeera*, January 26, 2009.

<sup>29</sup> Carlotta Gall and David E. Sanger, "Civilian Deaths Undermine Allies' War on Taliban," *The New York Times*, May 13, 2007; Carlotta Gall, "U.S. Faces Resentment in Afghan Region," *The New York Times*, July 3, 2009.

<sup>30</sup> Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, *Focus and Exit: An Alternative Strategy for the Afghan War*, Washington, DC, February 3, 2009, 9.

<sup>31</sup> "Frustration with War, Problems in Daily Life Send Afghans' Support for U.S. Efforts Tumbling," ABC News/BBC/ARD National Survey of Afghanistan, February 9, 2009, available at <<http://abcnews.go.com/images/PollingUnit/1083a1Afghanistan2009.pdf>>.

<sup>32</sup> Jones, 303.

<sup>33</sup> "Response Posture for Noncombatant Civilian Casualty Incidents in Afghanistan," memorandum for the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, October 29, 2008; see also Peter Graff, "New Tactic for U.S., NATO in Afghanistan: Say Sorry," *Reuters*, April 17, 2009.

<sup>34</sup> See “U.S. Deeply Regrets Civilian Deaths in Afghanistan: Clinton,” Agence France Presse, May 7, 2009.

<sup>35</sup> See Adam B. Ellick, “U.N. Official Calls for Review of American Raids,” *The New York Times*, June 14, 2009.

<sup>36</sup> See “NATO/ISAF Tactical Directive (Releasable Portions) 6 July 2009”; David Zucchino and Laura King, “U.S. to Limit Airstrikes in Afghanistan to Help Reduce Civilian Deaths,” *The Los Angeles Times*, June 23, 2009.

<sup>37</sup> General Stanley McChrystal, statement before the Senate Armed Services Committee, June 2, 2009.

<sup>38</sup> The distinction between the direct and indirect approach to special operations is controversial and often confused within the special operations community. The authors’ usage is drawn from David Tucker and Christopher J. Lamb, *U.S. Special Operations Forces* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

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<sup>40</sup> Email exchange with Colonel David Maxwell, USA, U.S. Army Special Operations Command.

<sup>41</sup> Jones, 265; interviews with Special Forces officers, July 22, 2009, July 27, 2009; interview with 0–6 staff officer, July 20, 2009. For evidence of the confusion surrounding the focus of Special Forces, see Major Darin Blatt and Major Glenn Bollinger III, “3<sup>d</sup> SFG Develops Special Army Forces Combat Advisers for Afghanistan,” June 24, 2009, available at <<http://shadowspear.com/special-operations-news/3rd-sfg-develops-special-forces-combat-advisers-for-afghanistan.html>>.

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<sup>44</sup> Denis P. Doty, “Command and Control of Special Operations Forces for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Contingency Operations” (Master’s thesis, Naval War College, 2003), available at <[www.fas.org/man/eprint/doty.pdf](http://www.fas.org/man/eprint/doty.pdf)>.

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<sup>49</sup> Peter Baker and Elisabeth Bumiller, “Obama Considers Strategy Shift in Afghan War,” *The New York Times*, September 22, 2009.

<sup>50</sup> McChrystal, 1–2, 1–3, 2–1, 2–10, 2–11.

<sup>51</sup> Project for National Security Reform (PNSR), *Forging a New Shield* (Washington, DC: PNSR, 2008).

<sup>52</sup> For more arguments on the need to merge OEF and ISAF, see Ambassador James Dobbins (Ret.), “Obama’s Af/Pak Strategy,” a draft chapter from a forthcoming book.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.; McChrystal.

<sup>54</sup> Vincent Morelli and Paul Belkin, “NATO in Afghanistan: A Test of the Transatlantic Alliance,” Congressional Research Service, July 2, 2009.

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<sup>59</sup> Morelli and Belkin, 11.

<sup>60</sup> “German Troops Beef up Fight against Taliban,” Spiegel Online International (Germany), July 9, 2009.

<sup>61</sup> Bob Killebrew, “The Left-Hand Side of the Spectrum: Ambassadors and Advisors in Future U.S. Strategy,” Center for a New American Security, 2009.

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<sup>65</sup> Gertz, “Inside the Ring.”

<sup>66</sup> This recommendation is consistent with the division of labor recommended by General Barno. See Barno, testimony.

<sup>67</sup> McChrystal, annex B.

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<sup>72</sup> Pauline Jelinek and Anne Gearan, “General Seeks New Afghan Approach: He urges ‘cultural shift’ in how troops handle civilians,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 1, 2009.

<sup>73</sup> Interview with Army Special Forces officer, July 27, 2009.

<sup>74</sup> Spiegel, 6; McCain.

<sup>75</sup> See Tucker and Lamb.

<sup>76</sup> Austin G. Long, *Doctrine of Eternal Recurrence: The U.S. Military and Counterinsurgency Doctrine, 1960–1970 and 2003–2006*, RAND Counterinsurgency Study Paper 6 (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2008).



# Civil-Military Integration in Afghanistan

## Creating Unity of Command

By JOSHUA W. WELLE



Marines and civilian representatives of U.S. organizations talk with resident in Nawa district of Helmand Province during counterinsurgency operations with Afghan National Security Forces

U.S. Marine Corps (Jeremy Harris)

On the heels of the Afghan presidential elections and General McChrystal's 60-day mission assessment, changes to civilian-military C<sup>2</sup> should be considered. This article argues why and how ISAF should reorganize its C<sup>2</sup> structure to ensure true civilian-military integration.

### Complex Environment

One of the poorest countries in the world, Afghanistan has a 70 percent illiteracy rate and the world's third highest infant mortality rate. It has been ravaged by 30 years of war and political instability. Creating opportunities for economic growth is difficult because of weak government institutions, dilapidated or nonexistent infrastructure, and significant environmental degradation from drought. Improving Afghanistan's ability to self-govern is of the highest priority, so stabilization efforts are "less about schools and other infrastructure than about the process by which international donors partner with local governments and institutions."<sup>3</sup> Ultimate success is achieved through Afghan ownership and execution of enduring development solutions. Thus, there are no quick wins.

President Barack Obama's regional strategy labels the Afghanistan mission as a vital national security interest. The objective is to promote a more capable, accountable, and effective government that serves the Afghan people and can eventually function with limited international support.<sup>4</sup> Yet in this longer term effort, time is of the essence. By mid-2009, a new Ambassador and military commander were appointed, 17,000 troops were deployed to the southern region, and a clear message from Washington was sent:

**Lieutenant Joshua W. Welle, USN, was a Civil-Military Planner for Regional Command South, International Security Assistance Force, from November 2008 to August 2009.**

Last year, Senators John McCain and Joe Lieberman argued that the way forward in Afghanistan required "a comprehensive civil-military counterinsurgency approach."<sup>1</sup> The U.S. interagency community is answering the call. By mid-2010, there should be over 700 civilians deployed to complement the increase of U.S. troops to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) International Security Assistance Force (ISAF); however, the "civilian surge" is only a first step toward success in a counterinsurgency (COIN) campaign. Next, the U.S. Government must integrate personnel into a unified civilian-military structure with clear command and control (C<sup>2</sup>) systems aligned with the government of Afghanistan and ISAF. Without unity of command throughout civilian and military organizations, there cannot be the unity of effort needed to support Afghanistan in defeating a ruthless insurgency.

The strategy for success, as directed by General Stanley McChrystal, USA, and echoed by Washington pundits, is based on population-centric counterinsurgency doctrine.<sup>2</sup> COIN literature, from David Galula to David Kilcullen, recognizes good governance and sustainable development as the prize, relegating capture and kill missions to a secondary status. The U.S. Armed Forces are not trained to enhance governance in conflict zones and create long-term development strategies. Accordingly, civilian expertise in a counterinsurgency is a force multiplier. ISAF does not do governance and development; it endeavors to enable others to do it by creating security space in and opportunities for civilian international and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to deliver sustainable progress by, with, and through the Afghan people. The strategy is to shape, clear, hold, and build—through an integrated civilian-military strategy from start to finish.

ISAF has 12 to 18 months to show evidence of positive momentum to retain support of the coalition.

### First-hand Perspective

For 10 months, I served in the Regional Command (RC) South Civilian-Military Planning Cell (Civ-Mil Cell) within ISAF at a turning point in U.S. policy. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, with buy-in from partner nations in the South, advocated this cell to embed civilian expertise needed to guide regional planning efforts away from kinetic operations and toward governance and development-led approaches. The cell, established by Brigadier General John Nicholson, USA, led key initiatives that contributed to Dutch commander General Mark De Kruif's vision of a regional, comprehensive integrated strategy. Our team was on the cutting edge of civilian-military integration.

### Paradigm Shift

The war in Afghanistan is witness to a paradigm shift in coalition civilian-military doctrine. An excerpt from the *ABCA Coalition Operations Handbook* states:

*In coalition operations, consensus building to ensure compatibility at the political, military, and cultural levels between partners is key. A successful coalition must establish at least unity of effort, if not unity of command. The success of a coalition operation begins with the authority to direct operations of all assigned or attached military forces.<sup>5</sup>*

Applied to Afghanistan, the last sentence should be rephrased: "The success of a coalition *counterinsurgency* operation begins with the authority to *coordinate* operations of all assigned or attached *civilian and military assets through a common strategy*." If the White House plan for "executing and resourcing an integrated civilian-military counterinsurgency strategy" is to succeed, the C<sup>2</sup> structure must go beyond the existing plans for civilian-military integration.<sup>6</sup>

Civilian and military operations are converging every day; civilians are the key enablers of a successful COIN strategy. Whole-of-government, comprehensive, and fully integrated policy concepts are bringing foreign and defense ministries more closely together because stability operations require political, economic, and military cooperation. After 8 years, COIN in Afghanistan is unlike

a postconflict stabilization operation. Gone are the days when we could separate security efforts from governance and development activities in a clean phased progression; this is armed nationbuilding. The Taliban rarely distinguish between a United Nations (UN) governance workshop and a Canadian stabilization project. Nor do insurgents separate a World Food Program convoy from a British military patrol. In the eyes of the enemy, those supporting the Afghan government or the coalition are targets. Civilians and military actors therefore must closely cooperate, as all have similar goals, assume comparable risks, and are dependent on one another for success. But cooperation is not enough.

### The National Layer

Civilian-military synchronization must start at the national or Kabul level. In the highly centralized model that the government of Afghanistan espouses, political power is focused here and poorly diffused among the provinces. In the effort to keep power and resources controlled by Kabul and to ensure regional warlords are not able to develop major provincial powerbases, critical decisions for each province are made in ministries in the capital. National large-scale road design and construction are not orchestrated by Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs); road strategies are part of Afghanistan's master plan and are carried out by the Ministry of

## *President Obama's regional strategy labels the Afghanistan mission as a vital national security interest*

There are distinct layers within Afghan government and ISAF structures that define command and control. The Afghan government has a formal presence at the national, provincial, and district levels. For security, the Ministries of Interior and Defense have a fourth layer: regional headquarters for Afghan National Security Forces. ISAF parallels the government but has more robust RCs with no coequal, nonmilitary Afghan counterpart. Understanding these four tiers is important. As ISAF commits to full "partnership" with the Afghan government and its security forces, it is through these tiers of formal Afghan structures that the coalition can support lasting, positive change.

Public Works partnered with international donors. Concerns about Kajaki Dam power generation or the privatization of the Afghan utility company, for instance, are best directed to Ishmael Khan's Ministry of Energy and Water, not provincial authorities. Power in Afghanistan emanates from the center, and ISAF should approach the Afghan government with a more informed understanding of development strategies.

At the present time, each donor- and troop-contributing nation retains the right to bilaterally engage Afghan ministries on their specific province according to their specific priorities. The Canadian embassy negotiates with the Ministry of Education about its



ISAF (Jeffrey Duran)

Kandahar PRT members talk to local children about delivering donated school supplies

signature projects for Kandahar City. Likewise, the United States engages the Ministry of the Interior regarding Afghan National Police milestones. Each lead nation establishes relationships outside collective synchronization mechanisms, without regard to ISAF. This uncoordinated key leader engagement allows the government to manipulate partner nations and weakens the ability of these nations to band together to combat corruption.

In the face of these competing priorities, there has long been recognition that synchronization is needed. However, in Kabul, Afghan government ministries, embassies, ISAF, and NGOs have consistently failed at effective synchronization because few agree on a single empowered forum for executive level integration. The Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board (JCMB) is the highest level and brings all key stakeholders together in a forum co-led by the Afghan government and UN. But this board is more about process than progress. Issues going to the JCMB are either precooked or watered down to ensure consensus. Major disputes or differences in approach are often necessarily pasted over. Beyond the JCMB, ISAF requires a distinct forum in which the coalition can align assets and efforts prior to government and UN engagement—where problems can be effectively and openly raised and solved and where

its members can be held to a common strategy. Kabul is home to a wealth of successful strategy documents but has no decisionmaking authority to turn words into coordinated action. To date, national level efforts have reflected traditional (read *ineffective*) notions of civilian-military cooperation that resemble herding cats.<sup>7</sup>

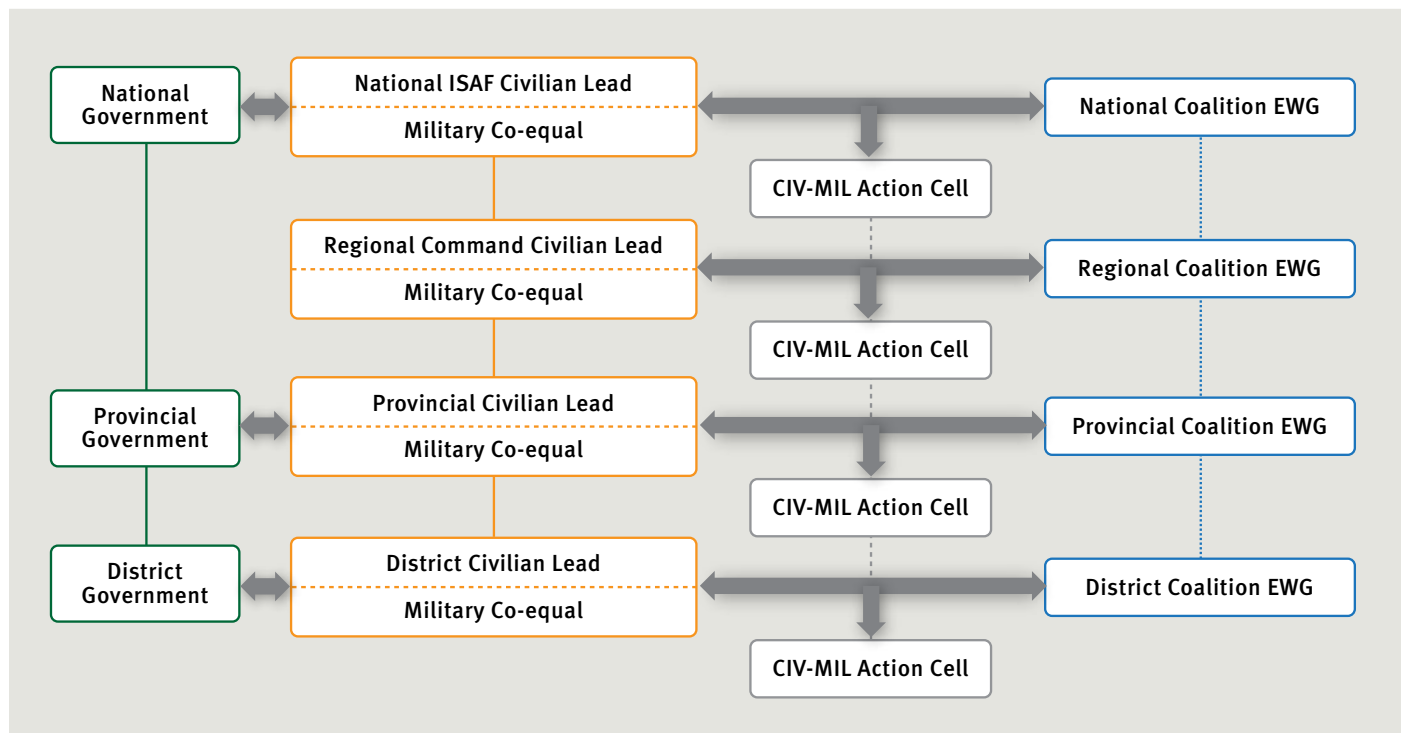
*at the present time, each lead nation establishes relationships outside collective synchronization mechanisms, without regard to ISAF*

The United States went beyond herding cats in 2009 by creating an Executive Working Group (EWG) that synchronized U.S. efforts in Afghanistan. This forum allowed principals from key organizations—Department of State, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), RC East and RC South leadership, and Combined Security Transition Command—to sit in one room once a month and shape U.S. civilian-military plans and operations. From EWG meetings in the spring of 2009, it was apparent this collective body had far-reaching authority in Afghanistan and was formulating a combined civilian-military voice back to Washington.

The EWG, however, was made effective because of a talented support secretariat—the Integrated Civilian Military Action Group (ICMAG)—whose job it was to staff integration up and down the U.S. chain of command. Initially an ad hoc body and predominantly staffed by personnel from the Department of State Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization and RC East military officers, the ICMAG supported the EWG to align stakeholders and created national level, regional, and provincial plans in areas of U.S. priorities. The ICMAG grew to include U.S. ISAF and USAID planners with a breadth of influence and reach into their parent organizations. The EWG/ICMAG was a success because it created a credible and accepted forum for decisionmaking, aligned disparate strategies for the U.S. Government, and had a talented, well-networked staff able to gather information from all layers.

The EWG/ICMAG partnership is a model for civilian-military coordination and, if improved, can be carbon-copied at every layer of ISAF command, creating effective civilian-military coordination and making ISAF the hub (see figure 1). Such a structure would be more inclusive of multinational interests outside isolated embassy efforts and allow civilian-military planning to be more transparent. Establishing a Coalition Executive Working

Figure 1. ISAF Civilian-Military C<sup>2</sup> Model





Group (CEWG) and a Civilian Military Action Cell (CMAC) at ISAF headquarters and lower levels will deliver positive results.

### The Regional Layer

Though there is no parallel Afghan regional governance structure, RCs enable military planning and have logistical assets to support fast-paced operations in the provinces. Regional designations suit Afghanistan's geographical, ethnic, and socioeconomic divisions; a regional focus allows resources to be applied better in a complex coalition theater.

Each region—North, East, South, West, and Capital—has a coalition two-star general leading the security mission. However, the success of the regional model to date begins to break down when confronted with the integrated planning needed for the next level of COIN operations. ISAF RCs have been historically ineffective at planning COIN operations because development strategies are handed down from Kabul or created at the PRT without input from the military RC headquarters. To overcome this situation, RCs require an ISAF civilian leader and a coordinating structure identical to the national level CEWG/CMAC model.

A CEWG already exists in RC South. The Partner's Coordination Board (PCB) has been effective in creating a regional understanding through voluntary participation of each province's senior civilian and mandatory attendance by task force commanders. However, the PCB has not been able to establish far-reaching authority because PRTs and their sponsor countries are reluctant to cede the influence of their capitals to a higher military coordinating body. In 2009, General de Kruif partnered with the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan to put a "civilian face" on the PCB but saw limited success; having an actual coalition-approved *civilian* regional commander would create needed unity of command over coalition PRTs. The PCB would be empowered by the contributing nations, endorsed as the lead regional coordination board, and become the driver of cross-provincial, civilian-military planning in the South.

RC South also benefits from having a well-established Civ-Mil Cell that strives to create the regional comprehensive vision needed to support planning for governance, development, and reconstruction, similar to the U.S. Embassy's ICMAG. The Civ-Mil Cell

has members from most southern partners (Australia, Canada, Denmark, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the United States) and ought to be the direct support staff to the dual-command team and action secretariat to the PCB. Beyond planning, the Civ-Mil Cell is the lone interlocutor within ISAF that can seamlessly access donor and diplomatic networks. The cell identifies key problems, is an advocate for the region in Kabul, and can organize stakeholders to enable a southern strategy.

The CEWG/CMAC must still respect coalition requirements and interests: country-specific caveats will apply (RCs should not spend nationally driven dollars). However, we can no longer afford RCs imploring civilian development actors to provide information on project milestones, future planning initiatives, and donor strategies relevant to long-term military planning.

### The Provincial Layer

Success at the provincial level is paramount because ministries, although lacking Afghan human capacity, do exist and can connect the population to the government. There are 34 provinces in Afghanistan; 26 have PRTs, and 13 of these are U.S.-led. Provincial development strategies are drafted and executed in relative isolation from ISAF (surprisingly, American military officers detailed to ISAF headquarters lack an understanding of U.S. PRT priorities because most information is close-hold or not transmitted over NATO computer systems). In many parts of the country, PRTs are supported by ISAF but not all their elements are under control because of a "lead nation" policy. The lead nation methodology is not working. As a result, in several provinces, strategies are often disjointed from ISAF; PRT proprietary attitudes over relationships with Afghan ministries reduce coalition effectiveness; and some PRTs have a cavalier attitude that their methods alone will win the war. Changes to the PRT C<sup>2</sup> structure would be—by far—the most difficult to implement; however, creating PRT unity of command up to ISAF, and unity of effort with the wider provincial team of actors (special operations forces, embedded and police mentor teams, and intelligence agencies), is critical.

Like the British in Helmand, Dutch in Uruzgan, and Canadians in Kandahar, all PRTs should be civilian-led and military-

enabled (the United States lags in this capacity compared to coalition PRTs and must recruit, train, and deploy enough civilians to support this structure). PRTs with civilian leadership are better at building Afghan capacity, delivering basic services, and improving rule of law because civilians are resourced in numbers and engaged in the military planning process. In fact, in the more successful PRTs, some senior civilians coapprove operations with the military commander. Making the PRTs civilian-led is not enough; PRT planning must be accountable in some way to ISAF. Presently, ISAF tries to obtain basic atmospheric through standard reporting and only receives 20 percent of required data because there is no incentive for PRTs to report. PRT-ISAF links are too informal, which weakens mission effectiveness.

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*the Civ-Mil Cell is the lone interlocutor within ISAF that can seamlessly access donor and diplomatic networks*

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Provincial level elements (coordinated by PRTs) also require an EWG with key provincial stakeholders that can align plans and create true civilian-military effect. The British PRT, located in Lashkar Gah, has a Joint Coordination Board (JCB) chaired by a senior civilian, with British and U.S. senior military participation, and Danish senior civilian input. This team also works closely with the provincial governor to help shape operations. The summer 2009 clear-hold efforts in Babji, Khanishin, and Nawa were possible only through civilian-military planning with Governor Gulab Mangal, supported by the British and U.S. troop commanders.

There should also be a CMAC to carry out executive policy by aligning donor plans with security priorities to create synergy between the international provincial elements and provincial line ministries. A dedicated civilian-military staff working for the JCB, reporting to the ISAF chain of command, would ensure continuity across provinces and set achievable benchmarks measurable at the regional and national levels.

While the concept has been an essential tool for unity of effort, integrated command teams, which enable coordination between international civilian and military leadership in a province, often miss the mark and

become overly reliant on personality, consensus, and trust to get the job done.<sup>8</sup> ISAF ought to endorse and train toward a structure in which civilians lead PRTs, the military supports civilian directors, and all reporting and assessments go through joint civilian-military RC teams up to ISAF headquarters and the broader CEWG in one coherent system. As U.S. troop deployments homogenize coalition battlespace, particularly in the South, the lead for all governance and development must remain nested in a single location—the PRT. As 2<sup>d</sup> Marine Expeditionary Brigade commander Brigadier General Larry Nicholson said in a June 2009 PCB, “If you are not working with the [British] PRT, you are irrelevant to the governance and development mission.” Canada and the United States recently completed a Kandahar Action Plan, without ISAF input; again, ISAF was cut out of the planning process because of oversensitive bilateral concerns. Progress will continue to be nominal until development and military efforts are coordinated under one ISAF chain of command.

### The District Layer

District level integration is less challenging than provincial because there are fewer cats to herd. However, the paucity of Afghans and the untenable security environment make

basic stability operations complex; it is all fog. Subprovincial efforts must adapt to unfamiliar Afghan tribal structures, the influence of the narcotics power brokers, and a void of Afghan district ministries. Counterinsurgency experts rightly argue that “district level governance, social justice, and security define the key terrain of the insurgency, and control at the local district level is vital.”<sup>9</sup>

In the interconnected and localized web of Afghanistan’s districts, a finely tuned plan that draws on the strengths of all our elements in the field is essential. As these areas move through shape-clear-hold-build, ISAF and its civilian partners must be able to move deliberately and seamlessly from military to civilian leads. In practice, the military leads on security regardless of the stage of the shape, clear, hold, and build framework. But to be successful, more civilian input is required. During Operation *Kaley*, the Canadian military’s “village approach” was dominated by uniformed planners, and when it came time to hold-build, there were not enough stability advisors to support operations. Battalion commanders should make all resources accessible to a civilian lead and allow governance/development to lead kinetic planning. Civilians in the field, conducting shuras or serving as political advisors, also need a small civilian-military staff to integrate planning across

district level stakeholders. Presently, there are one or two nonmilitary advisors supporting battalions and companies when there should be a 10-person CMAC linked into a larger ISAF civilian-military structure.

Resources for better district development are coming *online* through the U.S. civilian surge, but civilian-military C<sup>2</sup> is still very much *unaligned*, particularly in the southern coalition environment. The United States authorized the creation of a Senior Civilian Representative in RC East and RC South and the designation of “lead civilian” among the U.S. civilian agencies at each level. Presence was then extended to the district level through the creation of a District Support Team (DST) concept, which is similar to the British Military Stabilization Support Team. A DST will have two to three U.S. civilians with delegated authority to conduct

*battalion commanders should make all resources accessible to a civilian lead*

stabilization activities, such as implementing cash-for-work programs (providing an alternative to the insurgency), issuing vouchers to entice poppy farmers to grow wheat instead (facilitating a licit agro-based economy), and building governance capacity that leverages existing tribal structures (persuading Afghans away from the Taliban toward the Afghan government).

While the concept has been floated, DSTs have not yet been given the authority to align stakeholders at the district level. DSTs are American constructs that are not fully nested into coalition PRTs or ISAF. DSTs should have one civilian-lead actor, teamed with a military battalion commander and reporting through the civilian-led PRTs up to the ISAF region and then national headquarters. DSTs must be empowered to lead planning that is aligned with Afghan district level priorities.

### Making Civilian-Military C<sup>2</sup> Real

Without a drastic C<sup>2</sup> shift toward full civilian-military integration, unity of effort is unlikely. The civilian-military C<sup>2</sup> structure outlined must be politically approved by NATO and installed in each of the four layers. In a perfect world, it can work. The greatest obstacle will be getting embassies to align civilian governance and development

## Figure 2. Seamless Multinational Civilian-Military Integration

Civilian-military cooperation within a single nation is not enough in a mission with 42 participating countries. The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) ought to create structures that allow for seamless multinational civilian-military integration.

**Dual-Command:** All operations, at all levels, must be guided by a North Atlantic Treaty Organization–approved senior civilian, partnered with an ISAF military commander who is a co-equal with primacy over security operations. This two-person command team should speak with one voice down to subordinate commands and civilian development actors, across to Afghan ministries, United Nations partners, and the nongovernmental organization community, and up to national capitals.

**Coalition Executive Working Group:** The dual-command team must chair an approved Coalition Executive Working Group (CEWG) that includes all key stakeholders on that layer and below. This body can unify efforts along all lines of operation, aggregate planning and resource challenges, and communicate with the Afghan government in a unified manner.

**Civilian-Military Action Cell:** The CEWG must be supported by a Civilian-Military Action Cell staffed by first-rate personnel from each lead coalition partner at that layer. This cell, serving as a secretariat and plans/policy node, reports directly to the civilian-military command team.

Effective stability planning incorporates all key stakeholders at that layer and is civilian-led. This proposed ISAF structure does not eliminate other forums for integration; however, it does define a hierarchy of platforms that, if properly mandated, can fuse planning and execution efforts.

programming into a broader, coalition-coordinated strategy.

After this structure becomes reality (see figure 2), ISAF should fuse the civilian-military structure. Succinctly, each layer should have:

- a civilian and military co-lead
- an endorsed and inclusive multinational CEWG
- a robust CMAC with national representation of all key stakeholders on that level
- direct communication through dynamic staffing policies at all four layers.

Allowing CMAC personnel freedom to rotate up and down within the layers to work with national embassies strengthens unity of effort. Not until this author traveled to each southern PRT, up to Kabul and ISAF headquarters, and to other partner embassies did this maze of stakeholders become apparent. The ties between the U.S. Embassy ICMAG and RC South Civ-Mil Cell proved that interlayer coordination strengthens the link between national and regional priorities.

Coalition partners should retain civilian control (call it lead nation if necessary) over governance programs and infrastructure efforts, but there must be political agreement to link all projects into a wider national ISAF (and ultimately Afghan government) scheme of maneuver. Reporting must then funnel up to ISAF headquarters in Kabul to properly measure effects. Presently, much of the staff at coalition PRTs mock ISAF reporting and place national requirements first.

Cultural divides over how to conduct development do exist, but both Ambassadors and generals agree that COIN is a long and slow fight requiring strategic patience. Military officers recognize the importance of governance and development objectives but lack the development advisor's long view. Development experts realize that schools and wells without teachers and water management are not effective but seldom appreciate the enabling benefits of the military. Having the finest civilians and military officers collocated and working in unison under the ISAF umbrella to support Afghanistan's government is the best (and only) way forward.

After serving on General McChrystal's 60-day assessment team, Anthony Cordesman concluded the Afghanistan effort "should be an integrated civil-military effort and focus

on winning the war in the field, [but] is a dysfunctional, wasteful mess focused on Kabul and crippled by bureaucratic divisions."<sup>10</sup> Others concur, claiming Afghanistan "development activities have not been integrated into counterinsurgency planning."<sup>11</sup> Embracing the recommendations of this article brings the international community and ISAF closer to unity of effort by creating unity of command, without undermining national sovereignty. The RC South PCB/Civ-Mil Cell is evidence that coalition civilian-military planning is possible, but nationalizing this model requires greater support from NATO partners at a political level. Moreover, ISAF, with a much greater civilian presence through its CMAC and other multinational civilian links to development agencies, must be the recognized forum for civilian-military planning and coordination. (Making this system work will require faster civilian training and deployment processes from coalition countries, putting qualified personnel throughout ISAF—a process that is under way.)

Having separate reporting and coordination mechanisms for national civilian and coalition military efforts is not working because the counterinsurgency can be won only by joint civilian-military efforts. A U.S. political advisor in Helmand Province recently stated, "Civilians like working *with* the military, but they do not like working *for* the military." If this sentiment is widely held, civilians should colead ISAF at all levels and be supported by experienced military commanders who understand counterinsurgency strategy.

Heeding this advice will not win the war in Afghanistan; victory can only be achieved through the sweat, blood, and tears of the Afghan people, who dream of a country free from tyranny. However, the recommendations herein can improve how the international community and coalition support the Afghan government. The present ISAF structure is ineffective because ISAF continues to take on governance and development planning without civilian governance and development expertise. Civilian leadership, partnered with a military commander, is required at all levels, and the CEWG/CMAC model will be the catalyst for fusion between national development strategies and military operations.

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Michael Mullen has been cited on many occasions: "In Afghanistan, we do what we can. In Iraq, we do what we must." This is

old news. But the U.S. commitment to ISAF and Afghanistan is now redoubled, with hundreds of civilians with expertise in governance and development, billions of dollars for socioeconomic growth, and thousands of troops supported by robust combat enablers being sent. Integrating these resources into the ISAF structure under a single civilian-military command structure is the key to success. Counterinsurgency progress is symbiotic for civilians and the military; operations cannot be conducted in isolation. In or out of uniform, those serving in Afghanistan are part of *one* team. **JFQ**

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> John McCain and Joe Lieberman, "Our Must-Win War: The 'Minimalist' Path Is Wrong for Afghanistan," *The Washington Post*, March 19, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> General Stanley A. McChrystal, "July 2009 Tactical Directive," available at <[www.nato.int/](http://www.nato.int/)>.

<sup>3</sup> Andrew Exum et al., *Triage: The Next Twelve Months in Afghanistan and Pakistan* (Washington, DC: Center for a New American Security, June 2009), 17.

<sup>4</sup> The White House, "White Paper of the Inter-agency Policy Group's Report on U.S. Policy toward Afghanistan and Pakistan," available at <[www.whitehouse.gov/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/)>.

<sup>5</sup> *ABCA Coalition Operations Handbook*, April 2005, x, available at <<http://usacac.army.mil/CAC2/coin/repository/COH.pdf>>. Emphasis added.

<sup>6</sup> The White House.

<sup>7</sup> See John Howard Eisenhower and Edward Marks, "Herding Cats: Overcoming Obstacles in Civil-Military Operations," *Joint Force Quarterly* 22 (Summer 1999), 86–90.

<sup>8</sup> The ISAF PRT Handbook suggests that an integrated command group, composed of senior military and civilian officials, should be collocated and have a highly consensual and considered approach to decisionmaking. The command group is responsible for taking ISAF top-level direction and, in combination with national priorities, determining PRT strategy to include approach, objectives, planned activities, and monitoring and evaluation systems. PRTs rarely respond to ISAF guidance.

<sup>9</sup> Exum et al., 24.

<sup>10</sup> Al Pessin, "More US Troops May Be Needed in Afghanistan," *Voice of America*, July 29, 2009, available at <<http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/2009/07/cordesmanon-afghanistan/>>.

<sup>11</sup> Ashley J. Tellis, *Reconciling with the Taliban? Toward an Alternative Grand Strategy in Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2009), 44.



# An Interview with **Eric T. Olson**



ADM Olson

**JFQ:** We understand that you are focusing on the creation of a U.S. Special Operations Command [USSOCOM] Capstone doctrine: USSOCOM [Publication] 1. How do you see this relating to other joint doctrine (such as [Joint Publication 3–05, *Doctrine for Joint Special Operations*]) and Service doctrines about Special Forces?

**ADM Olson:** Doctrine over the past several years has been very dynamic. Freezing it at any point for publication would have been inappropriate. We relied instead on an active program to collect and disseminate best practices as they were proving successful.

We are now working to revise USSOCOM Pub 1, a foundational document scheduled for completion on January 1, 2010. We have coordinated with the Joint Staff to delay our rewrite of JP 3–05 until January 15, 2010, because much of USSOCOM Pub 1 will be used in the new JP 3–05. The Joint Staff has granted us “fast track” authority of the next iteration of JP 3–05, which will shorten the publication cycle to just under 12 months.

USSOCOM is actually surging to originate more SOF [special operations forces] doctrine, as this is an area in which we have largely deferred to the Services. Our intent is to be able to meet our legislated responsibility for SOF doctrine development within a year.

**JFQ:** How do you envision exercising your responsibilities as the joint proponent for security force assistance [SFA]? How do SFA and foreign internal defense [FID] compare? Are they not redundant?

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**Admiral Eric T. Olson, USN, is Commander, U.S. Special Operations Command.**

Colonel David H. Gurney, USMC (Ret.), and Dr. Jeffrey D. Smotherman of *Joint Force Quarterly* interviewed Admiral Olson at his Pentagon liaison office.

**ADM Olson:** SFA and FID are not redundant, but many of their activities overlap. In my view, SFA is an expansion of FID; the common purpose is to contribute to the development of other nations' security forces. As the Department of Defense [DOD] joint proponent for SFA, USSOCOM will serve mostly as an extension of the Joint Staff in a synchronization role. We will be the machine that receives, reviews, and prioritizes SFA requirements, and then makes recommendations to the Joint Staff about force preparation and allocation. I expect that most SFA missions will comprise a mixture of SOF and General Purpose Forces, with other agencies of government participating whenever appropriate. This construct nests nicely within the processes already developed at USSOCOM to synchronize DOD planning against terrorist networks. For more than a year, SFA has been a working group at the USSOCOM-hosted, semiannual Global Synchronization Conference.

**JFQ:** *We are interested in the new unconventional warfare [UW] definition and how that will support national security. Could*

*you give us your views on UW in general and who conducts it and under what authorities? (I do not want to get into sensitivities here, but most JFQ readers do not realize that a Presidential finding is required for most operations, and we want to touch on this as an educational point.)*

**ADM Olson:** The concept of UW has not changed. It remains, roughly, a set of activities intended to stimulate and support indigenous organizations that are challenging an illegitimate and hostile government. Such activities include but are not limited to guerrilla warfare, subversion, sabotage, and intelligence activities. The initial stages of the Afghanistan campaign are a great example of UW. Fewer than 600 SOF enabled indigenous Afghan forces to suppress and evict the Taliban government. UW is essentially the flip side of counterinsurgency [COIN], which encompasses those activities intended to support a legitimate government against challenge by insurgent forces.

**JFQ:** *This issue of JFQ features four authors who evaluate potential strategies in*

*Afghanistan. Please give us your views on the COIN versus CT [counterterrorism] debate as you have forces that are intimately involved with both activities.*

**ADM Olson:** COIN without CT, or CT without COIN, is a flawed strategy. And in Afghanistan, the situation is complicated by the reality that the elected government competes with Taliban shadow governments for control of the tribal communities. This brings UW into the equation. COIN, CT, and UW are all core SOF missions, so, in any case or combination, SOF are key to implementation of the selected strategy.

**JFQ:** *An excellent example of the application of the FID concept of remote area operations can be found in Major Jim Gant's One Tribe at a Time [Nine Sisters Imports, 2009]. Why have Special Forces not been used more along these lines in Afghanistan?*

**ADM Olson:** The employment of special operations forces as described by Major Gant plays to SOF strengths by translating tactical actions and microregional presence into stra-

**Special Forces Soldier detonates explosive to simulate enemy attack during foreign internal defense training at Camp Diwaniyah, Iraq**



U.S. Air Force (Eric Harris)



tegic effects. This is SOF at its roots and at its core. Allocation and employment of deployed SOF is the purview of the operational commanders, and so we are doing what we can to suggest innovative and bold utilization of SOF in the manner described by Major Gant. At USSOCOM, we say that “presence without value is perceived as occupation.” In Afghanistan, our value to the tribes isn’t necessarily measured by our traditional standards.

**JFQ:** Do you envision that SOF might take the lead in some operations in an IW [irregular warfare] environment around the world, such as Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force–Philippines [CJSOTF–Philippines]?

**ADM Olson:** SOF have the lead in CJSOTF–Philippines, as that task force has been commanded by Special Forces colonels for years. Although every situation is different, CJSOTF–Philippines is a great example of what SOF can accomplish in remote and challenging environments. It is the implementation of a SOF campaign plan that was developed to support the Armed Forces of the Philippines in their actions against common threats that were manifested in local terrorist groups with linkages to al Qaeda. In this case, General Purpose Forces were assigned in direct support of the SOF commander.

**JFQ:** We would like to ask about the CJSOTFs in Afghanistan and Iraq. They are manned mostly by 3<sup>d</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> SFG [Special Forces Group] in Afghanistan and 5<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> SFG in Iraq. You have directed that 3<sup>d</sup> SFG take over sole responsibility for Afghanistan and Pakistan and that the 5<sup>th</sup> take over Iraq entirely with both groups augmented by other SFGs. However, there are rumors that USSOCOM is going to put non–Special Forces (SEALS, Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command, and Air Force Special Operations Command) officers in command of the CJSOTFs. Whom do you envision commanding CJSOTFs in the future when the dominant elements are all Army special operations (Special Forces, Civil Affairs, psychological operations, Special Operations Aviation, logistics support)?

**ADM Olson:** We are a joint force that is not hung up on the Service affiliation of any individual leaders. Realistically, though, the CJSOTFs in Iraq and Afghanistan will be commanded by Army SF colonels for the foreseeable future.

**JFQ:** The next question centers on the 5<sup>th</sup> SOF truth: “Most special operations require non–SOF support.” How do you feel about the support you are getting from the Services?

**ADM Olson:** The budget provided to USSOCOM is intended to meet requirements peculiar to SOF. All other requirements should be met by the Services. At this point in Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom, the ability of the Services to meet SOF needs is stretched thin. Still, we are receiving good support. The main issue is related to the “enabling” forces that are in such short supply. SOF truly depend on them and cannot perform their missions without them.

**JFQ:** We would like an update on USSOCOM reorganization. Based on a recent Booz Allen Hamilton study done on SOF organization, you directed on October 1, 2009, that USSOCOM revert from the “centers” concept that General [Peter] Schoomaker [USA, (Ret.)] established in the 1990s back to the traditional J-staff organization. Please expand upon your rationale and how you think this will improve SOF support.

**ADM Olson:** USSOCOM is a unified combatant command with many of the responsibilities of a military department. A primary factor in the adjustments to our headquarters organization was the recognition that having a three-star SOF officer assigned to the Pentagon to represent the command’s requirements and positions is essential. I was also determined to empower both the deputy commander and chief of staff with the authorities expected of their positions. Since the centers had done what General Schoomaker created them to do, it was time to declare success and move on to a structure that is more in line with our counterpart organizations. I expect that we will improve our user-friendliness while we gain many efficiencies.

**JFQ:** As the first Navy SEAL ever appointed to the grades of three and four stars, as well as the first naval officer to be USSOCOM’s commander, you bring a unique perspective to your duties. As you approach 2½ years into your tour as USSOCOM’s 8<sup>th</sup> commander, what are the one or two most important things that joint military professionals should know about today’s USSOCOM?

**ADM Olson:** First of all, I don’t think the fact that I’m the Navy’s first three- or four-star or the first naval commander of USSOCOM is really all that important. I grew



Woman injured during sinking of ferry near Zamboanga del Norte, Philippines, is helped aboard Navy vessel by members of U.S. Joint Special Operations Task Force–Philippines

U.S. Navy (William Ramsey)



up in a joint-SOF environment, and I just sort of worked my way up through the system the same way all previous commanders have.

What I think is important to know about United States Special Operations Command is really at two levels. One is the command itself, meaning the headquarters, and that is to understand that we are a strategic level headquarters. We fill in what I would call a sort of strategic, almost intellectual battlespace regarding special operations: how they ought to be developed, how they ought to be used. We serve in many ways as an extension of the Joint Staff, in some ways as an extension of the Office of the Secretary of Defense; we have authorities that are of a unified combatant command, that are in some regards similar to military departments and defense agencies, that we serve as a microcosm of a sort of the department, with the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and joint commands, on the next level of command. And that's without real operational authority once the force leaves the United States, where the business is influencing how they're employed, not directing how they're employed from our headquarters in Tampa. So that's the command.

An entirely different discussion is the force itself. What you want to know about is United States Special Operations Forces, not United States Special Operations Command, and I think the message there is that it really is a broadly capable, career oriented force that fills in many of the niche requirements that this nation has. Our core activity is listed within the legislation that created us, some of it added since then—that's the menu from which we derive the capabilities that we invest in, and it's a wide range of capabilities. I think that there's a general sense that we are troops who have gone through more schools and been issued different types of equipment, but my cliché response to that would be, we're more a mindset than a toolset for the department. And in many ways, I think that because we have the ability to operate together more over the course of a career, and we operate in generally smaller units, we have some agility that larger organizations don't have. We also serve as a kind of control group for experimentation within the department. We are a place to bring new equipment online, do tests, and experiment with new tactics, techniques, and technologies along the way.

So that's the two levels. I think it's important to make a distinction between what the headquarters does and what the force does because what we're really doing is providing the wherewithal for the force to develop and operate.

**JFQ:** Do you envision an "Indirect Operations" Command advocated by Robert Martinage in his congressional testimony last spring? (Mr. Martinage is now working for the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special

ments in which we are ever more likely to find ourselves.

**JFQ:** As the joint proponent for SFA, should USSOCOM take the lead in training indigenous forces in Iraq and Afghanistan? Lieutenant General [William] Caldwell [USA] is a very capable officer and slated to take over Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan [CSTC-A]. Wouldn't a SOF three-star be an ideal choice for that position?

U.S. Soldiers from ISAF during night mission in Wardak Province, Afghanistan



U.S. Army (Matthew Friberg)

*Operations/Low-Intensity Conflict and Interdependent Capabilities, and he wrote about this issue in his SOF report for the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments.)*

**ADM Olson:** SOF are effective across the spectrum of conflict, and I think it is important to avoid the temptation to categorize units or capabilities as either "direct" or "indirect." The reality is that most of our units can be conducting direct actions one day and indirect actions the next. I do believe that we will need to develop a deployable senior-level SOF headquarters that can take command of a complex direct-indirect force structure in the ambiguous conflict environ-

**ADM Olson:** I have a great respect for LTG Caldwell and am glad to see him in command of CSTC-A, while I also acknowledge that a SOF three-star would likely be a good fit in that position. But in this area, the strength of SOF is not in raising basic armies or police forces; it is in developing and mentoring the special forces, commandos, paramilitary, and surrogate forces of other nations, which we are doing in both Iraq and Afghanistan. **JFQ**



Army Special Operations Command troops prepare to fast rope from CH-47D Chinook

U.S. Army Special Operations Command

# U.S. Special Operations: Context and Capabilities in Irregular Warfare

By ERIC T. OLSON



Irregular warfare (IW) is a concept highlighted in contemporary military thinking, but it encompasses a perspective that has long been the core of America's special operations forces (SOF).

The United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), created by Congress over 22 years ago, implemented its original charter and Title 10 authorities primarily as a resourcing headquarters, providing ready and relevant SOF for episodic engagements against threats to the Nation and its vital interests. Since the attacks of 9/11 and during 8 years of protracted war, USSOCOM has become a proactive, global, and strategically focused headquarters encompassing a two-fold purpose and mission. As a functional command, USSOCOM serves as proponent for U.S. SOF and for the development of equivalent unit and headquarters functions among allied and partner nations. As a combatant command, USSOCOM synchronizes Department of

Defense (DOD) operational planning for global operations against violent extremist organizations, and it is prepared to employ SOF worldwide when directed by the President or Secretary of Defense. Put simply, in fighting our nation's wars, USSOCOM decides how SOF should be prepared and recommends where, when, and how to use SOF and other forces in support of U.S. defense policy.

The operational commitments of the American military have led to an increase in demand for SOF. America's SOF are popularly prescribed as the "pinch hitters" of national security, called upon to succeed where others would fail, to solve crises by working through and with others rather than by unilaterally committing American lives. Although there are elements of truth in this perception, it is flawed for two reasons. First, by their very nature, SOF are limited in size and scope and inherently cannot form the mainstay of our large-scale military commitments abroad.

Second, while the ability to work with partners and allies, be they other nations' fielded forces or militias of local tribesmen, may be a core SOF capability, today's conflicts require other elements of our military to embrace such capabilities. In that context, this article outlines what makes SOF "special" in the operational environment, and explains how USSOCOM and SOF fit into the integrated whole of military forces tasked to defend U.S. and partner interests.

### The Contemporary Context

Civil war, religious conflict, and competition between peoples rather than states have dominated human history. Despite the recent popularity of the term *irregular warfare*, such warfare is "irregular" only in comparison to the preceding century or so of state-on-state opposition. Two world wars and four decades of Cold War conflict overshadowed what has historically been the defined norm in warfare: population-centric conflict based on competing social identities and comparatively scarce resources. Examining the contemporary environment serves first to illustrate why SOF are increasingly in demand, and then introduces implications for how our overall defense posture must be oriented and resourced to defend U.S. national security.

Defining the current operating environment requires an appreciation of the complex world in which we live. The current population of 307 million Americans is less than 5 percent of the world total, which by almost any statistical metric would indicate that events will generally occur whether or not this nation wants them to. Furthermore, terms such as *uni-* or *multipolar* are inherently misleading in that they overly rely on states' territorial sovereignty as a definition of social identity or a measure of power in the global system. Sovereignty is simply not what it used to be, and even a cursory review of the past 1,000 years of civilized history suggests that "patria rarely designated the polity."<sup>1</sup>

Although territorial sovereignty can be defined and defended, cultural, economic, and informational sovereignty cannot. Globalization creates stresses on developing and underdeveloped nations and societies, which in turn create regional instability and political tensions. Thomas Friedman similarly

described these trends as a "flattening" of the world, in which traditional hierarchies are being superseded by globalizing effects that connect us in ways for which state-centric institutions are poorly postured.<sup>2</sup>

This new realm of sovereignty is defined not by geographic boundaries but by population trends. Crime, migration, extremism, and competition for resources drive populations and foment conflict. As a result of this environment and the changing practical definition of what it means to be sovereign, war also does not mean what it used to. Traditionally defined forms of warfare such as counterinsurgency and unconventional warfare are being lumped under umbrella terms such as irregular warfare or hybrid warfare in attempts to better describe military actions in this "new" environment. The concept of war itself often means something else when translated into other, especially non-Western, languages. It is a common and perhaps naïve misconception to believe that peace is a norm from which wars deviate, or that war itself is a temporary problem with a presupposed military solution. In many parts of the world, that is simply not so. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates captured this notion well when he wrote: "What is dubbed the war on terrorism, in grim reality, is a prolonged, worldwide, irregular campaign—a struggle between the forces of violent extremism and those of moderation."<sup>3</sup>

sensus must be favored over coercion, and the ability to do so proactively requires a holistic approach to warfare aimed at both eliminating adversaries and eroding the conditions that foment and foster their behavior.

DOD defines *irregular warfare* as a "violent struggle among state and non-state actors for legitimacy and influence over the relevant population(s)."<sup>4</sup> IW is then inherently both political in purpose and local in character. The focus is on populations and effective governance rather than on territories and material dominance. This has distinct implications for how irregular wars must be fought and for the forces that fight them.

### U.S. Special Operations

USSOCOM was activated on April 16, 1987, at MacDill Air Force Base, Florida. DOD created the new unified command in response to congressional action in the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 and the Nunn-Cohen Amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act of 1987. Congress mandated that a new four-star command be activated to prepare SOF to carry out assigned missions and, if so directed, to plan for and conduct special operations. In addition to the military department-like authorities of developing training and monitoring readiness, Congress gave USSOCOM its own budgetary authorities and responsibilities

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Regardless of how wars are defined, one constant remains: current and potential antagonists are unlikely to directly oppose America's conventionally postured military forces. This means that the United States is most likely to get hit, as occurred on 9/11, in ways for which the preponderance of its military is least prepared. No longer can a massed military presence be relied upon to secure solutions to what are inherently political conflicts, as physical presence without popular value will ultimately be perceived as occupation. Proactively engaging in these conflicts requires a lengthy commitment before the fighting even starts. As proud as America may be of its ability to run quickly to the sound of the guns, the surest means of winning against an irregular enemy is to defeat him before the shooting starts. Con-

through a specific Major Force Program in the DOD budget. Additionally, USSOCOM was granted its own acquisition authorities, enabling it to develop and procure equipment, supplies, or services peculiar to special operations.

USSOCOM now has approximately 54,000 Active-duty, Reserve, and National Guard Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, and civilians assigned to its headquarters, four Service components, and one subunified command. USSOCOM's components are U.S. Army Special Operations Command, Naval Special Warfare Command, Air Force Special Operations Command, and Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command. The Joint Special Operations Command is a USSOCOM subunified command. Headquarters, USSOCOM, through its component and

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**Admiral Eric T. Olson, USN, is Commander, U.S. Special Operations Command.**



subunified commands, prepares and fields SOF to conduct the core activities listed below.

- Direct action: seizing, destroying, capturing, or recovering through short-duration strikes and other small-scale offensive actions in denied areas

- Special reconnaissance: acquiring information concerning the capabilities, intentions, and activities of an enemy

- Unconventional warfare: conducting operations through and with surrogate forces that are organized, trained, equipped, supported, and directed by external forces

- Information operations: achieving information superiority by adversely affecting enemy information and systems while protecting U.S. information and systems

- Counterproliferation of weapons of mass destruction: either locating, seizing, destroying, or capturing, recovering, and rendering such weapons safe

- Security force assistance: sustaining and assisting host nation or regional security forces in support of a legitimate authority through the unified action of the joint, inter-agency, intergovernmental, and multinational communities

employing military capabilities for which there is no broad conventional force requirement.” Furthermore, special operations “are applicable across the range of military operations” and “differ from conventional operations in degree of physical and political risk, operational techniques, mode of employment, independence from friendly support, and dependence on detailed operational intelligence and indigenous assets.”<sup>5</sup> While the definition effectively (if not succinctly) outlines the manner in which special operations and SOF differ from conventional forces and missions, it offers little regarding their operational integration within an overall campaign plan and IW context.

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*the varied range of special operations presents challenges to the very definition of what comprises a special operation and to what must characterize the forces that undertake these missions*

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America’s SOF are organized, equipped, trained, and deployed by USSOCOM to meet the unique demands of regional combatant commanders around the world. The first part of the command’s mission is to “provide fully capable Special Operations Forces to defend the United States and its interests.” USSOCOM is a force provider in a large sense, much like a military Service. The second part of the USSOCOM mission is to “synchronize planning for global operations against terrorist networks.” This defines a combatant command authority codified in the Unified Command Plan, which states that the USSOCOM commander “is responsible for synchronizing planning for global operations against terrorist networks, and will do so in coordination with other commands, the services, and, as directed, U.S. government agencies.”<sup>6</sup> USSOCOM synchronizes the prescribed plans for operations, then reviews, coordinates, and prioritizes them, to make recommendations to the Joint Staff and Secretary of Defense on how resources should be allocated to match the ever-present demands of global operations.

The most comprehensive element of USSOCOM’s synchronization effort is the global collaborative planning process. This effort draws on other combatant command



U.S. Navy (Byron C. Linder)

**353<sup>d</sup> Special Operations Group and U.S. Marines unload relief supplies from CH-53E for remote areas of west Sumatra, Indonesia, following two earthquakes**

- Foreign internal defense: providing training and other assistance to foreign governments and their militaries to enable the foreign government to provide for its national security

- Civil Affairs operations: establishing, maintaining, or influencing relations between U.S. forces and foreign civil authorities and civilian populations to facilitate U.S. military operations

- Counterterrorism: preventing, deterring, and responding to terrorism

- Psychological operations: providing truthful information to foreign audiences that influences behavior in support of U.S. military operations

- Counterinsurgency operations: defeating insurgency through military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological, and civic actions

- Other activities specified by the President or Secretary of Defense.

The varied range of special operations, both as historically executed and conceptually outlined above, presents challenges to the very definition of what comprises a special operation and to what must characterize the forces that undertake these missions. According to joint doctrine, *special operations* are conducted to “achieve military, diplomatic, informational, and/or economic objectives

capabilities and expertise to develop the DOD war on terror campaign plan, which, coupled with the combatant commands' regional war on terror campaign plans, is dynamic and under continuous review. USSOCOM and the DOD Global Synchronization Community have developed structured processes to evaluate and prioritize the many capabilities, operations, activities, resources, and forces required for DOD efforts to deter, disrupt, and defeat terrorism. The primary forum is the semiannual Global Synchronization Conference, an event that brings stakeholders into a single cooperative venue that sets the stage for much of the collaboration to occur in the following 6 months. This synchronization is intertwined with USSOCOM's role as a resource provider.

It is a common misperception that USSOCOM plans and executes operations globally. Except for rare occasions, USSOCOM does not synchronize or command specific operations; that is the role of the operational commanders who maintain the authority to position and utilize their allocated SOF. Connecting operational authority to proper utilization is of the utmost importance in correctly employing SOF assets that are by definition in limited supply. For example, establishing continuity among disparate efforts is a distinct concern in Afghanistan, where the dynamic nature of tribal structures, physical terrain, and civil-military activities combines to challenge traditional military hierarchies.

The creation of Combined Forces Special Operations Component-Afghanistan in early 2009 was instrumental in extending SOF reach from the tribal level to the national level while remaining integrated within the overall military campaign and with continuing efforts to transition Afghan forces from a military to a civil security enforcement role. That transition itself is critical to executing a comprehensive civilian-military plan that will integrate the security, governance, development, and strategic communications dimensions of supporting the Afghan government, ongoing interagency efforts, and international partners.

Taken in sum, USSOCOM builds SOF and then reviews the manner and recommends the places in which those forces will be used. USSOCOM prioritizes both material resources, in terms of what equipment SOF needs and how to get it, and operational resources, in terms of where the threat is and

how best to engage it. That product is then provided to combatant commands to apply operationally, while USSOCOM retains a mutually reinforcing relationship with each Theater Special Operations Command as the crucial tie between force provision and operational application. This then broadly encompasses USSOCOM's role within the national security strategy: to decide how SOF should be prepared and to help decide where and when to use them. That role can then be further expanded into SOF's roles in irregular warfare.

### Irregular Capabilities and Capacities

In employing indirect operations to gain asymmetric advantage over adversaries, irregular warfare is not a new mission area for SOF. Unconventional warfare, counterterrorism, counterinsurgency, Civil Affairs, psychological operations, and foreign internal defense are all traditional IW activities and core activities for SOF. With the IW emergence as a focus area for broader participation across

that compose the whole of an IW campaign; conventional and special operations must be coordinated rather than simply deconflicted. This inherently requires the development of appropriate mechanisms to mesh IW activities within DOD, with the diplomatic and development efforts of our interagency partners, and in accordance with mutually supporting interests of the United States and partner nations.

These priorities underscore the USSOCOM mission to ensure that SOF are highly trained, properly equipped, and deployed to the right places at the right times for the right missions. SOF personnel must be capable of planning and leading a wide range of lethal and nonlethal special operations missions in complex, ambiguous environments.

*too often, special operations are thought of as unilateral, high-risk, one-shot deals*

ADM Olson testifies on U.S. policy toward Pakistan and Afghanistan before Senate Armed Services Committee, April 2009



DOD, it increasingly describes activities that both SOF and General Purpose Forces will employ in their operational approaches. These approaches must reflect a certain focus, where the "new high ground for operational forces will be to capture the perceptions of populations, not to seize terrain."<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, participation by U.S. operational forces in total should imply an integrated set of activities

Too often, special operations are thought of as unilateral, high-risk, one-shot deals. There are of course times when that is the case, but what is truly *special* about special operations is the ability to work through and with others in pursuit of mutually beneficial outcomes to unusually complex situations. Put simply, a "special operation is above all a powerful exercise of mind; muscle and even disciplined

response are essential but secondary.”<sup>8</sup> Gaining the right perspective is paramount—only then can the right processes follow. It is important to be able to accurately predict the effects of our decisions and actions within the specific operational context of a microregion.

The complexity of the present strategic environment requires that SOF operators maintain not only the highest levels of war-fighting expertise but also cultural knowledge and diplomacy skills. These “3D operators” are members of a multidimensional force prepared to lay the groundwork in the myriad diplomatic, development, and defense activities that contribute to the U.S. Government’s pursuit of vital national interests. Fundamental to this effort is the recognition that humans are more important than hardware and that quality is more important than quantity. Investments in weapons platforms and technologies are incomplete without the right people to employ those systems.

The focus is to first select and nurture the extraordinary operators and then to provide them the most operationally relevant equipment. Language skills and regional knowledge continue to be key to establishing effective relations with the foreign forces, organizations, and individuals with which SOF will interact.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Special Forces Group language training program was recognized by the Army and DOD as the best of its kind in 2007, but, even though language training programs have been enhanced in recent years, SOF remain underqualified in many key languages and dialects. USSOCOM will continue to expand these programs, stressing the need for a few individuals to be thoroughly steeped in select languages and cultures. We have termed these programs Project Lawrence, intended to produce individual regional expertise in support of a persistent presence approach. Yet unlike the career path of their namesake, T.E. Lawrence of Arabia, these initiatives include an exploration of innovative options to permit specialization without sacrificing promotion opportunities, for which the proactive support of the Services is required.

One of USSOCOM’s priority initiatives is the increase of regional expertise through recruitment of native heritage speakers. As of August 2009, approximately 350 legal nonpermanent residents with special language skills and abilities joined the Army under a pilot program. Called Military Accessions Vital to the National Interest (MAVNI), the program

embraces the multifaceted cultural heritage of this country by allowing for the quick inclusion of ethnic diversity into the military force over the long term. While it is a new program, MAVNI is not without precedent. The Lodge-Philbin Act of June 30, 1950, allowed for recruiting foreign nationals into the U.S. military, and provided members to the U.S. Army Special Forces. MAVNI fulfills a similar critical need today, and overall educational quality is phenomenally higher than non-MAVNI recruits: 87 percent of recruits are enrolled in college or have a college degree, and 29 percent hold Master’s or higher degrees. By comparison, the top recruiting battalion in the Nation enlisted 13.7 percent with college degrees.<sup>9</sup>

To meet more immediate tactical needs, USSOCOM has initiated steps to dedicate in-Service translators and interpreters to its Army component for joint use. Individual development aimed at correctly aligning language testing, career management, and incentives remains important to the overall capability, requiring strengthened institutional programs at the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine component levels. We are already behind, and there is a long way to go, in recognizing and incentivizing such expertise before it becomes possible to develop and sustain real experts in specific key regions around the world.

The enabling capabilities that must be provided in greater number by the Services include mobility, aerial sensors, field medics, remote logistics, engineering planners, construction, intelligence, regional specialists, interpreters/translators, communications, dog teams, close air support specialists, security forces, and others that permit SOF operators to focus more directly on their missions. Assigned at the unit or detachment level to support joint SOF commanders away from main bases, the effects of such a combined force will remain integrated within an overall campaign effort while having immediate impact in the local conditions where they are employed.

The goal is a two-fold balance: first, to have sufficient organic SOF-peculiar enablers to permit rapid response to operational crises; and second, to have enabling capabilities assigned in direct support of SOF for longer term sustainment and expansion of the operation. SOF are and will remain dependent on the Services for key force enablers. The nonavailability of these force enablers has become the most vexing issue in the current operational environment, especially in view of the responsible General Purpose Forces drawdown in Iraq. SOF cannot fully provide for their own needs over the long term, and the provision of such support is a mandate of the General Purpose Forces: “Services

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*to meet immediate tactical needs, USSOCOM has initiated steps to dedicate in-Service translators and interpreters to its Army component for joint use*

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### Resourcing IW

SOF cannot grow more than 3 to 5 percent per year in those key units and capabilities that must be developed within the SOF organizational structures and training pipelines. This growth rate will not meet the already obvious appetite for the effects of SOF in forward operating areas. The solution, beyond the necessary continued steady and disciplined growth of specific special operations capabilities, is to mitigate the demand on SOF by developing and sustaining supporting capabilities within the Services that are beyond their organic needs, and can therefore be used in direct support of special operations commanders. This will enhance the impact of forward-deployed SOF without placing unfeasible additional demand on SOF’s own limited enabling units.

and/or executive agents should be prepared to support special operations as soon as possible but not later than 15 days after SOF are employed.”<sup>10</sup>

In addition to an appropriate baseline budget, SOF readiness requires investment in the rapid fielding of both existing solutions and cutting edge technologies, even when relatively small purchase quantities do not optimize production costs. Here the authority to direct funds is actually more important than the amount of funding itself; policy and planning decisions must objectively project future needs and anticipate any new or expanded authorities required to meet those needs.<sup>11</sup> USSOCOM’s aggressive use of its acquisition authority is a key factor in providing wide-ranging, time-sensitive capabilities to widely dispersed and often isolated forces.



Because this budget authority is limited to SOF-peculiar equipment and modifications, USSOCOM also depends heavily on Service acquisition programs that develop and procure Service-common mobility platforms, weapons, ammunition, and other equipment that is then modified to meet SOF's mission needs.

While Federal acquisition regulations uniformly apply to DOD, USSOCOM strives to take advantage of flexibilities inherent in these guidelines to expeditiously provide materiel solutions for the SOF operator. This is accomplished in cooperation with the three military departments, as these departments fund, develop, acquire, and provide the basic Service-common vehicles, aircraft, boats, weapons, ammunition, and other equipment to USSOCOM, which is then modified to SOF-specific platforms, systems, and equipment. When a SOF requirement cannot be met using a Service-common solution, USSOCOM uses its authority to develop and acquire SOF-peculiar equipment or modify the Service-common equipment to meet SOF needs. In those instances, the USSOCOM acquisition culture stresses assertive risk management and process efficiencies to steward a system that is arguably more tailorable, responsive, and agile than elsewhere in DOD.

While some capabilities are truly SOF-peculiar and reside within USSOCOM's processes, most special operations capabilities are based on Service-provided systems. It is therefore important that DOD collectively transitions from a platform-based acquisition cycle to one that is capabilities-based, wherein capabilities such as intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance collection suites or specific weapons packages can be modularly employed on a variety of ground, maritime, and air platforms to increase their tactical and operational reach. Doing so would allow USSOCOM to buy, try, and modify capabilities without being constrained by Service platform considerations and also allow USSOCOM to upgrade modular capabilities at the pace of technology advancement. In return, the rapid development of SOF-peculiar and modular systems is likely to expand a catalogue of systems through which to appropriately fit and equip portions of the conventional force for the IW fight.

### Commitment to Success

The problems SOF and DOD must be prepared to address include the inability

of nation-states to deal with increasingly complex challenges or to meet the needs and expectations of their populations. These challenges are exacerbated by the growing number of nonstate actors who have strategic effects in a networked and interconnected world. In the vacuum created by weak or failed governments, nonstate actors have achieved greater influence over benign populations by addressing their basic needs and grievances, and

by intimidating and sometimes brutalizing them into submission. When governments fail to address the needs of the population, they become irrelevant and people will make choices shaped by their own immediate needs for survival.

In the best case scenario, people will turn to a benevolent nonstate actor such as a nongovernmental organization, a moderate and tolerant religious group, or

**2<sup>d</sup> Marine Special Operations Battalion conducts parachute training at Reno/Stead Airport**



U.S. Marine Corps (Stephen C. Benson)

a local ethnic or traditional institution. However, populations also turn to extremist or criminal organizations, many of which are sponsored by rogue nation-states. Nonstate groups such as al Qaeda, the Taliban, Hamas, Hizballah, Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta, Jamal Islamiyah, and MS-13 are growing in influence and shaping the choices of populations as nation-states fail to adequately address their needs and grievances. Responding to these challenges requires an approach that is integrated with the long-term work of civilian agencies, especially the Department of State and U.S. Agency for International Development, to foster the credibility and influence of legitimate authorities among relevant populations.

This is specialized excellence within a full spectrum capabilities set. Many of the enabling capabilities previously listed are not exclusively military in nature, nor are they restricted to government services. Some are commercial entities that have been constructing things in adverse places for decades. Academic specialties such as anthropology are also included on this list of essential enablers that must exist within a balanced joint force above and beyond the organic needs of the Services. Only with such an “excess,” as misleading as that word may be, can we ensure that the resident expertise is available to adapt to any emergent security scenario that may face us in the coming years. These imperatives apply to both SOF and to the larger U.S. defense establishment, which has been tasked

our assistance in resolving their crises. There really is nothing special or irregular about it, but it does require wisdom and persistence. Such an approach has historically been a core part of U.S. special operations, and it must remain a mainstay capability of our future military. Tomorrow’s victories will be defined by the successes of others, and their defeats will be our failures. The commitment, in either case, remains ours, and we must embrace it now. **JFQ**

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Saskia Sassen, *Territory, Authority, Rights: From Medieval to Global Assemblages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 42.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas L. Friedman, *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005).

<sup>3</sup> Robert M. Gates, “A Balanced Strategy,” *Foreign Affairs* 88, no. 1 (January-February 2009). See also Eric T. Olson, “A Balanced Approach to Irregular Warfare,” *The Journal of International Security Affairs*, no. 16 (Spring 2009), 3.

<sup>4</sup> Joint Publication (JP) 1-02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Washington, DC: The Joint Staff, April 12, 2001, as amended through March 17, 2009), 282.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 511-512.

<sup>6</sup> Department of Defense (DOD), *Unified Command Plan* (Washington, DC: DOD, 2009). The Unified Command Plan in its entirety is a classified document, though the guidance presented here is not.

<sup>7</sup> Robert H. Scales, *The Past and Present as Prologue: Future Warfare through the Lens of Contemporary Conflicts, The Future of the U.S. Military Series* (Washington, DC: Center for a New American Security, 2009), 4.

<sup>8</sup> Derek Leebeart, *To Dare and to Conquer: Special Operations and the Destiny of Nations, from Achilles to Al Qaeda* (New York: Little Brown, 2006), 586.

<sup>9</sup> U.S. Special Operations Command, “MAVNI Recruiting Update” (Tampa, FL: J1, August 7, 2009). See also Alfred H. Paddock, Jr., *U.S. Army Special Warfare: Its Origins* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1982).

<sup>10</sup> JP 4-0, *Joint Logistics* (Washington, DC: The Joint Staff, July 18, 2008), V-9.

<sup>11</sup> Richard M. Miller, *Funding Extended Conflicts: Korea, Vietnam, and the War on Terror* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2007), 121.

<sup>12</sup> Robert M. Gates, remarks delivered to the Economic Club of Chicago, Chicago, IL, July 16, 2009.

**Joint Tactical Air Controller coordinates with aircraft to provide close air support for Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force–Afghanistan**



U.S. Army (Corey Dennis)

Beyond these required changes must also come a change in how the U.S. military organizes and trains units. Everyone must invest in IW capabilities and incentivize the best and brightest to pursue these career fields. Such an investment must be formalized in policy that incentivizes these disciplines as core skills, and institutionalizes operator career progression that rewards specialized rather than generalized performance. This investment is already long overdue. If we do not commit a significant portion of our personnel to living abroad in other cultures for extended periods and to specializing rather than generalizing our skill sets, then we will fail to gain the trust, credibility, and faith of those nations and partners we claim to be fighting alongside.

to provide “a portfolio of military capabilities with maximum versatility across the widest possible spectrum of conflict.”<sup>12</sup>

The conflicts we are engaged in are bigger than DOD, and they will require a global effort. The United States will need to go even beyond a whole-of-government approach to what can be called a whole-of-nations approach: an ability to work through and with others in pursuit of mutually beneficial outcomes to unusually complex situations. Doing so requires more than setting an “American” example for others to follow, as neither words nor deeds are sufficient to justify our presence abroad over the long term. Our military forces must be able to live as locals do, and understand and respond to indigenous concerns, if we are ever to expect others to accept





# Countering Irregular Threats

## The Army Special Operations Contribution

By JOHN F. MULHOLLAND, JR.



Lieutenant General John F. Mulholland, Jr., USA, is Commander, U.S. Army Special Operations Command.

The joint Services and interagency communities predict a future of persistent conflict consisting of irregular or hybrid threats within an irregular warfare (IW) environment requiring forces to operate across the spectrum of military operations. The U.S. Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) embraces the joint, U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), and Army vision of this future threat and, as the designated Army component to USSOCOM, is responsible for recruiting, educating, organizing, training, manning, equipping, and deploying Army special operations forces (ARSOF) to accomplish special operations

missions in support of combatant commanders and chiefs of mission.

ARSOF, which is composed of Civil Affairs, Rangers, Special Forces, Psychological Operations, Special Operations Aviation, and Sustainment, has long been involved in countering irregular threats across the full spectrum of operations. These forces routinely operate in small elements throughout complex, uncertain environments and are uniquely suited for conducting operations within the IW environment. Four of the five mission areas defining IW in the Department of Defense Directive 3000.07, "Irregular Warfare," are designated by USSOCOM (and Title 10) as special operations core



activities: foreign internal defense (FID),<sup>1</sup> unconventional warfare, counterterrorism, and counterinsurgency.<sup>2</sup> The fifth IW activity, stability operations, requires extensive support of two primary core SOF capabilities, Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations, which are the proponent responsibility of the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School.<sup>3</sup> To continue to improve the Army's ability to conduct operations in an IW environment against irregular and hybrid threats, USASOC has established three lines of action aimed at preparing for, preventing, and countering these likely future threats that will persist in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The three ARSOF lines of action, which can overlap in execution, are investment, persistent engagement, and operations. Army special operations roles in these lines of action include *preparatory activities* to inform decisionmakers and build relationships with key indigenous and U.S. mission leaders abroad and organizations through the conduct of persistent presence. They are *preventive in nature* by contributing to capability- and capacity-building and development efforts through enduring engagement with friends, partners, and allies, and they are *initiatives-based* to deter, disrupt, and defeat discrete threats and hostile forces in the application of direct operations, which can include the full range of special operations core activities.

The relevance of these three lines of action spans the full spectrum of operations as each action is complementary and contributes to education and training the force, information-gathering, analysis of current or probable security challenges, and the ability to seize the initiative. The focus of the Army special operations lines of action is to support a whole-of-government approach to current and emerging security challenges. In effect, what is common across these three actions is that ARSOF provides a strategic "bridging" force of specially assessed and selected, highly trained, intelligent Soldiers possessing high initiative and creativity who, by natural inclination, seek solutions to complex problems. This bridging force consistently looks to link or bridge other U.S. Government capabilities, often seemingly disparate ones, inherent in the joint Services and interagency community while working to develop or enable indigenous security solutions.

However, challenges confronting Army special operations within these lines of action construct are twofold. First, personnel policies inhibit supporting long-term investment in overseas locations. Secondly, the necessary enabler, sustainment, and support (ESS) capabilities and capacity are not entirely resident within ARSOF.

Ultimately, the purpose of this article is to advance an understanding of the ARSOF

IW capabilities and lines of action as part of their contribution to full-spectrum operations and whole-of-government/-nation solutions to complex political-military problems in the era of 21<sup>st</sup>-century persistent conflict.

### Investment

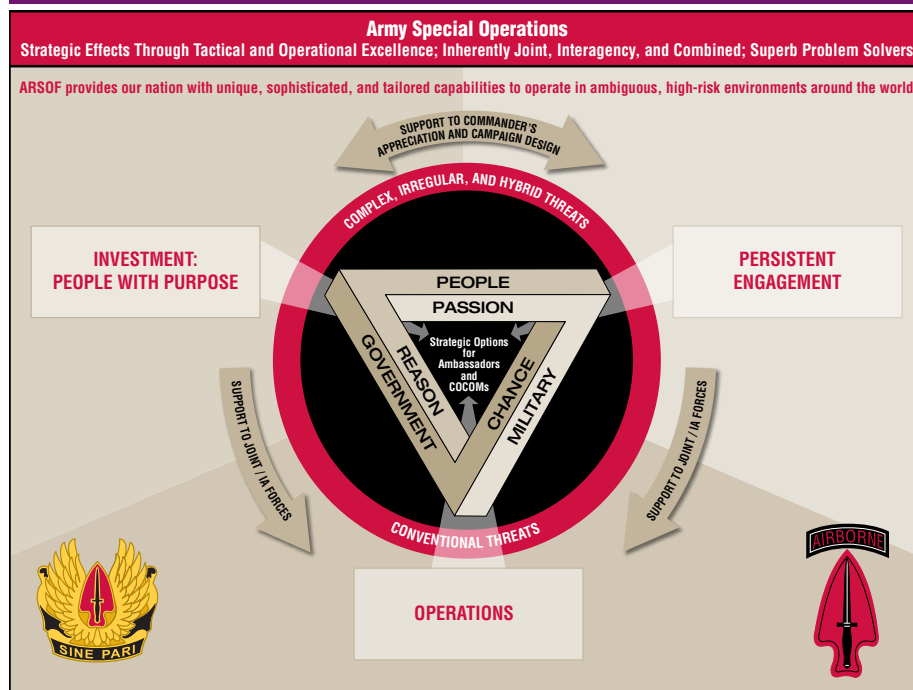
The ARSOF contribution within the investment line of action is designed to provide focused, full-time military expertise in assessment, planning, coordination, and advice and assistance on behalf of combatant commanders at the request of Ambassadors. The foundation of the investment line of action lies in the USASOC Title 10

*the focus of the Army special operations lines of action is to support a whole-of-government approach to current and emerging security challenges*

responsibilities to educate and train ARSOF to develop Soldiers with regional expertise capable of providing information to U.S. civilian decisionmakers. Global ARSOF presence is a key supporting effort to the Department of State and combatant commanders' strategies in semipermissive and unstable areas of the world. The ARSOF investment line of action is primarily realized by small teams of Civil Affairs, Special Forces, and Psychological Operations personnel studying, living, and working for extended periods of time in overseas locations to gain understanding, acquire expertise, and develop relationships. These ARSOF elements provide a complementary capability in further developing U.S. interagency efforts to increase available human and technical information in select foreign countries against irregular threats. Additionally, the investment line of action allows for the development and sustainment of long-term relationships with indigenous personnel and enables/allows for a cadre of language-capable and culturally relevant Soldiers who provide Ambassadors, combatant commanders, and follow-on forces with critical capabilities should emergencies arise or contingencies develop.

ARSOF has had a long history of investing in personnel to develop the necessary regional expertise, and USASOC continues to be committed to this approach by currently

Figure 1. The ARSOF Lines of Action



Key: IA = Interagency; COCOM = Combatant Commander

providing more than 180 highly trained, experienced Soldiers to over 30 Embassies ranging from the Republic of the Philippines to Pakistan. Historical ARSOF personnel investment overseas is best represented by, but not limited to, such organizations as Special Forces Detachment A in Berlin, Special Forces Detachment K in Korea, and 46<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Company in Thailand, as well as long-term presence in Central and South America working for chiefs of mission. The advantages of an investment line of action in IW are the opportunity to develop cultural and environmental skills as well as to build and sustain relationships and access and mutual understanding of challenges in the region.

From its inception, ARSOF has focused on developing regional, cultural, and language skills through consistent regional alignment of USASOC components. However, in line with the USSOCOM commander's vision for increasing language and cultural expertise, it is recognized that select ARSOF Soldiers have what the USSOCOM commander labels the "T.E. Lawrence" aptitude and desire to become regional experts. This requires a career-long assignment methodology to acquire the necessary expertise. For ARSOF, investment is envisioned as maturing to a career-long commitment of specially selected members maintaining the proficiency necessary to optimally contribute to our country's foreign policy, specifically in the areas of selected partner nation-specific and regional strategies. USSOCOM and the Army have authorized the establishment of dedicated Regional Support Detachments in each Special Forces Group in order to develop these capabilities.

Finally, ARSOF investment in personnel capital alongside a partner nation's military leadership assists in the development of the combatant commander's strategy for the U.S. military engagement plan in a partner nation.

### Persistent Engagement

Persistent engagement can be characterized as a line of action by using all elements of national power and defense, development, and diplomacy to prevent conflicts and enable friends, partners, and allies to defend their sovereignty and eliminate ungoverned and undergoverned spaces where irregular threats can find sanctuary. Characterized by FID (activities that ARSOF has been part of for more than 50 years), one of ARSOF's primary contributions in the IW environment is sup-

porting combatant commanders' partner nations' security-building capacity efforts through enduring engagement. In support of combatant commanders' Theater Security Cooperation Programs, ARSOF employs a range of FID capabilities focused on training and population-based infrastructure programs designed to improve foreign security forces' capacity and capability to deter or defeat irregular threats through the conduct of counterterrorism and counterinsurgency. Training and programs include, but are not limited to, Special Forces imparting counterterrorism or counterinsurgency skills to selected partner nation military units or Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations assisting partner nations to deter irregular threats from gaining sanctuary and countering extremist ideologies.

Highlighting the importance that the special operations community places on persistent engagement, despite the predominant commitment to Operations *Iraqi Freedom* and *Enduring Freedom*, in 2009 ARSOF conducted more than 100 partner nation capacity-building training and program events in more than 50 countries. In many instances, gaining access in unstable and politically sensitive locations requires a small footprint in the conduct of operations. Coordinating capacity-building efforts is complemented in these sensitive locations by the planning and relationships developed through ARSOF persistent presence activities. ARSOF components'

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*in many instances, gaining access in unstable and politically sensitive locations requires a small footprint in the conduct of operations*

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U.S. Army Rangers participate in mass tactical airborne operation, Fort Benning, Georgia



U.S. Army (Jason B. Baker)

regional orientation, cultural understanding and agility, foreign military relationships, and language capability are instrumental to the successful conduct of FID missions.

## Operations

ARSOF operations are characterized by small, mature, politically astute, and lethal forces that capitalize on access and enhanced aviation mobility to quickly and decisively neutralize high-value targets. Whether Rangers, Special Forces, special operations aviation, or the ground component of the National Mission Force, ARSOF will continue to provide a strategic direct approach option for our nation, underscoring a high-end capability in support of operations in an IW environment against irregular threats and in major combat operations. An important distinction is that the *operations line of action* is not synonymous with direct action, but is defined by the application of the full range of special operations missions undertaken in named operations to defeat threats to U.S.

national interests. The operations line of action can be unilateral U.S. direct action as well as combined operations with ARSOF working through and with indigenous forces.

The operations line of action also includes Special Forces conducting unconventional warfare operations alongside friendly Afghan resistance forces in the early stages of the war in Afghanistan. FID operations currently ongoing by special operations in support of *Iraqi Freedom* and *Enduring Freedom*, as well as select partner nations in each of the overseas combatant commands, are also representative of operations. The contribution of ARSOF conducting investment and persistent engagement lines of action can result in the development of information networks and personal relationships, which ultimately supports the find-and-fix phases of the operational targeting cycle. The finish phase of the operational targeting cycle can be conducted by ARSOF operating unilaterally or by ARSOF-enabled indigenous forces. Countering irregular threats globally across nation-state boundaries will

continue to require ARSOF to maintain skills enabled and honed through premier training and technology.

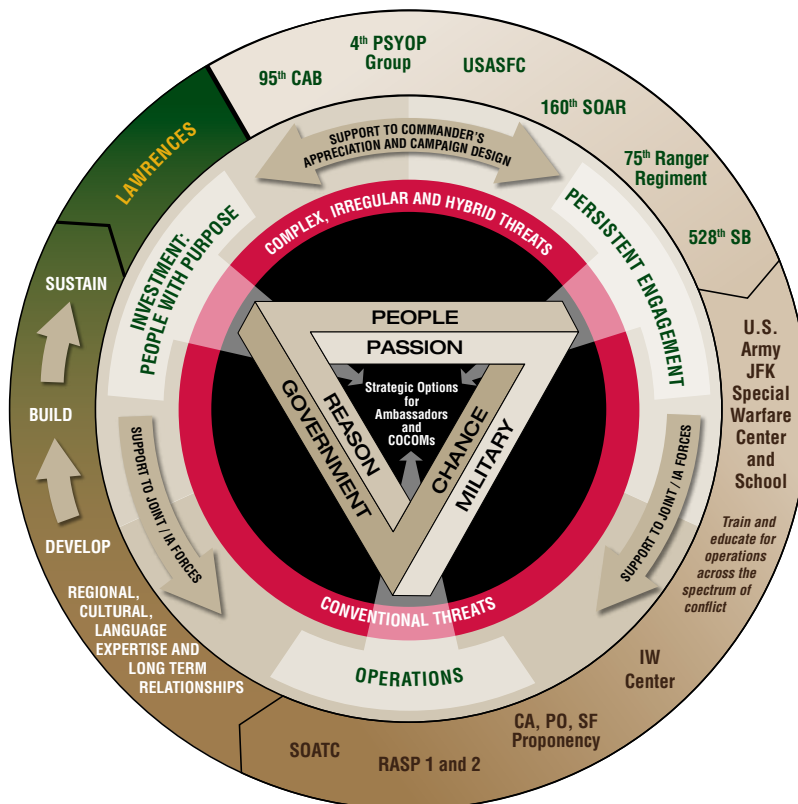
ARSOF provides unique capabilities that can be force multipliers in all forms of combat and enablers for other operations and activities in an IW environment against irregular and hybrid threats. The ability of ARSOF to provide situational understanding, conduct development and information activities, train the forces of friends, partners, and allies, and support the operations of U.S. combat forces provides a strategic bridging capability that assists in preventing, preparing for, and, when necessary, conducting operations to meet U.S. national objectives.

## Challenges

The significant challenges faced by ARSOF in executing these lines of action include adapting personnel policies to allow development of expertise by broadening the traditional paths for career advancement and satisfying the requirements for ARSOF ESS capabilities and capacity. USSOCOM, the Department of the Army, and USASOC are committed to addressing these challenges. Analysis and development of recommended courses of action to address the ESS concerns were included in the DOD Program Objective Memorandum (POM) for Fiscal Years 2012–2017; and the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) personnel policy review and analysis are addressing the challenge of growing T.E. Lawrences to develop the microregional expertise in support of persistent presence, while not threatening an individual's career goals or advancement opportunities.

**Personnel Policies.** The ARSOF investment line of action requires continued analysis and review of current Army personnel policies to support the development of T.E. Lawrences. A T.E. Lawrence special operations Soldier is one who is linguistically fluent and retains a deep cultural understanding enabling development of long-term relationships with indigenous people in a select country. A Soldier attains this level through continuing assignments in a country at some expense of established professional development requirements. Career progression of ARSOF officers, warrant officers, and non-commissioned officers (NCOs) currently dictates assignment and education requirements, which sometimes conflict with the development of cultural, language, and regional aptitude required to support human capital devel-

Figure 2. The ARSOF Construct



Key: 4th PSYOP Group = 4th Psychological Operations Group; 95th CAB = 95th Civil Affairs Brigade; 160th SOAR = 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment; 528th SB = 528th Sustainment Brigade; CA = Civil Affairs; COCOM = Combatant Commander; IA = Interagency; IW Center = Irregular Warfare Center; PO = Psychological Operations; RASP = Ranger Assessment and Selection Program; SF = Special Forces; SOATC = Special Operations Aviation Training Company; USASFC = United States Army Special Forces Command



opment to sustain an investment approach. Consideration should be given to supplementing mandatory attendance at Department of the Army NCO courses, officer Intermediate Level Education (ILE), and warrant officer advanced courses with expanded educational opportunities, both in military and more likely civilian schools, in foreign countries. Although many partner nation military education programs do not offer similar NCO and warrant officer opportunities, select ARSOF Soldiers should be considered for attendance at corresponding officer ILE programs. An additional dilemma in developing ARSOF T.E. Lawrences in support of the investment line of action is the traditional requirement for Soldiers to change assigned locations every 2 to 3 years; development of

**3<sup>d</sup> Special Forces Group trains with AT-4 antitank rocket launcher before rotation to Afghanistan**



cultural and language expertise and necessary human relationships is contradictory to the current change of station mandate faced by ARSOF Soldiers. Solutions that focus on the requirement to retain Soldiers committed to a select country—while not threatening career progression—are being explored by USASOC and the Army. Fundamentally, operations in an IW environment demand corresponding irregular personnel management in order to develop the type of Soldier needed to enhance those strategic capabilities that combatant commanders and Ambassadors require.

**ESS Requirements.** The challenges surrounding the persistent engagement and operation lines of action lie in ESS requirements necessary to conduct operations in

the global IW environment. Army special operations logistics competency resides with the 528<sup>th</sup> Sustainment Brigade. The brigade is knowledgeable in all aspects of land, sea, and air logistics and is experienced at leveraging theater sustainment capacity in support of ARSOF operational requirements. The 528<sup>th</sup> provides ARSOF-unique communications and medical capabilities, to include a recently acquired Trauma Level II medical transport capability. This capability provides lifesaving medical care for Soldiers operating in remote locations. However, in previous years, programmed ARSOF operational capability growth increased without a corresponding increase in ESS capacity. Resolving the current ESS capacity and capability gap includes both a SOF organic and nonorganic enabler solution set.

The commander of USSOCOM recently directed the reintroduction of the long-omitted fifth “ARSOF truth,” which states, “Most special operations require non-SOF assistance.”<sup>1</sup> Special operations must operate as part of the Total Force, and there are few operations that can be conducted without assistance from joint and interagency partners. Army special operations ESS requirements to conduct operations in an IW environment were identified during the POM and QDR processes. Army and USSOCOM analysis to resolve current ARSOF ESS shortfalls propose resolution through two methodologies. The first is organic growth of SOF-unique ESS requirements in the areas of logistics, intelligence, and medical support to Special Forces group and battalion formations. The second is a concept of direct- and general-support relationships for non-SOF-unique ESS requirements involving the collaboration between combatant commanders and Services through the Global Force Management process to ensure programmed, dedicated ESS assets in support of global ARSOF missions.

Army special operations origins are rooted in IW operations and possess a tremendous IW capability, capacity, experience, and history. USASOC will seek to maintain its operationally balanced force, while increasing its IW capability and capacity in support of joint, interagency, and multinational efforts. To contribute to countering irregular threats by a whole-of-government/-nation approach, ARSOF investment, persistent engagement, and operations lines of action bring unique, complementary capabilities providing a range

of strategic options for our Ambassadors and combatant commanders, thus serving our nation as a strategic bridging and enabling force. ARSOF will remain a critical IW contributor within the Army and the joint force and will continue to adapt and evolve capabilities to meet the demands of an era of persistent conflict. **JFQ**

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Joint Publication 1-02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Washington, DC: The Joint Staff, April 12, 2001, as amended through August 19, 2009), defines *foreign internal defense* as the “participation by civilian and military agencies of a government in any of the action programs taken by another government or other designated organization to free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, and insurgency.”

<sup>2</sup> Field Manual 3-0, *Operations* (Washington, DC: Headquarters Department of the Army, February 2008), specifies: “Special operations forces conduct most irregular warfare operations. Sometimes conventional forces support them; other times special warfare operations forces operate alone. However, if special operations forces and host-nation forces cannot defeat unconventional and irregular threats, conventional Army forces may assume a lead role. The joint operations grouped under irregular warfare include the following: foreign internal defense, support to insurgency, counterinsurgency, combating terrorism, and unconventional warfare.”

<sup>3</sup> In its proponent role for the Army and executed by the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School, USASOC is responsible for the doctrine and education foundation for unconventional warfare and, as designated by USSOCOM, is the lead component for the ground aspect of foreign internal defense.

<sup>4</sup> Commander, U.S. Special Operations Command, “O” Flake, Number 09-13, June 19, 2009, Subject: Fifth SOF Truth. The “O” Flake states that “the operational effectiveness of our deployed forces cannot be achieved without being enabled by our Service Partners.” For this reason, the commander of USSOCOM directed the addition of a fifth SOF truth: most special operations require non-SOF assistance. The other four SOF truths are: humans are more important than hardware, quality is better than quantity, special operations forces cannot be mass produced, and competent special operations forces cannot be created after emergencies occur.



# Adapting Across the Spectrum of Conflict

## The Role of Naval Special Warfare

By EDWARD G. WINTERS



Since the 9/11 attacks on the United States, the Nation has realized a new enemy, one that has no borders, hides among the innocent, moves quickly, and is tied to no law of war—or to any law, for that matter. Because of this, the enemy is hard to predict and is difficult to find. The window of opportunity to strike him is small and comes with little warning. He is hard to engage with our conventional weapons because he surrounds himself with innocents. He is smart, calculating, has planned for the long war, yet adapts quickly to counter any success we have. Any response to this new enemy must be quick, nimble, adaptive, and precise. It must also be persistent. We must engage not only the enemy but also the environment and human terrain in which the enemy takes refuge.

The U.S. Naval Special Warfare (NSW) Command of the U.S. Special Operations Command has changed to move faster and

more precisely against this new enemy. There are no longer operations and intelligence; instead, we face “intelligence-operations” or “operations-intelligence.” Additionally, there is no single organization that can defeat this enemy; it requires joint intelligence operations at a level that surpasses anything we have done previously. It requires the interagency community working side by side developing and executing common strategies and synchronizing all efforts. It requires the application of many elements of national and coalition power against the enemy.

Speed of action was an immediate requirement and remains an enduring quest. In the 8 years since 9/11, NSW has done what it does best: more successful combat missions have been conducted, across a broader range of operational environments, than at any time in its storied history. We have achieved this success because we have remained true to our core. This article provides the story of



continuous and agile adaptation by sea-air-land teams (SEALs), Special Warfare Combatant-craft Crewmen (SWCC), and highly trained, special operations forces (SOF)—tailored Navy technicians. It is a chronicle of an organization focused on learning, anticipating, and adapting to more effectively execute across the spectrum of indirect and direct lines of operation.

### Not Just Direct Action

An NSW squadron—composed of a SEAL team, organic and attached combat support (CS) and combat service support (CSS), Individual Augmentees, and mobilized Reservists—has been assigned as Special Operations Task Force–West (SOTF–W) in Anbar Province, Iraq, since 2005. Over the past 4 years, SOTF–W lines of operations have remained constant and include:

- conducting combined lethal operations (direct action)
- conducting foreign internal defense (FID)/security force assistance (SFA)
- developing networks of influence
- targeting enemy networks.

### Conducting Combined Lethal

**Operations.** NSW direct actions have been exclamation points within the Iraq counterinsurgency rather than the focal point of effort. These include Fallujah (2004), Ramadi (2006), Baghdad (2008), and Mosul (2009). In these four major battles, small NSW elements provided direct support to U.S. Marine Corps and Army maneuver elements. SEAL snipers and Tactical Air Controllers rained devastation upon enemy forces and helped shift the tide of these battles. In 2008, for example, a single overwatch element eliminated nearly 50 enemy personnel over a 2-day period and put an end to enemy attacks on coalition forces within their sector (Baghdad, Sadr City). NSW provided Marine Corps, Army, and Iraqi Security Forces freedom of maneuver and operational space as these General Purpose Forces heroically and successfully fought to provide security to the Iraqi population.

**Conducting FID/SFA.** SOTF–W has been successfully engaged in FID/SFA from

its inception. Training Iraqi SOF, police, and tribal security forces, NSW has helped develop and maintain security within the Western Euphrates River Valley of Anbar Province. In 2006, al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) had a stranglehold on Anbar and was conducting devastating attacks on coalition forces as well as the local population. NSW played a critical role in enabling the “Awakening,” a movement of Sunni tribes to reject and fight AQI and to ally themselves with the coalition. NSW helped train and equip those tribes’ security forces and their sheiks’ bodyguards to resist the brutal counterattack by AQI. NSW also helped transition many of those tribal security forces into the Iraqi police and continued to provide training on tactics, evidentiary documentation and control, targeting and intelligence, and command and control. While SEAL direct action operations helped put the enemy on its heels, Iraqi civil and tribal leaders and security forces, trained and mentored in part by NSW, won the fight against AQI.

islands of the Sulu Archipelago, training and advising Philippine marines and SEALs. Living a Spartan existence in these isolated outposts and teaching combat casualty care, complex mission planning, and intelligence operations, as well as providing medical evacuation and intelligence, surveillance,

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*in 2008, a single overwatch element eliminated nearly 50 enemy personnel over a 2-day period and put an end to enemy attacks on coalition forces within their sector*

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and reconnaissance support, NSW has enabled partner nation forces to take the fight to the enemy.

Around the globe, in Africa in support of Operation *Enduring Freedom*–*Trans Sahara*, in South America, and in Asia, NSW Active-duty and Reserve personnel are

U.S. Navy (Tim Turner)



**SEAL provides team cover while advancing on suspected al Qaeda and Taliban forces, Operation *Enduring Freedom***

Half a world away in the Philippines, NSW Task Unit–Archipelago (NSWTU–Arch) has conducted a 7-year FID/SFA campaign with its Filipino counterparts enabling the harassment and capture of insurgent, terrorist, and criminal elements. NSWTU–Arch leads small, distributed teams called Liaison Coordination Elements (LCEs). These two-to-seven-man LCEs are scattered across the

distributed in small teams as liaison elements, joint planning and advisory teams, and coordination elements. These warriors are engaged in the current fight through FID. Not widely known throughout Department of Defense circles, in February of 2008 rebels from Sudan pushed all the way into Ndjamena, the capital of Chad. The battalions of Chadians trained by SEALs had only one combat loss and were

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**Rear Admiral Edward G. Winters, USN, is Commander, U.S. Naval Special Warfare Command.**



instrumental in keeping Chad from falling into the hands of the Sudanese rebels.

Special Warfare Combatant-craft Crewmen, NSW's master mariners and career special operations professionals, have also molded themselves to the current fight. The world's premier combat craft operator, the SWCC traditional role is waterborne insertion of SOF and clandestine delivery of special operators in the littorals and river deltas. Yet for the last 8 years, SWCC have been globally dispersed in small teams conducting FID and SFA. A maritime NSW task unit in Manda Bay, Kenya, composed primarily of SWCC operators, has led a 6-year FID/SFA campaign focused on maritime security. Initially training Kenyan naval personnel, they expanded their focus to an all-of-government approach and trained the Kenyan Wildlife Service, coast guard, and maritime police in an effort

### *Developing Networks of Influence.*

Through combat operations, FID, and SFA, Naval Special Warfare Command builds and maintains relationships that constitute local and regional networks of influence. These networks must be fostered and developed through constant contact. Over a recent 4-month period, nearly 1,000 meetings were conducted by SOTF-W with tribal and civil leaders and Iraqi citizens. These meetings provide atmospherics and insights that are crucial to counterinsurgency. Tribal engagement in Anbar Province provides an example of the deep and broad networks of influence that NSW builds and maintains. For instance, Sheik Sattar abu Risha led the Anbari tribes in the Awakening. SEALs and NSW combat support personnel were frequent guests in his home. They provided a sounding board as he planned and executed

to better prosecute irregular warfare (IW). Support activities are excellent examples of how NSW has adapted to meet the fight more effectively. In 2006, NSW established intelligence operations commands with new and advanced collection and analytical capabilities. The support activities—two Echelon IV O-5 commands—have become the NSW targeting engine. Support activities and their subordinate units are led by SEALs, who bring with them the warrior ethos that is the core of NSW; these leaders provide the operational grounding crucial to successful advanced intelligence operations. However, career SOF personnel—SEAL and SWCC—compose less than 20 percent of support activities; over 80 percent are Navy technical specialists, highly trained and SOF-tailored combat support assigned to NSW for 2 to 5 years. These cross-functional or multidiscipline intelligence

*support activities and their subordinate units are led by SEALs, who bring with them the warrior ethos that is the core of naval special warfare*



NSW Combatant-craft Crewmen (seen here driving special operations craft—riverine) are USSOCOM maritime mobility experts

U.S. Navy (Kathryn Whittenberger)

teams are integrated into an assault force—the SEAL troops—creating a seamless and continuous intelligence operations cycle. The comprehensive assimilation of intelligence disciplines into a single targeting element and its complete integration under tactical assault forces create a powerful synergy unachievable through traditional stovepiped intelligence silos.

### **Adaptation**

Naval Special Warfare is learning from the current conflict and anticipating the future fight. NSW is adapting to an environment where smaller, tailored-to-task forces will be widely distributed and conducting operations and activities by, with, and through partners. This IW fight will continue for the foreseeable future. Long-term presence, knowledge, and relationships will be among our most important weapons. The Nation will require mature, joint, combined, interagency warrior-diplomats. Educating subject matter experts within the NSW force on insurgency, tribal politics, culture, law, finances, and Civil Affairs, and on the use of information to counter jihadist propaganda, will soon be a primary training require-

to increase and maintain security and control maritime lines of communication in this volatile area of the Horn of Africa.

SEALs and SWCC, as well as NSW's organic CS and CSS personnel, conduct combat FID in Iraq and Afghanistan and FID/SFA around the world. This has been the largest contribution of NSW in terms of man-hours and focus since 9/11. The relationships that they build during these activities are the foundations for networks of influence essential to counterinsurgency and the current fight.

the Awakening. When Sheik Sattar was killed in an improvised explosive device attack in 2008, select members of NSW, considered friends of the family and of the tribe, attended his funeral. Within days of his death, NSW intelligence operations identified his killers and facilitated their capture. These deep relationships are replicated around the world with tribal, civil, and military partners.

**Targeting Enemy Networks.** Since 9/11, NSW has been relentless in pursuing innovation in organization, tactics, and capabilities

ment. This is vital to build a force more fully capable of waging counterinsurgency and IW campaigns rather than simply executing episodic training exercises, raids, and reconnaissance. A growing portion of Naval Special Warfare will be dedicated to creating opportunities for the United States and its allies and facilitating the execution of complex military and civil operations *by others*. This will require close coordination with the interagency community and U.S. Country Teams, as well as mastery of FID, SFA, and advanced intelligence operations.

NSW is adapting to better conduct IW and to find and fix terrorists and their infrastructure. Developing language, regional expertise, and cultural (LREC) specialists is one area where the Navy and NSW are applying resources in fiscal year 2010. The Navy will recruit 30 Sailors through the Military Accessions Vital to National Interest (MAVNI) program for assignment to Naval Special Warfare as military linguists. MAVNI is focused on legal immigrants who possess unique, high-demand/low-density LREC skill sets. The support activities will develop education and training to tailor these unique assets into vital IW enablers. These cultural engagement specialists will support NSW squadrons and conduct tactical questioning, provide translation in support of FID and SFA, and act as cultural advisors. Additionally, they will serve as human terrain sensors, providing operational commanders with ground truth and insight into social, tribal, and cultural atmospherics gained from deeper interaction with NSW's networks of influence.

Another innovative organizational structure under development within Naval Special Warfare is the Anchor Team concept: small teams of SEALs and SWCC who focus on a particular country over a minimum 4-year assignment. Anchor Teams will resource Theater Special Operations Command (TSOC) requirements for persistent presence and focus on advise/assist, FID, SFA, and liaison duties; their time horizon will not be just a single 6-month deployment but rather an entire tour of duty. NSW has had persistent presence (365-days boots-on-the-ground) in over a dozen high-priority and priority countries. However, this presence by necessity is resourced by a constant flow of personnel from multiple commands. Each effort lacks continuity and connectedness to operational issues and interagency and host

nation partners; no single NSW organization owns or trains to the problem set. Focus and implementation plans shift with each new rotation, and personnel lack focused preparation for these unique and challenging assignments. Anchor Teams are designed to foster continuity, cultural expertise, connectedness, and long-term commitment—the “4 Cs” of

and senior enlisted personnel to meet demand worldwide. This growth is not only SEAL growth; it is also CS and CSS growth. That additional operator force will require those additional support elements. This is difficult as our requirement for CS and CSS from the Navy comes at a time when it is being directed to downsize. For some time,

*Anchor Teams are designed to foster continuity, cultural expertise, connectedness, and long-term commitment*



Secretary of the Navy meets with LTG David Rodriguez and GEN Stanley McChrystal at ISAF headquarters

counterinsurgency. This construct will be transparent to operational commanders except for the fact that TSOCs will receive more focused and better prepared NSW elements to execute their strategies and plans in key locations where they currently maintain persistent presence.

NSW will continue to adapt to accomplish the needs of the Nation alongside joint, combined, and interagency partners. We will continue to grow into better, stronger partners—and we will also grow in size. We believe that we can grow at a rate of about 3 to 5 percent annually, but there is a delicate balance between growing fast enough to meet demand and growing so fast that the experience of the platoon becomes dangerously diluted, resulting in mistakes that cost lives.

In addition to the SEAL and SWCC operators, it will take years before NSW reaches the quantity of quality senior officer

we expect that we will continue to do more with less; however, the quality, strength, and dedication of our people will allow us to continue to succeed.

Naval Special Warfare is known for and characterized by high-intensity direct action. Lesser known is NSW's capacity for and accomplishments conducting foreign internal defense/security force assistance, building networks of influence, and using its robust ability to target terrorist networks. Since 9/11, NSW has displayed unique agility by rapidly adapting and transforming to meet new and evolving theater requirements and by swiftly transitioning across the spectrum of conflict—conducting tribal engagement and FID in small distributed elements and then aggregating into larger elements to conduct high-intensity urban combat. **JFQ**



# Mastering the Art of the Possible

## The Air Force Special Operations Command

By DONALD C. WURSTER



*In November 2008, a flight of four CV-22 Ospreys, along with corresponding maintenance/logistics support, deployed to Bamako, Mali, in Africa to participate in Flintlock—the premier exercise to support future training and engagement in the Trans-Saharan region. Not only was this exercise significant in the fact that it was the first time U.S. Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC) CV-22 aircraft had deployed across the Atlantic Ocean to support special operations forces (SOF), but its importance lay in the achievement of combatant commander objectives: assisting partner nations in establishing and developing military interoperability and strengthening regional relationships in support of future combined humanitarian, peacekeeping, and disaster*

*relief operations. While in Mali, Malian and U.S. military personnel conducted Medical Civic Action Programs and Veterinary Civic Action Programs aimed at providing select medical and veterinary services to rural communities in Mali.<sup>1</sup>*

This story provides only one example of how AFSOC continues expanding our capabilities to provide the combatant commander with the full spectrum of specialized airpower. Providing airlift for access to rural populations represents a paradigm shift in thinking about how SOF airpower is applied to meet the commander's objectives. The context of irregular warfare is expanding perceptions of the term *the art of the possible*.

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**Lieutenant General Donald C. Wurster, USAF, is Commander, U.S. Air Force Special Operations Command.**



U.S. Air Force

Malian and Senegalese forces train on 8<sup>th</sup> Special Operations Squadron CV-22 Osprey



U.S. Air Force Special Operations Command, the air component of U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), is engaged in operations around the world. Many of these operations support engagement strategies aimed at building relationships that will prevent future conflict within a region. We employ a dedicated force that executes the mission areas of SOF mobility; shaping and stability operations; battlefield air operations; intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR); precision strike; agile combat support; command and control; and information operations. At the same time, we are pushing the innovation and technology envelope to develop responsive, relevant, and sustainable capabilities to achieve combatant commander goals within the context of a dynamic security environment.

As an adaptive learning organization, AFSOC's understanding of the nature of this dynamic environment has been the catalyst to modify our approach to warfighting. In short, we have evolved our organization and its capabilities to remain a step ahead in an environment where the only real constant is change.

### Nature of the Environment

Since the terror attacks of 9/11 and our subsequent experiences in Operations *Enduring Freedom* and *Iraqi Freedom*, our nation has witnessed forms of warfare that are the portent of future conflict. The concept that the central threat for the foreseeable future will be of an irregular nature has been recognized by Secretary of Defense Robert Gates in the 2008 National Military Strategy and has subsequently been embraced by AFSOC and the Services at large.<sup>2</sup>

Irregular warfare's (IW's) expected prominence has sparked a paradigm shift in how AFSOC regards the threat environment. Previous thinking about the employment of SOF tended to focus efforts within a context of nation-state conflict, counterproliferation, and counterterrorism. Tomorrow's security challenge will likely have less focus on nation-state peer competitor conflict, and more of an emphasis on irregular challenges and issues at the subnational level.

The nature of these subnational threats is an extension of the places and conditions that generate them. Irregular threats, which can become regional threats impinging on U.S. national interests, develop within an environment that facilitates their growth.<sup>3</sup> Fertile ground for the development of these

threats tends to exist where there are common elements that can form the basis for grievance against a government's legitimacy: poverty, perceived social injustice, corruption, lack of infrastructure, inability to project the rule of law throughout a nation's sovereign lands, an appealing alternate vision of governance, competing ideologies, and historic ethnic and tribal conflict. Along with these causes for grievance or greed that invite instability, other conditions typically exist that foster the growth of insurgent groups, such as sanctuary, outside funding sources, and access to ungoverned or undergoverned spaces.

This list describes conditions typically found in states that could be described as occupying the "bottom strata" of international economic development standards for gross national product, unemployment, high mortality rates, and low individual income. Because insurgent groups formed under such circumstances tend to tap into extremely complex social and cultural conditions, they are inherently complex adaptive systems. This interactive complexity inherent in human groups fundamentally differs from structurally complicated systems, such as an enemy Integrated Air and Missile Defense System, and requires a different approach.<sup>4</sup> What was once airpower's forte—defeating

problem: access to the hinterlands in order to extend the rule of law. In the IW context, the mobility provided by airlift is key to building legitimacy, yet hinterland access has proven a challenge in the past. However, with the addition of light and medium mobility aircraft, AFSOC has anticipated and answered the need for austere mobility. The leased and purchased airframes chosen to meet the specific needs of theater requirements and supported SOF forces are based on commercial, off-the-shelf models and, by virtue of their ubiquity in the civilian market, can offer a great range of nation access options.

Three new squadrons have been assigned this mission. Within 2 months of activation of the first of these tailored theater mobility squadrons in 2008, aircraft arrived in the Pacific for use by joint task force commanders in U.S. Pacific Command. By June 2009, additional medium-lift aircraft were flying near-daily missions in support of U.S. Southern Command and U.S. Africa Command requirements, providing airlift for up to 25 passengers or 9,000 pounds of cargo. With their short takeoff and landing capabilities suitable for small, remote airfields, these aircraft provide the combatant commander a SOF presence in areas previously inaccessible.

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### *the nature of subnational threats is an extension of the places and conditions that generate them*

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structurally complicated systems such as enemy air defense systems—remains a critical capability even though it is now a problem that we are seemingly less likely to face in the near future. Instead, a new requirement has emerged: addressing and adapting to challenges of the human condition. Today, along with our kinetic ability to deliver "hard" military power, AFSOC has internalized the concepts of soft power by honing skills for both coopting and coercing. This is our new security challenge: how can we as Airmen help to prevent or deter future conflict, and what capabilities can we develop and use to operate in the austere challenging environments our mission requires with our available total force partners?

### SOF Mobility

The first part of the answer has to deal with environments where instability and conflict are most likely to share a common

This new capability in the combatant commander's toolkit extends reach and influence beyond the airfield limitations of larger, more traditional airlift.

In addition to expanding the austere mobility capability, AFSOC is placing high emphasis on recapitalization of the MC-130 fleet. All MC-130 variants continue as the workhorses for SOF movement of troops and resupply. This recapitalization effort will modernize both our Active-duty and air Reserve airlift fleets, improve sustainability, and expand AFSOC aerial refueling capabilities.

Future SOF mobility concepts to address high-end threats will continue to expand global accessibility for the warfighter. The next-generation mobility platform needs to provide the capability to execute long-range clandestine infiltration, exfiltration, and resupply missions to conduct the full range of special operations.

### Shaping and Stability Operations

A dangerous combination that can threaten regional stability is a partner nation that has violent extremists in its midst (or conditions exist for them to thrive), has the will to suppress or defeat them, yet lacks the capacity to do so. Culturally astute, language-trained combat aviation advisors from the 6<sup>th</sup> Special Operations Squadron (SOS) execute the aviation foreign internal defense (AvFID) mission, providing unique capabilities to develop and maintain relationships, shape the environment, promote regional stability, and build partner nation capacity. Habitual training relationships fostered by the 6<sup>th</sup> SOS allow access, presence, persistence, and influence in regions that might otherwise fall prey to insurgent groups. A unique quality that the AvFID unit possesses is the ability to operate with a reduced signature, thus mitigating concerns by some partner nations about the perceptions within their populace when ground troops from an outside nation are present. AFSOC's "signature management" is an enabling capability in retaining America's access to partner nations—allowing influence

and aid, which help reduce the likelihood of instability.

Beyond partner nation engagement, AvFID personnel help build the compatibility necessary for coalition air operations at the intrastate level. To execute the mission of building partnership capacity, 6<sup>th</sup> SOS personnel, who represent over 30 different

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*the next-generation mobility platform needs to provide the capability to execute long-range clandestine infiltration, exfiltration, and resupply missions*

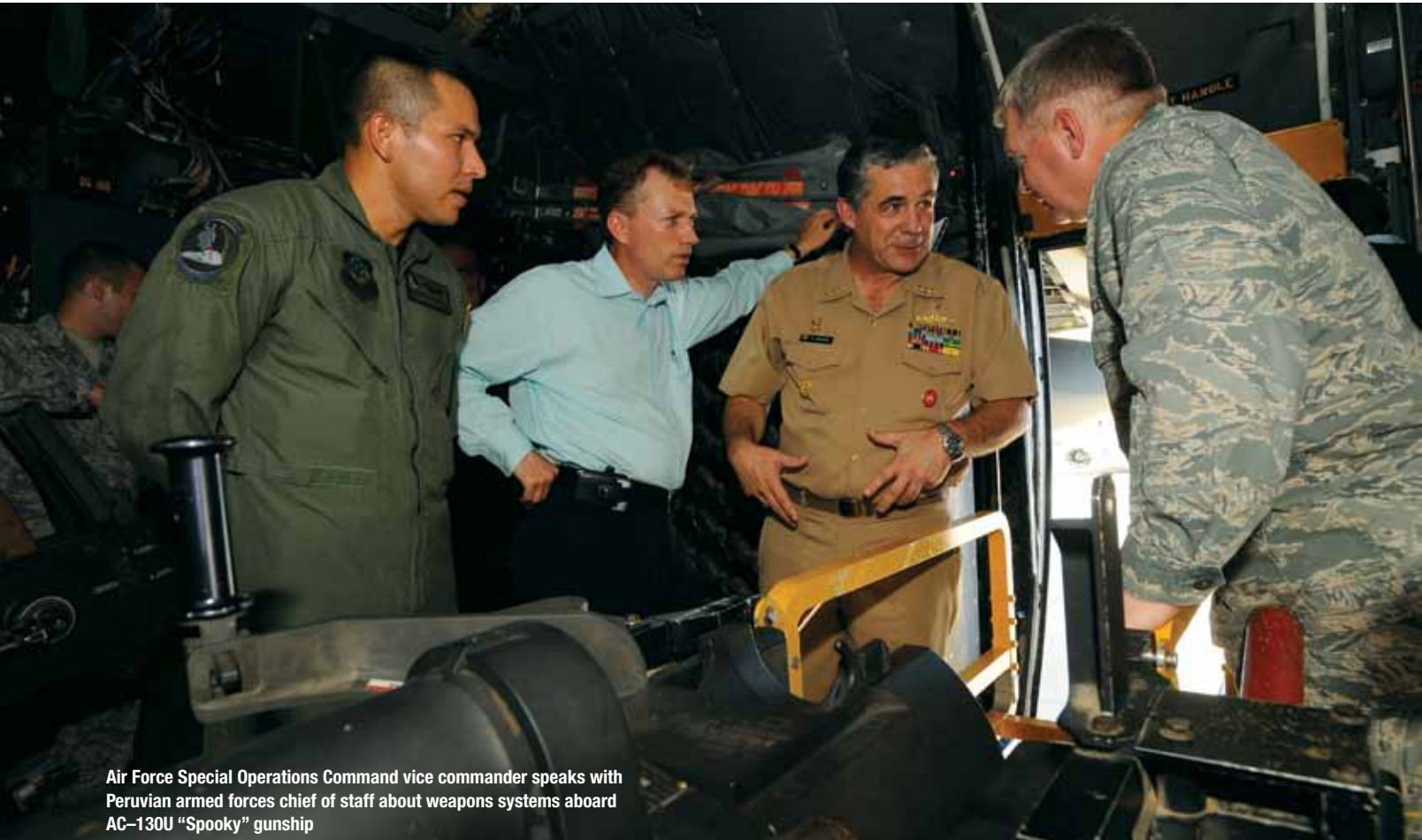
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career fields, train on a variety of domestic and international airframes while providing training expertise that ranges from aircraft maintenance to security, pilot training, survival, and life support. The AvFID mission is in high demand. The increased requirement from combatant commanders has sparked a period of unprecedented growth, doubling

the squadron size in just the past 3 years, with the potential to double again in the near future.

### Battlefield Air Operations

One of the greatest challenges facing an air component engaged in an irregular war is one of integration with ground forces. Our Battlefield Airmen of the 720<sup>th</sup> Special Tactics Group provide the critical link between SOF ground forces and the decisive effects airpower can provide. The Battlefield Airmen career fields in AFSOC are combat controllers, pararescuemen, special operations weathermen, and the latest addition: the terminal attack control party. AFSOC's newest unit of Battlefield Airmen, the 17<sup>th</sup> Air Support Operations Squadron, provides dedicated Joint Terminal Attack Controller support to the U.S. Army Rangers and Special Forces units. Our Battlefield Airmen, Active duty and assigned Air National Guardsmen, are heavily deployed to meet the insatiable need for their unique skills—whether controlling aircraft, conducting personnel recovery, or forecasting environmental impacts to the mission.



Air Force Special Operations Command vice commander speaks with Peruvian armed forces chief of staff about weapons systems aboard AC-130U "Spooky" gunship

U.S. Air Force (Jason Epley)



All Battlefield Airmen are trained to seamlessly integrate with any U.S. or coalition SOF team, and to this end, they are taught “joint” from day one. Not everyone is suited for such an arduous lifestyle, and the Air Force Special Operations Training Center, composed of both Active-duty and Reserve Components, has placed a needed emphasis on recruiting the right people for grooming into Battlefield Airmen and Air Commandos. At the completion of the individual career field training, instruction culminates in the operational readiness phase of Special Tactics Training Squadron. Airmen learn the tactics, techniques, and procedures of operating on the ground inside enemy territory, while honing the skills that enable airpower’s success and ultimate achievement of the joint force commander’s objectives.

## ISR

The irregular warfare conditions SOF will face in the future require a different mindset and the hardware to match the needs of the environment. Conventional ISR activities typically provided the commander with raw data about enemy forces—size, number, location. In an irregular context, ISR must be used to fill in an additional dimension: context and meaning.<sup>5</sup> Often, killing and destroying are not the right ways to do business in irregular warfare (although those, too, are sometimes required). AFSOC has moved ahead full force with the creation of new squadrons equipped with the latest unmanned ISR technology to help gain understanding of the enemy, while maintaining the ability to find, fix, and finish a target should the mission warrant it.

Not only will AFSOC continue to provide USSOCOM with the MQ-1 Predators, but also, as of July 31, 2009, with the standup of the 33<sup>d</sup> SOS at Cannon Air Force Base, New Mexico, the advanced MQ-9 Reaper joined the inventory. With its improved performance and firepower, the Reaper will provide unparalleled ISR and close air support to the warfighter and combatant commanders. These platforms, along with the tireless dedication of the Air Commandos of the 11<sup>th</sup> Intelligence Squadron, are able to develop “pattern of life” intelligence on persons of interest—with the processing, exploitation, and dissemination necessary to turn data into information. Actionable intelligence is the sine qua non of today’s IW fight.

## Precision Engagement

Keeping collateral damage to a bare minimum is a strategy that must be unfailingly pursued in most irregular contexts. An errant munition’s impact can go far beyond collateral damage or civilian casualties; the strategic communications impact can be devastating as well. Precision munitions then become essential for a successful campaign. AFSOC assets provide combatant commanders with the option of precision fires with long loiter times—a combination often needed when dealing with subjects who attempt to hide among the civilian populace. The AC-130 gunship remains the weapon of choice for SOF troops in close contact with

precision fires to SOF in the field as well as close air support for troops in contact. AFSOC is currently pursuing outfitting its MC-130Ws with the PSP as an interim measure to rapidly increase its precision strike capacity until new precision strike aircraft are fielded.

## Agile Combat Support

By their very nature, IW campaigns require that the joint force establish long-term presence in multiple countries to build the necessary partner nation capability and capacity, which extends U.S. operational reach, is a force multiplier, and increases options for defeating mutual adversaries.<sup>6</sup> With this in mind, our forces need a robust,

*in an irregular context, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance must be used to fill in an additional dimension: context and meaning*



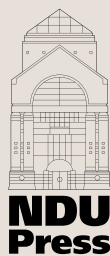
the enemy. When going into an engagement, every special operator wants a gunship overhead. Their proven lethality and accuracy have made them the most feared aircraft in the fight. To improve this critical capability, AFSOC is pursuing several initiatives to recapitalize its aging AC-130 fleet.

The core of the recapitalization initiative’s offensive capability is the Precision Strike Package (PSP), consisting of a modular set of sensors, fire control systems, and weapons that can be installed on a number of different aircraft types. This system is designed to provide armed overwatch and

agile combat support (ACS) capability to sustain the myriad new and legacy AFSOC weapons systems deployed worldwide. Whether employing direct combat support activities such as maintenance and logistics or other functional areas such as security forces, communications, health services, or operations training, ACS plays a significant role in the successful accomplishment of AFSOC missions and is vital to the overall development and defense posture of a partner nation.

Sometimes nonkinetic engagement goes further in securing the peace. AFSOC deployable medical and surgical teams go to





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### Defense Horizons 68

*Cyberspace and the "First Battle" in 21<sup>st</sup>-century War*

According to authors Robert A. Miller and Daniel T. Kuehl, the "first battle" in the 21<sup>st</sup> century may well be in cyberspace. They remind us that we have already seen hints of cyberwar in Estonia and Georgia. Coordinated cyber attacks designed to shape the larger battlespace may become the key feature of the next major war. Given the increasing dependence of the U.S. military and society on critical infrastructures, this cyber-based first battle is one that we cannot afford to lose.

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## SPECIAL FEATURE | Air Force Special Operations

villages to help treat people who may not have seen a doctor for years. This type of commitment can help change local perceptions of the United States and its military.

While medical teams are significant contributors, in the end ACS will often involve aircraft with unique capabilities. None of the manned or unmanned machines or the crews that operate them can benefit a combatant commander without the support personnel and maintainers who keep them operational. AFSOC is home to world-class maintenance professionals, many of whom require specialized skills that take longer to hone than the time it takes to train the aircrew flying the aircraft. Their level of dedication and spirit of teamwork are exactly what America has come to expect from its special operations "quiet professionals."

### Command and Control

Expanding the global footprint of the force to meet rising theater demands necessitated a revised AFSOC approach to command and control (C<sup>2</sup>), ensuring alignment with emerging national military strategy priorities of IW and building partnership capability. Sourcing and sustaining a professionalized C<sup>2</sup> force for each Theater Special Operations Commander (TSOC) must strike the right operational balance of keeping pace with programmed platform, aircrew, and operating locations, while still remaining light, lean, agile, and relevant to the SOF involved. As such, the AFSOC Air and Space Operations Center (AOC) is partnering with AFSOC Wings/Groups and all the ground control centers to place small professionalized C<sup>2</sup> nodes forward, each tailored to specific TSOC mission needs. We refer to this construct as Global SOF Air C<sup>2</sup>, not only because it is enabled by common systems and tools, supported by 24/7 reachback, but also because it is scalable to handle contingencies within, or across, theaters. To further sustain this capability during periods of surge, a ready reserve force is additionally being integrated into the AOC. The combined effect of these initiatives is SOF air, communications, and C<sup>2</sup> for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### Information Operations

In a globalized world where individuals with cell phone cameras and a computer connection can sway the opinion of a population, information operations (IO) become a battlefield dynamic under which all military opera-

tions are executed. In the IW context, any action, even down to the individual Airman, can have strategic level impact. In this sense, IW is largely a "battle of the narrative," each side working to have the more effective strategic communication effort to capture the support of the people. In AFSOC, IO dissemination is one of the missions of the Pennsylvania National Guard's 193<sup>d</sup> Special Operations Wing. The importance of this mission is reflected on their ramp: the 193<sup>d</sup> is the first AFSOC unit to be equipped with the new "J-model" C-130s, upgrading their previous EC-130E aircraft into the EC-130J, extending range, altitude, and capability to reach a broader audience. The 193<sup>d</sup> is in high demand and remains one of the most deployed units in AFSOC, and the most deployed air unit in the National Guard.

### Adaptability Is Key to Airpower

When Colonel John Boyd devised his Observe, Orient, Decide, Act Loop to describe how to get "inside" of an adversary's decision cycle, he was thinking about conventional combat against like opponents, not asymmetric and irregular threats that are complex adaptive systems. Today, "acting quicker" is simply not enough. We must not only be more flexible in our thinking about the future threat, but we must also adapt faster than the enemy does. As worldwide security threats evolve, the capabilities within AFSOC's missions have rapidly adapted as well—and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. **JFQ**

### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Africa Command Public Affairs, "Government of Mali Hosts Military Exercise in Bamako, Mali," available at [www.africom.mil/getArticle.asp?art=2220&lang=0](http://www.africom.mil/getArticle.asp?art=2220&lang=0).

<sup>2</sup> *The National Military Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, DC: The Joint Staff, June 2008), 7, 8.

<sup>3</sup> *The National Defense Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, DC: Office of the Secretary of Defense, June 2008), 2, 3.

<sup>4</sup> See Paul K. Van Riper, "EBO: There Was No Baby in the Bathwater," *Joint Force Quarterly* 52 (1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2009), 83.

<sup>5</sup> James S. Corum, "Getting Doctrine Right," *Joint Force Quarterly* 49 (2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2008), 95.

<sup>6</sup> Department of Defense (DOD), *Irregular Warfare Joint Operating Concept Version 1.0* (Washington, DC: DOD, September 11, 2007), 1, 11.

# Forging Marine Special Operators

By MASTIN M. ROBESON



**E**stablished on February 24, 2006, and headquartered at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, U.S. Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command (MARSOC) is the Marine Corps component of U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM). MARSOC is making great advances in its quest to build and operate in order to contribute directly to the Nation's overseas contingency operations. Now at about 80 percent of its full mission capability, MARSOC is in the process of reorganizing and right-sizing to continue to meet its current operational commitments and posturing the force for its future roles.

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Major General Mastin M. Robeson, USMC, is Commander, U.S. Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command.



MajGen Robeson addresses graduates of first MARSOC Individual Training Course

U.S. Marine Corps (Richard Blumenstein)

Since our activation almost 4 years ago, MARSOC's pace of operations has increased steadily. As an additional capability is introduced or capacity increased, it is employed against a global threat. MARSOC provides to USSOCOM the following additive and complementary capabilities:

- company- and team-sized units with the capability to conduct distributed operations
- littoral and counterinsurgency expertise
- special reconnaissance
- operational command and control to field a special operations task force or a combined-joint special operations task force
- interoperable conduit between USSOCOM and the Marine Corps (for example, Marine Expeditionary Unit [Special Operations Capable] integration into USSOCOM Theater Security Cooperation Plans).

In January 2009, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates directed MARSOC to deploy two Marine special operations companies into Afghanistan. Subsequently, USSOCOM tasked us to deploy a special operations task force headquarters to Afghanistan to provide command and control over all special operations assets and missions and to coordinate

*we agree that the Phase Zero engagements in key areas of Southeast Asia and Africa are a cornerstone of our nation's long-term strategy*

their operational functions within a specified region. Both of these firsts for MARSOC are the result of our development of broad force capabilities. When we were first established under USSOCOM, we were used as an immediate solution to operational gaps. USSOCOM now has a focused vision as to how and where to best employ our capabilities, demonstrating its increased confidence in our abilities. Additionally, it gives the Marine Corps a greater understanding of what value MARSOC provides to the current fight, to the Nation, and to Corps history.

Our expanded footprint in Afghanistan and an increase in the number of joint-combined exchange training and counternarcotics

training commitments are also indicative of the steady increase in our operational demand as our capabilities grow. This has facilitated our ability to take on more of the load historically shouldered by other special operations forces (SOF) units. During fiscal year 2006, we conducted 4 missions; in fiscal year 2007, we completed 15 missions; in fiscal year 2008, we completed 32 missions; and we completed

top priority for us is the preparation, deployment, and redeployment of our forces to and from combat, specifically in support of Operation *Enduring Freedom-Afghanistan*. This includes developing the special operations task force and preparing for its employment as well as maintaining the two-company presence. We are also focused on building partnerships with other partner nations'



Marine Special Operations Advisor Group members train in advanced urban warfare tactics

U.S. Marine Corps (Steven King)

over 40 missions last fiscal year. We are rapidly growing in capability and capacity, providing the forces and expertise needed to contribute to global, sustained engagements by U.S. SOF.

Like our joint USSOCOM counterparts, our mission sets typically fall under the following core activities: foreign internal defense, security force assistance, counterinsurgency, special reconnaissance, and direct action. A

forces to include South Asia and the littorals of Southeast Asia and Africa. We very much agree that the Phase Zero engagements in key areas of Southeast Asia and Africa are a cornerstone of our nation's long-term strategy.

### Internal Reorganization

Due to the increased need for the employment of MARSOC forces and the accelerated maturation of our capabilities and



other force initiatives, we are in the process of reorganizing or right-sizing our structure. This is a top priority. The past year has validated the tremendous success that we can achieve when we properly task-organize our Marine special operations companies and teams.

In April 2009, we redesignated the Marine Special Operations Advisor Group as Marine Special Operations Regiment. This established a structure of 1 regiment, 3 special operations battalions, 12 special operations companies, and 48 special operations teams. Each battalion has the same mission but focuses on different geographic areas. The key to our success is the ability to grow our combat support and combat service support capabilities (signals intelligence, human intelligence, communications, intelligence analysis, explosive ordnance disposal, and military working dogs) to support the above structure and the requisite maintainers.

Once the reorganization is complete, we will have three colonel-commanded units: Marine Special Operations Regiment with three Marine Special Operations Battalions (1<sup>st</sup> MSOB at Camp Pendleton, California, and 2<sup>d</sup> and 3<sup>d</sup> MSOBs at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina), Marine Special Operations Support Group (which will include a support battalion and an intelligence battalion at Camp Lejeune), and the Marine Special Operations School.

### Building the MARSOF Marine

In our ongoing efforts to build a command with long-term relevancy that USSOCOM can employ across the spectrum of SOF engagement methods, it is crucial to select and train Marines capable of conducting missions as directed. We believe that Marines are who we are and special operations are what we do. As such, forging Marines into Marine Special Operations Forces (MARSOF) operators is another top priority.

We believe there is no better pool from which to recruit special operators than the Marine Corps. Marines have a history and background in small wars and expeditionary operations that make them comfortable working with emerging regional nations and in austere, isolated locations. At the outset, we focused solely on recruiting Marines from the combat arms community, but we have recently cast a wider net across the entire Corps for potential candidates. This includes updating some of the selection criteria and opening up availability to all military occu-

pational specialties, provided they meet the proper requirements.

One of our more significant milestones to date has been the graduation of our first Individual Training Course (ITC), which represents a major achievement in having a SOF-qualified program that takes a basically trained Marine and produces a competent special operator—the last piece to complete the MARSOF pipeline.

The process for a Marine to become a part of MARSOC begins when we recruit and screen potential candidates. These Marines then attend Assessment and Selection (A&S) that determines if they have the attributes required to complete training and

The next step for a newly assigned Marine is ITC, an intensive 7-month training package broken into four phases. The framework of the program of instruction emphasizes the indirect approach, irregular warfare, counterinsurgency, and amphibious reconnaissance. Phase One is the basic skills phase where Marines are introduced to USSOCOM and MARSOC, tactical combat casualty care (advanced medical training), basic communications, Survival Evasion Resistance Escape, weapons skills, and fire support. Phase Two is the shaping phase where Marines are taught mission planning and preparation, introduction to special reconnaissance skills, advanced combat marksmanship, amphibious

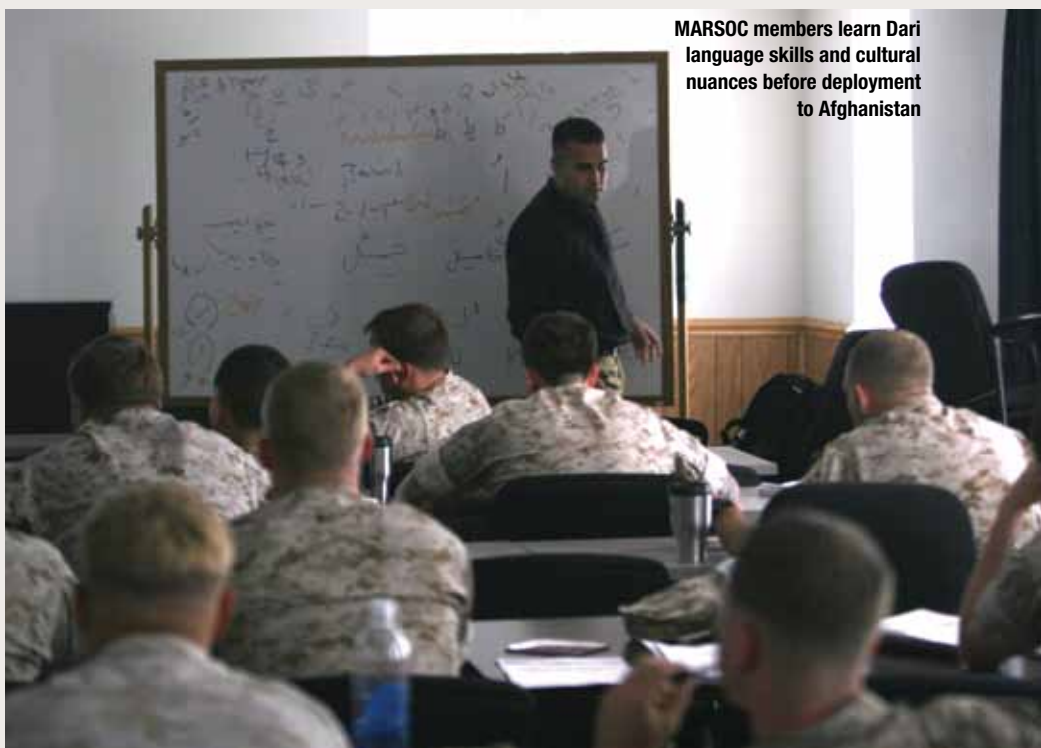
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### *the Advanced Linguistic Course is intended to prepare Marines to excel in cross-cultural relationship-building activities*

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conduct special operations missions. The assessment includes physical, team, and problemsolving events providing an overall pattern of performance designed to identify those Marines who are most comfortable working in austere and isolated areas, or in small teams, while employing an indirect approach. At the completion of A&S, Marines receive orders to MARSOC.

reconnaissance, advanced light infantry and small unit operations, and basic demolitions. Phase Three is the refining phase where Marines sharpen their skills in advanced communications, urban close quarters combat, and advanced special reconnaissance. Phase Four is the culmination phase where historical irregular warfare and counterinsurgency operations case studies are used to reinforce



**MARSOC members learn Dari language skills and cultural nuances before deployment to Afghanistan**

U.S. Marine Corps (Stephen C. Benson)

the principles they have learned and will employ during the final exercise.

After graduating, select Marines transition to the Advanced Languages Courses, which encompass 9 to 12 months of concentrated language instruction designed to provide each deploying team with a near-fluent speaker for the language in which each team will operate. This is a new program called the Advanced Linguistic Course and is intended to prepare Marines to excel in the cross-cultural relationship-building activities that are essential to working effectively with other nations. The majority of the graduates will move directly to an operational team in one of the MSOBs. The goal is to establish 48 Marine special operations teams with at least one member

### New MARSOC Facilities

We have developed and are executing a long-term military construction plan to provide MARSOC with extensive, multifaceted, and functional compounds at Camp Lejeune and Camp Pendleton. Facilities valued at \$370 million are currently under construction, and future projects totaling over \$300 million have been validated by USSOCOM to round out and support the emerging MARSOC organization.

Since our activation, we have occupied a growing inventory of geographically dispersed interim facilities on both coasts. We are currently transitioning from over 112 facilities into a newly constructed compound at Camp Lejeune's Stone Bay, and we anticipate our west coast compound at Camp Pendleton's

Center that will incorporate all aspects of physical fitness, therapy, rehabilitation, nutrition, and education specifically meant to develop and sustain the MARSOC human asset to its maximum potential in order to provide the highest level of operational readiness while preserving the force.

Our future projects include facilities on both coasts to support subordinate unit headquarters, company, and team facilities needs, as well as additional projects to support expanded mission requirements for academic instruction, training venues, billeting, and associated personnel and equipment mission support activities.

### Future of the Force

MARSOC continues to meet the challenge of concurrently *building* the force and *deploying* the force. The lessons learned from ongoing operations have enabled us to adapt our structure, training, and operational cycle to improve force capabilities and to meet requirements. We are still in the process of growing our force to its authorized structure. We are currently at 82 percent of our Marine build, 94 percent of our Navy build, and 75 percent of our civilian build. With continued terrific support from Headquarters Marine Corps, we hope to achieve our manpower goals to become fully mission capable during fiscal year 2012.

As we continue to mature our capabilities and grow our capacity, we are reminded of the many magnificent Marines who have served exceptionally in special operations throughout our Corps' history. First Lieutenant Presley O'Bannon's daring exploits against the Barbary pirates in 1805 began a special operations history that has continued through the Spanish-American War, Nicaragua, Haiti, Dominican Republic, World War II, Vietnam, Afghanistan, the Horn of Africa, and dozens of other small wars and engagements. As the newest member of an incredibly capable joint special operations community, we look forward to providing the Nation with capabilities that will truly contribute to irregular warfare successes globally. We Marines are proud to serve alongside our fellow special operators. We remain Marines first, who are always faithful, always forward, silent warriors. **JFQ**



U.S. Marine Corps (Stephen C. Benson)

Marine Special Operations Regiment members relay enemy target details during fire support and combined arms training

who is near fluent in the language and culture of the county that he will operate in (the remaining members receive survival language training).

After assignment to their units, Marines are sent to follow-on advanced courses offered by our Marine Special Operations School. Additional Service, joint, and SOF courses are also available to them. At the end of the pipeline, the amount of schooling the Marines potentially receive will make them a premier special operator for current and future USSOCOM missions.

Las Flores Area to be ready for occupancy in the summer of 2010. The Stone Bay compound initially opened with a new component headquarters and operations/intelligence building, and will be followed by facilities to support bachelor enlisted housing, health services, equipment operations/maintenance, supply and weapons storage, academic training, both entry level and advance academic instruction, special operations training range, and fitness requirements.

We are also establishing a state-of-the-art Warfighter Rehabilitation Performance





# Legitimizing Army Psychological Operations

By ALFRED H. PADDOCK, JR.

Once again, we hear discussion within the U.S. Army on whether the name *psychological operations* (PSYOP) should be changed—an issue that has arisen periodically for years. The term, defined broadly as the planned use of communications to influence human attitudes and behavior of foreign audiences, is characterized by some as “toxic,” “disinformation,” “unsavory,” and with other pejorative words. This criticism inhibits the ability of PSYOP units to support U.S. military forces and to interact with other executive branch agencies—or so goes the criticism. Thus, some argue, the term must be replaced.

I believe this would be a mistake.

First, I want to place the issue in its historical context. Essentially, three terms have been used since World War I to describe the Army’s employment of persuasive communications to influence the behavior of enemy, friendly, and neutral audiences: propaganda, psychological warfare, and psychological operations.

The term *propaganda* was first widely used by the Army in World War I. Its origins, however, go much farther back. In 1622, Pope Gregory XV created a papal department named the *Sacra Congregation de Propaganda Fide*, or the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith. Although the department was aimed largely at Martin Luther’s call for reformation of the Church, the term at the heart of its name has remained part of our vocabulary.

In his *Munitions of the Mind: A History of Propaganda from the Ancient World to the Present Day*, British historian Philip Taylor states that propaganda is a neutral term, an organized process of persuasion, a means to an end, and that “[w]e need to redirect any moral criticism away from propaganda itself in the direction of the goals and intentions of those conducting it.” This is a key point, which I will revisit later.

In any event, the key organization for Army propaganda during World War I was the Propaganda Subsection in the G2 (Intelligence) of General John Pershing’s Allied Expeditionary Force. Leaflets distributed by balloons and airplanes emphasized surrender themes to German soldiers: promises of good

Above: U.S. Air Force B-36 crew members arm leaflet-dropping bomb for psychological warfare mission over North Korea

Left: U.S. Naval officer loads 25-pound shell with propaganda leaflets prepared by Psychological Warfare Branch of Allied Force Headquarters, which integrated U.S. and British military and civilian propaganda efforts during World War II



MG David A. Morris, USA, commander, U.S. Army Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Command (Airborne), speaks at Independence Day celebration



U.S. Air Force

Alfred H. Paddock, Jr., was on Active duty in the U.S. Army from 1957 to 1988 and served three combat tours in Laos and Vietnam with Special Forces. He also was Director for Psychological Operations in the Office of the Secretary of Defense.



food and humane care, privileges under international law, opportunity to return to families, and so forth.

Some leaflets related progress of the Allied forces on various fronts, with maps showing the territory gained by the Allies, particulars of German losses, and the rapid increase of the U.S. Army in the theater. The Army emphasized factual accuracy with its “combat propaganda,” thereby enhancing its credibility.

A new term—psychological warfare—emerged in World War II, but propaganda remained as a key element. “Psywar” gained recognition early in the war when a group of Americans translated German documents indicating that psychology should be employed in all phases of combat.

Most of the Army’s operational work in psywar took place at the theater level, where the responsible organization was normally designated a psychological warfare branch (PWB). The largest of these organizations was the PWB at Allied Forces Headquarters, activated in North Africa in November 1942. Its head was Brigadier General Robert McClure, who was to play a key role in this field during both World War II and Korea.

In February 1944, McClure, under General Dwight Eisenhower’s command, established the Psychological Warfare Division, Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Forces (PWD/SHAEF), for the

invasion of France and prosecution of the war in mainland Europe. As indicated in its history of operations in the Western European Campaign, 1944–1945, PWD/SHAEF defined *psychological warfare* as “the dissemination of propaganda designed to undermine the enemy’s will to resist, demoralize his followers, and sustain the morale of our supporters.”

Psychological warfare thus became the overall umbrella term—the process—and propaganda was the product (themes, dissemination). This term succinctly encompassed the divisive (undermine the enemy’s will to resist, demoralize his followers) and cohesive (sustain the morale of our supporters) purposes. In actual practice, the two terms were often used interchangeably.

Propaganda directed against the enemy was divided into three classes: “white,” whose source is clearly indicated; “black,” in which a false source is given; and “grey,” in which the source is not revealed. White was often characterized as overt propaganda, grey and black as covert propaganda. Military psywar units concentrated primarily on overt propaganda for maximum credibility of their messages. The Office of Strategic Services—forerunner of the Central Intelligence Agency—employed covert actions. This division of responsibility

for overt and covert propaganda remains today.

In Europe, PWD made radio broadcasts from Office of War Information transmitters and over the British Broadcasting Corporation (indeed, the venerable BBC was often used to disseminate propaganda), conducted loudspeaker broadcasts on the frontlines, and employed large-scale leaflet operations using specially designated aircraft squadrons. PWD even provided leaflets to be dispersed by the

*psychological warfare became the overall umbrella term—the process—and propaganda was the product*

then-novel method of artillery shells designed specifically for that purpose.

The basic Army field operating unit for psywar was the Mobile Radio Broadcasting (MRB) Company, whose personnel could operate loudspeakers and radios, employ mobile printing presses, and prepare leaflet bombs. The doctrinal and organizational concepts embodied by the MRB reappeared in the psychological warfare units formed during the Korean War.



Above: 8<sup>th</sup> PSYOP battalion member and Montagnard loudspeaker team broadcast propaganda in Vietnam  
Left: MG Robert A. McClure, USA, is called the “Forgotten Father of U.S. Army Special Warfare”

U.S. Army

U.S. Army History

During 1945–1946, Army psychological warfare staffs and units dissipated with the general demobilization of the military establishment. A prototype detachment of 2 officers and 20 enlisted men at Fort Riley, Kansas, was the only operational psychological warfare troop unit in the Army when the North Koreans attacked South Korea in June 1950. Reorganized as the 1<sup>st</sup> Loudspeaker and Leaflet (L&L) Company, it was sent to Korea in the fall of 1950 and served as the Eighth Army's tactical propaganda unit throughout the conflict. Tactical propaganda, sometimes called combat propaganda, was directed at specific audiences in the forward battle areas. Mobile loudspeakers mounted on vehicles and aircraft became a primary means of conducting tactical propaganda in Korea.

To conduct full-scale strategic operations, General McClure—now chief of psychological warfare on the Department of Army Staff—directed the 1<sup>st</sup> Radio Broadcasting and Leaflet (RB&L) Group to deploy to Korea in July 1951. It conducted propaganda intended to further long-term strategic aims. The group had the equipment and capability to produce newspapers and leaflets, and to augment or replace other means of broadcasting radio propaganda. It supervised a radio station network known as the Voice of the United Nations and often produced more than 200 million leaflets a week, disseminated by aircraft or artillery shells. Some leaflets, for example, offered inducements for enemy soldiers to surrender, while others bolstered the morale of Korean civilians by proclaiming United Nations support.

Although the 1<sup>st</sup> RB&L Group was a concept accelerated to meet the requirements of the Korean conflict, it and the 1<sup>st</sup> L&L Company performed functions similar to those used in psychological warfare in World War II. It bore a direct linkage to the mobile radio broadcasting companies formed under PWD/SHAEF to conduct operations in North Africa and the European theater. Both the strategic concept embodied in the RB&L group and the tactical propaganda idea expressed by the L&L Company would appear in the capability formed as part of the new Psychological Warfare Center at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, in mid-1952. Indeed, they were forerunners to the activation of the 4<sup>th</sup> Psychological Operations Group in Vietnam.

This Psychological Warfare Center was the brainchild of General McClure, who con-

vinced the Army that psychological warfare and Special Forces units required such a facility and home base. The center consisted of a Psychological Warfare School for psywar and Special Forces instruction, the 6<sup>th</sup> RB&L Group, the 10<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Group, and a psywar board to test materiel, doctrine, techniques, and tactics for psywar and Special Forces.

This home base, the name of which was changed to the Special Warfare Center in 1956, formed the nucleus for expansion into the U.S. Army JFK Special Warfare Center and School after the death of President John F. Kennedy—and eventually, for establishment of the U.S. Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) headquarters at Fort Bragg. (In 2001, the USASOC headquarters building was named in honor of General McClure, “The Father of U.S. Army Special Warfare.”)

Nevertheless, interest in special warfare began to dissipate after the Korean War, and the Army's psychological operations capability had eroded by the early 1960s. In addition, an important change in terminology occurred: psychological operations replaced psychological warfare as the umbrella term. *Psychological operations*, or PSYOP, encompassed *psychological warfare*, but the latter

operated a 50,000-watt radio station and high-speed heavy printing presses, published a magazine for Vietnamese employees working for the U.S. Government and civilian agencies, and possessed a capability for developing propaganda.

PSYOP battalions employed light printing presses, a research and propaganda development capability, and personnel to work with American Air Force Special Operations units for aerial leaflet and loudspeaker missions. Their loudspeaker and audiovisual teams operated with American divisions and brigades or with province advisory teams. The 7<sup>th</sup> PSYOP Group in Okinawa provided valuable backup support for printing and high-altitude leaflet dissemination.

Four target audiences formed the basis of the 4<sup>th</sup> PSYOP Group's overall program in support of the counterinsurgency effort. First was the civilian population of South Vietnam—in essence, “selling” the government of South Vietnam to its people. Next came the Viet Cong guerrillas in the South, followed by the North Vietnamese regular army, and finally the North Vietnamese civilian population.

The 4<sup>th</sup> and its battalions employed the same media used in World War II and Korea—radio, loudspeakers, and leaflets—

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### *interest in special warfare began to dissipate after the Korean War, and the Army's psychological operations capability had eroded by the early 1960s*

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indicated propaganda directed only against enemy forces and populations for divisive purposes. The new and broader term could also be used to describe propaganda employed toward friendly and neutral audiences for cohesive purposes.

As was the case after World War II, the Army severely reduced its psychological operations capability after Korea. Consequently, an insufficient base of PSYOP-trained officers was available when the 6<sup>th</sup> Psychological Operations Battalion was activated in Vietnam in 1965. By 1967, the Army's PSYOP forces in Vietnam had been expanded to a group (the 4<sup>th</sup>) with four battalions, one in each of the four corps tactical zones.

In addition to providing support to tactical field force commanders, the 4<sup>th</sup> PSYOP Group assisted the South Vietnamese government in its communication effort down to the hamlet level. The group headquarters

with the leaflets taking up 95 percent of its effort. The group disseminated propaganda via television directed primarily at the civilians of South Vietnam. It also air-dropped thousands of small transistor radios—pre-tuned to its 50,000-watt radio station—over enemy troop locations.

In targeting the enemy, one of the most effective efforts to which the 4<sup>th</sup> Group provided support was the *Chieu Hoi*, or Open Arms Program. Over the years, approximately 200,000 mostly lower level Viet Cong defected, or “rallied,” to the South Vietnamese government. Some of these ralliers agreed to participate in propaganda campaigns by having their photos taken and composing a simple surrender appeal disseminated by leaflets among their former units.

The 4<sup>th</sup> Psychological Operations Group returned to Fort Bragg in October 1971 as part of the withdrawal of U.S. forces



from Vietnam. Although officially a combat support organization, the 4<sup>th</sup> lost 13 of its members to enemy action during the war, and several others were decorated for valor.

From World War I to Vietnam, the terms *propaganda*, *psychological warfare*, and *psychological operations* were employed in total war, limited war, and counterinsurgency, respectively. They would continue to be used until near the end of the Cold War in the late 1980s when propaganda and psychological warfare were relegated to the glossaries of PSYOP doctrine. Indeed, when I commanded a PSYOP battalion in the mid-1970s and a group in the early 1980s, the Propaganda Development Center was the focal point of our operations. Under the new regime, that entity became the Product Development Center, but the “products” were, in fact, still propaganda. Nevertheless, the erosion of our terminology had begun.

Above, I quoted Philip Taylor’s statement that *propaganda* is a neutral term, an organized process of persuasion, and a means to an end. *The Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (March 2009) defines the word as “[a]ny form of communication in support of national objectives designed to influence the opinions, emotions, attitudes, or behavior of any

population against the Jews, and the employment of propaganda to support U.S. forces in actions that result in the surrender of enemy troops, thus saving their lives and possibly the lives of our own Soldiers. The purposes are completely different. As Taylor states, “We need to redirect any moral criticism away from propaganda itself in the direction of the goals and intentions of those conducting it.” No matter. The term that had been a central part of our doctrine from World War I to the end of the Cold War disappeared. It was not to be trusted. Totalitarian states used it. It represented lies.

General McClure often told his psychological warfare staff and units to “[s]tick to the truth, but don’t be ashamed to use those truths which are of most value to you.” In other words, employ “selective truth,” much like the political propaganda employed by candidates for office in the United States.

A revelatory article that makes this point was Michael Dobbs’ December 2007 piece in the *Washington Post* on December 30, 2007, “The Fact Checker: Sorting Truth from Campaign Fiction.” Citing specific statements of Presidential candidates, Democrat and Republican, Dobbs states many claims were “demonstrably false.” He argues that “the art of embellishment and downright fibbing is alive and well in American politics.” In fact, much of this twisting of the facts is often poor propaganda. In the age of the Internet, as Dobbs notes, the accuracy of a candidate’s statements can be checked. Nevertheless, “electoral rewards from stretching the truth or distorting a rival’s record just as frequently outweigh the fleeting political costs.”

Another example of propaganda used by our government appeared in Robert Pear’s front-page article in the October 1, 2005, *New York Times*, “Buying of News

by Bush’s Aides is Ruled Illegal: Covert Propaganda Seen.” Essentially, the Bush administration commissioned writers to prepare stories praising the Department of Education’s programs and passed them to newspapers that printed the stories without telling readers the origin of the material. Of this affair, the Government Accountability Office stated in its September 30, 2005, report: “The failure of an

agency to identify itself as the source of pre-packaged news misleads the viewing public by encouraging the audience to believe that the broadcasting news organization developed the information. The prepackaged news stories are purposely designed to be indistinguishable from news broadcasts to the public. . . . The essential fact of attribution is missing.”

This is a classic illustration of black propaganda. This and milder forms of propaganda (white or grey) have been a regular feature of American political life since the founding of the Nation. Nevertheless, military psychological operations terms continue to be deemed by some as too sensitive for interaction with commanders, other countries, and some governmental agencies.

With regard to the latter, my favorite anecdote is a discussion I had with a senior United States Information Agency official while serving as the director for PSYOP in the late 1980s. He was an old hand in the business, having been a member of the Joint U.S. Public Affairs Office in Vietnam, which, incidentally, provided policy direction for military PSYOP in the country. We had a candid relationship. When I told him that his agency in reality conducted propaganda and psychological operations abroad, he immediately responded, “You’re right, Al, but we can’t call it that.” For military PSYOP, we *should* call it that.

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*those who criticize the term propaganda allude to its being used only by our adversaries for evil means*

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It is truly ironic that a capability used to assist military commanders in accomplishing national security objectives abroad can be considered un-American, when the same techniques of propaganda are used by our government and political parties for domestic purposes. In a fruitless search for legitimacy, a steady stream of euphemisms is trotted out, usually with the word *information* attached—an amorphous term that can mean anything to anybody.

In May 1994, in a letter to the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict, I wrote that “[a]nother difficulty with the term ‘information’ is its ever-widening definitional boundaries. In all of its permutations . . . it is becoming a morass which will cause even more



PSYOP helicopter equipped with loudspeakers, circa 1964

group in order to benefit the sponsor, either directly or indirectly.”

That is about as neutral a definition as one could ask for. Yet those who criticize the term *propaganda* allude to its being used only by our adversaries for evil means. But surely, for example, there is a difference between Nazi Germany’s use of propaganda to turn its



confusion if [the Department of Defense] uses it to describe what it does in PSYOP. More profitable for the long run, in my view, would be continued efforts to legitimize existing terms rather than apologizing for them or attempting to disguise them.”

That was 15 years ago. Alas, the concerns I expressed have come to pass. A case in point is when the U.S. Special Operations Command renamed its Joint Psychological Operations Support Element the Joint Military Information Support Command in November 2007. Despite this new name, the mission of the organization—psychological operations—remains unchanged.

Now some want to eliminate altogether the name psychological operations—despite the fact that psychological warfare and PSYOP organizations served honorably in World War I, World War II, Korea, Vietnam, and in a variety of roles, to include conflicts, until the present—and despite the fact that our country is now engaged in another ideological Cold War, the very essence of which is psychological in nature. The question must be asked: If *propaganda*, *psychological warfare*, and *psychological operations* were appropriate terms for these earlier threats to our national security, why are they politically incorrect now?

Related to this is the heritage issue. I wonder, for example, how 4<sup>th</sup> PSYOP Group veterans who served in Vietnam—and who lost 13 troops—would feel about changing the name of their unit. And now we have a PSYOP Regiment comprised of one Active-duty and two Reserve Component groups. All have personnel serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. The regiment has as its purpose the development of pride in the heritage of a unit. Changing the PSYOP name will detract from that purpose.

One can only imagine the hue and cry that would arise if a proposal were made to change the name of the infantry, the artillery, or armor. These are combat arms units that use lethal means to accomplish their missions. Thus, it is particularly ironic that some would change the name of PSYOP units that employ nonlethal means to support these combat arms. Apparently, undermining the morale of the enemy is more politically incorrect than killing them.

Then there are practical considerations. A name change would require significant retooling of Service and joint doctrine. Additionally, the development of a PSYOP branch for officers in the Army was a further important step toward legitimizing the name. I have

not heard any calls for renaming the Special Forces branch.

Calling PSYOP or propaganda something else will not deceive anyone. It certainly won't fool our adversaries or the media. As an example of the latter, Pulitzer Prize winner Tom Ricks wrote a front-page article in the *Washington Post* on April 10, 2006, the lead sentence of which read: “The U.S. Military is conducting a propaganda campaign to magnify the role of al-Qaeda in Iraq.” Just changing the name is not going to camouflage what psychological operations does: persuasive communications to influence attitudes and behavior of foreign target audiences in ways that support U.S. objectives. As Richard Crossman, a brilliant propagandist who worked for McClure in World War II, stated, “The art of propaganda is not telling lies, but rather selecting the truths you require and giving it mixed up with some truths the audience wants to hear.” The “truth” is that psychological operations are based on manipulation of facts. Using euphemisms will only draw attention to our efforts to disguise the real purpose of PSYOP.

recommended the creation of an interagency public diplomacy committee to support counterterrorism efforts and a PSYOP working group as part of the committee. These recommendations were implemented.

During my tour as the Director for Psychological Operations in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, one of my top priorities, approved by the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, was institutionalizing PSYOP. To do so, I continued briefing senior officials throughout the Department of Defense, and for 2 years I lectured at the Service war colleges. When the Secretary of Defense recommended to the National Security Council that an interagency PSYOP committee be formed, we insisted that “psychological operations” be included in its title. It was.

A final personal anecdote. A few years ago, I was invited to participate in a National Public Radio panel to discuss psychological operations. As it turned out, the panel comprised three journalists—and me. The moderator was also a journalist. At the beginning, I sensed that they were all just waiting to pounce. So I began my comments with

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*little instruction on psychological operations historically has been included in the curricula of the Army's professional military education for officers*

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Let me address the argument that changing the name would make it easier for PSYOP to be accepted by supported commanders. Historically, the biggest challenge for PSYOP personnel has been convincing commanders how PSYOP can help them accomplish their mission. The PSYOP name rarely plays a part in this equation. Part of that difficulty stems from the fact that measures for effectiveness of PSYOP are often difficult to demonstrate. Another factor has been that little instruction on psychological operations historically has been included in the curricula of the Army's professional military education for officers. Thus, PSYOP personnel continually have to reorient commanders and staff on their capabilities.

As for selling PSYOP at “higher levels,” I should like to provide some personal experience. While serving as the military member of the Secretary of State's Policy Planning Staff with a portfolio that included public diplomacy, PSYOP, and terrorism, I arranged for the 4<sup>th</sup> PSYOP Group to brief senior State Department officials on its activities. I also

a frank explanation of the military's use of PSYOP and propaganda. I also compared it to the hypocrisy of U.S. domestic political propaganda, and cited a couple of examples. When I finished, it was as if all of the air had been let out of their collective balloons, and the discussion proceeded on a much less adversarial basis. After the session, the moderator thanked me for my candor.

What I have described are examples of aggressive institutionalizing that can and should be done by all PSYOP individuals (Active-duty, Reserve Component, and retired) to prevent a loss of identity for their craft. PSYOP personnel should take pride in their discipline and avoid apologizing for its name. The use of euphemisms in an attempt to disguise PSYOP should cease. And senior Army officials must take into account the rich legacy of this specialty, plus the practical limitations of changing its name. In sum, they should resist political correctness and legitimize military psychological operations. **JFQ**

# The Business of War

## The Impact of “PLA, Inc.” on Chinese Officers

By DEAN CHENG

Dean Cheng is a Research Fellow at the Heritage Foundation.

In 1979, as the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) fought its last major war, it was a military still recovering from the ravages of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, when military professionalism had been derided in favor of “People's War,” “human wave attacks,” and the thoughts of Chairman Mao Zedong. Moreover, it was a military that had been repeatedly politicized, as it was often the sole institution that could maintain order while Mao “unleashed” the Red Guards against the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

Three decades later, the PLA is a much more professional force. Gone are the days of focusing on “rifles and millet” and the belief that overwhelming numbers would suffice against technologically sophisticated opponents. Instead, even as it is incorporating a variety of sophisticated weapons, ranging from *Kilo*-class submarines to Su-27 and Su-30 fighter aircraft, the PLA is revitalizing its thinking and organization. To this end, it is promulgating new joint doctrines and regulations that suggest it is grappling with the difficulties of operating not only in the land,

ADM Gary Roughead, Chief of Naval Operations, tours bridge of *Luyang 2* in Qingdao, China, during 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of founding of PLA Navy



U.S. Navy (Trifini M. Jones)

sea, and air environments, but also in outer space and cyberspace. It is also in the process of constructing a long-service noncommissioned officer corps to supplement both its conscripts and its officer corps.

Much of the success of this transition rests upon that officer corps. Of special importance will be the current cohort of midlevel officers, those at the rank of senior colonel (U.S. O-7 equivalent) and below, who will have to sustain ongoing reforms after the current military leadership retires. For these officers, the PLA foray into business in the 1980s and 1990s, often termed “PLA, Inc.,” by Western analysts, was an essential part of their early careers in the military. The experiences they derived from managing commercial entities will likely define their worldview.

### PLA, Inc.

After the passing of Mao, his successor, Deng Xiaoping, sought to reform the Chinese economy. Deng shifted China from a Soviet-style centralized, planned economy that emphasized military production to one oriented toward consumer and light industrial demand. In the wake of the Sino-Vietnam war in 1979, he also slashed the PLA’s budget by nearly 25 percent.<sup>1</sup>

To make these reforms more palatable, in the early 1980s the PLA was allowed to commercialize. This comprised two elements:

- converting the Chinese military industrial complex to production of commercial goods for the consumer and export markets
- allowing various Chinese military units to use their resources to embark on money-making ventures.<sup>2</sup>

Within a few years of this decision, many PLA units had established their own companies, factories, farms, and other commercial enterprises.

By 1999, however, many units were spending more and more time on their profit-making ventures and neglecting their training duties. Moreover, corruption had become an endemic issue within the PLA, threatening not only discipline within the military, but also CCP-army relations. In light of these problems, Deng’s successor, Jiang Zemin, ordered the military to divest itself of most of its businesses (one prominent exception being the PLA’s stake in the Chinese telecommunications industry). Ten years later, most PLA

units appear to have refocused on military training and preparedness and left the commercial world behind.

### Impact on Officers

There is a widespread view that the period of intense commercial focus on the part of the PLA was detrimental to officer development, if only because of the tension between commercialization and professionalism.<sup>3</sup> Yet there were also potential benefits whose impact is less clear. Three are discussed below.

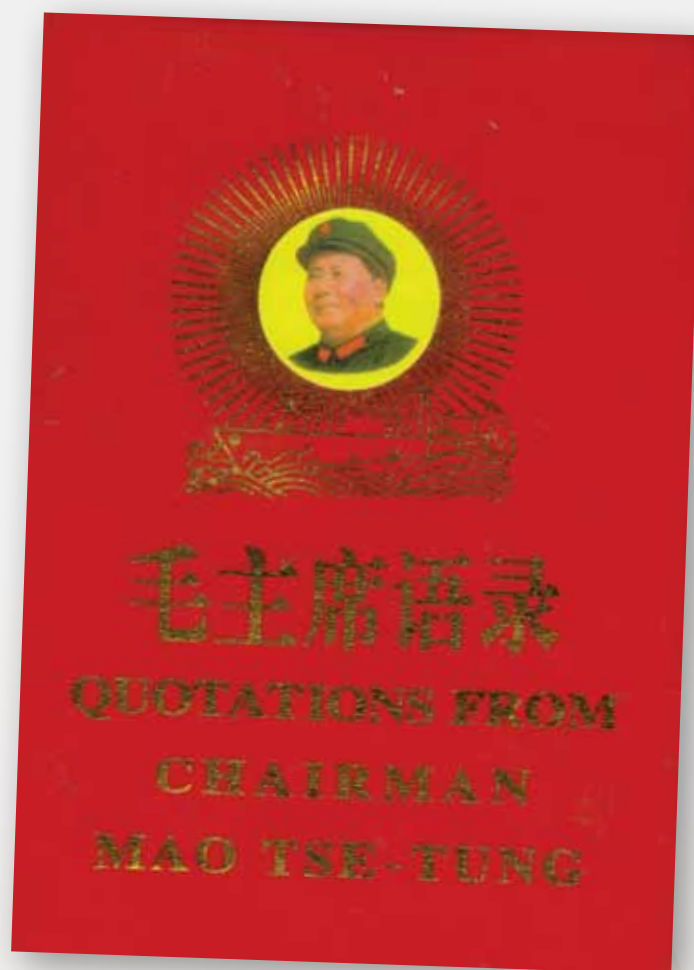
#### *Promoting More Flexible Thinking.*

The PLA that fought the Sino-Vietnam war had been deprived of contact with most foreigners for nearly 20 years, since the Sino-Soviet split. This insulation from larger military and technological developments was symptomatic of the self-imposed isolation that Mao inflicted upon China as a whole. For the PLA, then, entry into the commercial sector promoted interac-

*within a few years, many PLA units had established their own companies, factories, farms, and other commercial enterprises*

tion with the broader Chinese society and economy, themselves undergoing the reform and opening processes, and with the world at large.

This increased interaction with a range of new counterparts likely exposed officers to a variety of new ideas. The focus on profit-making introduced a new set of metrics for measuring success, as studying bottom lines eclipsed studying Mao’s “Little Red Book.” It also likely reminded officers of the importance of flexible thinking as a path to success, as well as the benefits of being open to alternative approaches to achieving a





particular set of goals. All these lessons have applicability in military as well as business contexts.

**Retooling Political Officers.** The General Political Department (GPD) is one of the four general departments that manage the Chinese PLA. While it is responsible for overseeing the political orthodoxy of the PLA, this did not prevent the GPD from managing its own business empire as part of PLA, Inc. More to the point, as the GPD plays an essential role in the training and promotion processes, this meant that both officers and their underlings in the era of PLA, Inc., were being assessed according to their ability to generate revenue and profits. This would suggest that officer selection and promotion by the GPD was based, at least in part, on the qualities of a good businessman—and those qualities may still be part

of the promotion criteria, since they benefit military functions as well.

**Exposing Officers to Foreign Technologies and Experiences.** For many PLA officers, the creation of businesses opened the door to joint ventures with foreign firms. Along with exposing officers to new ideas, these interactions led to initial contact with the various information and sensor technologies that were just beginning to affect both civilian and military capabilities in the early 1980s. The disparity between Chinese and foreign technology levels was substantial and made clear how much ground China had lost through its enforced autarky. Coupled with the impact of the 1991 Gulf War, the importance of high technology was underscored by how the PLA characterizes future wars: Local Wars under High-Tech Conditions now evolved into Local Wars

under Informationalized (or Informatized) Conditions.

This suggests that the PLA is no longer afflicted with an antitechnology attitude; more importantly, it also indicates that the PLA may not be operating under a “not invented here” bias. The combination of domestic technological weakness and lack of combat experience has potentially made the Chinese military more open to incorporating foreign technology as well as to learning from foreign experience.

Today’s PLA officers suffer from lack of combat experience. They also labor under relative technological inferiority compared with their American counterparts. Yet their experiences as entrepreneurs and business managers may have made them more flexible and open to learning from foreign experience. This suggests not only that the PLA is likely to sustain its current set of reforms, but also that it may be a more flexible and agile adversary than might be expected for a military steeped in Marxist-Leninist ideology that has not engaged in direct combat for three decades. **JFQ**

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> James C. Mulvenon, *Soldiers of Fortune* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe Publishers, 2001), 53.

<sup>2</sup> Testimony of Andrew D. Marble to the U.S. China Economic and Security Review Commission, Washington, DC, December 7, 2001.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, David Shambaugh, *Modernizing China’s Military* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 196–204; and Andrew Scobell, *Going Out of Business: Divesting the Commercial Interests of Asia’s Socialist Soldiers*, East-West Center Occasional Paper, no. 3 (Honolulu: East-West Center, January 2000).



DOD (Jerry Morrison)

Secretary Gates greets PLA Deputy Chief of General Staff during Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore



AP Images (Dan Balilty)

Israeli air force F-15I lands at Hatzorim military base in southern Israel

# Israel and the Iranian Nuclear Infrastructure

By BRENT J. TALBOT

In a recent *Wall Street Journal* article, John Bolton asked, “What if Israel strikes Iran?”<sup>1</sup> Certainly there has been a great deal of media attention on this subject, particularly since Israel launched over 100 aircraft in a June 2008 aerial exercise believed to simulate an attack on Iran.<sup>2</sup> It was also rumored that during former Prime Minister Ehud Olmert’s visit to Washington in May of that year, he asked President George W. Bush for permission to overfly Iraq in order to strike targets in Iran, which Bush denied.<sup>3</sup> If true, the denial likely delayed an Israeli attack on Iranian nuclear targets that might have otherwise occurred before President Bush left office. Now that President

Barack Obama has taken up the reins of U.S. leadership and has renewed efforts to jump-start the Arab-Israeli peace process, the question of the Iranian nuclear threat to Israel remains unresolved.

Most defense experts agree that a strike on Iranian nuclear infrastructure would only delay, and not prevent, Iran’s efforts to acquire nuclear weapons. Even the current Israel Defense Forces (IDF) Chief of Staff, Lieutenant General Gabi Ashkenazi, has admitted his belief that an aerial attack would only set back Iran’s nuclear program 2 or 3 years.<sup>4</sup> With Iran’s ability to attack Israel through its proxies Hamas and Hizballah, it seems unlikely that the benefits of delaying

Iran’s nuclear program by that length of time outweigh the costs to Israel in terms of immediate, elevated threats to or within its borders. Moreover, President Bush would have had U.S. interests in mind when denying Israel a green light to bomb nuclear sites in Iran, and Bush chose not to launch such an attack himself despite speculation to the contrary and a greater capability to do so. U.S. forces in the region would be vulnerable to Iranian retaliation, and Iran certainly has the potential to disrupt ongoing U.S. peace-building efforts in both Iraq and Afghanistan. In other

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words, such an attack appears unfeasible and unlikely for both Israeli and U.S. forces now or in the foreseeable future.

Still, history reveals numerous military actions that appeared unfeasible and unlikely at the time, such as the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, or combined Arab actions against Israel on Yom Kippur in 1973. To understand the real threat perception and likelihood of an attack by Israel, one must look into a security culture that has developed along far different lines than that which has evolved in America. The U.S. security culture, developed in a land separated from its enemies by two great oceans with friendly neighbors on its northern and southern borders, had no need to focus on security. While security became a major concern in the aftermath of Pearl Harbor and again after events of 9/11, Americans have generally been more focused on the economy or their personal lives than the survival of the United States. Moreover, there is a clearly established chain of civilian control of the military in U.S. politics, and the decision to use military force is made by civilian leadership and only as a last resort in most cases. Finally, the U.S. military is not designed to prevent attacks

on the American homeland, but to punish enemies on their own territory. Compared to the Israeli populace, living in range of missiles from enemies both near and far, the American homeland is enemy-free.

Israel is a state born of the Holocaust from which European Jewry fled, having no other place to go. Additionally, another 800,000 Jews migrated from Arab and Persian homelands to join them in Israel, some fleeing potential genocides of their own. The Jewish people have fought almost continuous wars against their Arab neighbors since the founding of the Jewish state, clashing in 1948, 1956, 1967, 1973, 1982, and 2006. They have also dealt with two major intifadas initiated by the Palestinians—as well as sporadic violence in the interim—since the 1967 occupation of the West Bank and Gaza (in 1987 and 2000).

Israeli civil society is best described as a “national security culture,” focused on the survival of a state ever involved in war or gearing up for war. Security has always taken priority over economics, personal concerns, or other governmental matters. Feelings of insecurity among the Israeli electorate are more likely to change the leadership at the political

helm than any other concern.<sup>5</sup> Professor Yoram Peri confirms this view: “The centrality of security, the extensive human capital and social capital invested in the military, and the country’s institutional interests created in Israel a social structure different from that of democracies living in peace. . . . Israel exists as a nation in arms and, therefore, lacks integral boundaries between its military and society.”<sup>6</sup> Moreover, there is a lack of distinction between civil and military leadership since so many former generals serve as politicians, enabling a security-focused decisionmaking process at the highest levels of government. Recent policies, such as the construction of the security barrier or “fence,” have been aimed at ending Palestinian suicide bomber infiltrations into Israel at the expense of world opinion concerning Israel’s treatment of Palestinians. And because of its effectiveness at ending the most recent intifada, Israelis applaud the barrier. Survival of the state is foremost in the minds of Israel’s politicians and citizenry, even at the expense of world acceptance.

Still, the Western perception would counter that Israel must feel more secure now than at any time in its history. It has



AP Images (Hasan Sarbakshian)

Sign reading “Atomic Power Plant” points toward nuclear facility in Bushehr, Iran



signed peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan. The Golan front has remained quiet since 1973, even after Israel's September 2007 attack on a suspected nuclear complex in Syria, which drew no retaliation. Iraq—its onetime principal threat—is no longer a concern with Saddam Hussein removed from power. Lebanon's powerful Hizballah organization has not reattacked with

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*Israeli civil society is best described as a "national security culture," focused on the survival of a state ever involved in war or gearing up for war*

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missile volleys since 2006, even though the recent so-called Gaza War (December 2008–January 2009) left Hamas clamoring for help from its symbolic ally to the north. The Gaza operation itself has stopped Hamas support for rocket attacks on Israel, at least temporarily, and the fence has ended suicide attacks. The Israeli military has proven itself the most capable in the region.

With this state of affairs in mind, I recently interviewed Israel's Director of Military Intelligence, Major General Amos Yadlin. He confirmed that Iranian nuclear efforts are Israel's number one security concern at present and that Iran is considered a much greater threat than Hizballah or Hamas, both of whom have recently been dealt with, and both of whom Israel feels have been deterred from further attacks in the near term. He believes Israel is capable of dealing with these border threats even if Iran should increase its arms supplies and encouragement to harm Israel.<sup>7</sup> Though he made no mention of any plans to attack Iran, one must consider that Iran is the only remaining existential threat to the state of Israel, that reelected Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has called upon Muslim leaders to wipe Israel off the map,<sup>8</sup> and that Israel, a state always focused on its security first and foremost, has planned and trained for missions requiring the scale and distance to successfully attack nuclear sites in Iran. Bearing this in mind, one must consider that such an attack could be forthcoming, and if so, the United States and its coalition partners should immediately plan for the aftermath

as it is likely to impact operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Persian Gulf.

### Why Israel Might Attack

In 1981, Israel destroyed the Iraqi nuclear complex at Osirak. World opinion condemned the attack, as did the United States. Yet Israel suffered no real political consequences, and the destruction of the reactor is widely believed to have prevented Saddam from acquiring nuclear weapons in the 1980s. Some would even say the United States has Israel to thank for the fact that it did not face a nuclear Iraq during the Gulf War in 1991. In September 2007, Israel again attacked a suspected nuclear complex, this time in neighboring Syria—a country that is number two on the Director of Military Intelligence threat list—and again it suffered no consequences. The event got little publicity, in part because the Syrians themselves were slow to admit that any attack had occurred, perhaps embarrassed by their ineptitude in detecting or countering it and the potential exposure of an undisclosed nuclear program, in violation of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Considering that in both of these instances Israel's regional nuclear-pursuing neighbors were thwarted in



Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert meets President George W. Bush at White House, June 2008

AP Images (Evan Vucci)

their desires, that Israel suffered no real consequences from either engagement, and that Iran is now the third country in the region attempting to go nuclear, Israel's track record seems to indicate that an attack on Iran will occur sooner or later. Supporting this view is the comment made by Shaul Mofaz, former IDF chief of staff and then deputy prime minister, who told an Israeli newspaper, "If Iran continues to develop nuclear weapons, we will attack it."<sup>9</sup>

Though Mofaz no longer holds a cabinet office, the new government led by Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu achieved victory over a Kadima-led coalition primarily due to increased security concerns from the electorate. Had Kadima's disengagement plan been successful in achieving a more peaceful environment after Israel's 2005 withdrawal from Gaza, the electorate would have left it in power. But with the Hamas takeover of Gaza and increased violence that resulted in the need for the IDF to enter Gaza during December-January 2009 (just prior to elections), the electorate favored the conservative parties, and Likud was able to engineer the current governing coalition.<sup>10</sup> Thus, a more conservative, security-conscious government is in place. Ehud Barak,

as would be required by any peace treaty favored by President Obama, whose recent efforts to reinvigorate the peace process could increase pressure on the Israeli government to renew negotiations with the Palestinians. Noted expert John Duke Anthony believes that by attacking Iran, IDF forces would transfer attention from Israel's territories far to the east as the United States and

*the likelihood of a decision to launch a preemptive strike has arguably increased with the accession of Netanyahu*

international community became increasingly concerned about potential repercussions in the oil-rich gulf.<sup>11</sup> In other words, an attack on Iran might actually *reduce* pressure from the Obama administration on Netanyahu's government to make peace with the Palestinians.

At the same time the Israeli government has changed hands, U.S. intelligence sources are claiming that the "earliest possible date Iran would be technically capable of producing enough highly enriched uranium for a weapon is late 2009," though the more

deter any attack."<sup>14</sup> Even more remarkable, intelligence uncovered by the *London Times* during August 2009 claims that Iran has openly stated that it completed its research program to weaponize uranium and could feasibly make a bomb within 1 year of a decision by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. It would take 6 months to enrich enough uranium and another 6 months to assemble a warhead that could be carried aboard the Shehab-3 missile.<sup>15</sup> Referring back to the Osirak case, Israel struck just days before the reactor was to become operational; so if Israeli intelligence sources agree to similar assessments regarding the Iranian nuclear timetable, an IDF strike could be expected soon.<sup>16</sup>

A major argument against an IDF air-strike on the Iranian nuclear infrastructure is that it is too dispersed and hardened to be targeted with any high probability of success. But Efraim Inbar, director of Israel's Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, claims that Natanz is the key facility. Without uranium enrichment, the Iranian program cannot go forward. Inbar concludes that "all the eggs are in one basket at Natanz."<sup>17</sup> Thus, one target is within Israel's capabilities, as was the case in Iraq and Syria.



Israel Defense Forces

Israeli Chief of the General Staff speaks at Tactical Command and Staff College in Galilee



Israel Defense Forces

Israeli Homefront Command search and rescue unit conducts training to rescue people trapped under collapsed building

another former IDF chief, remained as defense minister, and he is also an advocate of action against Iran. Thus, the likelihood of a decision to launch a preemptive strike has arguably increased with the accession of Netanyahu.

Another crucial issue concerning the elections is Netanyahu's opposition to further withdrawal from the West Bank,

probable timeframe is 2010–2015.<sup>12</sup> Iran also has demonstrated the capability to deliver an atomic weapon, having put a satellite into orbit during February 2009.<sup>13</sup> An *Economist* assessment stated in July 2008 that the "window for military action against Iran could close within a year, because by then Iran might already have developed a bomb, or improved its air defenses sufficiently to

### Natanz the Target?

Interestingly, while still in its nascent stage, enrichment operations at Natanz were suspended in November 2003 after Iran signed an agreement with France, Germany, and the United Kingdom (known as the E3). However, with Ahmadinejad's first election in 2005, Iran violated the enrichment agreement and resumed research and

development efforts at Natanz against E3 and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) wishes.<sup>18</sup> In 2006, the IAEA referred the matter to the United Nations Security Council, and since that time Iran has played a cat-and-mouse game of cooperation and noncooperation with the IAEA on the matter of uranium enrichment. During July 2008, President Ahmadinejad boasted that 6,000 centrifuges were installed at Natanz.<sup>19</sup> This figure is double U.S. intelligence estimates, though data indicate that the facility is designed to house nearly 50,000 centrifuges when complete, and analysts believe that all the centrifuge cascades—with newer and more efficient models coming in later installments—could be fitted in 2 years and operational by 2012.<sup>20</sup>

Massachusetts Institute of Technology nuclear experts agree that Natanz is the most important target in the Iranian nuclear infrastructure, though they recommend waiting until all centrifuges are in place to maximize attack effectiveness.<sup>21</sup> Still other estimates state that 4,000 to 5,000 centrifuges would be enough to generate “one weapon’s worth of uranium every eight months or so,” meaning the Israeli intelligence estimate may necessitate an attack

well before all centrifuges are delivered to Natanz.<sup>22</sup>

Nuclear experts also state that there are two more critical nodes in the nuclear infrastructure: uranium conversion facilities at Isfahan, and the heavy water plant and plutonium reactors under construction at Arak.<sup>23</sup> The experts’ target analysis indicates that 50 Israeli fighters (F-15s and F-16s), armed

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*the Israeli intelligence estimate  
may necessitate an attack  
well before all centrifuges are  
delivered to Natanz*

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with appropriate global positioning system—or laser-guided penetrating bunker buster weapons, would achieve a high probability of success against these targets of concern: Natanz, Isfahan, and Arak.<sup>24</sup>

Three possible routes of attack have been analyzed.<sup>25</sup> The most likely route is across Turkey, as it allows refueling over the Mediterranean during the mission for all fighters departing for and returning from target(s) in Iran. More importantly, this route mitigates the need to overfly potentially hostile Arab countries that may engage

Israeli aircraft or at least prevent refueling operations over their territory. Turkey is also an ally of sorts and was likely complicit in the 2007 attack on Syria—detachable wing tanks from an Israeli fighter were found on the Turkish side of the Syrian-Turkish border during that operation—and some even speculated that the Syrian raid was a dress rehearsal for an Iranian attack.<sup>26</sup> Such complicity indicates that Turkey might welcome overflight of its territory as in the 2007 attack. But it also leaves the option for plausible denial in the largely unmonitored airspace of eastern Turkey, and this route would mitigate the need to get a green light from the United States for the attack. The U.S. Navy-controlled Persian Gulf and U.S. Air Force-controlled Iraqi airspace would be circumnavigated. Turkey certainly shares Israeli concerns about a nuclear Iran. Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has stated that he cannot support Iran’s nuclear program if it seeks development of weapons of mass destruction.<sup>27</sup>

Israel’s June 2008 exercise provides empirical evidence that Israel is capable of conducting a major attack on Iran. More than 100 F-15 and F-16 fighters flew over 900 miles from their bases in Israel out over

Iranian President Ahmadinejad visits new facility producing uranium fuel for planned heavy water nuclear reactor near Isfahan



AP Images (Vahid Salemi)



Israeli Minister of Defense Shaul Mofaz at Pentagon, 2002



already tested both weapons in combat: the GBU-28 against Hizballah (2006) and the GBU-39 against Hamas (2009).<sup>30</sup>

### What about Reprisal?

The biggest argument against an Israeli attack is the expected reprisal by Iran. With influence over both Hamas and Hizballah, Iran would likely use its proxies to launch retribution attacks. A second option would be a missile barrage aimed at Israel. More worrisome for the United States would be an attack on oil shipping or an effort to close the Strait of Hormuz. While these reprisals seem more than Israel would be willing to bargain for, it has already dealt with Hamas and Hizballah, especially during the last 3 years; and both parties have been worn down by Israeli efforts to reestablish deterrence. Israel can handle terror threats from these groups, and neither is an existential threat like a nuclear-armed

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*Israel has already dealt with Hamas and Hizballah, and neither is an existential threat like a nuclear-armed Iran*

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Iran. Furthermore, Israel's missile defense system could handle an Iranian missile volley. Finally, the oil threat is more of a U.S. problem, and closing the strait would be as much a problem for Iran—in need of hard currency through oil sales—as for anyone else, particularly the Chinese, who buy over half a million barrels of Iranian oil each day.<sup>31</sup>

Israel is likely to launch a preemptive strike in the near future against the Iranian nuclear infrastructure to prevent, or at least delay, Iran reaching the nuclear threshold. This argument goes against the typical Western security mindset as mentioned above. But the goal is to provide evidence that Israel is a security-driven society. For Israelis, "The world does not function according to principles of justice and morality, but serves as a battlefield for the disputes of actors, namely the different states. . . . Reality is shaped by the use of force."<sup>32</sup> Diplomats like to believe that persuasion and appeasement are alternative tools in relations between states, but a security-driven society focuses on military solutions to threats, especially those that are existential. Israel perceives its adversary as a target needing preemption rather than a persuadable entity. It sees Iran's nuclear ambitions as

the Mediterranean, refueled, and returned to simulate a mission that could reach Iranian targets given straight line routes from bases in Israel.<sup>28</sup> Though the actual distance is 1,380 miles per an assessment using the Turkish route to their farthest aim point in Isfahan, with the added ability to refuel on the return route, there is no reason Israeli fighters would be limited by the distance to the target. Moreover, the fact that Israel was able to conduct a mass exercise, using twice the calculated numbers of fighters, indicates that it not only could destroy the three key targets, but also the excess capacity would be available against other targets, including air defenses,

or perhaps more of the well-dispersed Iranian nuclear infrastructure.

Some might argue that even though Israel has sufficient aircraft, it would be unable to penetrate Natanz. The Iranians learned the lesson of Osirak and thus built a hardened and dispersed facility at Natanz, where two separate halls containing the centrifuge cascades are buried 8 to 23 meters underground and protected by multiple layers of concrete.<sup>29</sup> But recent sales by the United States of GBU-39 bunker buster bombs, along with earlier sales of the more capable GBU-28 to the Israeli air force, means that Israel has the weapons to do the job. Finally, Israel has

DOD (Helene C. Stikkel)

aimed at its small territory, which lacks the strategic depth to weather a nuclear attack. The cost-benefit analysis of a state living in the shadow of another holocaust perceives only military solutions. The United States and its coalition partners should prepare for the inevitable aftermath. **JFQ**

## NOTES

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<sup>2</sup> Guy Raz, "Israel Military Sends Message to Iran, World," *All Things Considered*, National Public Radio, June 21, 2008, available at <www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=91773676>.

<sup>3</sup> Jonathan Steele, "Israel Asked US for Green Light to Bomb Nuclear Sites in Iran," *The Guardian*, September 25, 2008, available at <http://guardian.co.uk/world/2008/sep/25/iran.israelandthepalestinians1>.

<sup>4</sup> David E. Sanger, "US Rejected Aid for Israeli Raid on Iranian Nuclear Site," *The New York Times*, January 11, 2009, available at <www.nytimes.com/2009/01/11/washington/11iran.html>.

<sup>5</sup> Author interview of Reuven Hazan, Hebrew University elections expert, Jerusalem, June 4, 2009. See also Yoram Peri, *Generals in the Cabinet Room: How the Israeli Military Shapes Israeli Policy* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2006), especially chapters 1 and 16.

<sup>6</sup> Peri, 29.

<sup>7</sup> Author interview of Major General Amos Yadlin, Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) Director of Military Intelligence, Tel Aviv, June 14, 2009.

<sup>8</sup> See Sean Yoong, "Ahmadinejad: Destroy Israel, End Crisis," *The Washington Post*, August 3, 2006, available at <www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/08/03/AR2006080300629.html>.

<sup>9</sup> Quote from June 2008. See Steele.

<sup>10</sup> Hazan.

<sup>11</sup> John Duke Anthony, *War with Iran: Reactions and Requirements* (Washington, DC: National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations, July 30, 2008), 18.

<sup>12</sup> J. Michael McConnell, *Annual Threat Assessment of the Intelligence Community for the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, February 7, 2008), 13.

<sup>13</sup> "Iran Launches Homegrown Satellite," February 3, 2009, available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\_east/7866357.stm>.

<sup>14</sup> "Dangerous Games: Iran's Confrontation with the West," *The Economist*, July 5, 2008, 60.

<sup>15</sup> James Hider, Richard Beeston, and Michael Evans, "Iran Is Ready to Build an N-Bomb—It Is Just Waiting for the Ayatollah's Order," *London*

*Times*, August 3, 2009, available at <http://ebird.osd.mil/ebfiles/e20090803693955.html>.

<sup>16</sup> Ehud Barak met with Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Michael Mullen in December 2007 and briefed him on the Israeli belief that Iran could have a nuclear weapon by 2009, though 2010–2011 was more likely. See Steven Erlanger, "Israelis Brief Top US Official on Iran," *The New York Times*, December 11, 2007, available at <www.nytimes.com/2007/12/11/world/middleeast/11mullen.html>.

<sup>17</sup> Author interview of Efraim Inbar, Colorado Springs, CO, February 10, 2009.

<sup>18</sup> Paul K. Kerr, *Iran's Nuclear Program: Status* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, November 20, 2008), 5.

<sup>19</sup> Jon Leyne, "Iran Announces Nuclear Expansion," July 26, 2008, available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\_east/7526894.stm>.

<sup>20</sup> Kerr, 9–10.

<sup>21</sup> Whitney Raas and Austin Long, "Osirak Redux? Assessing Israeli Capabilities to Destroy Iranian Nuclear Facilities," *International Security* 31, no. 4 (Spring 2007), 14–15.

<sup>22</sup> Sanger.

<sup>23</sup> Raas and Long, 12–13.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 27–30.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 23–27.

<sup>26</sup> Peter Beaumont, "Was Israeli Raid a Dry Run for Attack on Iran?" *The Guardian*, September 16, 2007, available at <www.guardian.co.uk/world/2007/sep/16/iran.israel>.

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<sup>28</sup> Donald Macintyre, "Israel's Dry Run 'Attack on Iran' with 100 Jet Fighters," *The Independent*, June 21, 2008, available at <www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/israels-dry-run-attack-on-iran-with-100-jet-fighters-851614.html>.

<sup>29</sup> Raas and Long, 17.

<sup>30</sup> Yaakov Katz, "IAF Uses New US-Supplied Smart Bomb," *Jerusalem Post*, December 29, 2008, 1.

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<sup>32</sup> Peri, 217.



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## Defense Horizons 69

*To Build Resilience: Leader Influence on Mental Hardiness*

The military profession is inherently stressful and becoming more so for U.S. troops faced with repeated and longer deployments in multifaceted and ambiguous missions. While attention has focused in recent years on identifying and treating stress-related breakdowns, little investment has gone toward the study of healthy, resilient response patterns in people. In this paper, Paul Bartone, Charles Barry, and Robert Armstrong focus on mental hardiness, an important pathway to resilience. After reviewing the major stress factors in modern military operations, the authors summarize the theory and research behind the mental hardiness construct. They conclude with suggestions on how to increase hardiness and resilience in organizations, primarily through the actions and policies of leaders. By setting the conditions that increase mental hardiness, leaders at all levels can enhance health and performance while preventing stress-related problems.

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Brig Gen David A. Cotton, USAF, director of Command, Control, Communications, and Warfighting Integration, U.S. European Command, confers with participants in exercise Combined Endeavor 2009

U.S. Air Force (Joshua L. DeMott)



# An *Intelligent* Theater

By JAMES G. STAVRIDIS

Operationally, the U.S. military is essentially organized geographically. The world is divided into six combatant commands with wide-ranging responsibility for Department of Defense (DOD) activity across a defined theater.

At U.S. European Command, for example, our area of focus is the 51 countries that make up the European continent, stretching from the Bay of Biscay in the Atlantic Ocean to the far Pacific shores of Russia. Our area runs from the Mediterranean to the North Pole, and includes Turkey, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Israel outside of Europe. It is an area with close to 800 million people, more than 10,000 nuclear weapons, and the most powerful collection of armed forces and the

highest gross domestic product among the half-dozen combatant commands.

We are, of course, enormous consumers of intelligence. Our dedicated intelligence apparatus runs above 1,800 people, all focused on our particular theater of operations. Yet I often ask myself the question, and no pun is intended: Is this the most intelligent way to organize ourselves in the area of intelligence?

I think we can save resources, operate more efficiently, and provide commanders at the theater level and below better intelligence by organizing ourselves better.

As we look into the next decade, expending the time and energy to rethink the shape of theater intelligence structures and organizations is an investment worth making. Balancing analytic agility needed to support

commanders against their demands to enable operational forces puts our defense intelligence enterprise on the horns of a dilemma: where and how should it create analytic agility and at the same time maintain functional alignment over the long haul?

The key is agility: we should apply some of the principles of special operations to our theater intelligence approach.

## Is What We Have Still Relevant?

As we look at the intelligence structure of the Department of Defense after 9 years

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**Admiral James G. Stavridis, USN, is Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, and Commander, U.S. European Command. He was formerly Commander, U.S. Southern Command.**



of war, preceded by an additional decade of intense operations approaching war (Somalia, Haiti, the Balkans, Operations *Northern Watch* and *Southern Watch* in Iraq, Colombia, and hostage rescue and disaster relief missions), it seems that we are finally coming to grips with the intelligence demands of high-fidelity, high-tempo tactical operations. That is the good news. However, we still could do better on what type and size intelligence organization we need to support the combatant commanders.

Much of what currently exists at these vital headquarters in Hawaii, Tampa, Miami, Colorado Springs, and Stuttgart, Germany (where U.S. European and U.S. Africa Commands are collocated), is grounded on a 1990–1991 model in which General Norman Schwarzkopf deployed forward to Saudi Arabia and essentially turned his combatant command forward headquarters into a joint task force (JTF). Arguably, we have been trying to replicate all combatant command and JTF intelligence functions at the theater level since. Our most recent iteration of transforming these organizations is the Joint Intelligence and Operations Center.

With the advent of joint training and education programs since the 1990s that emphasized joint integration, functional delegation, and technology-enabled horizontal and vertical collaboration, the need for large, theater intelligence centers of any name is diminishing. Add in the examples of Iraq and Afghanistan, with their exceptionally robust and capable intelligence structures forward and immediately available to the operational commander, and the continued support of large, theater-level organizations “in the rear” is even more suspect.

The question, then, is: What intelligence support does the 21<sup>st</sup>-century theater strategic commander really need? Clearly, we need to exercise our Title 10 and Title 50 authorities and operational responsibilities in the context of national security and national military strategies. We need to determine if the current theater intelligence structure template—fundamentally unchanged for nearly 20 years—is still relevant to supporting commanders. Are they the best we can do to provide the appropriate level and type of intelligence to commanders in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Are they efficient and cost-effective?

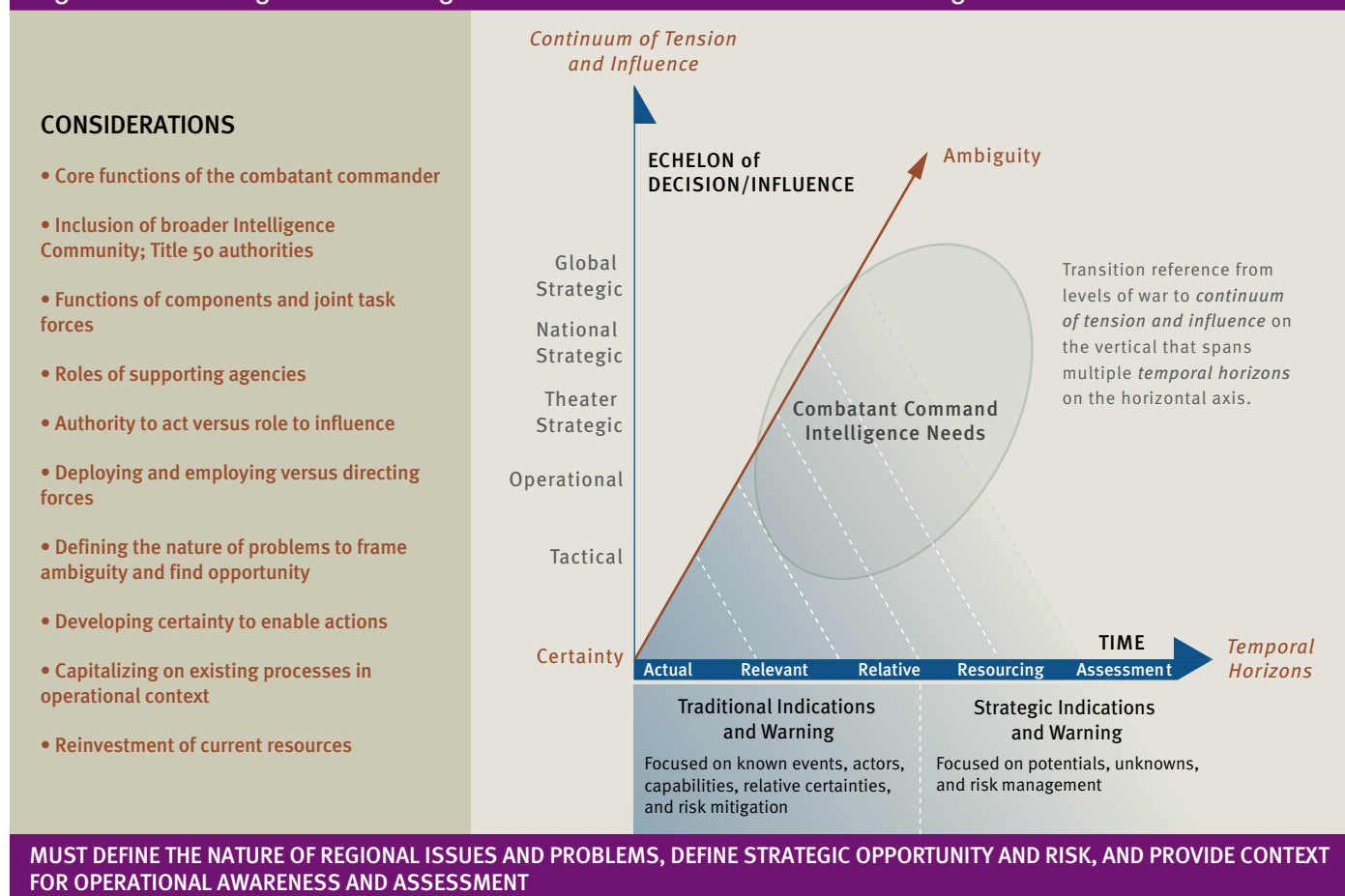
## Defining the Unknown

Commanders work in the realm of strategic ambiguity. We are expected to pursue national security objectives through a host of means, often without a clear picture of all the competing interests. That is fine and is what we are paid to do.

Of the three primary Unified Command Plan responsibilities commanders hold—to develop plans for contingencies, direct operations, and perform other activities to shape the environment—the third consumes the bulk of their energies. The simply stated task of “shaping” has such broad-ranging implications that we can no longer afford to look just at the traditional aspects of military intelligence. We will engage across a host of political, sociological, cultural, informational, and military issues with leaders of all types throughout the assigned region.

These engagements are our part of a “whole-of-government” approach to national security. They demand that theater intelligence integrates a broad, strategic depth to supporting analysis in addition to the traditional order of battle and indications and warning (I&W) that have been the bread and butter of intelligence centers for more than a decade (see figure 1).<sup>1</sup>

Figure 1. Rethinking Theater Intelligence: Nature of the Commander's Challenge



Our responsibility for preparing contingency and deliberate plans implies that we are also responsible for implementing those plans in accordance with DOD established procedures and processes. Two supporting intelligence tasks need to be supported: all-source analysis that contributes to planning as formalized in the DOD Directive for Intelligence Planning,<sup>2</sup> and an operational linkage to and alignment between the defense I&W process and the crisis and operational planning processes based on Guidance for Employment of the Force (GEF) planning and contingency tasking.

It is notable that while theater commanders typically direct operations, we generally do not conduct operations. The intent is for operations to be conducted by either the theater Service components or joint forces apportioned to us under a JTF commander. This has a significant impact on functional alignment of intelligence skills. We need to put our skills and functions where they align operationally.

We also need to look at time differently at the theater level (see figure 2). Tactical commanders can work in real time and may project themselves into future time to forecast their next engagement with an enemy force. The tactical world is one of high certainty with tangible, physical actions and results. Theater commanders' realms are not as certain, as they work with time horizons that are much farther out and impact a much broader set of factors. They and their staffs are working to affect events, people, and situations across a time continuum that may stretch for a decade.

It is clearly important for the component commanders to know where every enemy submarine, tank, and airplane is

and develop order of battle updates that determine enemy capabilities and subsequently force capabilities that need to be developed—a primary Title 10 responsibility of the Service departments and chiefs. But the theater commander's intelligence organization does not need to focus on detailed force tracking and order of battle functions.

Instead, the theater commander's interest lies in understanding the strategic reasons why forces are employed relative to U.S. national security interests. This understanding provides the rationale for commanders to develop plans and propose force and capability requirements.

Theater targeting is another function that needs to be scrutinized for potential restructuring/realignment. We must think in terms of theater versus operational targeting, then again in terms of national strategic versus theater strategic targeting, to determine the best place to apply intelligence human resources. We need a clear relationship between targeting skills and the level of command that is actually going to find, fix, and affect the target. Thus, we at a theater command may find minimal need for targeteers; instead, we should work to create a resource to meet a significant need at commands such as U.S. Strategic Command and U.S. Special Operations Command, or at theater functional and component commands and JTFs.

Exploitation is another area we should rethink. The National Cryptologic Representative (NCR) model is generally working well. With a few embedded leaders, the NCR can garner the support of thousands for our employed forces forward. Are we willing to apply the model to other disciplines and functions?

The last piece is interagency cooperation. With the broadening aperture we use to see and understand our regions, we need to rethink and fully empower the concept of reachback. The concept of reaching out and leveraging resources external to DOD needs to become inherent and institutionalized for theater intelligence. Whatever our theater intelligence organization evolves into, it has to be agile, integrate into the Nation's Intelligence Community, provide our people the best professional opportunities for growth, and have the capacity to expand and contract quickly to meet demands within a theater or in support of others.

*the concept of reaching out and leveraging resources external to DOD needs to become inherent and institutionalized for theater intelligence*

## Defining What We Need

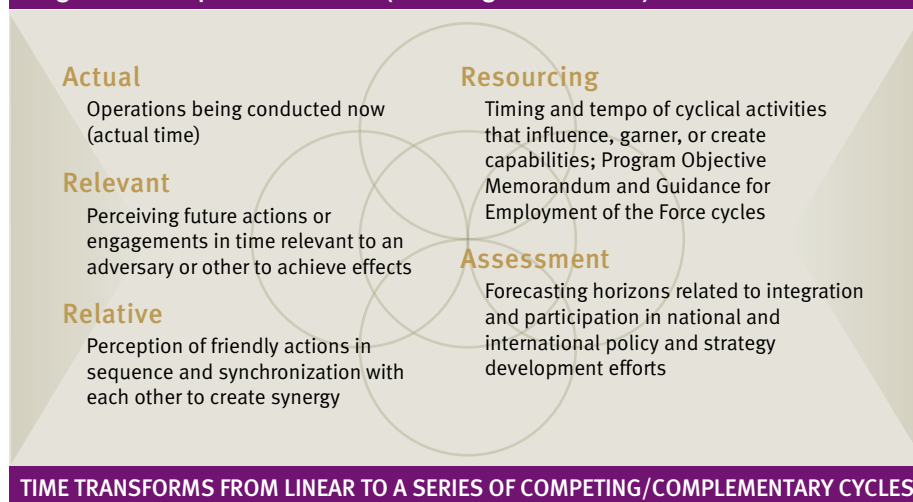
Conflict in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will demand more intelligence capabilities at lower echelons of command than ever before. Pervasive intelligence support across the force is critical and places intensive strain on our capacities. The voracious consumption and production of tactical and operational intelligence are unprecedented. Sustaining the manpower that represents realized intelligence capabilities forward at all levels is a must.

Manpower capacity must be adequate to support what is needed on a "normal" basis and programmed for expansion in crisis. Investing in the information technology and physical infrastructure for crisis operations is critical to that planning. However, the luxury of maintaining any additional crisis manpower on hand is no longer feasible.

I&W processes are critical to effectively forecasting when to transition from a steady-state to a crisis posture. The I&W process must be effectively operationalized. This will only work with education and full integration of I&W and operational processes—not the absorption of one by the other, but *full integration*.

Critical intelligence functions are more effective when they are focused on supporting units that will conduct operations or affect an action. Planning groups that consist of components, designated JTF staffs, and supporting

Figure 2. Temporal Horizons (Thinking about Time)





GEN Norman Schwarzkopf, USA, commander in chief, U.S. Central Command, visits troops who took part in Operation Desert Storm, 1992

DOD (Dean Wagner)

agencies can bring in the expertise to build joint targeting/effects lists. This allows our theater staffs to concentrate on development of targeting guidance and policy. Accordingly, planning skills will be more valuable than targeting skills at the theater level. This implies that theater components and combat support agencies (CSAs) will provide targeting expertise to our planning groups as they work.

The current analytic skill set does not encompass all the requirements we have based on National Security Strategy objectives. The transnational nature of 21<sup>st</sup>-century threats, such as terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, pandemic disease, and human and narco-trafficking, demands that our intelligence professionals and organizations be networked to garner a broader set of skills and competencies. Reaching out is not optional, and integrating the Director of National Intelligence (DNI) representative to support the theater intelligence effort is pivotal.

Theater intelligence infrastructure development and maintenance, partner nation capacity-building, and sensitive intelligence activities will continue. As we rethink our theaters, the DNI and Intelligence Community as a whole will welcome some of the opportunities we present. We have to make sure our skills and capabilities are articulated in clear and relevant terms to the rest of the community.

### Options

There are options we can pursue as we rethink theater intelligence. Although any viable option will get the job done, some will incur more risk than others. The key will be

to balance current demands against future requirements adequately to allow forecasted, managed, and timely expansion and contraction of organizations at all levels.

We can continue onward essentially “as is,” with periodic shuffling of the work force between commanders and agencies based on the best argument layered on current priorities. This weights main efforts but keeps large portions of the overall Intelligence Community capacity locked into current fights and creates risk to the theater’s future shaping and engagement efforts.

We can reshape based on “getting rid of the spare tire” (see figure 3). This option keeps specific theater I&W, collection management, and enhanced analytic skills at the theater command level. Combat support agencies would still provide embedded expertise to draw products forward into the combatant command analytic shops as required, much like the National Cryptologic Representative model currently employed by our theater commander’s staffs.

Targeting, order of battle, battle tracking, and other selected functional skills would be pushed to Service centers, theater Service and functional components, JTFs, and combat support agencies. This provides components with additional manpower to support troop rotation units and gives combat support agencies the capacity to support sustained operational theater rotational force requirements.

### Nonnegotiable

There are a few nonnegotiable areas as we go about this rethinking. Certain intelligence functions have to be retained at the

theater level; however, that does not necessarily mean they have to stay where they are within the theater command. For instance, there is still a requirement for a viable, robust I&W mechanism to monitor the theater and forecast decision and transition points, as well as opportunities. However, the mechanism can be an integrated element of the command center/theater monitoring/crisis action planning function.

Integrated strategic analysts from across the government bring the skills needed at the theater level. Our national security is not just about military threats, but also competitors who employ the full set of national instruments. Energy, transportation, commerce, and agriculture are some of the areas we need to reach out to.

Intelligence campaign planning and programmatic integration and oversight are critical at the theater level. We have to make sure that we translate our understanding of why things are happening into realistic

**Figure 3. Getting Rid of the “Spare Tire”**

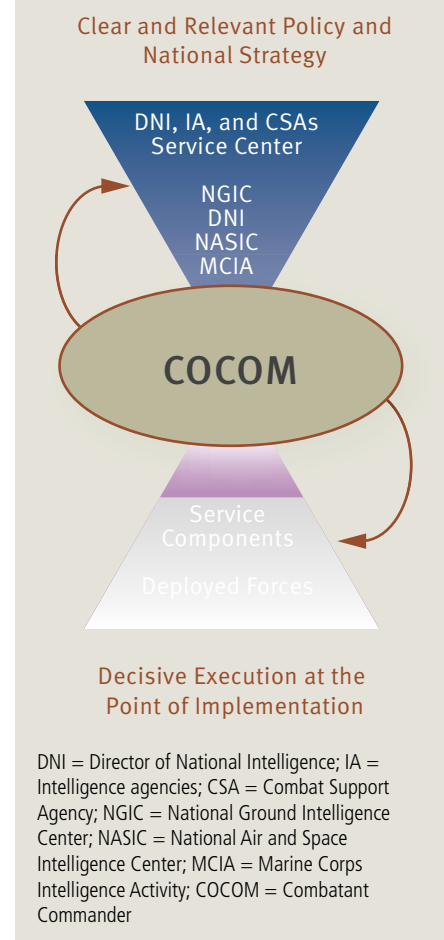




Figure 4. Rethinking Theater Intelligence: Reinvesting Resources



requirements that can shape the future force and drive adjustments to our strategic posture.

### Weighing the Options

Looking at essentially a corporate restructuring, we have to consider the benefits and risks:

- Core functions retained at the theater command level must be relevant to managing the challenges at the theater strategic level, identifying opportunities to adroitly engage at the national strategic level, and providing direction to the operational level efforts.

- Inclusion of the broader Intelligence Community is critical to understanding how national resources and capabilities can be leveraged, both in our favor and against us. The issues of energy, economics, health, agriculture, and commerce increasingly are being used as the national instruments of choice by competitors.

- With continued seasoning of the force, our components and JTFs are becoming exceptionally skilled at using capabilities that only existed at theater level or in the special operations forces 10 years ago. They are equally experience- and technology-enabled, and we should empower them with the capabilities that shorten their operational and tactical sensor-actor linkage while unencumbering our theater effort.

- The roles of our supporting agencies as they relate to responding to theater require-

ments will evolve. In particular, the command and control/supporting-supported relationships will need to be redefined.

- Authority to act versus role to influence is always a consideration and will drive the type and scope of intelligence production. Experience and education will be key aspects for defining the skill requirements needed

*authority to act versus role to influence will drive intelligence production*

at the theater: planners and general military intelligence, interagency, and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance managers will be the four cornerstones. This will be augmented with the right level of process management and oversight.

- Deploying and employing versus conducting operations defines where critical operational and tactical intelligence skills such as time-sensitive targeting support and exploitation are needed.

Risk has to be managed. As our people learn new approaches to their jobs, and our organizations redefine their roles and functional boundaries, there is potential for processes to develop holes, or for functions to “fall off the moving cart” as they transfer

from one organization to another. Care must be taken. Consequences of failure are high.

### Where We Might Go

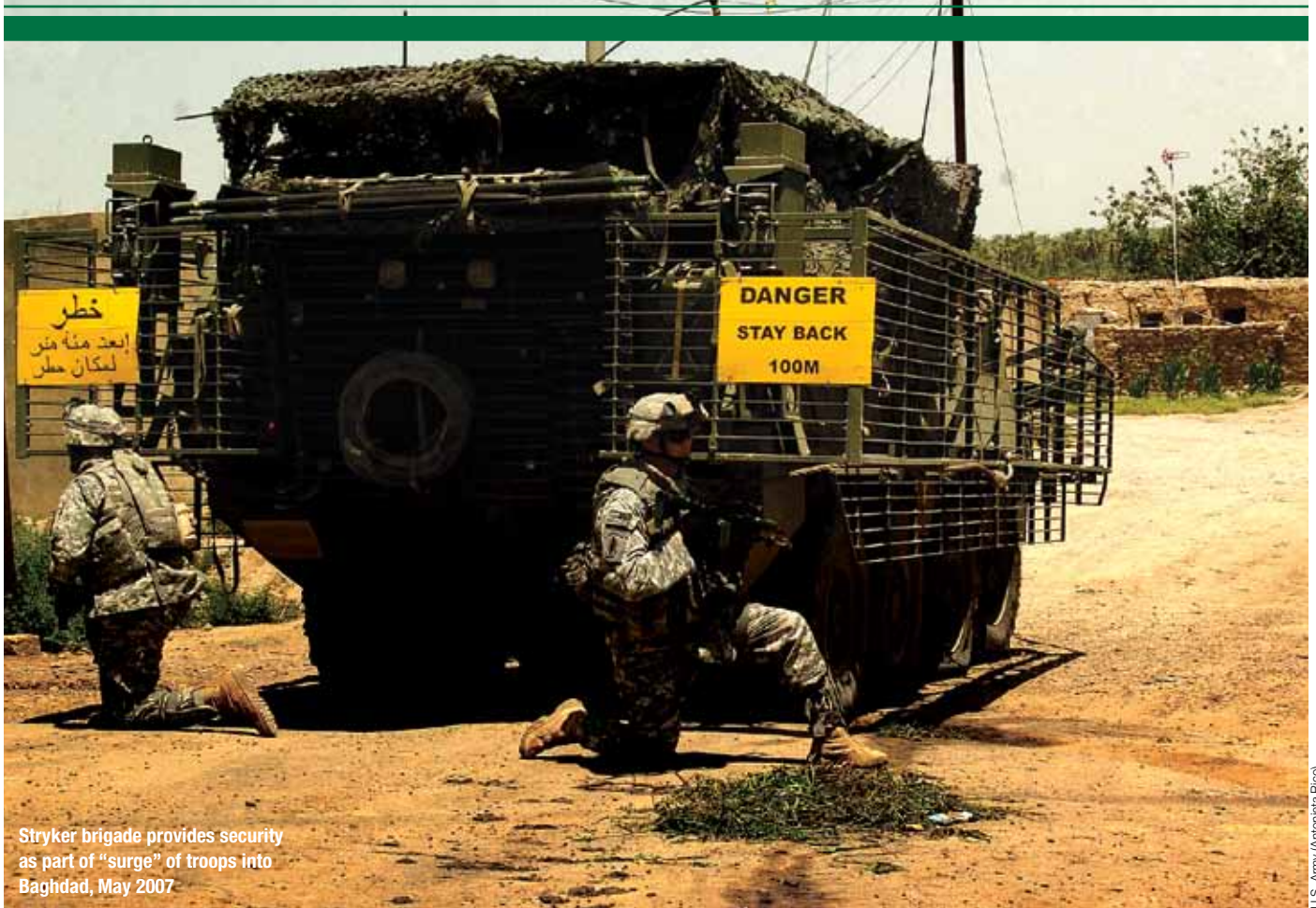
What might this look like? A likely scenario is small, agile, adaptive intelligence organizations led by innovative thinkers who exercise the authorities to focus on and define strategic problem sets—think of them as intelligence “special operators” attached in small groups directly to theater commanders (see figure 4). They then reach back as needed to pull product to the commander’s level.

This will also require highly disciplined processes and procedures to fully exploit *all* theater staff capabilities and capacities found in our headquarters, as well as among our components and assigned forces, and clearly defined support relationships of the department’s CSAs and DNI support. Hard thinking and analysis will be crucial, but the potential payoff in efficiency and quality of support is high. **JFQ**

### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Scott Corrigan, “Setting Conditions through Intelligence Operations,” briefing slides with scripted commentary, Pinnacle: “Joint Operations Module,” Joint Warfighting Center, Suffolk, VA, August 4, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Memorandum 3314.01, “Intelligence Planning,” Washington, DC, February 28, 2008.



Stryker brigade provides security as part of "surge" of troops into Baghdad, May 2007

U.S. Army (Antonieta Rico)

# The Leavenworth Heresy and the Perversion of Operational Art

By JUSTIN KELLY and MICHAEL J. BRENNAN

*War and politics, campaign and statecraft, are Siamese twins, inseparable and interdependent; and to talk of military operations without the direction and interference of an administrator is as absurd as to plan a campaign without recruits, pay or rations.<sup>1</sup>*

Brigadier Justin Kelly, Australian Army (Ret.), was Director General of Future Land Warfare in Army Headquarters and Commander of the Land Warfare Development Centre. Dr. Michael J. Brennan is Director of General Simulation in the Australian Department of Defence.

**W**ars are fought to achieve a distribution of political power that is satisfactory to the victor. Political power rests on the acquiescence of a population—however that is attained. Therefore, the fundamental challenge in war is to assemble a sequence of actions that seems likely to change the minds of a (hostile) population. Some stratagems, tactics, or weapons may be, or become, inimical to that shift in the popular consensus and be counterproductive. Some may have mixed impacts, influencing different parts of the target community in different ways. Actions to overcome armed resistance may alienate sectors of the population, while failing to do so may be a path to defeat. Shifts in the circumstances on the ground, in the domestic politics of the belligerents, or in the





The Battle of Koniggratz by Georg Bleibtreu

Wikipedia.org

wider international community may validate, invalidate, or alter the strategic objectives sought, the campaign plan pursued, or the tactics employed. Although these complexities are not new, they are becoming increasingly salient in the contemporary setting.

The aphorism “strategy proposes but tactics disposes” is important here. Unless strategy includes a tactical view, it may seek objectives that are practically unachievable, or it may miscalculate the costs and benefits likely to emerge from a conflict. These costs are not limited to the direct economic and social impacts of war on the belligerents but extend to international public opinion and international politics. The consequences of tactical actions can, more than ever, decide not only who wins the war but also the shape of the peace that follows it.

Equally, tactics need to serve strategy, and tactical action without strategic purpose is merely senseless violence. The strategic direction of a war needs to be intimately connected to the details of the warfare being conducted to ensure both that it is making realistic demands and that the warfare remains appropriate to the wider conduct of the war. Moreover, tactics need to be constantly seeking to contribute to the ends laid down by strategy with economy and efficiency, and with nuance shaped by an awareness of the wider conduct of the war. A two-way conversation between strategy and tactics is fundamental to the successful prosecution of any war.

Sound theory attempts to deal with this reality. The German school of military theorists that emerged around the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, for example, saw war as a “giant demonic force, a huge spiritual entity, surcharged with brutal energy.”<sup>2</sup> For those responsible for the management of this beast,

it was clear that to be understood and properly directed, war needed to be seen in the round. As Gerhard von Scharnhorst asserted, “One must habitually consider the whole of war before its components.”<sup>3</sup> Michael Handel expands on this proposition, arguing that war needs to be viewed as a gestalt, or complex whole comprising concrete and abstract elements, and explaining that “because of its infinite complexity and non-linear nature, war can only be understood as an organic whole not as a mere compendium of various separate elements.”<sup>4</sup>

Nowadays, political leaders are not prepared from birth to be students of war, and war has expanded beyond a localized cluster of tactical actions. In the face of today’s complexity, the understanding and managing of war as a whole are shared across a bureaucracy. The military’s interaction with that bureaucracy is colored—if not quite regulated—by its doctrine. This article argues that the existing understanding of the meaning and role of operational art is based on poor

*in the face of today’s complexity, the understanding and managing of war as a whole are shared across a bureaucracy*

theoretical foundations, is implicated in a pattern of U.S. failures of strategy, and is not able to accommodate the evolution of warfare as it is currently anticipated.

### From Strategies of a Single Point to Modern Campaigns

The need for operations was a product of changes brought about by the Napoleonic

concept of the nation-in-arms and the impact of the Industrial Revolution. The nation-in-arms provided huge armies, while the Industrial Revolution provided the means to equip, deploy, command, and sustain them. The result was that whereas in the wars of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, armies in the field seldom exceeded 150,000, Napoleon invaded Russia in 1812 with 600,000 men, and the Prussians invaded France in 1870 with 1,200,000. As a result of this increase, the size of the battlefield grew from a few kilometers wide in Frederick the Great’s time to several hundred kilometers in France in 1871.

The use of seemingly inexhaustible mass armies supported by the full economic power of increasingly well-organized states moved war, at least in Europe, from limited conflicts of dynastic maneuvering to unlimited and stupendously violent confrontations seeking the complete subjugation of the enemy. This raised the stakes of war for the belligerents at the same time that the increased scope and dispersion of action reduced the ability to maintain tight control. Therefore, whereas it remained a common practice for European monarchs to accompany their armies into the field until well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century, this no longer ensured that the means committed to tactical engagements remained yoked to strategic objectives.

G.S. Isserson describes a typical Napoleonic campaign as “a great, long approach, which engendered a long operational line, and a short final engagement in a single area, which, with respect to the long operational line is a single point in space and a single moment in time.”<sup>5</sup> Echoing Carl von Clausewitz—“The field of battle in the face of strategy is no more than a point; in precisely the same way the duration of battle reduces to a single moment in time”—Isserson describes Napoleonic war as the era of single-point strategy since “the entire mission of a military leader was reduced to concentrating all his forces at one point and throwing them into battle as a one act tactical phenomenon.”<sup>6</sup>

In this context, the closely contemporaneous Austro-Prussian (1866) and Franco-Prussian (1870–1871) wars marked a watershed. The war of 1866 demonstrated the strategy of a single point—Koniggratz—but, by 1870, the larger armies and more expansive theater of operations created new needs. In 1870–1871, there were many battles that influenced each other and that extended through time and across space. War had outgrown the



U.S. Soldier on patrol outside Forward Operating Base Salie, Baghdad



U.S. Army (Albino Mendoza III)

strategy of a single point. Whereas in 1866 all the Prussian armies moved toward Koniggratz, in 1870 the Germans' frontage was 100 kilometers in their assembly areas, immediately increasing to 150 kilometers as the force advanced. The defeat of France required four discrete combat links: Spicheren-Werth, Metz, Sedan, and Paris, each of which represented a cluster of lesser battles of varying scale. This meant that battle, instead of occurring in a single place with the mass of forces of both sides engaged, became distributed into a number of subordinate battles across a sometimes expanding front. As a result, "[Helmuth von] Moltke was faced with a completely new problem of coordinating and directing combat efforts, tactically dissociated and dispersed in space to achieve the overall aim of defeating the enemy."<sup>7</sup>

As a consequence of this realization, toward the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, German thinking included awareness "that the battlefield had grown larger and deadlier. Battles and engagements had lost their distinctiveness and would blend into an all-encompassing 'Gesamtschlacht' [overall battle] that might extend across the entire width and depth of the theatre of war."<sup>8</sup> Of course, without some unification, the *Gesamtschlacht* would threaten

to dissolve into an uncoordinated brawl. A framework to direct it was required and, at the latest, by 1895 one had emerged and is described by Colmar von der Goltz:

*In the course of military events there will always be separate groups of affairs springing into prominence, the parts of which are more intimately connected with each other than the preceding or subsequent occurrences. Military activity then tends with livelier interest towards a special object and leaves all others to one side, or subordinates them, until the former is attained. After that, a certain abatement, or perhaps a brief pause for recuperation, may be observed until a more rapid course of action is again adopted, and, in a manner, a new idea, a second objective, becomes visible.*

*a common leading thought, and not arbitrarily or accidentally strung together, is a matter of course, and does not remove the distinction.*

Again, among certain operations a more intimate relationship will generally be brought about by the fact that they are conducted under similar circumstance, at the same time of year, against the same hostile army and are separated from the rest of the operations through conditions of time or space, change of opponents or alteration in the method of conducting the war. Such an association of operations is called a "campaign," which forms a definite portion of the war.<sup>9</sup>

Therefore, by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there was an understanding that the evolution of warfare, increasing size of

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*by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there was an understanding that conditions had led to the need to group tactical actions into operations and to group operations into campaigns*

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*Every such group of actions will be composed of marches, the assumption of positions, and combats, and is called an "operation." . . . That the different groups of occurrences . . . must be connected by the bond of*

armies, improvements in firepower, communications, and logistics, and consequent expansion of theaters of operations had created new conditions. These conditions had led to the need to group tactical actions

into operations and to group operations into campaigns. As a result, strategy was faced with problems of a complexity that were new to it. Rather than war planning involving the design of a single campaign focused on creating the opportunity for a single decisive battle, it now involved a need to plan possibly several campaigns, each of which was itself a cluster of discrete, and largely foreseen, operations intended to achieve intermediate objectives, the summation of which represented the objective of the campaign as a whole. The summation of the objectives of each of the campaigns, in turn, represented the objectives of the war.

At the same time, the need to coordinate multiple blows distributed across time and space but supporting a single unifying idea broadened the understanding of the campaign (adding a geographic meaning to its previous temporal one) and created the special meaning of *operation* that we retain today. Within the campaign, clusters of tactical actions, grouped in time or location, and pursuing their own unifying idea—but one subordinate to that of the campaign—formed individual operations. The arrangement of these tactical actions and the retention of their focus on the campaign intent formed the entirety of the new, and as yet nameless, kid on the block—operational art. Whereas in 1866, the congruence of the war, the campaign, and the Battle of Koniggratz made operational art unnecessary, by 1870–1871, it had become essential.

### Giving the New Kid a Name

It was the Soviets who gave us the term *operational art*. Although the term *operation* in its special meaning of a sequenced group of tactical actions had been around since the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the identification and codification of operational art had to await the arrival of the socialist state. The Soviets, guided by dialectical materialism, found it necessary to distill “science” out of the universal experience of war and as a result produced a comprehensive and multipartite taxonomy of its components.<sup>10</sup> In Soviet usage, *military science* was understood as a system of knowledge facilitating the understanding of practical experience. *Military art*, as a subset of military science, involved the application of this system of knowledge in practical situations.<sup>11</sup> *Operational art*, a subset of military art, combined tactics and logistics to assemble a series of tactical problems intended to achieve an intermediate aim within a campaign.

By 1923, Mikhail Tukhachevsky had begun to articulate the broad shape of Soviet operational art:

*Since it is impossible, with the extended fronts of modern times, to destroy the enemy's army at a single blow, we are obligated to try to do this gradually by operations which will be more costly to the enemy than to ourselves. . . . In short, a series of destructive operations conducted on logical principles and linked together by an uninterrupted pursuit may take the place of the decisive battle that was the*

*form of engagement in the armies of the past, which fought on shorter fronts.*<sup>12</sup>

Tukhachevsky and his colleagues saw maneuver as having physical rather than moral objectives—the Soviets wanted to *annihilate* the enemy. As a result, Tukhachevsky was quite clear that “an operation is the organized struggle of each of the armies for the destruction of the men and material of the other. Not the destruction of some hypothetical, abstract nervous system of the army, but destruction of the real organism—the troops and real nervous system of the opponent, the army's communications, must be the operational goal.”<sup>13</sup>

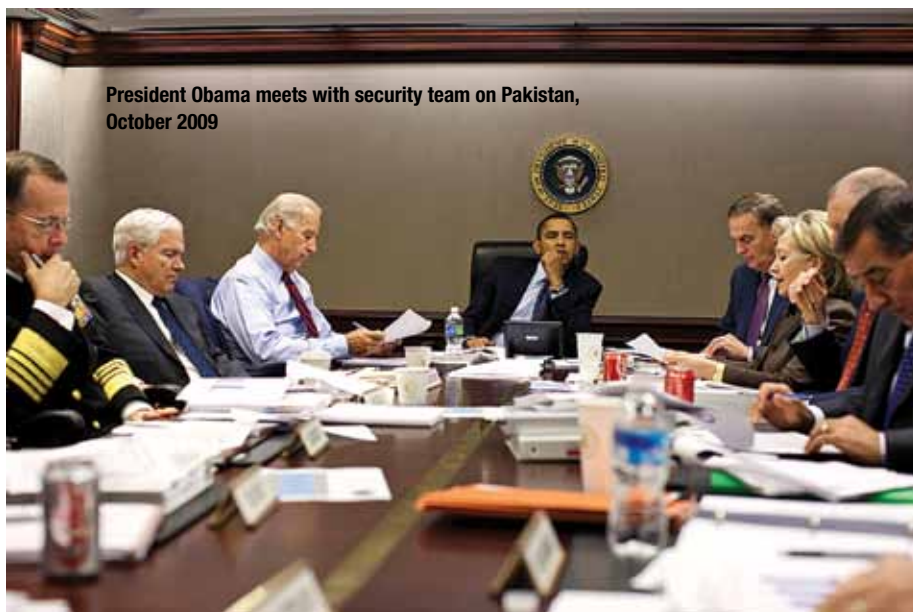
This statement encapsulates the two dominant streams in Russian operational art: successive operations (the infliction of a series of damaging blows) with deep operations (the linking of these blows to achieve penetrations of increasing depth until the enemy defensive zone, including deep reserves, had been

*because single decisive battles were no longer expected, the path to the annihilation of the enemy needed to be broken into a series of operations*

pierced and the conditions for mobile warfare thereby reestablished). This would create the conditions for the encirclement and subsequent annihilation of large enemy groups. These two ideas were eventually combined in Soviet deep operations theory, in which a deep attack was understood as simultaneously destroying, suppressing, and pinning down not only those defending forces designated to repel an attack from the front, but also those located well behind the front.

The evolution of the theory of the deep attack took place in conjunction with a refinement in Soviet understanding of operations and operational art. Because single decisive battles were no longer expected, the path to the achievement of the annihilation of the enemy needed to be broken into a series of operations. Operations were understood as a sequence of tactical actions that were:

*directed towards the achievement of a certain intermediate goal in a certain theatre of military operations. . . . On the basis of the goal of an operation, Operational Art sets forth a*



President Obama meets with security team on Pakistan, October 2009

White House (Pete Souza)

*whole series of tactical missions . . . [and] dictates the basic line of conduct of an operation, depending on the material available, the time which may be allotted for the handling of different tactical missions, the forces which may be deployed . . . and finally the nature of the operation itself.*<sup>14</sup>

In this, there is a clear hierarchy of responsibilities: strategy frames the campaign; that is, it defines the theater, sets objectives, and allocates resources while the campaign commander, working within this framework, decides on the successive operations necessary to achieve his campaign objectives.<sup>15</sup>

### The Heresy Emerges

In 1982, the U.S. Army published a revised version of Field Manual (FM) 100–5, *Operations*, which described how the Army intended to fight. The 1982 version formed a key component in the post-Vietnam renaissance that was sweeping through the Army at the time. The advent of the all-volunteer force brought with it a renewal of military professionalism in the widest sense, and this flowed into approaches to training and education as well as how the Army as an institution viewed war and preparation for it. Most importantly for our purposes, however, it introduced to the U.S. Army the idea of the *operational level of war*.

It is not clear how the German view of war as a whole or the Soviet recognition of operational art became translated, in American usage, into a discrete level of war existing somewhere between strategy and tactics, but therein lies the source of much subsequent confusion. This confusion is demonstrated in the single paragraph that introduced this new species to the military menagerie:

*The Operational Level of War involves planning and conducting campaigns. Campaigns are sustained operations designed to defeat an enemy force in a specified place and time with simultaneous and sequential battles. The disposition of forces, selection of objectives and actions to weaken or outmaneuver the enemy all set the terms for the next battle and exploit tactical gains. They are all part of the operational level of war.*<sup>16</sup>

Here, FM 100–5 removes from strategy its traditional role of planning campaigns and conflates the term *campaign* with what the Soviets would recognize as an *operation*—a

sequence of simultaneous and sequential battles connected by a unifying idea and intended to defeat an enemy force. This original error was further developed in the 1986 version of FM 100–5 when the term *operational art* was introduced to the American lexicon and defined as “the employment of military forces to attain strategic goals in a theater through the *design* [emphasis added], organization and conduct of campaigns and major operations.”<sup>17</sup> This new and heretical understanding of operations and operational art spread through the Anglophone world like a virus, and, with minor variations in spelling, the same definitions appeared in British, Canadian, and Australian military doctrine by the early 1990s and remain relatively unchanged to this day.

There is nothing wrong with ascribing new meanings to existing terms, and therefore the FM 100–5 definition is not necessarily wrong. However, in this case it has the pernicious effect of perverting the original purpose of operational art—facilitating the two-way conversation between tactics and strategy—and instead, in association with a discrete and influential level of command, actually works to weaken this connection. The misunderstanding of the role of operational art proselytized in FM 100–5 and the creation of the notion of an “operational level of war” has led it to assume a level of independence that has usurped the role of strategy and thereby resisted the role that politics should play in campaign planning.

Art Lykke, in an influential article in 1989, described strategy as consisting of ends (objectives toward which one strives), ways

(courses of action), and means (instruments by which some end can be achieved).<sup>18</sup> If we accept this, we can conclude that strategy necessarily requires the simultaneous consideration of ends, ways, and means. In the case of a specific conflict, the choice of ways includes campaign design: the decisions on whom, where, and how to fight. Campaign design would also include a clear view on the scheme of maneuver, the operations that seem likely to be necessary, and therefore the resources required. Failure to complete this examination, or errors in its completion, risks seeking to achieve too much with too little or, conversely, incurring opportunity costs that might detract from the prosecution of the wider conflict. Equally, each individual campaign needs to be examined in the wider strategic context to ensure that the ends-ways-means rationale for it internally is in accordance with the higher direction of national strategy and is politically sustainable through its planned duration. In this context, operations—as a sequence of tactical actions and tactics, actual battles, and engagements—clearly come under the category of means.

Pleasingly, this analysis seems to lead to a model broadly in accordance with Scharnhorst’s and Clausewitz’s direction that we consider war as a whole. Furthermore, it apparently encapsulates the idea of war as a gestalt and offers opportunities for the multiple loops and connections that recognize war as a complex, adaptive system. This model, shown in figure 1, is broadly in accordance with theory and is entirely consonant with German and Soviet approaches to operational art. In contrast, however, if we conduct a similar

Figure 1. Ends, Ways, and Means in War as a Whole

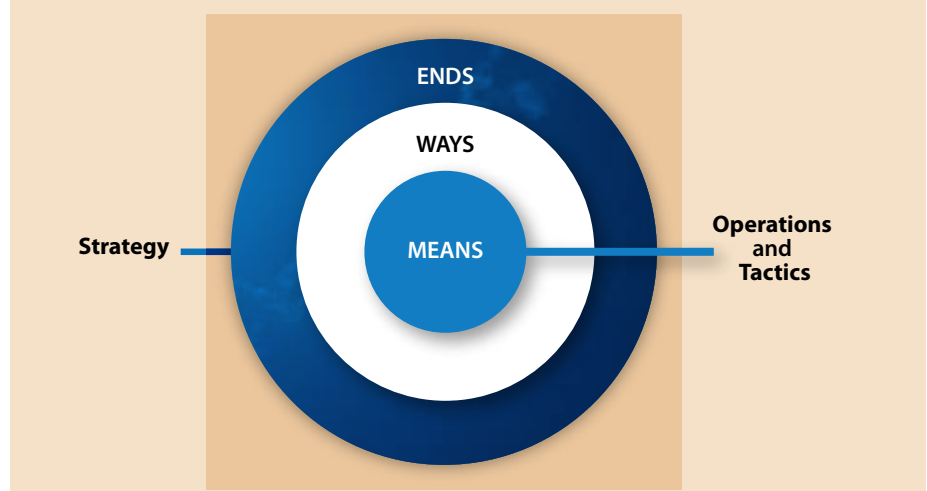
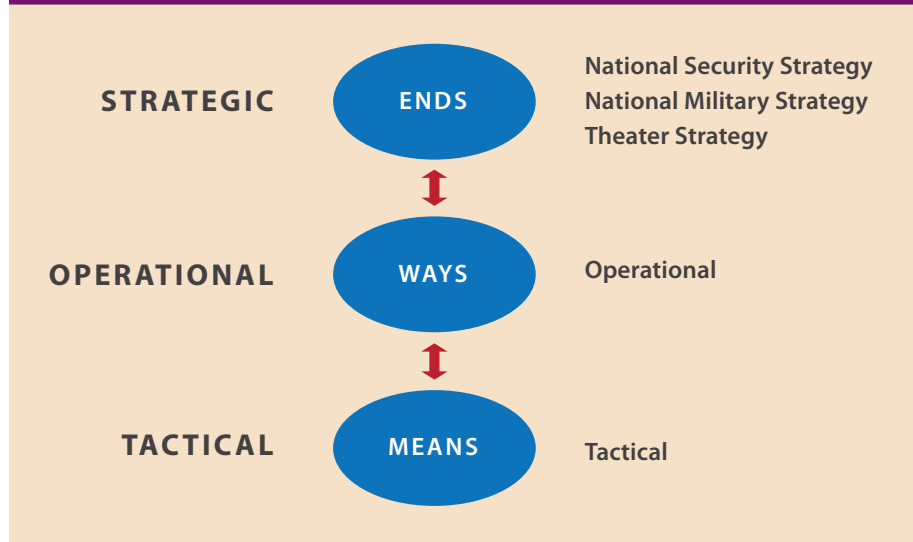




Figure 2. The Continuum of War



analysis with a discrete level of war and its associated level of command, a hierarchical model emerges such as that in figure 2.

This, the “continuum of war” model, is in accordance with most extant Western doctrine and reflects what Eliot Cohen has referred to as the “Huntingtonian” or “normal” theory of civil-military relations.<sup>19</sup> In this model, it is the “duty of the statesman to formulate a ‘clear, concise and unambiguous declaration of national policy’ to guide the military.”<sup>20</sup> Once this declaration is provided, the politicians should simply get out of the way and let the military get on with its job. As the Command and General Staff School wrote in 1936:

*politics and strategy are radically and fundamentally things apart. Strategy begins where politics ends. All that soldiers ask is that once the policy is settled, strategy and command shall be regarded as something in a sphere apart from politics. . . . The line of demarcation must be drawn between politics and strategy, supply and operations. Having found this line, all sides must abstain from trespassing.*<sup>21</sup>

Although this is admittedly an extreme view which was written in 1936, it continues to echo today, and “a simplified Huntingtonian concept remains the dominant view within the American defence establishment,” with the Caspar Weinberger and Colin Powell doctrines reflecting its continuing authority.<sup>22</sup>

The existence of an independent level of war, served by its own level of command and operating free from unwelcome interference from strategy, represents the foundation on which the U.S. military defines its profes-

sional jurisdiction. In this context, operational art, as defined in the 1985 version of the pamphlet, represents the pinnacle of the profession of arms. It was therefore both a product of the self-perception of the U.S. military and a necessary input to it. This arguably is the true reason for the unchallenged theoretical solecism that appeared in FM 100–5 in 1982.

Unfortunately, the hierarchical separation of levels of war on which the continuum of war is based is not reflected in practice. Strategy is free to expand, contract, or alter its objectives as circumstances create new opportunities or foreclose others, or as the costs-and-benefits calculus alters. The connection between war and politics gives strategy functionality, and therefore war is necessarily vested with the same volatility as politics. Any attempt in theory to insulate the practical conduct of war from this volatility is erroneous. This means there is not an overlap between strategy, operational art, and tactics; they are completely fused. Tactical actions necessarily carry strategic implications, and strategy conceptualizes, creates, and applies tactical forces, as well as shaping their diplomatic, economic, demographic, and operational environments. An American soldier on a street corner in Baghdad personifies not only a strategic decision to invade Iraq, but also the entire political, social, diplomatic, cultural, and economic evolution of the United States from its colonial origins. The actions of this strategic private carry military, Iraqi domestic political, U.S. domestic political, and international political implications. Any attempt to conceptually separate tactics from strategy denies this connection.

Despite tactical successes, the failure to adequately involve the strategic level in campaign planning is manifest in America’s recent wars. The 1990–1991 Gulf War is an example. In this single campaign, there were two successful examples of operational art: Operation *Instant Thunder*, the air operation to shape the environment, and *Desert Storm*, the ground operation to eject Iraqi forces from Kuwait. Despite the clear success of both operations, the 1991 campaign was not sufficient to end the war with Iraq—for that, a succession of additional campaigns was required, and it apparently is only now coming to a conclusion.

The Iraq War that began in 2003 is another instructive example of the problems of the existing doctrinal approach. In 2003, who was responsible for anticipating that the campaign to remove Saddam would necessarily be followed by one to establish a successor regime? To simply answer “Bush” or “Rumsfeld” is to hide what has become a doctrinal void. Political leaders are no longer routinely students of war. Therefore, there is a need that they be supported to prevent them from demanding the unachievable. Equally, though, they need to be made fully aware of the costs and risks attendant on the choices being offered to them. These costs and risks span fields as diverse as minor tactics and international economics, and they are not amenable to consideration at the provincial headquarters of a combatant commander or even in the office of a Secretary of Defense. Binding the conduct of a campaign to that of a war and ensuring the war contributes to the state’s role in the march of history are the embodiment of the idea that war is an extension of politics.

The 2007 “surge” was conducted when President George W. Bush, substantially alone, balanced the economic, diplomatic, strategic, political, and military costs and benefits of the alternatives available to him and chose to fight on. This was a return to “classic” campaigning in which the head of state, rather than merely acceding to the advice proffered, laid out the objectives and constraints of the campaign and chose the general who would be responsible. It is almost unique in recent U.S. history. The more familiar disjunctions among politics, strategy, campaign planning, and the conduct of operations were also demonstrated in Somalia (1992) and Kosovo (1998).

What allowed the conduct of a war and strategy to become so disjointed? Strategic

failure cannot be sheeted home to any one idea or problem but rather tends, like most accidents, to be the result of a confluence of otherwise unconnected errors. The aim of military doctrine, planning, and organization is to reduce the number of errors being made in order to reduce the frequency of these accidents. Not everything is within the control of military leadership, but doctrine largely is. Current U.S. doctrine creates a gap

that perpetuates the failing identified by many. By conflating two very different ideas, the United States (and the Anglophone world in lockstep) has reinforced the difficulty of the strategic management of wars and exposed an Achilles' heel. At the same time, by expanding the meaning of operational art to be nearly all-encompassing, the detailed examination of its necessary evolution is prejudiced. When the United States finds itself fighting Serbia,

as described in FM 100-5, operational art became the principal focus for a "level of war" and assumed the responsibility for campaign planning. In time, the vigor of this conception reduced political leadership to the role of "strategic sponsors" and quite specifically intervened to widen the gap between politics and strategy. The result has been a well-demonstrated ability to win battles that have not always contributed to strategic success: "a way of battle rather than a way of war." The creation of an operational level of war undid a lot of good work—to connect politics and tactics—that had been done by theorists since Clausewitz.

This pernicious solecism has confused our response to the continuing evolution of warfare.

At a time when the connections between tactics and politics are being continuously strengthened and exploited by actual and putative enemies, we have stretched the meaning of operational art until it has become a near synonym for the entirety of warfare. In combination with its role as a defining component of the jurisdiction of the profession of

### *not everything is within the control of military leadership, but doctrine largely is*

between politics and war, whereas "good" doctrine should acknowledge *both* the need to fully engage political leadership and the national bureaucracy in campaign planning *and* the challenges of doing so. Good doctrine does not guarantee success but at least offers a promising start.

The U.S. military's decision to extend the meaning of operational art to encompass campaign planning is a theoretical dead end

Somali warlords, or failed and failing second- and third-rank states, these weaknesses may be apparent but their consequences manageable. If, at some time in the future, the United States finds itself at war with a great power, these theoretical obfuscations may prove to be more damaging.

Rather than meeting its original purpose of contributing to the attainment of campaign objectives laid down by strategy,

**Iraqi residents survey damage from a truck bomb explosion in Tal Afar**



U.S. Army (Robert C. Brogan)



arms, it has prevented us from beginning to make the institutional adaptations necessary to cope with the increasing connectedness of the more-military and less-military aspects of contemporary warfare.

If operational art is the entirety of warfare, from campaign design down to battalion level—and if it is principally the purview of the military—then the type of “national campaigns” envisaged in the joint operating environment, seeking the coherent and direct application of all of the elements of national power, are beyond our reach. Perhaps we should use the term *strategic art* to encompass the bureaucratic effort required to deal with the types of diffuse, nuanced, and complex problems envisioned in the joint operating environment. At present, operational art has filled that space—as it surreptitiously threatens to fill the space occupied by tactics and even minor tactics. If battalion commanders are operational artists, then surely the strategic corporal also needs to be one.

Despite the doctrine that is presently published by the world’s militaries, there is no evidence that politicians are content to set concrete objectives and then sit back and passively watch the conduct of a war for which they are responsible to both their domestic and international audiences now and for the rest of history. The U.S. theory of an operational level of war charged with campaign planning and working in conjunction with

*an operational level of war charged with campaign planning and working in conjunction with the post-Goldwater-Nichols hierarchy threatens effective campaign planning*

the existing post-Goldwater-Nichols hierarchy threatens effective campaign planning. Specifically, it threatens to resist close engagement with the political and bureaucratic leadership until either strategic pressures become intolerable, at which time the “10,000-mile screwdriver” pierces the carapace of the operational commander—often to his chagrin—or, more usually, it means that a campaign is undertaken without the strategic level being fully engaged in examination of the ends-ways-means interaction, with

resultant self-imposed strategic surprise that needs to be dealt with as the war progresses.

The result has been characterized as “compression” of the operational level of war, in which the strategic level is charged with being guilty of intrusion into the realms of operations and tactics. Rather than the operational level being compressed, strategy is reasserting its role and attempting to meet its responsibilities, but in the face of the dual resistances presented by the enemy and a dysfunctional military doctrine.

The term *operational art* can, in the end, mean anything we want it to mean, but it cannot usefully mean everything we presently think it does. It is not at all clear that interagency operational art is practical or that a logical line of operation seeking to establish the rule of law can truly be said to contain opportunities for operational art. Arguably, we are here confusing operational art and purposeful action. To be useful, trainable, and applicable, operational art needs to have meaningful boundaries.

It is time we returned operational art to its enclosure. Operational art is not the entirety of warfare. It is not the design and conduct of campaigns. It is not an interagency problem. Operational art is the thoughtful sequencing of tactical action to achieve a subordinate objective within a campaign. Good operational art, demonstrated as often as necessary to support the achievement of campaign objectives, ensures that tactical actions contribute to the attainment of the purpose of a war. **JFQ**

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> From John G. Nicolay and John M. Hay, *Lincoln*, quoted in Eliot A. Cohen, *Supreme Command: Soldiers, Statesmen and Leadership in Wartime* (New York: Free Press, 2002), 51.

<sup>2</sup> Herbert Rosinski, “Scharnhorst to Schlieffen: The Rise and Decline of German Military Thought,” *Naval War College Review* 29 (Summer 1976), 85.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>4</sup> Michael I. Handel, *Masters of War: Classical Strategic Thought* (London: Frank Cass, 2001), 345.

<sup>5</sup> G.S. Isserson, “The Evolution of Operational Art,” in *The Evolution of Soviet Operational Art: 1927–1991—The Documentary Basis*, ed. H.S. Orenstein (London: Frank Cass, 1995), 55.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>8</sup> Antulio J. Echevarria II, *After Clausewitz: German Military Thinkers Before the Great War* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2000), 212.

<sup>9</sup> This is the first mention that the authors can find of the use of the term *operation* with its special meaning. See Colmar von der Goltz, *The Conduct of War* (1895), section 8, “The Operations,” a photocopy of which (produced by the U.S. Army War College *Art of War* colloquium in February 1983) is in possession of the authors.

<sup>10</sup> *The Evolution of Soviet Operational Art*, xiii–xviii, describes this taxonomy in detail.

<sup>11</sup> A.A. Svechin, “Strategy and Operational Art,” in *The Evolution of Soviet Operational Art*, 7.

<sup>12</sup> James J. Schneider, *The Structure of Strategic Revolution: Total War and the Roots of the Soviet Warfare State* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1994), 178.

<sup>13</sup> M. Tukhachevsky, “*Voyna Klopov*,” *Revolutsiya i voyna*, no. 22 (1923), quoted in Jacob Kipp, “Two Views of Warsaw: The Russian Civil War and Soviet Operational Art, 1920–1932,” in B.J. McKerchner and M.C. Hennessy, eds., *The Operational Art: Developments in the Theory of War* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1996), 53. Tukhachevsky wrote the preface to the Russian version of Fuller’s *Reformation of War*, in which he challenges much of what Fuller had to say. The foreword in its entirety is reproduced in Richard E. Simpkin, *Deep Battle: The Brainchild of Marshal Tukhachevsky* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1991), 125–134.

<sup>14</sup> Svechin, quoted in Schneider, 175.

<sup>15</sup> Vladimir Triandafilov, “The Nature of Operations of Modern Armies,” in Schneider, 191.

<sup>16</sup> Field Manual 100–5, *Operations* (Washington, DC: Headquarters Department of the Army, 1982), 2–3.

<sup>17</sup> Australia defines the *operational level of war* as “the planning and conduct of campaigns and major operations in order to achieve strategic objectives.” See Australian Defence Force Doctrine Publication–D, *Foundations of Australian Military Doctrine* (2002), paragraph 3–9. British Defence Doctrine (JDPO–01 2008, paragraph 231) describes the *operational level of war* as “the level at which campaigns are planned, conducted and sustained within a theatre or area of operations.”

<sup>18</sup> Arthur F. Lykke, Jr., “Toward an Understanding of Military Strategy,” in *U.S. Army War College Guide to Strategy*, ed. Joseph R. Cerami and James F. Holcolm, Jr. (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, 2001), 179–185.


<sup>19</sup> Cohen, appendix.

<sup>20</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (New York: Vintage Books, 1964), 307–308.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*; Cohen, 228.

<sup>22</sup> Cohen, 229.





Soldiers graduate from Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Advanced Individual Training

U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center Public Affairs

# CAN THE ARMY BECOME A *Learning Organization?*

## A QUESTION REEXAMINED

By ANTHONY J. DiBELLA

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In 1994, after serving as an organizational consultant for General Gordon Sullivan, then–U.S. Army Chief of Staff, Margaret Wheatley wrote an article about the U.S. Army becoming a learning organization. Wheatley, a new-age social scientist and author of *Leadership and the New Science*, had been solicited by Sullivan to see how the Army could benefit from the buzz about learning organizations that was then sweeping corporate America. It has been 15 years since that writing, during which time there has been a great deal of research on learning organizations. This article revisits the title of Wheatley's essay in light of recent research and military experience.<sup>1</sup> In doing so, it lays out an integrated approach for building learning capability in any organizational setting, large or small, military or otherwise.

Over the years, the U.S. military has won more wars than it has lost, but has had to do so with changing tactics in the context of changing circumstances, be they political, economic, or social-cultural. For some time, it has been recognized that the Army is apt to face a growing diversity and number of missions, and it was that sense of urgency in

the 1990s that prompted General Sullivan to focus on the Service's need to learn. The latest admonition for this requirement appears in the preface to the Army/Marine Corps counterinsurgency manual.<sup>2</sup> It reaffirms the need to change and adapt as a perennial requirement of our military, a thesis reflected in this statement from General David Petraeus:

*We've been reminded through hard experience that it's imperative to continue to learn and adapt . . . to identify and share lessons learned and best practices; and to strive to ensure that our units are learning organizations. What works today may not work tomorrow, we must remain alert to that reality.*<sup>3</sup>

In citing Wheatley back in 1994, Sullivan claimed that the Army already was a learning organization.<sup>4</sup> If that was indeed the case, why was it so slow to respond to the Iraqi insurgency, and why Petraeus's recent reaffirmation? One explanation may be that Sullivan's focus was force structure, while Petraeus's concern has been strategy and tactics. It is one thing to have a nimble and more easily deployable force, but it is another to have a force whose approach to combat is improvisational. Another explanation may be a lack of understanding about the Army's learning capabilities.

### A Matter of Perspective

It is difficult to know what Generals Sullivan and Petraeus know about learning organizations. However, it is clear that they are big advocates of them. The learning organization concept was popularized by Peter Senge, who described it, in part, as a "place where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire."<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately, with popularity came pretentiousness and vulgarity and efforts by many scholars and practitioners to redefine the concept or reconceptualize it altogether. For some, Senge's definition sounded too grandiose or Pollyannaish and thus was not taken seriously. Others offered definitions and methodologies to make the concept actionable. For example, David Garvin defined a *learning organization* as one "skilled at creating, acquiring, and transferring knowledge, and at modifying its behavior to reflect new knowledge and insights."<sup>6</sup> Even more simply, Peter Kline and Bernard Saunders defined a learning organization as "a viable and vital means for developing a culture of high performance learners."<sup>7</sup>



**GEN Petraeus recognizes importance of ongoing learning and adaptation**

U.S. Navy (William Selby)

As the number of definitions of the learning organization grew, several clear themes emerged. Among them was the distinction and interdependence of individual level learning and organizational learning, and that one could not exist without the other. Another theme was that learning is linked to adaptation, whether to external events or knowledge gained internally through experience. One point of commonality was the *necessity* for organizations to learn. That sense of urgency was first characterized by Arie de Geus, who claimed that the only sustainable way to stay ahead of one's competitors was to learn faster than they did.<sup>8</sup> In essence, that concept underlies General Petraeus's approach to counterinsurgency.<sup>9</sup> One must be as flexible and adaptive as one's foes, if not more.

*Arie de Geus claimed that the only sustainable way to stay ahead of one's competitors was to learn faster than they did*

Over time, practitioner focus has shifted from definitions to techniques and methodologies, and three approaches or perspectives have emerged: normative, developmental, and capability.<sup>10</sup> Within the normative school, learning organizations are viewed as a particular type of organization characterized by a specific set of internal conditions.

Learning does not occur spontaneously or naturally since organizations resist change and invest in activities that have immediate impact rather than those whose impact is uncertain or long-term. However, with deliberate effort, leaders and managers can and should build learning organizations.<sup>11</sup>

In the developmental perspective, learning organizations *can* be realized through the strategic actions of their leaders but only through a progression of stages, whether by evolutionary or revolutionary means.<sup>12</sup> In effect, learning organizations develop as a function of their own lifecycles such that learning styles vary over time. Typically, the learning characteristics of a startup will differ from those of a well-established organization operating in a more stable environment. For example, the creation of U.S. Africa Command as an entirely new structural entity within the Department of Defense provides new possibilities for learning compared to those in existing combatant commands.

Both the normative and developmental perspectives focus on the problems and difficulties in promoting learning in organizations. When organizations fail to establish the necessary conditions, they suffer from learning disabilities. These disabilities occur due to the fundamental ways in which individuals have been trained to think and act and from barriers to discovering and utilizing solutions to organizational problems.<sup>13</sup> Organizations

fail to learn because it is difficult, if not impossible, to see the long-term consequences of their actions and decisions due to time lags. Learning is avoided when leaders attribute failure not to internal causes but to conditions in the external environment or to factors that cannot be controlled. Organizations may suffer from amnesia (lack of organizational memory), superstition (biased interpretation of experience), paralysis (inability to act), and schizophrenia (lack of coordination among organizational constituencies).<sup>14</sup>

Rather than focusing on why learning is problematic for organizations, another approach considers how learning is innate to organizations. In this third perspective (capability), the concept of a learning organization is as redundant as the notion of a breathing mammal. The focus is not on becoming a learning organization but on learning processes that already exist. Learning processes are embedded in organizational culture and structure, both formal and informal, and there is no one best way for organizations to learn.

From this perspective, the question by Wheatley is misleading, if not outright nonsensical. More appropriate questions would be: How does the Army learn and why? What does it learn? And how is that learning aligned with its mission and strategy? The balance of this article presents a methodology for addressing these questions using an approach that integrates insights from each of the three perspectives.

### An Integrated Approach

The first step in developing the Army as a learning system is to recognize its profile of current learning capability. The second is to specify a profile that is more aligned with its strategic objectives. The third is the formulation of a change management plan to bridge any gaps. This approach incorporates the capability perspective that the Army has a culture, and embedded within that culture is a patterned set of processes that promote learning. Of course, it could be suggested that the Army is not simply a single culture but a series of subcultures (for example, intelligence, artillery, armor), and learning varies between different functional units. Consequently, one can view the Army as having a portfolio of learning practices.

Existing learning patterns reflect learning styles, and these may be developed over time. Normative factors set the

conditions for learning to occur. A strictly normative approach would only focus on normative factors. In fact, that is exactly

### *existing learning patterns reflect learning styles, and these may be developed over time*

the approach taken in an assessment of the Army War College that utilized Senge's normative model.<sup>15</sup>

Research has validated an integrated framework that can be used to assess or profile overall learning capability.<sup>16</sup> It consists of a set of 17 elements, 7 descriptive learning orientations, and 10 normative facilitating factors. This model has been tested and used in a variety of contexts and is depicted simply in figure 1.

### Learning Orientations

Learning Orientations (LOs) represent the ways learning takes place and the nature of what is learned. These orientations reflect patterns that shape an organization's learning capability. Each LO is a bipolar continuous

dimension with no judgment made as to correct position along each continuum. Different organizations will exhibit different orientations, and the combination of positions on all seven LOs reflects learning styles. Figure 2 shows the set of seven LOs that in aggregate depict the critical dimensions of learning capability.

Organizations gain knowledge directly through the experiences of their own personnel and indirectly through the experiences of other organizations. These contrasting approaches are captured by the first LO, *Knowledge Source*: one approach reflects internal sources, the other external ones. The Center for Army Lessons Learned is a repository of insights gained from after-action reviews. Its focus is internal in that the lessons are from the United States rather than foreign militaries. On the other hand, the United States has learned about counterinsurgency from the British, who represent an external source.

The second LO, *Content-process Focus*, refers to the preference for knowledge related to the nature of what the organization does as opposed to knowledge about the processes

Figure 1. Two Parts of Organizational Learning Capability



Figure 2. Learning Orientations

LEARNING ORIENTATIONS	
Name	Approach
Knowledge Source	internal » external
Content-process Focus	content » process
Knowledge Reserve	personal » public
Dissemination Mode	formal » informal
Learning Scope	incremental » transformative
Value-chain Focus	design/make » market/deliver
Learning Focus	individual » group



whereby its mission is accomplished. The Army, much like the rest of American society, is action oriented. That translates into an orientation toward knowing what needs to be done (content or mission focus) and doing it rather than reflecting on how to do it (process focus).

Where does the knowledge within the Army reside? Is it in the heads of its officers or in written-down policies and procedures? The third LOR, *Knowledge Reserve*, reflects these preferences and patterns. If an officer wanted to access, for example, what the Army has learned about special tactics, would he look up the rules of engagement in Army Knowledge Online or phone a fellow West Point graduate now serving in special operations? The answer to that question would point toward the Army's dominant orientation.

Quite separate from the location of an organization's knowledge is the means whereby that knowledge is accessed and disseminated. This characteristic is captured by the fourth LOR, *Dissemination Mode*. The publication of this article in a journal represents formal dissemination of knowledge. On the other hand, serendipitous meetings and conversations in officers' clubs throughout the world are an informal mode of disseminating knowledge.

One common issue in the literature on organizational learning is the distinction between single- and double-loop learning.<sup>17</sup> The contrast pertains to knowledge about improving what one is already doing based on a given set of assumptions versus examining and altering the assumptions underlying one's actions. The former leads to revising tools or techniques, while the latter leads to entirely new ways of thinking due to a change in mindset. The fifth LOR, *Learning Scope*, captures these distinct approaches.

Incremental improvements can enhance organizational performance, but environmental changes may require more fundamental or transformative change. For example, stabilizing security in Iraq after the fall of Saddam Hussein required that U.S. forces realize how the nature of the conflict had radically changed to asymmetric warfare. That demanded a very different type of knowledge that took some time to propagate because it was so different from what the bulk of our forces have learned to do historically.

Organizations provide their clients, customers, or stakeholders with products or services that are of value to them. The thread that extends from product conceptualization,

design, creation (build, manufacture, and so forth), and delivery has been categorized as the value chain.<sup>18</sup> Each activity, or link in the chain, provides an opportunity to increase value. Organizations can invest in learning at various stages along the chain.

The sixth LOR, *Value-chain Focus*, represents the choices that an organization can make either explicitly or tacitly in terms of its learning priorities. Accepting Samuel Huntington's claim that the military's role is the management of violence, the focus of the Army is clearly delivery rather than design.<sup>19</sup>

It is one thing to learn a trade or be trained to perform some technical function; it is quite another to learn to perform that function in the context of a work team. Becoming certified in some professions, such as an airline pilot, engine mechanic, or sonar technician, is apt to require individual learning. However, the successful performance of that skill or function depends on the ability to coordinate one's action with others. That challenge leads to the distinction between individual versus group *Learning Focus*, the last LOR. Prior to deployment, Army troops customarily train and learn together since their roles are interdependent.

Once an organization is profiled in terms of its learning orientations, such data can be used to further understand learning capability. Learning styles are a function of LORs and can be identified by matrixing pairs of LORs. For example, figure 3 shows the matrixing of LOR 1, *Knowledge Source* (internal versus external), with LOR 5, *Learning Scope* (incremental versus transformative). The result is a typology of four different styles: correction, innovation, adaptation, and acquisition.

Every day, Soldiers gain experience in the performance of their duties and responsi-

bilities. That experience (internal Knowledge Source), if processed well, can be an abundant and continuous source of learning. The Army's after-action review process is representative of this form of learning.<sup>20</sup> By analyzing its experience, a team or Service branch can correct mistakes and errors and thereby make incremental improvements to actions already designed and implemented (see figure 3, cell 1: correction).

When an organization conducts research to promote completely new ways of working or doing, it rethinks what it does, why, and how. For example, developing the Future Combat System requires new knowledge and new insights into combat. That

*when an organization conducts research to promote completely new ways of working or doing, it rethinks what it does, why, and how*

knowledge may be based on different assumptions about tactics and would be transformative in scope (cell 2: innovation).

By studying the experiences of others or collecting data about what is going on in the environment, our military can acquire knowledge from external sources (external Knowledge Source). When that information is combined with what is already known or done, adaptation occurs through incremental change (cell 3: adaptation). For example, as combat troops encounter intelligence about what our foes are doing, they can use that information to redesign or reconfigure strategies or tactics to maintain their usefulness.

Some forms of learning, especially the transformative type, require a major investment in resources, especially money, time, or

Figure 3. Learning Style as Determined by Knowledge Source and Learning Scope

Knowledge Source	INTERNAL	3. adaptation	4. acquisition
	EXTERNAL	1. correction	2. innovation
		INCREMENTAL	TRANSFORMATIVE
		Learning Scope	

personnel. Rather than reinventing the wheel, so to speak, organizations with significant financial resources may find it easier and more efficient to simply go out to the external environment (external Knowledge Source) and purchase the capability they desire (cell 4: acquisition). For example, if a company in the private sector developed a new weapons system, the Army could go out and purchase it. This approach would be much more cost-effective compared to the Army developing the system from scratch.

The template of seven LOrs provides insight into the processes whereby learning occurs in an organization. A complete set of seven data points, one for each LOr, depicts in a descriptive way any organization's learning profile. Such data does not indicate the speed whereby learning is taking place or whether the learning is aligned with the strategy of the organization. However, it does provide a baseline to understand current learning capability and a platform to discuss desired capability, which is promoted by normative elements.

### Normative Side: Facilitating Factors

The second major aspect of understanding and developing organizational learning capability relates to the inherent difficulties in changing organizations. Learning is apt to challenge established ways of doing things. Learning also takes resources and attention away from activities that are seen as more productive. Consequently, a great deal of research has been conducted to identify those factors that promote learning or establish conditions in which learning is more apt to occur.

Focusing on this aspect brings us to the normative side of the model. For example, Senge advocates for five disciplines (personal mastery, mental models, shared vision, team learning, systems thinking) that he claims promote learning organizations.<sup>21</sup> These elements are not disciplines in the academic sense but are five skill areas required for learning to occur. In another learning model, Garvin claims that learning organizations are skilled at systematic problemsolving, experimentation, learning from experience, and transferring knowledge.<sup>22</sup> Other lists can be found in the writings of other learning advocates. What they share is an emphasis on prescription—that if certain skills or conditions are not present, learning will not occur.

If there is one common trait of learning organizations, it is that information and knowledge flows freely up, down, and across

the organization. Good news travels fast, and bad news travels faster. One way in which this characteristic has been captured is with the term *Climate of Openness*.<sup>23</sup> It reflects the permeability of boundaries such that knowledge essential to learning is shared, not hoarded or hidden. Through knowledge-sharing, people working together can learn from and with one another. Lessons from experience, successes, and failures can be applied to improve performance. Climate of Openness also reflects the freedom that individuals feel to express their opinions or debate issues that affect the organization's overall effectiveness.

In organizations that lack a Climate of Openness, the organization covers up mistakes, errors, and accidents. Absent learning, organizations replicate the past and fail to improve performance. It would take an empirical study to fully investigate the extent to which Climate of Openness is a characteristic of the Army or any other institution. However, it is possible to consider some key traits that constrain learning in light of military culture.

Climate of Openness has been a focal point of Chris Argyris. He has argued that organizational learning is severely limited by the tendency of people to act defensively and to overlook or hide errors to avoid punishment.<sup>24</sup> This tendency is compounded

or error can also be embarrassing and thus socially unacceptable.

Openness to learning suggests a certain amount of humility by acknowledging that one does not know everything. In effect, an active learner may be perceived as a fallible person by appearing to be incomplete. However, in many organizations, showing vulnerability is a sign of lack of confidence and a sure reason to be overlooked at promotion time.

When we know something, we can act on the basis of our knowledge, feel certain that we are doing the correct thing, and project confidence about that. Openness and the search for learning require tolerance of ambiguity. In learning or inquiry mode, a person must cope with some level of uncertainty if only to sense that he is still searching for the correct decision to do the right thing. In general, military culture rewards bravado and the projection of confidence rather than humility and the projection of uncertainty or ambivalence. This value constrains openness.

Finally, in organizations where bad or misunderstood decisions can have disastrous consequences, a high degree of control is placed on the discretionary authority of subordinates. In making clear the distribution of power, so-called command and control organizations such as the military constrain

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### *the need for professionals and those in authority to be right gets in the way of decisions being made based on experience*

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where individuals are rewarded for the very behaviors or values that prevent learning: remaining in control, maximizing winning and minimizing losing, suppressing negative feelings, and being as rational as possible.<sup>25</sup> In effect, the need for professionals and those in authority to be right gets in the way of decisions being made based on experience. Furthermore, Argyris argues that while organizations may espouse the latter, they act on the basis of the former.<sup>26</sup>

In the military, "truth to power" is an expression that reflects the need for a Soldier or Sailor to be truthful even if some fact or opinion contradicts the view of someone higher up the chain of command. However, what one also finds in any hierarchical organization is a conscious or subconscious tendency to defer to those in authority or positions of command. Beyond avoiding conflict, the pointing out of some mistake

the free flow of data. Information must flow through formal channels up and down the hierarchy. While there are very good reasons why military institutions are run this way, other institutions seem less constrained. In effect, an organization's command structure need not dictate the flow of communication so essential for learning.

Describing learning orientations and discerning facilitating factors is a basic start to determining the learning capability of any organization. What remains unanswered is the application of learning to the realization of the organization's mission or desired outcomes. What should be of interest is not learning per se but the impact of that learning relative to strategic directions.

### Building Capability

Perhaps more critical than *how* learning occurs, as represented by learning orientations,

or *why* learning occurs, as indicated by facilitating factors such as Climate of Openness, is *what* gets learned. Organizations that learn to design or implement strategies that are misaligned with organizational demands or missions serve no institutional purpose (even though such action may benefit some stakeholders with a vested interest in the status quo). Likewise, organizations may engage in dysfunctional or superstitious learning whereby biases and subjective judgments override experience or objective realities.<sup>27</sup>

For organizations to learn strategically, learning resources and processes need to be directed toward the attainment of the organization's mission and strategy for achieving it. The military issues a variety of strategy documents including the National Military Strategy, National Defense Strategy, and Quadrennial Defense Review. Often, the implications of these strategies for force structure are clear. What is not explicit is the

*organizational learning gets to the capacity of the Army as an institution and its ability as a social system to learn from experience*

set of skills, competencies, and knowledge the military needs to implement its strategies. Understanding an organization's learning profile provides a guide to the most effective way such competencies can be learned.

The U.S. Army is an institution whose competence centers around the learning of its officers from their enrollment in its war colleges to participation in after-action reviews. Men and women learn in various ways: by reading books, interacting with peers, and listening to lectures. Organizational learning gets to the capacity of the Army as an institution and its ability as a social system to learn from experience.

Since Margaret Wheatley first posed the question about the Army becoming a learning organization, research has suggested that while the question is provocative, it is not the right one to ask. Several Army publications have since implicitly considered the question by focusing primarily on normative models.<sup>28</sup> Instead of seeing the learning organization concept from a normative, one-way-fits-all perspective, a more generative, systems approach respects the idiosyncratic nature of all institutions while acknowledging

that learning processes are embedded in all organizations.

By understanding and utilizing how the Army learns, we can more readily promote new ways of combating our foes. For example, if our military and political leaders ordain that the Army learn counterinsurgency, then our Army leaders need to know what learning approaches can best make that happen. A formal dissemination approach might be as simple as printing up a lot of counterinsurgency manuals and passing them out among the troops. A more informal style could utilize online social networks and blogs.

The Army is not and will never be one monolithic learning organization. However, if learning advocates take an integrated approach, they will recognize the complexity of the Army in its portfolio of learning orientations and practices. An important key is how the elements in the portfolio complement one another and how they enable our defense establishment to maintain security in times that are forever evolving. **JFQ**

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# Pay *for* Play

## Countering Threat Financing

By MICHAEL T. FLYNN *and* SIMONE A. LEDEEN

**S**hortly after midnight on March 20, 2009, in Bilbao, Spain, police began a series of raids to arrest a number of North Africans on suspicion of funding terrorism in North Africa through criminal activity in Spain. While this investigation continues, globally networked terrorists are operating on low-contrast battlefields where understanding the difference between enemy and friendly forces is growing increasingly complex. This physical and virtual domain includes numerous dimensions unlike any that we have previously experienced.

Among these dimensions, we have discovered that illicit financing networks represent both a significant strength and a critical enemy vulnerability to exploit. Guns, drugs, weapons of mass destruction, and humans are all commodities interactively traded by terrorists in corporate-like networks.

As we have discovered, these networks are interrelated, each transcending borders and forming a growing nexus between terrorist movements and other criminal and narcotics enterprises. The same *hawalas* (money remittance systems prevalent in the Muslim world), smuggling channels, and, in some cases, cash

couriers are used by diverse organizations with similar aims of evading law enforcement, military, and intelligence activities. As Adam Fosson asserts, "The connection between many Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs) and either transnational organized crime groups or global trafficking organizations has increased over time, and FTOs themselves have become

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U.S. Army (Jeffrey Alexander)

U.S. and Iraqi soldiers battle insurgents in Adhamiya, Iraq

more involved in criminal and trafficking activities. . . . [B]oth sides have a common financial interest, as though two corporations were merging.”<sup>1</sup>

When we scrutinize terrorism and organized crime, the only discernable difference is that most terrorists have political or religious motivations, while organized criminals are motivated by profit and do not, as a rule, attack state targets. However, as these internetworked transnational actors become increasingly capable of warfighting, we are witnessing the evolution of entities capable of challenging the primacy and ultimately the solvency of nation-states.<sup>2</sup> We need only look to the examples of Hizballah, al Qaeda in Iraq, and the Taliban for evidence as to how these organizations exploit criminal activities for their own nefarious purposes.

One of the most complex but most important ways that organized crime and terrorism are connected is through the raising, storing, and transferring of illicit monies, which are at the core of the global organized criminal enterprise. Through this enterprise, terrorists, warlords, gangsters, and other illicit actors frequently cooperate, and we have often successfully disrupted them.

### Funds Distributed Globally

According to Edward Frothingham, “In some respects, terrorist organizations are similar to businesses anywhere in the world. They need to earn, store, and transmit money. The faster and easier they are able to do so, the more effective they will be.”<sup>3</sup> Until recently, we did not understand how to put the pieces together in a comprehensive manner to learn how terrorist and criminal networks overlap. We now have learned that terrorists can generate and hide significant revenues when they work in tandem with criminal groups, or when they undertake criminal activities themselves:

■ Terrorist networks such as al Qaeda have supported or exploited relationships with warlords in Somalia and Afghanistan to anchor their global terrorist actions.<sup>4</sup>

■ According to French intelligence officials, “Most of the [extremist] structures [the French] have dismantled have been financed by crime,” including robbery, drugs, and fraud.<sup>5</sup>

■ At the height of the insurgency in Iraq, insurgent groups used the Baiji Oil Refinery and the supply chain supporting its activities to skim funds from the oil trade. Together

with criminal networks, these groups profited by cutting into pipelines and trucking oil products to be sold on the black market.

Indeed, much has already been written about the linkages among organized crime, terrorism, and narcotics trafficking, going back to the 1990s and the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (FARC); designated in 1997 as an FTO by the U.S. Department of State, the FARC over the years has morphed into an organized criminal syndicate and narco-trafficking organization in order to maintain its revenue flow. One such criminal activity the FARC engages in is the production of counterfeit U.S. currency. To date, the U.S. Secret Service has seized over \$241 million in counterfeit currency generated by the FARC.

In addition to counterfeiting currency, the FARC is famously involved in drug trafficking. In 2003, it was designated a significant foreign narcotics trafficker by the Department of the Treasury’s Office

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*terrorists can generate and hide significant revenues when they work in tandem with criminal groups, or when they undertake criminal activities themselves*

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of Foreign Assets Control, pursuant to the Kingpin Act. The FARC learned over time that it did not need to merely dabble in drugs—it decided to go all the way. The logistics of drug trafficking is so costly that it only makes sense to do it on a large scale. To generate the revenues necessary to maintain its army of 14,000 troops, the FARC moves cocaine to U.S. and European markets. To transport these drugs to the United States, the FARC must work with traditional drug trafficking organizations to move its product through Central America and Mexico. This is the same route used by those who want to move illegal aliens, bulk cash shipments, stolen cars, and weapons from the United States southward.

All of these items are really commodities that pass through the same areas, navigate the same sentries, and can be interchangeable. A load of AK–47 rifles can be traded for heroin as it travels to a final destination. There are tremendous intelligence collection and

disruption opportunities from drugs. We can use the linkages among crime, narcotics, and terrorism to map these networks, how they operate, and how they overlap to determine vulnerabilities and subsequent targeting.

While the FARC has been successful in the past, it has become increasingly vulnerable, as key nodes of its facilitation and narcotics networks have been chipped away by the Colombian military and law enforcement apparatus, with the assistance of the United States. The FARC continues to operate in specific geographic areas but no longer poses the same threat.

In testimony before the House Armed Services Committee, Admiral James G. Stavridis, USN, then-Commander of U.S. Southern Command, now Supreme Allied Commander Europe, discussed the nexus between drug trafficking, “including routes, profits and corruptive influence,” and “Islamic radical terrorism.” In fact, in August 2008, the U.S. and Colombian governments disrupted an international cocaine smuggling and money-laundering ring based out of Colombia. This operation was executed through a partnership between a Colombian drug cartel and Lebanese members of Hizballah. Portions of the profits—allegedly hundreds of millions a year—were used to finance Hizballah.<sup>6</sup>

In addition to drug trafficking in South America, Hizballah operatives engage in a host of criminal activities to raise, transfer, and launder funds to support terrorism. These activities run the gamut from mafia-style shakedowns to sophisticated import-export scams involving traders from India and Hong Kong. In one case, Paraguayan officials arrested an operative—Ali Khalil Mehri—for selling millions of dollars in pirated software and funding Hizballah with the profits.

Back in the Middle East, the Israelis discovered and disrupted a series of Israeli-Arab cells working for Hizballah in return for money and frequently drugs. Some of these cells, such as one operating out of the Galilee village of Abu Snan, were planning to kidnap Israeli soldiers. In September 2002, an Israeli military court indicted an officer for spying for Hizballah in return for money, hashish, and heroin.<sup>7</sup>

All of these examples are drops in the bucket compared with the activities of Assad Amad Barakat and his network in and around Paraguay’s Ciudad del Este. The owner of Apollo Electronics Store in Galleria Page, Barakat was identified by Paraguayan

U.S. Border Transition Team escorts Iraq Threat Finance Cell officer during visit to Iraqi border post at Basra



U.S. Army (Keriah Cohen)

police as “the Hizballah military chief in the Tri-Border,” an area along the junction of Paraguay, Argentina, and Brazil. The Paraguayan government assessed that Barakat raised \$50 million for Hizballah between 1995 and 2001. He was arrested in a raid on September 14, 2001, and charged with tax evasion. In 2003, he was sentenced to 6½ years in prison. According to a recently released RAND report, the Barakat clan sent these millions of dollars to Hizballah from drug trafficking and pirated goods and was responsible for much of the \$20 million annually that Hizballah was estimated to have received from the Tri-Border Area (TBA).

While it is difficult in the case of Hizballah to tie these activities to a specific attack, other examples are readily available. In 2004, the ringleader of the Madrid bombings, an adherent of *Takfir wal Hijira*, a largely Moroccan Islamist sect active in the European and North African criminal underworld, turned out to be the brother of one of Morocco’s top hashish traffickers. His cell used 30 kilograms of hash to purchase the explosives used in those attacks. In the investigation that followed, nearly \$2 million

in drugs and cash was seized. It was a true coalition of radicalized gangsters who came together to conduct the operation, selling drugs as a weapon of jihad and demonstrating the dangerous combination of Islamic extremism and organized crime.

Our collective experiences have taught us that contemporary terrorists are operating in a networked fashion, with relatively

without these ill-gotten gains, these nefarious characters cannot operate as they wish.

These groups historically have raised and spent money autonomously, with little centralized direction or coordination. The focus on money is the insurgency’s weakness as well as its strength. The estimates of amounts raised and laundered by these groups around the world vary widely, but all

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*contemporary terrorist networks are much more “business” than we realized even a few short years ago*

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autonomous cells—much like market-driven businesses. In fact, these networks are much more “business” than we realized even a few short years ago.<sup>8</sup>

We have seen in Iraq, for example, that money is a crucial motivation for a majority of Sunni insurgents, more than the ideology of radical Islam. Studies of detainees in American custody found that about three-quarters were not committed to the jihadist ideology. Money from criminal activities such as kidnapping for ransom, extortion, and fuel-smuggling serves as the insurgency’s oxygen—

agree that these are substantial sums. This enormous influx of foreign cash relieves pressure on governments to meet citizen demands, especially in today’s economic environment. Governments are finding it is easier to look the other way than to combat groups that use violence and coercion against the state.<sup>9</sup>

When the Soviet Union collapsed, organized crime groups paid handsomely to scoop up intelligence professionals to supplement their efforts and improve their capabilities. Former KGB agents who had been stationed



overseas now use the same “safe” financial conduits once used for espionage as avenues for money-laundering, improving tradecraft to a previously unthinkable level.

### Targeted Measures

Faced with this complex and growing challenge, the United States is broadly stepping up its focus on disrupting adversary finances in order to decrease operational capabilities. In our battle against adversary infrastructure, money is one of the most critical nodes. Our adversaries are acutely aware of the many measures that we take to disrupt their activities, especially the most visible: targeted financial measures.

One of the major challenges we face with regard to targeted financial measures undertaken by either the State or Treasury Department is that the people we are designating are also the best positioned to evade sanctions. As we designate one entity, another pops up under a different name with the same shady characters behind the wheel. Due to the stringent legal threshold required to designate an individual or entity, it will be months before a follow-on action can be approved. Months will pass in which illicit money is raised and moved, often in plain sight, with the full knowledge of the law enforcement and/or security services of the country where this individual or entity is based.

However, the importance and relevance of targeted financial measures either domestically through Presidential executive orders or internationally through the United Nations Security Council remain significant. In December 2006, the U.S. Treasury Department listed Sobhi Fayad as a Specially Designated Terrorist because “Fayad has been a senior TBA Hezbollah official who served as a liaison between the Iranian Embassy and the Hezbollah community in the TBA. He has also been a professional Hezbollah operative who has traveled to Lebanon and Iran to meet with Hezbollah leaders. Fayad received military training in Lebanon and Iran and was involved in illicit activities involving drugs and counterfeit U.S. dollars.”<sup>10</sup> Fayad is currently serving a 6½ year sentence in a Paraguayan prison for tax evasion and criminal association with Mr. Barakat.

The simple act of publicizing these individuals and their activities can have an effect, either directly through freezing assets

or indirectly through “naming and shaming.” The name-and-shame tack can provide impetus to partners who may have been on the fence to take action, as we have seen in a number of cases. Furthermore, it discourages people from wittingly doing business with designees for fear of becoming implicated and having their own accounts frozen. Public designations cause targets to resort to less secure and costlier mechanisms for moving assets globally.

In addition to designations, the U.S. approach to combating threat finances includes intelligence and law enforcement action, helping to set international standards and the provisions of international training and technical assistance programs. Law enforcement action is increasingly important as we gain further understanding of the global nature of the challenge we face. A raid in Spain can directly affect the situation on the ground in Africa.

Moreover, publicizing these terrorist networks’ engagement in common criminal activities contradicts the image they seek to maintain. The close association of terrorists with criminals, narcotics traffickers, and other such characters, and the publicizing of this association, denies these terrorists the appearance of legitimacy that is critical in recruiting both operatives and financial supporters.

We in the Department of Defense (DOD) assist these efforts on a number of levels and are working to increase our support. At the same time, we continue to develop our internal capabilities. We have broadened our aperture from the early focus on direct action, to include support to inter-agency efforts to combat threat finance. The geographic combatant commands, through their threat finance units, can facilitate the disruption of threat finance networks of particular interest to the combatant commander. These units work with DOD and non-DOD intelligence, law enforcement, and regulatory agencies to detect financial support networks; collect, process, and analyze information; and target, disrupt, or destroy financial systems and networks that support activities that threaten U.S. interests.

The geographic combatant commands are currently assessing the ability of adversaries to finance operations and the effectiveness of military efforts to deny them resources. Initial data from these assessments indicate that despite some early suc-

cesses, we are progressing slowly in combating threat financing on a global scale.<sup>11</sup> There is still much to do.

The hybridization of terrorist groups and organized crime has given birth to organizations that could become more dangerous as they gain more skill sets. By merging multiple entities or applying their respective strengths, they stand to improve their capabilities. We must posture ourselves accordingly.

We are working to refashion ourselves into a hybrid of sorts, crafted from our respective cylinders of excellence, to include terrorist, narcotics, and proliferation

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*our adversaries’ reliance on what some call “nontraditional” methods of moving money is a vulnerability that provides us an opportunity for disruption*

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finance. By focusing on money, we have a shot at cutting across these cylinders and bringing a focus and discipline to identifying and disrupting these networks. Focused intelligence collection must play a significant role in this effort. We must follow the money trail to impede these illicit financial operations and ultimately the international networks they support. In particular, we must develop human intelligence capabilities to identify weaknesses or choke points within these criminal/terrorist hybrid networks.

As we follow this trail, our adversaries’ reliance on what some call “nontraditional” methods of moving money—their use of *hawala*, trade-based smuggling, and cash couriers—is a vulnerability that provides us an opportunity for disruption. These organizations operate on a trust-based network where infusing and sowing the seeds of doubt and deception could open seams and gaps that may not currently exist.

Another area of vulnerability is when the pipelines intersect with the official economy or state structures. There are many means of attacking publicly identifiable organizations such as companies, banks, charities, and nongovernmental organizations. We may not be able to destroy a pipeline, but we can seriously damage it and force our

adversaries to spend financial and human resources to defend themselves. We have done this in the counter-drug fight for many years.

In early 2001, General Anthony Zinni spoke at the University of California at Berkeley. He told students that the threats we face today are nontraditional, unlike any we have experienced before. "The application of the military," he said, "isn't as direct as we would like, and our theory and doctrine prevent dealing with the reality, which is overlaid and mixed with politics and economics, and humanitarian and cultural issues. It's a very different world out there . . . the application of military force to this has to change, to adapt to that."<sup>12</sup>

General Zinni's words ring true today, as we are engaged in complex military operations in different theaters. While we work to adapt our application of military force, we must continue to develop our capability across the U.S. Government to disrupt the flow of illicitly gained funds to our adversaries. At the end of the day, it is all about money.

The merging of narcotics traffickers, organized criminals, and terrorists tends to occur simply due to the availability of and access to money. Therefore, to the extent that these groups do not have money, the deadly alliance between terrorists and conventional criminals will be weakened and perhaps even broken. Mapping and targeting financial networks require a focused interagency effort. Our experience has demonstrated that we are up to the challenge. **JFQ**

## NOTES

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### Strategic Forum 247 *Radicalization by Choice: ISI and the Pakistani Army*

Robert B. Oakley and Franz-Stefan Gady argue that the Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate and Pakistani Army remain essential to the security of Pakistan. Although both groups have in the past embraced radicalism as a means to address the conventional military gap between Pakistan and its traditional enemy India, there are signs that Pakistan is shifting its short-term strategic priorities and recognizing that the Taliban is not only a U.S. problem. After reviewing the major influences on Pakistani strategic culture, they conclude that now is not the time to restrict U.S. military assistance to Pakistan.

# A JOINT STAFF TO BELIEVE IN



By G. JOHN DAVID and PAUL S. REINHART

**A**t the national level, the United States requires a unified joint military staff with executive authority to manage issues that have grown beyond the frontiers of the geographic combatant commands. The national military command structure must adapt to confront the armed conflicts and defense matters of the new millennium. Global national security challenges that require a whole-of-government effort can no longer be militarily compartmentalized in geographic or functional military commands whose scope cannot encompass them. Similarly, the resource environment demands a more efficient model than that designed during the Cold War for a more discrete adversary set. This environment also requires creative circumvention to adapt to extant threats. Though there are challenges to this concept, civilian overarching authority, sufficient separation of power, governmental transparency and oversight, and the cultures and traditions of the Armed Forces make us ready for a new construct. The time has come to change the Joint Chiefs of Staff into a Joint Command Staff.



## Strategic Realities

The 2006 National Security Strategy and 2008 National Defense Strategy both define a set of interests of the United States that is almost entirely transregional. Specific challenges highlighted by the former are terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, weapons proliferation, global economic development, regional conflicts, and failed states—and the opportunities these provide for the Nation's adversaries. Section IX of the National Security Strategy is devoted to the need to “transform America's security institutions to meet the challenges and

States can best be described as “hybrid warfare,” or conflicts in which the adversary employs a variety of techniques across the spectrum of military operations in order to attack the United States while escaping its conventional warfighting capacity.<sup>3</sup>

It is safe to assert that most strategies cite global threats.<sup>4</sup> Common knowledge of these realities has created a public consciousness of them and an expectation of structural change in government to meet these global challenges in all arenas, including the structure of the National Command System, with the possibility of a change in the nature of

than a message relay between the Secretary and a geographic or functional combatant command (a step that the Secretary can ignore), the Joint Chiefs should provide a global command staff.

This role of executive authority within the operational chain of command would neither obviate nor change the roles and positions of the Service chiefs and staffs, who would remain the principal advisors to national authorities for their Service functions while recruiting, training, and equipping forces that can be provided to the joint command system.<sup>6</sup> Leaving this arrangement untouched would continue the balance of power provided by the Services, who would retain most of the personnel and budgets that drive military operations and without which no operating joint force can function.

Converting the Joint Staff to an executive authority in the chain of command would accomplish four major goals, however. This change would:

- provide a national global command staff for global military issues
- establish an authoritative military point of contact for interagency affairs and operations anywhere in the world, for any military purpose; this global role would be performed in the most logical place in the chain of command, at the national command level of the Joint Staff, collocated with the centers of authority of the other agencies of the “interagency”
- streamline DOD strategic authority for Title 10 Armed Forces roles and missions
- create staff efficiencies that could enable the growth of more operational units while reducing the burden of redundant staff elements.

## Dated Structures

Exploring each area in detail reveals how this seemingly simple change achieves tremendous results. The present command system, for example, remains largely what it was at the close of World War II. Codified by the National Security Act of 1947 and the Unified Command Plan, little other than some aspects of authorities has changed since then.<sup>7</sup> The Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 rationalized the joint character of the unified commands and altered the balance of operational authority once and for all in favor of the joint combatant commands, which exercise it on

## *no transformation of the national military command structure has taken place other than the addition of limited geographic combatant commands*

opportunities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.”<sup>1</sup> Though interagency operations are certainly important, and though the Department of Defense (DOD) has enacted a series of transformational actions and experiments with regard to its subordinate offices and agencies, the fundamental pillar of national security is the Armed Forces; for this reason, the National Security Strategy begets the National Defense Strategy and National Military Strategy. Yet no transformation of the national military command structure has taken place other than the addition of limited geographic combatant commands (U.S. Northern Command and U.S. Africa Command [USAFRICOM]).

The 2008 National Defense Strategy, the next step in the thinking process, further defines the strategic environment by enunciating six basic threats:

- violent extremist movements such as Islamic terrorists
- hostile states armed with weapons of mass destruction (refined in the document to include the proliferation of these weapons)
  - rising regional powers
  - emerging space and cyber-threats
  - pandemic disasters
  - growing competition for resources.<sup>2</sup>

Of these six threats, four to five are clearly global or, at the very least, transregional in nature. As observers have noted, the conflicts of the near future for the United

the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Recommendations abound, including disposing of the geographic combatant command concept in favor of some sort of interagency approach, such as a Joint Interagency Command.<sup>5</sup> This notion is conceptually derived from the success of the Joint Interagency Task Force. The new entity would have expanded authority rather than serving merely as a coordination center, and that authority would entail an exhaustive alteration of both legislation and procedure.

The answer may be simpler than many of these recommendations, requiring only the modification of a single law and certain assumptions rather than a radical alteration of the Unified Command Plan. For the military, the Nation persists with a unique but unsuitable construct largely for historical reasons that have little to do with the practical circumstances of today. For this reason, the United States should consider converting the Joint Staff into a national command element with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) as its head. No change is required to preserve the role of the Chairman as advisor to the Secretary of Defense, or as the senior military advisor to both the President and National Security Council. But within the operational chain of command, the Chairman and his staff should be included, and they should have executive authority to provide a military link under the Secretary of Defense and between the Secretary and operating forces. Rather than serving as little more

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a geographic or functional basis today.<sup>8</sup> As a result of these laws, the Joint Staff is tasked generally as follows:

*... the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff shall be responsible for the following:*

*Strategic Direction. Assisting the President and the Secretary of Defense in providing for the strategic direction of the armed forces.*

*Strategic Planning.*

- *Preparing strategic plans, including plans which conform with resource levels . . .*

- *Preparing joint logistic and mobility plans to support those strategic plans . . .*

*Contingency Planning; Preparedness.*

- *Providing for the preparation and review of contingency plans . . .*

- *Preparing joint logistic and mobility plans to support those contingency plans.<sup>9</sup>*

These foundations, while reasonable and solid, do not support the military against today's threats. By law, the Joint Staff may not address global concerns for reasons that will be addressed below. So while the staff can plan, it has no authority to act on or implement anything that it plans, muting the effects of its efforts.

Instead, each combatant command responds directly to the Secretary of Defense and President in the operational chain of command with no global military command to order and organize action between them. For military issues, this means that to manage the India-Pakistan border, the Secretary of Defense must manage U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) and U.S. Pacific Command. To examine Israeli-Palestinian-Arab issues,

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*while the staff can plan, it has no authority to act on or implement anything that it plans, muting the effects of its efforts*

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the Secretary manages U.S. European Command and USCENTCOM. Such examples are myriad, but more important are the transregional issues that affect more than two geographic and functional commands, such as terrorism, narcotics, human trafficking, and the proliferation of various weapons.

Although the 1947 and 1986 changes drove jointness into being, these structural evolutions did so by creating new fissures in the joint commands. For example, with certain important exceptions, a combatant command is not responsible to another combatant command for a common issue; disagreements must be resolved at the level of the Office of the Secretary of Defense. Rather than eliminating rivalries, the reforms merely changed the rivalries. Though it can be assumed that the conflict between combatant commands remains less virulent and less culturally driven than those between the Services, and based more on procedure and command personality, it still exists. The difficulty of encouraging U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) to talk with USCENTCOM, two headquarters that operate on the same Florida base, is almost axiomatic among military planners. The Joint Command Staff with executive authority would eliminate this issue by being able to resolve matters directly through its own authority, rather than translating it for the Office of the Secretary and adding layers of bureaucracy.

No other part of the executive branch, including those most involved in foreign affairs in the Department of State or the Central Intelligence Agency and Intelligence Community, follows the same geographic

divisions as the combatant commands. Moreover, even DOD's own combat support agencies, those Title 50 agencies given a wartime support role in U.S. law, do not follow these groupings in accordance with the nation-sets managed by the military commands. This difference makes managing the interagency process difficult even inside DOD; should these agencies coordinate through the Joint Staff as it exists in law today, there is no assurance that the agreement as conceived will be implemented by the military because the operational commands can demur, despite the coordinating role of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Thus, a nonmilitary entity involved with the military in an international mission of the U.S. Government must theoretically coordinate with a multitude of combatant commands to secure final concurrence, or alternately it must force the Secretary of Defense to perform the coordination function, as the Joint Staff has no authority under law. Conversely, a Joint Command Staff with executive authority can facilitate coordination through a simpler set of contacts.

Functional combatant commands may fight globally, but they are limited to their specific purposes. Most notably, U.S. Strategic Command (USSTRATCOM) and USSOCOM have assumed a number of wartime roles and responsibilities, but these commands cannot achieve true unity of effort by themselves because even if they are designated a coordinating authority for a given issue, such as terrorism, the entire world in which they operate is someone else's physical zone of responsibility. USSTRATCOM, for instance, manages a series of efforts designed to create global staffs for specific functions in their eight joint component commands. Issues that these components have responsibility for range from missile defense to weapons of mass destruction.

In dealing with complex global problems, DOD has resorted to the knowledge base that it retains in its combat support agencies (CSAs), and the descriptions of USSTRATCOM's component commands identify the CSA that each is associated with. These agencies do not have military Title 10 authority, being subject instead to Title 50 (War and the National Defense). To give these CSAs Title 10 military authorities, the agencies partner with USSTRATCOM, who becomes nominally in charge of an effort run by an agency in Washington in order to obviate the need for a national military Title 10 staff

Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen James E. Cartwright



DOD (Cherie Cullen)

to manage the function. The list of agencies in the component command descriptions includes the Defense Information Systems Agency, Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), Defense Threat Reduction Agency, and Missile Defense Agency—and if not for classification might include more. This tortuous chain of command is symptomatic of a structure ill adapted to its task. If the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs had authority, the entire component system of USSTRATCOM would become an unnecessary redundancy, and any Title 10 roles sought for military personnel in the CSAs could be provided directly by the Joint Staff, who are nearly collocated with the players.

This brings us to the possibility of staff efficiencies created by the simple extension of executive authority to the Joint Staff. In

*in the interest of jointness and unity of purpose, U.S. Joint Forces Command has recently been given the role of coordinating force contributions to missions and mission planning*

the interest of jointness and unity of purpose, U.S. Joint Forces Command (USJFCOM) has recently been given the role of coordinating force contributions to missions and mission planning, a function that formerly occurred at the Joint Staff. Currently, rather than having the Services that are collocated with the Joint Staff work out their issues in Washington, each Service has to stand up a component headquarters in Norfolk, in part to do the

same thing (though these components do have other functions).

Moreover, force and equipment allocation have also entered into this duplicative process. This is neither to belittle the valuable work done by USJFCOM nor to deny that this change is basically an evolution of the role of the command; it is merely to point out that the system imposed has added a further layer of bureaucracy to force allocation. Rather than either eliminating Joint Staff input or the USJFCOM step, the Nation now has both. Services cannot resolve their differences in one location; they must work with two. It is never good to add a step in the bureaucracy; it will simply slow the process and, in this example, lead to the expansion of staffs comprised of officers and troops who could be better employed in operational units (the tooth) rather than shuffling papers (the tail). Training joint forces, generating joint forces, creating joint doctrine, and experimenting with that doctrine are all extremely valuable “joint force enabler”<sup>10</sup> tasks, but whether they require an entirely separate command is questionable.

#### Other Initiatives

The need to streamline and centralize these processes, however, grows more and more obvious. Senior personnel continue to recognize the need for functions and authorities of a global command staff. Particularly in the Intelligence Community, whose business is to focus on current and future threats, several initiatives to achieve the advantages of a global staff have been attempted, with varying degrees of success.

The Defense Joint Intelligence Operations Center, which was later renamed the Defense Intelligence Operations Coordination Center (DIOCC), was established in 2006 in response to a perceived need for global coordination of the DOD intelligence enterprise. The DIOCC is a well-intended response to a global problem set, in which shared high-value but low-density intelligence assets are employed to address the disparate and usually competing intelligence requirements of 10 combatant commands. The shortcoming of this relatively ad hoc solution is the lack of backing in Federal law for the authority to “direct” supporting CSAs or military forces.<sup>11</sup> Unfortunately, the orders of the Secretary compete with the definitions provided in U.S. law, not least because the DIOCC was constructed in one of the CSAs rather than in the Joint Staff. The CSA has no titular authority to direct or coordinate either other CSAs or military forces (the latter is the specific province for which the USSTRATCOM component command chains exist). The Joint Staff would have been able to coordinate competing intelligence requirements between commands, at the very least, though it too would have been unable to enforce its decisions.



Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff ADM Michael Mullen



The DIOCC experiment can best be summarized in a notional example wherein two geographic combatant commanders simultaneously have different requirements for an intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance mission by a single platform. While the DIOCC has the backing of a DOD directive (DODD), combatant commanders have no requirement under existing Federal law to abide by or to recognize the authority of the DIOCC regarding prioritization of their competing intelligence requirements, and they have no uniformed senior to mitigate the occasional disagreement. The highest immediate authority available to the DIOCC without resorting to the Secretary of Defense is the director of DIA, a three-star noncombat command position. Combatant commanders are well within their rights to point to Title 10 and the defined direct relationship between a combatant commander and the Secretary of Defense for all matters, and to object to any direction from the DIOCC.

Alternatively, the problem of authority exists even in the case of a single combatant command with an expressed need for intelligence, operating within the guidelines of DODD 5105.21. The combatant commander is directed to turn to the DIOCC for coordination and (logically) tasking of the intelligence requirement to the remainder of the DOD CSAs, as suggested by DODD 5105.21, but again, there is no backing in Federal law for the DIOCC to perform prioritization or tasking to other CSAs and little in the way of formal structure with which to do so, such as the Joint Staff tasking system. CSAs tasked by DIOCC are well within their rights to point to Title 50 and the direct relationship mandated by Federal law between a CSA and the Secretary of Defense for guidance and tasking, with a refusal to prioritize any but their own requirements. The DIOCC, then, while a valuable experiment energetically undertaken by capable personnel, highlights the weaknesses of proceeding without addressing issues of law in the organization of executive authorities.

Another ongoing experiment with executive authorities for national security matters may be seen in the structure of USAFRICOM. Based on recent experiences with military intervention worldwide, USAFRICOM stresses a “whole-of-government” approach at the geographic command level. The USAFRICOM experiment may contribute greatly to capacity to function in an interagency manner at least in Title



U.S. Africa Command (Amanda McCarty)

10 and Title 50 exclusive environments.<sup>12</sup> But giving the Ambassador authority in the military system neither gives him/her authority to direct other departments' assets nor solves the issue of transfrontier seams in the military command system. Besides giving the appearance of failing confidence in the existing military commands, especially after its poorly executed initial announcement, the USAFRICOM model does not resolve much when confronted with the aforementioned

enlisted personnel and untold millions of dollars to return to the operating forces and put boots on the ground.

The remaining reluctance to invest such authority in the Joint Staff stems from the concept of the so-called Man on Horseback,<sup>13</sup> or the fear of military officers exceeding their authority. It is out of this fear that the United States, unique among all the world's nations with standing militaries, retains a nondirective military Joint Staff system.

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*besides giving the appearance of failing confidence in the existing military commands, the USAFRICOM model does not resolve much when confronted with global threats*

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global threats. When the military issue is assisting a response between two combatant commands, the fact that one has more interagency representation will not resolve the residual issue for executing strategy in the face of a trans-regional threat contingency. Moreover, USAFRICOM cannot actually direct the activities of any other agency outside Title 10 military forces and by its existence may generate problems for those other agencies, as some observers have pointed out.

### **The Joint Command Staff**

The challenges of the current system bring us back to the Joint Staff as the best global executive military authority. With executive authority in the Joint Staff, it may be possible to curtail the proliferation of unified command staffs and to eliminate certain of these staffs as economy of force measures, freeing literally thousands of officers and

The founders of the United States were well aware of the potential for a military man to use his command authority to supersede the Republic, and not just from antiquity. Oliver Cromwell, sharing Puritan beliefs with New Englanders, was only a century earlier, and Napoleon seized power during the lifetimes of the Constitution's authors. Foreign examples continued during the history of the American Republic and reinforced the impression that strong generals might pose a threat, including the Chiefs of the German General Staffs during the World Wars, and General Francisco Franco in Spain between those wars. The specter of military coup rightfully unsettles civilian government.

There are four counterarguments to this concern today. First, the Secretary of Defense should be at the top-center of this command concept, above the Chairman for chain of command purposes, providing continued

civilian control. This coupling of authority would further increase the efficiency of the concept by giving the totality of the command staff much more control over CSAs due to their direct line from the Secretary. Second, the senior military officers in this concept are all subject to congressional oversight first by their rank—four stars for the Chairman, his deputy, and the Service chiefs—and secondly by their positions. Third, the Services would retain their equities, and the combatant commanders would generally retain control of fielded forces, whereas the Joint Command Staff would give direction through them for global operations. The conceivable exceptions where a joint task force might work directly for the Joint Command Staff already exist in the joint functional component commands for specific global issues organized currently at USSTRATCOM, which are issue-based rather than force-based.

Finally, neither the separation of power between the joint operational chains of command and Services nor the information and oversight environment in the transparent governmental world of today lend themselves to military power-mongering. Similarly, the American environment is so open and congressional cognizance so acute that subversion of the U.S. Government from within would be difficult. Also, the leonine personalities at issue in 1947—including, for example, commanders who wielded authority over the 10 percent of the national population that was under arms—are not present today. The military is much smaller in personnel as a portion of the total population.<sup>14</sup>

In examining the possibility of one person exceeding his mandate, it should be noted that the individual need not be a general or even in the military. The numerous problems with the Cobra II plan for the invasion and security of Iraq from phase four

*in examining the possibility of one person exceeding his mandate, it should be noted that the individual need not be a general or even in the military*

(stabilization) onward have been attributed in part to a Secretary of Defense who chose to ignore his Joint Staff and deal directly with a geographic combatant command because

the Joint Staff had disagreements with him. In today's structure, the Secretary was well within his legal authority to do so. USCENTCOM devised what may have been the most successful joint and coalition operation in history through phase three, but due to its regional limitations, lack of connection to the rest of government, necessary tactical focus, total lack of follow-on troops, and failure to include a standing headquarters for the ensuing occupation, it did not foresee the next steps with any degree of clarity. These are strategic tasks that the Joint Staff is particularly suited for.

Arguably, General Colin Powell's time as Chairman most closely approached a directive Joint Staff. Overseeing 28 diverse crises ranging from the initial, successful phase of humanitarian intervention in Somalia to Operation *Desert Storm*, the Powell era demonstrated in part what firm national joint leadership might accomplish, including the discussion of what happened next in the very same country, Iraq.

As Secretary of Defense Robert Gates has noted, DOD "must set priorities and consider inescapable tradeoffs and opportunity costs."<sup>15</sup> Structural change in the Unified Command Plan is not a simple matter of executive orders or Secretary of Defense memoranda. While experiments are both fruitful and instructive, they can also expose the flaws of the ideas proposed. Among the most glaring flaws highlighted by the experiments to date is the lack of statutory foundation for the changes proposed. Converting the Joint Staff into a Joint Command Staff, while a simple action, would require statutory change through Congress, not just an order from a Cabinet officer.

For years, the Nation has built its strategic frameworks on the supposition of global and transregional threats. Jointness has passed into the military lexicon as an assumption of that which is desired, so much so that discussions now have turned to making military commands more "inter-agency." Before that step, however, the final pillar of the joint concept must be erected, and that pillar is a unified global Joint Command Staff with executive authority tying all joint military operational chains of command together nationally. A Joint Command Staff is the ultimate step in the long process of transition toward unified action. The time for change is now. **JFQ**

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, DC: The White House, March 2006), available at <[www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss/2006/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss/2006/)>.

<sup>2</sup> *The National Defense Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, DC: Office of the Secretary of Defense, June 2008), available at <[www.defenselink.mil/news/2008%20national%20defense%20strategy.pdf](http://www.defenselink.mil/news/2008%20national%20defense%20strategy.pdf)>.

<sup>3</sup> Frank G. Hoffman, "Hybrid Warfare and Challenges," *Joint Force Quarterly* 52 (1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2009), 34.

<sup>4</sup> "Declassified Key Judgments of the National Intelligence Estimate 'Trends in Global Terrorism: Implications for the United States' dated April 2006," available at <[www.dni.gov/press\\_releases/Declassified\\_NIE\\_Key\\_Judgments.pdf](http://www.dni.gov/press_releases/Declassified_NIE_Key_Judgments.pdf)>.

<sup>5</sup> Jeffrey Buchanan, Maxie Y. Davis, and Lee T. Wight, "Death of the Combatant Command? Toward a Joint Interagency Approach," *Joint Force Quarterly* 52 (1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2009), 92.

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Code (USC) Title 10, available at <<http://uscode.house.gov/pdf/2006/2006usc10.pdf>>. Function of Chief of Naval Operations, USC § 5032, Function of Commandant of the Marine Corps, USC § 5041, Function of Chief of Staff of the Air Force, USC § 8032, Function of Chief of Staff of the Army, USC § 3032.

<sup>7</sup> "The History of the Unified Command Plan 1946 to 1993," available at <[www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/history/ucp.pdf](http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/history/ucp.pdf)>.

<sup>8</sup> See Gordon Nathaniel Lederman, *Reorganizing the Joint Chiefs of Staff* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999).

<sup>9</sup> USC, Title 10, Subtitle A, Part I, Chapter 5, § 153; U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) Directive 5100.1, *Functions of the Department of Defense and Its Major Components* (Washington, DC: DOD, August 1, 2002).

<sup>10</sup> See Posture Statement of General Lance L. Smith, USAF, Commander of U.S. Joint Forces Command, before the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress House Armed Services Committee, March 15, 2007.

<sup>11</sup> USC, Title 50, Chapter 15, § 401, 1.12.

<sup>12</sup> See Mary C. Yates, "U.S. Africa Command: Value Added," *Joint Force Quarterly* 52 (1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2009), 152.

<sup>13</sup> Lederman, 57.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 57–61.

<sup>15</sup> Robert M. Gates, "A Balanced Strategy: Reprogramming the Pentagon for a New Age," *Foreign Affairs* 88, no. 1 (January–February 2009), available at <[www.foreignaffairs.org/20090101faessay88103/robert-m-gates/how-to-reprogram-the-pentagon.html](http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20090101faessay88103/robert-m-gates/how-to-reprogram-the-pentagon.html)>.

# GLOBAL INSURGENCY MYTH OR REALITY?

**T**he current global security situation appears to validate and vindicate the doctrinal assumptions of U.S. Army Field Manual 3-24,

*Counterinsurgency*, that insurgencies will be the “new normal” mode of conflict in which the United States finds itself engaged around the world. In 2010, insurgencies abound and comprise the vast majority of the world’s conflicts. This is nothing new. In fact, the most recent data available on global conflict taken from the 2007 Stockholm International Peace Research Institute Yearbook suggest that in 2006, there were 17 major armed conflicts taking place in 16 regions of the world. Not one of them was an interstate conflict.<sup>1</sup>

Despite nearly a year since the change in Presidential administration, a world rife with insurgencies is little different than it was at the height of what the Bush administration called the “global war on terror.” Iraq may be now stabilizing, but there remain regular incidents of insurgent violence directed at U.S. combat forces, the Iraqi government, and innocent civilians. Afghanistan continues to disintegrate and is the main effort for U.S. military operations. The administration of Barack Obama was on course to raise the number of troops from 38,000 to 68,000 by the end of 2009, and military commanders are on record asking for an additional 10,000 troops above that. As with Iraq, the situation in Afghanistan has all the hallmarks of a *national insurgency*, typically defined as “an organized movement aimed at overthrowing a constituted government through the use of subversion and armed conflict.”<sup>2</sup> Indeed, General David Petraeus, commander of U.S. Central Command, has

noted as much in testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee.<sup>3</sup>

Besides Iraq and Afghanistan, there are numerous incidences of local, regional, or national insurgencies. The Tamil Tigers and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, though weakened substantially in 2008, are still considered viable regional threats to the Sri Lankan and Philippine states, respectively. The government of Colombia and its various rebel groups have been fighting what amounts to a civil war for decades now, and Mexico appears headed down the same path with respect to what is being called a “narco-insurgency.”<sup>4</sup> Israel and the Palestinians have been engaged in one of the longest running conflicts, though whether the intifada represents a classic insurgency is a matter open to debate. Obviously, on the international stage, insurgent violence is more common than it is rare.

But do these local, regional, or national insurgencies, as captivating as they are, comprise a viable and unified *global* insurgency? At its heart, that is the question debated by the authors of the two following articles. On its face, the issue is deceptively simple. Unpacking it, however, reveals additional wrinkles that fundamentally challenge our understanding of insurgency and perhaps even the roots and characteristics of global conflict itself.

In addressing this question, each author examines the issue of the global insurgency from an epistemological point of view; in other words, how do we *know* that (or if) we are facing a global insurgency? What are our measurement and assessment criteria? Are they quantitative, so that we can call an insurgency global once we aggregate enough discrete incidents of local violence? Or is there a qualitative com-

monality among the disparate local, regional, and national insurgencies, some binding philosophy that makes the local examples really just fractal instances of the larger phenomenon?

The authors also examine the issue of the nature of the insurgency itself. If it is a global insurgency, is it founded on radical Islam, and focused on undermining the Western style of governance? Or is it a global insurgency because we *choose* to call it one? If so, is it in the best interests of U.S. national security that we have not seriously examined the philosophical differences and divergences among these insurgencies that are taking place far from each other in both time and space?

These questions, and others, are debated. While each author proposes his own solution to the question of whether a global insurgency exists, we leave it to the reader to draw conclusions. **JFQ**

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Stockholm International Peace Research Institute Yearbook 2007, *Armaments, Disarmament and International Security* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), appendix 2A.

<sup>2</sup> Joint Publication 1-02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Washington, DC: The Joint Staff, April 12, 2001, as amended through August 19, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> David H. Petraeus, testimony on United States Policy toward Afghanistan and Pakistan before the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee, April 1, 2009, available at <<http://armed-services.senate.gov/Webcasts/2009/April/04-01-09Webcast.htm>>.

<sup>4</sup> Hal Brands, “Mexico’s Narco-Insurgency,” *World Politics Review*, December 22, 2008, available at <[www.worldpoliticsreview.com/article.aspx?id=3072](http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/article.aspx?id=3072)>.



# The STRUGGLE

## Against Global Insurgency

By DANIEL G. COX

Soldier en route to capture insurgents and locate weapons caches in Baqubah, Iraq

Since 9/11, it has become commonplace for scholars, politicians, and military thinkers to refer to current U.S. military and diplomatic actions as being part of a larger “war on terror.” This is an extremely imprecise characterization of the current conflict. What the United States and, in fact, the world are facing is more properly dubbed a global insurgent movement that emanates from al Qaeda at the international level and that slowly seeps into legitimate (and illegitimate) national secessionist movements around the world. What follows is an argument in support of the claim that al Qaeda is essentially the world’s first attempt at a global insurgency.

According to General Wayne Downing, USA (Ret.), “terrorism is a tactic used by Salafist insurgents to attain their strategic goals, which are political in nature.”<sup>1</sup> Indeed, terrorism is a tactic—and one cannot wage war on a tactic. Though this is a correct but

superficial criticism, it has never led to any meaningful discussion regarding the implications of this point or what it is that the U.S. military is actually combating. Only a few authors have asserted that al Qaeda is an insurgency, and even fewer have made the connection between al Qaeda’s terror tactics and a larger global insurgency movement.

Audrey Kurth Cronin was one of the first scholars to hint that al Qaeda is a global insurgency, writing soon after 9/11 that it was aiming not so much at the World Trade Center or the Pentagon or even the United States, but was instead aiming to destroy the U.S.-led global system.<sup>2</sup> David Kilcullen claims that the West is facing a “global jihad,” which is much more akin to a global insurgency and has as its chief aim the imposition of a worldwide Islamic caliphate.<sup>3</sup> One of the newest entries into this field of argumentation is Dan Roper, who is not only one of a new breed of scholars who clearly sees the

folly of declaring war against a tactic, but also one of the few to argue that the U.S. Government and military are facing a global insurgency and to provide some concrete policy recommendations.<sup>4</sup>

This article seeks to expand on this embryonic line of argumentation, but in order to establish al Qaeda as the first global insurgency, a review of the definition of insurgency and its link to terrorism must be conducted. Next, al Qaeda’s rhetoric and demands are briefly examined. The article concludes with an analysis of al Qaeda’s strategy for fomenting global insurgency through its exploitation of failed and failing states and of (often legitimate) domestic insurgencies around the world.

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## Insurgency and Terrorism

David Galula, in his seminal work *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, defines *insurgency* as “a protracted struggle conducted methodically, step by step, in order to attain specific intermediate objectives leading finally to the overthrow of the existing order.”<sup>5</sup> Field Manual 3–24, *Counterinsurgency*, defines an insurgency along similar lines as “an organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through the use of subversion and armed conflict.” Frank Kitson expands on these notions, emphasizing that the successful insurgent generally starts with little power but a strong cause, while the counterinsurgent has a near monopoly of power but a weak cause or reason for holding that power, which the insurgent levers against the counterinsurgent over time until those in power are ousted.<sup>6</sup> Bard O’Neill adds three

some view terrorism as an indicator of failed insurgency in its last death throes, while others deem it an essential first step toward gaining momentum. Galula views “blind,” or indiscriminate, terrorism as the first step in “bourgeois-nationalist” insurgencies where a fledgling movement is seeking to gain notoriety for its cause.<sup>8</sup> This is followed by a second stage of “selective” terrorism in which an insurgency gaining strength seeks to target counterinsurgents and isolate them from the people.<sup>9</sup> Sometimes terrorism is seen as the only viable tactic for an insurgent facing a severe asymmetry in the balance of military force. In this case, terrorism becomes one of the feasible forms of “lesser violence” that can be implemented against a superior conventional force.<sup>10</sup> But not all agree that terrorism is a tactic that can be employed successfully by insurgents. Anthony Joes, for instance, came

That terrorism is the tactic of choice for insurgencies facing overwhelming conventional threats does not conclusively indicate weakness or future failure. In fact, in a recent study for the RAND National Defense Research Institute, Daniel Byman found that while not all terrorist groups are insurgencies, it does appear that “almost every insurgent group uses terrorism.”<sup>12</sup>

## Demands from al Qaeda

Establishing that terrorism and insurgency are closely linked and that many national insurgencies have used terrorism both to draw attention to a cause and later to isolate counterinsurgents from the people is insufficient to substantiate the claim that al Qaeda is an insurgency. An examination of al Qaeda’s own words and deeds is necessary to close the correlative link.

Cronin argues generally that the Western world has been slow to recognize that terrorist activity has increased in response to U.S.-led globalization, or what is being termed “Western imperialism.”<sup>13</sup> This is an important point; it is this backlash against globalization that al Qaeda is tapping into in fomenting its own global insurgency. Al Qaeda leaders have referenced the intrusion of Western nations as colonial oppressors, military bullies, and economic exploiters.

Al Qaeda’s brand of insurgency against perceived imperial intrusion is grounded in the work of the 12<sup>th</sup>-century Islamic thinker Ibn Taymiyya, who grew up experiencing a brutal Mongol invasion and oppressive occupation. This created a problem, as the invading Mongols were also Islamic; hence, Taymiyya had to devise a way around Koranic law, which specifically forbade the killing of any Muslim by another, to justify killing fellow Muslims. He had to expand the notion of what it is to be Muslim and differentiate between “good” and “bad” Muslims. Obviously, since the Mongols were an invading people, they had to kill Muslims to achieve their goals, and this fact, coupled with their horrible treatment of conquered Muslims, allowed Taymiyya to make a convincing argument that invading Mongols were “bad” Muslims. The road became clear when he declared that the invading Mongols and the rulers who bowed down to them were apostates. Now distinctions could be drawn between self-professed and real Muslims, and some could be determined to be enemies of Islam and were, therefore, subject to death.<sup>14</sup>



Soldiers photograph and identify man during operation to track and arrest Iraqi insurgents

U.S. Navy (Robert Whelan)

types of insurgency, which he dubs “anarchist,” those wishing to overthrow government but not replace it; “egalitarian,” those attempting to replace the current government with one that emphasizes distributional equality; and “traditionalist,” those bent on replacing corrupt modern society with a mythologized distant past that emphasizes traditional values often rooted in fundamental interpretations of religion.<sup>7</sup>

The relationship between insurgency and terrorism is not without controversy. While most scholars see the two as related,

to the conclusion that terrorism is antithetical to the waging of successful guerrilla warfare after examining modern insurgency movements. He notes that in all but one of the insurgent cases, terrorism was employed as a last resort by “insurgencies that were losing, or that eventually lost.”<sup>11</sup>

While one could certainly conclude that terrorism is the tactic of choice for the weak, the evidence for the assertion that it is a tactic of failed insurgencies is unconvincing. Galula’s argument that terrorism is the initial stage of an insurgency seems more plausible.

The reason this is so monumentally important to al Qaeda is that Taymiyya's revolutionary shifting of targets allows al Qaeda free rein to conduct its terror attacks against a much broader group of infidels. Not only are apostate Muslims fair targets, but so are infidel women and children. In fact, al Qaeda has a written directive in a seized training manual that specifies that "apostate rulers" presiding over predominantly Islamic nations are more of a threat than past colonial oppressors.<sup>15</sup> The link to Taymiyya is clear, for as one author writes, "Islamic radicals everywhere see the United States as the neo-Mongol power lurking behind the apostate governments that they seek to topple."<sup>16</sup> According to al Qaeda theologian Faris Al Shuwayl, Shia Muslims are portrayed as polytheists and worthy only of death. Christians and Jews can obey sharia law and

*the demands from al Qaeda regarding Western powers are instructive, as they have the flavor of demands made by many domestic insurgent groups*

Islamic theological directives or be expunged. The broadening of enemies of Islam initiated by Taymiyya, expanded by Wahhabi, and carried into modern times by al Qaeda serves as the foundation for terror attacks aimed at overthrowing Western dominance, capitalism, globalization, and modernization, which currently define the world system.

While apostate rulers within *Dar al Islam* are singled out as the prime targets of al Qaeda's global insurgency, al Qaeda has made it clear that Western powers, especially the United States, are not off the hook. The demands from al Qaeda regarding Western powers are instructive, as they have the flavor of demands made by many domestic insurgent groups. Osama bin Laden has on several occasions demanded that the United States withdraw all support for Israel and remove all presence from Saudi Arabia, especially military presence.<sup>17</sup> A slightly expanded version of these demands was offered in a letter sent to the *New York Times* by al Qaeda propagandist Nidal Ayyad the day after the 9/11 attacks. In this directive, al Qaeda demanded that the United States cut economic and military aid

to Israel and cease interference in all domestic affairs within any Middle Eastern state.<sup>18</sup>

In the final analysis, al Qaeda's demands that Western imperialists leave the Middle East and refrain from interfering with domestic Arabian politics, that apostate rulers in Arabia step down, and that illegal Israeli colonizers give up their claim to Israel are strikingly similar to demands from the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka or the Free Aceh Movement in Indonesia, both of which demand autonomy from unfair and abusive state rule. The only significant difference is that al Qaeda's claims stretch across multiple Islamic countries instead of being confined to a specific region in a recognized nation-state. O'Neill's characterization of a traditional insurgency seems appropriate when attempting to categorize al Qaeda. He writes, "Within the category of traditionalist insurgents, one also finds zealous groups seeking to reestablish an ancient political system that they idealize as a golden age."<sup>19</sup>

### Dune Insurgency

Shaul Mishal and Maoz Rosenthal offer an interesting reinterpretation of al Qaeda as an organization. Instead of classifying it as a hierarchical (almost no one claims this anymore) or a networked organization, Mishal and Rosenthal perceive al Qaeda as being "Dune-like." According to these authors, a Dune organization "relies on a process of vacillation between territorial presence and a mode of disappearance. The perception of territorial presence is associated with stable territorial formations:

nation-states, global markets, or ethnic communities."<sup>20</sup> Like sand dunes, Mishal and Rosenthal see a temporary network attaching and detaching and "moving onward after changing the environment in which it has acted."<sup>21</sup> This analogy seems to depict al Qaeda accurately and explains why direct confrontation is so difficult. Mishal and Rosenthal argue that Dune movement is "almost random,"<sup>22</sup> but this assertion is debatable since al Qaeda seems to be spreading and growing in strength.

The Dune analogy captures the movement and actions of al Qaeda and helps illustrate how a complex and adaptive global insurgency works. Combating a Dune insurgency is difficult because once one tries to stamp a sand dune with his foot, he is likely to find either the wind has blown most of the sand to a different area or his foot is now stuck in the sand. Worse still, successfully dislodged sand can blow back into an area that was previously cleared.

This certainly appears to be the modus operandi with al Qaeda's global insurgency. From the movement's humble birth in the late 1980s as a successful mujahideen insurgency against Soviet invaders in Afghanistan, bin Laden and al Qaeda constructed their first significant Dune in Sudan. Al Qaeda built a close relationship with the Sudanese government, developing joint business enterprises in exchange for a safe haven and, on at least one occasion, securing hundreds of Sudanese passports for al Qaeda operatives to use for travel.<sup>23</sup> While in Sudan, al Qaeda branched out, meddling in any regional problem that



Soldier with interpreter questions local resident about suspected insurgent activities during air assault mission in Afghanistan



contained an Islamic component. In Somalia, 18 U.S. Army Rangers were killed in a particularly brutal battle on October 3, 1993, by Somali fighters trained by al Qaeda operatives in Sudan.<sup>24</sup> Eventually, the United States continued to apply diplomatic and economic pressure on the Islamic-dominated government of Sudan, and in 1996, bin Laden and his organization had to seek refuge in Afghanistan.<sup>25</sup> But once again, al Qaeda is regaining influence in both Sudan and Somalia. The dislodged sand is accumulating once more. J. Stephen Morrison argues that this should be expected as “both states are highly porous, fractured, and weak (or wrecked) states; both welcomed al-Qaeda in the past and retain linkages to it today.”<sup>26</sup>

After Sudan, al Qaeda set up shop in its old haunt, Afghanistan. But Afghanistan was by no means the only base of operations. Al Qaeda had learned in Africa to spread its operations and to foment violent radicalism wherever possible. While it was only able to operate freely in Afghanistan under fundamental Taliban rule from 1996 until the government itself was removed from power by coalition forces in 2002, al Qaeda grew in strength and complexity not only by continuing to perpetrate successful attacks against the United States but also through linking itself and its Salafist cause to many domestic insurgencies and secessionist movements throughout the world.

What is most interesting during this period is that al Qaeda seemed to ramp up its emphasis on global insurgency. Southeast Asia became a target of choice and remains

one of the group’s most prominent fixations. There are several reasons why the region is a good fit for its brand of insurgency. Zachary Abuza argues that Southeast Asia is perfect for al Qaeda and other terror organizations because of widespread poverty, lack of equal education, lax border controls (due to many states being reliant on tourism), and the spread of Wahhabist and Salafist Islam.<sup>27</sup> Another enticement for al Qaeda is that there is already a fairly well-established regional terrorist organization, Jemaah Islamiyah, which espouses the grand goal of establishing a caliphate encompassing all Southeast Asian states.<sup>28</sup> Finally, there are numerous Islamic secessionist movements looking for support. The Free Aceh Movement in Indonesia, multiple Islamic secessionist groups in the Philippines, and recent secessionist movement in southern Thailand all provide fertile grounds for al Qaeda to infiltrate.

Al Qaeda began laying the seeds of insurgency in Southeast Asia while headquartered in Sudan. Ramsey Youssef, a chief architect of the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, was one of the main actors managing al Qaeda’s growing regional network in Southeast Asia. Youssef regularly visited the Philippines and consulted with the Abu Sayyaf group and coordinated cooperation between it and al Qaeda.<sup>29</sup>

Al Qaeda continued to expand this initial cooperation while in Afghanistan, supporting secessionist movements and regional insurgent movements in Southeast Asia, which allowed it to gain a strong foothold and a networked base of operations there. In fact,

by 2002, it is estimated that nearly 20 percent of all of al Qaeda’s organizational strength was in Southeast Asia.<sup>30</sup>

Simultaneously with the infiltration in Southeast Asia, al Qaeda began to align itself with a strengthening fundamental Islamic movement in Pakistan. Islamic fundamentalism sprang up, in part, due to the Pakistani government’s decision to back the fundamental Taliban regime against Soviet invaders. When the Taliban mujahideen succeeded in resisting Soviet occupation, an explosion of fundamentalism occurred in Pakistan. The number of fundamentalist madrassas there increased tenfold in the decade after the Soviet Union was unceremoniously expelled from Afghanistan, and these religious schools began training insurgents who would become influential leaders of radical terror organizations in Southeast Asia.<sup>31</sup>

Al Qaeda grew as an organization, and the sand dune that was seemingly dislodged from Sudan reappeared in Afghanistan. While in Afghanistan, al Qaeda gained a strong foothold in Southeast Asia that it largely retains today. In 2002, coalition forces would kick the sand again and al Qaeda would relocate to the nearby Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) in Pakistan.

Many pundits, political leaders, and high-ranking members of the military quickly proclaimed that al Qaeda was severely damaged when its operations were forcefully dislodged from Afghanistan, that it could no longer operate as it used to, and that bin Laden and his whole organization were hopelessly on the run. But these proclamations were soon proven premature as al Qaeda continued to perpetrate, or at least inspire, major attacks against Spain and Great Britain. Al Qaeda also continued to infiltrate Southeast Asia and revisit old haunts in North Africa. In fact, U.S. intelligence agencies reported in 2007 that al Qaeda had actually become stronger and more dangerous almost 6 years after coalition forces dislodged it from Afghanistan.<sup>32</sup> The organization has also continued to strengthen in Sudan and is actively supporting the Islamic Courts movement in Somalia.

Al Qaeda consistently calls for an Islamic caliphate and the destruction of Western imperialist interveners in Islamic affairs. It persists in demanding the dissolution of the state of Israel. It continues to grow in strength and arguably in scope even though successful efforts dislodged the organization from two separate nation-states that it

**Soldiers search for explosives in Iraq’s Diyala River Valley to disrupt al Qaeda networks**



U. S. Army (Bobby L. Allen, Jr.)

was using as its main bases of operations. Al Qaeda is acting like a Dune insurgency, and forceful attempts to disrupt this organization are meeting with what appears to be short-term success but long-term failure.

## Implications

Al Qaeda appears to be using terrorism as an early-stage tactic to draw attention to its insurgent cause and to separate the people in multiple nation-states from the counter-insurgents just the way Galula predicted. It also shows the characteristics of being what O'Neill describes as a traditionalist insurgency attempting to rail against global forces and return at least the Muslim world to a mythologized caliphate emphasizing traditional, fundamental Islam. Finally, al Qaeda appears to be perpetrating a successful Dune insurgency, transitioning nimbly between short periods of territorial presence and then seemingly disappearing until it becomes evident that it has set up shop elsewhere, perhaps even in multiple locations.

If the above analysis proves true, then combating a complex Dune insurgency will be problematic. Successfully countering al Qaeda in Iraq and Afghanistan, while vital, does not necessarily encompass all that needs to be done to counter a global insurgency. Unfortunately, the old counterinsurgency mantra "clear, hold, build" now applies to almost everywhere there is an exploitable instability. Kinetic options will likely meet with limited success as the main course of action, as the al Qaeda movement has spread deeply into multiple states and regions, and no coalition force could hope to intervene militarily in all of these places simultaneously. What really needs to be combated is instability and fundamentalism, as al Qaeda thrives off of these two features. Instability provides a perfect environment for al Qaeda to step into. Groups with sometimes legitimate secessionist demands provide potential allies, because poverty and human rights abuses provide causes that al Qaeda organizers can latch on to and use to leverage popular support for their larger global cause. One of the great ironies of the al Qaeda insurgency is that it could unintentionally unite the industrialized world in the first genuine, concerted effort to eradicate poverty and human rights abuses in the developing world. Stability operations performed by the military take on prime importance in such a struggle.

Finally, strategic communication will be a key in managing the al Qaeda problem. Industrial powers will need not only to foster stability in the developing world but also to broadcast the benefits of modernization and freedom to a large and diverse body of people that is largely wary of outsiders and that has been exploited by European colonizers. None of these tasks will be easy, but the sooner it is accepted that al Qaeda is a complex, adaptive global insurgency, the sooner real debate and discussion regarding these and broader, more global initiatives can occur.

But one must also take caution when combating al Qaeda's global insurgent movement. Kinetic options are necessary to take out irreconcilables, but widespread kinetic operations can actually feed the movement and serve to coalesce disparate groups around the al Qaeda banner. One must always bear in mind that the implication of an attempted global insurgency is that al Qaeda has declared war against the world, and the sheer magnitude, and perhaps hubris, of such an undertaking might mean that it is doomed to fall under the weight of its own ambitions. **JFQ**

## NOTES

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<sup>2</sup> Audrey Kurth Cronin, "Behind the Curve: Globalization and International Terrorism," *International Security* 27, no. 3 (Winter 2002/2003), 38.

<sup>3</sup> David J. Kilcullen, "Countering Global Insurgency," *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 28, no. 4 (August 2005), 598, 603–604.

<sup>4</sup> Daniel S. Roper, "Global Insurgency: Strategic Clarity for the Long War," *Parameters* 37, no. 3 (Autumn 2008).

<sup>5</sup> David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (New York: Praeger, 1968), 4, emphasis in original.

<sup>6</sup> Frank Kitson, *Low Intensity Operations: Subversion, Insurgency, and Peacekeeping* (Saint Petersburg, FL: Hailer, 1973), 29.

<sup>7</sup> Bard E. O'Neill, *Insurgency and Terrorism: From Revolution to Apocalypse*, 2<sup>d</sup> ed. (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2005), 20–21.

<sup>8</sup> Galula, 58–59.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> O'Neill, 57.

<sup>11</sup> Anthony James Joes, *Resisting Rebellion: The History and Politics of Counterinsurgency* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2004), 20.

<sup>12</sup> Daniel Byman, *Understanding Proto-Insurgencies* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2007).

<sup>13</sup> Cronin, 34.

<sup>14</sup> See Michael Doran, "The Pragmatic Fanaticism of al-Qaeda: An Anatomy of Extremism in Middle Eastern Politics," *Political Science Quarterly* 117, no. 2 (Summer 2002), 179; and Daniel Benjamin and Steven Simon, *The Age of Sacred Terror* (New York: Random House, 2002), for a more complete accounting of Taymiyya and his influence on al Qaeda.

<sup>15</sup> Doran, 180.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 183.

<sup>17</sup> Barry R. Posen, "The Struggle Against Terrorism: Grand Strategy, Strategy, and Tactics," *International Security* 26, no. 3 (Winter 2001/2002), 40.

<sup>18</sup> Benjamin and Simon, 12–13.

<sup>19</sup> O'Neill, 21.

<sup>20</sup> Shaul Mishal and Maoz Rosenthal, "Al-Qaeda as a Dune Organization: Toward a Typology of Islamic Terrorist Organizations," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 28 (2005), 282.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Benjamin and Simon, 112.

<sup>24</sup> Ruth Wedgewood, "Al-Qaeda, Military Commissions, and American Self-Defense," *Political Science Quarterly* 117, no. 3 (Autumn 2002), 358.

<sup>25</sup> Benjamin and Simon, 133.

<sup>26</sup> J. Stephen Morrison, "Somalia's and Sudan's Race to the Fore in Africa," *Washington Quarterly* 25, no. 2 (Spring 2002), 192.

<sup>27</sup> Zachary Abuza, "Tentacles of Terror: Al-Qaeda's Southeast Asian Network," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 24, no. 3 (December 2002), 428.

<sup>28</sup> Mishal and Rosenthal, 280.

<sup>29</sup> Wedgewood, 359.

<sup>30</sup> Rohan Gunaratna, *Inside Al-Qaeda: Global Network of Terror* (New York: Berkley Books, 2002).

<sup>31</sup> Irm Haleem, "Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Central Asia: Recruiting Grounds for Terrorism?" in *Democratic Development and Political Terrorism*, ed. William Crotty (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2005), 146.

<sup>32</sup> Mary Louise Kelly, "Is Al Qaida Stronger Six Years after Sept. 11?" Transcript from National Public Radio, *Morning Edition*, September 11, 2007, available at <<http://current.com/10i9e4c>>.

# THE DANGERS OF MISTAKING **Coherence for Capability**

By MICHAEL W. MOSSER

**T**he purported global insurgency that al Qaeda is claimed to represent is nicely captured by the language of the 2006 *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, which considers radical groups to be united by a fundamentalist ideology, posing a clear and present danger to the Nation. In the words of the strategy, the war on terror is a Manichean struggle of good and evil, a war of opposing philosophies:

*From the beginning, the War on Terror has been both a battle of arms and a battle of ideas—a fight against the terrorists and against their murderous ideology. In the short run, the fight involves using military force and other instruments of national power to kill or capture the terrorists; deny them safe haven or control of any nation; prevent them from gaining access to [weapons of mass destruction]; and cut off their sources of support.*

Soldiers on counterinsurgency mission prepare to enter mud huts in Tawillah region of Iraq



5<sup>th</sup> Mobile Public Affairs Detachment (Armando Monolig)



*In the long run, winning the War on Terror means winning the battle of ideas, for it is ideas that can turn the disenchanted into murderers willing to kill innocent victims.*<sup>1</sup>

It is no secret that the war on terror is a war only if we conflate *tactics* with *ideology*.<sup>2</sup> Insofar as the tactics employed by terrorists since time immemorial have been as much psychological as military, this might be acceptable. But is there really a deeper ideology behind those tactics? It is true that armed insurgencies exist in many parts of the world, but are they united in a way that makes them *global*?

This article argues that there is no truly unified global insurgency centered around al Qaeda and that to make a case that there is risks reifying what is only an accidental similarity. The aggregation of localized insurgencies into a global insurgency by both thinkers and practitioners misses a fundamental distinction of the *scope conditions* of insurgency, or the setting in which an insurgency takes place. Put another way, imputing a global nature to a collection of distinct insurgencies adds artificial coherence to what is better seen as a fundamentally incoherent phenomenon.

In support of this argument, the article makes three main points. First, it posits that the United States has fundamentally mischaracterized the nature of the challenge posed by al Qaeda and other “global” insurgencies. Second, it contends that we may be pursuing counterproductive strategies in what was formerly known as the “war on terror.” Finally, it asserts that we have an overly simplistic view of the causes of global violence. In a complex, increasingly globalized world in which we are one actor among many, assuming that we are the targets of insurgent violence merely because we exist risks creating a self-fulfilling prophecy via our actions to counter this latent, not overt, threat.

To make this case, it is helpful to draw an analogy from astronomy and the study of asteroids. Scientists have discovered two major categories of asteroid: aggregate (or “gravel pile”) and coherent (or “monolithic”). This is not idle science, as many asteroids have the potential to impact the Earth and cause catastrophic damage. Knowing which type of asteroid is on a collision course with Earth will dictate appropriate mitigation or defeat

strategies. The question, as it relates to insurgencies, is similar: how do we counter the threat posed to our way of life—to the social system in which we operate?

Much as the mitigation strategy for dealing with Earth-impacting asteroids is determined by their internal consistency, a sound understanding of the internal structure

### *the best-case scenario may be one of managing rather than solving the insurgency*

of the insurgency is key to developing an effective response. Fortunately, insurgencies take place on Earth, not out in space. Unfortunately, insurgencies are not easy, or even possible, to fully counter. The best-case scenario may be one of managing rather than solving the insurgency. We may need to see the insurgencies we face as complex puzzles more than as simple problems. To do so, we need to understand the nature of insurgent groups, and of insurgency more generally.

### **Coherence versus Incoherence**

To what ends and for what purpose are insurgent groups operating? These are the proper questions to ask when attempting to unpack so-called global insurgencies. Together, they comprise a necessary expansion of an overly simplistic question, which is usually phrased along the lines of, “Why do they hate us?” This question presupposes its answer. Worse, it demands a *universal* answer to a phenomenon that is better understood as a series of local events.

A useful example of a fundamental shift in perspective gained by asking the right question in the right way is to examine the case of the Palestinian unrest in Israel’s occupied territories. Scholars of the Palestinian intifada (which, directly translated from the Arabic, means “shaking off” rather than its more common translation as “rebellion” or “uprising”) note that the uprising against the Israelis is, at its heart, a conflict based on *grievance* rather than one based on *ideology*. As the Palestinians see it, the intifada is an attempt to shake off what the community perceives as the heavy-handed yoke of Israeli occupation. The conflict is thus almost entirely localized rather than globalized.

Hamas, the duly elected government of Gaza, has cleverly acted to leverage Palestinian anger at Israel into support at the polls.

For its part, Hizballah in Lebanon has seemingly put aside traditional Sunni/Shia rivalries and collaborated with Hamas in support of its struggle. But by misinterpreting the conflict as a rebellion not only against Israel but also against Western ideology, the United States has made the mistake of *aggregating* grievances from local to global, giving it legitimacy as a foe worthy of fighting. This is not an isolated case, nor is it surprising when put in the context of an intersubjective understanding of the “Other.” To justify the scale of the reaction, we must make the Other a vaunted adversary, one with capabilities that, while not equal to ours, nonetheless poses a significant existential risk to our physical security (for example, weapons of mass destruction), our identity, or our way of life.

We see the same universalizing of the problem once we scale the Palestinian case to the alleged global insurgency represented by al Qaeda. Despite the fact that numerous recent authors have identified the fractured nature of the global insurgency that we face, especially with respect to al Qaeda and patterns that might emerge through analysis, the National Security Strategy and the policies and strategies that flow from it continue to link terrorism and insurgency. What is more, robust scholarly attempts to understand al Qaeda and its motivations have proven quite problematic.<sup>3</sup>

For those scholars who see insurgency from a sociological or constructivist point of view, where identities are fluid and intersubjective rather than fixed and objective, the key facet is *mischaracterization*. While it would be naive to suggest that al Qaeda and its ilk are only a problem if we make them one, it is possible that the nature of the problem changes as we impose our particular problemsolving mentality on it. Following from the lessons imputed from constructivism and even from poststructuralism, both of which seemingly deny the presence of objective identity, it may be that our interactions with al Qaeda will change our interpretation of it, and vice versa.

For example, perhaps al Qaeda is truly only an aggregator of local grievances, and that various al Qaeda “franchises” are as much about the redress of perceived local injustice as any globally coherent ideology. A good case of the franchise model providing benefits without cost is al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). After the end of the Algerian civil war, the state effectively lost its monopoly on internal violence, giving al

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Qaeda an opportunity to exploit the situation and assert control. To this point, the story fits the accepted model of al Qaeda expansion. But it appears the group that became AQIM shares little of the Salafist ideology of the main branch, showing that AQIM may be merely using the al Qaeda “brand” to redress local grievances and has little interest in expanding its activities elsewhere.<sup>4</sup> If the evidence proves this to be the case, then a potentially successful U.S. and allied strategy would be to *disaggregate* the grievances, addressing them from the point of view of local citizens and cutting AQIM out of the grievance cycle.<sup>5</sup>

### The “Puzzle/Problem” Split

Insurgencies, at their heart, are social systems.<sup>6</sup> Unlike a physical system, a social system is highly complex. The system continuously interacts with its environment in a series of positive and negative feedback loops. Inputs do not necessarily lead to predictable outputs. Moreover, in a process known to social scientists as *path dependence*, small changes to initial conditions may lead to major changes in outputs.<sup>7</sup>

As opposed to the material coherence of physical systems, insurgencies exhibit varying degrees of *ideological* coherence. If an insurgency is ideologically coherent to the point of rigidity (as is argued is the case with Salafist strains of Islam), its very strength may be used against it. The armed forces of a nation or a coalition can find the center of gravity, apply enough force, and shatter it into pieces to be dealt with more easily. If, on the other hand,

physical entity, any attempt to counter it had to recognize the degree of factionalism that existed within it. The IRA, as it turned out, was an incoherent insurgency. In effect, the “Irish Republican Army” construct oversimplified the actual dynamics of the insurgency and missed the impact of splinter groups such as the Provisional IRA on the overall peace process. Only when the British government recognized the essential incoherence of the movement and changed tactics to deal with the “legitimate” members of the insurgency and isolate the “illegitimate” members was progress made in the negotiations.<sup>8</sup> This dimension of incoherence within insurgencies is vital to understand. Just as important, however, is the dimension of *systemic* coherence—that is, the degree to which various insurgent groups’ grievances transcend the parochial and bind them to other groups. Internally incoherent actors will find it difficult to create systemic coherent movements.

With this in mind, it is clear that the supposed global insurgency faced by the United States and its allies is in fact not one coherent entity, but rather an incoherent agglomeration of grievances held together by nothing more than the most ephemeral ties, in what could be termed “ideological gravity.” In this conceptualization, the major insurgent groups the United States claims are united by a single ideological vision are better understood as playing the role of an ideological consolidator. Like massive stellar bodies that gather material around them, these ideological consolidators have a central

even be factually accurate (or “true,” the word on which Western strategic communication fixates). But because no other domestic pressure group has been willing or able to serve as a counterconsolidator to the insurgency, its vision remains preeminent.

Paradoxically, the ability of al Qaeda to serve as a global ideological consolidator is strengthened by the decisionmaking apparatus and mode of thought of its sworn enemy, the United States. In America, as in most modern nation-states, policymakers spend their careers looking for solutions to real or perceived problems. They ask simple questions: How do I solve the problem in front of me? What resources do I need to apply to this problem to arrive at the best possible solution? Contrast that model with the puzzle-solving model favored by scholars. When confronted with the issue of whether there exists a global insurgency, scholars change the “How do I solve the problem in front of me?” question to “Is there a problem? How do we know there is a problem?”

For policymakers, answers to their questions often come in the form of problem-set typologies, heuristics that give them the ability to react more quickly than otherwise would be possible. This is exactly what has happened in the war on terror. The U.S. policy community has mistakenly classified al Qaeda as a highly coherent and *highly capable* actor, one more akin to the Soviet Union or China than to a terrorist entity. Due almost entirely to its spectacular attacks perpetrated on U.S. citizens, al Qaeda’s ideological coherence and its capacity have become conflated. This explains why, at a public diplomacy level, the strategy that the United States has tried so far is to engage in counterinformation operations or counterstrategic communications, in effect attempting to show that the “errors” that al Qaeda makes in its interpretation of Islam undermine its message and weaken its legitimacy.

The danger in such a strategy is that, in this case, policymakers’ problem-set typology conflates *coherent* with *capable*. We mistake al Qaeda for a monolith, when in fact it is more of a gravel pile. To be sure, its internal coherence is weaker, but there is still some external force keeping the whole assemblage together. In the case of the asteroid, that force is gravity caused by the accumulated mass of the individual pieces of the gravel pile. In the case of al Qaeda, it is the strong psychological defense mechanism of the reaction to oppression. But is that enough? Will a reactive strategy allow the movement to prosper? In other

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*if the insurgency is only loosely held together by some ideological attractor, the binding effect of the attractor may be transient, and attacking it may do little to affect the outlying elements*

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the insurgency is ideologically *incoherent*, and only loosely held together by some ideological attractor, the strategy for mitigating the threat becomes less clear. The binding effect of the attractor may be transient, and attacking it may do little to affect the outlying elements. Following the logic of path dependence, an initial misread of the entity may make the effects of early mistakes much harder to counter later on.

An example of an initial misread that harmed counterinsurgency efforts can be found in the case of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) in Northern Ireland. Because the IRA was as much a social construct as a

core of true believers around which can be found a nebulous collection of members with varying commitment levels. Al Qaeda is the most successful of these consolidators, but it is by no means the only one. While al Qaeda has the most global reach of the ideological aggregators, Hamas, Hizballah, Abu Sayeff, and other purportedly Islamist insurgencies all serve the same function on smaller scales. They aggregate the complaints of legitimate domestic pressure groups into a quasi-coherent philosophy, wrapped in a particular ideological vision. This vision is not necessarily beneficial to the groups that the aggregators represent. Indeed, it may not

words, is al Qaeda as *capable* an entity as we believe it to be?

Evidence to the contrary is strong and growing. Apparently, al Qaeda is facing a serious internal split in its reaction to the Barack Obama administration.<sup>9</sup> Even before Obama's election, however, al Qaeda had three fundamental issues. First and foremost is the *distance* from its major enemy, the United States. While undoubtedly there are sleeper

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*we mistake al Qaeda for a monolith, when in fact it is more of a gravel pile*

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cells in developed countries around the world, not least in Western Europe and the United States, the core of al Qaeda leadership remains isolated in the tribal areas of Pakistan. Al Qaeda's own actions have caused it to be forcibly removed from previously friendly (and centrally located) areas such as Sudan and western Iraq. In effect, al Qaeda's lines of communication are stretched thin.

The second problem, directly related to the first, is *coordination*. With modern means of communication such as the Internet and satellite phones monitored and tracked by superior Western technological means, al Qaeda has to coordinate many of its activities via courier and physical interactions. This leads to serious problems, not only in the tactical sense, but also ideologically, as the actions of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi showed in Iraq in 2006. There, al Qaeda lost tactical and ideological control of its operational commanders. This fact, coupled with increasing realization on the part of erstwhile insurgents that actions taken in the name of al Qaeda were no longer bringing benefits (the franchise model) but only punishment from U.S. forces, tarnished the al Qaeda brand and led to a backlash against the movement by local sheikhs. This loss of ideological control gave the United States and its allies a much-needed opening to enable the Anbar Awakening to flourish.

The third problem al Qaeda faces is *security*, which paradoxically is both harmful and helpful to the movement. Much like the Viet Cong insurgency in Vietnam, al Qaeda confronts a severe security problem in that it does not have the means to go toe-to-toe with traditional national armies. Its forces would be soundly defeated, as was shown in Afghanistan in the few instances where al Qaeda forces mounted a sustained offensive

against coalition troops. On the other hand, precisely because al Qaeda cannot fight symmetrically, it can use the power differential to its advantage via public relations and propaganda. But if it is unable to project a coherent message, its advantage is diluted or even lost entirely. Because of these problems, al Qaeda must operate in the spaces and shadows of the international system. It is not a member of the international community, except perhaps in the *negative* sense (much as organized crime syndicates are members, however dysfunctional, of domestic society). These problems, as profound as they are for al Qaeda, are not insurmountable. But they are real, and they are forcing the movement into a defensive posture. In the end, al Qaeda is not as capable as it would like the world to believe.

Despite the evidence that al Qaeda today is both less coherent and less capable than it once was, many U.S. and allied policymakers still see it as just the opposite, as the locus of a universalized insurgency bent on Islamist domination. Clearly, al Qaeda would be easier to defeat were it a monolithic entity such as Nazi Germany or fascist Japan, the last real monolithic enemies we faced. But it is not. It is a gravel pile that may or may not fracture on its own. We cannot ignore it and hope for this fracturing to take place. But we should not attack the right problem with the wrong solutions. Our actions to mitigate the perceived monolithic threat posed by what may turn out to be a less-than-capable ideological aggregator may splinter the insurgency but not dissuade the constituent elements from pursuing separately destructive paths. The actions we take without a clear understanding of the nature of the threat posed to us (or even whether there is a threat) may be creating the reality we wish to avoid. We mistake coherence for capability at our peril. **JFQ**

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, DC: The White House, March 2006), section III.

<sup>2</sup> John Lehman, "We're Not Winning This War," *The Washington Post*, August 31, 2006.

<sup>3</sup> See, for instance, Victor Asal, Brian Nussbaum, and D. William Harrington, "Terrorism as Transnational Advocacy: An Organizational and Tactical Examination," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 30, no. 1 (January 2007), 15–39; Victor Asal and Jonathan David Farley, "Breaking Al-Qaeda Cells: A Mathematical Analysis of Counterterrorism Operations (A Guide for Risk Assessment and

Decision Making)," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 26, no. 6 (November 2003), 399–411; Bruce Hoffman, "Al-Qaeda, Trends in Terrorism, and Future Potentialities: An Assessment," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 26, no. 6 (November 2003), 429–442; David Martin Jones, Michael L.R. Smith, and Mark Weeding, "Looking for the Pattern: Al-Qaeda in Southeast Asia—The Genealogy of a Terror Network," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 26, no. 6 (November 2003), 443–457; and Xavier Raufer, "Al-Qaeda: A Different Diagnosis," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 26, no. 6 (November 2003), 391–398.

<sup>4</sup> See Jean-Luc Marret, "Al-Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb: A 'Glocal' Organization," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 31, no. 6 (June 2008), 541–552. This argument admittedly goes against the conventional wisdom. A typical counterargument can be found in David H. Gray and Erik Stockham, "Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb: the evolution from Algerian Islamism to transnational terror," *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations* 2, no. 4 (December 2008), 91–97.

<sup>5</sup> There are a number of issues with this prescription, however. The primary problem, from the point of view of the U.S. security establishment (both civilian and military), is that al Qaeda's aggregation of grievances takes the form of injuring or killing U.S. citizens and troops. The United States does not stand idly by while its citizens or troops suffer at the hands of an enemy, however ill defined. Another major problem is the lack of will on the part of allies (especially those in the region) to adequately address the grievances of their disaffected citizenry.

<sup>6</sup> In his most recent work, Marc Sageman makes the case that al Qaeda is more of a social *network* than a social *system*, but the key point is similar. See Marc Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).

<sup>7</sup> See W. Bryan Arthur, *Increasing Returns and Path Dependence in the Economy* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007) and *The Nature of Technology: What It Is and How It Evolves* (New York: The Free Press, 1994); and Arthur, Steven Durlauf, and David Lane, eds., *The Economy as an Evolving Complex System II* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1997). See also Paul Pierson, *Path Dependence, Increasing Returns, and the Study of Politics* (Cambridge, MA: Center for European Studies, Harvard University, 1997); and Pierson, "Increasing Returns, Path Dependence, and the Study of Politics," *American Political Science Review* 94, no. 2 (2000), 251–267.

<sup>8</sup> See John Clark, "Northern Ireland: A Balanced Approach to Amnesty, Reconciliation, and Reintegration," *Military Review* (January–February 2008), 37–49.

<sup>9</sup> See "The growing, and mysterious, irrelevance of al-Qaeda," *The Economist*, January 26, 2009, available at <[www.economist.com/world/international/displaystory.cfm?story\\_id=12972613](http://www.economist.com/world/international/displaystory.cfm?story_id=12972613)>.



# Vice Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Leadership of the Joint Requirements Oversight Council

By RICHARD M. MEINHART

**M**ilitary leaders at many levels have used the advice and processes associated with strategic planning councils in various ways to position their organizations to respond to the demands of current situations while simultaneously transforming to meet future challenges. This article broadly identifies how the last seven

Vice Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff led the Joint Requirements Oversight Council (JROC), the Nation's most senior joint military advice council, to provide recommendations to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) to help enable him to meet his resource-focused responsibilities.

This resource advice, under the heading of Requirements, Programs, and Budget, is



U.S. Air Force (Adam M. Stump)



DOD



DOD (R.D. Ward)

**Top row, l–r: General James E. Cartwright, Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (2007–present), Admiral David E. Jeremiah (1990–1994), Admiral William A. Owens (1994–1996)**

**Bottom row, l–r: General Joseph W. Ralston (1996–2000), General Richard B. Myers (2000–2001), General Peter Pace (2001–2005), Admiral Edmund P. Giambastiani (2005–2007)**



DOD (R.D. Ward)



U.S. Air Force (Ann-Marie Boom)

one of the Chairman's six main functions specified in Title 10 U.S. Code. This resource responsibility has not changed since his overall responsibilities increased as a result of the landmark Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense (DOD) Reorganization Act of 1986. Prior to this act, these resourcing responsibilities were almost exclusively within the Services' domain, but the Chairman now needed to become more of an advocate in designing, sizing, and structuring the Armed Forces to meet combatant commanders' needs.<sup>1</sup> The Vice Chairmen changed this council's focus and complexity during the last two decades to help enable the Chairman to meet these new responsibilities, which provide leadership and decisionmaking insights.

The JROC is a senior military council led by the Vice Chairman and consisting of the vices or deputies of the four military Services.<sup>2</sup> This council's main responsibility, specified in U.S. Code since 1996, is to provide the CJCS recommendations from a joint perspective on three main issues:

- priorities of military systems and requirements to meet the National Military Strategy
- important acquisition programs to include cost, schedule, and performance criteria and any alternatives
- prioritizing military programs such that "the assignment of such priorities conforms to and reflects resource levels projected by the Secretary of Defense through defense planning guidance."<sup>3</sup>

The Chairman can either accept or decline JROC recommendations in consultation with the other Service chiefs before

formally providing his advice to the Nation's senior civilian leaders. The U.S. strategic environment, which has external threats and challenges and internal fiscal and operational realities, influences JROC focus. In total, this environment has characteristics associated with the words *volatility*, *uncertainty*, *complexity*, and *ambiguity*.<sup>4</sup>

While there are CJCS operating instructions that take broad guidance from U.S. Code and DOD directives and provide specificity to JROC tasks, in practice the Vice Chairman profoundly influences how issues are addressed. Most often, the Vice Chairman has changed operating instructions after trying new ways rather than first *defining* a new way. In providing leadership insights, this article focuses on key JROC initiatives by the past six Vice Chairmen:

- Admiral David Jeremiah (1990–1994)
- Admiral William Owens (1994–1996)
- General Joseph Ralston (1996–2000)
- General Richard Myers (2000–2001)
- General Peter Pace (2001–2005)
- Admiral Edmund Giambastiani (2005–2007).

It then identifies a few key initiatives taken by the current Vice Chairman, General James Cartwright. It broadly identifies how JROC processes and lower organizational structures changed over time to become much more complex and integrated. Next, key JROC-related Vice Chairman initiatives, which can be considered part of their leadership legacy, are discussed. Finally, the article provides concluding insights on how senior leaders can best use councils or boards to respond to strategic challenges.

## Leadership

Of the seven Vice Chairmen from 1990 until 2009, three were Navy, two Air Force, and two Marine. Their leadership responsibilities, which included chairing the JROC, were generally more internally focused on the many Pentagon processes and resource issues, versus those of the Chairman, who had more external advice and strategic communications responsibilities. As such, the Vice Chairman represented the Chairman on many internal Pentagon boards and councils, particularly when joint military advice was needed on resources and specific programs. His leadership of the JROC, senior leader discussions, and countless JROC-related briefings essentially prepared him to execute these management responsibilities.

*most often, the Vice Chairman has changed operating instructions after trying new ways rather than first defining a new way*

**Overall Evolution.** As required by a DOD directive, the JROC was officially established in June 1986 and consisted of the director of the Joint Staff and the four Service vices with the council's chairman rotating among the vices.<sup>5</sup> Its main mission was to provide formal advice on major military requirements before they entered the DOD acquisition processes. With the passage of Goldwater-Nichols in October 1986, the Vice Chairman's position was created; and in 1987, the Chairman appointed, with the Defense Secretary's approval, the Vice Chairman as JROC chairman.<sup>6</sup>

The JROC formally evolved four times, so its advice and impact throughout the military Services and DOD agencies have significantly grown. The first major JROC era, from its inception until 1993, was primarily reactive to major Service programs, as the council generally met infrequently with a focus limited to acquisition programs. The second major era, from 1994 to 1996, witnessed a substantial growth period as JROC meetings significantly increased, its focus expanded to broader joint warfighting issues, and a new analytical Joint Warfighting Capability Assessment (JWCA) process supported its proactive advice. The

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U.S. Air Force (Andy Dunaway)



DOD (Cherie Thurlby)

third major era, from 1996 to 2002, involved greater organization and process complexity as two formal lower level organizations were created to examine issues, more organizations and individuals were invited to provide advice or attend JROC-related meetings, and meetings decreased due to the substantial work of the lower organizations. The fourth major era, from 2003 to today, is focused on an overall capabilities approach and expanded gap analysis enabled by operating, functional, and integrating concepts associated with the Joint Capability Integrating Development System (JCIDS), with a formal Gatekeeper (the Joint Staff J8 responsibility) to decide which issues go to the JROC for decision.

These changes, while generally evolutionary in each individual instance, in total can be considered revolutionary in their broadened scope and greater complexity. Furthermore, as inputs from other Defense and interagency organizations have increased, the JROC can be considered the most integrating and influencing council within DOD on complex joint military issues. It is “influencing” because in design the Chairman ultimately decides whether to improve its recommendations, but in operation he generally accepts them. The council’s Secretary, the Joint Staff J8, codifies deliberations and decisions in various ways, and its work directly shapes the Chairman’s two annual resource advice documents to the Secretary of Defense: the Chairman’s Program Recommendation (CPR) issued in the spring and the Chairman’s Program Assessment (CPA) issued in the fall. Furthermore, the council’s inclusive, collaborative, and analytical nature influences other Service and DOD leaders that provide input; hence, there is agreement well beyond the Council’s formal members and decisions. The following examines each Vice Chairman’s key leadership contributions in using the JROC.

#### **Admiral David Jeremiah (1990–1994).**

While he served as Commander of the U.S. Pacific Fleet prior to becoming Vice Chairman, Admiral Jeremiah’s broad military experience included assignments on the Naval Staff and in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Program Analysis and Evaluation.<sup>7</sup> Hence, he appreciated Services’ and Defense organizations’ interests as well as intricate Pentagon processes. He focused on the internal management and direction of the Joint Staff, to include orchestrating the time-consuming, but not JROC-related, political-military issues associated with National Security

Council deputies’ meetings with the 1990 Gulf War and regional operations in Somalia, Haiti, and Bosnia.<sup>8</sup>

Later in his tenure, Admiral Jeremiah prioritized JROC efforts in deciding which weapons and communications would best position the future military within a constrained resource environment. Hence, his focus was on weapons systems that could be produced in smaller quantities, more joint-versus single Service-oriented, and with more emphasis on technology.<sup>9</sup> These later efforts in 1993 set a foundation for the council to be more proactive versus reactive in defining military requirements.<sup>10</sup> His overall efforts as Vice Chairman were so widely recognized that he became a full member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in 1992. A key leadership insight is his use of a council to react to a declining resource environment and subtle ways to envision future weapons systems.

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### *Admiral Jeremiah prioritized JROC efforts in deciding which weapons and communications would best position the military within a constrained resource environment*

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#### **Admiral William Owens (1994–1996).**

Admiral Owens had many prior assignments in sea operations, Navy Secretariat and Staff, and academic venues; hence, he had broad operations, staff, and intellectual perspectives.<sup>11</sup> He introduced the most significant JROC changes as processes and products became much more integrating and comprehensive. These changes included:

- quadrupling the number of council meetings and increasing tenfold the time spent by members on council issues
- aggressively encouraging combatant commanders’ input on warfighting requirements
- creating the JWCA to conduct lower level analysis on broad mission areas and integrate higher level advice
- increasing the content of the existing Chairman’s resource advice by expanding the CPA and creating the CPR.<sup>12</sup>

These four initiatives fundamentally changed the Chairman’s advice to the Secretary of Defense from being reactive to

Services’ and Defense agencies’ programs to more proactive with a joint warfighting focus to shape the military’s ability to respond to the strategic environment. These initiatives continue today in spirit, although their exact nature and style have changed.

The first two initiatives reflect a philosophy that a leader’s prior experiences, what he pays attention to, and whose advice he seeks will determine what ultimately will get done. Before becoming Vice Chairman, Admiral Owens was the Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for Resources, Warfare Requirements, and Assessments. Hence, he was familiar with Pentagon processes and a need to develop consensus to help make tough weapons system tradeoffs forced by declining resources. He identified new areas the council would consider, to include functioning as an active spokesperson of combatant commanders’ requirements, reviewing warfighting deficiencies and capabilities, and considering broad interoperability and cross-Service issues.<sup>13</sup> He held informal weekly breakfasts with JROC members,<sup>14</sup> quadrupled formal JROC meetings, and held an “unprecedented series of separate off-site, all-day discussions among the JCS, the Commander-in-Chief of the Unified Commands, and the JROC members, centered on the JROC’s effort to identify joint military requirements.”<sup>15</sup> Combatant commanders’ inputs increased as the Joint Staff established JROC liaison offices with their staffs, and the council now visited them in their areas before formal recommendations were developed. To illustrate the JROC’s importance, its members were spending roughly 15 percent of their time working on these issues, the greatest share given to any one activity.<sup>16</sup>

The third initiative, and perhaps the most important and lasting, was the Admiral’s establishment of JWCA to provide an intellectual foundation for the council’s proactive decisions. These JWCA focused on broad, joint mission areas such as strike and command and control, to name two.<sup>17</sup> These assessment activities were placed under the management of a Joint Staff directorate. Most importantly, the JWCA included representatives of the Joint Staff, Services, Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), Defense agencies, combatant commanders, and others as needed to consider relevant share and stakeholder inputs. Within a JWCA, there would be many different issue work groups generally led by colonels. This allowed analysis of numerous



aspects of strike or command and control under a formal timeline, wherein work group leaders briefed the JROC or their Joint Staff directors. While these JWCAs were chaired by a one- or two-star Joint Staff general officer for overall guidance, the lower colonel-led teams were inclusive and collaborative to gain consensus and provided the analytical rigor on which to base recommendations.

Building on these assessments, the fourth initiative increased the specificity of resource advice in the existing Chairman's Program Assessment and developed a new Chairman's Program Recommendation. The CPA was designed to assess proposed Service programs submitted within the Planning, Programming, and Budgeting System before they became part of the President's budget. Prior to 1994, most of the CPAs simply acknowledged or endorsed Service programs. However, the October 1994 assessment, the first submitted from the analytical process described, challenged some Service programs, identified about \$8 billion in additional funding, and argued for shifts in \$4 billion more.<sup>18</sup> While this was a small percentage of defense resources, it established a precedent wherein the Chairman would not just endorse Service programs. Furthermore, the CPR was designed to influence the Secretary of Defense's resource guidance to the Services and Defense agencies before it was issued. This recommendation was to "enhance joint readiness, promote joint doctrine and training, and better satisfy joint warfighting requirements."<sup>19</sup>

In 1995, a CPR was submitted in the spring and a CPA was submitted in the fall, which reflect this resource advice sequencing that continues today. The October 1995 assessment was much broader in scope than the previous one and recommended shifting resources from some programs to others and reducing some redundant Service capabilities, and it argued for a different recapitalization approach—"steps that, taken together, could require an adjustment of up to 12 percent of the projected defense budget over the FYDP period."<sup>20</sup>

#### **General Joseph Ralston (1996–2000).**

General Ralston, who was Commander of Air Combat Command prior to becoming Vice Chairman, had multiple assignments on the Air Force's Secretary and Air Staff in requirements, acquisition, plans, and operations, all of which indicated a balance between staff and operations experiences.<sup>21</sup> General Ralston, to

Marine weighs in before participating in body armor study



U.S. Marine Corps (Albert F. Hunt)

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*the Chairman's Program Recommendation was designed to influence the Secretary's resource guidance to the Services and Defense agencies before it was issued*

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perhaps reflect his leadership style and allow time to focus on interagency issues, envisioned his JROC focus “to be ‘harmonizing’ Service positions on programs so that national security needs could be met within budgetary constraints.”<sup>22</sup> This contrasts with the more direct and time-consuming approach taken by his predecessor. Hence, General Ralston created a JROC Review Board (JRB), led by the three-star J8 with one- or two-star Service representatives, to assist in reviewing analytical assessments, nominating topics, and shaping issues before coming to the JROC.<sup>23</sup> This reduced the frequency of JROC meetings to perhaps a more manageable weekly level as many issues were now considered by this review board’s focus and expanded schedule.

The JRB’s stature and responsibilities increased as it comprehensively reviewed many issues and semiannually held three all-day issue update conferences before visiting combatant commanders.<sup>24</sup> It visited commanders prior to scheduled JROC visits, which the JROC still did semiannually, but one of these trips was to a central location where a few commanders would gather. To

more directly respond to the changing strategic environment, 6 of the 10 original JWCA domains changed and ultimately the number increased to 12 and then 14 as domains on interoperability, combating terrorism, reform initiative, and combat identification were created.<sup>25</sup> A leadership insight is that creating a lower board with proper responsibilities and an inclusive nature not only has the advantage of focusing a leader’s time, but it can also assist in developing future leaders and creating a joint climate. Conversely, increasing bureaucratic structure can have a negative effect in delaying or perhaps reducing the controversy associated with some issues that senior leaders need to hear as consensus is greatly valued before finally briefing these leaders.

**General Richard Myers (2000–2001).** Prior to becoming Vice Chairman, General Myers served as Commander of U.S. Space Command and earlier was a special assistant to the Chairman. Hence, he experienced the JROC from a combatant commander’s perspective and appreciated the Chairman’s views. He spent the shortest time in this position, as he was the Vice Chairman for 18 months before being made Chairman in October 2001. In his April 2000 testimony to Congress, General Myers identified three key JROC areas that needed improvement: (1) shifting the council to be more strategic in requirements and integrating joint warfighting capabilities, (2) institutionalizing U.S.

*Joint Vision 2010* (1996) and further described in *Joint Vision 2020* (2000) to gain full-spectrum dominance. The existing JROC Review Board was changed to the Joint Requirements Board. Also, an Enhanced Joint Requirements Board, cochaired by the Joint Staff J8 and the Undersecretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics, was created to gain advice on selected programs from civilian perspectives. To assist the JROC and JRB, General Myers created a Joint Requirements Panel, chaired by a one-star, to focus primarily on acquisition issues and the requirements development process.

Combatant commanders as well as the Assistants to the Chairman for National Guard and Reserve matters now had a standing invitation to attend JROC meetings in an advisory capacity. Finally, General Myers created an inclusive process to identify strategic topics to better focus the JROC and lower boards’ efforts.<sup>27</sup> Key leadership insights include implementing the Chairman’s vision, establishing lower boards to enable joint climate and develop future leaders, and soliciting broader and strategic inputs to JROC meetings not only to address greater complexity but also to provide for a more informed consensus to execute decisions.

**General Peter Pace (2001–2005).** Prior to becoming Vice Chairman, General Pace was the Commander of U.S. Southern Command and previously served as Commander, Marine Corps Forces and joint

**U.S. Navy’s newest Aegis destroyer, USS *Wayne E. Meyer*, commissioned October 10, 2009**



U.S. Navy (Desiree Green)

*combatant commanders as well as the Assistants to the Chairman for National Guard and Reserve matters had a standing invitation to attend JROC meetings in an advisory capacity*

Joint Forces Command’s joint experimentation efforts and integrating with other DOD decisionmaking processes, and (3) shifting capability assessments from being narrow to far reaching.<sup>26</sup> These views, codified in a March 2001 Chairman’s instruction, reflected a sense that assessments had grown and were not strategic enough, and changes were needed in existing structure and processes.

To achieve this new focus, the overall JWCA structure significantly changed as 14 mission areas were reduced to 8 with 4 named: precision engagement, full dimensional protection, dominant maneuver, and focused logistics. These names reflected emerging operational concepts introduced in

task forces in Somalia, as well as the Joint Staff’s Director of Operations. Hence, he clearly understood the operator’s needs. He changed the names of the lower level boards to reflect the capability and transformation focus that continues as lower level boards were now Functional Capability Boards (FCBs) and the three-star-led board was now the Joint Capabilities Board (JCB). The FCBs were responsible to analytically review issues within a newly developed and complex JCIDS to identify, analyze, and prioritize joint warfighting capability needs to fill capability gaps to better respond to the changing strategic environment. The JCB assisted the JROC in executing its responsibilities by directly assessing the work of



the FCBs and the JCIDS process. Moreover, to gain civilian input, representatives from 8 OSD organizations, 10 Defense agencies, and 6 interagency organizations could participate on FCBs as needed and attend JROC-related meetings in an advisory role.<sup>28</sup> A group of Joint Staff documents, designed to shape future military capabilities out to 20 years, informed this capability focus and the JCIDS processes. Starting in 2003 with the Chairman's Joint Operations Concept, later replaced by the 2005 Capstone Concept for Joint Operations, there was now a family of Joint Operating Concepts, Joint Functional Concepts, and Joint Integrating Concepts to help promote interdependence.<sup>29</sup> Recognizing this complexity and a need to streamline decisions to focus the JROC's activities, General Pace established a Gatekeeper. This general officer in the J8 formally directed what issues needed to be elevated to the JROC and what FCBs would lead or support specific issues.<sup>30</sup> This family of concepts and the associated work created a high degree of complexity that some leaders inside and outside the military criticized and others embraced.<sup>31</sup> A leadership insight is that too much complexity can be overwhelming and inhibit crisp decisionmaking.

**Admiral Edmund Giambastiani (2005–2007).** Prior to becoming Vice Chairman, Admiral Giambastiani was Commander of U.S. Joint Forces Command for 3 years and earlier was the Senior Military Assistant to Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld; hence, he experienced transformation from both operational and Pentagon perspectives. He inherited a complex process that he considered somewhat bureaucratic, not sufficiently focused on combatant commanders' needs, and sometimes too geared to lower level programs. However, he did embrace the overall capability approach and the need to identify those critical combatant commanders' gaps to shape future resource decisions. His JROC tasks had greatly expanded, as there were now 27 specific functions, a substantive increase over the 7 functions in 1995, and there were 21 approved Tier 1 and 240 approved Tier 2 Joint Capability Areas in 2006.<sup>32</sup>

To solve these complexity concerns, the Admiral instituted an integrated process to gather all requirements identified to the Joint Staff from other existing processes and distilled them down to a more manageable number called the Most Pressing Military Issues. To gain more combatant commanders' inputs, he extended a standing invitation

for commanders to attend JROC meetings and used videoteleconferencing to make this a routine event as evidenced by their participation in 17 of the first 21 meetings. He was more inclusive when integrating JROC efforts with the Deputies Advisory Working Group, created to work Quadrennial Defense Review issues. Recognizing the value of civilian inputs, nearly 70 percent of the JROC meetings had senior leader representatives from OSD.<sup>33</sup> Overall, Admiral Giambastiani's efforts enabled the JROC to focus on higher priority items and gain greater civilian input.

**General James Cartwright (2007–present).** While it is too early to provide definitive insights on General Cartwright's JROC leadership legacy, the current Vice Chairman has the most prior experience dealing with the council from Joint Staff and combatant commander perspectives. General Cartwright was the Deputy Director for Force Structure, Resources, and Assessment in the J8 from 1996 to 1999 and later served as the Director for Force Structure, Resources, and Assessment from 2002 to 2004. He was Commander of U.S. Strategic Command from 2004 to 2007 before becoming the Nation's eighth Vice Chairman in the



MRAP vehicles are offloaded from MV *Marilyn* for training exercise in Europe

U.S. Army (Pierre-Etienne Courtisole)



summer of 2007. Hence, he saw JROC from many perspectives as it evolved from the early 1990s to today.

During his confirmation as Vice Chairman, General Cartwright advocated building on his predecessor's initiatives, getting the JROC ahead on strategic issues, and keeping the JROC's formal military membership along with seeking civilian leadership advice. He continues to actively seek both combatant commander advice through senior warfighter forums and civilian leadership advice, to include the inter-agency community when appropriate. He has aligned Functional Capability Boards with the DOD portfolio approach, focused more on streamlining the overall capability process, and empowered U.S. Joint Forces Command with the Command and Control Functional Capability Board.<sup>34</sup> Finally, the *Capstone Concept for Joint Operations*, a key Chairman's guidance document that serves as the intellectual foundation for future capabilities, was significantly rewritten by U.S. Joint Forces Command before the Chairman signed it in 2009, which reflects more influence by this command for capability development.

### Insights

From this examination of the Vice Chairmen's use of the JROC, there are four broad insights for senior leaders who use or are considering using councils to shape strategic decisions. These insights center on simplicity versus complexity, organizational culture, process characteristics, and decisionmaking.

Leaders need a balance between complexity and simplicity to focus their intellectual energy. If processes are too simple, decisions will be more linear and not integrating. If they are too complex, a leader's focus is not optimized and impact is diminished. Too much simplicity was likely

viewed by their successors. Hence, to create a needed balance, a process to become more strategic was introduced by General Myers, and a process to focus on the most pressing military issues was introduced by Admiral Giambastiani. Leaders need to appreciate that balance in the event they become too comfortable or are captured by their own processes. Thus, entrenched leaders need to reflect on this balance, and new leaders should access the strengths and weaknesses of processes they inherit from varied perspectives before embracing or changing them. The ongoing challenge is how best to reduce today's complexity to a manageable level but still get integrated decisionmaking.

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### *General Cartwright advocated keeping the JROC's formal military membership along with seeking civilian leadership advice*

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the case during most of Admiral Jeremiah's tenure. A needed degree of complexity with a broader and more analytical focus was added by Admiral Owens. That complexity exploded during the next decade such that there was too much at the end of General Ralston's and General Pace's tenures as

Leaders can use councils and boards within an overall strategic planning system to help create a climate and embed an organizational culture. This recommendation reflects the work of all the Vice Chairmen since Goldwater-Nichols. To help create a joint climate, there has been an expansive interaction of

**Lockheed Martin F-35 Lightning II Joint Strike Fighter at production facility**



DOD (Cherie Cullen)

civilian and military leaders working together with a joint focus on JROC-related boards, as combatant commanders and many DOD organizations now have input on requirements and capabilities that were formerly primarily under the Services' domain. This assisted the successful transition from Service deconfliction in the early 1990s to Service interoperability in the late 1990s and early 2000s to the present emerging joint interdependence. It is this author's assessment from working within and studying the effects of the Chairman's overall strategic planning system, and the work of the JROC during these seven Vice Chairmen's tenures, that the culture of jointness envisioned by many of our nation's civilian and military leaders has found a foothold with those who support these efforts.

Leaders need to ensure that processes are integrated, inclusive, and flexible to improve effectiveness. This integrated nature is illustrated by the initial JWCAs and now the capability gap assessments briefed to the lower level boards before reaching the JROC. This inclusiveness is demonstrated by the greater representation of civilians from many organizations and their increasing contributions to the analytical assessments and to JROC-related decisions. Flexibility is demonstrated by the way various Vice Chairmen have changed the JROC focus to meet the changing strategic environment. Interviews with strategic planners indicate that using inclusive, integrated, and flexible processes helped educate them on others' perspectives, which in the end enabled them to do their own jobs better. Finally, the overall effectiveness is supported by the manner in which this council's decisions are embraced and implemented. While there have been studies that called for JROC improvements, there has been a broad recognition of its achievements.

Leaders need to be aware of the strengths and weaknesses of three main types of decisionmaking to better enable success.<sup>35</sup> The rational decisionmaking process, which reflects an analytical and systematic approach to maximize efficiency, was generally used throughout to initially consider issues, access tradeoffs, and determine capability gaps. This was augmented by the participative decisionmaking process, which requires the involvement of those affected by the decisions. As the JROC evolved, combatant commanders who used the systems and OSD civilians who eventually decided which systems to resource were added to working

groups and advised the JROC when needed. The bargaining decisionmaking process, which seeks to maximize political support, was conceptually evident as considerable internal coordination efforts were pursued to gain internal support through consensus on recommendations before issues were elevated for final JROC decisions. Finally, processes were explicit on how to share JROC decisions with Congress, which has ultimate funding responsibility. **JFQ**

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> William A. Owens and James R. Baker, "Overseeing Cross Service Trade Offs," *Joint Force Quarterly* 13 (Autumn 1996), 37.

<sup>2</sup> Joint Requirements Oversight Council (JROC), U.S. Code, Title 10, Section 181. This section specifies the formal membership of the council (Service general or admiral) and its chair, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who can delegate this responsibility only to the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Section 181, Para. b (3).

<sup>4</sup> Stephen Shambach, *Strategic Leadership Primer*, 2<sup>d</sup> ed. (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, 2004), 13–14.

<sup>5</sup> Office of the Vice Chairman, *JROC Planning in a Revolutionary Era* (Washington, DC: Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis, 1996), 2.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 2–3.

<sup>7</sup> Ronald H. Cole et al., *The Chairmanship of the Joint Chiefs of Staff* (Washington, DC: Joint History Office, 1995), 203–206.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 205–209.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 208–209.

<sup>10</sup> Owens and Baker, 37; Office of the Vice Chairman, 9.

<sup>11</sup> Cole et al., 213–215.

<sup>12</sup> Office of the Vice Chairman, 9–12.

<sup>13</sup> Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Memorandum (CJCSM) MCM–14–95, *Charter of the Joint Requirements Oversight Council* (Washington, DC: The Joint Chiefs of Staff, February 7, 1995), 2–4.

<sup>14</sup> Cole et al., 216.

<sup>15</sup> Office of the Vice Chairman, 10.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* The other eight assessment areas were land and littoral; strategic mobility and sustainability; sea, air, and space superiority; deterrence/counterproliferation of weapons of mass destruction; information warfare; intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance; regional engagement/presence; and joint readiness.

<sup>18</sup> Office of the Vice Chairman, 11–12, 22–23.

<sup>19</sup> Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction (CJCSI) 3137.01, *The Joint Warfighting Capabilities*

*Assessment Process* (Washington, DC: The Joint Chiefs of Staff, February 2, 1996), 3.

<sup>20</sup> Office of the Vice Chairman, 23.

<sup>21</sup> Cole et al., 223–227.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 227–228.

<sup>23</sup> CJCSI 5120.01, *Charter of the Joint Requirements Oversight Council* (Washington, DC: The Joint Chiefs of Staff, May 2, 1995), 19.

<sup>24</sup> CJCSI 3137.01A, *The Joint Warfighting Capability Assessment Process* (Washington, DC: The Joint Chiefs of Staff, January 22, 1999), enclosures B, C, and E.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 30. This January 22, 1999, CJCSI documents the change to 12 JWCAs.

<sup>26</sup> Richard B. Myers, statement before the Senate Armed Services Committee, Emerging Threats and Capabilities Subcommittee, April 4, 2000, available at <<http://armed-services.senate.gov/hearings/2000/e000404.htm>>.

<sup>27</sup> CJCSI 5123.01A, *Charter of the Joint Requirements Oversight Council* (Washington, DC: The Joint Chiefs of Staff, March 8, 2001), enclosure A. The changes attributed to General Myers came from this instruction, which was a major update from the 1997 version.

<sup>28</sup> CJCSI 5123.01B, *Charter of the Joint Requirements Oversight Council* (Washington, DC: The Joint Chiefs of Staff, April 15, 2004), enclosure A.

<sup>29</sup> Richard B. Myers, *Capstone Concept of Joint Operations* (Washington, DC: The Joint Chiefs of Staff, August 2005), 2–5. This document guides the development of future joint capabilities across the range of military operations for the period 2012–2025.

<sup>30</sup> CJCSI 5123.01B, enclosure A.

<sup>31</sup> "Van Riper's E-mail to Pace, Hagee, and Schoomaker Regarding JCIDS, with Responses from Deptula and Mattis," *Inside the Navy*, January 23, 2006. This article addressed the pros and cons of the existing JCIDS complexity by email correspondence.

<sup>32</sup> CJCSI 5123.01D, *Charter of the Joint Requirements Oversight Council* (Washington, DC: The Joint Chiefs of Staff, August 8, 2007), enclosure A; CJCSM MCM–14–95; and Joint Staff J7, "Joint Force Development," April 2007, briefing slide 5.

<sup>33</sup> Gordon R. England, "Statement of the Honorable Gordon England, Deputy Secretary of Defense, before the House Armed Services Committee 26 June 2007," available at <[www.dod.mil/dodgc/olc/docs/testEngland070626.pdf](http://www.dod.mil/dodgc/olc/docs/testEngland070626.pdf)>.

<sup>34</sup> "Pentagon Leaders Inch toward More Joint Management of Capabilities," *Inside the Army*, January 14, 2008; Memorandum for the JROC: Subject: *Functional Capabilities Boards Rebaseline*, March 4, 2008; and "JROC Hands JFCOM Authority for Command and Control Requirements," *Inside the Navy*, December 19, 2008.

<sup>35</sup> Donald F. Kettle and James W. Fesler, "The Politics of the Administrative Processes," in *Decision Making* (Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press, 2005).

# Unity of Command in the Pacific During World War II

By PHILLIP S. MEILINGER

One of the myths of World War II is that, unlike in Europe, unity of command was lacking in the Pacific. The argument goes that the Southwest Pacific had one commander, General Douglas MacArthur, and the Pacific Ocean areas had another, Admiral Chester Nimitz. MacArthur often commented that the Pacific Ocean areas drained resources for little gain that he could have put to far better use. In his memoirs, he railed against the command structure: "Of all the faulty decisions of war perhaps the most unexplainable one was the failure to unify the command in the Pacific. . . . [It] cannot be defended in logic, in theory, or in common sense. . . . It

resulted in divided effort, the waste, diffusion, and duplication of force, and the consequent extension of the war, with added casualties and cost."<sup>1</sup>

For its part, the Navy believed that the Pacific war was "a naval problem." Admiral Ernest King, Chief of Naval Operations, insisted that "the entire Pacific Ocean should constitute a single theater with a unified Naval command headed by Nimitz."<sup>2</sup> Because MacArthur and Nimitz were so powerful, and because their champions in Washington were so entrenched, however, unity could not be achieved. As a result, a fundamental principle of war was violated, and the result was inefficiency, confusion, waste, and an "ad hoc"

and "piecemeal strategy."<sup>3</sup> Another historian is even more critical, arguing that the U.S. effort in the Pacific was "hamstrung" because of the inability to appoint a single theater commander. The result was "a wasteful allocation of resources, a dispersion of effort, and a consistent failure to pursue the most effective and economical strategy against the Japanese." The compromise of appointing two commanders for two different theaters was "grotesque."<sup>4</sup> In truth, however, a basic assumption of the above argument is false. There was no unified command in Europe, so the ideal to which the critics of the Pacific war allude never existed.

U.S. Navy



President Roosevelt at conference in Hawaiian Islands with GEN MacArthur, Supreme Allied Commander of the Southwest Pacific Theater, ADM Leahy, Senior Member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and ADM Nimitz, Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet and Pacific Ocean Areas, 1944



## Defining Unity of Command

First, a word about the term *unity of command* is in order. Principles of war, in one form or another, have been claimed since Sun Tzu wrote over 2,000 years ago. The first modern effort to enumerate such principles was by a British officer, then-Captain J.F.C. Fuller, who published them in 1916. These principles were soon enshrined in British *Field Service Regulations*, and in 1921 were adopted with minor revisions by the U.S. Army. These early doctrinal writings referred to a principle of “cooperation” that allowed diverse fighting forces to work efficiently toward success.<sup>5</sup> By 1931, the U.S. Army had substituted the term *unity of command* for this idea, stating authoritatively: “It is a well-established principle that there shall be only one commander for each unit, and one commander in each zone of action, who shall be responsible for everything within his unit or within his zone of action.”<sup>6</sup> This principle was not, however, established in a joint environment. Theater commanders were not yet common in American military operations; rather, Army and Navy commanders were still expected simply to “cooperate” when circumstances dictated. This would lead to problems as late as 1941, when the Services could not agree on a single commander for the Caribbean.

The Caribbean was a crucial theater for the United States because it guarded the Panama Canal, vital to hemisphere defenses. Yet when the Army appointed Lieutenant General Daniel Van Voorhis as commander of the Caribbean Defense Command, it quickly discovered that the Navy had other ideas. Whenever Van Voorhis attempted to exert the authority given him by the President over the naval forces in the theater, local admirals replied tartly that “he was not in their chain of command.”<sup>7</sup>

Pearl Harbor changed things. In October 1942, U.S. planners preparing for the Casablanca Conference issued a definition to guide Allied leaders regarding future joint and combined commands:

*Unified command is the control, exercised by a designated commander, over a force integrated from combined and joint forces allocated to*

*him for the accomplishment of a mission or task. This force will include all the means necessary for the mission’s successful execution. Unified command vests in the designated commander, the responsibility and authority to control the organizations of all arms and services composing his force, by the organization of task forces, assignment of missions, designation of objectives, and the exercise of such control as he deems necessary to insure the success of his mission.*<sup>8</sup>

It was such unity of command that existed in Europe. Or did it?

## Disunity of Command?

Italy is part of Europe, as are the Balkans and Poland. Most definitions would also include Iceland and Greenland. And yet the Supreme Allied Commander of Europe, General Dwight Eisenhower, had no authority over the Mediterranean theater of operations, which included Italy and Greece and was led by Field Marshal Sir Harold Alexander. Nor did Eisenhower control the Atlantic sea lanes or the vital bases in Iceland and Greenland that fell under the authority of Admiral Max Horton at Allied Naval Forces in the Atlantic. Finally, Eisenhower had no say over—and indeed, was barely informed of—Soviet operations in Eastern or Central Europe. A look at the map (next page) illustrates this issue even further.

As is apparent, the European and Mediterranean theaters combined were much

smaller than either the Pacific Ocean or Southwest Pacific areas. (Note that the Pacific Ocean areas consisted of four subcommands, although the South-East Pacific area was never activated.) If, therefore, one advances the argument that the areas of Eisenhower, Alexander, and Horton were too large to be commanded effectively by one man, then *how much more impossible* would it have been for any one person to run the *entire* Pacific?<sup>9</sup>

*there was no unified command in Europe, so the ideal to which the critics of the Pacific war allude never existed*

Similarly, it is specious to argue that effective coordination between the Pacific Ocean and Southwest Pacific areas was unattainable. Such coordination existed in Europe and was exercised by the Combined Chiefs of Staff (CCS)—the union of the British and U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS). The CCS met regularly throughout the war to debate and draft grand strategy and to allocate resources between the theaters. They would then recommend a course of action to their political superiors.<sup>10</sup> Although the CCS system was not perfect, and many would argue that national and Service politics too often shaped its decisions, the system in the main worked in Europe. If landing craft or forces had to be moved from the Mediterranean

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U.S. Army



U.S. Navy

Above: ADM Chester W. Nimitz  
Left: GEN Douglas A. MacArthur

theater to reinforce the European, or if air assets from Europe were needed to bolster the Middle East, the CCS directed such changes—often overruling the wishes of the theater commanders involved.<sup>11</sup>

In the Pacific, command relationships were less cumbersome. Both the Pacific Ocean and Southwest Pacific areas were largely American affairs. The British played almost no role, and when they attempted to interject themselves into operations near the end of the war, U.S. military leaders adamantly rejected their offer. At the Potsdam Conference in May 1945, for example, the British offered to deploy more of the Royal Navy to the Pacific to take part in the planned invasions of the Japanese home islands scheduled for November 1945 and March 1946. Admiral King heatedly objected, arguing that he could neither use nor support additional British vessels.<sup>12</sup> The Australians were steadfast and loyal allies throughout World War II, but U.S. leaders effectively denied them much of a voice in Allied planning or command despite the

fact that in 1942 and 1943, Australians comprised the majority of MacArthur's combat forces.<sup>13</sup> In short, the Pacific was controlled almost totally by the JCS. As a consequence, it was not necessary to go through the time-consuming and politically charged process of securing the approval of Allies as was the case in Europe.

### Strategic Airpower

Another anomaly throughout the war regarded the status of the British and American strategic air forces. In Europe, the Royal Air Force's Bomber Command, led by Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Harris after February 1942, enjoyed a special status during the war. Harris was a favorite of Winston Churchill, who ensured that Bomber Command existed as a separate force, answerable directly to the CCS, and thus was treated as an equal of the various theater commands.<sup>14</sup>

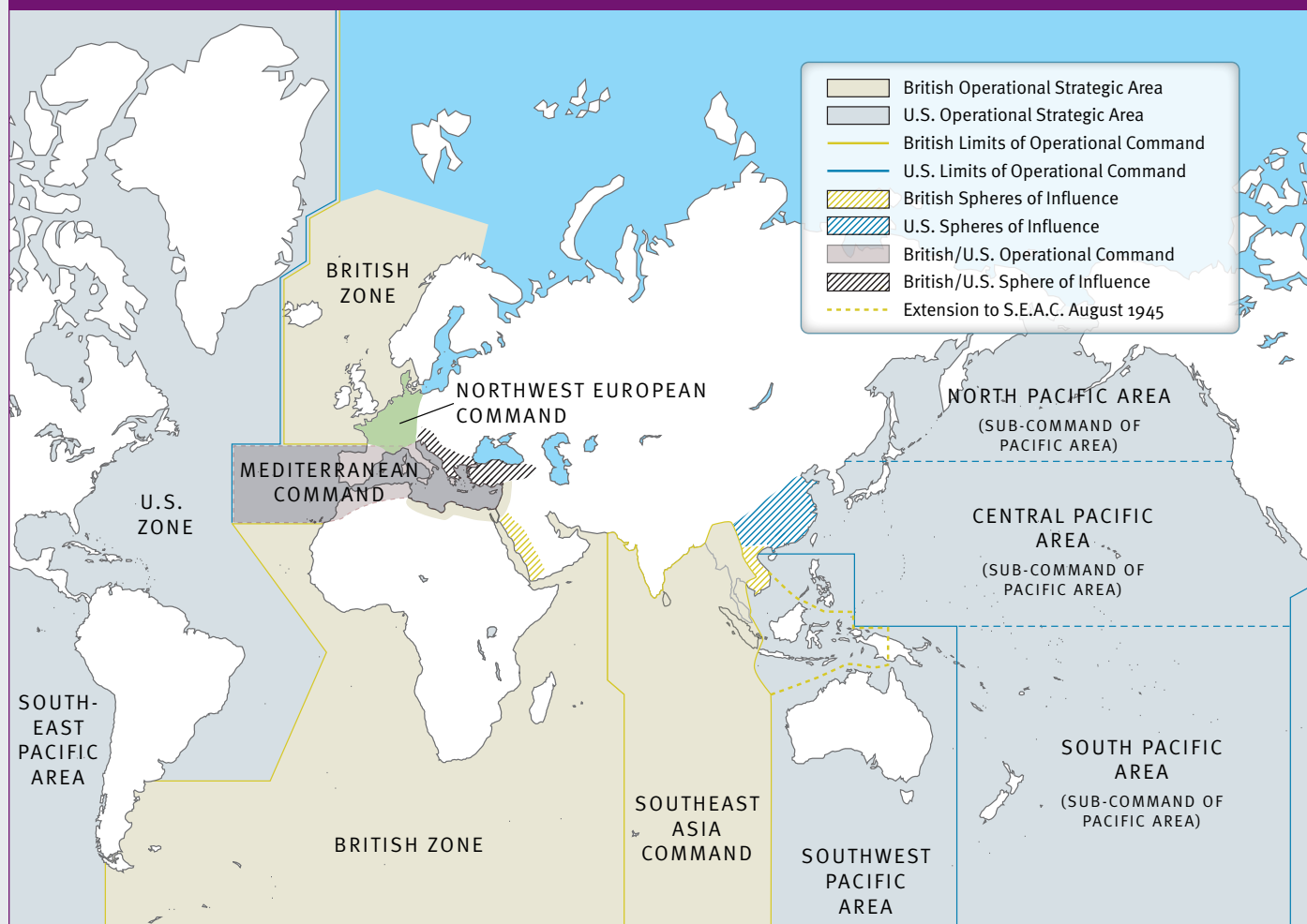
On January 1, 1944, the United States established a similar system. General Carl Spaatz became commander of U.S. Strategic

Air Forces (USSTAF), consisting of the Eighth Air Force based in England and the Fifteenth Air Force based in Italy. Cutting across theater boundaries, USSTAF ensured unity of command of the strategic air forces, but ingeniously employed the principle of focusing that unity on the target—Germany—rather than in the different theaters where

*it was not necessary to go through the time-consuming and politically charged process of securing the approval of Allies as was the case in Europe*

the bombers were based. This system was modified prior to Operation *Overlord*, when the CCS gave Eisenhower temporary targeting authority over both USSTAF and Bomber Command to support the Normandy invasion. He relinquished control of the bombers

### World War II Areas of Command







U.S. Navy

**Motion of propeller forms aura around F6F Hellcat aboard USS *Yorktown*, 1943**

in September 1944, and they returned to the overall direction of the CCS.<sup>15</sup>

The situation was similar in the Pacific, although only U.S. air units were involved. In April 1944, B-29 long-range bombers began deploying to India, and staging bases were also established in China. B-29s of XX Bomber Command would depart from their bases in India, land in China to refuel, continue on to bomb targets in Japan, and then return to India via China. In October 1944, the Mariana Islands were liberated by Allied forces and airfields were immediately built on Guam, Saipan, and Tinian to accommodate the B-29s of the newly formed XXI Bomber Command. This meant that B-29 bases were established in two different theaters—in the South-East Asian theater commanded by Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten (Royal Navy) and in the Pacific Ocean areas under Nimitz (U.S. Navy) while transiting the theater of General Joseph Stilwell (U.S. Army) in China.<sup>16</sup> Who was in overall command of the B-29s?

In an unusual move, General Henry “Hap” Arnold, commanding general of Army Air Forces in Washington, formed Twentieth Air Force, composed of XX and XXI Bomber Commands, and then elected to command the Twentieth himself. Arnold argued that, as in Europe, unity of command over the *target area*—Japan—was far more important than unity of command in the *basing areas*.

He maintained that it would be impossible to delegate command authority to three different theater commanders and have any hope that an effective, coordinated strategic air campaign could be conducted against Japan. (When selling this idea to his fellow chiefs, Arnold noted that much the same system in the U.S. Navy allowed Admiral King to command U.S. Antisubmarine Command,

redesignated Tenth Fleet, while remaining in Washington as Chief of Naval Operations.<sup>17</sup>) As in Europe, however, if the ground situation was such that the strategic bombers were needed, Arnold would place them at the disposal of the theater commander. This happened in March and April 1945 when Twentieth Air Force was diverted from its strategic



U.S. Marine Corps



U.S. Navy

**GEN MacArthur signs formal surrender of Japan aboard USS *Missouri* in Tokyo Bay, September 2, 1945**



bombing campaign to support the invasion of Okinawa; targeting authority then passed temporarily to Nimitz.<sup>18</sup>

In sum, in both Europe and the Pacific, strategic air forces operated side by side with the theater commanders, all of whom took their guidance from the CCS, or in the case of the Pacific, from the JCS. If the situation required, forces or resources were shifted from one theater to another, or air assets were temporarily placed at the disposal of a theater commander if the tactical situation deemed it necessary. The system worked.

### Focusing on Japan's Defeat

It would be difficult to prove that a single commander in the Pacific could have waged the war more effectively than the combination of Nimitz, MacArthur, and Arnold working under the guidance of the JCS. Indeed, there is no evidence that the refusal to settle on either a central Pacific thrust or one coming up through New Guinea and the Philippines delayed Allied victory. On the contrary, simultaneous attacks on the central and southern fronts—as well as the strategic bombing offensive, the U.S. Navy's unrestricted submarine warfare campaign, and the operations in China and Burma—stretched the Japanese defenders to the breaking point. Had the Allies focused on a single thrust, the Japanese would have been able to use their interior lines to concentrate their forces to meet that threat. Instead, they were forced to disperse and defend against attacks from several directions. The Allies had the forces to conduct such a multipronged strategy; the Japanese did not.

In such a view, redundancy is the true American way of war. The United States had the personnel and materiel resources to follow several different strategies. To put it more cynically, indecision became the key to flexibility. Because U.S. political and military leaders refused to decide upon a supreme commander in the vast Pacific region, they unwittingly introduced enormous flexibility into Allied planning—and consternation into Japanese planning.

In truth, the competition between Nimitz, MacArthur, and even Arnold spurred them and their staffs to heightened efforts. All wanted to claim that it was *their* command that was the decisive instrument in bringing Japan to its knees.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, this has been a central issue in postwar debates by historians ever since.

One should also note that the entire grand strategy of attacking the enemy simultaneously on several fronts was a deliberate and essential aspect of the war against Nazi Germany. Why should such a multipronged offensive be considered inspired in Europe but a “grotesque compromise” in the Pacific?

In reality, the entire “unity of command” argument seems to be nothing more than an inter-Service turf battle. However, because it would look unseemly for one Service to admit that it wanted command priority simply because it would enhance its prestige, the debate has acquired the fig leaf of centering on a hallowed principle of war—unity of command. As the facts show, there was actually far greater unity of command in the Pacific than there was in Europe during World War II, and operations against the Japanese did not suffer in any event. **JFQ**

### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Douglas MacArthur, *Reminiscences* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), 172–173. This argument is echoed in the Army's official history: Louis Morton, *The War in the Pacific: Strategy and Command, The First Two Years* (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1962), chapter 11.

<sup>2</sup> D. Clayton James, *The Years of MacArthur: Vol. II: 1941–1945* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1975), 309.

<sup>3</sup> Stephen T. Ross, *American War Plans, 1941–1945* (London: Frank Cass, 1997), 50.

<sup>4</sup> John Ellis, *Brute Force: Allied Strategy and Tactics in the Second World War* (New York: Viking, 1990), 505, 510–511.

<sup>5</sup> John I. Alger, *The Quest for Victory: The History of the Principles of War* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1982), 240.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 246.

<sup>7</sup> Larry I. Bland, Sharon Ritenour, and Clarence E. Wunderlin, Jr., eds., *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, Vol. III: “We Cannot Delay,” July 1, 1939–December 6, 1941 (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 257.

<sup>8</sup> *Foreign Relations of the United States: The Conferences at Washington, 1941–1942, and Casablanca, 1943* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office [GPO], 1968), 733–734.

<sup>9</sup> One should also note that the Atlantic Ocean—far smaller in area than the Pacific—was divided into U.S. and British zones with no overall commander.

<sup>10</sup> The history of the Combined Chiefs of Staff has not yet been written. For a brief overview, see Vernon E. Davis, “The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in World War II: Vol. I: Origins of the Joint

and Combined Chiefs of Staff,” Joint Chiefs of Staff History Office study, 1972.

<sup>11</sup> Regarding the allocation of landing craft, for example, see *Foreign Relations of the United States: The Conferences at Washington and Quebec, 1943* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1970), 1146–1148. As for air assets, the Eighth Air Force in England was denuded of aircraft and trained crews throughout 1942 in order to stand up the Twelfth Air Force in preparation for the invasion of North Africa. See Wesley Frank Craven and James L. Cate, *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, 7 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948–1958), vol. II, chapter 2.

<sup>12</sup> *Foreign Relations of the United States: The Conference at Quebec, 1944* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1972), 333.

<sup>13</sup> James, 311–314. In April 1943, MacArthur's land forces consisted of 18 divisions, 15 of which were Australian.

<sup>14</sup> Max Hastings, *Bomber Command* (New York: Dial, 1979), 136–137.

<sup>15</sup> Craven and Cate, III, 79–83.

<sup>16</sup> China was technically part of Mountbatten's theater, but Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek ran things within his country with little interference. To help smooth things out, Stilwell was dual-hatted as the deputy to Mountbatten and the chief of staff to Chiang.

<sup>17</sup> George W. Baer, *One Hundred Years of Sea Power: The U.S. Navy, 1890–1990* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 203; Haywood S. Hansell, *Strategic Air War against Japan* (Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: Air University Press, 1980), 26–27. Hansell was on the Air Staff at the time the Twentieth Air Force was formed and then took over XXI Bomber Command in the Marianas.

<sup>18</sup> Craven and Cate, V, 630–631.

<sup>19</sup> This was purportedly the deliberate intent of Joseph Stalin when he played his two great marshals, Georgy Zhukov and Ivan Konev, against each other to see who would take Berlin first. See Max Hastings, *Armageddon: The Battle for Germany, 1944–1945* (New York: Knopf, 2004), 461–476.



### **The Human Face of War**

by Jim Storr

London: Continuum International Publishing, 2009

240 pp. \$120

ISBN: 978-1-84706-523-0

Reviewed by

CLINTON J. ANCKER III

**A**t a time when debates on a range of issues are taking place within the defense community, the ability to step back from the particulars and look at first principles is particularly important. This book, an important work by a serious student of the profession of arms, does just that. Surveying an array of disciplines including history, psychology, systems theory, complexity theory, and philosophy, Storr (a former British army officer) looks at what a theory of combat should include, and then provides one. He goes on to apply that theory to the design of organizations and staffs, leadership, information management, and the creation of cohesion in units. In doing so, he takes on many currently popular theories such as effects-based operations, the observe-orient-decide-act loop, and the use of postmodern theory and language.

Its title may lead readers to expect *The Human Face of War* to be similar to Richard Holmes' *Acts of War* or John Keegan's *The Face of Battle*, both of which focused on how people behave in combat. Rather, this book is about how that behavior affects

how we think about battle or, more precisely, how we develop our theories of warfare. It is a serious and profound look at how and why human nature should guide the theories of combat and their implications for doctrine, organizations, training, and leader development.

The first three chapters discuss theories of conflict: what they should do, how they should be developed, and why many recent attempts at theories are really shallow approaches based on a single governing idea, ignoring many of the contradictory or more complex aspects of warfare. Storr discusses rationalism, determinism, and empiricism, dissecting why each is or is not a valid approach to a working theory of combat. He clearly establishes why rationalism fails us in our quest for a theory, and why empiricism is an appropriate approach. It boils down to a simple test: does our theory work in the current circumstances, and do we think it will work in the future? Even if a theory appears to be working, we must recognize that it is never more than a best guess that must be continually revised based on the results of actual operations. Nothing we propose is ever an immutable law, but rather a hypothesis to be tested and, if found wanting, discarded in favor of one that does work, at least for now. Combining a healthy pragmatism with empiricism should produce something that works for a given set of circumstances. Storr's position is best summed up with this passage: "[C]ritically, military theory should not be a case of 'this is the right course of action,' but rather 'doing this will probably have beneficial outcome'" (p. 29).

The third chapter, "The Nature of Combat," is a detailed look at why combat is not, and cannot be, deterministic. This discussion alone is worth the

price of the book. Anyone who believes that we can predict with any degree of certainty how a specific action will turn out should read this chapter. What results from Storr's effort is a superb guide for how to approach the conduct of operations. Much of it focuses on the need to act in order to provide concrete evidence of how things will evolve, all the time maintaining an open mind instead of following a predetermined script. While much of this approach is not new, Storr's explanation of why it is necessary is compelling. The chapter further looks at some advanced research done by the British Defence Operational Analysis Centre on the factors that do have a significant impact on the outcome of battles. Four factors tended to dominate, regardless of force ratios: surprise, air superiority, aggressive ground reconnaissance, and shock. Storr closes the chapter with a discussion of the much-denigrated and misunderstood idea of attrition. His defense of attrition runs counter to much of what is being bandied about today but, when put in context, is quite convincing. All these factors are linked to the fundamental idea that combat is about how humans behave in battle, not some mechanistic approach based on a thorough systems analysis.

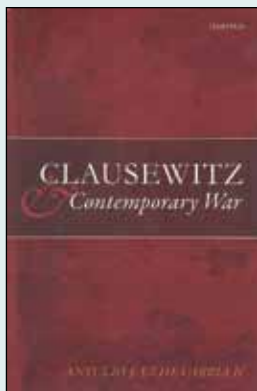
After developing his precepts in the first three chapters, Storr uses the rest of the book to deal with specifics about how to apply those precepts to "Tools and Models," "Shock and Surprise," "Tactics and Organizations," "Commanding the Battle," "The Soul of an Army" (a fascinating discussion of leadership styles), and "Regulators and Ratcatchers" (a discussion of personality types based on the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and how they relate to military leadership). The discussion in

these chapters presents a superb treatise on the use of examples and counterexamples to support points of view. A single counterexample is not sufficient to falsify an argument, for there are no absolutes. Rather, we are looking for patterns that appear better than others, the fact that they sometimes fail notwithstanding.

*The Human Face of War* is a densely packed book that takes on much of the conventional wisdom about theories of combat. Whether one agrees or not, the ideas are all amply documented and well reasoned. One would ignore them at the peril of overlooking insights provided by superb research. While Storr's stated focus is the tactical level of war, the discussions of what makes for good theory are applicable at any level of war. The book is also clearly focused on classic combat operations. While there are some who feel that the days of major combat operations are over, much evidence exists that small unit combined arms operations encompass the skills needed for any kind of combat. The idea that we will not have to fight a "conventional" fight again because we are so good at it only holds as long as we are good at it. This book can go a long way toward helping to build a force that is formidable in the conduct of combined arms combat.

If there is a downside to this book, it is the absurd price of \$120. One can only hope that some American publisher will produce it in paperback at a reasonable price. It deserves to be widely read by those who think seriously about the profession of arms. **JFQ**

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### Clausewitz and Contemporary War

by Antulio J. Echevarria II  
New York: Oxford University Press, 2007  
210 pp. \$99.00  
ISBN: 978-0-19-923191-1

Reviewed by  
THOMAS BRUSCINO

Interpreting the writing of Carl von Clausewitz continues to be a cottage industry; in the last few years, Jon Tetsuro Sumida, Hew Strachan, and Andreas Herberg-Rothe have all added to a library already well stocked with the works of Michael Howard, Peter Paret, and Michael Handel, to name but a few. Indeed, Antulio Echevarria's *Clausewitz and Contemporary War* builds on his significant writings on the work and influence of the Prussian theorist. What can one review add to this voluminous literature? Very little, except a reaffirmation that engaging that literature is still worthwhile for any serious student of military affairs.

With *Clausewitz and Contemporary War*, Echevarria, the Director of Research at the Strategic Studies Institute, has provided one of the more useful contributions to the Clausewitz canon. Anyone who has grappled with *On War* is well aware of the difficulty of the material, and Echevarria, like so many before him, has set

out to clarify it, but not at the expense of losing the subtlety and nuance of the original work. For that reason, the first part of his study, on the purpose and method of *On War*, is also the most difficult. Clausewitz sought an understanding or theory of war that transcended specific time and place while recognizing that all real wars remained constrained by their specific context. For example, his discussion of absolute war represented one aspect of a generalized theory, but the probabilities of reality kept actual wars from ever reaching their absolute nature. For Clausewitz, such testing through experience and history of the tension between the ideal and the real improved the understanding of war far more than the declaration of fixed principles found in the work of some of his contemporaries, including Antoine-Henri Jomini.

That said, Echevarria spends most of part two of his work explaining what Clausewitz did find to be universal in the nature of war, focusing especially on the importance of violence. Too many interpreters have misunderstood Clausewitz's emphasis on combat to mean the search for decisive battle, when in reality he was making the assertion that war itself was inherently about the use of violence to achieve some purpose. Policy determines the purpose of the war, and politics (the interplay among political, military, social, and economic institutions) affect the purpose and the conduct of the war; but war itself is always about the use of violence.

Where things get a bit less familiar in today's terms is the discussion of strategy, part three of *Clausewitz and Contemporary War*. Clausewitz understood strategy in the classical sense, as "the use of

engagements to accomplish the purpose of the war," by which he meant the balancing of ends, ways, and means to use violence or, according to Echevarria, the threat of violence to achieve the purpose of the war. In that sense, it is useful to remember that the book is called *On War*, not *On Statecraft*. The threat of war is the domain of statecraft. The threat of violence in war is a dimension of strategy.

Lest those definitions sound too restrictive for contemporary war, Echevarria argues in one of the more contentious sections of his book that Clausewitz said war "occurs whenever one party resists the violent actions of another" (p. 145). Therefore, most of the missions of the military today, to include arms control, peace operations, humanitarian assistance, combating terrorism, and civil support in domestic emergencies, reside in the domain of Clausewitz's definition of strategy. Echevarria probably reaches too far here—some missions carried out by the military belong to statecraft, not war—but then again from the military's perspective, the principles of strategy probably still apply.

Those principles, which Echevarria calls more subjective and flexible than laws, constitute much of *On War* and the final part of *Clausewitz and Contemporary War*. They include the issues of strength of defense and attack, superiority of numbers, concentration of forces, economy of force, surprise, perseverance, turning movements, culminating points, and the much-debated center of gravity (Echevarria makes a solid case for its continued relevance). Much of this section will be familiar to modern readers, even if many of the principles laid out by Clausewitz now more properly belong

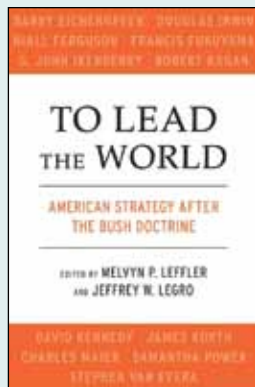
at the operational level—a level he did not recognize because it muddled conceptual clarity. That said, it would be a trap for readers to assume that only the familiar is relevant to contemporary military studies.

Perhaps the best that can be said for Echevarria's book is that it is not easy. Whether Clausewitz's intention or not, the effort to find order across his work is exactly the sort of mental exercise that is necessary to find order in either making or studying war, in this or any other era. The easy practice is to take the parts that make the most sense from Clausewitz (or Echevarria, Strachan, Sumida, and others) and excerpt them to prove military theory bona fides. But that is precisely what must be avoided. We must continue to do the hard work of struggling with Clausewitz and his interpreters because after all these years, war is simple, but the simplest thing is still difficult. **JFQ**

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**To Lead the World:  
American Strategy after the  
Bush Doctrine**

*Edited by Melvyn P. Leffler and  
Jeffrey W. Legro*

Oxford: Oxford University Press,  
2008

303 pp. \$17.95

ISBN: 978-0-19-536941-0

*Reviewed by*  
JORDAN MICHAEL SMITH

In June 2007, as the George W. Bush administration's batteries died, the University of Virginia's Miller Center of Public Affairs hosted a 2-day workshop called "After the Bush Doctrine: National Security Strategy for a New Administration." The event brought together 10 U.S. scholars—historians, political scientists, and economists—from across the political spectrum and tasked them each with writing a concise national security statement. The statements were to offer advice to future officials on the overall goals of national strategy, and to identify and assign priority to the greatest threats facing the Nation. This book is a collection of the responses.

*To Lead the World* is notable for the prominence and eclecticism of its contributors. Few editors can entice such high-profile names as Samantha Power, Francis Fukuyama, and Niall Ferguson to write for them. Even fewer volumes can

simultaneously claim such a diversity of political opinion. The book's authors encompass a wide range of political perspectives, from Robert Kagan's neo-conservatism to Stephen Van Evera's defensive realism.

For all the range of opinion, however, the contributors find commonalities. As the book's title indicates, all the authors agree with the necessity for American leadership. All agree that the United States should maintain its military dominance. All agree, furthermore, on the benefits of an open economic order. There is also consensus on the need for the United States to embrace multilateralism. Finally, unanimity is present among the contributors on the desirability of improved democracy and human rights abroad.

Agreement ends there. MIT political scientist Stephen Van Evera, in the book's most specific, persuasive chapter, identifies nuclear-armed terrorists as the greatest threat to the United States (p. 11). Global warming and epidemic diseases are other potential threats he names. With these three problems posing dangers to the world, Van Evera calls for a "Concert of Cooperation" among the great powers, along the lines of the Concert of Europe established in 1815 (pp. 16–17). He writes that cooperation with China should be a primary goal of American foreign policy (p. 18), and that "the main threat to the United States is no longer conquest but war itself" (p. 4). Van Evera contends that the main impediments to this grand strategy are foreign lobbies and the defense establishment (p. 25).

Robert Kagan disagrees. For Kagan, a columnist at the *Washington Post* and Senior Associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International

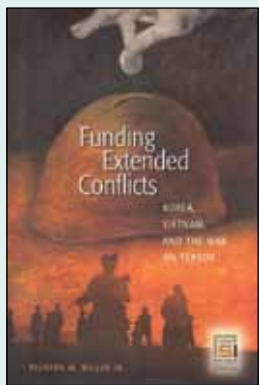
Peace, the spread of autocracy is the chief menace to the Nation. Undemocratic powers Russia and China are pursuing regional predominance and encouraging the spread of autocracy to protect themselves (p. 48). It follows that the United States should form democratic coalitions, and spread democracy, to push back against the Sino-Russian offensive (p. 53). Kagan is thought-provoking and provocative, but ultimately he starkly overemphasizes the dangers of Russia and China and consequently overstates the need for U.S. power projection.

G. John Ikenberry, Francis Fukuyama, Samantha Power, and James Kurth also offer intriguing, if ultimately less persuasive, ideas. Not one of the 10 contributions is unoriginal, nor is any ludicrous. Perhaps the most frustrating contributor is Niall Ferguson, who spends most of his chapter ruining the public's ignorance of the statesman's dilemmas, only to hastily declare near his conclusion that a new President should jettison the assumption that the biggest threat to the U.S. is nuclear-armed terrorists (p. 242). He identifies four alternative dangers, among them the Middle East's disintegration, as more important. Given the provocative nature of this claim, it would have helped if he had elaborated on it. Instead, he simply says that "we must take very seriously the risk that the Greater Middle East could become in our time what Eastern Europe was in the 1940s or Central Africa in the 1990s: a lethal zone of conflict." The wars in 1990s Central Africa were horrid, but they were not a major threat to the United States. If the Middle East now poses as little a threat to the United States as Africa did, we are in for a peaceful future.

*To Lead the World* benefits from its contributors' varied backgrounds. Stanford University historian David M. Kennedy offers one of the best chapters, the historically informed "Two Concepts of Sovereignty." Kennedy roots the U.S. interventionist streak in its messianic birth: "When Britain's North American colonies struck for their independence in 1776 they at once invoked Westphalian principles and bid them defiance" (p. 159). America's respect for self-determination has led to great successes, but its moralistic streak leads it to crusades. Kennedy also places great importance on the so-called revolution in military affairs, believing that devastating force wielded by an all-volunteer army divorced from the mass public tempts policymakers into unnecessary wars (pp. 169–176).

Books such as this have an expiration date. With international events changing rapidly, foreign policy assessments in general become obsolete as quickly as computer software programs. The lack of a narrative puts edited volumes in particular at risk of being overrun by the train of time. But before *To Lead the World's* time is up, international relations students and policymakers would do well to read its contents and consider its recommendations. **JFQ**

**Jordan Michael Smith is a writer in Washington, DC.**



**Funding Extended Conflicts:  
Korea, Vietnam, and the War  
on Terror**

by Richard M. Miller with  
foreword by Dov Zakheim  
Westport, CT: Praeger Security  
International, 2007  
200 pp. \$49.95  
ISBN: 0-275-99896-7

Reviewed by  
RICHARD S. TRACEY

In his first address to Congress, President Barack Obama declared that his budget would include “for the first time . . . the full cost of fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan.” He then bluntly added an exclamation point to his declaration: “For seven years, we have been a nation at war. No longer will we hide its price.” Unquestionably, the price of the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other global war on terror operations has been extraordinary. At the time of the President’s speech, according to the Congressional Research Service, the total direct cost of operations since September 11, 2001, was \$864 billion. While it is true that the George W. Bush administration and Congress largely funded costs for the war on terror outside of the normal budget cycle with a string of emergency supplemental appropriations bills, the issues behind President Obama’s assertions are more complex and less unique than one might suppose, and thus merit close analysis.

*Funding Extended Conflicts* offers such an analysis with case studies of how the legislative and executive branches budgeted for the wars in Korea, Vietnam, and the war on terror. Because it was published in 2007, the book covers funding only through Congress’ consideration of the Bush administration’s request for fiscal year 2006 emergency supplemental funding. Nevertheless, it provides an essential starting point for a thoughtful consideration and understanding of the arcane issues associated with funding extended conflicts.

Richard M. Miller, Jr., an Active-duty U.S. Navy officer, as well as a resource manager and congressional analyst for the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, is well suited to this task. A laudatory foreword by Dov Zakheim, Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller) from 2001 to 2004, attests to his bona fides and the value of his analysis. A winner of the B. Franklin Reinauer Defense Economics Prize at the Naval War College, Miller makes his judgments based on his deep knowledge of defense budgetary policy and an ability to handle a range of budgetary data spanning over five decades.

Miller’s close analysis of the war funding for Korea, Vietnam, and war on terror through 2005 identifies a set of enduring issues that he summarizes in 12 “Resourcing Considerations.” Here, Miller correctly concludes that determining war costs before, during, and after a conflict is an extraordinarily difficult exercise. The inherent problem with predicting the nature, intensity, and extent of any war should be self-evident to policymakers, but often it is not. This uncertainty contributes to tensions and suspicions over funding between the legislative and executive

branches. Exacerbating these tensions was the tendency of the administrations considered in this study—Harry S. Truman, Lyndon B. Johnson, and George W. Bush—to lowball estimates or conceal potential war costs at the outset of the conflict. Moreover, determining what the war costs exactly are is problematic. For example, as Miller points out, during the Korean War, sorting out the direct costs of the fight on the peninsula from the general Cold War expansion triggered by the North Korean invasion was a contentious and challenging issue. Similar problems emerged during the war on terror. Arguments over whether funding for the Army’s modularity program should be included in the emergency supplemental appropriations bills or folded into the regular base budget illustrate this issue. Next, Miller appropriately notes that capturing second- and third-order war costs is elusive, as expanded Servicemember benefits and pay, veterans’ care, and equipment reset costs continue to make demands on budgets well after the end of a conflict.

All three conflicts featured the use of emergency supplemental appropriations to fund costs. Miller notes that debates over when and how to move ongoing war costs into the baseline budget and the regular appropriations cycle is a “perennial” resourcing consideration. Thus, while the initial use of wartime emergency supplemental appropriations was not a Bush administration innovation, the continued use of supplementals to fully fund operations over an extended period did stretch the norms of past practice.

The argument underlining President Obama’s assertion that the Bush administration hid war costs through

supplemental funding is that funding the war on terror exclusively through supplementals excluded these costs from long-term budget projections, obscured the real size of projected deficits, and minimized congressional oversight. Miller takes a somewhat contrary view. Although he agrees that war costs need to be incorporated into long-term Federal budget projections, he argues that supplementals offer more, not less, visibility of direct war costs, and, furthermore, they offer the executive branch necessary planning and operational flexibility. This complex argument cannot be adjudicated in a short book review. Suffice it to say that Miller introduces the issue fairly, carefully outlines the parameters of the argument, and offers his perspective for the reader’s consideration.

Finally, a pair of distractions in an otherwise fine study should be noted. First, a chart titled “Funding Tensions in Clausewitz’s Trinity” reflects a common misunderstanding of the trinity that misses Clausewitz’s profound insights regarding the nonlinear, interactive, and unpredictable nature of war. Miller, as have many others, takes Clausewitz’s remarkable trinity and flattens it into a linear model for pursuing successful war policies that emphasizes the need to maintain balance among the army, people, and government. Second, at the beginning of most of Miller’s chapters, a string of four to five quotations appears without proper citations or consistently clear connections to the subsequent text. These numerous quotations, although often interesting, should have been reduced, properly cited in the endnotes, and in many cases integrated into the text.

These distractions aside, this is a balanced, well-documented, and thoughtful work that makes a significant contribution to understanding an important subject. It recognizes that the struggles between the legislative and executive branch over war funding are not new and identifies enduring war funding issues that will vex the current as well as future governments. We should look forward to further contributions from the author on this subject. **JFQ**

**Lieutenant Colonel Richard S. Tracey, USA (Ret.), teaches strategy and joint operations at the Army Command and General Staff College's Fort Belvoir, VA, satellite campus. In 2005, he worked for a Member of the House Armed Services Committee.**

# Wargaming the Flu

By MARGARET M. MCCOWN

As the winter wears on and swine flu (H1N1) spreads, the importance of transnational public health issues seems more apparent. Swine flu has not proved as deadly as first feared, but the large-scale health and public communications effort mounted to address it illustrates the complex exigencies of the response, where an array of partners, both domestic and international, with numerous and overlapping areas of responsibility and expertise shape policy options and their efficacy. Analyzing and formulating policy responses to complex, strategic level issues that are dynamic and are affected by similarly rapidly changing local, state, national, and international efforts and concerns present political scientists and policy planners with great challenges.

Other recent articles from the Center for Applied Strategic Learning in *Joint Force Quarterly* have addressed how to select topics for exercises and using qualitatively specified games for teaching versus analytical purposes. This article explores the substantive and methodological findings that National Defense University (NDU) gleaned from a series of pandemic influenza exercises conducted for senior government participants over a 2 ½-year period. In particular, it focuses on how participant observations and feedback shaped the design of subsequent exercises, creating an iterative process in which lessons learned from earlier games informed structure that, in turn, elicited further and more refined insights in subsequent ones.

## Background

Between February 2006 and June 2008, the Strategic Policy Forum (SPF), the strategic exercise group within NDU targeting senior executive and legislative participants, conducted six pandemic influenza exercises, addressing state, national, and international strategic issues. Two exercises were conducted in Washington, DC, in February 2006 and again in February 2007 for sets of participants that included Members of Congress and senior executive branch participants from a wide range of agencies. At the invitation of the respective governors, three state exercises were subsequently conducted in Alaska (August 2007) and Hawaii (December 2006 and January 2008) with many of the same executive branch participants, combined with state level elected officials and agencies. The cycle of games concluded with an international exercise conducted for American and Mexican officials and executive branch officials in May of 2008. Participants constituted an unusually broad and representative sample of policymakers involved in the planning for and response to pandemic.

## Findings

As design work began on the first pandemic flu exercise in 2005, the issue was still somewhat new to the defense community. Another Defense Department research group shared with SPF materials that it had used for a quickly designed and executed game. This game, which SPF modified for the February 2006 exercise *Global Tempest*, was originally based on a bioterrorism policy exercise. The exercise began with a first move in which a novel, highly pathogenic influenza virus emerged overseas, asking participants questions such as:

- Are there measures to contain the virus before it reaches the United States?
- How much of the supply of antivirals in the Strategic National Stockpile should be shared with the foreign countries in which the disease is present?
- Should surveillance systems be put in place?

Subsequent moves portrayed a limited and then full-blown disease pandemic in the United States, and asked participants questions about roles and responsibilities in the response and to make prioritizations over the allocation of limited resources such as vaccine and antivirals. There was even some discussion of whether poultry flocks should be culled and the impact of this on the national economy. As the notional pandemic worsened in the United States, participants even discussed what to do if civil unrest—in reaction to deaths, disruption, and limited resources—complicated the situation. One public health participant wryly noted that one sees so few flu patients with the vigor to rise from their sick beds to riot. The congressional Members' experience of constant constituent contact allowed them to expand on and underscore the importance of effective public communications strategies appropriately coordinated





**Commander, Naval Medical Center Portsmouth, Virginia, receives influenza vaccination**

across levels and branches of government, so that the public received consistent and accurate information and guidance.

The exercise was a success; bringing together multiple perspectives and sets of expertise elicited new insights into the problem as well as highlighting its salience to a broad range of actors beyond the public health community. In a statement after the exercise, Senator Pat Roberts observed that the “exercise taught us a valuable lesson: we must be prepared at all levels to deal with a large-scale public health emergency such as pandemic flu. This system must be able to respond in any type of crisis, but more importantly, this system must be ready to respond before the crisis begins.”

The exercise taught SPF several valuable lessons as well, most particularly the importance of the complex Federal-state relationship where questions of public health are concerned. At the Governor’s invitation, SPF conducted an updated, but similar, version of the exercise for a Hawaii state audience that included the Adjutant General and Speaker of the House for Hawaii in December of 2006 and, 2 months later, ran it for Congress again. Like the initial exercise, these iterations presented an essentially emergency response conceptualization of the strategic challenges raised by a pandemic. Public communications and the importance of clear and credible public messages and identifying the right agency or level of government to address the right issues were a dominant topic of conversation. Public health officials began to caution against an overfocus on vaccine and antiviral allocation and prioritization, pointing out that it was far from certain the former would work or that there would be enough of the latter in time

to make a difference. Similarly, participants agreed that containing the disease overseas was probably not realistic and placed a greater emphasis on using the time before it reached the United States to prepare the public.

Drawing on these findings, the last three games introduced rather different factors. In August, SPF ran the exercise for the state of Alaska, including state policymakers and representatives from Alaska and U.S. Pacific Command. Like the Hawaii exercise, this game allowed the opportunity to discuss the need for coordinating the pandemic response in a geographically isolated state, which also hosts a significant Federal and, particularly, Defense Department presence.

One of the more interesting observations came from an Alaska Department of Labor official, addressing the assertion that a crucial part of the response would be convincing the public to stay home if ill. As the official stated, “We have a large tourism industry with seasonal employees here. What do we do about workers who won’t stay home because they have no sick leave?” This simple question informed a major overhaul of the exercise before it was run again in Hawaii in January of 2008. That exercise eliminated many of the allocation-of-limited-resources scenario details and questions in favor of factors the previous exercises had highlighted as more important.

The second Hawaii exercise, Pandemic Tempest, asked how the demographics of affected populations and, particularly, variations in access to care might shape the policy options open to decisionmakers as well as their efficacy. It also posited an antiviral resistant strain of the disease in order to focus the discussion on nonpharmaceutical response measures, such as isolation and closing schools. Throughout the exercises, public health participants had continued to put the

greatest emphasis on these measures and risk communication to make them effective. This exercise also weighed whether significant levels of unreimbursed or slowly reimbursed hospital care, coupled with many nationwide deaths, could shock health and life insurance companies to the extent to which the health care system faltered. This was the first pandemic exercise to devote a move to examining the aftermath of the pandemic.

The final international exercise incorporated many of the factors or constraints that had emerged from the different evolutions of the game. Instead of taking an “emergency response approach,” exercise Partnered Response focused on broad social issues that would shape the course of a pandemic as well as its impact. The difficulties and yet importance of the free movement of goods, services, persons, and capital across North America during a pandemic, particularly if Asian trade was heavily disrupted, was traced across all three moves of the exercise. The exercise also addressed transnational communication to a coordinated response. And, similar to the Pandemic Tempest exercise, it devoted an entire move of the game to examining the postpandemic world.

This series of pandemic flu exercises is an excellent example of how qualitatively specified games can help us refine our understanding of the key independent factors that structure a problem. Some factors or constraints, particularly public communication, were found consistently important and present across all exercises. Even this factor was refined, however, as the emphasis switched from justifying resource allocations to explaining the benefits of nonpharmaceutical measures. All told, exercises moved away from what could be characterized as an emergency response understanding of the problem toward a more public health understanding. Multiple iterations of the exercise, a set of participants who were both diverse and representative of the decisionmaking community, and exercises that were sufficiently explicit about the constraints or factors that we posited as composing the strategic challenge were the three factors key to using qualitatively specified exercises to refine and validate how we conceptualized the problem. **JFQ**

**Dr. Margaret M. McCown is an Associate Research Fellow in the Center for Applied Strategic Learning at the National Defense University.**

# Joint Doctrine Update

## Joint Chiefs of Staff J7 Joint Education and Doctrine Division

**T**his issue of *Joint Force Quarterly*, devoted to the contributions of special operations forces to joint warfighting, is particularly timely given the explosion of joint doctrine development and revision efforts regarding special operations within this arena.

Currently U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) is the lead agent for six joint publications (JP) devoted to “traditional” special operations mission sets. These include JP 3–26, *Counterterrorism*, and JP 3–22, *Foreign Internal Defense*, both of which have been under revision and are close to being signed. USSOCOM is also the lead agent for JP 3–57, *Civil Military Operations*, JP 3–05, *Joint Special Operations*, JP 3–13.2, *Psychological Operations* (PSYOP), and JP 3–05.1, *Joint Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Joint Special Operations Task Force Operations*. Each of these JPs has been influential in not only how we interact with our interagency partners but also how we will continue to operate in the future.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, terrorism has emerged as the signature activity for ideological extremists around the world, directly or indirectly affecting millions of people. The evolution of terrorism from a sparsely used tactic by relatively few individuals to a widespread, globally coordinated, long-term conflict has sparked significant political and military changes.

JP 3–26, for instance, redefines and refocuses counterterrorism away from obsolete constructs; reflects current policy and strategy adjustments to the evolution of terrorism from a tactic to a transnational threat of strategic proportions; discusses the relationship of counterterrorism within irregular warfare and existing doctrine applied to these operations; introduces the strategic campaign framework for the direct and indirect approaches for conducting these operations; and discusses the enhanced role of conventional forces in counterterrorism operations.

As our awareness and understanding of security cooperation (SC) continues to grow, the importance of JP 3–22 will become even more critical to understand. This JP is the source document for SC and will provide the foundation for how we interact as a joint force in the future, especially in areas such as the Middle East. Today, each Service has its own view on what SC really is and USSOCOM has reached out to the Services and combatant commands to ensure that this publication is clear, cohesive, and enduring. The publication addresses specific sources of U.S. power (financial, intelligence, and law enforcement) applied through the instruments of U.S. national power and introduces a discussion of security force assistance into joint doctrine.

JP 3–13.2, which also recently completed its revision, refocuses PSYOP within the context of military and informational instruments of national power and communications strategy and expands the discussion of joint PSYOP activities at all levels of war. The publication also discusses PSYOP support of combat operations, Defense Department information capabilities in peace, civil authority information support of domestic-led Federal agencies, and special operations. Finally, it introduces a seven-phase PSYOP process into joint operations.

These three highlighted JPs, along with the others for which USSOCOM is the lead agent, show how involved and relevant USSOCOM is in shaping the nature of our military’s future engagements.

As we go forward, we will continue to challenge the entire doctrine community to ensure that we are on the leading edge of the integration of lessons learned and identifying the best practices to be cited into joint doctrine. Doctrine development and assessment will remain the core focus areas with the implied task of identifying potential subject areas for future inclusion. The doctrine development community continues to remain open and transparent and welcomes dialogue and feedback.

### JPs Revised or Under Review

- JP 1–05, *Religious Support to Joint Operations*
- JP 2–01, *Joint and National Intelligence Support to Military Operations*
- JP 3–0, *Joint Operations*
- JP 3–02.1, *Joint Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Landing Force Operations*
- JP 3–06, *Doctrine for Joint Urban Operations*
- JP 3–07, *Stability Operations*
- JP 3–07.2, *Joint Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Antiterrorism*
- JP 3–08, *Interagency, Intergovernmental Organization, and Nongovernmental Organization Coordination during Joint Operations*
- JP 3–09, *Joint Fire Support*
- JP 3–10, *Joint Security Operations in Theater*
- JP 3–13, *Information Operations*
- JP 3–13.2, *Psychological Operations*
- JP 3–13.3, *Operations Security*
- JP 3–13.4, *Military Deception*
- JP 3–17, *Joint Doctrine and Joint Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Air Mobility Operations*
- JP 3–22, *Foreign Internal Defense*
- JP 3–24, *Counterinsurgency*
- JP 3–26, *Counterterrorism*
- JP 3–30, *Command and Control for Joint Air Operations*
- JP 3–31, *Command and Control for Joint Land Operations*
- JP 3–52, *Joint Doctrine for Airspace Control in the Combat Zone*
- JP 3–53, *Doctrine for Joint Psychological Operations*
- JP 3–61, *Public Affairs*
- JP 4–01.5, *Joint Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Transportation Terminal Operations*
- JP 4–03, *Joint Bulk Petroleum and Water Doctrine*
- JP 4–05, *Joint Mobilization Planning*
- JP 4–06, *Mortuary Affairs in Joint Operations*
- JP 4–08, *Joint Doctrine for Logistic Support of Multinational Operations*
- JP 4–09, *Joint Doctrine for Global Distribution*
- JP 5–0, *Joint Operation Planning*
- JP 6–0, *Doctrine for C<sup>2</sup> Systems Support in Joint Operations*

Looking for the latest in doctrine? Check out the JDEIS Web portal at <https://jdeis.js.mil>



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*“A campaign against extremism will not succeed with bullets or bombs alone.”*

—President Barack Obama March 27, 2009



## Looking for a Challenge?

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is actively recruiting experienced officers to serve in Afghanistan. These are non-career Foreign Service Limited Appointments, for up to five years, requiring at least a Bachelor's degree and eight years of relevant experience, four of which must be overseas.

For more information and to apply, go to  
<http://www.usaid.gov/careers/fsls.html>

The United States has a long history of extending a helping hand to people overseas struggling to make a better life, to recover from a disaster or to live in a free and democratic country. It is this caring that stands as a hallmark of the United States—and shows the world our true character as a nation.

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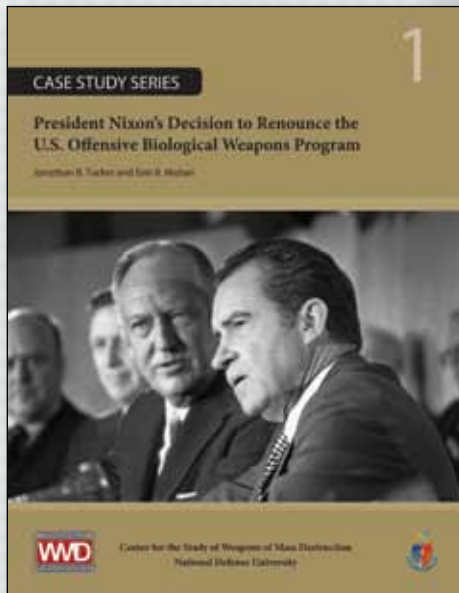
*“As President, my greatest responsibility is to protect the American people... We are in Afghanistan to confront a common enemy that threatens the United States, our friends and allies, and the people of Afghanistan and Pakistan who have suffered the most at the hands of violent extremists. So I want the American people to understand that we have a clear and focused goal: to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al Qaeda in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and to prevent their return to either country in the future... To achieve our goals, we need a stronger, smarter and comprehensive strategy.”*

—President Barack Obama  
March 27, 2009



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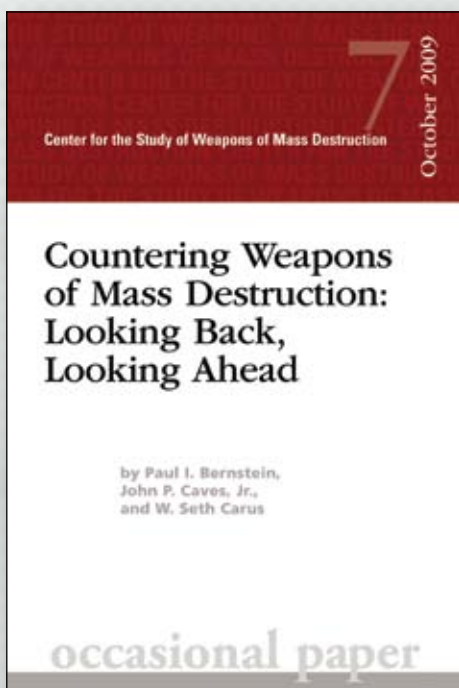
for the Center for the Study of Weapons of Mass Destruction  
(WMD Center)



### Case Study 1

#### *President Nixon's Decision to Renounce the U.S. Offensive Biological Weapons Program*

In the first of a new series of case studies, coauthors Jonathan B. Tucker and Erin R. Mahan examine President Nixon's 1969 decision to renounce offensive biological weapons. This renunciation of biological and toxin weapons was the first time that a major power unilaterally abandoned an entire category of armament. The decision opened the way for the 1972 Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, while marking the end of three longstanding assumptions regarding U.S. chemical and biological weapons policy: that chemical and biological weapons were inextricably linked, that an offensive biological capability was required for deterrence, and that the United States needed to be prepared to retaliate in kind to a biological weapons attack.



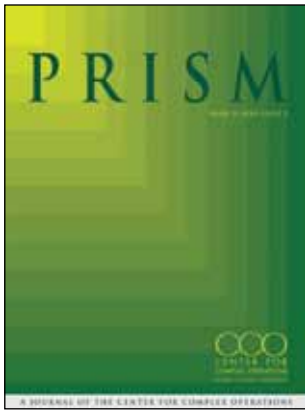
### Occasional Paper 7

#### *Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction: Looking Back, Looking Ahead*

In this general assessment of the 20 years since the United States began worrying seriously about the risks of regional weapons of mass destruction (WMD) proliferation, the authors begin by looking back at the evolution of the countering-WMD enterprise in the Clinton and Bush administrations. Paul Bernstein, John Caves, and W. Seth Carus close this section with some observations on why, in fact, America has not been attacked with WMD. Turning to the future, they examine such issues as creeping proliferation, the likelihood of a "proliferation cascade," other challenges, and initial observations of the Obama administration. They conclude that although investments and other efforts have to some extent prevented our worst WMD fears from being realized, much remains to be done to counter the WMD threat of today and as it is likely to evolve in the future.



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## New Journal from NDU Press

# PRISM

National Defense University (NDU) is pleased to introduce *PRISM*, a complex operations journal. *PRISM* will explore, promote, and debate emerging thought and best practices as civilian capacity increases in operations in order to address challenges in stability, reconstruction, security, counterinsurgency, and irregular warfare. *PRISM* complements *Joint Force Quarterly*, introduced by General Colin Powell, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 16 years ago to similarly advance joint force integration and understanding.



*PRISM* welcomes articles on a broad range of complex operations issues, especially those that focus on the nexus of civil-military integration. The journal will be published four times a year both online and in hardcopy. Manuscripts submitted to *PRISM* should be between 2,500 and 6,000 words in length and sent via email to [prism@ndu.edu](mailto:prism@ndu.edu).



## Call for Entries for the 2010

### Secretary of Defense National Security Essay Competition *and* Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Strategic Essay Competition



Are you a Joint Professional Military Education (JPME) student? Imagine your winning essay appearing in a future issue of *Joint Force Quarterly*. In addition, a chance to catch the ear of the Secretary of Defense or the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on an important national security issue, recognition by peers, and monetary prizes await the winners.

**Who's Eligible:** Students at the JPME colleges, schools, and programs, including Service research fellows and international students.

**What:** Research and write an original, unclassified essay in one or more of the various categories. May be done in conjunction with a course writing requirement. Must be selected by and submitted through your college.

**When:** Essays may be written any time during the 2009-2010 academic year, but students are encouraged to begin the process early and avoid the end-of-academic-year rush that

typically occurs each spring. JPME colleges are free to run their own internal competitions to select nominees but must meet these deadlines:

- **April 27, 2010:** colleges submit nominated essays to NDU Press for first round of judging.
- **May 18-19, 2010:** final judging and selection of winners.

National Defense University Press conducts the competitions with the generous support of the NDU Foundation. For further information, see your college's essay coordinator or go to:

[www.ndu.edu/inss/Press/NDUPress\\_SECDEFEC.htm](http://www.ndu.edu/inss/Press/NDUPress_SECDEFEC.htm)  
[www.ndu.edu/inss/Press/NDUPress\\_CSEC.htm](http://www.ndu.edu/inss/Press/NDUPress_CSEC.htm)



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