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Foreign Internal Defense, The Art of Counter-insurgency and the Combined Action Platoon Concept

by

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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The CAPs of I Corps were established in order to "clear and hold" selected villages or hamlets, improve the capabilities of the Popular Forces (PFs), conduct civic action, and foster the pacification effort at the grass roots level. The Marines who participated in the CAP program fought the war *in* the hamlets, while front line Army and Marine units all too often waged war *on* the hamlets. In comparison to other American units operating in the populated areas of South Vietnam, CAPs killed and captured proportionately more of the enemy at less cost to themselves and were successfully employed as an economy of force asset. CAPs were also able to neutralize the village guerrilla and bring a certain amount of confidence to the villagers and local government officials.

There will always be a need to study the lessons of the CAP program and other counter-insurgency efforts. Policy-makers and CINC planners will often find relevance in some of the concepts and methods employed in the past. The U.S. military should retain counter-insurgency expertise in support of FID strategies that will provide the training and readiness required should the U.S. once again become involved in a counter-insurgency conflict.

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the Marine Corps' Combined Action Platoon (CAP) program in the Vietnam War, its concepts, how it was employed as a counter-insurgency strategy, and whether those concepts have applicability to possible future counter-insurgency conflicts, as well as today's Foreign Internal Defense (FID) and Internal Defense and Development (IDAD) doctrine.

The CAPs of I Corps were established in order to "clear and hold" selected villages or hamlets, improve the capabilities of the Popular Forces (PFs), conduct civic action, and foster the pacification effort at the grass roots level. The Marines who participated in the CAP program fought the war *in* the hamlets, while front line Army and Marine units all too often waged war *on* the hamlets.[1] In comparison to other American units operating in the populated areas of South Vietnam, CAPs killed and captured proportionately more of the enemy at less cost to themselves, were successfully employed as an economy of force asset and were an excellent example of the unity of effort principle in multi-national combat operations. Additionally, the relationships established with the villagers and PFs were better than those of Americans in regular front-line infantry units. CAPs were also able to neutralize the village guerrilla and bring a certain amount of confidence to the villagers and local government officials.

Despite the efforts to advance the cause of peace, conditions within a country or region may result in armed conflict. When diplomatic measures are unable to influence a potentially hostile situation, military force or the threat of its use may be required. CINC FID campaign plans will be instrumental to the successful resolution of threats to emerging democracies that are supported by the U.S. The U.S. military should retain counter-insurgency expertise in support of FID/IDAD strategies that will provide the training and readiness required should the U.S. once again become involved in a counter-insurgency conflict.

There will always be a need to study the lessons of the CAP program and other counter-insurgency efforts. Policy-makers and CINC planners will often find relevance in some of the concepts and methods employed in the past.

[1] Michael E. Peterson, The Combined Action Platoons: The U.S. Marines' Other War In Vietnam (New York: Praeger, 1989), 35.

> The motive in small wars is not material destruction. It is...the social, economic, and political development of the people...Instead of striving to generate the maximum power with forces available, the goal is to gain decisive results with the least application of force...In small wars, tolerance, sympathy, and kindness should be the keynote of our relationship with...the population.[1]

Introduction. Numerous variables and stresses continually pull at the seams of the international community. Under these complex conditions, the U.S. military must remain prepared to answer a wide range of challenges to our national interests from fighting a war in a Major Regional Contingency (MRC) scenario to supporting the entire range of options in a Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW) environment--including counter-insurgency efforts. At any given time, the U.S. has small units of military personnel operating in approximately 25 countries helping foreign governments cope with such challenges.[2] U.S. forces provide invaluable training and advice to friendly governments threatened by subversion, lawlessness, or insurgency. Working with new or fledgling democracies or older allies to help them preserve those states committed to free markets and respect for human rights, is a key part of our national security strategy.[3] New and fragile democracies trying to take root are often threatened by intense religious and ethnic rivalries. Failure of these democracies to survive could not only deprive us of new allies in dealing with world security matters but also affect U.S. national interests.

Foreign Internal Defense (FID) and Internal Defense and Development (IDAD). In the context of FID/IDAD, planners must understand the true nature of the threat to the host nation (HN) lies in the enemy's political strength rather than military power. Any strategy that does not pay continuing attention to the political aspects of the struggle will be at a severe disadvantage. The military component of FID is required, but alone it is an insufficient means for achieving success.

Corresponding to U.S. policy goals, the focus of all U.S. FID efforts is to support the HN's IDAD programs. These programs are designed to free and protect a nation from threats to its legitimacy by advocating programs and policies that respond to the needs of society and foster internal solutions to problems for which the HN has ultimate responsibility. The most significant needs are likely to be

economic, social, or political; therefore, these needs should be the primary focus of U.S. efforts. Nevertheless, military assistance is often necessary to provide the secure environment for these efforts to become effective. The U.S. will normally consider FID support only if the following three conditions exist: the existing or threatened internal disorder is such that action by the U.S. supports U.S. national strategic goals; the threatened nation is capable of effectively using U.S. assistance; and the threatened nation requests U.S. assistance.[4] U.S. military support to FID may include training, materiel, advice, or other assistance, including direct support and combat operations. U.S. military involvement in FID, in fact, has traditionally been focused on counter-insurgency.[5]

A CINCs IDAD campaign plans should encompass specific goals and employ the four basic principles that guide IDAD implementation: unity of effort, maximum use of intelligence, minimum use of violence, and responsive government.[6] The plans should also include one or more of the following objectives: implementing civic action programs, establishing control in populated areas, neutralizing the insurgent infrastructure and tactical forces, denying the use of insurgent bases, and establishing government strength and authority in selected areas.[7] Additionally, there are seven FID guidelines that a staff must consider as it develops potential courses of action. These are: HN sovereignty and legitimacy, plan for the long term (perseverance), maximize intelligence capability, unity of effort, tailor FID operations to the needs of the HN, ROE and economy of force measures, and measures of success.[8] Critical to the success of the plan is establishing the legitimacy of the HN government. Additionally, the CINC should employ all the forces at his disposal, not only SOF units, in accomplishing his FID/IDAD missions. For example, in the SOUTHCOM AOR conventional force Marines have instructed HN military forces on riverine tactics as part of the drug war. As the impact of the downsizing of the military becomes more severe, Special Forces units will be unable to accomplish FID/IDAD missions alone. It may be necessary for Mobile Training Teams and Country Teams to be built around a mix of Special Forces and selected conventional personnel.

Training of HN forces can have a very significant impact on the IDAD program. The CINC must remain engaged in coordinating, planning, and approving the training. General objectives are operation and maintenance of equipment, effective management of its defense establishment, development of training with an eye on self-sufficiency, mil-to-mil contacts and interoperability, and human rights.[9] The training of U.S. forces is just as significant as the training of HN forces and requires a wide range of subject matter including: understanding of overall U.S. and theater goals, area cultural orientation, language training, standards of conduct, relationship of FID programs to intelligence collection, coordinating relationships with other U.S. agencies, legal guidelines, ROE, and tactical force protection training.[10]

Combat operations in a FID environment requires serious consideration and Presidential authority and serves only as a temporary solution until HN forces are able to stabilize the situation and provide security for the populace.[11] Overall, U.S. combat operations in FID will require a very restrictive use of force. The purpose of these restrictions ensures that the HN military promptly accepts responsibility for the security of the nation and minimizes HN civilian casualties. The CINC should consider several issues when employing combat forces in support of FID: HN IDAD organization, transition points (that point in time when indigenous forces resume responsibility for combat operations), joint and combined focus, U.S. combat operations, offensive operations, human rights considerations, ROE, indiscriminate use of force, intelligence, and integration with other FID programs.[12]

The Nature of the Beast We Call Insurgency. *"Plus ça change, plus ça même"*--the more things change, the more they stay the same. Throughout history, super powers and regional hegemons have come and gone. But when the history of warfare is examined, one constant remains--insurgency. The tactics and strategies of insurgent warfare are as old as warfare itself. In From the Barrel of a Gun, John Ellis lists 165 *notable* historical guerrilla conflicts (see Appendix A). From the days of Herodotus and Thucydides and the first accounting of armed conflict to the towns and villages of Chechnya, insurgents

and the incumbent governments have waged political-military campaigns over social, economic, psychological, ideological, and political issues.[13] The essence of these conflicts is the often protracted struggle over the "hearts and minds" of the population. As Mao Zedong noted, "Guerrilla warfare without a base of support of the people is nothing but roving banditism."[14]

In all insurgencies, three strategic considerations must be kept in mind: the insurgent is dedicated to the unlimited aim of total victory, and all his actions must be judged by that standard; the fundamental goal of the insurgent is not military, but political; and counter-insurgency operations cannot be done in a conventional manner--each conflict must be objectively analyzed with an eye toward a special task organization and distinct tactics.[15] Insurgent warfare seeks to obtain specific objectives leading to the capitulation or decapitation of the existing government. These objectives are common to most insurgencies and are designed to help achieve eventual success:

- Limit the ability of the government and enhance the capability of the insurgents.
- Obtain the support or neutrality of critical segments of the population.
- Isolate the government from international diplomatic and material support and increase international support for the insurgents.
- Increase domestic and international legitimacy of the insurgent organization at the expense of the government.
- Destroy the self-confidence of government leaders and cadres, causing their abdications or withdrawal.
- Reduce and, if possible, neutralize government coercive power while strengthening insurgent coercive capabilities.[16]

Other factors influencing insurgencies include anti-colonial sentiments, strong feelings of nationalism, ethnicity, culture, religion, and the physical environment. Appendix B examines some factors influencing insurgencies. Five relatively recent insurgencies are depicted as examples.

Time is another critical factor in guerrilla conflicts, and it generally favors the insurgents, allowing them to build an effective organization and chain of command and reinforcing their political

and military strength. Furthermore, as the struggle becomes more protracted, the incumbent government and its allies tend to become frustrated, which can easily lead to poor strategic choices in an attempt to defeat the opposition.

For both the insurgents and the government, the focus of all their efforts must be on the people. They are the center of gravity and gaining their support is critical to success. Whether support of the people is gained at the same time control is achieved is yet another matter; for support and control are not necessarily synonymous in an insurgency. As an insurgent or the incumbent government, the people's willing support for your goals and objectives makes achieving the desired end state much easier. This equates to establishing the legitimacy of the incumbent government. The use of terror runs counter to the "winning the hearts and minds" theory, yet, both sides often employ this tactic. "Winning the hearts and minds of the people" may be a cliché, but clichés are based on observable truths.

The Vietnam Experience as an Historical Case Study. Notwithstanding the sacrifice of over 58,000 American lives, the expenditure of $150 billion,[17] the application of the world's foremost technical expertise, and the employment of seemingly inexhaustible and undefeatable military power, the U.S. failed to achieve its political objectives in Vietnam. Why? No clear, concise, nor universally accepted answers have emerged over the past two decades. One possible reason is that for 20 years after the end of World War II U.S. decision makers' support for counter-insurgency was not a top priority. The Communist victory in the Chinese Civil War, the outbreak of the Korean War less than one year later, and the ever expanding sphere of influence of the Soviet Union resulted in U.S. strategists focusing on the policy of containment. Often counter-insurgency was not considered strategically significant and defense department planners paid little attention to it.[18]

Key figures of American leadership failed to understand the nature of the war upon which they had embarked. When U.S. leadership finally realized the nature of the war, "the U.S. Army was neither trained nor organized to fight effectively in an insurgency conflict environment."[19] With the exception

of the Marine Corps and Army Special Forces, the U.S. military was not interested in some of the more mundane counter-insurgency operations such as training the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN), village pacification, local self-defense, or rooting out insurgent political cadres. Critical flaws in strategy development, such as script-writing and mirror-imaging, resulted in failure. Most critically, the enemy's center of gravity was never accurately identified. The North Vietnamese Army (NVA) and the Viet Cong (VC) did, however, correctly identify the U.S. and South Vietnamese centers of gravity. Strategically for the U.S., it was the staying power and public opinion of American citizens, and for the South Vietnamese it was the people. Additionally, the South Vietnamese villagers were the U.S. operational center of gravity.

U.S. Ground Strategy in Vietnam. The objective of the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) was to assist the Government of Vietnam in defeating externally directed and supported Communist subversion and aggression.[20] U.S. credibility and its capacity to help a nation defend itself against a Communist war of liberation were being tested. In today's terms this could be translated into one tenet of FID--assistance provided to another government to free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, and insurgency. General Westmoreland planned to achieve this end state by defeating the enemy in a war of attrition. A strategy of "search and destroy" became the *modus operandi* of MACV forces.

The NVA and VC were not about to fight a war determined by a set of U.S. ground rules. They were not going to be, as the U.S. hoped, a cooperative enemy! This hope was a major flaw in the U.S. ground strategy. If the NVA and VC refused to fight a continuous, Mao-type phase 3 conventional conflict, the U.S. could not win.[21] Consequently, the NVA and VC generally withdrew from direct confrontations with superior U.S. forces and as a result of adhering to the search and destroy strategy, for the most part unsuccessfully, U.S. forces played into the hands of the VC by being drawn away, to some

degree, from the population centers. This enabled the guerrillas to renew their insurgency efforts relatively unabated.

Counter-insurgency and Pacification as Alternative Strategies. Any successful alternative ground strategy required a focus at the grass roots level and a significant reallocation of resources. Pacification of South Vietnam, or the "other war," did not receive a sufficient priority. MACV and the ARVN were responsible for training and organizing the South Vietnamese Regional Forces (RFs) and Popular Forces (PFs). The ARVN should have made greater efforts to motivate the rural population to participate in village and hamlet defense, as well as grooming local intelligence sources. A successful pacification program would have protected the local population from insurgent intimidation and terrorism and instilled confidence in the central government, local security forces (RFs and PFs), and the village itself. Winning the counter-insurgency struggle should have been accomplished by implementing an expansive rural development program, reforming the political process, eliminating corruption at all levels, establishing social programs, and ensuring permanent physical security to prevent what would have been a certain increase in VC terrorist reprisals. A successful pacification program might have forced the VC to expose themselves and isolated them from the South Vietnamese people making it possible to destroy the parasitic VC infrastructure.

The Marine Corps and the Combined Action Platoons (CAPs). This paper's opening quotation, from the Small Wars Manual of the United States Marine Corps, 1940, cuts to the heart of the matter of counter-insurgency and illustrates the fact that the Marines had developed doctrine for fighting a counter-insurgency conflict 25 years before they landed at Da Nang. So it is not surprising they advocated a counter-insurgency strategy that eventually evolved into the CAP Program. Marine experiences from the "banana wars" of 1915-1935 and other guerrilla wars aided in doctrine development. The Marine Corps, more than any other service, had the best appreciation of the nature of the Vietnam War.

A thorough examination of the Small Wars Manual reveals the Marine Corps had an insight into the root causes of revolutionary warfare. The Marines appreciated the importance of minimizing the level of destruction, avoiding collateral damage and injury to non-combatants, and advancing a positive relationship with the indigenous population. Also, the Manual reveals in places a "Sun Tzu-type" approach to guerrilla warfare. For example, "A Force Commander who gains his objective in small wars without firing a shot has attained far greater success than the one who resorted to the use of arms." [22]

Below the strategic level, but complementary and extremely important to the pacification program in Vietnam, was the Marine Corps' relatively successful Combined Action concept. The CAP Program was the center of the U.S. Marine Corps' counter-insurgency effort in Vietnam and was the only long-term commitment of regular U.S. troops to fight the war on the village and hamlet level.[23] The first CAP was organized in I Corps on 1 August 1965 by combining a Marine Corps rifle platoon, comprised mostly of volunteers, with local PFs. The integration of a Marine squad and PF platoon was patterned after the British companies used in Malaya during the 1950s.[24]

The CAP program's long-term goal was to help the Vietnamese form their own viable and professional security force and raise the PFs to a fighting level close to that of the enemy. Since the PFs were defending their own hamlets and villages, they had a vested interest in the success of the counter-insurgency strategy and the CAP program. The CAPs attempted to destroy the VC and enhance ongoing rural development programs, while maintaining a sense of continuity and physical security in the villages and hamlets. They also placed emphasis on the more traditional aspects of counter-insurgency discussed above. However, for a security strategy, the CAP program was to develop the villages and hamlets into an ever expanding secure area in which the CAPs would be at the center. This approach had all the makings of a potentially expanding and flourishing "oil spot." Unfortunately, the PFs were not a significant part of the ARVN strategy against the North; yet, they held the key to the counter-insurgency

effort. The PFs and RFs were at the bottom of the "food chain" when it came to equipment, ammunition, and training. The ARVN and MACV commanders gave the front-line battalions priority.

The Marine Corps' recommendations for the counter-insurgency effort were diametrically opposed to General Westmoreland's search and destroy strategy. The Marine Corps and Army leadership were at loggerheads from the outset. Victor Krulak, Commanding General FMFPAC, argued for a "clear and hold" strategy:

> It is our conviction that if we can destroy the guerrilla fabric among the people, we will...deny the larger units food, intelligence, taxes, and the other support.... At the same time, if the big units want to sortie out [sic] the mountains,...the Marines are glad to take them on, but the real war is among the people and not among the mountains.[25]

As part of the clear and hold strategy, somewhat reminiscent of the Malayan Emergency, the CAPs were considered an economy of force measure. They were also an excellent example of the unity of effort principle in a multi-national combat environment. Man for man, compared with an infantry battalion assigned a comparable mission, the CAPs controlled more of the population, efficiently patrolled more terrain, and killed and captured more of the enemy.[26] By the end of 1966, the CAPs had become an integral part of the Marine Corps' counter-insurgency strategy.

When the CAP strategy first emerged as a means of successful pacification, the Marines employed a "fortified compound" method of providing security for the villages and hamlets. Operating from these compounds soon proved not to be the optimal tactic. Having the CAPs in one location provided the enemy the opportunity to observe the Marines' schedules, positions, strengths, and weaknesses. With this information the VC carefully planned their attacks; and with their mobility versus the CAPs' fixed position, gave the advantage to the enemy. The CAPs' mission was not strictly military, however; it was also pacification. Ideally, the compound could have been the source of the "ink spot," a relatively safe area from which overall security would grow. As a pacification center, the compound was the nexus for civic action (see Appendix C). Village elders, leaders, and other peasants knew where to go for most types of assistance, such as medical aid, supplies, or food.

Early in 1968, the Marines began to employ the tactic of mobilizing the CAPs.[27] The idea was that the CAPs, like the VC, should be mobile, so the enemy could not pinpoint their positions. They began to operate as the enemy did--like guerrillas. Militarily, the mobile tactic benefited the CAPs reducing the number of casualties and making CAP duty safer. When the tactic was properly employed, it also resulted in a higher number of enemy casualties. By the end of 1969, 145,000 CAP patrols had been conducted--73 percent at night; and CAPs initiated two-thirds of the contact with the enemy indicating the VC were surprised by the nightly relocation of the CAPs.[28] The mobile CAPs enhanced the entire area security strategy, a prerequisite for pacification.[29]

Just as the dual nature of the war in Vietnam called for an extensive pacification strategy, as well as the employment of the conventional maneuver warfare strategy of search and destroy, perhaps the ideal tactical employment of the CAPs might have been a combination of the mobile and compound units. The status of the Tactical Area of Responsibility (TAOR) and the level of intensity of the fighting could have been the determining factor as to what tactic was to be employed. If the area was "hot," the mobile CAP was most appropriate. Conversely, if the area was "cold"--or not too "hot"--the compound concept could have been employed with an emphasis on community development and civic action projects such as repairing roads, dikes, and schools.[30]

CAP Expansion. During the latter half of 1966, the CAP program had its greatest growth: 41 CAPs established in seven months. Major General Lewis Walt, III Marine Amphibious Force (MAF) Commander, hoped to have 74 CAPs in place by the end of 1966, but the South Vietnamese failed to provide enough PF platoons to meet this goal. By January 1967, 57 CAPs were set up. The program never grew beyond 120 CAPs.[31] One problem the CAPs suffered from its rapid growth was that Marines were often "volunteered" into the program. Some battalion commanders saw the CAPs as a dumping ground for their trouble-makers. Still others signed on in anticipation of receiving orders to potentially easier duty. The perception was that assignment to a village or hamlet would not be as tough

as slugging it out with the enemy in a front-line battalion. Most of these Marines soon experienced the intensity of the "other war" in the villages and hamlets. Unfortunately, the allure of a break from combat attracted two other types of individuals who had no business in the CAP program. These were, "the grunts who had a racist hatred for the Vietnamese; or the grunts who had been excessively brutalized by combat."[32] In what should have been obvious to the leaders of the Combined Action Program, a racist, in one unthinking and inconsiderate incident, could destroy a bond of trust and cooperation that took months to develop.[33]

CAP Training. Much the same as current FID training programs, language skills and a need for cultural awareness was critical to the CAP program's success. A formalized, viable training program was sorely needed, but the competition for the individual Marines' time was just as great. If a young Marine was in-country 12-13 months, commanders were reluctant to have him sit in school for several weeks learning the Vietnamese language and culture.[34] However, if MACV had officially adopted the CAP program early in the war as the official counter-insurgency strategy, perhaps in 1965 or earlier, an appropriate training program could have become an integral part of every Marine's FMFPAC indoctrination.

Early in the CAP program, a Marine would receive a week of training and preparation. Normally, the Marines attended classes in the morning and conducted patrols in the afternoon and evening. The classroom sessions revolved around limited language training, the structure of the Vietnamese government, and the cultural nuances of village life. The patrols would be conducted in the vicinity of the village where the squad was eventually assigned.[35]

As the CAP program expanded, a formalized training regime was adopted, taking into account that several Marines came from combat support and combat service support units. Training was conducted for the Vietnamese PFs, as well as the Marines and complemented their respective areas of expertise. The Marines taught security, tactics, etc., and the PFs taught local culture, customs, and

language. At its peak the training program took 16 weeks and, in addition to the topics mentioned above, included: maintenance of equipment, citizenship and patriotism, sentry duty; small arms firing, hygiene, hand-to-hand combat, PSYOPS, first aid, intelligence gathering, communications, field fortifications, mines and booby traps, map and compass reading, land navigation, village searches, and ambushes and immediate action.[36] PF integration into the training program was significant; and if the CAP program had received MACV's full-fledged support, thoroughly trained PFs would have proved invaluable. Capable PFs, along with ARVN troops of sufficient caliber, could have been the nucleus of a security system in Vietnam after the withdrawal of U.S. forces. More emphasis should have been placed on the indigenous forces to "carry the load." This was not, however, in MACV's strategic framework.

Of all the valuable and meaningful training conducted, increased emphasis should have been placed on language skills. "Most Marines who appear to 'get along' in Vietnamese in fact know only about 50 words. Such minimal language ability is put to the test, and fails, just when it is most needed--in times of crisis...when people begin to speak more rapidly and less carefully--shattering the communication bridge...."[37]

The Objectives. The CAP program and its objectives were an extension of the Marine Corps' warfighting doctrine of the day, and as the CAP program expanded in 1966 and 1967 the objectives for the platoons and the command structure became more standardized. The program had six objectives:

1. Destroy the VC infrastructure within the village or hamlet area of responsibility.
2. Protect public security and help maintain law and order.
3. Protect the friendly infrastructure.
4. Protect bases and lines of communication within the villages and hamlets.
5. Organize people's intelligence nets.
6. Participate in civic action and conduct propaganda against the VC.[38]

These six objectives are similar to the six principles for conducting MOOTW as delineated in Joint Pub 3-07, Joint Doctrine for Military Operations Other Than War, in which the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff spells out the acronym SLURPO--security, legitimacy, unity of effort, restraint, perseverance, and objective (see Appendix D for a more detailed explanation).

The Results. Although results varied throughout the country depending on what TAOR a CAP operated in, texts and official histories of the program generally view it as a success.

> Combined action was one of the Marines' most notable contributions...to pacification...a daring and generally successful attempt to engage the Vietcong on their own ground among the people. Probably more effectively than any other American military force, the CAPs...had done what had to be done to win the war; they had broken the connection between the guerrillas and the peasants.[39]

Once a CAP was established, the village's security was far better than a village without a CAP or a village occupied by a PF alone. CAPs usually operated in the more "densely populated areas leaving the VC little to recruit or exploit in the remote, largely uninhabited region they controlled."[40] And General Krulak, an original staunch supporter of the CAPs, in his book, First to Fight stated:

> It was a multiplier, where the final product had combatant value many times the sum of its individual components....Two extraordinary statistics reveal that the unique organizational arrangement paid off: no village protected by a combined action unit was ever repossessed by the VC; and 60 percent of the Marines serving in the combined action units volunteered to stay on with their Marine and Vietnamese companions for an additional six months....[41]

In addition to the relationships CAP Marines established with the villagers, the enemy also respected their combat skills. One two-year study showed the ratio of enemy losses to CAP losses was 7.2:1, while the corresponding ratio for countrywide forces was only 3.8:1[42] (see Appendix E). A significant result garnered by the increased capability of the CAPs was the number of enemy captured. The countrywide enemy killed-to-captured ratio was 12:1. In CAP villages it was 2:1.[43] This lower ratio could have been attributable to local intelligence and the detailed knowledge of local terrain. An additional dividend gained by the high number of enemy captured was the elimination of the local VC infrastructure which severely curtailed the level of NVA infiltration and subsequent expansion into the

South. The elimination of the VC infrastructure struck more deeply at the roots of the insurgent organization than the attrition of NVA regulars.[44] The CAP efficiency indicated an increase in the level of self-confidence, capability, and commitment to the war on the part of the PFs that did not exist before the U.S. Marines achieved an established presence in the villages.

The success of the CAP program was negatively impacted by several factors. For example, there were distinctly "hot" and "cold" areas of operations in Vietnam. Such a situation raises questions about the effectiveness of the program. Were the "cold" areas due to the lack of, or destruction of, the VC infrastructure? And if so, why were the CAPs responsible not moved to other more vulnerable areas? Or were the areas "cold" due to some form of covert agreement between the VC and local village officials and/or PFs?[45] On the other hand, why were the "hot" areas nearly always "hot"? Until 1969, few hamlets had been pacified sufficiently to justify a relocation of the CAPs. In Phu Bai (just SE of Hue), in Thua Thien province, for example, all the CAPs established in the summer of 1965 were in the same location in 1969,[46] the inference being that, in an attempt to achieve victory through pacification in a counter-insurgency environment, *perseverance* and long-term commitment are required. Countrywide, however, in less than four years, 93 CAPs had been transferred from villages determined to be safe and ready to assume their own protection responsibilities.[47] One aspect of the pacification effort that the CAPs did not consider was the transition point (discussed earlier). There were no definitive guidelines established to determine when a village was sufficiently pacified for the PFs to provide their own security and for the CAPs to move on to other villages.[48] Without guidelines for establishing transition points, it is impossible to determine whether the 93 CAPs that were transferred from pacified villages could have been transferred earlier and their experience utilized elsewhere.

Some pessimists and those unfamiliar with the basic concepts and history of counter-insurgency warfare have argued that the CAP program was doomed to failure from the start. They maintain(ed) that the American culture and that of the Vietnamese were too disparate. However, the facts say otherwise.

In 1967, less than 15 percent of the U.S. troops countrywide volunteered to extend; 68 percent of the Marines in CAPs volunteered to stay an additional six or more months after their 13 months in-country.[49] Not only did these extensions mean that fewer soldiers had to be replaced, it also meant continuity in the villages; the experience level, knowledge, and the established personal relationships matured, improving the overall effectiveness of each CAP.

On the South Vietnamese side, twice as many PFs died in CAPs as in non-CAP villages. The PFs were well aware of this fact. Yet, while the PF desertion rate in 1966 and 1967 exceeded 20 percent, in the CAPs it was less than 4 percent.[50]

For a Marine in a CAP, unfortunately, the odds were grim when compared with other American combat units. A CAP Marine had a 75 percent chance of being wounded once, a 25 percent chance of being wounded twice, and an 18 percent chance of being killed.[51]

<u>The Efficacy of the CAP Program</u>. The overall effect of the CAP program is still debated today. It is doubtful that an expanded counter-insurgency strategy alone could have won the war for the U.S. Nonetheless, a stronger counter-insurgency effort and a well supported CAP program earlier in the war, before NVA regulars were involved in the fighting, could have contributed (along with other alternative strategies) to reducing the escalation of the conflict and subsequent level of destruction and violence.[52]

The CAP program was constrained by size, resources--both manpower and materiel--and attitudes up and down the chain of command. Compared to the rest of the ground forces in Vietnam, the manpower allocated to the CAP program was very small. There were approximately 80,000 Marines in Vietnam at the height of the war, but the CAPs never exceeded 2500 at any one time--only 4 percent of the total Marine force.[53] Larry Cable points out in <u>Conflicts of Myth</u>, that although the Marine Corps had shown great insight in their <u>Small Wars Manual</u>, they did not sufficiently prepare all Marines for counter-insurgency doctrine and training.[54] He also states that, "the Marines turned away from their traditions of economy force and reduction of firepower to a level appropriate in a counter-insurgency

environment. Instead, they chose an unbalanced use of tactics and weapons over the more subtle elements of counter-insurgency--civic action and humanitarian assistance."[55] The CAP program never achieved its long-term goal of pacification. The VC infrastructure was never completely destroyed, and the PFs were never able to defend all villages alone.[56] Yet, the facts of the Rand study conducted by Francis West show that the CAPs achieved results far out of proportion to their size.

What Does the Future Hold? The world remains extremely unstable and unpredictable. The only certainty we face is the inevitability of change. An explosion of previously restrained nationalism and religious factional rivalries endangers world stability. These conflicts will require new approaches to ensure U.S. security.[57]

Vietnam was a unique war, and the CAPs were unique to it.[58] The circumstances and conditions of the Vietnam War may have been too unique to employ the CAP concept whole-heartedly in current or future counter-insurgency doctrine and strategy. But, given the degree of success the program achieved and its imaginative implementation, it should not be examined in a vacuum or dismissed entirely out-of-hand as irrelevant. Decision makers must glean the appropriate lessons from the counter-insurgency efforts in Vietnam and other conflicts and apply them to FID/IDAD initiatives the U.S. may undertake in the future. Some of the most important lessons to be considered are: establishing the legitimacy of the government, the training of HN forces, avoiding the use of terror to gain support of the populace, and the use of a measured response, i.e., a smaller force usually works better. There is, in fact, a lot of common ground between the concepts employed in the past, i.e., the CAP program and current FID doctrine.

Along with the fact that there will always be a need to study the lessons of the CAP program and other counter-insurgency efforts, comes a warning. John Waghelstein, in "Ruminations of a Pachyderm..." cautions, "None of the pearls of wisdom...are directly applicable without thorough analysis and appropriate modification because each insurgency is unique and defies accepting solutions that worked elsewhere. Blindly trying to apply lessons learned has resulted in failures on both sides."[59]

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[2] The White House, A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement (Washington, DC: The White House, 1995), 11.

[3] Ibid, 22.

[4] Joint Staff, Joint Pub 3-07.1: Joint Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Foreign Internal Defense (Washington, DC: Office of the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1993), II-2.

[5] Ibid, I-3.

[6] Headquarters, Departments of the Army and Air Force, FM 100-20/AFP 3-20 Military Operations in Low Intensity Conflicts (Washington, DC: Headquarters, U.S. Army and U.S. Air Force, 1990), E-2.

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[9] Ibid, IV-9.

[10] Ibid, V-2.

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[12] Ibid, IV-29.

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[18] Steven Metz, Counterinsurgency: Strategy and the Phoenix of American Capability (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 1995), 1.

[19] Krepinevich, 4.

[20] Harry G. Summers, Jr., "Defense Without Purpose," Society, (November/December, 1983), 10.

[21] Mao's 3 phases of protracted revolutionary warfare are: phase 1: strategic defense; phase 2: strategic stalemate; and phase 3: conventional military operations.

John Ellis, From the Barrel of a Gun: A History of Guerrilla, Revolutionary and Counter-insurgency Warfare from the Romans to the Present (London: Greenhill Books, 1995), Chapter 7, pp 177-199; and Professor Bradford A. Lee, "Maoist Strategy" Strategy and Policy lecture Naval War College, Newport, R.I., February 1, 1996.

[22] Small Wars Manual, Sect. 1-10, p 18.

[23] Michael E. Peterson, The Combined Action Platoons: The U.S. Marines' Other War in Vietnam (New York: Praeger, 1989), 2.

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[26] Francis J. West, Jr., An Area-Security System for Vietnam Incorporating Combined Action (Santa Monica, CA: The Rand Corporation, 1969), 13.

[27] Peterson, 60.

[28] Al Hemingway, Our War Was Different: Marine Combined Action Platoons in Vietnam (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1994), 11.

[29] Interview with Colonel Burton C. Quist, USMC, 25 April 1996, Naval War College, Newport, R.I.

[30] Peterson, 62.

[31] Ibid, 32.

[32] Ibid, 33.

[33] Quist interview.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Charles W. Driest, Combined Action Platoons: A Possible Role in the Low-Intensity Conflict Environment, (Fort Leavenworth, KS: School of Advanced Military Studies, United States Army Command and General Staff College, 1989), 13.

[36] Ibid, Appendix B.

[37] Peterson, 49.

[38] Ibid, 35.

[39] Graham A. Cosmas and Terrance P. Murray, U.S. Marines in Vietnam: Vietnamization and Redeployment, 1970-71 (Washington, DC: History and Museum Division Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1986), 152.

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[42] West, 3.

[43] Ibid, 7.

[44] Ibid. 8.

[45] Peterson, 59.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Hemingway, 11.

[48] Quist interview.

[49] Peterson, 24.

[50] Ibid.

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[52] Interview with John D. Waghelstein, 24 April 1996, Naval War College, Newport, R.I.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Larry E. Cable, Conflicts of Myths: The Development of American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and the Vietnam War (New York: New York University Press, 1988), 170.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Hemingway, 177.

[57] Special Operations Command, 1994 Special Forces Posture Statement, 15.

[58] Waghelstein interview.

[59] John D. Waghelstein, "Ruminations of a Pachyderm or What I Learned in the Counter-Insurgency Business," Small Wars and Insurgencies, (London: Frank Cass & Co., Ltd.: 1994), 360.

Chronology of Notable Guerrilla Wars*

DATE	INSURGENTS	INCUMBENTS	PLACE
516 BC	Scythians	Persians	Scythia
389-338	Volsci	Romans	n. Italy
195-138	Celtiberians	Romans	Spain
166-160	Jews	Syrians	Israel
154-138	Lusitanians	Romans	Spain
80-72	Celtiberians Lusitanians	Romans	Spain
54	Britons	Romans	England
54-51	Gauls	Romans	France
15-16 AD	Chatti	Romans	Germany
17-24	Numidians	Romans	Africa
36	Cietae	Romans	Anatolia
43	Britons	Romans	England/Wales
355-57	Alamanni	Romans	France
378	Visigoths	Romans	Italy
900-950	Magyars	Raids throughout Europe	
1070	Saxons	Holy Roman Empire	Saxony
1070	Anglo-Saxons	Normans	The Fens
1094-5, 1114	Welsh	English	Snowdonia
1143	English	Normans	The Fens
1282	Welsh	English	Snowdonia
1287-92	Welsh	English	Snowdonia
1296-1328	Scots	English	Scotland
1363-84	Tuchins	English	Auvergne
1418-50	French	English	Normandy Maine
1550	Estonians	Russians, Knights of the Teutonic Order	Reval
1576-1601	Muslims	Moghuls	Mewar
1597-1694	African slaves	Portuguese	Brazil
1604-05	Hungarians	Turks, Austrians	Slovakia
1627-80	Marathas	Moghuls	
1655-83	African slaves	English	Jamaica
1686-1707	Javanese	Dutch	Java

Appendix A

*Ellis, 7.

1690-1720	African slaves	English	Jamaica
1703-11	Camisards	French	Cevennes
1716-68	Sikhs	Persians	Punjab
1740-43	Hungarians	Prussians/French	Bohemia
1772	Caribs	English	St. Vincent
1773-74	Bulgarians	Turks	Bulgaria
1780-83	Americans	English	Carolinas
1785-94	Chechens	Russians	Caucaus
1791-97	African slaves	French	Haiti
1793	French Royalists	French Republicans	Vendee
1799	Italians	French	Naples
1806-10	Italians	French	Calabria
1808-13	Spanish	French	Spain
1809	Austrians	French	Tyrol
1809-16	Peruvians	Spanish	n. Peru
1810-21	Mexicans	Spanish	Mexico
1812-13	Russians	French	Russia
1817-28	Urugayans	Portuguese Argentinians	Uruguay
1821-9	Greeks	Turks	Greece
1825	Javanese	Dutch	Java
1832-47	Arabs	French	Algeria
1833-39	Carlists	Spanish	Spain
1835-42	Seminoles	Americans	Florida
1936-59	Murids	Russians	Caucasus
1846-49	Carlists	Spanish	Catalonia
1847-1900	Mayas	Mexicans	Yucatan
1849-55	Hungarians	Austrians	Hungary
1853-68	Nien	Manchus	n. China
1855-72	Miao	Manchus	Kweichow
1858-61	Liberals	Clericals	Mexico
1860-66	Neapolitans	Piedmontese	Naples
1860-86	Apaches	Americans Mexicans	Arizona, n. Mexico
1861-65	Confederates	Union	Missouri, Kansas, Virginia
1863	Poles	Russians	Poland
1863-67	Mexicans	French	Mexico
1866-69	Cretans	Turks	Crete
1868-78	Cubans	Spanish	Cuba
1870-71	Franc-tireurs	Prussians	France
1877-78	?	Russians	Daghestan
1878-81	Bosnian-Moslems	Austrians	Bosnia-Herzegovina
1880-98	Vietnamese	French	Annam
1882-98	Malinke	French	w. Sudan

1885-86	Cambodians	French	Cambodia
1886-87	Sarrakole	French	Senegal, Gambia
1886-98	Kachins, Chins	British	n. Burma
1887-95	Yaos	British	Malawi
1894-95	Red Beards	Russians	Manchuria
1894-1911	Senussi	French	Libya
1896-97	Brazilian Indians	Brazilians	Canudos
1896-1908	IMRO	Greeks, Turks, Bulgarians	Macedonia
1897-1902	Filipinos	Spanish Americans	Philippines
1897-98	Pathans	British	N.W. Frontier
1898	Temne	British	Sierra Leone
1900-02	Boers	British	S. Africa
1904-07	Nama	Germans	Tanganyika
1919-20	Mexican Revolution		Mexico
1910-34	Arabs, Berbers	French, Spanish	Morocco
1914-18	Germans	British	Tanganyika
1916-18	Arabs	Turks	Arabia
1916-21	IRA	British	Ireland
1918-21	Ukrainians	Bolsheviks	Ukraine
1918-28	Basmatchis	Russians	Turkestan
1919-34	IMRO	Greeks, Yugoslavs, Bulgarians	Macedonia
1920-21	Chechens	Russians	Daghestan
1920-22	Kurds	Persians	Azerbaijan
1922-32	Arabs	Italians	Cyrenaica
1926-1949	Chinese Communists	Chinese Nationalists, Japanese	China
1927-30	Kurds	Turks	Turkey
1927-33	Nicaraguans	Americans	Nicaragua
1935-41	Ethiopians	Italians	Ethiopia
1936-39	Arabs	British	Palestine
1941	Partisans, Cetniks,	Germans, Italians	Yugoslavia
	Italians	Germans, Italians	n. Italy
	Slovaks	Germans	Slovakia
	Albanians	Germans	Albania
	Bulgarians	Germans	Bulgaria
	French	Germans	France
1941	Poles	Germans	Poland
1945-49	Indonesians	Dutch	Indonesia
1946-47	Jews	British, Arabs	Palestine
1946-49	Greek Communists (ELAS)	Greek government, British	Greece
1946-54	Hukbalahaps	Filipino government	Philippines

1946-54	Viet-minh	French	Vietnam
1948-60	Malayan Communists	British	Malaya
1948-?	FARC (to1990), ELN (GNG from 1986), EPL, M-19 (to 1990) ADO	Columbia government	Columbia
1949	Indian Communists	Indian government	Telingana
1949-?	Karens (KNLA)	Brumese government	Burma
1951-55	Mau Mau	British	Kenya
1953-74	Pathet Lao	Laotian government	Laos
1954-59	EOKA	British	Cyprus
1954-62	FLN	French	Algeria
1955-59	Cuban Civil War		Cuba
1958-75	Viet Cong (NLF)	S. Vienamese government	South Vietnam
	North Vietamese	USA	South Vietnam
1961-74	MPLA	Portugese	Angola
1961-75	Kurds (KDP)	Iraqi government	Iraq
1962-69	MR 13; FAR	Guatemalan government	Guatemala
1963-67	Indonesians	Malayans, British	Borneo Sarawak
1963-73	PAIGC	Portugese	Guine-Bissau
1963-75	PFLO; DLLF; PFLOAG;	Omani government, British	Dhofar
1963-75	Khmer Rouge	Cambodian government	Cambodia
1964-74	FRELIMO	Portugese	Mozambique
1964-91	ELF, EPLF	Ethopian government	Erittea
1966-89	SWAPO	South Africa	Namibia
1969-?	NPA, MNLF, MILF	Philippine gov't	Philippines
1970-83	PLO and Lebanese, Shiites	Israelis	Israel
1974-?	Chakmas (Shanti Bahini)	Bangladeshi government	Bangladesh
1975-?	FRETLIN	Indonesian goernment	East Timor
1975-?	UNITA	Mozambique government	Mozambique
1975-?	EGP	Guatemalan government	Guatemla

1976-?	POLISARIO	Moroccan government	Mauretania
1977-79	Sandanistas	Nicaraguan government	Nicaragua
1977-?	Tamil Tigers (LTTE)	Sri Lankan government	Sri Lanka
1978-89	Afghans	Afghan government Soviets	Afghanistan
1978-?	Khmer Rouge	Cambodian government	Cambodia
1979-91	TPLF	Ethiopian government	Tigre
1980-83	FMLN	Salvadorean government	El Salvador
1980-86	Bugandans (NRA)	Ugandan government	Uganda
1980-?	Sendero Luminoso Tupac Amaru	Peruvian government	Peru
#[1980-?	Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN/ZNLA)	Mexican government	Chiapas, Mexico]
1981-90	Contras (NDF; ARDE)	Nicaraguan government	Nicaragua
1983-?	Hezbollah	Israelis, South Lebanon Army	Israel, Lebanon
1984-?	Kurds (KDP)	Iraqi government	Iraq
1984-?	Kurds (PKK)	Turkish government	Turkey
1987-89	JVP	Sri Lankan government	Sri Lanka
1989-92	Afghans	Afghan government (pro-Soviet)	Afghanistan
1992-?	Afghans	Afghan government	Afghanistan
#[1995-?	Chechens	Russians	Chechnya]

#: not included in the original

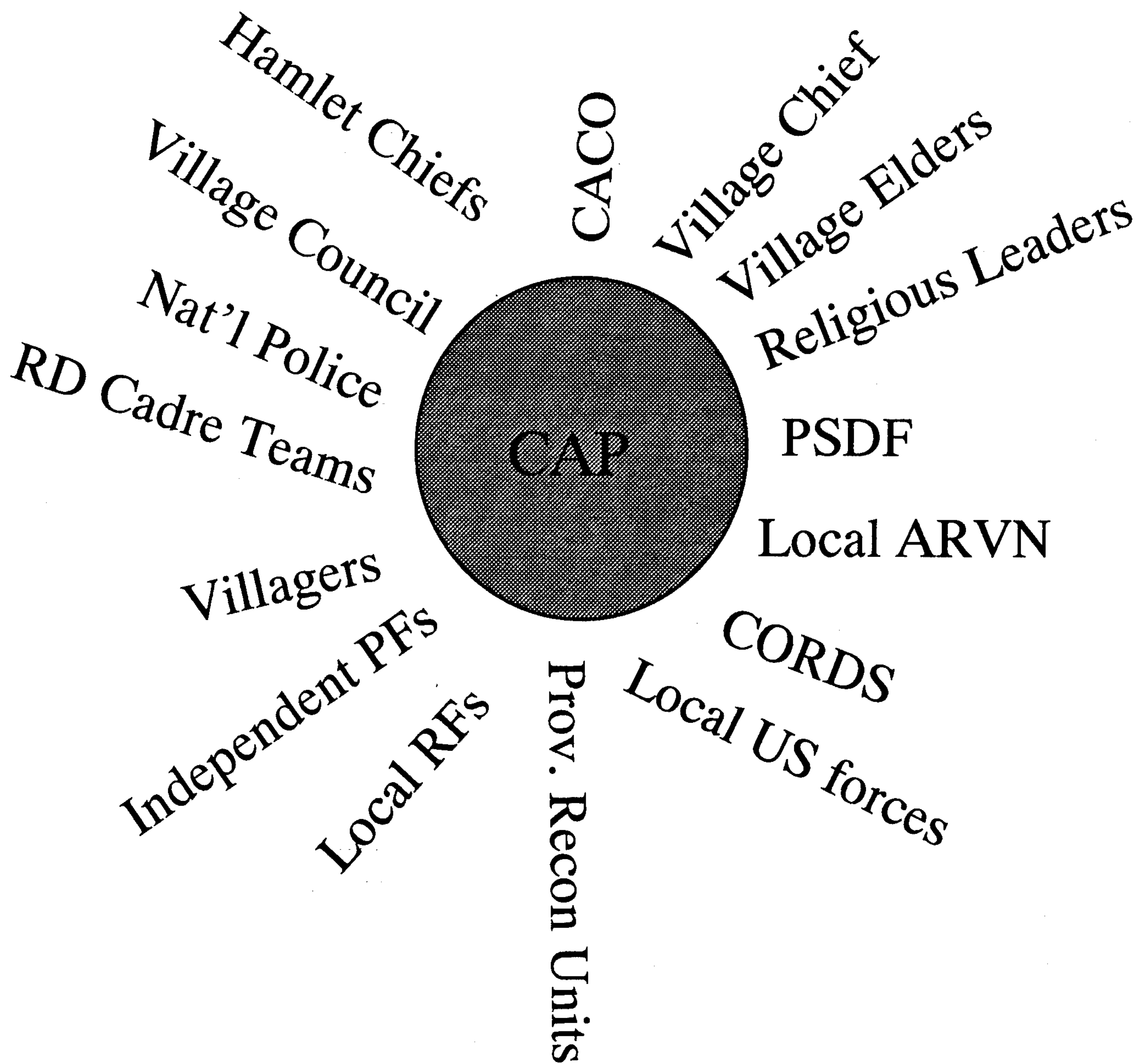
	Malaya	**Philippines**	**Vietnam**	**Greece**	**Algeria**
Geography	peninsula	islands	large borders for sanctuaries and support	large borders with Albania, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria	long borders and coastline
Terrain	jungle	mountains and jungle	jungle; delta; some mountains;	mountains in central and north	beaches; desert; mountains
Nature of central government	rule of British law	weak, corrupt, inefficient	repressive (French)	elected gov't, liberal Prime Minister	fragile French coalition at home; *Pied Noir*; repressive in Algeria
Central-local government connection	established administration to locals	patron-client relationship	little to none; small amount of local pressure	good in south and central; not too good in north	very little presence in many areas
Socio-economic disparities	wide disparities; squatters	wide disparities	wide disparities; poor peasants	disparities (from World War II)	wide disparities
Cultural and religious make-up	Chinese vs. Malays	relatively homogeneous Filipino	Catholic vs. Buddhists; Montagnards in mountains	homogeneous (except for Macedonians)	*Pied Noir*; Arab/Berbers
Colonialism; legitimacy	pledge of independence	U.S. aid; ex-colonial, U.S. just granted independence	colonial regime	not colonial, but influenced by Truman Doctrine	colonial regime
Nature of economy	plantations; agrarian; commodities for export	agrarian; sugar, hemp for export	agrarian; rice	nothing notable (but difficult to deny food to insurgents)	nothing notable (but difficult to deny food to insurgents)

Appendix B

Some factors influencing successful/unsuccessful insurgencies*

*Bradford A. Lee

The CAP as the Village Nexus*



*Peterson, 138.

Appendix C

"SLURPO" Defined

1. Security: Never permit hostile factions to acquire a military, political, or informational advantage. This principle enhances freedom of action by reducing vulnerability to hostile acts, influence, or surprise. Operations security is an important component of this principle. The essential elements of U.S. military operations should always be safeguarded. Security may also involve the protection of civilians or participating agencies and organizations.

2. Legitimacy: Committed forces must sustain the legitimacy of the operation and of the host government, where applicable. Legitimacy is based on the perception by a specific audience of the legality, morality, or rightness of a set of actions. If an operation is perceived as legitimate, there is a strong impulse to support the action. In MOOTW, legitimacy is frequently a decisive element. The perception of legitimacy by the U.S. public is strengthened if there are obvious national or humanitarian interests at stake, and if there is assurance that American lives are not being needlessly risked.

3. Unity of effort: This principle emphasizes the need for ensuring all means are directed to a common purpose. Command arrangements among coalition partners may be less well-defined than the U.S. chain of command and not include full command authority. Under such circumstances, commanders must establish procedures for liaison and coordination.

4. Restraint: Apply appropriate military capabilities prudently. A single act could cause significant military and political consequences; therefore, judicious use of force is necessary. The use of excessive force antagonizes those parties involved, thereby damaging the legitimacy of the organization. Commanders at all levels must take proactive steps to ensure their personnel know and understand the ROE. ROE in MOOTW are generally more restrictive, detailed, and sensitive to political concerns than in war.

5. Perseverance: Prepare for the measured, protracted application of military capability in support of strategic aims. Some MOOTW may require years to achieve the desired results. Often, the patient, resolute, and persistent pursuit of national goals and objectives, for as long as necessary to achieve them , is a requirement for success. This will often involve political, diplomatic, economic, and informational measures to supplement military efforts.

6. Objective: Direct every military operation toward a clearly defined, decisive and attainable objective. Commanders must understand the strategic aims, set appropriate objectives, and ensure that these aims and objectives contribute to unity of effort. Inherent in the principle of objective is the need to understand what constitutes mission success, and what might cause the operation to be terminated before success is achieved. Commanders should be able to translate their political guidance into appropriate military objective through a rigorous and continuous mission and threat analysis. Commanders should be aware of shifts in the political objectives, or in the situation itself, that necessitate a change in the military objective.

Appendix D

*Joint Pub 3-07, II-1 thru II-5

FORCE	1966	1967 (first 9 mos)	1968 (first 5 mos)	TOTAL
CAP KIA				
U.S.	6	64	124	194
PF	5	54	83	187
TOTAL	11	118	207	336
ENEMY KIA	129	464	1061	1654
ENEMY CAPTURED	137	383	249	769
TOTAL	266	847	1310	2423
RATIO OF ENEMY LOSSES TO CAP/LOSSES	24/1	7.2/1	6.5/1	7.2/1

Table 1

CAP Combat Results: 1966-1968

FORCE	RATIO OF ENEMY LOSSES TO FRIENDLY LOSSES
CAP (PF or U.S.) in I CORPS	7.2/1
U.S. LARGE UNIT (800 OR MORE MEN) in I CORPS	7.6/1
U.S. SMALL UNIT (2 COMPANIES or LESS) in I CORPS	6/1
ALLIED FORCES COUNTRYWIDE AVERAGE	3.8/1
PF COUNTRYWIDE AVERAGE	1.5/1

Table 2

General Combat Results

Appendix E*

*West, 4.

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