Adapting the Targeting Process in Fourth Generation Warfare

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Adapting the Targeting Process in Fourth Generation Warfare

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Submitted by Captain P.F. Eldridge

CG #12, FACAD: Major K.B. Ellison

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The *FMFM 1-A* is a working document currently in draft form that is attempting to characterize the type of warfare the enemies of the United States are engaging in, in places like Iraq. The document has branded that type of warfare as Fourth Generation in the context of the historical evolution of the mindset, will, goals and tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) being adopted. These TTPs are not new and similarities can be drawn to research and writings on guerilla warfare, hybrid wars and asymmetric warfare, but never has the tactics been so lethal and widespread and the inability to counter those tactics so difficult. The targeting process, as explained in the *Marine Corps Warfighting Publication (MCWP) 3-16*, has given commanders a sufficient framework from which to prosecute targets against these fourth generation opponents. However, the United States Marine Corps has been slow to adapt to fighting in Fourth Generation warfare and seemingly unconcerned to the second and third order effects in regards to the use of fires as it relates to the enemy and the cultural environment. To win current and future battles, the U.S. Marine Corps must employ lethal and non-lethal fires as well as information operations (IO) in a manner that reflects the insights and lessons of Fourth Generation Warfare.

Fourth Generation Warfare

Fourth generation fighters utilize TTPs that mitigate what are considered the primary centers of gravity (COG) for the United States military: firepower and the ability to employ combined arms. The fourth generation fighter does this by making himself un-targetable. Examples include planting improvised explosive devices (IED) on the sides of roads, avoiding wearing military uniforms, firing mortar rounds from the back of a dump truck in a populated neighborhood, or driving a vehicle borne IED into a traffic control point (TCP). Despite the cost of civilian lives, the fourth generation fighter's ability to win moral victories while the United States military wins the physical victories makes him disturbingly effective[1]. The *FMFM-1A* notes that this is "the central dilemma of fourth generation war: what works for you on the physical (and sometimes mental) level often works against you at the moral level."[2] Using a negative Iraqi perspective, the United States is seen as an occupier that can't provide security and other necessities and lives and operates from behind protective Kevlar suits, armored vehicles and forward operating base fortresses.

[1] William S. Lind, *FMFM 1-A, Fourth Generation War*, p. 6
[2] William S. Lind, p.6

From a cultural perspective and in the wake of the Abu Ghraib scandal, the United States military has failed to win many moral victories and the targeting process has contributed.

The Targeting Process

The *MCWP 3-16* defines targeting as "the process to detect, select, and prioritize targets, match the appropriate action, and assess the resulting effects based on the commander's objective, guidance, and intent."[3] Commonly referred to as D3A or decide, detect, deliver, and assess, this methodology applied to a fourth generation warfare environment requires an assessment of the possible second and third order effects of decisions made at every step of the process to avoid contributing to the enemy's moral victories.

For example, U.S. forces may destroy the house of a suspected arms dealer with minimal collateral damage to surrounding buildings or civilians. First order thought and prior training tells us that this is a resounding success, but when examined through a "cultural lens"[4], the standoff tactics,

[3] United States Marine Corps, *Marine Corps Warfighting Publication 3-16: Fire Support Coordination in the Ground Combat Element* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2001), Q-15

[4] H.A. Klein, D.S. Harris, D. Steele-Johnson, Preparing for Multinational collaboration: From the laboratory to the field, Expertise out of context: Proceedings of the 6th International Conference on Naturalistic Decision Making. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum & Associates, 5-6

use of devastating firepower, and lack of human interaction with tribal, political, or religious leaders breeds contempt amongst people who have different values, customs, and honor codes. The effects the commander achieves are now the opposite of what he intended.

The failure in such examples results from faulty or insufficient intelligence preparation of the battlefield (IPB). IPB is the foundation for planning and execution in every war fighting functional area. It is a methodology that should continually and systematically analyze the enemy and the environment in a comprehensive manner. The *MCWP 3-16* defines IPB as "an analytical methodology…that builds an extensive data base for each potential area in which a unit may be required to operate…it is then analyzed in detail to determine the impact of the enemy, environment, and terrain on operations."[5] However, as is presently being learned in Iraq, IPB must be thorough and include all aspects of culture as well as U.S. forces' impact on that culture as it relates to the mission.

[5] United States Marine Corps, *Marine Corps Warfighting Publication 3-16: Fire Support Coordination in the Ground Combat Element* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2001), Q-10

D3A Process

Decide

In order for the D3A process to be relevant and effective against our current threat in Iraq, each step must be reevaluated in terms of its implementation and how effectiveness is measured throughout. With the exception of idea exchange, language training, and professional readings related to trying to understand the Arab culture, the Marine Corps' past and even current training habitually focuses the targeting process on Soviet attrition-type dilemmas. This mentality is developed at Combined Arms Exercises (CAX), the National Training Center (NTC), and the Expeditionary Warfare School (EWS) where success, based on the commander's high payoff target list (HPT), is measured only through the neutralization or destruction of enemy equipment in a prioritized fashion. For example, if the trainee is able to attrite the T-72s of the enemy's motorized rifle brigades down to 40% and the enemy division artillery group is unable to mass above the battery level, then success will be achieved based on the center of gravity (COG)/ critical vulnerability (CV) analysis conducted prior to the exercise and transferred on to the attack guidance matrix. However, nowhere in the *MCWP 3-16* does it mention destruction of specific equipment, unit percentage of effectiveness, or technological

superiority as requirements for success. Their tangible nature and simplicity offer an easy way to teach fire supporter and intelligence students about the many aspects of the targeting process and the output products associated with them. However, opportunities to implement training in targeting scenarios should emphasize cultural aspects that are required in fourth generation warfare and exercise decisions on who or what to target and the second and third order consequences associated.

What the *MCWP 3-16* says about the decide portion of D3A is it "translates commander's intent into priorities and attack guidance…it provides the overall focus and sets priorities for intelligence collection, production and dissemination, and attack planning…the commander bases his initial guidance on the IPB."[6] The purpose of IPB by definition is to reduce uncertainty in regard to all aspects of the battlespace to include the enemy, weather, terrain, people and culture. For the commander in Iraq to achieve his end state, he must target appropriately, taking into consideration what the second and third order effects are for different targeting courses of action in his battlespace. With the exception of troop levels being far below what is required for Phase IV operations in Iraq, the failure of U.S. forces to achieve the desired end state is a direct result

[6] United States Marine Corps, *Marine Corps Warfighting Publication 3-16: Fire Support Coordination in the Ground Combat Element* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2001), P. 4-4

of U.S. military leadership's failure to conduct a thorough and complete IPB of their battlespace leading to poor decisions in the targeting process. Yet, with targeting training entrenched in Cold War scenarios, the result is not surprising

Detect

With the exception of high intensity, conventional type battles as seen in OIF I in 2003, and Najaf and Fallujah in 2004, Iraq continues to be a battleground for anti-coalition fighters to operate and fight from using guerrilla tactics. Their ability to operate is directly linked to U.S. forces' inability to detect them despite a superior technological advantage. The insurgency in Iraq has mitigated this technology advantage through their keen understanding of the critical vulnerabilities associated with them. In contrast to OIF I, successful target detection tools have shifted from satellite imagery and ISR platforms to human intelligence. These successes have been lessons that emphasize the limitations of technology and the human nature of war.

In the months following the major fighting in Najaf in August and September 2004, the 11TH MEU Maritime Special Purpose Forces (MSPF) and U.S. Army Special Forces conducted several joint direct action missions on HVTs in Najaf and its environs. The most successful missions conducted were a result of the Special Forces' ability to develop human sources and produce

actionable intelligence. Their understanding of the fourth generation fighter's vulnerability to human exploitation resulted in the capture of multiple HVTs and a massive weapons cache. Other intelligence collection means for detecting targets such as signal intelligence and ISR were limited but required less skill, less risk, and were invaluable when used in concert with human intelligence.

Deliver

Within the context of the moral, mental, and physical levels of war in Iraq, tribal leaders or Iraqi police and security forces of the same ethnic and religious background are the "delivery" methods of choice, while U.S. forces and use of kinetic fires are secondary choices. When deciding the delivery means on the detected target, the answer is a not always kinetic fire.

The analysis in light of the continuous IPB process may conclude that a particular target serviced with an IO campaign or a civil affairs project aimed at fixing the electricity will achieve the commander's desired effects. In the Arabic culture, seemingly harmless actions by western standards have the opposite effect in their complex system that values honor, tribe, social hierarchy and personal interaction. When choosing a delivery method in the targeting process in an environment like Iraq, visible displays of overwhelming firepower, whether

it is aviation (within sight or sound range), indirect fire, or wheeled and tracked vehicles with main gun systems, should be avoided. The latter may win on the physical level of war but will ultimately lose on the moral level of war.

What is being learned in Iraq now resembles lessons learned by the combined action program (CAP) in Vietnam. Brute Krulak mentioned, "This success-achieved with assault rifles, not tanks or warplanes or artillery-was not unique. Despite (or, more likely, because of) its lack of firepower, CAP produced results."[7] This quote sites the efforts and successes of integration into the South Vietnamese culture in order to bring peace and stability. Firepower and technology was de-emphasized while human relationships highlighted the CAP efforts. In the present fourth generation conflict in Iraq, the same tempered use of fire support assets may win allies amongst the people and ultimately deny the enemy sanctuary.

Assess

The Marine Corps assessment of the targeting process is measured based on the desired effects of the commander and what effects were actually achieved. In the Soviet style model effects are based on a battle damage assessment report (BDA) that focused on whether the target was hit and the damage

[7] May Boot: *The Savage Wars of Peace* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1st Ed. 2002 p. 307

associated. The Fourth Generation battlefield is non-linear and more complex, which complicates the assessment especially in IO where measurements of effectiveness are not quantitative (i.e. Insurgent KIA). For example, during recent operations in Iraq in 2004, one commander measured the effectiveness of his IO campaign by the number of leaflets distributed because of a false assumption the leaflets were effective.[8] In the Iraq Theater, assessment in targeting must focus on the commander's desired effects and its linkages to how the Iraqi non-combatant perceives the action.

Conclusion

The D3A targeting process is a functional and practical method for targeting enemy and civilian people and equipment with focus and purpose using the full spectrum of assets to include kinetic and non-kinetic fires and information operations. However, the current operating environment in Iraq and the Fourth Generation enemy we are fighting requires an institutional change to the way we train and fight and the targeting process procedures used to achieve the desired

[8] Major Phill M. Bragg, USMC, Assistant Division Fire Support Coordinator, First Marine Division Aug 2004-March 2005, personal interview conducted by author, 6 February 2006

effects. The enemy will not adapt to conventional tactics therefore the targeting process must adapt to be successful.

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