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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

TITLE:

Closing the Inter-Agency Gap: Role of the Marine Infantry Battalion on the Future Battlefield

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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Executive Summary

Title: Closing the Inter-Agency Gap: Role of the Marine Infantry Battalion on the Future Battlefield.

Author: Major Brendan G. Heatherman, United States Marine Corps

Thesis: The role of the Marine infantry battalion on the future battlefield will be to close the interagency gap by utilizing a comprehensive government approach to locate, close with, and destroy or defeat the enemy by fire, close combat, or other means in order to win decisively or shape the battlefield in such a manner as to allow other governmental agencies to cooperate for an appropriate end to the conflict.

Discussion: The future battlefield will be molded by world demographics, globalization, and increased power of ascendant and rogue states. The result can be battlefields ranging from conventional to battlefields evolving and transitioning throughout the spectrum during a particular conflict. The future battlefield will be fluid, multi-dimensional, conventional, and irregular played out amongst dense populations and under the scrutiny of the entire world. The current organization and equipment of the Marine infantry battalion has proven to be effective throughout the spectrum of conflict. The success of the infantry battalion during conflict is due to its staff, ability to command and control; and leadership by a board selected commander. These characteristics make it the lowest level of independent operations on the battlefield. The effects of globalization and the media forces the infantry battalion to become the face of the United States government. The nature of future enemy requires the infantry battalion to fill the void caused by lack of interagency presence on the battlefield, particularly during the initial phases of a conflict. Infantry battalions will be required to fully understand and address problems in its area of operations; the modern battlefield is characterized by different problems and circumstances at the tactical level, even under the umbrella of the same strategic conflict. Battalions must execute its operations using the framework of operations under lines of operation from a comprehensive government approach: public diplomacy, information operations and strategic communications, the full spectrum of military power from conventional tactics to local immersion into the populace, and economic resources for integrating into the local economy. The inability to bring these tactics to the battlefield invites enemy forces to use them to their advantage, potentially turning tactical conventional success for the Marine Corps into a strategic quagmire for the United States.

Conclusion: Due to the nature of the future battlefield, the mission of the Marine infantry battalion will need to expand to close the inter-agency gap on the battlefield. Unique tactical situations require infantry battalions to use new MCPP techniques to understand local dynamics and determine the nature of problems that are unable to be ascertained through a higher operations order. Evolving enemy tactics on the battlefield requires the infantry battalion to be versatile and able to combat the enemy using comprehensive governmental lines of operation.

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Preface

My purpose for writing on this topic is twofold: first, it has become the after-action report that I never put on paper following deployments to Afghanistan and Iraq from 2004 to 2006. Second, I wanted to organize my thoughts on concepts that I have thought about while taking courses at the Marine Corps Command and Staff College in order to bring them back to the operational forces. Although I don't believe any of the ideas presented in this report are revolutionary in nature, I do believe they should be considered standard operating procedures and not have to be re-learned by every battalion that deploys in harm's way.

I would like to thank Dr. John W. Gordon for his guidance and encouragement during the process of writing this report, Lieutenant Colonel Michael L. Carter for our conversation prior to writing my second draft, and Lieutenant Colonel Randolph Page for setting me straight prior to the final draft. I would like to thank my wife, Frances, for helping me decide on a topic that is practical and will be of use during my next fleet tour and my father, James K. Heatherman, former Marine and Vietnam veteran for his review and recommendations. Finally, I would like to thank Dr. Mark Cavanaugh, Associate Professor in the Division of Social and Behavioral Sciences at Nova Southeastern University in Florida and Mr. Tom Coughlin, journalist with more experience in Afghanistan than most American military members, for their review and encouragement.

Introduction

During the years following the events of September 11, 2001, Marine Corps infantry battalions have faced challenges across the spectrum of conflict in both Iraq and Afghanistan. These challenges range from traditional conventional combat to irregular warfare with un-uniformed enemy combatants to humanitarian operations, government building, and diplomacy. These wars, as in Vietnam and numerous other conflicts in the twentieth century, manifest the tendency of enemies of the United States to utilize tactics that offset the United States' superior air, intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, and other technological advantages.¹ Due to the effects of world demographic trends, globalization, a growing technological gap, and the past success of America's enemies using unconventional tactics, the future battlefield will manifest conventional, asymmetrical and irregular aspects, exploited by a strategic communication plan targeted at the American public. Although there is no shortage of past experience in operating in irregular environments, the Marine Corps has been researching numerous new concepts since the end of conventional operations in Iraq. These concepts range from the radical overhaul of the organization and mission of infantry battalions to enhanced company operations. Each attempts to restructure military organization and tactics to better combat evolving contemporary enemy tactics. Although each has its merit for meeting the enemy of the present and future from a military perspective, a comprehensive government approach has proven necessary and effective to overcome or prevent irregular warfare's complex challenges.² The elements of governmental power, to include diplomatic, informational, military, and economic means, typically projected at the strategic level, is rarely noticeable as a unified entity at the tactical level, especially during the initial stages of conflict. The resulting gap in a unified "whole of government" execution at the tactical level creates a vulnerability on the battlefield that can be exploited by Maoist

"bottom-up" strategies utilized by America's enemies as conflicts transition between conventional and irregular.

Limitations on manpower and the ability to operate in a combat environment by other governmental agencies needed for "whole of government" execution on the battlefield forces the Marine infantry battalion, a tactical entity trained primarily for military combat operations and the primary building block for Marine Corps combat operations throughout the spectrum of conflict, to fill the gap from the beginning of conflict until government agencies are able to concentrate efforts at the local level. The ability of the battalion to adapt to the demands of any situation requires little, if any, major changes to organization, training, and doctrine; however, the mission and capabilities of the battalion will be required to expand.³ The demands of increased responsibility will force the battalion commander to execute tactically, plan operationally, and think strategically. Although the mission of the Marine infantry battalion is to locate, close with, and destroy the enemy by fire and close combat, the role has clearly expanded, as evidenced by operations in the Al Anbar province in Iraq up until recent operations in Marja, Afghanistan. The role of the Marine infantry battalion on the future battlefield will be to close the interagency gap by utilizing a comprehensive government approach to locate, close with, and destroy or defeat the enemy by fire, close combat, or other means in order to win decisively or shape the battlefield in such a manner as to allow other governmental agencies to cooperate for an appropriate end to the conflict.

The Future Battlefield

Conflicts during the twentieth century ranged from conventional attrition warfare during the two World Wars and Korea, maneuver warfare during the Gulf War, a hybrid of conventional

and irregular warfare during Vietnam, irregular warfare and peacekeeping in Somalia, and counter-insurgency and promotion of governance during the Banana Wars in Central America and the Caribbean. Similarly, the battlefield experience during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan span the spectrum of conflict from armored conventional combined arms battles to counter-insurgency, peacekeeping operations, and promotion of governance. The future battlefield will be molded by world demographics, globalization, increased power of ascendant and rogue states, and history. The result will be a fluid, multi-dimensional battlefield ranging from conventional to irregular, in some cases transitioning amidst conflict, played out amongst dense populations and under the scrutiny of the entire world.

World demographics will be a primary factor in determining the future battlefield. The world population is expected to grow at a rate of 30% by 2025, heavily concentrated on the littorals; moreover, 60% of the population is expected to live in urban areas.⁴ During the 1990-2025 period, almost all population growth in the urban areas will take place outside of the developed world.⁵ This urbanization may contribute to the growth of insurgency, terrorism, and other forms of political instability and violence due to periodic economic crises, the inability of regimes to cope with the political and social mobilization generated by urbanization, grassroots demand for democracy, and an underclass of young men with little education and few marketable skills.⁶ Increasing migration will create influential diasporas, affecting policies, politics and even national identity in many countries.⁷ Furthermore, shortages of oil, food, and water could become a major factor in creating conflict. There are currently over a billion people without access to an improved water supply; moreover, consumption of oil is expected to grow by 50%.⁸ Growing populations and competitions for resources and jobs will enhance ingrained cultural differences, create rifts between societies and nations, and create rifts between socio-

economic classes.⁹ The result of these factors results in a complicated future battlefield within densely populated areas in the littorals, involving state and non-state actors acting along cultural and socio-economic lines competing for employment, resources, and political influence.

Globalization is the unfettered flow of information, ideas, goods, services, capital, and people throughout the world.¹⁰ As globalization continues to expand, the future battlefield will grow more and more complex. States will continue to be the dominant players on the world stage, but governments will have less and less control over flows of information, technology, diseases, migrants, arms, and financial transactions and financial transactions across its borders.¹¹ Although globalization offers an expansion of freedoms, it can also provide the motivation and resources to groups and adversaries to the United States to create conflict.¹² Globalization has occurred through history as cultures gradually grow and blend together; however, the introduction of television, internet, and advanced communication systems have significantly increased the speed at which cultures collide. The reaction to cultural globalization has resulted in an assault on western culture, which is denounced as a bearer of a secular, revolutionary ideology and a mask for U.S. hegemony.¹³ This resentment is compounded when culturally unaware American servicemen impose, on the battlefield, American values, customs, and expectations onto a particular populace, especially during the initial, most influential phases of a conflict.

Globalization can also enhance the enemy's capabilities on the battlefield. The internet and television can be valuable intelligence-gathering tools for enemies of open-societies. Communication devices have allowed groups to come together under certain causes, exchange ideologies, plan and execute operations, recruit followers, and share tactics, techniques, and procedures. Additionally, globalization has blurred the lines between the tactical and strategic

levels of warfare; the ubiquitous media have created a battlefield in front of an international audience inviting small unit, tactical decisions to have strategic effects.¹⁴ The proliferation of international news throughout the world, global economic and humanitarian interests, and the vehicles of worldwide inter-connectivity has allowed groups to use strategic communications as a weapon. The infiltration of the internet has allowed Muslim Jihadi groups to create a global Islamic movement against the U.S. led coalition during the Global War on Terror; the cheapness of processing words, pictures, sound, and video has become a tool as important as the AK-47 or the RPG Rocket Launcher.¹⁵ The detainee incident at Abu Ghraib has been used as an international rallying cry for extremists against the United States. Streaming video of improvised explosive devices attacking American vehicles acts as a training tool for extremists throughout the world and a tactic to lower morale for both military and civilian personnel. As technology cheapens and proliferates, younger generations age, and populations grow and become more dense, globalization will expand further, adding greater complexity to the battlefield.

The technological gap between the United States and its enemies has resulted in the innovation of tactics that affect the landscape of the battlefield. Dominant technology and conventional weapons have forced enemies of the United States to alter the battlefield to their advantage. The future battlefield will continue to be illustrated by combinations of various approaches including conventional capabilities, irregular tactics and formations, terrorist acts, and criminal disorder in the attempt to mitigate the economic and technological strengths of the United States.¹⁶ However, the threat of conventional warfare remains as ascendant states such as China continue to expand their conventional military capabilities, Russia takes a more active military stance, and rogue states such as Iran and North Korea continue to threaten world

disorder.¹⁷ All have the potential to pose a future conventional threat to the United States.

Moreover, conventional tactics may be needed to clear areas of enemy combatants, uniformed or irregular, during any category of warfare. Recent examples in Iraq include Operation Phantom Fury in Fallujah and Operation Steel Curtain in Al Qa'im; Operations Khanjar and Panchai Palang in Afghanistan were launched in 2008 to clear insurgents out of areas in order to provide security for the local populace. Whether used against a traditional enemy or in conjunction with counter-insurgency tactics, conventional warfare will remain a large part of the future battlefield. If viewing war as a whole, both from the perspective of an insurgent or conventional force, there can be no doubt that regular forces are of primary importance; guerilla warfare can assist but it is only the regular forces that can produce a decision.¹⁸

The precedent, however, has been set for competing militarily with the United States. In addition to the natural outcome of evolving demographics and globalization on future conflicts and subsequent battlefields, history will provide enemies with the insight on methods for combating the United States. Since 1945, the United States has fared well against powerful conventional powers such as Nazi Germany, Imperial Japan, the Soviet Union, Milosevic's Serbia, and Saddam's Iraq; however, the United States has not fared as well against material weaker enemies in Vietnam, Lebanon, and Somalia.¹⁹ The aversion of the United States to fight these types of wars is a function of years of preoccupation with high technology conventional warfare against states and accelerated substitution of machines for combat manpower.²⁰ As tactics to counter conventional tactics and technology of the U.S evolve, the battlefield will continue to shift from conventional to irregular.

The future battlefield will range across the spectrum of conflict with enemies employing a combination of conventional, asymmetric, and irregular tactics exploited by a cohesive

strategic communication plan. The motivations of the enemy will range from cultural to religious to economic and will vary widely, even within a common battlespace. The overall purpose of conflict on that battlefield, however, will remain the same. The war of the future will take place in new social and cultural contexts and will feature new technology, innovative tactics, and an altered landscape; nevertheless, war in the 21st century will still be organized violence in pursuit of political objectives.²¹ For the tactical commander, there is little difference between the Marine leader in the Korengal Valley, Afghanistan talking to the local sheik about governance than the platoon commander storming the beach at Normandy: as Clausewitz states, war in all its action and forms is fundamentally a political act.²² The manner in which it is fought, however, will be ever-changing, as enemies are able to bring comprehensive government and should be fought by a versatile force that is able to compete with the enemy on the tactical level with diplomatic, information, military, and economic means.

Alternative Concepts and Measures for the Future Battlefield

The transition from conventional warfare to counter-insurgency during Operation Iraqi Freedom uncovered a vulnerability in United States war strategy and preparedness of the United States Marine Corps. Trained primarily for combined-arms and conventional combat from an amphibious platform, Marines had to re-learn Small Wars Manual tactics on countering insurrection. The tactical focus of the war transitioned from large to small unit as infantry battalions were spread throughout Al Anbar province, assigned areas of operations, began interacting with the local populace, and operating against an increasingly irregular enemy using asymmetrical tactics. The reaction to the new operating environment prompted alternate

methods of tactics, organization, and training for Marine infantry battalions in order to prepare Marines for the modern battlefield.

From 2004 through 2006 the Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory (MCWL) focused its experimentation on the evolving concept of distributed operations (DO), focused on better trained, manned, and equipped platoons and squads. The DO project deliberately took a bottom-up approach, guided by the notion that a company is only as good as its platoons, its platoons only as good as its squads, and its squads only as good as its Marines.²³ Distributed Operations describes an operating approach that will create an advantage over an adversary through the deliberate use of separation and coordinated, inter-dependent, tactical actions enabled by increased access to functional support, as well as by enhanced combat capabilities at the small-unit level.²⁴ It seeks to fill the gap between conventional battalions and an irregular enemy by pushing decision-making and capabilities down to the lowest level on a diverse and complex battlefield.

The Enhanced Company Operation (ECO) concept was born from actions currently being employed on the battlefield in Iraq. Company Battle Positions were formed as satellites to the Battalion command post in order to more fully integrate with the populace within cities within battalion areas of operation. The Enhanced Company, in order to operate in an independent manner, includes a company operations center, replete with an intelligence cell and similar communications assets to a battalion.²⁵

Scenario-based organization of infantry battalions are designed to create an expert readiness for any conflict throughout the spectrum of conflict. The Marine Corps could retain twenty-four infantry battalions, divided into twelve infantry battalions and twelve stability battalions; the infantry battalions would be masters of urban and conventional warfare whereas

the stability battalions would be more specialized units that would regularly rotate into the Marine component of U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM).²⁶ The concept would require the organization of the Marine Corps force structure to adapt to potential future operating environments.²⁷ The result is a radical transformation of the present-day operating forces in the Marine Corps.

Out of necessity for success on the battlefield in Iraq and Afghanistan, the United States military has begun operating and training in an alternative manner than pre-September 11, 2001. With the new American way of populating-centric counter-insurgency, the Marine Corps has lost track of what happened to conventional warfighting skills.²⁸ As a result of structuring of the force following Operation Iraqi Freedom I (OIF I), the artillery community fell from the preeminence it once enjoyed as the premier all-weather capability of the Marine Corps to the role of force provider for nearly everything except fire support.²⁹ Missions for artillerists included detention facility management and security, ground movement control agencies, fixed site and mobile security elements, civil affairs, and convoy security.³⁰

Exercise Mojave Viper, the evolution of the traditional Combined Arms Exercise (CAX) established in 1975 to train Marines in fire and maneuver, prepares units throughout the spectrum of operations from counter-insurgency to fire support coordination in support of live fire and maneuver.³¹ However, the clear focus for infantry battalions has shifted from amphibious and combined arms operations to counter-insurgency; the result is a change of the focus of operations from enemy combatants to local populations. The outcome of a radical shift in focus can cause atrophy in core competencies which could take years to rebuild and have serious consequences on future tactical battlefields.³² The result of the trend of new tactics and

alternative concepts of fighting irregular warfare hints mistakenly that the traditional Marine infantry battalion is obsolete.

The Marine Corps Infantry Battalion

The primary mission of the infantry battalion is to locate, close with, and destroy the enemy by fire and maneuver or to repel his assault by fire and close combat.³³ However, the Marine infantry battalion's table of organization and equipment are designed for accomplishing this mission in any operating environment, throughout the spectrum of conflict. It is the basic tactical unit of ground combat power, a balanced firepower and maneuver team, and capable of independent operations when service support units are attached.³⁴ It is the platform for fighting in any operating environment due to its leadership, staff, and versatility.

Marine Corps Order 1300.64A from 2004 states that the purpose of the command screening program is for a board of former commanders, consisting of Colonels and Generals, to select the best and most fully qualified officers to assume battalion command. The program assures the highest quality of officers are chosen to lead Marines at the battalion level in combat. Of all the eligible officers each year, only the top 20% are chosen to lead Marines in battalion command; officers selected to command infantry battalions are the elite of the twenty percent chosen. The result of the command screening process is the most talented officers serving as commander of Marine infantry battalions.

The battalion can execute independently due to its ability to command and control through a staff. The staff is capable of integrating the efforts of attached units with those of supporting units by using representatives of these elements provided for that purpose. The staff is capable of supporting a tactical and main echelon and alternatives during displacement.³⁵ The

battalion consists of three rifle companies, consisting of approximately one hundred seventy five infantrymen with light to medium weapons, a weapons company consisting of heavy machine guns, anti-armor weapons and vehicles, and medium mortars, and a headquarters and service company that provides everything from communications assets to vehicle maintenance to medical support.

The basic composition of the Marine infantry battalion is inherently light, allowing the unit to insert and be sustained in areas of operation without the need for overwhelming logistical support. The basic means of mobility is by foot, supplemented by use of organic, small, lightweight vehicles for the transportation of electronics equipment, weapons, and limited amounts of ammunition and supplies. All elements are helicopter transportable and are compatible with other means of transportation (e.g., AAVs, motor transport, fixed-wing aircraft, and ships).³⁶ The nature, displacement, and mission during the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, however, have manifested the need for more vehicles and greater logistic support for infantry battalions and subordinate companies operating independently throughout the cities and towns of these countries. Consequently, the infantry battalion has grown into a heavy, motorized unit dependent on vehicles and logistics to operate in large areas of operation.

Successful deployments by infantry battalions in the Al Anbar province in Iraq and southeastern Afghanistan have proven that the Marine infantry battalion is versatile and is able to operate effectively throughout the spectrum of conflict. The Marine Corps Command Screening Program ensures a proven, talented leader will be at the helm of a unit capable of deploying and operating in any environment. The commander's staff allows planning and logistics to occur concurrently with operations, allowing the commander and company leaders to focus on the mission at hand. Although numerous concepts have emerged to challenge the need of a

traditional infantry battalion on the battlefield, its versatility and leadership continue to prove its effectiveness throughout the spectrum of conflict.

The Marine Infantry Battalion and the Comprehensive Government Approach

The future battlefield will require a military commander who understands the imperative of working with a panoply of civilian agencies, non-government organizations, the national and international media, and foreign armed services.³⁷ Interagency understanding will allow the Marine on the battlefield to execute those functions during the early phases of conflict; cooperation with interagency will allow a seamless transition from combat to stability operations. The transitions from peace to war and back again constitutes perhaps the greatest challenge of cooperation and coordination between Department of Defense (DoD) and Department of State (DoS).³⁸ For the warfighter who is planning a campaign in the face of a conflict, it is useful to understand DoS capabilities and limitations.³⁹ The future battlefield will require immediate attention to all elements of government power, even down to the tactical level. The lack of availability of government agencies, especially during initial stages of conflict, creates a gap can be exploited by the enemy. Operations in Iraq and Afghanistan prove that Marine infantry battalions can close that interagency gap on the battlefield.

Within the same strategic conflict, characteristics at the local, tactical level can vary. The attainment of strategic goals depends on mission accomplishment at the tactical level. Thus, an understanding of the problem at the local level is crucial to achieving the overarching strategic goals. The standing mission of the Marine Corps infantry battalion to locate, close with, and destroy the enemy will need no change. The means by which the battalion will defeat the enemy will require expansion. The Marine infantry battalion is traditionally called upon to enter into an

area of operations, at times forcefully, secure the area, and set the conditions for follow-on operations. Due to the nature of the future battlefield, security cannot be provided through military force alone; moreover, conditions for the "whole of government" execution of follow-on operations will require initial forces on the battlefield to expand from traditional military approaches. Battalions must locate, understand, and address specific problems at the tactical level on the battlefield as it evolves along comprehensive government lines of operations. Recent recommendations for problem setting or framing additions to the Marine Corps Planning Process gives the infantry battalion a mechanism to analyze the unique characteristics of tactical situations, identify and understand inherent problems, and consider solutions through comprehensive government lines of operation. Battalions can consider these lines using standard acronyms such as the "DIME", "PMESII", and "MIDLIFER" or expand to lines needed for the specific, unique tactical situation. Planning tools such as the Inter-Agency Conflict Assessment Framework (ICAF) and the Conflict Assessment System Tool (CAST) are examples of instruments by which battalions can frame unique local situations and problems and prioritize resources. The infantry battalion, during initial phases of conflict until civilian agencies are able to take responsibility for an area of operation, must understand inherent problems and address issues in order to fill the void created by comprehensive attention and project all elements of governmental power at the tactical level. This study examines considerations for Marine infantry battalions on the future battlefield using the "DIME" construct.

The Marine Infantry Battalion and Public Diplomacy

Globalization combined with increasing world population and urbanization has made interaction with the local populace on the battlefield, whether conventional or irregular, a

strategic endeavor. With consideration of all actors on the battlefield, conventional tactical victory can transgress into an irregular quagmire and thus, a strategic defeat. Thus, diplomatic engagement early and often on the battlefield has become crucial. Mao Tse-Tung recognize that "it is of the utmost importance on the battlefield to bond with the local populace; as battlefields transition from regular to irregular, the enemy will focus on association with the masses, for a disassociation will lead to failure in their endeavor".⁴⁰

On the strategic level, our military is constructed to deter and, as necessary, wage war; diplomacy is designed to employ peaceful means to advance our national interests.⁴¹ Public diplomacy is diplomacy aimed at foreign publics, as opposed to officials; it is the act of understanding, informing, engaging, and persuading foreign publics.⁴² Because the future battlefield will be increasingly urban and take place in a greater social and cultural contexts, engagement with local populations will be a critical factor of mission accomplishment. The United States can bring no professional tactical diplomatic forces to bear in order to counter enemy progressions in terms of connecting with local leaders and people and understanding unique local political and cultural constructs. Thus, a gap exists in addressing a major line of operation on the future battlefield. The Marine infantry battalion, therefore, must take responsibility for closing this gap. Recent efforts from Al Anbar to Afghanistan prove that battalions clearly understand the gap needs to be closed and have taken efforts to do so. However, it is still not considered by many to be the "mission" of an infantry battalion. This attitude is due to a misunderstanding of the purpose of battlefield public diplomacy.

The purpose public diplomacy on the battlefield is threefold: first, the gap between civilian public diplomacy and military operations is open for exploitation of enemy forces, and thus, a line of operation used against the battalion on the battlefield. Second, engaging local

leaders and civilians leads to an understanding of unique cultural, social, economic, and political constructs that reveal local problems that can be targeted as well as motivations, strategies, and critical vulnerabilities of the enemy that can be exploited. Lastly, battlefield diplomacy opens a dialogue with local citizenry in which to build trust, gain credibility, and gain information superiority over the enemy. Each purpose ties directly to defeating the enemy and gaining control of an area of operation and, consequently, accomplishing the "mission".

The most important military component of the struggle to prevent prolongation of conflict, rise in insurgency, and discontent of actors on the battlefield is not the fighting we do ourselves, but how well we prepare the local populace to defend and govern themselves.⁴³ Because of resource constraints and the absence of reserve "float," The Department of State often experiences difficulty in staffing for emergent issues.⁴⁴ As of August 2009, there were 10,000 Marines fighting in Helmand province but only 42 U.S. diplomats and aid workers there to help residents rebuild after the fighting; "Team Obama inherited a deteriorating situation in Afghanistan, without all the civilian resources they need to turn it around," says retired army colonel John Nagl, president of the Center for a New American Security think tank and author of a book on counterinsurgency. "We have not adapted the civilian elements of our government sufficiently to cope with the wars of the 21st century."⁴⁵ The gap in the ability to diplomatically engage at the local level is a critical vulnerability and opportunity by the enemy to influence local governments, infiltrate the leadership structure, blend into the local populace, and gain popular support, whether voluntary or by coercion, without competition. Truong Chinh declared that in order to achieve good results in guerilla or mobile warfare, the people must be mobilized and support his forces to enthusiastically fight the enemy together with him; the people are the eyes and ears of his army, they feed and keep the soldiers. The people are the water and his

army the fish.⁴⁶ Diplomatic connections to the populace has created a safe haven for Al Qaida and the Taliban in the northwestern tribal areas of Pakistan since 2002.⁴⁷ In early April 2010, Taliban officials returned to Marja, just months following the February offensive, to meet with local elders, re-affirm information superiority, and influence the populace on cooperating with coalition forces.⁴⁸ Actively planning and executing along diplomatic lines of operation forces the enemy to actively compete along these lines and consider these operations in their decision-making process.

Lenin, in *Guerilla Warfare*, said, "As regards the form of fighting, it is unconditionally requisite that history be investigated in order to discover the conditions of environment, the state of economic progress, and political ideas that obtained, the national characteristics, customs, and degree of civilization."⁴⁹ Overwhelmingly, units that enjoyed the most success in Iraq and Afghanistan made significant inroads with local leaders, found proactive ways to understand and respect local cultural norms, and had addressed specific community needs.⁵⁰ While an operations order from higher headquarters can give operational and some tactical level understanding, the nature of the future battlefield is such that local dynamics can differ widely within the same operational area of operations. Engaging local leaders and civilians will lead to a greater understanding of the unique culture, social and economic problems, and motivations of the enemy within a tactical area of operations. These unique circumstances cannot be contained in a higher headquarters operations order and must be ascertained through public diplomacy on the battlefield and continuously analyzed as operations progress. This continuous analysis keeps the infantry battalion focused properly on critical vulnerabilities exposed through actual experience on the ground, not from intelligence analysts without specific local understanding.

The enemy on the future battlefield will hold the upper hand with their better understanding of local customs and politics, their ability to speak the local language, their freedom of movement within society, and their greater comprehension of the population's interests.⁵¹ This advantage will give the conventional or irregular enemy the upper hand in the fight over information superiority. Admiral Michael G. Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, considers the issue of strategic communication, or lack thereof, as not the existence of a message being delivered with a common theme, but of credibility.⁵² This concept can be translated down to the tactical level. Public diplomacy is the mechanism by which an infantry battalion earns credibility on the battlefield and creates the conditions for continuous communication with the populace.

Information and the Marine Infantry Battalion

The emerging American way of war means fighting first for information dominance, at all levels of warfare; making information dominance a priority enables capabilities to keep up pace with threats and exploit opportunities afforded by innovation and information technologies.⁵³ The ever-present media and the enemy's focus on the use of information as a weapon against the United States forces the Marine infantry battalion to incorporate information as a line of operation in all endeavors across the spectrum of conflict. Hezbollah's battle plan during the Summer 2006 war with Israel lay in the use of information operations to reduce Israeli Defense Force (IDF) morale and public opinion, wear down and force them to withdraw, and ultimately lower international opinion of Israeli and gain global influence on the Arab-Israeli conflict.⁵⁴ Hezbollah's tactic reflects an emerging trend of using military operations to support an information campaign, vice the traditional utilization of information as a supporting effort to

military operations. The principle aim of the information instrument is to provide ideas and data that will convince various audiences that support to the enemy is not in their best interests.⁵⁵ Further, information is used to limit the dissemination and spread of enemy information and ideology through a concerted, proactive information effort down to the lowest level.⁵⁶ The Marine infantry battalion must plan and execute a detailed Information Operations (IO) plan and create a solid infrastructure within their area of operations in order in order to convey messages with broader implications as part of a higher level strategic communication plan.

IO will be crucial on the battlefield through the comprehensive action of information projection and intelligence collection to shape the perceptions of all actors in the battlespace in order to influence them to make decisions in support of a designed objective.⁵⁷ The Marine infantry battalion can exploit this capability in two ways: First, the battalion needs to improve all facets of its IO capabilities, including target audience analysis, message creation, and message delivery. The battalion would also need to learn how to synchronize strategic and tactical IO lines of operation.⁵⁸ This will require the Marine Corps to establish a functional concept of IO and enablers at the tactical level to execute.⁵⁹ A functional concept and trained enablers will alleviate any concerns or change impressions of a battalion commander of the viability of IO and what it means to lead, manage, or form human perceptions in an area of operation.⁶⁰ Effective IO on the battlefield enemy weaknesses and mistakes and highlights friendly successes and good deeds. As technology advances and cheapens, any gap in information conveyance on the battlefield will surely be filled by the enemy. Mao Tse-Tung required his tactical leaders to be experts in propaganda and counter-propaganda; his guerilla companies included a political officer with a mobile propaganda unit.⁶¹

Second, to make tangible progress in the “War of Ideas,” the battalion would need to do its best to reduce collateral damage during kinetic operations.⁶² As conventional conflicts transition to irregular, peacekeeping, or stability operations, the need for popular support and infrastructure will be paramount to mission success. Moreover, collateral damage in terms of civilian casualties and infrastructure will be fodder for enemy information campaigns which can prolong military commitment in areas of operation. IO efforts should be built around the actionable missions such as restoring security, improving civil and government services or infrastructure in addition to media themes, public diplomacy, and verbally communicated messages.⁶³ However, extensive collateral damage forces information campaigns to be reactionary and responsive in nature in order to mitigate effects of misdeeds. Furthermore, extensive damage to local populace or infrastructure acts as a message unto itself, thereby decreasing the effects of positive, intended messages. We need to worry not only about how to communicate our actions but about what our actions communicate.⁶⁴ Thus, an understanding of the effects of messages should be understood down to the lowest ranks.

The Marine infantry battalion must be cognizant of not only tactical level information plans, but overarching operational and strategic messages. The objective of strategic communication is to provide audiences with truthful and timely information that will influence the right audience in a precise way.⁶⁵ It must be conceived, executed, targeted, and agreed upon as part of a joint, interagency, and commercial system.⁶⁶ Mass communications has added to the complexity of the battlefield by making military actions on the tactical level an international means of sending a message. Proactive strategic communication planning can be exploited on the battlefield through the ever-present media. The very existence of the media ensures that a message will get out; the availability of mass communication vehicles will ensure the enemy will

be sending messages. In the “War of Ideas” future, ideology constitutes a significant portion of the battleground. The consistent themes should be communicated throughout the levels of warfare. The Marine infantry battalion, on the tactical level of the battlefield, is not only a mechanism by which to convey these themes, but an essential element of ensuring these messages are delivered, understood, and accepted.

Military Operations on the Future Battlefield

The Marine infantry battalion specializes in the military element of governmental power. It is a unique force in-readiness, prepared to fight and win our Nation’s battles with multi-capable MAGTFs, either from the sea or in sustained operations ashore.⁶⁷ Demographics indicating a shift of populations to cities in the littorals will require the Marine infantry battalion to regain its dwindling amphibious roots and become experts in urban combat and irregular warfare. The probability of conventional warfare transitioning to irregular warfare and insurgency suggests that the Marine infantry battalion needs to be prepared for executing beyond the three-block war into potential counter-insurgency and nation-building.⁶⁸ Although Marine infantry battalions are most familiar with the military element of governmental power, the range of combat skills required on the future battlefield forces the battalion to continue with traditional skills but also be prepared to become experts at decentralized immersion tactics. This requires a battalion commander to accept greater risks than ever before, a battalion staff to coordinate battalion through squad-level operations, and greater leadership at the lowest levels.

In order for battalions to anticipate, prepare for, and shape an evolving tactical battlefield, training must first begin with the core capabilities provided in Marine Corps Vision and Strategy 2025. Clear guidance is given as to the future direction of the capabilities needed for the future

battlefield. However, units destined for particular destinations tend to focus the majority of their time on the specific mission assigned; over time, Marines serving in those units will have no other experience as the battlefield shifts. Consequently, the Marine Corps is losing its Naval Character and could be ill-prepared for that aspect of the future battlefield.⁶⁹ The beginning of a training cycle should begin with basic core competencies then transition to destination-specific training to prepare for the current posture of the destined area of operations. These core competencies of battalion to platoon attacks and defense, patrolling, ambush, raids, and others form teamwork within a unit and require skills that are easily translated down from conventional to counter-insurgency to urban warfare.

The future battlefield presents conventional threats potentially graduating to counter-insurgency and irregular warfare. Due to the nature of a counter-insurgency, lack of overwhelming numbers compared to the population, and the need for interaction with the populace, small units must be trained extensively to operate in a semi-independent nature. However, lack of manpower for a sufficient staff and equipment for a fully functioning command operations center makes it difficult to train for and transition to completely independent operations. Lack of experience, expertise, and talent at the company level suggest these independent companies should be under the command and logistic reach of an experienced, board-selected lieutenant colonel. Company commanders, additionally, should be in the field leading their companies in these situations; command and control in an environment with strategic implications should be the responsibility of the battalion commander.

The future battlefield will require battalions to have the capability of dispersing the battalion in order to immerse into local environments. An increased effort, therefore, is needed to professionalize the non-commissioned officers. Squad and fire-team leaders are required to

operate under commanders intent on the battlefield; understanding the broad situation and the commanders general assessment of the battlefield helps these leaders accomplish the mission. A broader understanding of the nature of the conflict at large will allow them to understand their role and will reflect in their actions on the battlefield. Engaging infantry small unit leaders in intellectually stimulating activities will increase battlefield effectiveness, decrease decision and reaction time, and increase unit cohesiveness.⁷⁰ Enemy combatants conduct tactical operations with strategic effects; moreover, Marine leaders at the lowest level make tactical decisions that have strategic effect. A greater understanding of the strategic situation, the purpose of the greater mission, and the multitude of actors on the battlefield and their role will enable small unit leaders decision-making ability.

In order to succeed on the future battlefield, characterized by operations amidst heavily populated areas, infantry battalions will need to increase their threshold of risk-taking. Operations in Afghanistan have proven that heavy, armored vehicles make it impossible to move in mountainous terrain.⁷¹ These vehicles within cities and towns also contribute to barriers between the Marines and local populace, increasing alienation and mistrust. Heavy body armor worn by Marines has a similar effect.⁷² Additionally, escalation of force contributes to death, destruction of vehicles, and damage to property that can lead to civilian unrest and fodder for enemy information campaigns. Although caring for the well-being of Marines is a top priority in infantry battalions, a fine line must be found within units to balance risk and mission success. Furthermore, an acceptable increase in perceived risk in one area can have positive consequences on others; for example, a less hostile approach within villages and towns can result in a lesser threat perceived by the local population, thus adding to a more secure environment. A secure

working environment can, in turn, provide more security to Marines than flak jackets and armored vehicles.

Finally, infantry battalions should execute operations without comforts afforded by a heavily protected forward operating base. The separation between the local populace has a similar effect on the people as driving through towns in heavily armored vehicles. Large “secure” bases far from the population are arguably good for force protection and maintaining a “Western” quality of life for our troops, but these remote bases are counterproductive to accomplishing objectives. Living and operating out of such facilities creates an “us versus them” attitude between the GPF and population.⁷³ This means we must eat and sleep in the villages and towns without displacing a single family to build the relationships required to physically and psychologically separate the insurgents from the people.⁷⁴ The need to operate with independent companies and platoons, accept risks, and live away from secure bases will force the infantry battalion to become a lighter, more versatile force. An added benefit to the area is any infrastructure and improvements erected for the use of immersed forces will eventually be turned over to the town. Although Marine infantry battalions are arguably experts at the military element of government power, the future battlefield will require the battalion to continue to hone skills in the core competencies as well as become experts in transitioning from battalion through squad level conventional operations to decentralized, semi-independent immersion tactics requiring an acceptance of greater risk.

Tactical Use of Economics on the Battlefield

The economic instrument of national power, used by the government for strategic effects, can be translated into a tactical tool for use on the battlefield. Current and future battlefields, played out in villages, towns, and cities, will severely degrade local economies due to the

inability of the workforce to work, destroyed and damaged businesses, closed schools, and a general lack of commerce. Insurgent groups have exploited these situations by providing money to out of work civilians in order to increase their forces or conduct attacks on U.S. forces. These dire local situations, additionally, are used in enemy information campaigns to highlight difficulties to the populace as an effect of American or coalition presence, to promise improvements, and to widen rifts with governmental forces. The economic gap caused by military action within towns is further exploited by the enemy through donations, civil projects, and attempts at assimilating enemy forces into local governments. These phenomena require the Marine infantry battalion to consider the economics aspect on the battlefield as early as possible during conflict; ignorance of the economic line of operation on the battlefield will certainly be exploited by the enemy and critically affect efforts at support for local populations. Marine infantry battalions should be trained and be prepared to use methods of combating the enemy with respect to local economics by repairing and rebuilding damaged infrastructure and executing measures to stimulate the local economy.

Regardless of the conflict, it should be a standard operating procedure to bring emergency funds to the battlefield. The Commanders Emergency Relief Program (CERP) gives to the tactical level the authority, freedom, and funds required to launch local reconstruction or other projects in support of the mission without lengthy approval processes and delay from above.⁷⁵ Immediate local efforts at reconstruction, in conjunction with tactical public diplomacy and a targeted IO campaign, can be used with great effect and be a combat multiplier on the battlefield. Efforts along this line of operation, however, have proven to be difficult and require patience and a solid plan of intertwining economic means with other "whole of government" lines of operation. The Marine strategy in Marja, Afghanistan depends on sowing the

community with buckets of cash; the money is a bridge to a day when the Marja district government will have more credibility than the Taliban.⁷⁶ The Taliban, however, have responded with killings and threats of death to those who accept money or do business with the Marines. The situation in Marja is an example of the need for the economic line of operation used in conjunction with diplomatic, military, social, and other lines of operation for success. The efforts by the Marines, moreover, force the Taliban to resort to coercion and other tactics that can be exploited by information operations. The absence of this economic line of operation in Marja only allows the Taliban an unchallenged avenue to close this gap or exploit. Lack of funds for these endeavors, additionally, can also lead to unfulfilled promises by forces operating amongst the people at the lowest tactical level, destroying any chances for friendly credibility in specific locales.

Tactical immersion and public diplomacy lead to a greater understanding of unique facets of the local populace, political structure, and local economy. In addition to utilizing funds on the battlefield to stimulate local economic growth, the awareness of local economic structure during operations can lead to the avoidance of economic problems. The destruction of bridges across the Euphrates and closing of the border with Syria, in line with a strictly military line of operations, caused economic harm to the Al Qa'im region in Iraq. The rapid disintegration of local commerce and financial means of the local populace was exacerbated by the disruption of smuggling routes, and killing of smugglers confused with insurgents attempting to continue normal commerce across the border with Syria. The lack of consideration of economic means caused serious harm to relations with coalition forces and was exploited by insurgents in local information campaigns. Following the February 2010 offensive in Marja, Afghanistan, Marines made a priority of opening the bazaar in order to stimulate the local economy from within.⁷⁷

Although efforts have been met with severe repercussions from Taliban insurgents, the effort will have a longer-term effect on relations with the locals and can be used to widen rifts with the Taliban.

If the Marine infantry battalion will be required to live amongst the people, funds should be supplied to live off the people and the local economy. There are certain dangers to this tactic of complete immersion into local areas such as ambush and Marines "going native"; however, under proper supervision and supplemented by military meals, Marines immersing into the local economy can tear down barriers to the populace and add needed money into the local economy. Additionally, planned economic efforts in the initial battle plan will create a priority on returning local commerce before any exploitation of enemy efforts can be implemented. As in economic sanctions at the strategic level, a powerful message can be sent to local businesses for poor behavior. Economics, even at the tactical level, has been an effective tool that should become a standard operating procedure for an infantry battalion from the start of conflict until resolution, in any form of conflict.

Conclusion

The use of force plays a key role on the battlefield, however, military efforts to capture or kill enemy combatants, especially as a conflict transitions from conventional to irregular, are likely to be subordinate to measures to promote local participation in government and economic programs to spur development, as well as efforts to understand grievances that often lie at the heart of conflict and insurgencies.⁷⁸ Factors affecting the nature of the future battlefield have made it necessary for players on the battlefield to apply and enforce strategic lines of operation at the tactical level. Limitations on the ability of government agencies to bring a "whole of

government" approach to the tactical battlefield, especially during initial phases of a conflict, creates a gap in lines of operation that will be exploited by a future enemy. Military services must digest the lesson that "war is an instrument of policy"; moreover, the facile assumption that operations critical to the success of the campaign were "somebody else's business" reflect a shallow view of warfare.⁷⁹ The role of the Marine infantry battalion on the future battlefield, therefore, will be to close the interagency gap by utilizing a comprehensive government approach to locate, close with, and destroy or defeat the enemy by fire, close combat, or other means in order to win decisively or shape the battlefield in such a manner as to allow other governmental agencies to cooperate for an appropriate end to the conflict. The Marine infantry battalion, essentially, will be required to become the face of the United States government on the battlefield. Operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have proven that the Marine infantry battalion is capable of adjusting operations from conventional battalion level operations to closing the interagency gap on the tactical battlefield with company and platoon level comprehensive operations. The inability to bring this capability to the tactical battlefield invites enemy forces to use the gap to their advantage, potentially turning tactical conventional success for the Marine Corps into a strategic quagmire for the United States.

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⁷⁶ Oppel Jr., 2.

⁷⁷ Oppel Jr., 2.

⁷⁸ "National Defense Strategy," United States Department of Defense (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2008), 8.

⁷⁹ David C. Hendrickson and Robert W. Tucker, *Revisions in Need of Revising: What Went Wrong with the Iraq War* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2005), 28.

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