

Airman ensures approach to site is safe after controlled detonation, Ali Air Base, Iraq

U.S. Air Force (Jonathan Snyder)



## Developing Joint Counterinsurgency Doctrine An Airman's Perspective

By CHARLES J. DUNLAP, JR.

*Anybody who thinks that you can win these kinds of things in one dimension is not being honest.*

—General Peter Schoomaker, USA<sup>1</sup>

**H**ow does the U.S. military plan to win in Iraq? According to some, “The Book” on Iraq is the Army’s new Field Manual (FM) 3–24 (designated by the Marine Corps as Warfighting Publication 3–33.5), *Counterinsurgency*.<sup>2</sup> Though this manual may have been meant as “simply operational level doctrine for two Services,”<sup>3</sup> as one contributor insists, it quickly became viewed as much more. Senator John McCain (R–AZ), reflecting the received wisdom of many senior leaders (and probably the public at large), describes FM 3–24 as the “blueprint of U.S. efforts in Iraq today.”<sup>4</sup>

FM 3–24 does superbly articulate a thoughtful *landpower* perspective on the complicated challenge of counterinsurgency

(COIN). It does not purport to be, however, a full-dimensional joint approach. Indeed, the official Department of Defense (DOD) announcement unveiling the doctrine crowed that it “was a real team effort of Army and Marine writers,”<sup>5</sup> underlining the absence of the other Services, who emphasize the air, space, sea, and cyberspace warfighting domains.

The result? Among other things, the discussion of airpower is largely relegated to a 5-page annex in the nearly 300-page text. Moreover, that short discussion inexplicably discourages the use of the air weapon in a

way not applicable to other fires. Ironically, notwithstanding the doctrine, airstrikes in Iraq soared fivefold in 2007.

COIN operations present the kind of multifaceted problem that defies solution by any one component. Despite the ferocious efforts and eye-watering valor of America’s Soldiers and Marines, the various ground-centric COIN strategies attempted in Iraq over the years may have proven costly and time-consuming. Exploiting the full capabilities of the *whole* joint team would seem the wiser course given the complexities of COIN.

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# Report Documentation Page

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Accordingly, in late May of 2007, the four Services finally agreed to write joint doctrine for COIN. This development presents the ideal opportunity to meld the strengths of the whole joint team into a unified doctrinal concept. Significantly, *Inside the Pentagon* announced that the “Army will lead the pan-service effort.”<sup>6</sup> Alone, this is not problematic; however, it does raise concerns when juxtaposed with the further report that “several officials” said that FM 3–24 will serve “as a primary building block for the new service-wide effort.”<sup>7</sup>

It remains to be seen what a doctrine-development architecture so constructed will produce. While Soldiers and Marines would justifiably rely on the outstanding work already found in FM 3–24 in crafting their inputs, that is a rather different proposition from obliging a “pan-service” team to consider it, from the beginning, a “building block.” It might have been more creative and equitable to have started with the proverbial clean sheet of paper. As it is, there is an imperative for Airmen (and Sailors) to insist that their views be included on a fully equal basis with those of the other Services.

Soldiers observe airstrike to destroy cave near Barla, Afghanistan



9827 Combat Camera (Michael L. Castree)

## Airmindedness

Of course, Airmen bring distinct weaponry to the COIN fight but equally—or more—important is the Airman’s unique *way of thinking*. General Henry (“Hap”) Arnold termed the Airman’s “particular expertise and distinct point of view . . . *airmindedness*.”<sup>8</sup> According to Air Force doctrine, an Airman’s “perspective is necessarily different; it reflects the range, speed, and capabilities of aerospace forces, as well as the threats and survival imperatives unique to Airmen.”<sup>9</sup> This article contends that an Airman’s approach to military problems, including COIN, may differ markedly from that of a Soldier,<sup>10</sup> and that such differences provide the opportunity to capitalize on fresh perspectives.

Insisting on including the Airman’s perspective in developing joint doctrine is not pandering to abstract notions of jointness; it is a hard-nosed assessment of what makes Americans winners. The United States is the world’s greatest military power because it is built on the free enterprise system, the most successful economic theory in history. Underlying that system is the concept of *competition*, which drives efficiency and effectiveness, and its application is just as valid in the military realm as in any other.

Competitive analysis of contrasting component approaches will serve the COIN fight immeasurably. Authentic jointness is not meant to remove competition and advocacy in defense issues, but in practice it sometimes seems to have that result. Too often, superficially genteel bureaucratic consensus is misinterpreted as “successful” jointness when in truth it erodes the essence of the competitive spirit that makes America great.

Complementing competition is the concept of cooperation. That involves taking the fruits of competition fairly evaluated and blending them into a warfighting design in a way that productively exploits America’s total COIN potential.

This article intends to help regenerate and leverage that competitive and cooperative spirit by analyzing the differing approaches that landpower and airpower experts take with respect to military problems generally and COIN specifically. It aims to help complete the exceptionally fine work of FM 3–24 by facilitating the development of authentically joint doctrine.

It certainly does *not* argue that joint COIN doctrine must be “air-centric” or even “air-dominant.” It does demand, however, that

any *complete* COIN analysis for implementation in the joint environment must benefit from an *airminded* perspective. That means taking into account the potential of airpower technologies as well as an Airman’s distinct approach to resolving issues across the spectrum of conflict, to include COIN. In short, it affirms that a *fully* joint and interdependent approach will produce the most effective doctrine for the COIN fight.

*Airmen bring distinct weaponry to the counterinsurgency fight, but equally or more important is the Airman’s unique way of thinking*

## Ground Force Conventionality

Soldiers praise FM 3–24 as “brilliantly” created,<sup>11</sup> a proposition with which Airmen would agree. Airmen, however, would also find that its defining provisions espouse rather traditional ground force philosophies. In fact, what is paradoxical, given the publicity surrounding FM 3–24, is its surprisingly *conventional* approach to *unconventional* war. In particular, it reverts to much the same solution that Soldiers typically fall back on when confounded by a difficult operational situation (COIN or otherwise): employ ever larger numbers of Soldiers and have them engage in “close” contact with the “target,” however defined.

At its core, FM 3–24 enthusiastically reflects the Army’s hallowed concept of “boots on the ground.” It is an approach sure to delight those (albeit not necessarily FM 3–24’s authors) who conceive of solutions to all military problems mainly in terms of overwhelming numbers of ground forces. And the numbers of “boots” that FM 3–24 demands are truly significant. It calls for a “minimum troop density” of 20 counterinsurgents per 1,000 residents.<sup>12</sup> This ratio (which may be based on questionable assumptions) has enormous implications for the U.S. COIN effort in Iraq. For Baghdad alone, for example, the ratio would require over 120,000 troops;<sup>13</sup> for all of Iraq, over 500,000.<sup>14</sup>

Evidently, FM 3–24 conceives of accumulating combat power not through the massing of *fires* as would normally be the case, but by massing COIN *troops*. Both Airmen and Soldiers recognize the importance of *mass* as a principle applicable to COIN as with



any other form of warfare. To an Airman, however, mass is not defined “based solely on the quantity of forces” but rather in relation to the *effect* achieved. Although doctrinally the Army recognizes the concept of effects,<sup>15</sup> FM 3–24 seems to see the means of achieving them primarily through deploying significant numbers of COIN forces.

FM 3–24’s predilection for resorting to very large force ratios of Soldiers to address the challenge of COIN caters to the Army’s traditional and deeply embedded philosophies. For example, the Service begins both of its seminal doctrinal documents, FM 1, *The Army*, and FM 3–0, *Operations*, with the same passage from T.R. Fehrenbach’s *This Kind of War*, and it glorifies the boots-on-the-ground approach:

*You can fly over a land forever; you may bomb it, atomize it, pulverize it and wipe it clean of life but if you desire to defend it, protect it, and keep it for civilization you must do this on the ground, the way the Roman Legions did, by putting your young men into the mud.*<sup>16</sup>

The selection of Fehrenbach to introduce these documents so central to the Army suggests that the institution harbors something of an anti-airpower (if not anti-technology) bent. That in the 21<sup>st</sup> century the Army still clings to a vision of airpower from a conflict nearly 60 years past says much about the mindset and culture being thrust on today’s Soldiers.

Airmen must understand and respect, however, that the Army is rightly the proud heir to a long tradition whose ideal might be reduced in “heroic” terms to a close combat contest of champions on the order of Achilles and Hector. The centerpieces of such struggles often are not the weapons the warriors brandish, but the élan with which they wield them.

Today, the Army still views the infantry as the “Queen of Battle” and considers the quintessential Soldier as the infantryman, whose mission is “to close with the enemy” and engage in “close combat.”<sup>17</sup> Moreover, General David H. Petraeus, the principle architect of FM 3–24, romanced the ideal of close combat when he recently remarked that there

*the Army is rightly the proud heir to a long tradition whose ideal might be reduced in “heroic” terms to a close combat contest on the order of Achilles and Hector*

“is something very special about membership in the ‘brotherhood of the close fight.’”<sup>18</sup>

Without question there are—and will always be—situations (in COIN operations as well as in others) where it is prudent and *necessary* for ground forces to close with the enemy. The problem is that FM 3–24 discourages combating insurgents in almost any other way.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, it extends this notion of closing with the “target” to more than simply kinetic force application situations involving enemy insurgents.

Specifically, “targets” of COIN efforts typically include *nonkinetic* contacts with the friendly population. Like most COIN writings, FM 3–24 promotes as a main objective the people themselves<sup>20</sup> and seeks to win their “hearts and minds.”<sup>21</sup> To accomplish that, the doctrine contemplates huge numbers of COIN forces physically “closing” with the target population through various engagement strategies—a process that is, unfortunately, ill suited for U.S. forces in many 21<sup>st</sup>-century environments, including today’s Iraq.

In other words, the same affinity for close contact in *combat* situations is applied to contacts in *noncombat* winning-hearts-and-minds settings. Again, it is certainly true that

COIN forces will (and even *must*) interface with the target population if an insurgency is to be defeated, but the specific circumstances of when, where, how—and most importantly *who*—are all factors that need to be carefully evaluated in advance.

Regrettably, FM 3–24 gives too little consideration to the possibility that hearts and minds might sometimes be more efficiently and effectively won by having far fewer numbers of U.S. ground forces engaging in direct physical contact with the host-nation



U.S. Air Force (Jonathan Snyder)

**Left: Airmen attach counterbalances to horizontal stabilizers on MQ-1 Predator at Ali Air Base, Iraq**

**Right: Airmen work controls of unmanned aircraft system conducting reconnaissance over southern Arab Jabour region, Iraq**



1st Combat Camera Squadron (Andy Dunaway)

population, perhaps through the better utilization of technology. In fact, it may be imperative to explore such courses of action.

Given the expected resentment of the presence of foreign troops, even attempting to use *American* troops in a close-with-the-population role is not only problematic but also counterproductive in many 21<sup>st</sup>-century COIN scenarios. In Iraq, for example, despite the widely accepted COIN principle that success requires years of effort, a recent poll showed that 71 percent of Iraqis want U.S. forces to leave within a year.<sup>22</sup> Consequently, inadequate delineation between COIN forces generally and American forces specifically is one of FM 3–24's most serious conceptual flaws.

It may be then that the substitution of technology for manpower is a must for 21<sup>st</sup>-century COIN operations. Soldiers seem predisposed, however, as the Fehrenbach passage intimates, to be uncomfortable with *any* technology that might diminish or even displace the large ground force formations so vital to their tradition-driven self-conceptualization. This kind of adherence to tradition is in stark contrast to airmindedness.

### An Airman's Way of Thinking

FM 3–24 is an exquisite illustration of the differing paths Airmen and Soldiers can take in addressing warfighting matters. Considered more broadly, the contrasting philosophical perspectives underlie the fact that since airpower is “inherently a strategic force,”<sup>23</sup> Airmen *tend* to reason in *strategic* terms. Soldiers, intellectually disposed to favor “close combat,” *tend* to think *tactically*.

These are certainly not exclusive focuses of either component; many Soldiers are extraordinary strategic theorists and many Airmen have enormous tactical expertise. Rather, they are merely cultural propensities of the respective Services that are helpful in analyzing FM 3–24's manpower-intensive approach.

*The Strategic Inclination.* The strategic inclination of Airmen as applied to COIN requires some explanation. FM 3–24 does make a few references to strategic matters but gives them relatively short shrift.<sup>24</sup> There is no across-the-board recognition of the need for anchoring all aspects of modern COIN operations in strategic considerations. Effective doctrine for *American* COIN forces today *must* always account for U.S. strategic political goals. With respect to Iraq, this means

a “unified democratic Iraq that can govern itself, defend itself, and sustain itself, and is an ally in the War on Terror.”<sup>25</sup>

Thus, FM 3–24's statement that “long term success in COIN depends on the people taking charge of their own affairs and consenting to the government's rule” is not quite right. If the government that emerges in Iraq is intolerantly majoritarian, supportive of terrorism, or otherwise hostile to U.S. interests, in real terms the COIN effort there fails.

Strategic thinking also means understanding “politics” in the Clausewitzian sense, that is, the relationship of the “remarkable trinity” of the people, the government, and the military. When COIN operations become disconnected from political goals and realities, even technical, *military* success can become strategic defeat.

Furthermore, for Airmen, strategic thinking encompasses the aim of achieving victory without first defeating the enemy's fielded military capability. Put a different way (especially apt for the COIN operations conducted by *American* troops), it means defeating the enemy's military capability without excessive reliance upon the close fight (that is, the fight so costly in human terms that it can generate intractable political issues).

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Strategic, *airminded* thinking can also mean developing ways of pacifying the host-nation population that avoid the potential difficulties arising from excessive interaction by American troops with an Iraqi population that resents them as occupiers.

Officially, the definition of *strategic air warfare* speaks about the “progressive destruction and disintegration of the enemy's war-making capacity to a point where the enemy no longer retains the ability or the will to wage war.” In COIN, destroying an enemy's *warmaking capacity* is a complex, multilayered task, but the point is that an Airman's perspective on doing so would not necessarily require the tactical, “close” engagement by ground forces FM 3–24 favors. In fact, it may involve nonkinetic means employed from afar.

Not only do Airmen naturally look for opportunities to neutralize the enemy from afar, but they also instinctively look for ways to *affirmatively* frustrate the adversary's opportunity for the close fight. In insurgencies, the close fight that FM 3–24 supports usually optimizes the adversary's odds because the ground dimension is typically the only one in which the insurgent can fight symmetrically. Airmen prefer to deny the enemy the chance to fight in the way he prefers, or even on more or less equal terms.

Airmen seek *engagement dominance*, which denies an adversary the opportunity to bring his weapons to bear. As a matter of doctrine, therefore, Airmen first seek to achieve air superiority so that airpower's many capabilities can be employed with impunity. Generally speaking, American airpower achieves such dominance in COIN situations. Because insurgents are often (albeit not always) helpless against U.S. airpower—and especially fixed-wing airpower—it represents a unique and powerful kind of asymmetric warfare that *favors* the United States, an advantage an effective COIN doctrine must exploit.

U.S. airpower allows Airmen to control their domains to a far greater degree than Soldiers have been able to achieve on the surface dimension (particularly in Iraq). Much of the reason for the worldwide U.S. superiority in airpower is a result of top-quality equipment. Unsurprisingly, therefore, Airmen are inclined toward high technology.

*The Technological Inclination.* One of the most pervasive if inexplicable staples of COIN literature (including FM 3–24) is an attitude toward technology that frequently ranges from overlooked to misunderstood to outright antagonistic. Much of this antipathy is aimed directly at airpower. Typical of the latter perspective is Air War College Professor Jeffrey Record's essay describing the “American Way of War” as “obsessed” with a technology “mania” that is “counterproductive” in COIN.<sup>26</sup> He explicitly cites the air weapon as the “most notable” cause of the counterproductivity:

*The U.S. military's aversion to counterinsurgency . . . is a function of 60 years of preoccupation with high-technology conventional warfare against other states and accelerated substitution of machines for combat manpower, most notably aerial standoff precision firepower for large ground forces.*<sup>27</sup>



Even more scathing is James Corum's *Fighting the War on Terror: A Counterinsurgency Strategy*. His previous book, *Airpower in Small Wars*, sought to consign airpower (which he considers exclusively in an aircraft context) to a limited *supporting* role in COIN campaigns. Although debatable, the view expressed in *Airpower in Small Wars* is at least comprehensible given the state of aviation technology during the time period of the campaigns he examined. Corum's current book is puzzling, however, as he appears to use it to demean technology generally, and the U.S. Air Force specifically.<sup>28</sup> It does not fully appreciate the potential of today's airpower in COIN strategies.

For its part, FM 3-24 mentions technology only about a half-dozen times outside of the airpower annex, and several of those references are rather disparaging. Airmen see the world differently. They believe that high tech has the potential to change COIN operations as dramatically as it has transformed military operations at other points along the conflict spectrum. Accordingly, Airmen proudly proclaim that they are, among many things, "technology-

focused professionals,"<sup>29</sup> a cultural attribute that distinguishes them from the Army COIN culture (although perhaps not other parts of the Army).

Soldiers may consider technology differently from Airmen because of the relative role tradition plays in their *Weltanschauung*. Historian Charles Townshend observes:

*Soldiers have seldom led the way in technological development, and have often been reluctant to welcome new weapons. Tradition has always been important in fostering the esprit de corps of fighting units, and can lead to fossilization.*<sup>30</sup>

Adherence to ground force tradition may explain FM 3-24's preference for manpower-intensive COIN solutions as opposed to an Airman's inclination to look for ways to replace troops with technology. In discussing the reluctance of World War I soldiers to embrace the introduction of the then-new technology of the machinegun, author Anthony Smith recognizes the strong role of tradition in their thinking. He described the

attitude of many soldiers toward machinegun technology and the "close fight":

*Where was the luster in merely mowing down the enemy? . . . Where was the excitement and the honor one might gain in a fight which was man to man? . . . The [machinegun] was as wrongful in its status as showing up at Agincourt with rifles or grenades. It might win the day, but without a trace of glory.*<sup>31</sup>

This is certainly not an *airminded* approach to war. From the very beginning, advocates of the air weapon sought means of using it that avoided the sort of "glory" that led to the close-combat slaughter and stalemate of World War I.

Historian Lee Kennett states that airpower "seemed to offer a real alternative to the bloody, indecisive collisions along [World War I's] static front."<sup>32</sup> As a result, today's Airmen see no glory in the close fight if the enemy can be stopped at a distance with the latest technology. Airmen have no tradition that discourages new technology, and they embrace it as readily in COIN situations as in any other.

By contrast, Soldiers, it seems, are apt to hold onto traditional approaches even when they appear to be outdated. The Army, for instance, conducted horse-cavalry combat operations as late as 1942. More contemporarily, the Army retains its fabled paratrooper formations despite their limited utility in modern war as became clear during Operations *Enduring Freedom* and *Iraqi Freedom*.

Some soldiers admit to the lack of bona fide, 21<sup>st</sup>-century *military* rationale for this once-important capability. A former paratrooper concedes that "it seems clear that we have far too many airborne-qualified soldiers on active duty and that we should not have any large units that are equipped, staffed, and practicing for large-scale airborne operations."<sup>33</sup> He contends, however, that *tradition* is much of the reason the Army keeps its legendary parachute units.

While all military members appreciate the value of tradition, the Airmen's view is more temperate. Soldiers tend to think tradition, Airmen tend to think science. Why? The nature of airpower is such that the science that produces superior technology empowers its possessor to dominate the dimensions in which Airmen operate far more rapidly than is the case with landpower. Thus, Airmen see airpower, accord-

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U.S. Air Force

F-16Cs operate over Iraq, January 2008

ing to Chris Gray, as “integrally linked to science.”<sup>34</sup> Because of that, Gray claims, the “Air Force has led the way in institutionalizing postmodern war,” as well as what he calls the “innovation of innovation.”

### Uses of History

An Airman’s fascination with innovation, especially cutting-edge technological innovation, is just one of the reasons that Airmen and Soldiers interpret the past differently. FM 3–24’s overarching intellectual touchstones are history and the Army’s lessons-learned culture. And the doctrine is an outstanding example of both. In fact, its historical focus is itself one of the paradoxes of the document. While that focus gives it great strength, it is also likely one of the reasons that FM 3–24 does not fully exploit airpower and other cutting-edge technological solutions.

Instead, FM 3–24 enthusiasts gush that it “draws on lessons from history [and cites] Napoleon’s Peninsular Campaign, T.E. Lawrence in Arabia, Che Guevara, and the Irish Republican Army, as well as recent experiences in Afghanistan and Iraq.”<sup>35</sup> Therein, however, lies the problem: *none* of FM 3–24’s case studies involves the latest airpower technology. The air weapon is constantly evolving with a velocity that is difficult for surface warriors with a tradition-imbued deference to the past to fully grasp.

Even drawing upon *Enduring Freedom* and *Iraqi Freedom* experiences does not mean airpower’s current potential is explored completely. Despite a publication date of December 2006, what might have been the limits of airpower during FM 3–24’s drafting may already have been superseded by more recent advances. One example is the deployment of the MQ–9 Reaper unmanned aircraft system. Armed with a bevy of precision weaponry and surveillance equipment, the Reaper is a long-endurance hunter-killer that can revolutionize the pursuit of insurgents at *zero risk* to U.S. forces.

If using all the capabilities of the joint team is important, then lessons of *past* COIN operations conducted in the context of now-obsolete aviation technology should not be indiscriminately applied in assessing the value of airpower in *future* COIN operations. As the new joint doctrine is drafted, this limitation on the uses of history must be carefully considered.

The swiftness of technological change has, for Airmen, very real and immediate consequences in combat. The history of airpower is littered with examples of the rapid fall from grace of aircraft that once dominated the skies only to be superseded—sometimes in mere months—by platforms with better capabilities. “Historical” aircraft and other older technologies have sentimental but not operational value to Airmen.

Airmen are constantly confronted with the hard truth that so much of today’s airpower capabilities are linked to computer power. Accordingly, they are keenly aware of the Moore’s Law phenomenon that

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explains the rapid obsolescence of weaponry that relies on the microchip. Naturally, this makes Airmen especially disposed to relentlessly seek the most advanced systems available. This is why the Air Force, whose airplanes now have an average age of over 25 years, is so focused on modernization and recapitalization.

Dated infantry weapons can maintain their relevance far longer than the air weapon. Other factors (organization, training, and spirit) may offset the technological deficiencies. For example, the AK–47 assault rifle remains effective despite experts who believe the M–16 supersedes it.

This is not the case with aerial combat. Even the most skilled and motivated aviator cannot overcome the physics of flight as governed by the aircraft’s design. Though technology does eventually transform land warfare, the *pace* is not nearly as rapid as it is with most aviation systems.

It is true that there are important examples of insurgents who prevailed against high-tech surface opponents. Such instances are, however, properly interpreted as the insurgents winning *in spite of* technological inferiority, not *because of* such deficiency, as some contemporary COIN enthusiasts seem to think. In an opinion piece in *The Wall Street Journal*, Bing West and Eliot Cohen made the apt observation that “the American failure [thus far] in Iraq reflects not our preference for high technology—as facile critics

claim—but our inability to bring appropriate technology to bear.”<sup>36</sup>

To the frustration of Airmen, much ink has been spilled over the notion that high-tech airpower “failed” during the 2006 Israeli operations in Lebanon against Hezbollah.<sup>37</sup> The supposed “lesson learned,” it seems, is that only landpower “works” in low-intensity conflicts (to include COIN).

What is ironic about these assessments is that today, Israel’s border with Lebanon is secured by a force that is internationally manned and funded—and which has largely ended Hezbollah rocket attacks. Not a bad strategic result. In fact, many analysts are becoming convinced, as Edward Luttwak is, that the “the war is likely to be viewed in the long term as more satisfactory than many now seem to believe.”<sup>38</sup> Moreover, if airpower is to be denigrated because it allegedly “failed” to achieve “decisive” results in a 34-day war, what should one make of the performance of *groundpower* in over 1,500 days in Iraq? That groundpower fails as a COIN force?

Even an articulate and helpful analysis of the war such as that of Susan Kreps suffers from an unwarranted transference of generic assessments of airpower to that of *American* airpower.<sup>39</sup> Although Kreps recognizes that “no two wars are the same,” she nevertheless belittles airpower’s low-casualty success in the Gulf War and Kosovo by saying that those conflicts “may have been the anomalies.” At the same time, Kreps’ analysis of Israeli airpower in the Lebanon war leads her to propound as a given the proposition that the “effects of airpower against asymmetric adversaries” are limited. Underpinning that conclusion is the mistaken assumption that the capabilities and doctrine (and perhaps *creativity*) of American airpower and Airmen today are conterminous with those of the Israeli air force at the time of last summer’s operations against Hezbollah. Unfortunately, this kind of lessons-learned thinking unproductively “fossilizes” judgments about the current utility of U.S. airpower to the COIN warfighter.

To be sure, Airmen respect and study history, but they are keenly aware of its limits, especially as to the airpower lessons it suggests. They see history as a “foundational component of education for judgment.”<sup>40</sup> Importantly, Eliot Cohen insists that he does not want his students to “learn the lessons of history” as they “do not exist” but rather to “think historically.” Airmen would agree.



Airmen would also agree with General Petraeus, who said (albeit more than 20 years ago) that while history has “much to teach us,” it “must be used with discretion” and not “pushed too far.”<sup>41</sup> This is especially so with respect to strategizing COIN doctrine for Iraq. One former Soldier insists that since the conflict there “has mutated into something more than just an insurgency or civil war . . . it will take much more than cherry-picking counterinsurgency’s ‘best practices’ to win.”<sup>42</sup> Clearly, the unwise use of history risks, as one pundit put it, attempting to “wage war through the rearview mirror.”<sup>43</sup>

Misunderstanding history can perpetuate myths about the air weapon and these can hurt America’s counterinsurgency fight. As joint doctrine is developed, it is critical that representations of component capabilities be fully current and accurate. Finally, Airmen—and airpower—will be most effective in the counterinsurgency fight if truly accepted as equals on a *genuinely* joint and interdependent team. **JFQ**

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Timothy B. Clark, “Ground Truth,” interview with General Peter J. Schoemaker, USA, Government Executive.com, September 14, 2006, available at <[www.govexec.com/features/0906-15/0906-15s1.htm](http://www.govexec.com/features/0906-15/0906-15s1.htm)>.

<sup>2</sup> Field Manual (FM) 3–24, *Counterinsurgency* (Washington, DC: Headquarters, Department of the Army, December 15, 2006), available at <[www.fas.org/irp/doddir/army/fm3-24.pdf](http://www.fas.org/irp/doddir/army/fm3-24.pdf)>.

<sup>3</sup> Frank Hoffman, “Non Cents,” *Smallwarsjournal.com*, May 23, 2007, available at <<http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/2007/05/non-cents-1/>>.

<sup>4</sup> John McCain, “General David Petraeus,” *Time*, May 14, 2007, 76, available at <[www.time.com/time/specials/2007/time100/article/0,28804,1595326\\_1615513\\_1615454,00.html](http://www.time.com/time/specials/2007/time100/article/0,28804,1595326_1615513_1615454,00.html)>.

<sup>5</sup> Jim Garamone, “Army, Marines Release New Counterinsurgency Manual,” American Forces Information Service, December 15, 2006, available at <[www.defenselink.mil/news/NewsArticle.aspx?ID=2453](http://www.defenselink.mil/news/NewsArticle.aspx?ID=2453)>.

<sup>6</sup> Elaine M. Grossman, “Services Agree to Write Joint Doctrine for Counterinsurgency Ops,” *Inside the Pentagon*, May 24, 2007, 1.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Air Force Doctrine Document (AFDD) 2, *Operations and Organization* (Washington, DC: Headquarters, Department of the Air Force, April 3, 2007), 2, available at <[www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/service\\_pubs/afdd2.pdf](http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/service_pubs/afdd2.pdf)>.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> When the word *Soldiers* is capitalized in this article, it is meant to refer to infantrymen of the U.S. Army (and usually the Marine Corps).

<sup>11</sup> See Robert H. Scales, “To Win the Long War,” *The Washington Times*, October 10, 2006.

<sup>12</sup> FM 3–24, para. 1–67.

<sup>13</sup> See Joe Klein, “Good General, Bad Mission,” *Time*, January 12, 2007, available at <[www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1576838-1,00.html](http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1576838-1,00.html)>.

<sup>14</sup> Linda Robinson, “Why More May Not Be Enough,” *U.S. News & World Report*, January 14, 2007, available at <[www.usnews.com/usnews/news/articles/070114/22troops.htm](http://www.usnews.com/usnews/news/articles/070114/22troops.htm)>.

<sup>15</sup> See, for example, FM 3–0, *Operations* (Washington, DC: Headquarters, Department of the Army, June 2001), 4–13, available at <[www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/service\\_pubs/fm3\\_0a.pdf](http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/service_pubs/fm3_0a.pdf)>.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, note 15.

<sup>17</sup> FM 3–21.10, *The Infantry Rifle Company* (Washington, DC: Headquarters, Department of the Army, July 27, 2006), “Introduction,” available at <<https://atiam.train.army.mil/soldierPortal/atia/adlsc/view/public/23168-1/FM/3-21.10/chap1.htm>>.

<sup>18</sup> As quoted in Paul Bedard, “Not a Bad War Book . . . for a Girl,” *U.S. News & World Report*, April 23, 2007, 16.

<sup>19</sup> See discussion of airpower in FM 3–24, appendix E, para. E–5.

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, FM 3–24, para. 4–1.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, A–5.

<sup>22</sup> “Most Iraqis Want U.S. Troops Out Within a Year,” September 27, 2006, available at <[www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/articles/brmiddleeastnafirica/250.php?nid=&id=&pnt=250&lb=brme](http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/articles/brmiddleeastnafirica/250.php?nid=&id=&pnt=250&lb=brme)>.

<sup>23</sup> AFDD 1, *Air Force Basic Doctrine* (Washington, DC: Headquarters, Department of the Air Force, November 17, 2003), 41, available at <[www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/service\\_pubs/afdd1.pdf](http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/service_pubs/afdd1.pdf)>.

<sup>24</sup> See, for example, FM 3–24, para. 6–27.

<sup>25</sup> National Security Council, *Highlights of the Iraq Strategy Review*, “Summary Briefing Slides,” slide 8, January 2007, available at <[www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/iraq/2007/iraq-strategy011007.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/iraq/2007/iraq-strategy011007.pdf)>.

<sup>26</sup> See Jeffrey Record, *The American Way of War: Cultural Barriers to Successful Counterinsurgency*, Cato Institute Policy Analysis No. 577 (Washington, DC: The Cato Institute, September 1, 2006), available at <[www.cato.org/pubs/pas/pa577.pdf](http://www.cato.org/pubs/pas/pa577.pdf)>.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>28</sup> See, for example, James S. Corum, *Fighting the War on Terror: A Counterinsurgency Strategy* (Osceola, WI: Zenith Press, 2007), chapter 2.

<sup>29</sup> Department of the Air Force, *The Air Force Story* (Washington, DC: Department of the Air

Force, September 2006), 6, available at <[www.af.mil/shared/media/document/AFD-060919-007.pdf](http://www.af.mil/shared/media/document/AFD-060919-007.pdf)>.

<sup>30</sup> Charles Townshend, ed., *The Oxford History of Modern War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 4.

<sup>31</sup> Anthony Smith, *Machine Gun: The Story of the Men and the Weapon that Changed the Face of War* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2004), 164–165.

<sup>32</sup> Lee Kennett, *The First Air War* (New York: The Free Press, 1991), 221.

<sup>33</sup> See John T. Reed, “‘Elite’ military units: Army Airborne (paratroopers),” available at <<http://www.johntreed.com/airborne.html>>.

<sup>34</sup> Chris Hables Gray, *Postmodern War: The New Politics of Conflict* (New York: Guilford Press, 1997), 217.

<sup>35</sup> See “How to Predict the Future,” *Military History*, April 2007, 23.

<sup>36</sup> Bing West and Eliot A. Cohen, “Our Only Hope,” *The Wall Street Journal*, January 8, 2007, available at <[www.sais-jhu.edu/insider/pdf/2007-articles/cohen-wsj\\_010807.pdf](http://www.sais-jhu.edu/insider/pdf/2007-articles/cohen-wsj_010807.pdf)>.

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<sup>38</sup> Edward Luttwak, “Again, Israeli Gloom Is Misplaced,” *Thefirstpost.com*, August 18, 2006, available at <[www.thefirstpost.co.uk/index.php?menuID=1&subID=688&p=4](http://www.thefirstpost.co.uk/index.php?menuID=1&subID=688&p=4)>.

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<sup>40</sup> See Fredric Smoler, “History and War: An Interview with Eliot Cohen,” March 12, 2007, available at <[www.americanheritage.com/articles/web/20070312-eliot-cohen-military-theory-iraq-vietnam-antietam-guerrilla-warfare-nation-building-winston-churchill-military-history-condoleezza-ricce.shtml](http://www.americanheritage.com/articles/web/20070312-eliot-cohen-military-theory-iraq-vietnam-antietam-guerrilla-warfare-nation-building-winston-churchill-military-history-condoleezza-ricce.shtml)>.

<sup>41</sup> David H. Petraeus, “Lessons of History and the Lessons of Vietnam,” in *Assessing the Vietnam War*, ed. Lloyd J. Matthews and Dale E. Brown (Dulles, VA: Pergamon-Brassey, 1987), 171, 181.

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