AN EXIT STRATEGY NOT A WINNING STRATEGY? INTELLIGENCE LESSONS
FROM THE BRITISH 'EMERGENCY' IN SOUTH ARABIA, 1963-67

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The British Army is often praised for a particular skill in small wars or counter-insurgencies (COIN). Some attribute this to the special challenge of maintaining order across a global empire with a relatively small force; others cite the intellectual inheritance of great British military theorists and an inherent flexibility present within a small army that is used to adapting to overcome adversity. However, this view is challenged by recent scholars who suggest the UK record in COIN is not one of universal success. This thesis examines a less prominent British campaign–the war in South Arabia or "Aden Emergency." It was fought against a complex local enemy supported by a strong regional power in the Middle East with a public timeline for British withdrawal. This thesis focuses on the performance of the intelligence organization in South Arabia. There is much to learn from: extreme rural and urban terrain; cultural, religious and linguistic differences; an international political climate that condemned British actions but was sympathetic to the insurgency and its external sponsors. Finally, the issue of organizational learning is examined to identify the extent the British military was prepared to identify and address its experiences and incorporate lessons into its institutions.

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ABSTRACT

AN EXIT STRATEGY NOT A WINNING STRATEGY? INTELLIGENCE LESSONS FROM THE BRITISH 'EMERGENCY' IN SOUTH ARABIA, 1963-67, by MAJ Stephen Andrew Campbell, 195 pages.

The British Army is often praised for a particular skill in small wars or counter-insurgencies (COIN). Some attribute this to the special challenge of maintaining order across a global empire with a relatively small force; others cite the intellectual inheritance of great British military theorists and an inherent flexibility present within a small army that is used to adapting to overcome adversity. However, this view is challenged by recent scholars who suggest the UK record in COIN is not one of universal success. This thesis examines a less prominent British campaign–the war in South Arabia or "Aden Emergency." It was fought against a complex local enemy supported by a strong regional power in the Middle East with a public timeline for British withdrawal. This thesis focuses on the performance of the intelligence organization in South Arabia. There is much to learn from: extreme rural and urban terrain; cultural, religious and linguistic differences; an international political climate that condemned British actions but was sympathetic to the insurgency and its external sponsors. Finally, the issue of organizational learning is examined to identify the extent the British military was prepared to identify and address its experiences and incorporate lessons into its institutions.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION - THE BRITISH 'EMERGENCY' IN SOUTH ARABIA

The British Army has excelled in small-unit, anti-guerrilla warfare as they did in other aspects of counterinsurgency. History had given them an army that was relatively small and decentralized and, therefore, ideally suited to such warfare.[1]

— Thomas R. Mockaitis

Look at us, we're on the street in our soft caps and everyone loves us.[2]

— David Kilcullen

By the end of the twentieth century, the British Army had a conspicuous

reputation for skill in counter-insurgency operations (COIN). The record was by no

means uniformly successful but the prevailing trend of achieving conditions that were

broadly consistent with British political goals was impressive. For all the undoubted pain

incurred fighting insurgents in Ireland, Cyprus, Kenya, Malaya and Oman it was

generally recognised that in a type of conflict in which it is particularly difficult to

achieve decisive political outcomes through the use of force the British Army had a

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[1]LTC Robert M. Cassidy, "The British Army and Counterinsurgency: The Salience of Military Culture," *Military Review* (May-June 2005), http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/milreview/cassidy3.pdf (accessed 29 November 2012).

[2]Insurgency Research Group, "CNA Panel on British COIN," 31 July 2008, http://insurgencyresearchgroup.wordpress.com/author/betz451/ (accessed 29 November 2012). David Kilcullen on the perceived complacency of the British military during the early stages of the Iraq campaign; his comments were made as part of a wider discussion of attitudes within the British military towards COIN and their perception of superiority to US forces in 2005. Both Kilcullen and Marston argued that the British military performance in Iraq and Afghanistan had proven inferior to US forces with the former not living up to its reputation for excellence in small wars.

relatively strong track record. This is remarkable for a small military routinely tested by concurrent deployments stretching its scarce human resources across a global empire.

Many of the best known thinkers about COIN, or "small wars" as British officer Sir Charles Edward Callwell once defined this special type of conflict,[3] are of British origin; many gained their experience in the tough frontier environment of the British Empire.[4] The influence of French practitioners and theorists David Galula and Francois Trinquier on U.S. thinking during the recent Iraq war is well-known. However, the French school of experience from Algeria and Indochina was not the only European influence on U.S. COIN theory and practice. The seminal FM 3-24 manual produced in 2008 during General David Petraeus's period as Commandant of the Combined Arms Centre in Fort Leavenworth, and implemented by him as Commander of Multi-national Forces Iraq, was also strongly influenced by the writings of other British officers and theorists such as General Sir Frank Kitson, Sir Robert Thomson and Field Marshal Sir Gerald Templer. For better or worse the new U.S. appreciation for "population-centric COIN," and the proportionate use of violence, falls firmly within the British tradition–

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[3]Sir Charles Edward Callwell, *Small Wars: Their Principles and Practice,* 3rd ed. (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1906).

[4]It is hard to find a part of the British Empire that did not offer some form of local rebellion or political opposition to British rule. Even New Zealand, famed for its relatively peaceful politics, produced a fierce Maori-based insurgency that resulted in formal treaty being signed between the two parties in 1840. More famously, the British and their local allies faced a constant state of low level war on the North West Frontier Province of imperial India. See General Sir Andrew Skeen, *Passing It On: Fighting Pushtuns on Afghanistan's Frontier*, ed. Robert H. Baer and Lester W. Grau (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Foreign Military Studies Office, 2012). [Orig. pub. 1932.]

particularly the use of minimum levels of force and emphasis on developing legitimacy in the eyes of the local populace.[5]

The aforementioned list of illustrious British names can provide an impression of inherent British military brilliance, and unbroken success, at COIN. However, some contemporary academics such as Dr Andrew Mumford and Frank Ledwidge argue that consistent British excellence in COIN and "small wars" is not only misleading but is an outright "myth."[6] Mumford highlights the campaigns where British forces violated their own principles supposedly codified in the thinking of Thompson *et al*. It is not the focus of this document to argue for, or against, outstanding British achievement in COIN, consistency in application of theory, or, a long-term legacy in that field of military endeavour. The enduring respect outside the UK for British COIN theorists is in itself strong evidence that for all its faults there is something of broader value in the British approach–be that brilliant, flawed or sometimes a combination of the two.

The premise for this thesis is that significant lessons for COIN doctrine, theory and future operations can be found by a broader examination of British COIN campaigns. In short, it is essential to go beyond the relatively successful campaigns in Malaya, Oman and Northern Ireland and seek out the less fashionable, unsuccessful campaigns. The campaign in South Arabia from 1962-67 is just such a neglected but important conflict.

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[5]See U.S. Army, Field Manual (FM) 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5, *Counterinsurgency* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2006), Chapter 7; U.K. Army. Field Manual, Volume 1, Part 10, *Counter-Insurgency Operations* (London: Ministry of Defence, January 2010).

[6]For a different assessment of the UK's performance in counter-insurgency, see: Andew Mumford, *The Counter-Insurgency Myth: The British experience of irregular warfare* (London: Routledge, 2012); Frank Ledwidge, *Losing Small Wars: British military failure in Iraq and Afghanistan* (London: Yale University Press, 2011).

The specific area analysed within this thesis is the performance of the UK's intelligence organisation. Exploring the effectiveness of the intelligence structure is useful for two reasons: one, as a means of identifying universal themes for how intelligence should, and should not, operate in COIN campaigns; two, to highlight any significant strategic and operational lessons within the South Arabian campaign that retain relevance for future US and UK operations. It may be a comparison that makes many within the military uncomfortable but the similarity between the end of the British campaign in South Arabia and recent operations in Iraq and Afghanistan cannot be dismissed. In South Arabia, the military's mission changed to pursuit of an exit strategy once a political decision was made to withdraw rather than continue to pursue the original political objectives. The shift in mission had a profound impact on the ability to collect intelligence and develop the nascent institutions of the would-be state.

<u>Intelligence Performance in South Arabia–Thesis Structure
and Summary</u>

This thesis assesses the intelligence component of the UK's South Arabian campaign; particularly the role of the military within the intelligence organisation, how adequate it was at the inception of the campaign and the response to the searing experience of ever increasing violence. The thesis examines the issue in five parts. Chapter 1 provides the introduction explaining the thesis, a narrative of the overall campaign and assessment of the long term significance of the conflict. Chapter 2 outlines and analyses the political and military structures in which the intelligence organisation operated and a brief explanation of the key theories and models that underpin intelligence within the British Army (particularly the eight core principles of intelligence). Chapter 3

focuses on a key aspect of intelligence–the application of the principle "centralised control" and how well this was done within the South Arabian campaign. Chapter 4 explores the contentious issue of intelligence exploitation–particularly the interrogation of terrorist suspects and the challenges in developing a functioning organisation that can do so legally and legitimately. Chapter 5 encompasses all of the themes and assesses the enduring relevance of the South Arabian campaign by comparing its lessons to recent UK and US experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan. It concludes with a brief examination of the degree to which the British military was open to institutional learning from its experience and what this means about forming "learning organisations" within the military.

Further research of declassified documentation is required to provide a comprehensive answer to the above questions. The written record is not centrally held within any one archive; much may still exist in the various Regimental and Corps archives within the British Army. In the UK's National Archive material relating to South Arabia is scattered across Ministry of Defence, Colonial Office, Cabinet Office, War Office and Foreign Office records. However, all is not bleak; the generation of civilian intelligence personnel, colonial office civil servants and the military who fought in the conflict has reached a very mature age but remains available for interview. Their insights and perspective were impressively sharp, clear and vivid.[7]

From the research and analysis conducted for this thesis it is assessed that that the overall intelligence organisation was quickly overwhelmed in 1964-65 by a complex insurgency and struggled to adapt to the threat. The intelligence structure lacked the

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[7]The contribution made from retired military and civilian sources in interviews conducted was invaluable. All preferred to not be directly quoted within this thesis; however, their comments and insights helped shape the overall narrative and analysis.

resources, local expertise, and leadership to adapt and prevail. The arrival of sound institutional knowledge to fully utilise previously effective British techniques successful in Malaya and Kenya was too late to have an effect due to the UK government's change of national policy in 1966. The UK decision to abandon its treaty commitments to the would-be Federation of South Arabia and withdraw all military forces by 1968 was critical to the overall defeat. It inhibited the ability of British forces to develop meaningful contact and establish credibility with the local populace to gain human intelligence. Finally, within the British intelligence community there was a reliance on an informal network of experienced individuals brought in to fix a broken system. This approach is sensible in a crisis but shows the lack of a formal learning structure that automatically incorporated operational lessons into its institutional memory. The lack of institutional learning and reliance on gifted, experienced individuals was enough to muddle through in Malaya and Kenya but proved inadequate for the situation in South Arabia.

At the end of the war the experience of the military within the intelligence community in South Arabia seems not to have been "formally" incorporated into the corporate memory of the British Army or Intelligence Corps. Individuals who served in South Arabia took their hard-earned experiences within them into subsequent conflicts in Oman and Northern Ireland. However, there does not seem to have been any formal review of performance or even record of lessons from those who served in South Arabia. That may seem like a dry, academic point but for the present generation within the British Army who had to re-discover the same lessons about intelligence in Iraq and Afghanistan it is a very practical and professionally relevant issue. Before examining the intelligence

lessons from the conflict in chapters 3 to 5, it is necessary to provide some appropriate

context through a brief overview of the British campaign in South Arabia.

<u>South Arabia–The Unwanted Entry on the
British Army's COIN Curriculum Vitae?</u>

Between 1962 and 1967 the UK attempted to peacefully decolonise on favourable

political and military terms. The strategy was to help its local tribal and Adeni allies

establish a new federal state in South Arabia that would consent to a long term UK

military presence within its borders and be politically and economically oriented towards

the UK and wider western world. However, the UK faced fierce opposition from a rural

insurgency and urban terrorist campaign by a complex insurgency comprising at least two

major factions. Both were armed, guided and supported by Republican Yemen and the

Egyptian Intelligence Services (EIS). The international community was firmly anti-

British as the anti-colonial narrative pushed by Egypt, Yemen and the insurgents found

strong support in the United Nations General Assembly, the USSR and even within the

UK.[8] Despite British efforts to cope by declaring an "Emergency" on 10 December 1963,

the violence persisted in 1964 and then escalated sharply in 1965.[9] The National

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[8]The Labour Party within the UK was the main opposition party in 1962. They were a socialist party and had strong links to the Aden Trades Union movement–despite the latter undermining British rule and supporting political violence.

[9]The "Emergency" was a legal distinction used by the British to great success in other conflicts that in contemporary times would be called COIN campaigns. It is probably best known from the Malayan Emergency. An "Emergency" could be called in a Crown colony for which the British monarch had direct sovereignty and therefore had the direct authority to amend the powers of the local executive, legislature and judiciary. It had the benefit of allowing local civilians to claim insurance for attacks against their property as it classified the violence as "terrorism" or "banditry" rather than an act of war (the latter being precluded by most insurance companies). Within an Emergency the local government was given specific powers for an indefinite period of time as recognition of

Liberation Front (NLF) and Front for the Liberation of South Yemen (FLOSY) were able to weaken the UK and Federal government's position in the traditional tribal areas (most famously "the Radfan") before launching an increasingly effective terrorist campaign in Aden. The UK found itself conducting a full-scale COIN campaign against a well-armed enemy that it did not understand and increasingly lacked an intelligence capability that could reduce this critical weakness.

By 1966 the ruling party in the UK had changed from the Conservatives to Labour; the latter reversed the previous fifteen years of UK effort in South Arabia by publically abandoning its commitment to support the Federation of South Arabia. Critically, upon independence in 1968 there would be neither a permanent British military base nor honouring of the UK's security treaties with its local allies in the Federation. The political goal had shifted to an exit strategy. The remainder of 1966 and 1967 saw UK forces and the institutions of the would be Federation of South Arabia struggling to cope with sharply increasing violence and gradual loss of credibility as the local population anticipated the impending victory for the insurgents. The British military effort to at least train the security forces of their local ally to an adequately loyal and competent standard also foundered. The mutiny of Federal troops and police in Aden on 20 June 1967 showed the world in gruesome terms how ineffective this approach was at

the seriousness of the threat from political violence but with the understanding for all involved that it would be a temporary imposition of those measures and not a permanent change in civil rights. Typical measures taken were suspension of habeas corpus, use of the military to support the civil authority, internment without trial of suspected terrorists, restrictions on the right of trades unions to strike etc. As Aden was the only area within the Federation of South Arabia that was Crown Colony technically it was the subject of the "Emergency" status; however, the political subversion ran throughout the rest of South Arabia into the Western Aden Protectorate and Eastern Aden Protectorate so the entire campaign goes beyond Aden.

stemming the political subversion from the NLF. In the full glare of the world's media

the local security forces in Aden mutinied and took over the town; in the process twenty

two British soldiers were killed and twenty seven wounded.[10] The remainder of the

campaign saw the UK military conducting a fighting withdrawal in the midst of two

factions of insurgents engaged in a civil war with each other for political power while

British politicians attempted to find some credible group to hand over official

government to. Based on the original political objectives prior to the U-turn in 1966 the

campaign was clearly a defeat. Even based on the new objectives of withdrawal and

stability it was at best 50 percent successful. Either way, it was an ugly period and a

difficult experience.

The South Arabia campaign has tended to be overshadowed by analysis of the

more successful campaigns in Malaya and Oman. This hazy memory is understandable as

the conflict was a frustrating, unpleasant event in the post-World War Two history of the

British Empire. It should be no surprise that the enduring lessons are not well known

within the U.S. military as they are nearly equally obscure within the British military.

Outside of the Royal Marine Commandos and a few British Army regiments that were

heavily committed in 1967, the general understanding and awareness of the campaign

within the modern British military is not particularly strong.[11] Since the 1960s it has

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[10]Jonathan Walker, *Aden Insurgency: The Savage War for South Arabia* (Staplehurst Spellmount Ltd, 2005), "Chapter XII Mutiny," for a detailed account of the mutiny and the various political and tribal factors that triggered it. DEFE 11/533, UK National Archive, Kew, declassified records of the Ministry of Defence, Middle East Command (MEC) for the primary source report into the mutinies (including a breakdown of the casualties).

[11]In 2005 it was brought back into the updated, compulsory professional military education course for British Army Captains prior to promotion to Major and in 2010 was

received, at best, inconsistent attention in professional education for officers and soldiers.[12] The wider cultural memory within the British Army places little emphasis on Aden; as an anecdotal measure of prominence it has inspired considerably less artwork in Regimental Messes than is dedicated to Malaya, Ireland or any conventional conflict.[13] Where it is known it is infamous as an exercise in imperial frustration, the often excessive use of force, political-military dissonance over ends, ways, means and risk, and the total disaster of a publically announced timeline for military withdrawal from the region.

Intriguingly, some aspects of the conflict are also known for innovation. In particular, the further development of Special Forces unconventional and irregular warfare skills would prove critical in the subsequent Dhofar campaign in Oman. Less well known is the impressive innovation by the army to improvise a totally new plain clothes intelligence collection and strike capability within regular army units–the army's

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included as a Case Study in the latest edition of the British Army COIN manual. Its return to professional military education was noted by the instructors as being an innovation. It received zero attention at RMAS in 2003 and within Intelligence Corps officer training in 2004 (author's own experience).

[12]In 2002, the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders Officers' Mess (now 5 SCOTS) was something of a shrine to its experience in Aden; this is an anomaly (author's own experience).

[13]With the exception of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders for whom it has great significance as their prominent public role in the campaign was a major factor in saving the Regiment from disbandment in the various 1960s Defence Reviews. Artwork in the various Messes of the British Army is a good barometer of the extent to which a particular campaign was absorbed into the army's cultural consciousness. There are few Messes without art relating to the World Wars, the Cold War, the Falklands War, Northern Ireland from 1969 onwards (not the defeat in "the South" in 1921), Bosnia, Kosovo, Iraq and the most recent Afghanistan conflict. However, art dedicated to the murkier twentieth century imperial conflicts in India, Cyprus, Palestine, Kenya and Aden is comparatively rare.

"Special Branch" that struck back against the insurgents.[14] Similarly, a multi-agency intelligence exploitation centre was built and developed from scratch during the conflict yet by 2003 there was little sign of the Aden experience in the training and institutional memory of the Intelligence Corps.[15]

Finally, the specific area of the role of military intelligence personnel to the overall intelligence effort in support of this complex campaign has received relatively little attention. The neglect of at least two areas above–development of effective human intelligence networks within Islamic society and creating a bespoke intelligence exploitation centre–is particularly unfortunate as these provided major challenges in Iraq and Afghanistan. This being the case, analysis of the military intelligence support to the campaign is the key theme within the overall thesis. The criteria for assessing the intelligence organisation in South Arabia are covered in chapter 2. First, an explanation of the relevant historical context of the British position in Aden and the wider South Arabian Peninsula is necessary.

<u>Aden–The Only Arab Colony in the British Empire</u>

Prior to British colonisation, Aden was a historic Arab settlement on the tip of the Arabian Peninsula close to the sea lanes linking West Africa, the Arabian peninsula and the Indian sub-continent. Its relationship with the outside world was always complex; its geography linked it to Africa, Asia and the Indian Ocean while its mountainous and arid

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[14]Jonathan Walker, "Red Wolves and British Lions," in *COIN in Modern Warfare*, ed. Danield Marston and Carter Malkasian (Oxford, Osprey Publishing, 2010), 150.

[15]Author's own experience.

desert interior made it difficult to develop and govern–especially for an outside force. For the British it presented a minor challenge within their overall global empire albeit with some peculiar local characteristics. Aden and the surrounding rural territories ruled by tribal leaders were never a single nation-state, or unified political entity, comparable to the princely states incorporated by the British into Imperial India. Aside from being Britain's only Arab colony, the settlement in Aden was something of an anomaly in terms of the character of British rule. Aden was a British Crown Colony following its capture by troops from Bombay in January 1839; it was ruled from Bombay before the British Colonial Office assumed responsibility for government in 1937.[16] Consequently, Aden was a low priority investment that received an economy of effort approach from the British state; the surrounding tribal territories remained more or less untouched. Their leaders were sought for peace treaties to protect Aden from invasion and resist any overtures from the unfriendly Imam who ruled in Yemen but there was no direct British rule, or troops, stationed in tribal areas.[17] Although it all made sense to imperial decision makers across generations, the lack of political, economic, infrastructure, cultural, social and military investment in Aden and the neighbouring tribal states meant that the British position was unusually weak by the time it attempted decolonisation in the 1960s.

It may have proved short-sighted in the long run but there was a reasonable basis for the minimalist British approach. The strategic rationale for seizing Aden was as a

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[16]Walker, *Aden Insurgency*, 4.

[17]Sir Kennedy Trevaskis, *Shades of Amber: A South Arabian Episode* (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1968) provides a first-hand account of the parlous state of the British presence in South Arabia before the outbreak of the Emergency see "Part I: The years of complacency, 1951-3 (and before)."

coaling station to improve the sea lines of communication to India and to help project

power into British possessions in the Horn of Africa. Tellingly, the reason for Aden's

acquisition into the Empire was as a means to a greater end in India and Africa and not as

an end in itself or to achieve ambitious political goals in the Arabian Peninsula.

Subsequently, expediency and economy of effort shaped the extent of British

commitment to Aden. British colonists were small in number and the usually

comprehensive political, social, religious, economic and educational developments were

uncharacteristically limited compared to colonial efforts in Africa and the Indian Raj.[18]

Consequently, when it came time to decolonise and create a friendly pro-British state in

the 1960s the many favourable socio-economic conditions present in other colonies (such

as Malaysia, Singapore, Nigeria, Tanzania or Kenya) were minimal or simply absent. The

poverty of political, human, material and infrastructure resources also made an

insurgency more likely to develop and more difficult to defeat due to the existence of

genuine and diverse political grievances amongst the local populace. The attempt to

decolonise on preferential political and military terms in the face of an insurgency

sponsored by external powers (Egypt and Republican Yemen) ultimately proved too

difficult. The lack of help from key allies (including the United States) and Britain's self-

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[18]Walker, *Aden Insurgency,* Ch I, 2-4 for the early history of the Crown Colony and the lack of British investment. This view is corroborated by General Sir Peter De La Billiere when on secondment from the British Army to the Federal Regular Army (FRA) in 1962-63. He described British lack of interest as "deplorable"–see De La Billiere, Peter, *Looking For Trouble: SAS to Gulf Command* (Glasgow: Harper Collins, 1994), 191.

imposed time limit raised the stakes even higher for the over-extended British military

already committed in Africa and South East Asia.[19]

Explaining the "Federation of South Arabia"–Aden Colony and the Protectorates

Developing a better understanding of the British campaign in the wider Arabian

Peninsula region has suffered from its being defined as "the Aden Campaign." Figure 1

gives a clear indication of the relative size of the constituent entities that comprised the

Federation of South Arabia and hints at the complexity of the problem for the UK and its

local allies.

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[19] It is often unappreciated that the Aden campaign was fought, in part, by units drawn from 24 Infantry Brigade. This same force was concurrently committed to meet British military obligations in East Africa and the rest of the Middle East. The Headquarters of 24 Brigade were deployed in Kenya for much of the early political subversion in South Arabia. The Malaya Emergency had developed into the Indonesian confrontation (1962-66) that also drew British attention and military resources.
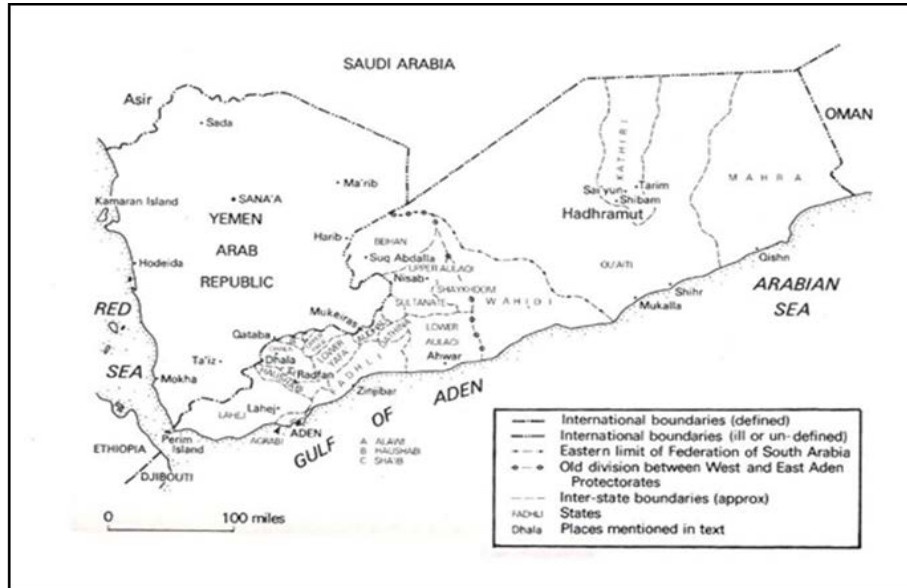
Figure 1.   The Arabian Peninsula in 1965: Republican Yemen
and the Federation of South Arabia

Source: Glen Balfour-Paul, *The End of Empire in the Middle East: Britain's Relinquishment of Power in her last three Arab Dependencies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). Map available online, http://alexchitty.wordpress.com/tag/aden/ (accessed 29 November 2012).

The understandable desire by historians to impose order on a complex topic by defining the conflict as "the Aden Campaign" is understandable but probably unhelpful. It encourages a perspective that places the Aden Colony at the centre of the conflict but neglects the importance of the political situation in the Protectorates. The political problem was understood by contemporaries to be much more complex than simply settling the disputes within Aden. There was no expectation that if the local politics in Aden could be mastered then the rest of the Federation would automatically follow suit. The political and security situation in Aden was certainly a significant factor in how the conflict evolved and was ultimately concluded. However, it was by no means *the* most important factor–particularly in the development of the winning insurgent group the

National Liberation Front (NLF). For example, the NLF established a strong position

through anti-British tribal warfare in the Western Aden Protectorate in 1964 before

becoming a force in Aden Colony through an urban insurgency using terrorist tactics. An

Aden-centric approach also underestimates the importance of the Egyptian and Yemeni-

sponsored violent campaigns in the Western Aden Protectorate tribal areas in the 1950s

that preceded the Aden Emergency but was central in persuading traditional local leaders

to pursue Federation and their own state.[20]

  This thesis does not refer to the conflict as "The Aden Campaign" or any of the

other terms popularly used as shorthand for the conflict. Although it is no doubt easier to

refer to the conflict as "Aden," "Aden and the Radfan" or even as "Yemen," that lack of

precision overlooks the complexity of the environment and makes it more difficult to

explain the interplay between the different areas that affected British strategy. There are

three key political entities that are referred to: one, the Aden Colony or Aden State; this is

the territory for which the British Crown had sovereignty and directly governed. Two, the

Western and Eastern Aden Protectorates containing the various Sultanates, Shiekhdoms

and Dolas of the traditional rural tribal leaders such as the Sutlan of Lahej, Yala

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[20]For example, Walker's outstanding history of the conflict *Aden Insurgency: The Savage War for South Arabia, 1962-67* uses "Aden" as shorthand for the conflict. In my view this goes against the grain of the overall thrust of his narrative that places the urban insurgency within Aden against the backdrop of Egyptian sponsorship of anti-British and anti-Federation violence by the NLF and tribesmen in the Western Aden Protectorate and the civil war within Republican Yemen. Mumford's chapter on Aden "The Turning Point: Aden and South Arabia, 1962-67" in *The Counter-Insurgency Myth: The British Experience of Irregular Warfare* (Abingdon: Cass Military Studies, 2012) begins by mistakenly describing Aden as a Protectorate rather than a colony (see 73) and then continues in the same vein. In my view this is one case where less is not more; therefore, readers must resign themselves to grappling to the long version "South Arabia campaign" for the whole war and enjoy the nuances between "Aden," "Federation," "WAP," and "EAP."

(including Abyan), Beihan, the Hawdramawt. Three, the would-be independent state "Federation of South Arabia" sponsored by the British comprising their local allies in Aden and the Western Aden Protectorate. Consequently, the overall conflict is referred to as "the South Arabia Campaign."

In summary, from this point onwards this thesis does not refer to the entire conflict as either the "Aden" or "Radfan" campaigns. Instead the overall British COIN campaign within the Federation of South Arabia is referred to as "the South Arabian Campaign." Nowhere will "Aden" or "the Protectorate" be used as shorthand for the Federation of South Arabia or for the entire campaign. When the terms "Aden," "the Radfan" or "the Protectorate" are used it is for those specific places, not as a term for the whole conflict. British actions within Aden and the Protectorates will be referred to within the context of the overall "South Arabia Campaign" but specifically by where they took place–for example, the British Army's reoccupation of Crater, Aden in July 1967; the deployment of "RADFORCE" to the Radfan, Western Aden Protectorate in May 1964. Similarly, "Yemen" is referred to as the Imam's Yemen or Republican Yemen and the covert UK support for the Royalist insurgency in Yemen is referred to as "the British-supported Royalist insurgency in Yemen."

It is worth taking time to explore the nature of the relationship between the UK and the various small tribal states within the Protectorates. The nature of the British position was not always well understood by contemporary British politicians and journalists who assumed a greater degree of British control over local government as was

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the practice in Africa.[21] However, in the Protectorates there was no British government

administration or British military presence and there never had been. This was in stark

contrast to the UK colonial administration in Africa where District Officers (effectively

local government) were a mix of locals educated and trained in the UK and British civil

servants. In the Protectorates, British interests were pursued by a "Political Advisor"

from the Colonial Office placed with the local leader to try influence the latter, develop

local governance and ensure that the alliance held. The advisor had no power beyond that

agreed by bilateral treaty agreed with the Sheikh and little or no British Colonial

administration to get things done as he would see fit. The regular British military troops

were stationed in Aden with only tribal levies comprised of locally recruited Arabs

present in the Protectorates. Therefore British interests could not be pursued by the quick

use of force or by turning to British civil servants to develop the local economy and make

favourable political decisions. They could only be achieved by persuasion of enigmatic

local Arab tribal leaders who often presided over their own tribes in very loose or tenuous

terms. As Sir Kennedy Trevaskis, the UK's Political Agent in the Western Aden

Protectorate and later High Commissioner noted when he first arrived in South Arabia:

"that in 1951 there should be a country and people such as these in the shadow of an

imperial base, which Britain had occupied for more than a hundred years, I found

incomprehensible."[22] His observation was both an exclamation of horror at the position

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[21]Trevaskis, 202-203.

[22]Trevaskis, 8. It is worth noting that Trevaskis was an experienced Colonial
Office figure with extensive service during World War Two, and after, in East Africa. He
requested an assignment to Aden as he found it an intriguing challenge. However, upon
his arrival he was concerned by the tenuous nature of the (limited) British administration
compared to his previous experience of British colonialism in Africa.

he was now in and a masterful insight into the chronic weakness of the British presence beyond Aden.

The political evolution of the "Federation of South Arabia" is also worth exploring briefly. "The Federation of South Arabia" contained the Aden Colony and the Western Aden Protectorate and eventually intended to include the Eastern Protectorate. The Federation initially comprised the alliance of tribal leaders in the Western Protectorate who finally agreed in 1960 to form this union after ten years of British encouragement. After even more protracted negotiations, the local leaders within the Aden Colony then agreed to join the Federation (pending Crown approval) to create "the Federation of South Arabia." Ultimately, this was the state the British and their local allies were trying to build, protect, and grant independence to in the face of an Egyptian and Yemeni sponsored insurgency. It is the state the latter two countries were determined to destroy and replace with something of their own creation.

Setting the Context: The UK's Political Challenge in South Arabia

The political challenge facing British leaders (particularly the High Commissioner) was to master the ever changing relationship between political leaders in Aden and their tribal counterparts in the surrounding rural areas in the Western and Eastern Protectorates. The health of the political relationship between these three separate groups was central to the viability of the British position and its attempt to enable their local allies to create the "Federation of South Arabia." Based on their original political objectives from 1963 (and reinforced by the Defence White Paper of 1964),[23] British

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[23]Julian Paget, *Last Post: Aden, 1964-67* (London: Faber and Faber, 1968), 113.

success would be defined by the survival of the Federation of South Arabia and its agreement for the UK to retain a permanent military base within their borders. The military challenge facing the British military was to somehow support this complex political balancing act through the judicious use of force to defeat political subversion and support stability. The theatre of operations would be simultaneously rural and urban. The rural area was a mountainous tribal region with little local infrastructure or government and few reliable allies along with an international border with Republican Yemen that had never been controlled. The second task was defeating political subversion, industrial action and terrorism in a densely population city with an unreliable local security apparatus and little understanding of local languages, customs and identity. Finally, the insurgency had external support from Republican Yemen and Egypt as well as an international community (including the United Nations and media) broadly sympathetic to the anti-colonial narrative. The issue of external support is worth briefly exploring as it was a key factor in achieving levels of violence and international political pressure that persuaded the British government to abandon the original political objectives.

External Support: Royalist Yemen, Republican Yemen and Egypt

The situation in Yemen and Egypt is often simplified in ways that are also unhelpful to achieving greater clarity. For example, there is often no differentiation made between pre-coup Yemen under the rule of the Imam and Republican Yemen propped up

by Egyptian support.[24] Lack of precision with these terms makes it harder to understand the political nuances of the campaign and the reasons behind the ever shifting military balance of power in the conflict against the British. Understanding the subtle difference between Egyptian support and Republican Yemen support is beneficial as the former was using the latter as a vehicle for its unconventional warfare campaign in the Federation of South Arabia but not as an equal partner. To retain as much control as possible of the insurgency, the Egyptian Intelligence Services (EIS) did not always use Yemeni personnel even while using the Yemeni state as a proxy. For example, the EIS provided all the manpower for the personal manning Radio Sanaa–a key conduit for anti-British, anti-Federation propaganda operating from Yemen. This is a prime example of the subtle approach by the EIS that used the institutions of their client regime in Yemen to complement their own propaganda station Radio Cairo while retaining control of the overall anti-British campaign.

Within Yemen it is important to acknowledge the change between Royalist Yemen under the rule of the Imam and the pro-Egyptian Republican regime that followed the coup in 1962. There was an important consistency in the political goals and priorities to Yemeni subversion of British controlled and aligned territory in the Federation between the regime of the Imam and his pro-Egyptian Republican successors but a key difference in methods. Both tried to play the tribal game to their advantage; however, the combination of high quality weapons and anti-colonial, Arab nationalist propaganda

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[24]Mumford, *The Counter-Insurgency Myth*, notes the change in regime in Sanaa but without any distinction in the increase in quality of external support provided by the Egyptians and new Republican regime in Yemen compared to the Imam's Yemen.

under the Egyptian-sponsored regime of Republican Yemen was a significant increase in capability–particularly in the Western Protectorate.

The changing nature of the Yemeni state from absolute monarchy to republican military dictatorship is important when analysing the insurgency within the Federation of South Arabia due to the high levels of Yemeni immigration to Aden. The influx of Yemenis to the workforce in Aden had a substantial impact on the subsequent growth of anti-British trade unionism.[25] Similarly, it is worth asking the question why the Republican regime in Yemen was able, with the Egyptians, to support an anti-British insurgency in the Protectorates, when the Imam had failed to do so over many decades of trying. It suggests that the quality of external support, and not just the presence of external support, is a key factor in a successful insurgency.

<u>Aden's Colonial Heritage: A Society with no Sense of Itself?</u>

As previously explained, from 1937 Aden was a Crown Colony under direct British sovereignty. Unfortunately the legal clarity of its status was not matched by a similar cohesion in local political or social identity. There was a unique blend of peoples within local society resulting in four inter-related but distinct groups: British personnel assigned to Aden (not emigrants), Indians, working class Yemeni immigrants and local Adenis. The latter were mostly from the rural hinterland and still had some degree of affiliation to their tribe and the Sheikh or Emir to whom their tribe presently owed allegiance. The blend of peoples made Aden a unique place within the British Empire; for all the heat, flies and poverty it also made it intriguing and even exciting. What it did not

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[25]Trevaskis, 95-96.

do was create the ideal conditions for the development of a nation state, a clear political identity or even a cohesive society.

The British personnel viewed Aden as an often unwelcome, hopefully temporary, destination in their careers and not as a going concern in which they would invest their time, effort and lives (unlike Hong Kong or Singapore). By the early 1950s it was not viewed as a place for energetic young Colonial Office figures to make their name; it was a backwater to be avoided or endured. The culture of complacency amongst the British community living in Aden was remarked on by Sir Kennedy Trevaskis; a career Colonial Office official with a strong record in Eritrea, he noted the extent to which the British in Aden lived amongst the local people but still understood little of their language, customs, religion or perspective on life.[26] This lax British attitude may have been appropriate in that other pocket of British sovereignty by the sea, Gibraltar, but it was little help in a region increasingly swept by strong forces of Arab nationalism. If any kind of British spirit could have prevailed in those conditions it was the attitude of entrepreneurs and innovators in Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia. There was little sense of urgency to develop Aden into a stronger state with the British community occupied by the reassuringly predictable social calendar of regattas, races, Christmas and New Year social events.[27]

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[26]Trevaskis, 6-7. For example: "One met a few [Brits] who said that they 'simply adored Arabs' as if they were talking of kebabs, and one met a few who frankly said that they could not stand the sight of them. But, as for the majority, they were merely indifferent."

[27]Trevaskis, 16.

The Indian community in Aden had developed local roots little deeper than their British counterparts and no apparent interest in viewing Aden as anything other than a means to their own ends. For Indians trading and working in the administration in Aden their goal was to achieve prosperity and return to India on favourable terms. There was little sense of commitment to developing a new identity or state (unlike among Indian immigrants to South Africa).[28]

The local Adenis and Yemeni immigrants were probably the two most problematic, but most important, groups from the perspective of building a cohesive society with a viable political identity. From the British perspective, the latter group became especially dangerous as the 1960s saw the rise of anti-British violence sponsored by Republican Yemen and their overlord Nasser. The narrow elite of local Adenis who had lost their tribal roots and prospered in the British colony were unable to construct an inclusive political narrative that won over the ever larger waves of Yemeni immigrants. The local Adenis who retained their tribal links were equally unreliable, as their political loyalties depended upon the current stance of the Sheikh or Emir presently leading their kin inland.[29]

Finally, there was not a strong political, economic or social connection between the elites within Aden and the various tribal entities that comprised the Western and Eastern Protectorates. This lack of contact may seem odd at first sight but is less so if the economy of effort approach to colonisation of Aden is remembered. The policy towards the interior was simply to establish broadly friendly relations with the local Sheikhs and

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[28]Ibid., 4-5.

[29]Ibid., 8-9.

thereby create buffer zone of tribal allies who would indirectly prevent any aggression from the Imam's Yemen from seriously threatening Aden. As an expedient of imperial policy that avoided the costly commitment of precious resources it was a policy that was at least realistic, economical and pragmatic. However, as a prelude to nation-building against the clock (as COIN often becomes) it was far from the ideal beginning.

<div align="center">

Britain and the Western Aden Protectorate and Eastern Aden Protectorate

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As noted above, the Protectorates were not British possessions under direct rule but a buffer zone for Aden created by many bilateral treaties with traditional local rulers. They were not colonies, were not under British sovereignty and had no collective political identity in even an embryonic form until the leaders of the Western Aden Protectorate formed the Federation of South Arabia in the period 1959-62.[30] There were no British troops stationed in these territories nor was there British government or administration directly running local affairs. Instead there were a very small number of British officials responsible for engaging with the native leadership and pursuing British interests. What did this presence look like?

Effectively, the British presence was a man working mostly on his own with his actions loosely coordinated by his superiors in distant Aden. The Political Officer, known as an "Advisor," was answerable to the senior British Political Officer in the Protectorate, known as the "Agent," who in turn was accountable to the High Commissioner in Aden. All British personnel came from the Colonial Office–many with experience from other more developed colonies where they had greater direct control over local government.

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[30]Paget, 261; Trevaskis, 143.

Being a Political Advisor in the field was a unique challenge with great personal risk, limited resources, indifference from many in Aden and a consistently hostile opponent competing for influence in the Imam's Yemen and then from Egypt and Republican Yemen.[31]

The limited British footprint in the Protectorates was far from ideal but had not proved to be a serious problem from formally gaining Aden as a colony to the Second World War. During this period the goal was simply to have friendly relations with the local tribes and an accommodation with the Imam's Yemen, thereby providing security for Aden and minimal draw on precious British resources. The new realties for Britain from 1945 onwards meant a reappraisal of the status quo. The requirement to maintain a global military role–specifically lead responsibility for the defence of the Middle East from USSR-sponsored communist aggression–while managing the decline from empire and consequent diminishment of resources presented a whole new challenge. All of a sudden the economy of effort applied in the Protectorates was inadequate as a new political entity in South Arabia was envisioned as necessary to support a British military presence in the region and defeat the hostile forces of pan-Arab nationalism. It would not be easy; not only was the Imam's Yemen a competitor for control of the Protectorates (and even Aden) but the Sultanates, Sheikhdoms and Dolas that led the tribes within the Protectorates vied with each other for power, prosperity and influence.

It is an assumption within the anti-colonial narrative that the "rural tribal leaders" in South Arabia were illegitimate, governed poorly and did not represent their people.

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[31]Trevaskis, 12-14, for a first-hand account of the role of the advisor and its unique challenges.

During the time they were portrayed by Radio Sanaa, Radio Cairo and the UN General

Assembly as British imperial stooges. The rebel tribes in the Radfan also acquired a

mystique as enigmatic natives living in harmony within one of the most inhospitable

environments. As ever, neither is right. Both stereotypes fail to appreciate the variety of

local leadership, their connection to the outside world, canny understanding of regional

politics and sincere aspirations for a better future. It is also a mistake to think that the

rulers of the mini-states within the Western and Eastern Protectorates had firm control

over their people or their territory–they did not. Although they styled themselves as

"Sheikhs," "Emirs," or "Dolas" they really presided over tribal confederations and

operated patronage networks offering protection and favour to rule their subjects in only

the most rudimentary way.[32]

In summary, it is difficult to conceive a more challenging tapestry of human

geography than the menagerie of competing tribal leaders whose territories and peoples

surrounded the Crown colony at Aden. There could be no single approach–multiple

strategies had to be pursued simultaneously if Britain had any hope of achieving its

political objectives in South Arabia. The various political entities within the Protectorates

can be seen at figure 1. To highlight three that are illustrative of the extent of the

challenge facing the British, Egyptians and Yemenis (both regimes) in the Federation

Campaign it is useful to look at the Sultanates of Lahej, Yafa, and Beihan.

The Sultan of Lahej was the hereditary leader of the tribal territory neighbouring

Aden; developing sound relations with the Sultan of Lahej was a high priority for the

British as Aden had been ruled by the Sultan of Lahej prior to their arrival. By March

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[32]Ibid., 10.

1952, the Sultan was Ali; he was a young progressive leader with strong views on the importance of developing not just Lahej but also preparing South Arabia for independence from the UK. Sultan Ali was so committed to this course that he was prepared to be the first Sultan of Lahej to sign a formal "advisory treaty" with the British Crown. On paper, Sultan Ali was a fabulous choice. However, nothing was ever simple in South Arabia. Sultan Ali did strike a pragmatic approach towards the British but he had other qualities that made him a spoiler for the British. First, Sultan Ali's behaviour always had to be viewed in the context of his overriding need to be acknowledged as first among equals amongst South Arabia's tribal leaders. As a man he was energetic but also very proud, ambitious and sensitive to any treatment that could be considered a slight to his honour and position. Finally, although he was involved in kicking out his pro-Egyptian brother, he was a strong pan-Arabist and admirer of Nasser. In short, the Sultan of Lahej was enigmatic, essential but, unfortunately for the British, elusive.

The Sultan of Upper and Lower Yafa presided over a large, predominately undeveloped territory that also included the lucrative cotton-growing Abyan area.[33] A wild man firmly rooted in tribalism, he was the titular head of a group of competing tribal groups. By 1950 there was no indigenous government structure or administration in Lower Yafa with Abyan as a remarkable pocket of economic development. The latter was attributable to a British-enabled development project run the by the British agent with local support that turned Abyan into a beacon of economic productivity and developing government. By irrigating land and developing agricultural infrastructure the Abyan

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[33]Analysts of contemporary Yemen will be familiar with Abyan as a region currently suffering from chronic insecurity and strong anti-government forces–including AQAP.

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Cotton Project was created and had become by the early 1950s "an oasis of twentieth-century technology, presided over by a Board marketing about £1,500,000 worth of cotton every year."[34] However, prosperity, development and local governance did not guarantee loyalty to the British. From 1952-57 the Sultan allowed an anti-British, Egyptian sponsored, anti-colonial insurgency to develop under the leadership of his son Mohammed Airdus. This particular burst of violence and political subversion was unsuccessful.[35] However, it serves as a salutary reminder for any COIN theorists who argue that addressing the material needs of the people will automatically undermine any insurgency or prevent it from spreading. The development of better local governance and economic prosperity in Abyan did not result in strong political alliances with the Sultan of Upper and Lower Yafa, nor did it help build alliances across South Arabia.

The Emirate of Beihan directly bordered the Imam's Yemen with the latter perennially hostile to British influence in the area and keen to pressure the Emir into changing sides by abandoning the alliance with the British crown. The Yemeni towns Harib and Mareb acted as ideal staging posts for fomenting tribal subversion in Beihan. The rulers of Beihan were frequently on the frontier of the competition between the UK, its local allies and the ambitions of the Imam's Yemen. They would go on to be the front line against the anti-British insurgency sponsored by Republican Yemen and Egypt following the coup that overthrew the Imam in Sanaa in October 1962. Sheriff Hussein, the Emir of Beihan, would a staunch defender of the alliance with the UK and eventually a proponent of the Federation of South Arabia. However, British stooge he was not.

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[34]Ibid., 31.

[35]Ibid., 122-4.

When the Egyptians bombed his Emirate on 13 March 1964 he strongly urged the leadership of the Federation to insist on retaliation by the RAF. The strike was tactically successful but caused international condemnation so strong that Labour politicians and influential print media in the UK became even more concerned at British activities in South Arabia.[36]

External Support: The Critical Role of Egypt

Understanding the British defeat in South Arabia is impossible without examining the role of Egypt in Yemen, the Protectorates and in Aden itself. From 1950 onwards, Egypt was the driving force for anti-colonialism and increasing its influence in South Arabia. It effectively pushed three campaigns: one, against the Imam in Yemen that resulted in the pro-Egyptian Republican coup in 1962. The second effort was a campaign of anti-British propaganda, political subversion and outright violence by sponsoring local tribes to attack British tribal allies (such as the Emir of Beihan) in the Western and Eastern Protectorates. The third was pure political subversion against the British position in Aden by encouraging and aiding the trade union movement to oppose British rule. Central to all three campaigns was provision of weapons but more importantly education in Egyptian universities, funding for propaganda, strategic guidance, support at the UN, and information operations from Radio Cairo. For a population that was aware of a general sense of Arab identify but largely illiterate and not well connected to the outside world, the influence of Radio Cairo was disproportionately effective. Its subversive effects were noted in the rural and urban areas–a notable achievement for the Egyptians.

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[36]Ibid., 208-10.

However, the role of Egypt was not as clear as that of the North Vietnamese in their war against US forces in South Vietnam. There was no equivalent of entire Regiments of North Vietnamese troops marching down from Yemen to directly contest control of the Protectorates. Egypt's own descent into a quagmire of expensive and near disastrous occupation in Republican Yemen (at one point approximately 60,000 troops were deployed there) complicated, but did not stop, their sponsorship of the anti-British insurgencies. Nevertheless, there was a consistent trend of anti-British and anti-Federation subversion from Egypt via their local ally, at times proxy, Republican Yemen. Ultimately, the failure to overcome the Egyptian anti-colonial narrative was one of the central reasons for the British defeat in South Arabia.

The Drive for Federation

The political vision for developing a state comprising the tribal territories of South Arabia's interior with the relatively developed Aden colony has often been laid at the door of the British. It is not a scheme that has attracted much praise from historians or many defenders claiming that it could have succeeded. Without embarking upon a pointless debate about counter-factual possibilities, it is worth noting two things: first, the state that followed the demise of the would-be Federation of South Arabia became a Communist dictatorship that enjoyed little popularity as it presided over woeful standards of living and political oppression (more on the long term impact of British defeat below). Second, and more importantly, the idea of creating a Federation uniting the tribal leaders of the Protectorates with each other and then with the Crown colony in Aden was proposed by the British in the 1950s, rejected by their local allies but then resurrected at the behest of the latter as they realised it was the best vehicle for their achieving their

own objectives for their people. Any idea that Federation was an insidious British plot foisted on hapless tribal allies that had little resonance with the various political communities in South Arabia is consistent with anti-British propaganda of the period but not with reality.

The harsh fact facing British Colonial Office political agents, British soldiers, Egyptian Intelligence officers and local Adeni trades unionists alike was that there was no single, coherent political nation in South Arabia to be "oppressed" or "liberated." Legitimacy and governance meant very different things from clan to clan, tribe to tribe, Shiekhdom to Sheikhdom or amongst the working class of Aden. The Egyptian-sponsored, anti-British trade unionists in Aden had no more legitimacy amongst the tribes of Beihan, Lahej and Abyan than the British–they had considerably less so than the local Arab leaders of the tribes in those areas (no matter how rudimentary rule by the latter may be).[37] Anyone who claimed to speak for "the people" of South Arabia was at best being fanciful and at worst disingenuous–there was no single "South Arabian people" to be spoken for. The British and Egyptian campaigns would be a contest between local coalitions led by those external powers to build a new state in South Arabia. To suggest one would inevitably lose the contest is the worst kind of determinist history and fails to appreciate just how tight the competition was for contemporaries.

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[37]Trevaskis, 172. The credentials of Asnaj et al. were never scrutinized by the UN General Assembly or British Labour Party who assumed that the opposition forces to colonialism must by default represent "the people." However, when High Commissioner Sir Kennedy Trevaskis asked Abduallah Al Asnaj, Secretary General of ATUC to name any clans that followed him. The answer was zero. Also, Al Asnaj was unable to even name any of the Clans that lived in the WAP yet he claimed his movement spoke for the oppressed masses of South Arabia.

<u>Understanding the War in South Arabia–Cold War Context</u>

As noted earlier, the South Arabia campaign comprised the Aden Emergency and guerrilla war in the surrounding Protectorates and ended with the total withdrawal of all British military forces in November 1967. Shortly after, the UK was compelled to recognise the NLF (the insurgents who defeated British forces and their local allies) as the government of the new Peoples' Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY). The political context for the war came from the attempt by post-war Britain to retreat from empire with grace but also retain influence within the region due to its strategic military, economic and political importance. A critical point that is sometimes overlooked is the Cold War political-military context that drove the original British political vision for its role in the region and therefore its presence in South Arabia. The key issue was the division of responsibility between the US and UK. Until Britain's withdrawal of military forces from the Middle East in 1971, it was the UK that had the lead for securing this critical, oil-producing region from the forces of aggressive, USSR-led communism. It is easily forgotten now in the light of the UK's gradual decline from global power status since 1945, but, the overriding strategic imperative for Britain's political and military leaders was retaining a credible base in the region to defend the Middle East and not maintenance of the empire at all costs.[38]

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[38]DEFE 7/11, "Outline of Draft of Defence White Paper 1953," declassified Ministry of Defence records, The UK National Archive, Kew.

The British intent was to retain its ability to employ forces capable of securing the

Middle East from aggressive, expansionist communism led by the USSR threatening the

traditionally pro-British regimes in the region. It was formalised in the vision expressed

by consecutive British governments in the 1950s, after extensive consultation with the

Combined Chiefs of Staff (all World War Two veterans–including Field Marshall Slim),

in the Defence White Paper of 1953 and the subsequent Defence Review of 1957.[39] The

defence review recognised the difficulty of scaling back British defence spending and the

size of the military in line with new, harsh economic realities for the UK. It also

recognised an enduring British commitment to support its local allies in the region and

(implicitly) to remain a strong global player independent of the US and France and

capable of leading in the Middle East. The UK government foresaw a methodical British

retreat from Empire in which Britain retained a global, or at least regional, military

capability that would meet Britain's enduring Cold War and local security obligations.

Consequently, there was a requirement to develop and maintain a British joint military

force capable of rapid deployment in the Middle East and East Africa. The map at figure

2 is from a declassified Top Secret MOD document from 1953 on the UK's intended

strategy for defence of the Middle East in the event of World War Three occurring.[40] The

anti-colonial narrative developed by the Egyptians and Yemenis during the South

Arabian campaign tends to ignore this issue: the strategic thinking behind the UK's

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[39]Ibid.

[40]DEFE 7/11, Annex to MOD Chiefs of Staff Memo on Defence of Middle East, declassified Ministry of Defence records, the UK National Archives, Kew.

position in Aden was not to hold on to the empire at all costs but to be able to play a leading role in the next global war against the Soviet Union.
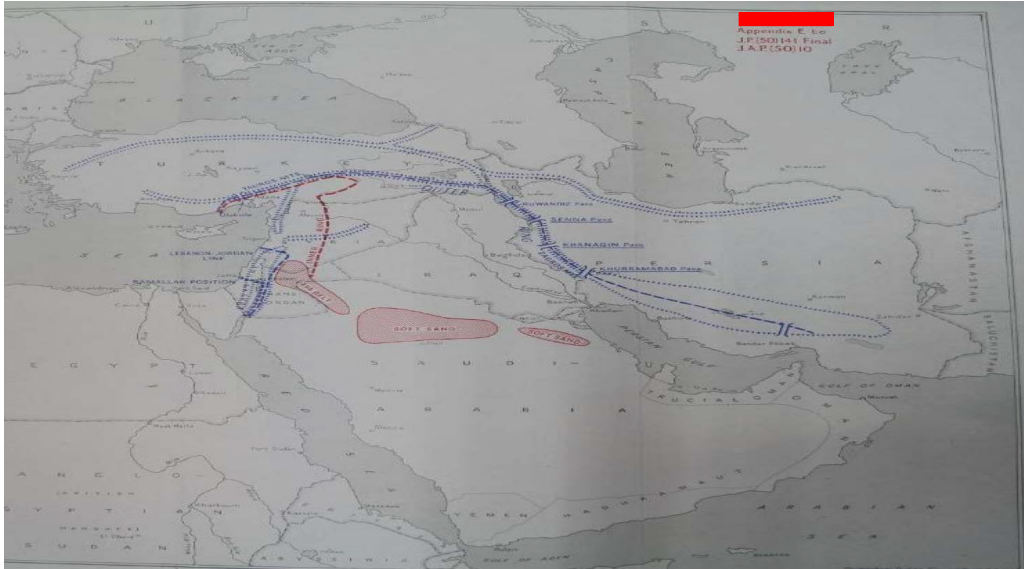
Figure 2.   UK concept of strategic defence of Middle East
in the event of a further global war, 1953

Source: UK Ministry of Defense (MOD), "Outline of Draft of Defence White Paper," (1953) declassified records, DEFE 7/11.

It may seem ambitious to contemporary eyes but it was in many ways a necessary approach as Britain retained defence commitments to protect long-term Arab allies such as Kuwait and the remainder of the Empire (now called "the Commonwealth") in Africa. As a well-established military and commercial port with excellent access to vital sea lanes linking Europe and the Far East through the Red Sea and Suez Canal, the facilities in Aden fit the bill (just). Intriguingly, in 1953 British defence planning considered Aden as the strategic centrepiece of Middle Eastern defence but rejected it as less suitable than

Egypt (Priority 1) and Israel (Priority 2).[41] However, the bitter experience of the withdrawal from the military bases in the Suez Canal Zone in 1954 and the disastrous British-French war to remove Nasser over the nationalisation of the Suez Canal company in 1956 resulted in a pragmatic shift in British strategy. The Defence White Paper in 1957 identified Aden as the centrepiece for the new joint Middle East Command that would lead and control this new, mobile, entirely professional military force.[42] However, there was little point in spending precious wealth and political capital on a large military base if the local political situation was not friendly and stable. Unfortunately, achieving this objective proved to be elusive and painful for all involved.

Defining Success–the British Political Objective in South Arabia

The political goal pursued by the British Colonial Office was to create a new state from the existing complex mix of direct Crown possessions and territories covered by ad hoc treaties with local tribal leaders. Aden itself was administered by the Colonial Office where the main concentration of British military and economic strength lay. Although not an easy proposition, it was more feasible to attempt to shape Aden's politics by the existing British political and military forces present than in the autonomous tribal entities within the Protectorates. Critically, loss of control of the Protectorates had the potential to cut Aden's land lines of communication with the rest of the Arabian Peninsula and generate an influx of anti-British tribal immigrants to Aden. The territory could also act

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[41]Chiefs of Staff Committee, Joint Planning Staff, "Military Problems in the Middle East Brief for the Minister of Defence," 12 January 1956, DEFE 7/11, declassified records of the Ministry of Defence (previously classified Top Secret), the UK National Archive, Kew.

[42]Walker, *Aden Insurgency*, 14-15.

as a secure rural base for a prolonged anti-British insurgency in Aden (as it ultimately did). This could be an important advantage for a small group of insurgents trying to stir a people into an anti-colonial consciousness–particularly as they became fired by nationalism and ultimately their own form of communism. There is little surviving evidence that the leaders of the insurgency in the NLF deliberately designed a Maoist-style campaign. Nevertheless, the reality of the weak British position in the rural areas was a reality they exploited as they gradually increased their influence in the Western Aden Protectorate before striking hard with an urban terrorist campaign in Aden in 1965.

For all the recognised challenges, the attempt to build the Federation of South Arabia did have some prospects of success–not least being Islamic and consistent with local customs. It was certainly less radical than the alternative state on offer; the enemies of the Federation had an equally new narrative in the shape of a weird, yet potent, mix of communism, Arab nationalism and the cult of Nasser's personality. The success of the British achieved in Oman suggests that the opposing force was not irresistible. In Oman the alliance of the local Sultan and coalition led by the UK defeated a similar mix of rebellious rural tribes and dedicated communists in the Dhofar insurgency from 1965-75. So, who were the ultimately victorious insurgents and how did the conflict with the British and their local allies unfold?

<p align="center">"Know the War you are Fighting"–the Nature
of the Insurgency</p>

The violence itself comprised a complex insurgency encompassing distinct rural and urban areas. In the Protectorates surrounding Aden there were autonomous rural tribesmen of a traditionally warrior-like society that were encouraged by Egypt and

Republican Yemen to attack the British position and their local allies who led the Federation. There were a bewildering array of factions within the insurgency but all were sponsored, or heavily influenced, by Egypt. They were: the National Liberation Front (NLF), the Organisation for the Liberation of Occupied Southern Yemen (OLOS), the People's Socialist Party (PSP), the South Arabian League (SAL), the Popular Organisation of Revolutionary Forces (PORF) and the peaceful in name only Aden Trades Union Congress (ATUC).[43]

ATUC and the PSP were closely related and drove the anti-British, anti-Federation campaign of strikes and protests that preceded the Emergency in Aden. They had extensive contacts and support amongst international trades' unionists–including the British Labour Party. However, ATUC and the PSP had little grasp of tribal politics in the Federation and no more mandate to rule "the people" they claimed to be trying to liberate from their traditional ruling families. Importantly, the socialist movement had many members educated in Cairo and it was to Nasser and the EIS they turned for guidance and support.[44]

The SAL was the association of tribal leaders in the Western Aden Protectorate who rejected the British-supported Federation and sought instead to form a local Arab-league style alliance with Egyptian support. The key figure within SAL was the Sultan of Lahej–as already noted a powerful and enigmatic young figure in South Arabia. SAL

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[43]Paget, *Last Post*, "Annex B–Nationalist Organisations," 262, provides an excellent summary of the perplexing factions within the anti-British and anti-Federation insurgencies.

[44]Trevaskis, *Shades of Amber*, 96-98.

proved a weak force but did provide a vehicle for dissident tribal leaders to gather around to then join more effective anti-British, anti-Federation groups–such as the NLF.[45]

The NLF was the ultimate victor in the South Arabian conflict. They were sponsored and directed by the EIS operating from Taiz and enjoyed a degree of support in tribal areas and in Aden. Their leadership was sufficiently centralised to be capable of receiving support from the EIS but also decentralised enough to be able to cope with the very different conditions of rural and urban insurgencies. It is an area worth further study but it is likely that the NLF was similar to modern insurgent networks in not being a strict hierarchy that mirrors western organisations. Instead it was probably an adaptive network based on familial links and patronage as much as it was on patronage and tight security measures. Of note, the NLF was consistently violent in its approach. It drove tribal violence in the Western Aden Protectorate in 1963-64 and then embarked upon a highly effective terrorist campaign that ripped apart the Aden police and Special Branch in 1964-65. Significantly, their political wing was less prominent than the other socialist factions making them more obscure to the British until late 1964. Even in 1967 it was the leaders of FLOSY who were sought out for negotiations by the British rather than the NLF.[46]

The Egyptians tried to rationalise this messy situation by encouraging the NLF and OLOS to combine into a new organisation that would end division and make external support easier. In January 1966 the Front for the Liberation of Occupied South Yemen (FLOSY) was created by this merger. However, it did not sit well with the NLF and by

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[45]Ibid., 110-116.

[46]Walker, *Aden Insurgency*, 72.

December 1966 they split away from FLOSY. The latter had to create its own militant

wing to fight the NLF hence the formation of PORF. The NLF then fought a fierce civil

war with their former revolutionary comrades in FLOSY-PORF. Ultimately, the NLF

prevailed thereby leaving many of the old ATUC and PSP figures who started the

Emergency and were associated with FLOSY out in the cold, in exile or dead.

Intriguingly, there is no sign of direct Soviet or Chinese support for FLOSY or the

NLF. The British Army became embroiled fighting a guerrilla war in the Western Aden

Protectorate against rebellious tribesmen and the NLF. Simultaneously in Aden it

conducted counter-terrorism against FLOSY and the NLF. In both areas it had only

locally recruited, and increasingly hostile, allies in the security forces of the Federation of

South Arabia for company. It was a confusing picture that set the British intelligence

apparatus a big challenge in disentangling the many factions, their external support and

competing political goals.

It was a protracted and often brutal war. The conflict has been characterised with

good cause as "the savage war in South Arabia."[47] In the mountainous Radfan region,

dead British soldiers were beheaded and their heads publically displayed by their

enemies.[48] In Aden grenade attacks deliberately murdered British civilians–particularly

the families of servicemen–with British soldiers decapitated by Radfan tribesmen in 1964

and murdered by mutinying local allies in 1966.[49] Even by the far from squeamish

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[47]Jonathan Walker, *Aden Insurgency: The Savage War in South Arabia*, 117 and 239.

[48]Paget, 74-75.

[49]Walker, "Chapter XII–Mutiny."

standards of British imperial conflicts, this was a deadly war with serious consequences for the combatants. It was at the political level that the British commitment is uncharacteristically weak.

As mentioned above, British servicemen displayed great dedication, selflessness and courage in the war. Yet the British military performance cannot be viewed with any sense of strategic, operational or tactical satisfaction. Ultimately, this was a very public defeat. Few of the successful operational or intelligence techniques that proved so effective in Malaya (and later in Oman) were employed successfully in Aden. The local Special Branch and intelligence structure that was critical to success in Malaya was recognised at British Cabinet and Combined Chiefs of Staff level as early as November 1965 as being inadequate in Aden and badly in need of reform.[50] Unfortunately for the British and their local allies, implementing meaningful reforms to address those shortcomings did not achieve success. The army and police were gradually drawn into an asymmetric conflict amongst the people that they lacked the precision, persistence, flexibility and size to overcome. In the Western Protectorate the deployment of the army similarly failed to stem the tide of NLF influence at the expense of the Federation.

<div align="center">Consequences of British Defeat in South Arabia–Poverty,
Terrorism, and Instability</div>

The outcome of the British defeat in South Arabia was not a joyous era of good governance and prosperity for the people of Aden and the former Protectorates. The

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[50]CO 1035 178, Declassified Colonial Office records, the UK National Archive, Kew, provides an insight into the parlous state of Aden Special Branch. From the surviving internal correspondence within the Colonial Office and across government in 1965, the dreadful state of Aden Special Branch was recognized a significant issue.

victors eventually formed the "People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, PDRY"; it was

the only Communist state in the Arab world. Not only was it an economically

underdeveloped, oppressive dictatorship that sponsored insurgency in Oman it was also a

haven for international terrorists seeking refuge from the reach of responsible

governments. Many of the hard-line Palestinian and ultra-left wing German terrorist

groups were given a safe haven to train and recuperate prior to committing atrocities

against Israel and the western world. Its fate post-unification with Republican Yemen has

been similarly poor. Despite their once lucrative oil and cotton sectors, Aden and the

Protectorates have been swallowed up into a united Yemen. In this chronic failing state

oil resources from Aden and Abyan were funnelled north to Sanaa to provide much

needed dollars to former President Salah's patronage network. Leaving aside the very

real threat from Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, there is a political movement for

restoring independence to the south (the "Southern Secessionists") yet it makes little

headway.

It was not appreciated at the time but the British failure to withdraw and leave a

stable state in Aden indirectly had significant negative long-term strategic consequences

for stability in the region and wider world. Even if one discounts the legacy of the

conflicts between the Peoples' Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY) and the Yemen

Arab Republic (YAR) before unification in 1990, modern day Yemen has significant

domestic political, economic, social and military challenges that threaten regional

stability.

Yemen's economic performance is substantially lower than the regional average.

It has a population of approximately 24 million and has benefited from oil and gas

reserves. Yet it ranks 154 out of 187 countries on the United Nations Human

Development Index (UNHDI) and performs poorer economically than its Arab

neighbours. Compare it to Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Oman: all had contact with the

British Empire and have populations of 28 million, 6 million and 2 million respectively

yet they rank a respectable 54, 96 and 89 in the UNHDI. Yemen's GNI per capita is

$2,213 compared to $23,274 for Saudi Arabia, $5,300 for Jordan and $22,000 for

Oman.[51] The economic forecast predicts further decline as Yemen runs out of exploitable

fossil fuels over the next 10 years and its agriculture sector breaks under the weight of

quat production and insufficient water resources. Its rates of illiteracy and poverty are

dire; there is little prospect for improvement while it ranks 164 out of 182 in the

perceptions of international corruption index.[52]

Internal political conflict and international terrorism is also rife within Yemen–

including the areas of the old British colony and Protectorates. There are at least two

significant domestic conflicts (arguable de facto civil wars or insurgencies) with the Shia

Huthis in the north and the southern secessionists in contemporary Aden challenging rule

from the capital Sanaa. Yemen has the dubious distinction of hosting arguably the most

technically capable and best led Al Qaeda franchise in the world - Al Qaeda in the

Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). AQAP was responsible for three major international terrorist

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[51]UN Human development index: Yemen, http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/
countries/profiles/YEM.html (accessed 29 November 2012); Saudi Arabia,
http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/SAU.html (accessed 29 November 2012);
Jordan, http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/JOR.html (accessed 29 November
2012).

[52]According to Transparency International-http://cpi.transparency.org/
cpi2011/results/ (accessed 29 November 2012).

plots against the US between 2009 and 2012.[53] The military struggle between the Yemeni

government in Sanaa and AQAP takes place in governates whose names would be eerily

familiar to the British soldiers and diplomats of the South Arabian campaign–Aulawi,

Abyan, Lahej, Shabwah, the Hadhramawt.[54]

It was not inevitable that British failure in South Arabia would result in the

creation of AQAP. However, it cannot be ignored that the failure to withdraw from

empire and leave behind stable government and prosperity set the conditions for

instability and state failure that led to the present situation. Even with the benefit of

hindsight, it is hard not to look ruefully at the failure to establish a legitimate,

economically viable, politically pluralistic state in South Arabia that lives in some degree

of harmony with its neighbours, regionally and the wider world.

The South Arabia Campaign–A Case Study for US-UK COIN in the Islamic World?

The wider geopolitical issues, and local political challenges, of the South Arabia

campaign resonate with British and American recent experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan.

It is also consistent with both states' official articulation of concerns over future threats

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[53]www.nctc.gov, "Counter-Terrorism 2012 calendar" published by the National Counter-terrorism Center for a day by day account of Yemeni-linked Islamic extremist terrorism (accessed 29 November 2012).

[54]Many of the most prominent recent AQ related terrorist events have revolved around Yemen. For example: the high-profile jihadist propaganda of Anwar Al-Awlaqi, a senior leader in AQAP and U.S. citizen and his subsequent death in a US CT strike in September 2011; Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab' the would-be pants-bomber from Christmas Day 2009; the failed mail cartridge attack on trans-Atlantic aviation in October 2010.

and conflicts in a similarly complex environment.[55] In many ways the South Arabia

conflict is a fine example of the so-called "wicked problem" all too familiar to the current

generation of US and UK policymakers, generals and soldiers alike. It remains under-

analysed–particularly in the critical sphere of military intelligence.

The lack of study and analysis of military intelligence is particularly unfortunate

as the strategic challenge facing British forces in creating and defending the would-be

"Federation of South Arabia" has many common themes with the contemporary British

and American experience of COIN. The challenges from South Arabia also chime with

the anticipated complex environment of the future: diverse local partners from different

cultures; nation building in areas of traditionally weak central governance; defeating a

complex enemy capable of operating in rural and urban areas; and, challenging the

external support networks from aggressive regimes providing external support to the

insurgency.[56]

A key difference between the South Arabia campaign and current experience is

the absence of a multinational invasion and subsequent occupation that ultimately

generated an insurgency and civil war. However, there is a significant similarity with the

nation-building and stabilisation effort in a complex Islamic society while working to

tough domestic political timelines. The British attempted to establish a state with a totally

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[55]UK Ministry of Defence study, *The Future Character of Conflict* (Shrivenham, DCDC, 2010), http://www.mod.uk/NR/rdonlyres/A05C6EB5-5E8F-4115-8CD6-7DCA3D5BA5C6/0/FCOCReadactedFinalWeb.pdf (accessed 29 November 2012); The US view is described in United States Joint Forces Command, *The JOE 2010: Joint Operating Environment,* http://www.fas.org/man/eprint/joe2010.pdf (accessed 29 November 2012).

[56]Ibid.

new form of government that was friendly to a long-term British military presence. The wider goal was that their new local ally would agree and honour a close strategic political relationship with Britain in the region. These goals and challenges resonate with our contemporary experience in Iraq and Afghanistan–particularly the latter attempt to develop centralised government amongst a tribal society with a history of regional autonomy, hostility to outsiders and weak central government based on personal patronage.[57]

Intelligence in COIN–The Value of a Historical Perspective

It is a major challenge to develop a competent military intelligence apparatus remotely capable of overcoming these myriad issues in contemporary operations. This was well-described in the influential Flynn report that examined US military intelligence failings in Afghanistan.[58] Given the similarities to the South Arabia campaign, it is unfortunate that military intelligence support there remains something of a historical black hole. It is very likely the US-led coalitions in Iraq and Afghanistan inadvertently re-learned lessons identified by the experience of British military intelligence in South Arabia. If nothing else, understanding what went right and what went wrong from that old campaign in the Islamic world could have served as a useful counter-point to the better known lessons from Malaya and Northern Ireland. The British Army in 2003 had a

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[57]Victoria Clark, *Yemen: Dancing on the Heads of Snakes* (London: Yale University Press, 2010).

[58]Major-General Michael T. Flynn, Captain Matt Pottinger, and Paul D. Batchelor, "Fixing Intel: A blueprint for making intelligence relevant in Afghanistan," Centre for New American Security (Washington DC, January 2010). Hereafter referred to as the Flynn Report.

largely Northern Ireland-based philosophy that was disproportionately influential on its approach to southern Iraq. An understanding of its own heritage, structures and TTPs from South Arabia would have been of much greater utility than focusing primarily on employing techniques developed within the UK.[59]

Britain: A Declining Imperial Power Doomed to Failure?

It is essential to place the British COIN campaign, and its military intelligence support, within the context of its time but outside a determinist narrative that sees British failure as inevitable. Historiography and analysis of the Aden campaign has suffered from an anti-colonial, Marxist determinist narrative. Largely based on crystal clear hindsight and political convictions, the "inevitable failure" narrative fails to appreciate the many factors that existed to suggest that the British campaign could have succeeded and was far from a doomed cause. There were many ingredients in place that could have supported a better military intelligence effort and ultimately a successful military and political British strategy.

The British campaign is usually portrayed as clumsy, nakedly oppressive, imperialism doomed to be overpowered by insurgents who had the full force of the 1960's irresistible anti-colonial energy behind them.[60] However, there was nothing inherently strong within the insurgency that gave it an unbeatable edge over the British. In reality the anti-British forces were far from united or overwhelmingly strong and had a Communist ideology that was far from consistent with local conservative Islamic values.

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[59]Frank Ledwidge, *Losing Small Wars* (London: Yale University Press), 24-25.

[60]Vitaly Naumkin, *Red Wolves of Yemen* (New York: The Oleander Press, 2004).

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There were four key areas that could have been exploited by the British to develop a better military intelligence organisation and adapt their campaign to achieve some level of success.

First, the ideology of the insurgency was not consistent with the traditional cultural and religious values of the local population in Aden or the surrounding Protectorates. The insurgency was led by overtly Arab nationalists loyal to Nasser; in Aden, FLOSY comprised socialists and communists. Neither pan-Arab nationalism nor communism is entirely consistent with traditionalist Islam, the socially conservative rural tribes or the merchant class dependent on Aden's external trade. The insurgents were also reliant on propaganda from Nasser's Egypt broadcast by Radio Cairo and Radio Sanaa. In short, the political narrative of the insurgency talked about freedom from external oppression but relied on direct support from a foreign power. It had at best an equal prospect of resonating with the local population if the Arab nationalist narrative as defined by Nasser could be discredited or undermined. These were decent prospects for friction between the insurgent, their sponsors and would be support base amongst the people that could be exploited by the British. Success could lie in emphasising key concepts within the existing layers of identity in local society: Islam, the tribe, rural autonomy and traditional resistance to outside interference. There was as much potential for British forces to exploit these conditions as there was for the Egyptian-backed insurgents to undermine the alternative British political narrative. There were certainly enough friendly strengths and enemy vulnerabilities for a vibrant, adaptive military intelligence organisation to get its teeth into.

Second, there was a high risk that the insurgents in South Arabia would lose credibility with their desired support base (the people of Radfan and Aden) by accepting external support from Egypt *and* from their traditional tribal rivals across the border in the Republican Yemen. The likelihood of that support becoming known amongst the people of South Arabia only increased as the support network by necessity was channelled through Aden's traditional northern rival. Throughout the British campaign in South Arabia, Republican Yemen was involved in its own civil war with Saudi and British-backed Huthi Royalist forces operating north of Sanaa. The regional rivalries, cultural friction and political risk of being perceived as dominated by Republican Yemen and Egypt were a risky cocktail for insurgents in South Arabia. There was little prospect of the British not detecting their support network as British mercenaries were in Republican Yemen supporting the deposed monarchy.[61]

Managing the political repercussions of external support complicated the already very difficult military task facing the NLF and FLOSY. They competed with each other while fighting the British and trying to woo two very different local communities: the deeply conservative, disparate tribes in the rural Radfan and the relatively well-educated, outward-looking workers in the thriving port city of Aden. The NLF's narrative of expelling external oppressors was vulnerable if they became perceived as pawns for their northern neighbours or for another aggressive Arab state with pretensions reminiscent of the Ottoman Empire. The Yemeni civil war created an additional vulnerability in the support network for the anti-British insurgents in Aden. It could have been exploited in military, political and propaganda terms to discredit the insurgency in the south. Overall,

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[61]Walker, *Aden Insurgency*, 127-128; De La Billiere, 208-211.

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it was a potential vulnerability for an intelligence organisation to identify and exploit if given sufficient time and resources.

Third, although lacking US support, the British imperial state was far from isolated or systematically incompetent. There were some reasons for expecting it to have the institutional capacity to adapt to the new challenge it faced and prevail. It had a long history in the region with many local allies not only in the would-be "Federation of South Arabia" but also in neighbouring Oman, Saudi Arabia and Jordan. None of those allies relished another state falling into Egypt's sphere of influence or the spread of communism in the region.

The historical narrative driven by the well-publicised punitive approach of "Mad Mitch's" Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders in Aden is that British forces were inherently out of their depth, overly punitive and essentially stood little to no chance of succeeding against their cunning, well-camouflaged indigenous foes. However, the British Army operated against similar cultural issues in Palestine in the 1920-30s. That was far from a model campaign, many aspects of it were outright disgusting in their pointless brutality,[62] but it does highlight a previous military experience in the Islamic world and that the UK was capable of a long campaign against a determined, local enemy.[63] Also, the British military presence in Aden was in itself not a new event. Apart from its strategic geographical location, it was the ideal place for the new Middle Eastern

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[62]Matthew Hughes, "The banality of brutality, 1936-39," *English Historical Review* 124 (2009), for an admirably blunt narrative of the British campaign in Palestine.

[63]Charles Townshend, "In the Aid of the Civil Power: Britain in Ireland and Palestine," in *COIN in Modern Warfare,* eds. Daniel Marston and Carter Malkasian (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2010).

Command as forces had been there for so long and at relatively little cost. No-one could claim that the British community had fully integrated into local society. However, compared to the fortified walls of the modern Green Zone in Baghdad, or ISAF's ring of steel around Kabul, there was substantial daily interaction with the local populace to provide the opportunity to build cultural knowledge and mutual connections. This provided a substantial opportunity to develop a competent military intelligence organisation and intelligence led campaign. If nothing else, it provided much better conditions of corporate knowledge to start a human intelligence network than existed in either of the modern Afghanistan and Iraq campaigns.

Fourth, the British Army, and state, had experience within that generation of servicemen and civil servants of simultaneously conducting decolonisation and COIN operations, with restricted resources, against communist insurgents. The success in Malaya has probably been used too many times–it certainly is cited as part of the "myth" of inherent British Army skill at COIN.[64] Nevertheless it is pertinent to the Aden campaign as an example that an economy of force military operation that starts poorly can adapt to succeed in an alien culture far from home. During the South Arabia campaign had British military leadership calculated it was beyond their means to achieve the political goals with the resources available to them they had excellent grounds for requesting an increase in support from the UK. The substantial resources employed to achieve success in Malaya was arguably less critical to Britain's strategic interests than success in Aden as the latter was the chosen location for Britain's new Middle Eastern Command apparently essential for the UK's leading role in the next global war. By

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[64]Mumford.

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definition, Aden was a key military base in a strategically important region that had already received substantial financial investment by 1966.[65] If the going got tough in South Arabia, and it did, there were sound reasons for the military to request greater support from the UK–at least an increase in intellectual effort, and collective sense of urgency, if not more military forces.

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[65]In October 1963 it was projected that over £4 million would be spent on housing in the short term with capital costs being £21 million in the longer term. See DEFE 11/541, declassified UK Treasury records, the UK National Archive, Kew.

CHAPTER 2

COMMAND, OPERATIONS AND INTELLIGENCE

There has in my view never been an intelligence machine which was not open to some criticism and which could not be improved.[66]
— Sir John Prendergast

I hardly dare repeat the recurring theme on the need for intelligence. The lack has hamstrung our operations and caused us unnecessary casualties. I am sure the point is not lost to the Gulf, but it may be harder to push in Whitehall because intelligence costs money.[67]
— Admiral Michael LeFanu

The success and failure of intelligence is a perennial topic of interest to all those concerned with military affairs and history. There is a lively literature concerned with the high profile issue of "intelligence failures" and an equally strong interest in official, and unofficial, accounts of great intelligence exploits.[68] It is a fair observation that the accounts of the latter are understandably less numerous and well-documented than the former. There is little point in having an outstanding intelligence apparatus–military or civilian–if it is compromised by public scrutiny of just what it does well and how. For

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[66]CO 1035 179, Declassified records from the Cabinet Office, the UK National Archive, Kew (formerly Top Secret).

[67]Middle East Command, Supplement to Newsletter 6, 30 November 1967, paragraph 22. From DEFE 11/541, declassified records from the Ministry of Defence, the UK National Archive, Kew. Previously classified Secret, the document was the regular situation report from MEC. This was the final report to CDS and the rest of the UK military establishment written by Commander in Chief Middle East Forces Admiral LeFanu. It is fair to say LeFanu pulled few punches in his valedictory report.

[68]John Keegan, *Intelligence in War: Knowledge of the enemy from Napoleon to Al Qaeda* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003).

any government or military to do so they would quickly lose the hard won advantage and expend precious resources regaining the edge over their opponents.[69]

The British policy towards publicising, or even acknowledging, intelligence successes is notably cautious. For example, current policy is not to comment on any aspect of UK Special Forces activity–no matter how successful. This is occasionally in contrast with the US; for example, the testimony to Congress by General Petraeus in 2008 that discussed the success of US and UK Special Forces operations against Al Qaeda in Iraq was not repeated by similar official disclosures in the UK. Despite the global fame of its most famous fictional agent, the Secret Intelligence Service (more popularly known as "MI6") was not officially acknowledged by the British government until 1994.[70] Given the culture of operational security and circumspection, it is not surprising that detailed accounts of the intricacies of the intelligence world are so sought after. However, a critical area within the military that is often overlooked is the relationship between the operations team and the intelligence apparatus– or J3 and J2 to use contemporary NATO joint military terminology.[71]

The importance of the relationship between operations and intelligence is less well understood–even within conventional military forces and the academic community.

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[69]A famous example of suffering severe losses by not taking action that could compromise an intelligence source is the UK decision not to take any extraordinary measures to protect Coventry in World War Two despite advance warning being achieved of the Luftwaffe attack.

[70]See official SIS website for short history of the organization: https://www.sis.gov.uk/about-us.html (accessed 29 November 2012).

[71]"J" stands for Joint so comprising personnel from Air, Maritime, and Land services. "2" denotes intelligence; "3" denotes operations.

The literature generated from recent experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan recognised the development of close working practices between different organisations and the intelligence community. The military structures developed were flatter, less hierarchical and better able to share, analyse and disseminate intelligence. However, the importance of a close working relationship between the operations staff (referred to in the British system as "G3" or "J3") and the intelligence team is just as vital to success. The existence of a physical or conceptual separation (a "stovepipe") between J2 and J3 is an unnecessary addition of friction in an already challenging environment. The critical, although somewhat mechanical, issue is the command and control (C2) structure and working practices within the force. If the overall commander does not structurally and physically locate his J2 and J3 to emphasise constant interaction–direction and feedback–then he is likely to preside over an organisation that is less than the sum of its parts. In short, just like every other field within the military, structure and command matters; it sets the conditions for success or failure.

This chapter provides an overview of the command and operational structures within the British COIN campaign in South Arabia and then the intelligence apparatus that supported them. Finally, the criteria for assessing military intelligence support are defined along with an explanation of the key intelligence process–the "intelligence cycle." The purpose of this section is to provide the essential context that shaped and gave direction to the intelligence organisations in South Arabia so there is a sound factual and conceptual basis for analysing the performance of military intelligence in the campaign. Although not primarily concerned with the events of the campaign, this chapter also provides an explanation of the strategic, operational and tactical direction

taken by British forces. The latter is necessary as it provides essential context to the

decisions made on how to change the intelligence apparatus to best support the ever-

expanding British campaign. The first area considered is the type of campaign the British

thought they were fighting and how it influenced their use of military force to achieve

their political ends in South Arabia and the wider Middle East.

<div align="center">

"Military Aid to the Civil Power" (MACP) and
"Internal Security" (IS)

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A critical factor to appreciate at the outset is the nature of the British COIN

campaign and the supporting role for the British military. A key distinction for

contemporary COIN theorists to acknowledge is that the participants at the time did not

think they were fighting a COIN campaign. They understood it to be a deployment as

"military aid to the civil power" (MACP) rather than fighting an externally-supported

rural and urban anti-British insurgency. The British military was deployed in this role to

help with internal security.[72] In modern terms, this is a limited military intervention to

support host nation security forces to address an internal threat. That is a sound approach

in one sense: it supports the supremacy of civil government and prevents the military

from worsening the situation by the excessive, or unilateral, use of force. The

subordination of the military component to civilian authority is consistent with the

prevailing British experience of COIN and small wars in general; this issue is analysed in

more detail below to explain the prevailing British philosophy and explain the mixed

civilian-military composition of the intelligence apparatus in South Arabia.

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[72]Paget, *Last Post*, 122, provides a first-hand account of the military objectives
and tasks set for the military in the Aden Emergency.

There were serious, ultimately fatal, drawbacks to rigidly following the MACP model for the whole of the South Arabia campaign. To paraphrase Carl Von Clausewitz states "the most significant judgement a leader can make is to judge the nature of the war he is fighting." Unfortunately, the British Colonial Office, and military, was slow to recognise the threat they faced as a full-blown, externally sponsored insurgency with a strong political message. Or if they did, they showed remarkable faith that the existing colonial institutions would succeed with minimal assistance. The violence in the Radfan was perceived as tribal fighting rather than Egyptian-sponsored political violence directed against British authority. Similarly, the anti-British and anti-Federation of South Arabia political aspect of the violence in South Arabia was not recognised as a threat that required a significant employment of British resources or change in command structure. It is worth noting that a key part of success in the Malayan Emergency was the adjustment of the overall command structure to place the civilian man in charge–the High Commissioner–in the same post as the Director of Operations (DOO). This was possible because Field Marshall (Retired) Sir Gerard Templer was available to replace the outgoing DOO General Briggs and the High Commissioner had just been assassinated. In South Arabia, the High Commissioner had not such equivalent DOO; no attempt was made to create one and therefore no repeat of the Malayan success in temporarily combining their two offices for strategic effect against the insurgency.

We should not be surprised that in 1965-66 the British military did not request a surge in troops from the UK or push for a new balance of power within South Arabia that left the military commander firmly in charge of the campaign. First, the UK had extensive global commitments and could not easily rustle up more experts or indeed

spare brigades. Concurrent to the campaign in South Arabia was a major conventional

forces commitment to defend Western Europe as part of NATO, a conventional

commitment to defend the Middle East[73] in the event of World War Three, the remains of

a COIN campaign in Kenya and an on-going low-intensity Special Forces-centric war in

support of local allies in Borneo and Brunei against Indonesia. In those circumstances,

and against a domestic UK political and popular culture that was far from enthusiastic

about military service, it would have been odd for Commander of Middle Eastern Land

Forces to confidently request additional resources from the UK.

The global overstretch and paucity of resources does not explain why the military

was content to soldier on within a framework that placed peacetime civilian structures in

command of the campaign in South Arabia. As mentioned above, the experience of a

civilian lead was something embraced, or at least commonly endured, by British military

leaders. In stark contrast to the US approach in Vietnam, the British campaign in South

Arabia was explicitly and consistently military aid to the civil power. The latter approach

is consistent with the long term approach to "small wars" and contemporary British

approach to COIN. It was formally articulated in 1966 with the principles famously

espoused by Sir Robert Thompson in his seminal work *Defeating Communist

Insurgencies*. The first four of Thompson's five principles of defeating insurgency all

revolve around politics, governance and legitimacy with the fourth principle explicitly

stating that "the government must give priority to defeating the political subversion, not

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[73]Percy Cradock, *Know your enemy-How the Joint Intelligence Committee saw the world* (London: John Murray, 2002), 202-209, provides an account of the UK intelligence process that led to the deployment of British troops to Kuwait in 1961 to deter an expected Iraqi invasion.

the guerrillas."[74] This philosophy emphasises effective civil governance over military

action to win the political argument against the insurgency. In this light, it is the natural

for British forces to approach any colonial insurrection with the initial expectation that a

civilian-led command structure must be established with the military a critical component

but firmly in support of the civilian leadership.[75]

<center>"Framing the Problem"–The Military Benefits
of a Civilian-Lead Approach</center>

The principle of civil power having the ascendancy was more than an expedience

brought on by extensive global commitments and lack of military resources. It was part

of a nuanced British approach to colonial conflicts that recognised their opponents

engaged in politically-driven subversion and violence even if it did not openly admit this

was the case. Intriguingly, in Malaya it was the British practice to be careful about how it

defined the campaign it was fighting and the people it was fighting against. The nuanced

approach is illustrated by the language chosen to describe the conflict in public and the

civilian-led command and control structure for the campaign. Hence, Malaya and South

Arabia were defined as "military aid to the civil power" requested by local authorities due

to an "emergency" rather than the deployment of military forces to take a major role in a

counter-insurgency war. That provided the benefit of framing the conflict in terms that

delegitimised the enemy by playing down their political credentials and implying that the

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[74]Sir Robert Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency* (St Petersburg, FL: Hailer Publishing,1966), 55.

[75]The civilian-led approach was strongly supported by Paget. See Paget, *Last Post,* 125-127.

threat was an issue but not too serious to require a major shift in British policy, government or military resources.

There was also subtle thinking by the British on how to define the enemy. There was a consistent tendency to deny the enemy insurgency any legitimacy–not even officially recognising the political nature of their violence or that Britain was engaged in a war at all. This is not attributable to British imperial aloofness or stubbornness–there was method in the madness. Contemporary sources from 1948-75 rarely refer to the insurgents in Malaya, Kenya, South Arabia or Oman as such. In Malaya the insurgents were officially titled "Communist Terrorists" or "CTs" for short. This title had the benefit of twice condemning the insurgents: first, by defining one aspect of their politics–their communist ideology–while ignoring their nationalist, anti-colonialism. Second, by using words that inherently contaminate their enemy's cause with the brutality of their methods; "terrorists" remains a judgemental and pejorative word with global resonance. When not described as "terrorism" the actions of the CTs were explained in, arguably, even more derogatory fashion as straightforward "banditry." The latter lacks the harsh moral condemnation of "terrorism" but goes even further in defining the insurgents by criminal actions and denying any political motivation to their movement thereby making the insurgents little better than common criminals.[76]

The war in South Arabia continued this British trend of using words to support subtly their political narrative, legitimise the nascent government of the would-be "Federation of South Arabia," frame British military actions in non-emotive terms and

[76]For example, during the recent conflict in Northern Ireland–"the Troubles–the Ulster Unionist parties delegitimized the IRA's associated political party Sinn Fein by describing them as "Sinn Fein/IRA" rather than 'Sinn Fein and the IRA."

simply to denigrate the enemy. Consequently, the campaign in South Arabia was never classed by the British as a war–instead, it was termed "an emergency."[77] The troops deployed to South Arabia were conducting "internal security duties" as part of a military aid to the civil power. The soldiers themselves received no specific campaign medal until very late in the conflict although gallantry medals for individual actions were discreetly awarded. The British were building their own political narrative that developed the credibility of the local government they were trying to build while its very legitimacy was being contested by the insurgents. The term "military aid to the civil power" implies that there is a legitimate, credible civil power capable of requesting assistance. It is very far from the truth: British military force used to support local allies build a state in the face of a strong insurgency that enjoys external support from an implacably hostile regional power.

<div align="center">British Civilian Leadership Culture in South Arabia</div>

The command and control arrangements for the campaign placed the existing British colonial civil structure firmly in the ascendency with the military in a subordinate role. In practice, the overall commander was the British High Commissioner. The High Commissioner is the representative of Her Majesty the Queen's government within a Commonwealth country; the post is equivalent to being an ambassador but varies in difficulty depending on the conditions in the recipient country. From 1962-67, the lucky man in the post of High Commissioner in South Arabia was in charge of a complex rural and urban counter-insurgency campaign whilst concurrently building the institutions and

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[77]Trevaskis, *Shades of Amber*, 198-200, provides a first-hand account of the circumstances, and violent event, that started the Emergency on 10 December 1963.

<div align="center">61</div>

leadership of the local would-be state. It was a very demanding post with the Colonial

Office that exacted a turnover of personnel. First they choose to replace long term South

Arabia expert Sir Kennedy Trevaskis with Sir Richard Turnbull in October 1964 as a new

British government sought a different political strategy in South Arabia.[78] In 1967

Turnbull was in turn replaced by Sir Humphrey Trevelyan. The High Commissioner had

to be a highly skilled and credible individual. In South Arabia he had four major

challenges. First, he had to balance engagement with local Arab political leaders in the

Protectorates and their counterparts in urbanised Aden yet shape them into a new,

coherent and viable political entity. Second, he had to provide the civilian direction to the

local activities of a very combat-experienced military that itself was not just active in

South Arabia but was responsible for the defence of the entire Middle East. The military

relationship required as much handling as the local tribal leaders and South Arabia trade

unions as the military was a close-knit community with significant political clout in

Whitehall. Third, he had to ensure mutual support and understanding with the ever

shifting political scene in the UK; again, a serious matter that in the case of Sir Kennedy

Trevaskis proved terminal to his career when he was dismissed by the Labour

government in London. Fourth, explain all of the above to the international media in a

coherent, credible way that supported Britain's political goals locally, regionally and

globally.

     It is not the purpose of this study to critique the British COIN campaign in South

Arabia; however, it is interesting to draw some comparisons with the "adjacent"

experiences in Malaya, Kenya and Oman. Getting the right man to be High

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[78]Walker, *Aden Insurgency*, 132; Trevaskis, 224-225.

Commissioner proved to be a challenge for the British in South Arabia. The sudden

removal of Sir Kennedy Travaskis in 1964 was a sign that all was not well. His

replacement by Sir Robert Turnbull fresh from his success in extracting Britain from

Kenya was a sign that London recognised the central importance of having the right man

in the post of High Commissioner to achieve a successful exit. It was also a sign to

British personnel in South Arabia, and more importantly their local allies and enemies,

that Britain's policy was changing.[79] As mentioned in chapter 1, the eventual change in

policy was more radical than anyone in South Arabia ever expected–total withdrawal by

the end of 1967 and no honouring of the security treaties with local allies.

The 180 degree change in British policy towards South Arabia indicates that from

1964-66 the new Labour government in London were at least not complacent in

accepting the extant political objectives in South Arabia. Ultimately, they chose an exit

strategy not a winning strategy but it need not have been so had their resolve, and

consequent policy, been different. Intriguingly, they did not consider the example of

Malaya when a change in the command relationship when the High Commissioner and

Director of Operations posts were combined in one man helped deliver decisive results.

They did not seek an ex-military figure to be High Commissioner *and* then given him

additional powers that spanned the civilian and military domains.

One reason for next taking this step in South Arabia was that unlike Malaya there

was no equivalent post to the Director of Operations (DOO). Although not decisive in

itself, the decision to merge the two (as recommended by General Briggs on his departure

from Malaya) was a critical moment in that campaign as it efficiently centralised control

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[79]Walker, *Aden Insurgency*, 132

of the Malayan Emergency under one man.[80] Not until May 1965–nearly 18 months into

the Emergency in Aden–did the British consider reorganising the military command

arrangements. Following internal discussions within Middle East Command it was

recommended that a military commander "solely responsible for the control of the

emergency" should be appointed to handle the security aspects of the Emergency and be

known as the "Security Commander." The consensus from the committee was that the

right post was General Officer Commanding Middle East Land Forces (GOC MELF). He

was to be supported by joint civilian-military committees with a reorganised staff in the

"Security Directorate" to enable his day to day command of the police and military.[81]

However, this figure would still be less empowered than Templer in Malaya as the High

Commissioner remained in charge of the political domain within the Emergency.

The lack of a clear figure with direct and sole responsibility for all aspects of the

counter-insurgency campaign until mid-1965 was a challenge for the British throughout

the war in South Arabia. To compound the error, the belated appointment of a military

commander to command the various brigades and Special Forces–a post equivalent to the

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[80]Richard Stubbs, "From search and destroy to hearts and minds: the evolution of British strategy in Malaya, 1948-60," in *COIN in Modern Warfare,* eds. Daniel Marston and Carter Malkasian (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2010).

[81]"Operational Executive-Minutes of the 5th meeting held at 10:30am Saturday 15 May 1965 at the Security Secretariat." CO 1035 179, Declassified Colonial Office records available at the UK National Archive, Kew. Previously classified SECRET, this was clearly a high level committee meeting in Aden. It was attended by its Chairman the Deputy High Commissioner (T. Oates), the Brigadier General Staff MELF (Brig VGS Mills), Commissioner of Police (AE Wiltshere), Chief of Intelligence (Brig AW Cowper). It considered a paper on changing the response to the Emergency; the paper was written by the Security Secretariat. There were two secretaries: an RAF Sqn Ldr and Lt Col J T Paget (Dep Head of Security Secretariat). Of note, there is not a sign of the HOSB in attendance at this meeting; a sign of how week and marginalized he had become.

DOO in Malaya–was a substantial oversight. The outcome was a military structure that for too long lacked organisation and clear leadership at the operational level for the entire theatre. The issue of the military command architecture is examined in more detail below; first, it is necessary to explain the political organisations it was trying to support.

<div align="center">British Political and Military Structures in South Arabia</div>

One thing that can be said for the collective British effort in South Arabia is that it the bureaucracy did not die of loneliness; there was no shortage of organisations involved in the country. Alas, sometimes quantity does not have a quality all of its own. Ultimately, the British did not have anything approaching a sufficiently robust, yet flexible, structure for defeating an externally-sponsored, complex urban-rural insurgency while concurrently building the institutions of a new state. That is easy to say with hindsight. However, contemporaries were similarly frustrated by their inability to establish sound structures that could defeat the ever increasing threat from FLOSY and the NLF–particularly in the field of intelligence.[82] For now it is necessary to explain just how many Federation and UK organisations existed in South Arabia and broadly speaking what they all thought they were doing to achieve their common strategic aims.

By 1963, the political organisations in South Arabia were a combination of British colonial and new local federal structures. The traditional tribal territories within the British Western Protectorate were the basic building blocks for the Federation. The

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[82]For example, the Prendergast Report and surrounding correspondence within the Colonial Office and Ministry of Defence showed barely concealed frustration with Aden Special Branch and the AIC from February 1965 onwards. DEFE 11/541 and CAB 1035/179, Declassified records of the Ministry of Defence and Colonial Office, the UK National Archives, Kew.

local Adeni representative government within Aden Colony (still under British Sovereignty and therefore direct government should the Crown choose to exercise it) was the Aden Legislature. The decision by the latter in 1963 to join the new Federation created by the alliance of the political leaders within the Western Protectorate was the key step in forming a South Arabian state for the first time.[83] This unprecedented, fragile political project was encouraged into existence by careful efforts by the Colonial Office throughout the 1950s. It meant that by 1962 achieving a critical political goal was nearly in sight for the UK: a friendly state with functioning institutions that would support the presence of a permanent British base. It also meant there was clear set of tasks for the civilian administrators and military: help their local allies build the institutions of the Federation and transition to local control if not outright independence–see figure 3 for the structure and organisations.

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[83]Trevaskis, *Shades of Amber*, 166-181.
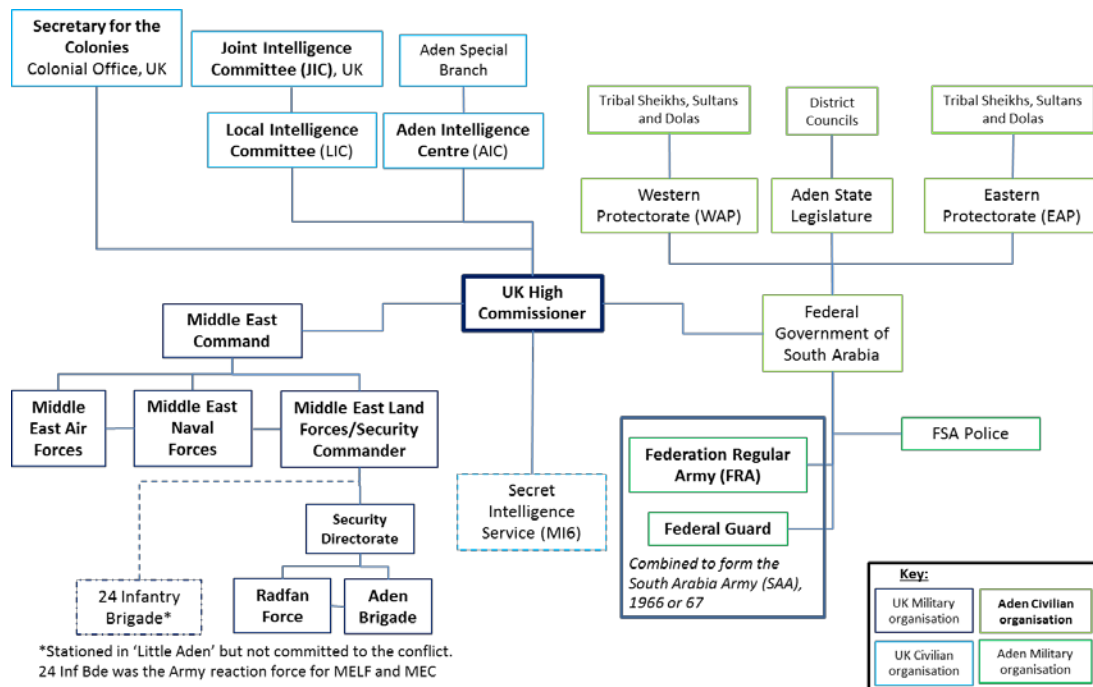
Figure 3.   British and Federation of South Arabia political, military and intelligence
organisations in South Arabia, 1963-7

Source: Author's own diagram.

If the above wire diagram looks confusing or intimidating then it is probably

doing justice to the scale of the task facing the representatives of the British state in South

Arabia. There are four key issues: one, the vulnerability of the Federation to a split

between the Protectorates and Aden; two, the importance of developing credible local

institutions; three, the critical role of the High Commissioner; four, the separation of

British authority between a civilian and military commander–no repeat of the Malaya

Emergency temporary combination of the office of High Commissioner and Director of

Operations under one person. There was a half-way house developed that provided unity

of command for the security aspect of the insurgency within Aden. From May 1965

onwards the General Officer Commanding Middle East Land Forces (GOC MELF) was double-hatted as the "Security Commander" for the Emergency thereby giving him control of the police and army. However, this is not the total centralisation that proved ultimately effective in pressing home the advantage against the under-pressure Communist Terrorists in Malaya when Templer was appointed High Commissioner and Director of Operations.

<u>The Federation of South Arabia–Governing the
Ungovernable?</u>

As noted above, the nascent "Federation of South Arabia" comprised the Aden Colony and the Western Aden Protectorate. The latter was ruled by the Federation government comprising tribal leaders while the Aden colony had its own elected Assembly. The latter was a relatively new forum and proved to be an important venue for left-wing, anti-colonial politics. Overall the distinct entities within the local state were run by the Federal Government (FRG) based in Al-Ittihad, just outside Aden city, while the tribal leaders within the WAP had extensive autonomy. Importantly, they owed little to the Federal Government and did not derive their power from any fiscal, military or political means provided by the FRG in Al-Ittihad. The local tribal leaders each required careful handling. All the Sheikhs in the WAP had their own personal, long-term, historic, political relationships with the British state–many of which were recognised by treaty with the British Crown. When a tribal Sheikh can produce a treaty between his ancestor and Queen Victoria where Her Britannic Majesty promised to grant him security "in perpetuity" it is very difficult to renegotiate terms. Many of the more significant tribal leaders from Lahej, Radfan and the Hawdramawt also had their own British political

advisors provided by the British Colonial Office. Coordination of the British political

position amongst so many different, physically isolated young men was a challenge in

itself. This point brings us to the unity of effort of the British political organisations.

<div align="center">Britain's own Bureaucratic Tribes–The Foreign Office and
the Colonial Office</div>

The lead department for all international relations in the modern day UK is the

"Foreign and Commonwealth Office" (the FCO). The FCO has cabinet level

representation in the Foreign Secretary–a post that is on a par with the Chancellor of the

Exchequer as the most senior in British government. The FCO is responsible for

"promoting Britain's interests overseas."[84] Regardless of the range of opinions about

British foreign policy there is little debate about the value of having one organisation

whose sole focus is promoting Britain's interests through external relations with wider

world. Unfortunately, in the South Arabia campaign the situation was less clear as two

different civilian organisations grappled with the political problems caused by the

insurgency.

The FCO's precursor was the Foreign Office (FO) and the Colonial Office (CO).

The leading British organisation in South Arabia was not the Foreign Office; it was the

Colonial Office as Aden was a Crown Colony and the Colonial Office negotiated treaties,

and managed relationships, with the tribal leaders "up country" in the territories that

became the Protectorate. However, the relationship with the two states sponsoring the

insurgency in South Arabia was the responsibility of the Foreign Office not the Colonial

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[84]For an official account of the role of the FCO see: http://www.fco.gov.uk/
en/about-us/ (accessed 29 November 2012).

Office. Egypt and Yemen (under the Imam or the Republic (were not Crown Colonies or dependencies–they were independent states with no special relationship to the British crown hence they fell under the purview of the Foreign Office. Inevitably, the presence of two separate institutions managing the politics of a complex, externally sponsored insurgency resulted in friction. For example, following the Republican coup in Yemen the FO was keen for the UK to recognise the new regime and establish diplomatic relations. However, the CO was completely opposed as this would undermine the government of the Federation of South Arabia and remove an important bargaining chip for the UK.

It is worth noting the internal culture between the FO and CO. The former was the first amongst equals with a culture that gravitated towards classic diplomacy, dinner parties and the more refined aspects of international relations. The FO was also the parent organisation for the Secret Intelligence Service (more commonly known as MI6) and for the Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ). The presence of two out of three of the UK's intelligence agencies within the FO stable gave that organisation even more influence within the networks of power in Whitehall. It did not mean that the FO was the expert on South Arabia, the Middle East or COIN.

Prior to the merger that created the FCO in 1968, the FO had only three postings in Africa-Cairo, Addis and Khartoum–all considered to be punishment postings for diplomats who had blotted their copybooks. In comparison the CO had different culture. Its presence was all over Africa and Britain's protectorates in the Middle East (such as Palestine, Cyprus and in South Arabia) and had a tradition of providing political advisors who got their hands dirty managing the empire and building alliances. Of course, both the

FO and CO recruited predominately privately educated young men from middle class families and a common Oxbridge education (usually in Classics) but that was par for the course in the British civil and intelligence services and did not preclude a mutual rivalry. Critically, the Colonial Office provided the High Commissioner; that individual was the central man for the entire British campaign. However, his colleagues in Sanaa and Cairo were not really colleagues at all but career diplomats in the FO who were working to subtly different agendas in a different organisation. In itself that is not a critical failing but it has a cumulative effect on the attempts to create the unity of effort that is essential in a COIN campaign. Finally, all FO and CO personnel in the Middle East had to ensure that they regularly briefed back to their respective Head Offices in London. The existence of two separate lines of communication back to the UK inevitably risked different assessments of the situation being written and received. Perceptions and bureaucratic agendas in the corridors of Whitehall would be a key arena to shape the campaign in South Arabia–a vital issue when the overall political objective and unity of effort were central to success.

<div align="center">The Colonial Office in South Arabia: the Mount Everest
of State Building Tasks</div>

Developing the capacity of the nascent local state was the most important task for the High Commissioner. The challenge for him was somehow to stitch together a coherent coalition of rival tribal leaders in the WAP that had strong allegiance to the Federal Government while preserving their individual rights guaranteed by treaty with the British Crown. His task was made even more complicated by having to ensure any settlement with the intensely conservative rural tribes was compatible with the very

different local politics of the Aden Colony. The latter was dominated by very modern, urban issues of employment, economic prosperity and socialist, anti-colonial ideologies. As if that was not hard enough, the High Commissioner lacked local political figures in South Arabia educated in the UK (unlike India with its extensive middle class educated to take on roles in the civil service). This is where the Egyptian willingness to accept Yemenis and Adenis to their universities in Cairo proved a far-sighted investment. These individuals returned with that unique blend of Arab nationalism, anti-colonialism, socialism and devotion to Nasser himself. It was a far cry from the local leadership provided by Tunku Abdul Rahman in Malaya and Sultan Qaboos in Oman.

The British political apparatus was far from simple but did at least have a presence that was not cut off from the local populace. The CO had political advisors "up country" with the tribal leaders in the EAP and WAP. These young men were incredibly vulnerable to assassination by the NLF and Egyptian intelligence. Without the presence of these young men to shape the expectations and win the loyalties of the wily conservative local leadership there was little hope the Federal Government would ever find its feet let alone flourish. It is telling that the NLF worked hard in the period 1960-65 to undermine the place of the advisors in the Protectorates before expanding their campaign into Aden itself. By 1967, their final move was to sweep the tribal leaders away altogether and thereby have no barriers between them and the local populace. There was no direct command and control from the USSR or PRC but it was a strategy that Mao and the North Vietnamese would have understood and approved.

Aden Special Branch: The Canary in a Cage

The British state in the Aden Colony started the conflict with colonial structures that had the potential to be sources of strength against the anti-British insurgency. The most important organisation that could have provided a much needed shield against the political forces attacking the would-be pro-British state was the police Special Branch. Special Branch was a part of the police force and was not a part of the military or intelligence services; however, as the name implies it was a unique organisation with distinct responsibilities that separated it from regular police. The Aden Special Branch was part of the traditional British approach to police and intelligence work in the colonies. It was firmly under civilian control and comprised both British and locally recruited personnel. The presence of the latter was deemed absolutely essential as it provided local language, cultural and political skills that had the potential to infiltrate, target and generally frustrate any anti-British organisation. Special Branch had the responsibility for investigating political subversion and acts of terrorism rather than being distracted by having responsibility for non-political organised crime or other serious areas of detective work. Developing the capability of the Special Branch in Malaya had been a key part of that successful campaign. A key moment there was the separation of the Special Branch out of the Criminal Investigation Division so it had the ability to focus on political subversion and violence–in other words, to tackle the insurgency and not deal with regular non-political crime.[85]

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[85]Richard Stubbs, "From search and destroy to hearts and minds: the evolution of British strategy in Malaya, 1948-60," in *COIN in Modern Warfare,* eds. Daniel Marston and Carter Malkasian (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2010).

It was essential that Special Branch be resourced and protected for the British to have any chance of achieving their political goals. It was not unknown for insurgents to understand the importance of the British police presence–especially the Special Branch or departments with a similar political role. There was historical precedent for targeting this kind of police force within living memory and very close to home. In the Irish War of Independence from 1916-1921, the Irish Volunteers led by Michael Collins deliberately targeted the members of the G Division of the Dublin Metropolitan Police to deny the British state in Ireland its most useful servants.[86] The loss of those detectives was a critical loss of capability for the British state in Ireland as it lost vital local knowledge and prompted the escalation of that conflict–particularly the increase in military support and the recruitment of the notoriously brutal paramilitary organisations Black and Tans and police Auxiliaries.

The NLF and FLOSY hit the Aden Special Branch hard. From December 1964 to June 1966 they killed sixteen Arab detectives and made the remainder non-effective.[87] The losses suffered denied the British local talent and expertise that they struggled to replace. The result was a law enforcement and intelligence capability that was recognised as inadequate by the highest levels of the UK political and military leadership.[88] The cultural influence of Special Branch extended into the military. As the army grappled with its lack of intelligence amongst the local populace it formed plain clothes

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[86]For an overview of the campaign that effectively defeated the "G-men" in Dublin, see Tim Pat Coogan, *Michael Collins* (Dublin: Arrow Publishing, 1991).

[87]Walker, *Aden Insurgency*, 141

[88]DEFE 11/541 and CAB 1035/178, Declassified records of the Ministry of Defence and Colonial Office, the UK National Archive, Kew.

reconnaissance units within battalions to collect intelligence and target insurgents. The army named them "Special Branch"; this is a compliment and also a criticism. If the real Aden Special Branch had still been functioning effectively as an intelligence gathering, counter-terrorist force then the army would never have formed their own *ad hoc* "Special Branch" to fill the vacuum.[89]

<u>The British Military in South Arabia–Combatants and Residents</u>

The historiography of the conflict tends to analyse the British military presence in South Arabia from the perspective of a military force deployed specifically to defeat an insurgency. In *Counterinsurgency in Modern Warfare* by Marston and Malkasian, the chapter on the South Arabia conflict is titled "Red Wolves and British Lions." Unfortunately, the nature of the war was not that clear for the British at the time as they were slow to appreciate the faced a complex insurgency with at least two factions backed by Egypt but concurrently locked in a deadly internal war with each other. The British military presence in South Arabia was in many ways fundamentally inadequate for COIN; many of the forces deployed were part of the UK's commitment to the defence of the Middle East in the event of World War Three. They were intended to be residents and not combatants; however, as the conflict escalated the higher headquarters was compelled to become involved in running the campaign despite that not being a task for which it was designed. There was no decision to form a separate layer of command to take sole control of all military support to the campaign and have none of the wider responsibilities for the Middle East. In effect, there was a gap as the conventional brigades in South Arabia

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[89]Walker, 184-185.

reported directly to Middle East Land Forces; the latter had to balance that onerous task with all British commitments in the wider region–no mean feat. The outcome was too many personnel of the wrong type and insufficient numbers and command and control (C2) for the actual COIN campaign.

The highest level military organisation in South Arabia was Middle East Command (MEC); its commander, a 3-Star General Officer, was ultimately responsible for the military support to the COIN campaign and reported back to the Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS) in the UK. As mentioned in chapter 1, MEC was a tri-service (joint) organisation that was the centrepiece for the UK's military capability in the region but was not designed to fight a COIN war. Its presence in South Arabia was ironically a factor that drove the insurgency and dragged it into the conflict to defeat that insurgency–despite it not being designed or intended for that purpose. US and UK military personnel pride themselves on their professionalism; however, few would argue that CENTCOM is best suited to be the operational level headquarters for a complex COIN campaign while concurrently fulfilling its responsibilities as a Combatant Command.

For the over-stretched British state, MEC and MELF must have been an appealing choice to provide leadership for the South Arabia campaign. They were already there and contained all land, naval and air components. It was essential that a centrally located base exist that could support air, land and naval power while protecting critical shipping lanes and act as a suitable location for protection of the Middle East from a war with the Communist Bloc. MEC was also designed to execute additional regional tasks–such as deterrence or even limited war. For example, Britain retained unilateral treaty obligations to protect many of the Gulf states. This was a serious task due to the threat from Egypt

and particularly from the post-Hashemite monarchy in Iraq. The threat from the latter to Kuwait caused the deployment of British naval and land assets in 1961 to deter Iraqi aggression.[90]

Middle East Land Forces (MELF) by default becoming a key player in the South Arabia campaign. However, the presence of MEC and MELF in South Arabia had little to do with the British response to the insurgency. They were intended to be residents in Aden rather than combatants so were not structured to support a COIN campaign as their main effort. The gap between MELF and the intelligence structures would prove to be a particular problem as the British attempted to reform in the face of an increasingly overwhelming insurgency. Under reforms advocated by Paget while a staff officer in MELF, GOC MELF assumed responsibility for command of the security forces in Aden in May 1965. However, he did not have the same authority in the Protectorate as it was not covered by the terms of the Aden Emergency nor was he responsible for the overall political dimensions of the campaign.

The result of having MEC and MELF in South Arabia directly supervising the military support to the internal security operation while simultaneously being responsible for an AO that stretched from Iran to South Africa was sub-optimal for the conduct of a COIN campaign. It meant that the British did not set up a specific headquarters and command with sole responsibility for the campaign but tasked it to an organisation with a regional outlook. Why would they set up a supreme command for South Arabia? That would be expensive and MEC and MELF were on the scene. Surely that was more than enough military leadership to defeat a minor security threat. Unfortunately for the British

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[90]Cradock, *Know Your Enemy*, 202.

and their local allies it was a C2 structure that was found lacking. Asking MELF to handle the local insurgency resulted in a gap in command at division level with the Aden Brigade and the forces in the Protectorate reporting straight to MELF. The modern analogy for US forces would be a combatant command such as CENTCOM having direct control over divisions or brigades deployed in Iraq or Afghanistan. For all the undoubted challenges of setting up appropriate C2 in both those campaigns, few have argued that the situation could be improved by removing Commander MNF-I or Commander ISAF and their staffs to be replaced by CENTCOM. Overall, the British C2 at theatre can be said to have been helpful in achieving the appropriate focus, unity of command and effort for the tactical forces in South Arabia.

The tactical forces deployed in South Arabia were committed at a time of significant global commitments but declining numbers of military forces for the UK–a consistent theme for the post-1945 British Army. Under the command of MELF there were three key land elements committed to the internal security task: first, the Aden Brigade located in the Aden Colony itself; second, a flexible force package (it ranged from Bn to Bde size) deployed in the fierce mountainous terrain of the Radfan governate; third, the locally raised, British trained and mentored Federal Regular Army (FRA). In addition, 24 Infantry Brigade existed as a "spare" force committed to regional emergency tasks but located in Little Aden; this force was very well equipped and tasked with force generating units to go "up country" to the Radfan. It had the benefit of a substantial headquarters staff and a high quality Brigade Commander. However, it had no direct role in the defeating the insurgency (beyond the basic task of securing the British base at Little Aden 15km outside Aden Colony).

The outer shield for the counter-insurgency campaign came from the British military units deployed "up country" in the Radfan area (part of Dhala, Western Protectorate). The latter had indigenous tribal leadership with political clout amongst the traditional power structures of local society. The Radfan also had high mountain passes that completely dominated the one main road that connected the Aden Colony with the interior and ultimately the YAR. The Radfan was the first area that the Egyptian backed NLF moved into as they built a rural power-base before infiltrating into the Aden Colony. There were two competing political campaigns going on in the Radfan and the wider Protectorate. It was a classic battle of local politics, personal influence, honour and face. The British advisors attempted to stitch together their complex web of alliances into a truly robust tribal alliance to join the overall Federation. Meanwhile Egyptian intelligence and the NLF sought to win over the same tribes with their own aid, promises and threats. It was a land where the local tribes had always feuded with each other and taxed commerce on the roads. The stakes were high: the prize was not just political stability but control of an insurgent highway into Aden or a pro-British tribal barrier to external support.

The initial British response to the challenge was to deploy substantial forces into the Radfan in the hope of seizing key terrain, developing the road network and overawing the local tribal leaders into resuming their alliance. The outcome was politically inconclusive and militarily painful. A brigade worth of troops (called the "Radforce") were sucked into the mountains to little permanent effect while losses caused high profile political embarrassment for the UK–particularly when two SAS members were killed in

action, their bodies decapitated and heads paraded in public in Republican Yemen.[91] The

presence in the Radfan following the high water mark of Radforce in 1965 was a

reinforced battalion designed to keep the supply route open and support the efforts of

local British political advisors. The military costs were draining as the troops deployed in

small patrol bases on very high features required resupply from precious aviation assets.

It was not enough to stop the area from falling under pro-Egyptian, NLF influence–both

materially and morally.

If the British forces "up country" were the outer shield attempting to hold the key

terrain in the mountains, the Aden Brigade was the inner shield against the insurgencies

of the NLF and FLOSY within the vital ground of Aden Colony. It was a challenging

task as the Aden Brigade faced two distinct, rival insurgent groups both backed by

Egyptian intelligence and committed to the expulsion of all British forces. While the

terrain of the Radfan provided the main intelligence and operational challenges for their

comrades "up country" it was the human terrain that dominated the environment for the

Aden Brigade. The local populace spoke a different language from the overwhelmingly

non-Arabist British Army personnel that comprised the Aden Brigade. Local culture was

also very different from other parts of the empire–save those who had served in the

Palestinian Protectorate. It was a daunting task for Headquarters Aden Brigade; it would

have been a daunting task for any formation. Unfortunately, Aden Brigade was not

formed from the "first eleven" of the British Army. It was an ad hoc, composite

headquarters staff comprising individual augmentees deployed into the HQ; it was not

formed by a top tier brigade commander who was assigned top quality staff and then

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[91]Walker, *Aden Insurgency*, 118-119; Paget, *Last Post*, 74-75.

conducted an extensive formation training programme. Understanding and defeating an urban insurgency in a major Arab city is a very difficult task; doing so with a headquarters with little collective training and no habitual relationship with its subordinate units was asking a great deal indeed.

Training the Local Security Forces–Our Exit Strategy

The FRA effectively became the exit strategy for British forces in South Arabia. Training the FRA to a high enough standard to be able to contain the urban insurgency within the Aden colony became the goal most likely to allow an orderly withdrawal by the British government's deadline. It also allowed for a straight substitution of forces in the same military task: aid to the civil power in an internal security campaign. There were two unfortunate consequences of this change in focus: one, British and FRA troops became focused on military capability and chasing insurgents rather than on developing maximum contact with the local populace to improve security and the legitimacy of the would-be government. Second, it meant that the insurgents–FLOSY and the NLF–could consolidate their gains amongst the local populace and concurrently escalate their campaign by targeting the FRA and local police. The success of the insurgents in pressuring the FRA (if not outright infiltration) was very violently and publically demonstrated on 22 June 1967 when the security forces mutinied and killed 22 British soldiers.

Boots on the Ground

The units deployed to the campaign were not able to offer much in the way of corporate knowledge to balance out the lack of experience in their higher headquarters or

poor quality local troops. There were two types of British units on the ground in South Arabia. First there was the army: units rotated through as battalions conducting 6-12 month tours before rotating back to the UK or the Far East. These units deployed *en masse* as one formed body and left as one. That meant there was tremendous group cohesion for the duration of their tour but it did little for campaign continuity, cross-fertilisation of TTPs, corporate knowledge and understanding of the local population. The other ground units in theatre were provided by a unit from 3 Commando Brigade of the Royal Marines. They had a completely different approach to force generation and deployment: 45 Commando of 3 Royal Marines Commando Brigade (equivalent to an army battalion) stayed in South Arabia for the duration of the entire campaign. They managed the pressure on personnel by "trickle drafting" marines back to the UK (and to other postings) while keeping an experienced spine of old hands in South Arabia at all times. The perception amongst British Colonial Office and the intelligence services was that the Royal Marines were more comfortable with the local environment than their cousins in the British Army. For all those who argue for inherent British brilliance at COIN, it is worth noting the existence of two completely different approaches to the campaign at the tactical level. It is a strong indicator that the British forces had not developed, or formalised, best practice for a COIN campaign. If the operational headquarters from the tactical, operational to theatre strategic level were sub-optimal for developing understanding, achieving unity of effort and enabling clear decision-making were there any intelligence structures that could fill the vacuum?

Aden Special Branch and the Aden Intelligence Centre

There were two specialist intelligence organisations identified by the British civilian and military leaders as essential for success–the Aden Special Branch (SB) and the Aden Intelligence Centre (AIC). In addition to these two specialist organisations, there were military intelligence officers throughout the force from battalion to MEC level. They were not viewed as being critical to success. Unlike the AIC and Aden Special Branch they are never mentioned in correspondence from the Colonial Office and MEC back to the UK. The military intelligence elements within the army and marines are nonetheless a key part of the intelligence architecture. They are considered in a subsequent section below.

The Aden Special Branch was the front line of the fight against the Egyptian-sponsored insurgency. Experience from previous campaigns in Ireland and Malaya demonstrated the central importance of a credible local Special Branch comprising British and native officers. The assassination campaign by the NLF and FLOSY cut out the core of the Aden Special Branch by killing many of the pre-conflict officers–especially the Arab officers who understood local culture intimately. It does not matter how much money is on offer–the death of the Arab officers in Aden Special Branch served as an eloquent disincentive to being recruited by the British. Even if suitably qualified local Arabs could be found who were willing to volunteer, they could not assume the dead officers' personal knowledge, experience and judgement of the local political scene. This campaign of assassination set the tone for the British as they struggled to regain the initiative against their opponents once they had lost the eyes, ears and expertise of Aden Special Branch. As early as 1964 the British were compelled to

send officers from Special Branch departments in other parts of the empire (such as Singapore and Hong Kong) and the UK. It was a bold move that would at least provide relevant police procedural expertise but could do nothing to replace lost local knowledge and language skills. Nevertheless the ubiquitous answer to persistent questions at the highest political and military levels in the UK on what to do about the poor intelligence apparatus in South Arabia all revolved around "fixing" the Aden Special Branch.[92]

It is worth noting that the British civil-led approach to COIN also placed greater emphasis on rehabilitating Special Branch as a method of supporting civil legitimacy. The by-product was a general intent to have military intelligence personnel bolstering the Special Branch rather than assuming the lead for intelligence themselves. The losses to Special Branch meant that there was an unusually large employment of military intelligence personnel into, or with, Special Branch. Nowhere was this more clearly visible than in the Aden Intelligence Centre.

The Aden Intelligence Centre (AIC) was established as the focal point for what we would now call intelligence "fusion" and exploitation capabilities. For contemporaries it was intended to be the central intelligence forum for all British intelligence agencies, local forces and the military to pool intelligence and process it into an all-source product. It was co-located with the interrogation centre–most likely for synergy as the British rated interrogation of terrorist subjects as their best means of gaining intelligence following the assassinations of the Special Branch. A central location for intelligence collection, analysis and production is recognised as an important step in achieving

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[92]DEFE 11/541, Declassified records of the Ministry of Defence; CO 1035/178, Colonial Office, the UK National Archives, Kew.

centralised control and cooperation. However, the views of contemporaries show that the

AIC struggled to fulfil its potential due to systemic failings. These are explored and

analysed in chapter 3. The key issue for the campaign is that as late as 1965 the AIC and

Special Branch were recognised at the highest levels in the UK as being central to any

improvement in the intelligence capability that was essential for victory. Unfortunately

they were both recognised as not being up to the task.

<div align="center">The Intelligence Frontline–British Army "G2"</div>

The penultimate component of intelligence to be considered is the military

intelligence elements operating throughout the force. This is another area of complexity

and unequal performance. Within the British Army is tradition at battalion level for the

commanding officer to appoint one of his own junior officers as his Intelligence Officer

(IO). The IO will typically take whatever manpower they can from the rest of the

battalion to form an intelligence cell. The pickings may well be slim as company

commanders refuse to give up any personnel for a task that does not relate directly to

putting bayonets through the enemy. As a minimum the IO will normally be able to

recruit an NCO to act as his assistant (the "AIO") but it is not unheard of for the IO to be

on their own. There has never been a consistent approach to this task across British

regiments.

A general trend in the British Army to the present day is for the Commanding

Officer in peacetime not to value intelligence. The result is often a young officer

appointed as IO who is double-hatted with another battalion headquarters post. The

battalion intelligence cell is similarly undervalued as the least promising personnel in the

unit are sent there (referred to as "the sick, lame and lazy"). When the battalion deploys

on operations there is a sharp change in how intelligence is viewed and "good guys" are sent into the IO and AIO posts. However, the latter process often does not happen quickly. As a minimum the result is an erratic performance level as bright amateurs with at best a 3-4 week course grapple with the wicked problem of operational intelligence under very testing conditions.

<p style="text-align:center">The Professionals–The Intelligence Corps</p>

The key organisation within the British Army whose task it is to deliver intelligence to the field army and wider defence community is the Intelligence Corps. This force historically drew in many of the brighter conscripts under National Service; since the end of the latter in 1961 there has been a high proportion of graduates amongst its soldiers. From its resurrection during World War Two, selection of Intelligence Corps officers was, and is, equally challenging. In part this is due to the demands of understanding and engaging with a consistently wide range of intelligence collection assets and specialist disciplines.

During the South Arabia campaign, the specialties within the Intelligence Corps covered the same range of disciplines that exist now. The utility of each one depends upon the type of conflict that is being fought. Nonetheless the disciplines are: human intelligence (HUMINT), counter-intelligence (CI), signals intelligence (SIGINT), electronic warfare (EW), geospatial intelligence (GEOINT), imagery intelligence (IMINT), electronic intelligence (ELINT) and operational intelligence (OPINT). Although first and foremost soldiers operating under military discipline, from a relatively junior rank members of the Intelligence Corps tend to have privileged access to commanders as their output enables the latter to form a plan and make a decision.

Intelligence Corps personnel were also marked out from their fellow soldiers due to their regular exposure to national intelligence agencies.

<div align="center">The Perennial Intelligence Dilemma–The Use
of Scarce Resources</div>

By the above criteria the Intelligence Corps sounds like precisely the right organisation to deploy personnel from the MEC, through the AIC to all the battalions in South Arabia. Unfortunately, it suffered (and still does) from being too small to meet the demands of a mercurial field army that alternates between disbelief in the value of professional intelligence personnel to having a voracious appetite for it. It has never comprised more than 2 percent of the overall numbers of the British Army and has not always been a permanent feature of its order of battle. The Intelligence Corps was created during World War One, and then disbanded, only to then be resurrected for World War Two. However, progress was made in 1945 as it managed to endure the post-war cuts despite scepticism that it was really needed in peacetime.

Even if commanding officers had been willing to allow an outsider into their battalion's inner circle it is highly unlikely that the Intelligence Corps had the personnel available to do so. As it stands the professional intelligence personnel provided by the Corps were drawn on heavily by the AIC–particularly its trained interrogators. Many other intelligencers were posted as Military Intelligence Officers (MIOs) to the various police and Special Branch units to provide the essential intelligence liaison between the police and the army. Given the paucity of trained intelligence personnel it is absolutely understandable that they were deployed to specialist and high priority areas at the higher levels of the campaign such as the AIC, Special Branch and the MEC.

The lack of Intelligence Corps personnel throughout the force may have been due to an understandable prioritisation of already scarce resources but it had one very unfortunate consequence: the reduction in quality of intelligence collected by those units in direct contact with the insurgents and the local population. There are many debates about the nuances of the best military approach to a COIN campaign. The current debate within the US Army over the balance between a kinetic approach that kills insurgents as the highest priority and a population protection-centric philosophy is one that need not be regurgitated here. However, neither approach is possible without a sound understanding of the operational environment; the presence of professional Intelligence Corps personnel within a battalion should raise the quality of intelligence collected, analysed and produced exponentially. Over time this brings greater situational awareness and understanding of the local environment for the local commander improving their ability to know when and how to act. It also informs the intelligence picture at the higher levels of the campaign so the collective, corporate knowledge of the force is multiplied as the better tactical picture is layered with the operational and strategic intelligence reporting.

It is not always appreciated within the Intelligence Corps just how important this extra protein can be for improving intelligence across all levels of the campaign. What can you learn at the tactical level beyond what direction the enemy shoots from and how much bread costs in the local market? How does that win the war? Intelligence collection and analysis at the tactical level can reveal the trends, stresses and intent of the insurgency and not simply give a tally of bombs planted and locals killed. A good company commander and their IO can develop a "feel" for how aggressive the local insurgents are, the quality of their equipment and the nature of their targeting campaign

that can help gain insight into the confidence, desperation or external support for the insurgency. When layered with national intelligence agency reporting on the efforts by a foreign intelligence service (such as Egypt or the People's Republic of China) to arm and sponsor the insurgency tactical intelligence can provide corroboration and insight. The lowest level tactical units are also usually those best placed to assess the credibility of local and national government. It does not take long for soldiers on patrol to judge the mood of a populace towards their would-be government and the extent to which the insurgents hold sway through fear or genuine popular support. Again, this is essential intelligence for the highest levels of the campaign–particularly if your national end-state is based on building a local state that has some hope of achieving legitimacy and credibility.

For the intelligence organisation at the centre of the COIN campaign it is essential that there are sound and well-trained intelligence personnel at the sharp end of the campaign. In practice this means sending out small numbers of professionally trained intelligence personnel to those who have daily contact with the local population as well as retaining specialist collectors and analysts to process the material sent to the centre. By not investing in the outer tactical layers the intelligence organisation is merely retarding its own faculties and depriving itself of one of the best senses for detecting an inconsistency in the campaign's overall ends, ways and means. A key factor is the relationship between the operations and intelligence structures. If the operations structure is well-designed and sound there is a high chance that the supporting intelligence structure will be similarly sound. However, if there is poor C2 for the overall theatre it is unlikely that the intelligence structure that supports it will be anything other than

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confused and incoherent. Why is there a strong relationship between the performance of intelligence and military command? There is no single reason but a major factor is the structure of the intelligence followed by the British military–"the intelligence cycle."

<center>The Intelligence Cycle–Giving Spin a Good Name</center>

The intellectual and practical framework for military intelligence within the British military, and NATO in general, is "the intelligence cycle" (the Int Cycle). As a system, the efficacy of the structure, processes and outputs are a regular topic of discussion within the Intelligence Corps. Despite the lively debate about how to best optimise the cycle, it remains the accepted basis of how to approach the task of providing military intelligence support to military operations. Since the resurrection of the Intelligence Corps following the Second World War the intelligence cycle has been the cornerstone of professional training and education for officers and soldiers within the British Army.[93] Any assessment of the performance of military intelligence must account for this conceptual framework as it is highly likely to have at least informed, if not directed, the actions of all personnel within the intelligence apparatus in South Arabia from battalions responsible for securing Sheikh Othman District to the MIOs in the AIC and the General Staff Officer 2 Intelligence (abbreviated to "GSO2 J2") in Headquarters Middle East Command.

The intelligence cycle is a simple model for delivering intelligence support to the military. It comprises four sequential stages in a circle: direction, collection, processing and dissemination. Direction comes from the overall commander with input from the

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[93]Anthony Clayton, *Forearmed-A History of the Intelligence Corps* (London: Brasseys, 1993).

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commander's intelligence advisor/officer. Collection is based on the priorities from the

commander's direction and is done by the intelligence agencies, organic military assets,

and by soldiers on patrol in the area of operations. Processing is the analytical and

assessment stage where the information gathered in the collection stage is collated,

analysed, evaluated and turned into some kind of useful product that provides improved

understanding through insight or predictive assessment. Finally, dissemination is the

stage where the hard work done at collection and dissemination find meaning as it is

disseminated out of the intelligence apparatus to someone who will actually do something

with it. The intelligence product may be a verbal brief or a ninety page Top Secret

Classified document–it depends on the requirement and situation. The key issues are

relevance and timeliness. Failure to meet both means failure for the overall Int Cycle.

Once the disseminated material is received by the commander there should be fresh

direction–even if the response is "same again" or "no change." The intended model of the

Int Cycle process is illustrated by the diagram below.

DIRECTION
*Must come from the Commander.
*Requires strong J2/J3/J5 interaction.

Principles of intelligence
- Centralised control
- Responsiveness
- Objectivity
- Systematic exploitation
- Security
- Continuous review
- Accessibility
- Timeliness

COLLECTION
*Must be responsive to the overall priorities not own agenda.
*Requires cooperation, coordination and de-confliction.
*Subject matter experts from collection agencies essential.

DISSEMINATION
*Must be timely, in the right format, by the right means at the right classification to the right end user.

PROCESSING
*The essential collation, analysis, evaluation and assessment to turn information into intelligence.

Figure 4.   The British Army's "Intelligence Cycle" model

Source: Author's own diagram.

The outputs from each stage are intended to be mutually supportive with the overall effect being a virtuous circle that can adapt to changes in overall direction from the commander, change speed or emphasis, depending on the evolving situation and mission. The risk is that if any one stage fails to deliver a decent quality output, perhaps in clarity or relevance, then the rest of the stages are affected and the overall process loses efficacy. A helpful metaphor used to describe some of the Clausewitzian friction common within the Int Cycle is "throwing sand in the engine." All four stages run the risk of weaknesses and inefficiency that can ruin the entire effort. Here are some of the most common and a short summary of how they were executed in the South Arabia campaign.

For "direction." it is not unknown for commanders to make a simple mistake: to assume that their direction and priorities are clear to all and therefore to give no direction at all (this is the most common in the author's experience). It is not unusual for commanders to simply expect their J2 staff to write their Commander's Critical Intelligence Requirements (CCIRs) and Priority Information Requirements (PIRs) for them. Strictly speaking, they should come from the commander's mission analysis in the early stages of planning. Given that CCIRs and PIRs are the foundation for the subsequent tasking of all assets to collect intelligence to achieve the mission it is odd for the commander to be content to leave it to a staff branch to work that out for him. For example, in the British planning system the commander takes the time to decide what effects he seeks to have on the enemy to achieve his mission rather than leave it to his staff to work it out. In an area as important but subjective as intelligence it is far from ideal to allow leeway for misinterpretation or confusion. In the case of South Arabia, the issue of C2 and military command culture is central to the focus and performance of the intelligence apparatus.

For "collection," the "sand in the engine" metaphor evokes the effect of lack of unity of effort has on the wider intelligence community. Unfortunately, in a world of institutional rivalry and competition for tight domestic budgets the spirit of cooperation amongst the agencies is sadly absent. Throw in the presence of the army, and the Int Corps, and there is the potential for a room full of wailing banshees rather than a harmonious choir. In the case of South Arabia, aside from the perennial issue of unity of effort amongst the intelligence agencies and military, the task of intelligence collection was challenging from the outset. The nature of the environment was itself more difficult

than the Malayan emergency: a heady mix of anti-colonialism, socialism, Islam, nationalism, urban and rural insurgency plus external support from Republican Yemen and Egypt. To make matters worse, within the British model there was an inherent structural problem of trying to pursue an "internal security" model that put the civilian Aden Special Branch in the lead for intelligence but then failed to adapt to a potent insurgency that targeted that every capability. The relationship between the military and Special Branch will be explored in the next chapter.

For "processing," there are three common situations that often frustrate efficacy and efficiency. One, marginalisation of the analysts responsible for processing so they are under-resourced, poorly-led and ignored. Two, lack of unity of effort amongst the intelligence agencies at the "collection" stage causing incomplete reporting and zero cooperation with the analysts responsible for turning the information collected into all-source intelligence. Three, poor quality analysts who are not well-trained in analysis and making assessments; this deficiency can also be compounded by analysts lacking awareness of the local environment (culture, terrain, people and their own army units) and the capabilities of the intelligence collection agencies. In South Arabia campaign, the material that survives suggests that lack of unity of effort and a poor understanding of the environment were both issues that frustrated the quality of intelligence produced by the AIC.

For "dissemination," the failings of the previous stages of the Int Cycle are all passed on as whatever has been directed, collected and processed is then provided to the "customer" that runs the cycle. In addition to that basic issue about cumulative failings, the dissemination stage can make matters worse by three common failings: one, failing to

send the intelligence to the customer in a timely fashion–better 80 percent on time than 100 percent too late is very apt. Two, sending out a product in a format that is unusable for the intended audience. Three, sending the product at an inappropriate classification–both too restrictive so it cannot be read by a key customer or too open so there is a danger of compromising intelligence collection capabilities. In the South Arabia campaign, the challenge was to somehow disseminate timely intelligence that could be read by British Army units working closely with the security forces of the Federation of South Arabia but protect the process that was heavily reliant upon interrogation of captured personnel. "Releaseability" to security force mentors and local allies would prove just as tricky in Iraq and Afghanistan. This issue will be explored further in chapter 4.

<u>Operations and Intelligence–Healthy Symbiosis or</u>
<u>Mutual Infection?</u>

The performance of military intelligence is dependent upon the structure of the wider civilian intelligence architecture in theatre and in the UK. The command and control structure is critical–particularly, is there one clear overall commander for the COIN campaign and a single figure to coordinate the intelligence apparatus. In Malaya, something close to best practice was established with retired British Field Marshal (Retired) Sir Gerald Templer appointed as High Commissioner and Director of Operations. He in turn ensured there was a Director of Military Intelligence empowered to compel the various intelligence organisations to work together to a common purpose. The principle of clear operational command setting the optimal conditions for a functional intelligence organisation is also true at the operational and tactical levels. The attitude taken by military commanders at all levels set the conditions for success or

failure as they are the owners of their intelligence cycles and as mentioned above their attitude is not always guaranteed to be well-informed or enlightened. They own intelligence assets that are organic to their formation, often appoint their intelligence officer from among their own Regimental personnel and frequently have the responsibility of managing the careers of their intelligence staff. In short, if they value intelligence they are in a position to invest in it. If they do not they can marginalise and ignore it. It is impossible to improve empirically, but if all the facts were known it is very likely that every so-called "intelligence failing" shields a command failure from scrutiny in the cold light of day.

<u>Intelligence Organisation in South Arabia–What Was There?</u>

There were six intelligence organisations active within South Arabia and a potentially critical one that was missing: one, the Aden Intelligence Centre (AIC); two, the Aden Special Branch (co-located with the AIC); three, the Interrogation Centre at Fort Morbut; four, the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS); five, the Joint Staff Intelligence (JSI); six, the Local Intelligence Committee (LIC). The absentee was any kind of intelligence organisation, or staff responsible for supporting the Protectorate (or Federation as it was also referred to).
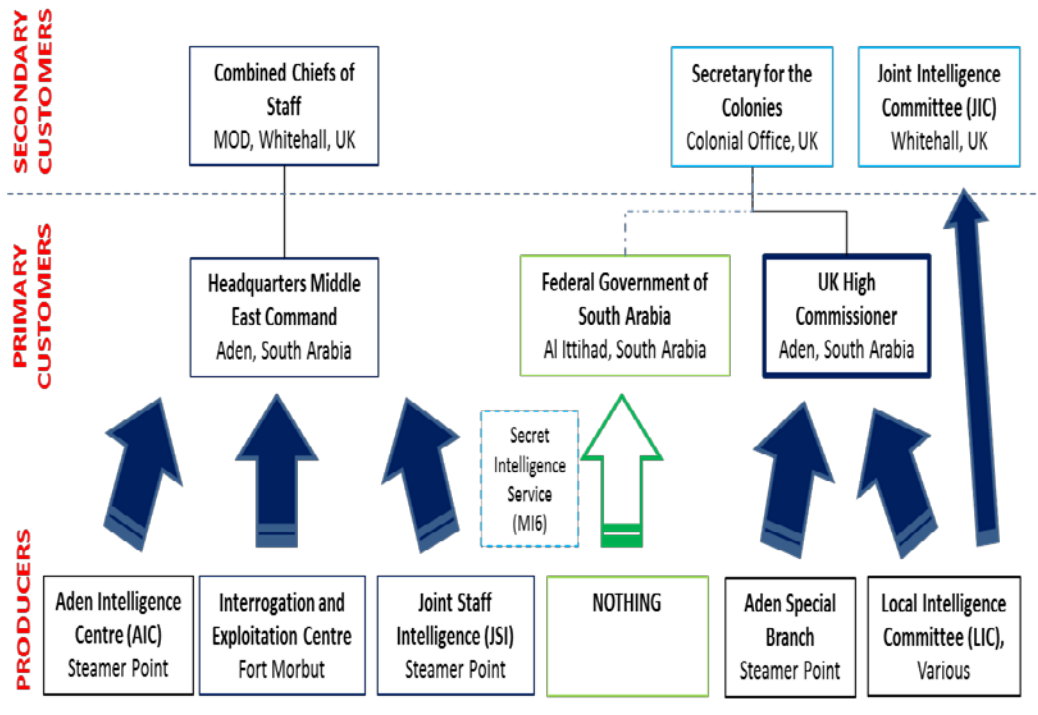
Figure 5.   UK and Federation intelligence organisations in South Arabia, 1963-67

Source: Author's own diagram.

The AIC was a joint military and civilian organisation that contained the Aden

Special Branch. It was led by a senior army officer from the Intelligence Corps (a

Brigadier) who controlled all its activities as the Chief of Intelligence (CoI). The AIC

was intended to be the central organisation for tasking of intelligence collection and also

for analysis and assessment of the material that was collected. In modern US terminology

it was the "Fusion" Cell; in UK terminology it was the All Sources Analysis Cell but also

the organisation that should direct the intelligence collection process. Its scope was

intelligence for the whole of South Arabia. However, it failed to live up to its potential

and was recognised as being very poor throughout the campaign. Analysis of the AIC and its failure to achieve the role assigned to it is the subject of chapter 3.

As noted earlier, the Aden Special Branch (SB) was a British police institution responsible for intelligence, counter-terrorism and counter-subversion across the colonies and in the various constabularies that comprised the police force in the UK itself. It was manned by Arabs and expatriate British officers. The loss of the former due to NLF assassinations caused a substantial degradation in SB capability that was recognised at the national strategic level as a major limitation in improving the intelligence capability in the South Arabian campaign. There was no local police force in either of the Protectorates, therefore, no Special Branch in either of those territories. This too was a factor that contributed to the blindness of the UK and its local allies.

The Local Intelligence Committee (LIC) was a special committee set-up within South Arabia to make intelligence assessments at the strategic level. It was led by the Deputy High Commissioner and comprised a variety of British civilian and military personnel. There was no local Arab representation on the LIC. The LIC was responsible for intelligence assessments from South Arabia for the High Commissioner, senior military leaders but also the senior figures in the UK. The latter exercised a strong degree of influence through the Joint Intelligence Committee (the JIC) that had its local representation through various LICs in the colonies and regions.

The JIC was, and is, a very important organisation within British government circles. It was founded in 1936 to provide comprehensive intelligence assessments for the Chiefs of Staff and senior ministers in the British government. It came into its own during World War Two as it provided both an agreed "British position" on intelligence

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assessment that could inform all of government and be shared with allies as appropriate. The development of the JIC as the key intelligence organisation in UK that brought together input from across government was a very important development in British intelligence and government history. It is the subject of an outstanding work by the late Sir Percy Craddock a career British civil servant and former Chairman of the JIC. For the purposes of this document, suffice it to say the JIC was a committee formed from across UK government and intelligence circles responsible for agreeing and providing an overall intelligence assessment for the top level of the British military and civilian leadership.[94]

Returning to the LIC, its membership mirrored the cross-government structure of the JIC. The LIC members all worked in different British colonial organisations in South Arabia and were not all intelligence professionals. Its membership, competence and output were a source of concern and criticism–this issue is explored in more detail in chapter 3.[95] The LIC's role was as an overall group responsible for overseeing intelligence output from Aden. They would gather together to consider intelligence material, respond to specific questions from the JIC and provide overall assessment documents.

The "Joint Staff Intelligence" (JSI) was the Tri-Service intelligence staff set-up to support Middle East Command. The JSI was a mixture of all three British services with both professional Intelligence Corps personnel and non-intelligence specialists present.

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[94]For his outstanding history of the JIC see Sir Percy Cradock, *Know your enemy: How the Joint Intelligence Committee saw the world* (London: John Murray, 2002).

[95]For a critical appraisal of the membership of the LIC see declassified records of the Colonial Office, Sir John Prendergast, "Intelligence in Aden," Top Secret report to Colonial Secretary, 3, paragraph 8, available at CO 1035/178, UK National Archives, Kew.

They were responsible for processing intelligence at the operational level for Middle East Command. They were probably led by an Army Colonel as the General Staff Officer 1 (GSO1) for intelligence; he may or may not have been an Intelligence Corps officer. The JSI was the highest level military intelligence organisation in South Arabia. In terms of distinguishing the JSI from the AIC, SB or the LIC the key difference is the JSI being all military personnel directly accountable to the Commander in Chief Middle East Command. Their focus was primarily on military affairs–"security intelligence"–within South Arabia but also had an Area of Intelligence Responsibility (AOIR) that covered the whole of the Middle East. Their effectiveness would depend on how smoothly they worked with the AIC, LIC and other agencies as potentially they could have competing assessments and priorities.

Much remains classified about Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) activities; however, what has been released makes it clear that they operated in Republican Yemen and South Arabia. At the time of the campaign in South Arabia they were a disavowed organisation but have since been recognised by the UK government and have accepted a public profile (albeit a low one). During the South Arabia Campaign, SIS had a substantial remit that encompassed the whole of the Arabian Peninsula. Their regional role made them the ideal organisation to try to cancel out the EIS campaign that was running from Taiz in Republican Yemen. Much of the SIS campaign remains classified. Many of the documents found in the National Archive have redacted sections which most likely contained SIS material. For the purposes of this paper the details of SIS operations and capabilities do not need to be examined. The key issue is how their campaign was

synchronised and prioritised with the wider intelligence effort–particularly in the areas of centralised control and exploitation.

An intelligence organisation for the Protectorate/Federal level of government in South Arabia was a major absentee. The surviving material held in the National Archive shows there was considerable effort expended in London and South Arabia discussing the development of an intelligence organisation to support the new Federation. It was noted that the British political advisors worked alone and had very little ability to write down what they knew for central collection and processing. This subject is analysed in more detail in chapter 3. The key issue is the British failure to develop an organisation that supported a key institution of their local ally and exploit all the intelligence available to them. This failure is particularly egregious given the success the NLF had in first building its strength in the Protectorate before launching its urban terrorist offensive in Aden.

<u>Military Intelligence–Assessing Performance</u>

It is a sign of the inherently subjective nature of the intelligence process that there is no formal structure for assessing its effectiveness within the British Army. The principles of intelligence provides framework but it does not help with some of the more specialised challenges that emerge in COIN campaigns. The eight "principles of intelligence" are: centralised control, responsiveness, objectivity, systematic exploitation, security, continuous review, accuracy, timeliness. The extent to which centralised control and systematic exploitation was achieved is examined as a means of analysing the overall performance of intelligence in the South Arabia campaign.

CHAPTER 3

INTELLIGENCE PERFORMANCE–CENTRALISED CONTROL

> This selfish approach to information must be stamped out. The intelligence community must work together to one purpose.[96]
>
> ― Sir John Prendergast

> In the land of the blind the one-eyed man is king.[97]
>
> ― Desiderius Erasmus

Discussion of the success of an intelligence organisation can easily gravitate towards the more glamorous end of the intelligence process–collection. This is the world that involves clandestine techniques and special technology: the cultivation of enemy agents, use of "wire taps" on suspects' phones or covert surveillance of the enemy by undercover military operatives. Comparatively little time is spent in popular fiction, or academic works, on the equally essential activity of tired people working in poorly air-conditioned offices deliberating over lines of authority, reporting chains, the allocation of resources and the analytical process. However, it is absolutely essential for the effectiveness and efficiency of any intelligence organisation to establish a sound structure for the intelligence process.

A "sound structure" should not be judged purely in terms of the intelligence being "right" or not. Intelligence gained on the enemy is highly likely to be more wrong than

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[96]CO 1035/179, Declassified records of the Colonial Office, available at the UK National Archives, Kew, Prendergast Report.

[97]Desiderius Erasmus, *Proverbs: Chiefly Taken from the Adagia of Erasmus, with Explanations; and Further Illustrated by Corresponding Examples from the Spanish, Italian, French & English Languages,* Vol. 2 (Ulan Press, 2011).

right on the very simple ground that intelligence work revolves around capturing information that an opponent is deliberately trying to conceal and then make predictions about future behaviour based on that incomplete understanding. It is better to view the soundness of the organisational structure by judging to what extent there is a clear chain of command capable of overseeing the collection, analysis and sharing of intelligence that is respected by both the intelligence community and their customers. It is this less exciting but absolutely critical area of centralised control (one of the eight principles of intelligence for the British Army at the time of the South Arabia conflict) that is the subject of this chapter.

What is "Centralised Control"?

From the 1960s to the most recent raft of British Army doctrine, "centralised control" is cited as an essential principle within the intelligence process; indeed, it was the first of the eight principles of intelligence. The purpose of centralised control is to ensure no duplication of effort, responsive of intelligence assets to the overall commander, and mutual support and efficiency between collection assets. For it to work it is imperative that the commander give clear direction and ffedback to his intelligence team. It is also essential that he appoint and empower a clear leader to corral and control his intelligence organisation. Hence, "centralised control."

In summary, "centralised control" is directing, controlling and reviewing the intelligence process to ensure it is effective and efficient. That may sound easy for an organisation that is built on hierarchy and compliance, but, in practice it is often very difficult to achieve. Identifying the best level at which to do so, finding the right person in whom to place this responsibility and then achieving consensus amongst the members

of the intelligence community to work within this framework is a very difficult challenge.

It can represent a threat to the civilian way of working that dislikes rigid authority,

military working practices and minimises their opportunity to increase their agency's

funding through unilateral intelligence successes. For the military it can undermine the

unity of command through the operational chain by placing a senior intelligence officer at

the summit of an intelligence process that directly or indirectly interferes with the local

commander's direction of his intelligence team. An example of a common type of

Combined Joint Task Force that generates exactly this kind of centralised control issues

is provided by the diagram at figure 6.
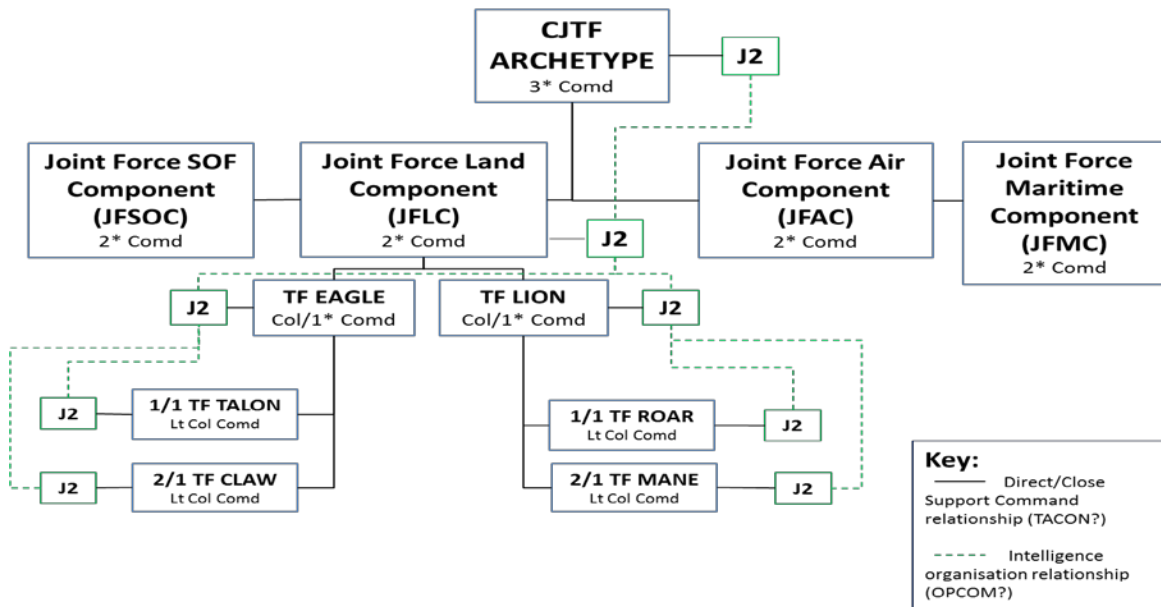
Figure 6.   An example of a Combined Joint Task Force with supporting J2 elements

Source: Author's own diagram.

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In the case of "CJTF ARCHETYPE," the difficult question that is not addressed is who is providing command and control (or "mission command" to use new U.S. Army doctrinal terminology)[98] for the intelligence organisation and how is this being coordinated to ensure maximum effectiveness and efficiency? The unfortunate answer is that it is not addressed properly. The intelligence element in the organisation (the boxes marked "J2") are all integrated into their respective military levels of command and have a loose relationship through their association as intelligence entities. They military personnel within those J2 teams may even come from the same military intelligence unit and thereby have common training, understanding and working practices. However, this is not guaranteed nor does it provide a common approach towards integrating members of the civilian intelligence community into the military-lead team. It also does not provide a mechanism within the military intelligence community for a senior intelligence officer to exist who is able to marshal the resources and energies of the entire intelligence team to support a specific mission, operation or effort. Unless the Commander of CJTF ARCHETYPE is willing to issue a clear directive to his subordinate commanders that properly demarcates the lines of authority, responsibilities and ability to allocate intelligence resources then the local Chief J2 of 2/1 TF CLAW will have to crack on and use his best judgement on who he really works for–the Chief J2 at CJTF ARCHETYPE or Commander TF CLAW? This question is not a fair one to leave to subordinates to decide for alone; it is also not a situation that would be tolerated in any other military

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[98]Headquarters Department of the Army, Army Doctrine Publication 3-0, *Unified Land Operations* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, October 2011), 5.

domain where clarity of command and authority is correctly understood to be a

prerequisite to successful operations.[99]

Why Have "Centralised Control"?

Aside from the inherent military benefits of knowing who you work for, their

authority over you and who you are supporting, it is worth considering the wider benefits

of taking an approach to intelligence that begins with "centralised control." There are six

reasons why "centralised control" is critical to a sound intelligence organisation.

One, it provides a way of correctly allocating scarce intelligence resources based

on the overall commander's priorities. This sounds easy but is a major challenge. It is

doubtful if there has ever been a commander who felt he had too many intelligence assets

or too great an understanding of the enemy or the operating environment. It is highly

likely that every campaign will have insufficient intelligence resources to achieve the

level of clarity that is sought. For example, even with the incredible SIGINT coup

delivered for the Allies in World War Two, Field Marshall Montgomery was able to

conceive and plan Operation Market Garden–a high risk airborne and land operation in

the very area in which a German SS Panzer Corps was deployed. With abundance or

scarcity of intelligence resources, the picture will always be partial and the commander's

understanding incomplete. By placing the commander at the central focus for the

intelligence organisation, and ensuring that it is in turn centrally controlled by his lead

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[99]Headquarters Department of the Army, Field Manual (FM) 6-0, *Mission Command: Command and Control of Army Forces* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, August 2003), 1-1.

intelligence officer, the commander at least has a fighting chance of shaping the intelligence battle to meet his needs.

Two, it provides the best opportunity to flexibly employ intelligence collection assets based on enemy vulnerabilities, friendly strengths and the demands of the commander's evolving operational approach. The alternative is to allocate out intelligence assets on a "fair" basis to subordinate tactical commanders who, by definition, are not able to see the bigger operational picture. If the intelligence collection assets are allocated out equally then they will be less than the sum of their parts. For example, electronic warfare (EW) collection assets could be deployed to the lowest tactical level in a COIN campaign where the enemy uses handheld radios as communication devices. At the tactical level the EW assets add great value by providing local commanders of immediate warnings of enemy attacks against their patrols and bases. However, the overall ability to use all electronic warfare as an intelligence collection tool to identify enemy activity and thereby map the entire enemy communications network is lost. Centralised control enables the overall commander to decide which approach to take–and when to change–depending on his priorities and the situation.

Three, centralised control provides a focal point for agreeing lines of authority between national intelligence agencies, local allies and the military intelligence community and common working practices that can then be established throughout the force. In a JIIM environment binding formal agreements at the most senior level in the operational theatre are essential to ensure all participants work in unison and within the correct legal framework. Once these thorny issues are addressed the subject matter

experts from all disciplines can focus on their own work rather than continually argue over what they are legally allowed to share with each other or collect in the field. The benefit of doing this at the most senior level in theatre is that it becomes inherently tied to the overall commander who is the best person to balance the national policy and legal issues with the urgent requirements of the operation. After all, that is why he is there. If left to the heads of agencies back in the US or UK it is much more likely that a risk-averse compromise will be reached that does not truly meet the needs of the campaign.

Four, centralised control provides the most suitable vehicle for understanding and responding to the enemy in a COIN campaign. In COIN it is highly likely the insurgents will be supported by an external agent and will cross individual unit boundaries and international borders as a matter of course. An intelligence organisation that is controlled at the highest practical level is best placed to detect, understand and track these trends. Dissipation of intelligence assets is more likely to miss the wider pattern and prevents the overall commander from doing much about it as his subordinate commanders "own" their J2 assets.

Five, centralised control plays to the strength of existing military and civilian cultures that all tend to embrace, or at least accept, a strong leader–be that the Ambassador, High Commissioner, or the CJTF Commander. Centralised control emphasises that overall leader's authority over the intelligence community and their active role as ultimate "owner" of the Int Cycle for the campaign. In short, it compels that leader to take responsibility for intelligence and not subcontract it out his intelligence experts; as the previous chapter on the Int Cycle showed, the experts require a leader to own the intelligence process or they will struggle to deliver the best material possible.

For example, it was noticeable in Iraq the time spent by General Petraeus during regular briefings on intelligence. It was not uncommon for him to spend an hour of a 3-4 hour briefing listening to, and questioning, intelligence before going on to hear from subordinate commanders on the situation in their areas. With this level of scrutiny it was clear how important intelligence was to his campaign as well as who owned it.[100]

Six, centralised control improves the performance of J2 analytical personnel within the intelligence structures by allowing them to work together in mutually supportive teams based upon skills, expertise and task. The nature of analytical work in the intelligence community is that it genuinely benefits from having the perspective of more than one analyst (but not too many). By putting analysts from different areas in the same analysis cell there is more rigorous analysis and cross-fertilisation of ideas as personnel inevitably look at each other's work, scrutinise their ideas and see patterns in reporting and enemy activity. This is the essence of intelligence work; it is labelled "Fusion" in contemporary U.S. and UK forces but was thought of in the past simply as all-source intelligence analysis.[101]

A final point, centralised control does not mean that all intelligence personnel and assets are held at the operational level with nothing supporting the formations at the tactical level. It must not be centralised control and centralised execution. That would be a very dangerous: everything would sit at the top of the ivory tower providing flawed

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[100]Author's own experience, Iraq, Summer 2008.

[101]Headquarters, Department of the Army Field Manual (FM) 2-0, *Intelligence* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, August 2012), 5; British Army Field Manual (AFM), Volume 1, Part 10*, Counter-Insurgency Operations* (London: Ministry of Defence, January 2010), 5-5.

assessment ignorant of tactical realities and dangerously exposing tactical units. To go

back to the hypothetical example of "CJTF ARCHETYPE," the J2 teams exist at all

levels to provide "Close Support" by conducting intelligence collection, analysis and

assessment to their formation. The key point is the empowering of the J2 team supporting

HQ CJTF ARCHETYPE with responsibility for allocating intelligence resources to the

subordinate J2 teams and giving them overall direction as required. That leaves scope for

the subordinate commanders to own the assets that have been allocated to them (but

knowing that allocation is subject to external review) and set the local priorities for their

J2 team. The challenge is then for the overall J2 at CJTF ARCHETYPE to give direction

without micromanagement and for the subordinate "Close Support" J2 teams at TF

LION, TF EAGLE etc. to balance supporting their local commander and the overall

intelligence effort. Getting this balance right in a COIN campaign is as big a challenge as

working out the best method of commanding and controlling artillery in support of

offensives in World War One. It is a less well documented area (and would make a valid

subject for study) but the principle of centralised control balanced with decentralised

execution holds true. The extent to which the British were able to address this issue

reveals the difficulty they had in overcoming their weakening position in South Arabia

and the difficulty in changing an unsound intelligence structure when the enemy has the

initiative.

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"Centralised Control" and the British Response to the NLF
in South Arabia

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Centralised control and unity of effort were not achieved in the South Arabia

campaign but they were recognised as key issues by those involved. It was the subject of

much debate at the highest levels in the UK and South Arabia in 1965 as the British

grappled with the losses suffered at the hands of the NLF and struggled to adapt.

However, who was the leader responsible for the campaign and giving direction to the

intelligence organisation?

Within South Arabia, there were three key customers who needed to be supported

by the intelligence machine. First, the High Commissioner who was the most senior

civilian figure and political supremo for the campaign. Second, General Officer

Commanding Middle East Land Forces who from June 1965 was appointed the "Security

Commander" with operational command of the forces engaged in the Emergency.[102]

Third, Commander Middle East Command who was ultimately the most senior military

leader in the theatre and responsible to the Combined Chiefs of Staff for the entire

Middle East Area of Operations and the South Arabian Campaign.

In Malaya, this ambiguity of command was resolved when the post of High

Commissioner and Director of Operations was combined (albeit not permanently) under

Templer. In South Arabia, the separation of the political and military domains under

separate organisations was maintained with the establishment of a security committee

created to tackle the terrorist problem with a whole of government approach.[103] However,

there was an underlying difference of views of those in theatre that sought to keep the

political and security domains separate. Regardless of the view taken on the balance

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[102]Glen Balfour-Paul, *The End of Empire in the Middle East: Britain's Relinquishment of Power in her last three Arab Dependencies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 157. "Operational Executive-Minutes of the 5th meeting held at 10:30am Saturday 15 May 1965 at the Security Secretariat," CO 1035/179, declassified Colonial Office records (formerly classified SECRET), the UK National Archives, Kew.

[103]CO 1035/179, declassified Colonial Office records.

between a kinetic and non-kinetic approach to COIN, few would argue that the separation of politics and security is a serious structural error. The counter-insurgent must recognise that the enemy is pursuing political subversion through violence; taking an approach that does not unify you own actions in those areas risks generating a poor understanding of the enemy and incoherence in your own strategy. This rift is revealed in the debate over how to address the ineffective intelligence organisation.

There were four individuals, and posts, were central to this debate: Sir John Prendergast a leading figure in the post-WWII intelligence and Special Branch world with an outstanding reputation from Cyprus and Kenya;[104] D.J. McCarthy political advisor to Commander MEC and later Head of the Arabian Department of the Foreign Office;[105] Major-General M. St. J. Oswald the Director of Military Intelligence in Whitehall;[106] Brigadier AW (Tony) Cowper the Director/Chief of Intelligence in Aden prior to the arrival of Sir John Prendergast as the new Director of Intelligence in July 1966.[107] Their discussions must have been vigorous in person as the language used in the surviving British documentation is unusually warm and colourful.

The report that brought to a head the entire issue of the effectiveness of the intelligence apparatus in South Arabia was Sir John Prendergast's "Review of Aden Intelligence." It was classified Top Secret and disseminated to a tightly controlled

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[104]Walker, *Aden Insurgency*, 146.

[105]Balfour-Paul, 216.

[106]CO 1035/178, Declassified records of the Colonial Office, the UK National Archives, Kew.

[107]Walker, 146.

audience in Whitehall and South Arabia in November 1965. The report was written

following Prendergast's visit to Aden in October 1965 after a prolonged internal

bureaucratic battle gained his temporary release from his duties as Head of Special

Branch in Hong Kong. The Prendergast Report was followed by reports from the JIC

Working Party on Intelligence in Aden and South Arabia. There was much agreement on

the factors that were frustrating the development of an effective intelligence organisation

in South Arabia. However, the perspectives from Brigadier Cowper and McCarthy had

the alternative prescriptions for change in South Arabia and that are unlikely to have

pleased Prendergast.

<u>The Prendergast Report: Analysis and Recommendations</u>

By the standards of any time, this document is impressively direct and blunt in its

analysis and prescriptive in its recommendations for change. The report itself was

addressed directly to the Secretary for the Colonies; he was the Cabinet level figure

responsible for South Arabia and the direct superior of the High Commissioner. It was

sixteen pages long and concluded with a list of seventeen specific recommendations for

immediate actions to change the intelligence organisation and four page annex providing

standing instructions for the Head of Special Branch.[108] The language used to describe

the existing state of the intelligence organisation in South Arabia was "full and frank" to

use that wonderful euphemism from legendary fictional Whitehall mandarin Sir

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[108]CO 1035/179, declassified records of the Colonial Office, the UK National
Archives, Kew.

Humphrey Appleby in *Yes Prime Minister*.[109] To use more plain language, it was brutal,

unambiguous criticism that could only come from an outsider not responsible for the

current predicament and with an outstanding professional reputation. His opening salvo

covered the entire culture of the intelligence organisation in South Arabia in very tough

terms:

> One of the first impressions I gained after my arrival in Aden was that the
> intelligence community lacked energy and purpose. There was no sense of
> urgency and far too much "nine to five" attitude to the tasks in hand. Worse still
> there was little or no cohesion and no team effort.[110]

It may seem harsh but this is an organisation that was over eighteen months into

the Emergency and had fourteen fatalities to its Arab Special Branch detectives. In that

light it is not difficult to share Prendergast's frustration at the tone of the organisation, its

lack of unity of effort and to understand his desire to see the culture change as the first

step towards reform.

Prendergast moved on to note the lack of centralised control within the

intelligence community and cited the marginalisation of the Chief of Intelligence (at this

stage Brigadier Cowper) as a key failing in the existing organisation:

> There was a tendency on the part of many to keep their intelligence cards too
> close to their chests instead of declaring the material they had to the right quarter–
> the Chief of Intelligence (CoI). This selfish approach to intelligence must be
> stamped out. The intelligence community must work together and to one purpose
> and the Chief of Intelligence must be placed in possession of all security

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[109]In the thinly-veiled fictional portrayal of the inner workings of the British government in Whitehall, a "full and frank" discussion could only be beaten by "a direct exchange of views." In plain English, the first has blood on the carpet; the second has blood on the carpet that it takes days to clean up. See Jonathan Lynn and Antony Jay, *Yes, Prime Minister,* "Power to the People," 1988, available from the BBC.

[110]CO 1035/179, Prendergast Report, 2, paragraph 5, declassified Colonial Office records (formally Top Secret), the UK National Archives, Kew.

intelligence material. He is there as the collator and assessor of such intelligence.[111]

Prendergast went on to explain his concept of how the Chief of Intelligence should operate in a COIN campaign and the importance of unity of effort within the intelligence community:

> Experience elsewhere has repeatedly shown, especially under emergency conditions, that it is essential that there be one person who sees the whole intelligence picture and one desk to which all intelligence material affecting the security of the area in question is directed. This has not been achieved in Aden. The Chief of Intelligence is not being used as he should be, even by the Local Intelligence Committee (LIC) and too frequently he is being bypassed by those very agencies and officials which have a responsibility to help him.[112]

This is a ringing endorsement of the principle of centralised control and unity of effort within the intelligence community; however, Prendergast's solution was not to create a structure that was even more centralised. He recognised the failings of the existing intelligence organisation which, after all, already had an AIC that in theory should have been the perfect vehicle for the Chief of Intelligence to fulfil the central role that Prendergast argued was essential.

Prendergast's view of the AIC made his thoughts on the complacent and selfish culture within the intelligence community seems mild by comparison. His analysis of the AIC was:

> it was presumably meant to be a focal point for all intelligence on Aden State and the Protectorate. If the Centre ever did play its role to the full it is certainly not doing so now. I formed the impression that in present circumstances and particularly looking to the future it would do well to look to its disbandment.[113]

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[111]Ibid.

[112]CO 1035/179, Prendergast Report, 2, paragraph 6.

[113]CO 1035/179, Prendergast Report, 2, 6, paragraph 11.

In the concluding section of his report, his final recommendation was equally clear: "That immediate consideration be given to the disbandment of the AIC."[114] The context of his remarks are essential: Prendergast is giving a failing grade to the very organisation that was designed and intended to provide intelligence for the British campaign in the Emergency. By stating so clearly that it was a failure it was by implication damning the British effort to date as inadequate and ineffective–strong words for an audience in Whitehall that was unlikely to welcome negative news.

Prendergast's solution to restructuring the intelligence organisation was not to reinforce the failed central structure of the AIC. He maintained that centralised control and unity of effort were critical but instead of investing in the current architecture advocated a new structure altogether. His solution was for centralised control, or at least supervision and analysis, but decentralised execution based on the geographical areas consistent with political boundaries and the actual ability collect intelligence. It placed the Chief of Intelligence at the centre of the intelligence organisation but restructured the framework and working practices to recognise what was currently missing and required substantial improvement. See figure 7 for a diagram that explains Prendergast's analysis of the situation in November 1965 and suggestions for change.

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[114]CO 1035/179, Prendergast Report, 15.
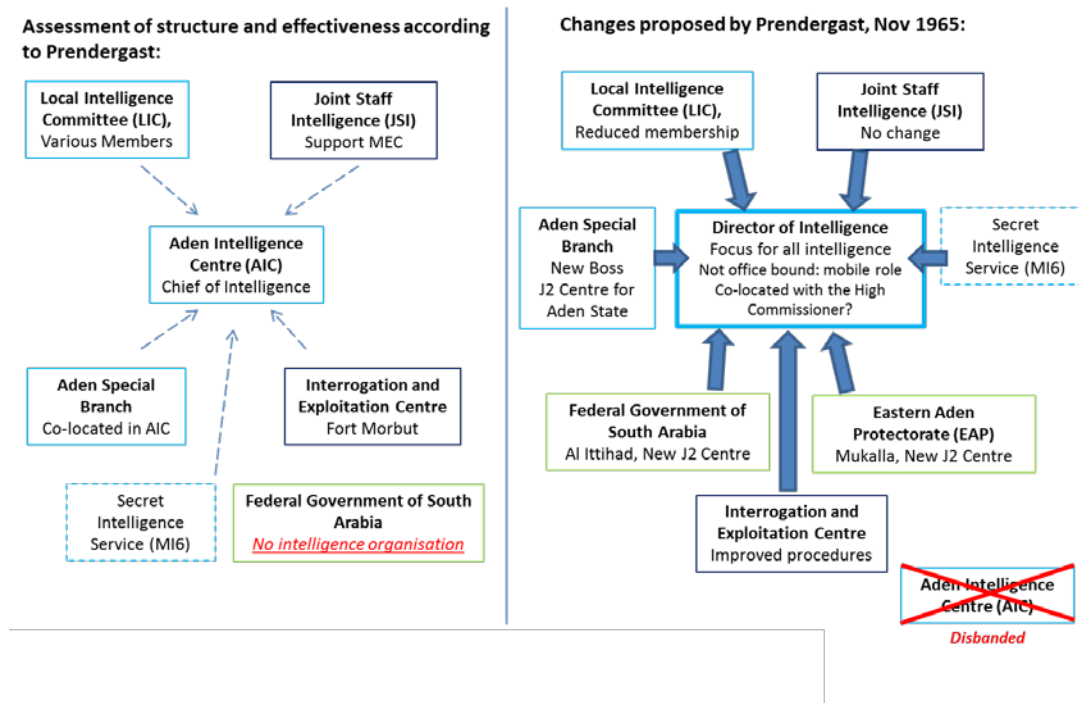
Figure 7. Prendergast's assessment of intelligence organisation in South Arabia and proposal for change, November, 1965

Source: Author's own diagram

When conceiving his idea for a new intelligence organisation, Prendergast noted four key issues with the status quo: one, trying to have an Int Cycle for the whole of South Arabia was not working but there was intelligence flowing in three separate areas that could yet be harnessed; two, create new intelligence organisations to support the EAP and Federation; two, rehabilitate Special Branch as an independent organisation and focus it on intelligence in Aden State; four, get the Chief of Intelligence out of the office and into the country to supervise and guide the whole enterprise.

Prendergast identified that little intelligence was reaching the British authorities in Aden but that there was valuable intelligence material coming from within the EAP and Fedral Government area but did not reach the AIC or Chief of Intelligence.

Consequently, he noted the requirement to develop new intelligence organisations for the

EAP and Federal Government separate from the AIC:

> It is clear that most of the intelligence derived from or affecting the Protectorate is reaching Al Ittihad. I would therefore suggest that the Protectorate Intelligence entity now house in the AIC be transferred to Al Ittihad . . . likewise I suggest that consideration be given to centring Eastern Aden Protectorate (EAP) on Mukalla.[115]

Prendergast spent a great deal of time focusing on how to resurrect the Special

Branch following the dreadful casualties amongst its Arab officers and replacement by

well-meaning but non-Arabist British expatriate officers. His main suggestion from an

operational intelligence perspective was that by separating out SB from the AIC the latter

can rediscover its true role as the primary organisation for intelligence within Aden State:

> If this decentralisation is achieved, it would in my view be advantageous if the AIC title was allowed to disappear. This would make way for the proper identification of Special Branch as Aden's own intelligence organisation. I cannot help but feel that the placing of Special Branch under the umbrella of the AIC has to some degree hampered the development of the former.[116]

Prendergast identified the immediate benefits of retaining the Chief of

Intelligence as the central figure in the overall intelligence organisation but unfixing him

from Aden and the mechanics of the production process. His intent was to thereby free up

the Chief of Intelligence to have greater travel around the operational theatre improve his

overall understanding through context and situational awareness.

> It is however, essential that all concerned with security in Aden State and the Protectorate should ensure that the Chief of Intelligence at all times has the fullest possible intelligence picture. I would suggest that to this end the Chief of Intelligence should travel about the area, particularly the Protectorate, far more than he does at present. He should meet the people who provide intelligence on

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[115]CO 1035/179, Prendergast Report, 5.

[116]CO 1035/179, Prendergast Report, 5, paragraph 13.

their own ground. He must try to divest himself of involvement in the day to day production of intelligence and by more personal contact in the field provide himself with background knowledge against which to judge the material he receives. I feel that there is a vast amount of information cum intelligence lying fallow which he could probably tap for himself and which would help him in his overall task as the main collator and assessor of local security intelligence.[117]

Prendergast did address the likely criticism that disbanding the AIC reduced centralised control. In his view that was a fair observation but bot valid in this case as the benefits that would be accrue from basing intelligence structures on three geographical areas that intelligence was actually collecting in–the Federation, EAP and Aden State–but was not making it back to the AIC outweighed the loss of the ineffective AIC. He also noted that a more effective decentralised system actually improved the position of the Chief of Intelligence to fulfil his role as the senior figure within the intelligence organisation providing centralised control through overall assessment, guidance and supervision.

> It may be felt that the above proposals are opposed to the basic principle of centralising intelligence on one desk. This is not in fact so because the C. of I. would remain the centre point of all intelligence material affecting the Protectorate and Aden State. The difficulty in centralising the producing agencies arises from the fact that there are three somewhat differing types of intelligence involved and three separate areas affected. While it is true that they are all inter-related there are three centre points into which the intelligence from the respective areas naturally flows–Aden, Al Ittihad and Mukalla. The material converging on these three points can and must meet eventually on the desk of the C. of I.[118]

There is a slightly enigmatic section in the Prendergast report covering the relationship between "Political Affairs Staff (PAS) and the Special Branch". Prendergast makes the following observation:

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[117]CO 1035/179, Prendergast report, 9, paragraph 21.

[118]CO 1035/179, Prendergast report, 6, paragraph 14.

There is in my view a great deal to be gained from a closer relationship between the PAS and Head of Special Branch. I hope that under the new regime in Special Branch a greater trust and understanding between the two agencies will be developed. This is particularly necessary if full advantage is to be taken of the resources of both organisations in tackling such important targets as the National Liberation Front's HQ in Taiz and the Egyptian Intelligence Service (EIS)….I was much heartened to hear during my visit that the PAS are now treating this as a primary target. The penetration of the Taiz HQ would be a tremendous advantage and would probably be the biggest step forward in the fight against the NLF. Therefore this must be the main objective of the combined efforts of the PAS and Aden Special Branch.[119]

At first glance "PAS" appears to be a reference to the many Political Agents from the Colonial Office sent on their own into the Sheikhdoms of the WAP and EAP but lacking any intelligence support staff. However, from the context of how Prendergast sees their relationship with Aden Special Branch developing, and from the presence of redacted words from the section, it is more likely to be a euphemism for SIS personnel and operations. The key area that Prendergast envisages as improving is the liaison between "PAS" and SB personnel in a joint campaign to target the EIS, the NLF and their HQ in Taiz, Yemen. That is much more consistent with intelligence sharing between covert members of SIS in South Arabia and any CT team set up within Aden SB than the relationship between overt Colonial Office Political Agents and SB. Either way it underlines Prendergast's recognition of the importance of unity of effort, centralised control and cooperation within the intelligence community.

For all the foresight in the above proposals, Prendergast did not answer three key questions: with the AIC disbanded where was the Chief of Intelligence located when not roving about the country drawing on "fallow" intelligence? Secondly, was the Chief of Intelligence to have his own staff or plug in somewhere else? How would that fit in with

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[119]CO 1035/179, Prendergast report, 9, paragraph 22.

the LIC and JSI? It was a good plan but required as much detail in those areas as Prendergast spent answering what Special Branch needed to do. The latter took up eight out of seventeen pages of the entire report. The bias towards Special Branch is understandable given Prendergast's current employment as a Deputy Commissioner of Police and Director of Special Branch in Hong Kong but nevertheless regrettable in terms of producing a more balanced and thorough report.

<u>Dissenting Views: The Political Advisor</u>

The surviving record does not give a clear account of what followed Prendergast's report. However, it appears to have been a period of urgent introspection as D.J. McCarthy, the Political Advisor to the Commander in Chief of Middle East Command, returned to London to give his input to the JIC in December 1965 just weeks after the Prendergast report hit Whitehall. The political advisor's contribution was delivered in person and written up as a six page Top Secret report with tight circulation in Whitehall. McCarthy was in a difficult position: he could not claim Prendergast was flat out wrong with his assessment as the latter had so much professional credibility throughout the British administration. Nor could he wholeheartedly endorse Prendergast's report in its entirety as it indirectly criticised him, and the other political advisors, for not fully supporting the Chief of Intelligence. McCarthy's response was a masterful piece of obfuscation that embraced Prendergast's overall assessment of the intelligence organisation while subtly arguing against centralised control and unity of effort.

McCarthy's assessment of the state of the British intelligence organisation in South Arabia is even blunter than the harsh words within Prendergast's report:

Intelligence Organisation in Aden–Background. The Federation is at most three years away from independence. The British machine, as opposed to Arabised British, is ramshackle and running down and lacks most elements of normal infrastructure….The successor Arab administrative machine barely exists yet. There is no intelligence machine, properly speaking, covering and targeting the Protectorate. The nearest thing to an intelligence service is Special Branch, which is confined to Aden State, which was gravely weakened by assassinations and which, because of these assassinations and through intimidation of the populace, is receiving far less than the normal flow of information.[120]

There are two critical differences between McCarthy and Prendergast: one, McCarthy denies any obstruction or lack of support for the Chief of Intelligence; two, he denies it is possible to have a centralised intelligence organisation in South Arabia.

McCarthy makes a substantial effort to deny the accusation that the Chief of Intelligence was undermined by a lack of unity of effort within the intelligence and political community. On three separate occasions McCarthy specifically denies that the Chief of Intelligence has not been supported by the various agencies and political advisors:

He himself [Brigadier Cowper the Chief of Intelligence] feels that his failure has been due to obstruction by others. In this he is over-rigid. He would have done better to realise that his charter was wrong.[121]

Followed by:

I think he [Prendergast] has accepted too readily the views of the Chief of Intelligence in insisting that the Chief of Intelligence must, as in the JIC Paper of 1964, be the centre of everything and in alleging personal obstruction.[122]

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[120]"Intelligence Organisation in Aden and the Federation Working Party," December 1965, 1, paragraph 1, CO 1035/179, JIC, declassified Colonial Office records (formally TOP SECRET "Special Care"), the UK National Archives, Kew. Hereafter referred to as the "JIC McCarthy Report."

[121]CO 1035/179, JIC McCarthy report, December 1965, 4, paragraph 15.

[122]CO 1035/179, JIC McCarthy report, December 1965, 6, paragraph 18.

And finally:

> Maj-Gen Oswald's report seems to be much more balanced. My only criticism is that he, again, appears to labour personal obstruction beyond what the facts warrant.[123]

It is not possible to give a definitive answer on who was blocking who. However, if three non-Political Advisors all concurred that the Chief of Intelligence was not receiving the necessary reporting on political matters it is hard to envision them all being wrong. McCarthy may have been defensive about this issue for personal reasons. It is highly likely that part of his role as Political Advisor to Commander MEC was to include the Chief of Intelligence in this material. His above statements were effectively denying his own obstructionism!

The recommendations from McCarthy on the role of the Chief of Intelligence are in stark contrast to Prendergast's views on centralised control and the value of all-source intelligence analysis in one location. McCarthy begins by explaining that political intelligence currently does not go anywhere near the Chief of Intelligence in the AIC:

> It is outside the mainstream of political reporting and discussion. It would take a major effort of distribution, of additional staff and additional paper and so on to bring it into the main stream. The resources to do this are not available. I do not think it is even worth trying to make them available. By the time the AIC has been put into a position to do the work it was conceived as doing (if possible which I doubt) independence would be on us. After independence it has no future whatsoever.[124]

What a wonderful insight into the mind of a political advisor assessing intelligence. Never mind the previous experience of Malaya, Cyprus and Kenya that highlighted the essential importance of a sound intelligence structure under an empowered Chief of

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[123]Ibid.

[124]CO 1035/179, JIC McCarthy report, December 1965, 4, paragraph 14.

Intelligence. In Aden, it was apparently not worth the effort. McCarthy then flat out states

that it is not possible for the Chief of Intelligence to do his job as the centre of the

intelligence organisation and that his remit from the JIC is wrong:

> I think the Chief of Intelligence's charter is one that he cannot be expected to live
> up to. His performance so far illustrates the point. He has done a good job in
> reconstructing the beginnings of an effective Special Branch after the Special
> Branch had been shattered by killings, the drying up of information and
> demoralisation. He has done a first rate job in getting effective interrogation going
> (although the part of the Army in this must not be overlooked). He has not been
> able to do much about political, as opposed to security, intelligence.[125]

McCarthy's comments are egregious when compared to the very good case Prendergast

makes when recommending an improved relationship between the Political Affairs Staff

(PAS) and Aden Special Branch as a method of improving targeting of the NLF.

Following his denial of lack of support for the Chief of Intelligence and

impossibility of centralised control, McCarthy goes even further by undermining

Prendergast's professional expertise. McCarthy asserts that "security intelligence" and

"other intelligence" are two separate domains; however, he does not define what they are

but has a good crack at using them to undermine Prendergast's credibility anyway:

> I think Mr Prendergast's report would be more telling if he had distinguished
> clearly between Security Intelligence and other Intelligence. Where he is dealing
> with the former, e.g. over Special Branch, he seems to be dead right and I am not
> in any case qualified to comment. Where he deals with the latter I think he has
> accepted too readily the views of the Chief of Intelligence….I see no signs that
> Mr Prendergast has even noticed the inherent landscape for central intelligence
> which I have discussed above.[126]

McCarthy implies that Prendergast is out of his depth yet admits he has not even read his

report when he makes his (lengthy) comments to the JIC! If he had, he would have

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[125]CO 1035/179, JIC McCarthy report, December 1965, 4, paragraph 15.

[126]CO 1035/179, JIC McCarthy report, December 1965, 6, paragraph 18.

realised that Prendergast noticed exactly the same "landscape" as McCarthy but had come to a different conclusion–to change the existing structure to make centralised control effective rather than abandon it as too difficult. McCarthy's attitude is probably a sign of instinctive defensiveness over his own role in marginalising the existing Chief of Intelligence. It is interesting to note that their two reports concur on much–setting up a proper intelligence structure for the Protectorate, disbanding the AIC–yet McCarthy remains resistant to greater unity of effort and centralised control.

The observations from McCarthy probably carried substantial weight in Whitehall; he had been Political Advisor to Commander MEC for several years and must have built up considerable professional capital in the bureaucracy. However, he was neither a police officer nor intelligence professional. It is odd that the JIC would regurgitate his views on keeping "political" and "security" intelligence separate with so little scrutiny or comment.

<u>Different Emphasis: The Military Professionals</u>

In addition to the reports from Prendergast and McCarthy there was formal input to the JIC from at least two members of the army both involved in intelligence: Maj-Gen Oswald, DMI, and Brigadier Cowper, Chief of Intelligence in Aden. Unfortunately the report from the former does not seem to have been preserved in the records. However, from references in the McCarthy report it appears Oswald was not content with the situation and advocated that a Counter-Intelligence Unit be set-up in the "Federal Forces"–presumably as Oswald recognised the threat of NLF infiltration of the FRA.[127]

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[127]CO 1035/179, JIC McCarthy report, December 1965, 4, paragraph 16a.

Cowper was called back to Whitehall for consultations and appears in the surviving documentation as having his say with the JIC's "Working Party on Intelligence in Aden and the Federation" on 22 April 1966;[128] this is approximately two months before he relinquished responsibility as Chief of Intelligence to Sir John Prendergast. It is likely there was a degree of personal protection going on as Cowper tried to defend his own record and encourage the JIC to set terms of reference for Prendergast that fitted Cowper's own agenda as the latter was not leaving theatre but continuing on in a subordinate role to Prendergast.

After pointing out the positive steps he had already taken, Cowper recognised the importance of developing the intelligence capability in the EAP and the Federation. However, he disagreed with Prendergast's prescription of breaking up the AIC and sending out the staff to set up intelligence cells in those areas–even if the situation deteriorated further:

> If there was trouble in the EAP it might be necessary to send a Military Intelligence Officer to Mukalla, but it was not possible for intelligence on the EAP to be processed by Federal Government Staff at Al Ittihad. The AIC must therefore be the central link covering the whole of South Arabia. On the whole, therefore, it seemed that no major change in the central organisation of intelligence was needed before independence.[129]

Looking beyond the likely concern Cowper had for his impending replacement as Chief of Intelligence by Prendergast, it is significant that Cowper did not support McCarthy's concept of separation of "political" and "security" intelligence. In fact, in his opening

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[128]CAB 182/55, declassified records of the Cabinet Office (formerly SECRET), UK National Archives, Kew.

[129]CAB 182/55, 3.

remarks he re-emphasised the importance of the Chief of Intelligence being fully

included in this area of reporting:

> Although arrangements for the circulation of telegrams of general political interest with a bearing on intelligence had been greatly improved there were still occasions on which the Chief of Intelligence did not see all such telegrams.[130]

Cowper's professional disagreement with Prendergast over centralised control and the

overall intelligence process was over how best to structure the organisation not over

whether or not it was possible or desirable to have an integrated and centrally-led

intelligence apparatus. This conclusion is important as it suggests that the late

appointment of a Director of Intelligence in Aden, and the generally poor intelligence

organisation, was an aberration in the British experience and not done by design.

<u>Summary–Centralised Control and Intelligence in South Arabia</u>

It is tempting to sum up the British attempts at changing their intelligence

organisation with a degree of scorn over the lack of urgency with which the British state

in Whitehall approached reform in South Arabia. The surviving correspondence from the

Colonial Office shows that the visit, assessment and report of Sir John Prendergast took

from Feb to Nov 1965 to organise and execute.[131] In that time, the NLF had subverted the

British position in the Federation and gained the ascendency in Aden through a very

effective terrorist campaign against Special Branch. The fact that Prendergast himself

noted a similar complacency in the "nine to five" mentality of those working in the AIC

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[130]Ibid., 1.

[131]For example, see internal Colonial Office telegram from the Colonial Secretary to the Governor of Hong Kong asking for a "Prendergast-like figure" to come out and look at Aden SB due to its dreadful condition, 15 February 1965, CAB 1035/178, declassified records of the Colonial Office, the UK National Archives, Kew.

when he visited in Oct 1965 is even worse as those members of staff are themselves in harm's way and have lost colleagues killed to the NLF. Similarly, the attempt by McCarthy to frustrate Prendergast's attempts at a thorough overhaul of the entire intelligence organisation suggests a lack of understanding of the principles and methods that had proved successful in other British campaigns. How could this happen when the campaigns that preceded and followed South Arabia showed that the British were capable of learning and adapting? This issue is explored in detail in chapter 5.

<u>Centralised Control of Intelligence–Wider Implications
for Intelligence</u>

There are three key issues from the British attempt at developing a centrally controlled intelligence apparatus that have wider implications for fighting and winning a COIN campaign. One, understand the nature of the war you are in as soon as you can; if you are in a COIN fight and/or a civil war then so be it–better to recognise that fact and try to win rather than deny there is a problem and hope for the best. Two, once you have done so, do not be coy or weak–make the bold changes that experience suggests must be made regardless of how upsetting that is for bureaucratic agendas, Service rivalry and people's careers. Only through inter-agency consensus will unity of effort and centralised control be achieved. If you do not do so then you have little hope of achieving the levels of effectiveness and efficiency required to prevail in that kind of environment. Three, make sure your political masters have the right expectations of what you can achieve and what is near impossible i.e. nothing if you are not perceived publically to be staying for the long term, little if you have no intelligence structure in half the country, and,

absolutely nothing if the local population will not talk to you and your intelligence community will not work together.

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Centralised Control of Intelligence–Wider Implications
Beyond Intelligence

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Outside the British military intelligence community "centralised control" is not a commonly used term; however, it is essentially the same as unity of command or at least "unity of effort." In the contemporary US military community the "joint, inter-agency, multinational" domain ("the JIIM") is recognised as a central part of how military operations are conducted in the modern world. The challenge for adapting military hierarchies and command relationships to include these new, non-military organisations is being addressed.

A key concept that is aligned with "centralised control" is "unity of effort." It recognises that with many different organisations coming together it is not necessarily possible (or even desirable in some situations) to have unity of command under a military figure. In its stead, "unity of effort" is the way ahead to at least achieve effectiveness (high quality output) if not efficiency (best value of output for resources spent in the process).

In the UK "unity of effort" in this sense finds its counterpart in the well-known concept of "the comprehensive approach." This concept is very familiar to US COIN theorists and defence personnel as is the hard-won experience that it is easier to talk about than put into practice. A comprehensive approach or coordinated government machinery has been a principle of British COIN operations for many years before recent

operational experience caused the lesson to be re-learned.[132] However, the significance of centralised control and unity of effort goes beyond the intelligence world and COIN theory. If methods of consensus building and working practices can be agreed within the intelligence community (and the latter is inherently a JIIM entity based on its diverse membership) then there may be lessons in achieving unity of effort and a comprehensive approach for the wider military and governmental community.

The same challenge exists in the contemporary British and US military and civilian intelligence communities. From the surviving documentation from the South Arabian campaign the issue of centralised control and unity of effort is a perennial challenge inherent to intelligence organisations and is not an anomaly. Examining how contemporaries grappled with this challenge provides some insights into the consequences of bureaucratic resistance, lack of prioritisation and not understanding the nature of the war you are fighting (or at least not quickly enough).

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[132]Frank Kitson, *Low Intensity Operations* (London: Faber & Faber, 1971), Chapter 3, 53; British Army Field Manual, Vol 1, Part 10, *COIN*, 2010, 4-5, paragraph 1-15.

CHAPTER 4

INTELLIGENCE–EXPLOITATION AND INTERROGATION

      In many of these case reports the local British authorities were accused of using physical torture, at least during interrogation, as a means of extorting confession...The very fact that a neutral organisation such as Amnesty International is not allowed to interview the detainees increases the suspicion of practice of torture at the interrogation centres. [133]

— Dr Selahaddin Rastgeldi

      The hazard of emotional involvement of the interrogator with the subject during protracted interrogations of this type was demonstrated when on one of the several occasions that ZAKI was reduced to tears of longing for his family the interrogator also wept, albeit briefly. [134]

— Lt Col Richards

There are few subjects within the intelligence world as controversial and emotive

as the interrogation of captured insurgents or suspected terrorists. Any debate over the

legacy of the Global War on Terror is likely to include a heated argument over the

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[133]Dr Rastgeldi's official report on behalf of Amnesty International from 1966, http://www.amnesty.org/fr/library/asset/MDE27/002/1966/en/b88ed2e0-6be4-42d6-baa0-ddacb29bdb82/mde270021966eng.pdf (accessed 29 November 2012).

[134]Lt Col Richards, "Report in Interrogation in Aden," November 1964, Classified SECRET "Handle with Care," page 5, paragraph 31, CO 1035 178, declassified Cabinet Office records, the UK National Archives, Kew, hereafter referred to as "the Richards report." The individual referred to as "ZAKI" was an important figure within the NLF. He was captured by the British in approximately October 1964 and was subject to extensive interrogation by Lt Col Richards and his team. During this period it was customary within formal intelligence report writing in the British military for place names and the names of persons to be capitalised hence "ZAKI." The original capitalisation within official British reports has been kept when quoted in this document; no changes have been made to increase emphasis or prominence within primary source quotes. Within the main body of the thesis individual names are written as normal e.g. Zaki not ZAKI, Razzaq not RAZZAQ.

morality of torture and the alleged intelligence gains that it provides.[135] This important

topic requires a great deal more scrutiny than can be provided in this chapter. For the

record, as a professional intelligence officer, I am both personally and professionally

opposed to torture. It is both morally wrong and strategically, operationally and tactically

counter-productive. It is worth noting the absence of any professional consensus on the

efficacy of torture while other morally dubious forms of intelligence collection are

accepted as legitimate and necessary.[136] Pushing past the hyperbole and emotion that

surrounds torture, it is critical that an essential truth is recognised: the exploitation of

captured people and material for intelligence purposes cannot be ignored. It must be

addressed robustly at the highest level in a COIN campaign and not be neglected by

military and civilian leaders. If exploitation is done well it is a tremendous opportunity

for gaining insight into the enemy and plotting their defeat. If done poorly it can all but

guarantee strategic defeat in the court of domestic and international political opinion.

This chapter examines the issue of exploitation by analysing the British approach

in South Arabia. It addresses the issue of how exploitation in COIN is currently viewed

by intelligence professionals within the British military and tries to identify the lessons

that can be drawn from the British approach in South Arabia. There are four parts: one,

key definitions of exploitation and interrogation within UK COIN doctrine; two, the

value of interrogation within COIN; three, how the British approached exploitation in

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[135]For a pro-torture narrative that is typically ill-informed about the realities of intelligence exploitation and interrogation see http://www.theweek.co.uk/27027/let%E2%80%99s-be-realistic-about-torture (accessed 29 November 2012).

[136]For example: electronic surveillance of private communications or directing human intelligence agents to conduct tasks that place their lives at extreme risk.

South Arabia (especially interrogation); four, the different views of the exploitation process within the British government and security forces during the South Arabia campaign. The wider implications are then highlighted for consideration in the final chapter.

"Systematic Exploitation," Exploitation and Interrogation–Some Definitions

As a general principle, systematic exploitation refers to oversight of the Int Cycle (particularly collection) to ensure that all assets are tasked in accordance with their strengths based on a sound understanding of what they can do and what they are needed to do. In the British system, "systematic exploitation" is best summarised as the process where intelligence sources are systematically exploited by methodical tasking based on a thorough knowledge of their capabilities and also their limitations. In practice, it means the rigorous use of collection assets to gather information from all sources possible followed by a thorough examination by the analytical team. This principle applies to interrogation of captured people and evaluation of recovered material as much as it does to electronic surveillance, satellite imagery or human intelligence sources within the local community.

There is an additional aspect to "systematic exploitation" not covered in this definition: the idea that information collected by those intelligence sources must be thoroughly exploited until every possible facet of value has been brought forth before sending a final product to the analysts who process all reporting. A common phrase used is "wringing it dry"; essentially it encourages a mentality of all members of the Int Cycle to conduct analysis and add value. The primary place for the thorough examination of the

information gathered is correctly placed at the "Processing" stage of the Int Cycle where analysts are responsible for rigorous analysis, evaluation and assessment. However, at the collection stage it is also appropriate for intelligence personnel to robustly scrutinise the information they are gaining from their sources before they send it to their colleagues responsible for processing. Scrutiny at the collection stage is important for two reasons: one, it provides the best chance of detecting technical failures in collection or deceit by a human intelligence source; two, it improves the quality of intelligence output by encouraging collectors to proactively seek as much value as possible from every report by not waiting on feedback from the analytical community. Nowhere is this more important than in the domain of exploitation of captured people and material where breakthroughs can create opportunities for gaining intelligence that can be directly used in the field against the insurgency.

<div align="center">Exploitation: People, Material and Documents</div>

Exploitation of captured people and material is not a new concept but it has undergone something of a rebirth in the past ten years. It featured as a core component of targeting in the new edition of British military COIN doctrine.[137] In summary, it is the exploitation for intelligence value of all captured documents, material (weapons and electronic equipment) and people related to enemy activity. It is a very challenging aspect to command as it comprises both the collection of information by specialists and then processing it into intelligence through painstaking evaluation and analysis. It also requires a joint, inter-agency approach due to the wide variety of skills necessary:

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[137]See British Army Field Manual, *COIN,* 2010, 5-5 to 5-7.

interrogating suspected insurgents, technically exploiting a captured computer, translating

documents from Arabic into English, guarding a prisoner, and forensic analysis of all of

the above. Any organisation tasked with exploitation becomes by default joint,

interagency and even multinational; it is a microcosm of the challenges of the

contemporary operating environment.

Unlike other forms of intelligence collection that are less controversial, there is a

strategic risk from conducting exploitation: if your activities are perceived as being

illegal, draconian or outright brutal it is highly likely that your cause will lose legitimacy

locally and internationally. This risk is not absent from other forms of intelligence

collection but it is not as severe. Since 9/11, it is hard to think of any incidents where

satellite imagery intelligence collection has caused a strategic incident. However, when

considering interrogation our minds immediately turn to recent events at the US facility

in Bagram in 2012 where it was reported that papers containing verses from the Holy

Quran were inadvertently burned by guards, to Baghdad in 2005 where the systematic

abuse of prisoners in Abu Ghuraib attracted international condemnation and to Basra in

2003 where the death of Abu Musa at the hands of the British Army resulted in the first

prosecution, and conviction, of a British soldier for war crimes since 1945.[138] If the risks

are so high why bother pursuing exploitation, and particularly interrogation, at all? To

answer that question, and explore the lessons from the British experience in South

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[138]BBC coverage of all three incidents provides a relatively balanced narrative (all
accessed 29 November 2012); Bagram Quran burning: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/
world-asia-17116595; Abu Ghuraib: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/4475657.stm;
Baha Musa: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/6609237.stm; For partial news coverage
from a Middle Eastern media outlet see Al Jazeera: Abu Ghuraib, http://www.aljazeera.
com/archive/2004/04/200841011243741174.html (accessed 29 November 2012).

Arabia, it is worth briefly examining the intelligence value of interrogation as a core part

of the exploitation process and entire Int Cycle.

Interrogation: The Double-Edged Sword?

Interrogation is clearly not a new activity within the military profession. Although

rarely credited with great insight into the domain of military intelligence techniques, the

eminent 19th century military theorist and tactician Antoine Henri Jomini noted the

importance of allocating high quality people to interrogate captured enemy prisoners:

> A skilful Chief of Staff will always be able to select intelligence officers who can
> so frame their questions as to elicit important information from prisoners and
> deserters.[139]

Contemporary British COIN doctrine from January 2010 similarly notes the

potential of interrogation to provide insight and valuable intelligence to support effective

operations against the enemy network. It also the strategic risks of being perceived to do

so illegally or with unnecessary force:

> The [operations] cycle is fed by the conduct of security operations and is refined
> by the ever-increasing and accurate intelligence that the process itself generates
> through interrogation. If the force is not specifically structured, trained or
> resourced to conduct detention operations there is high risk to its effectiveness.
> The exploitation of detainees within the rule of law by well trained personnel is
> critical. Poorly conducted detention operations will be damaging and may drive
> large numbers of the uncommitted population into the ranks of the insurgency.[140]

The goal for intelligence professionals is to achieve a centrally controlled Int

Cycle that utilises a diverse range of intelligence collection to provide insight and

corroboration but also redundancy should the enemy find a method of counter-acting any

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[139]Antoine Henri Jomini, *Art of War*, from *Roots of Strategy: Book 2* (Harrisburg: Stackpole Books, 1987), 537-538.

[140]British Army Field Manual, *COIN*, 2010, 8-C-2.

particular technique. There is never any intent on the part of intelligence professionals to rely wholly on one collection method. In a COIN campaign the reliance on interrogation (or any other method) is not a deliberate choice made from a position of strength but the recognition that other methods are not proving effective and it provides the only way of moving forwards.

Interrogation in COIN

Interrogation can contribute to a COIN campaign but particularly in three scenarios: one, when the counter-insurgent is strongly in the ascendency and seeks a method of communicating directly with insurgents to persuade them their cause is lost. Two, when trying to judge if morale within the insurgency has been degraded to the extent that they are persuaded to change sides or even give up (identifying their "tipping point"). Three, when the insurgents are strongly in the ascendency with the counter-insurgent dangerously blind to who they are and what they are doing. In the latter circumstance all intelligence collection is very difficult–perhaps even non-existent in the case of finding human intelligence sources within the ranks of the insurgency. When this (dire) situation occurs interrogation of suspected insurgents can be the last toehold the intelligence organisation has on developing an understanding of the enemy and thereby help the force find its way out of the darkness. Scenario three is the situation the British were in by January 1965. Of note, under the Emergency legislation they had the ability to detain and even deport suspected terrorists from South Arabia. This combination of internment and deportation was a key tool for intelligence exploitation as it provided a credible threat that could be used against the suspected terrorist. If the latter proved

totally resistant to interrogation it also provided a last resort to remove him from the area and thereby at least reduce the threat.

In summary, interrogation is an essential part of an exploitation system integrated within the Int Cycle. It can provide four things: one, an insight into the structure, capabilities, and goals of the insurgency when all else has failed; two, a route into developing human intelligence sources within the local community or the insurgency itself; three, as the intelligence picture is rebuilt from the ground up, a responsive collection method to directly support precision targeting of the insurgency; four, if coupled with a method of internment that is perceived as being legitimate, it can be a lever to relieve political pressure and develop a constituency in favour of a peaceful settlement. The latter point may take many years but was illustrated in Northern Ireland where many Republican and Loyalist prisoners became strong advocates for the Good Friday Peace agreement against the opinions of hardliners within their respective organisations.[141]

Were there any lessons from how the British approached this issue in the South Arabia campaign? Of note, it was scenario three (under attack and in near total darkness on the insurgent organisation) that the British found themselves in by January 1965. It was the results of interrogation that they were at least able to discern the opaque shape of the insurgency that had surrounded them. So how did the British approach interrogation

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[141]For a first-hand account of the views of senior Loyalist and Republican prisoners, see BBC documentaries by Peter Taylor–"PROVOS" and "LOYALISTS." British Film Institute archive, http://ftvdb.bfi.org.uk/sift/series/28549 (accessed 29 November 2012).

and exploitation in an Islamic country where they lacked language skills, faced an externally supported insurgency and international criticism?

Exploitation in South Arabia–Putting Humpty Dumpty Back Together Again

In 1964 the NLF increased the pressure on the British and their local allies by spreading their influence in the Protectorate and Aden State through an aggressive programme of political subversion. The targets were twofold: in the Protectorate the tribal balance of power that favoured the leaders of the would-be Federation of South Arabia; in Aden it was the critical security force apparatus that underpinned British control. In Aden, this meant one thing: a violent campaign of terrorist attack against the Aden Special Branch. In particular, the Arab officers who ran local human intelligence sources and provided the critical link between the British and the Arab populace.[142]

As 1964 progressed, losses in Special Branch took their toll on intelligence collection and overall understanding of the insurgency. By December 1964 (a full twelve months into the Aden Emergency) the only viable intelligence being gained was from interrogation. However, it had not been an easy journey nor were all problems resolved. Special Branch's losses had been so severe that the High Commissioner requested support from the Ministry of Defence.[143] It must have been recognised as a serious issue as the response by the Int Corps was to send the Commanding Officer (CO) and Chief

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[142]Walker, *Aden Insurgency*, 136.

[143]CO 1035/178, "IS Report on Interrogation in Aden, 18 Sep–25 Oct 1964," the Richards report, 31, paragraph 4.

Instructor of their specialist human intelligence interrogation unit.[144] They deployed for four months in total and were recognised as having made a strong contribution to rehabilitating the interrogation capability in South Arabia–at least in terms of delivering some useful intelligence.[145] There were two major issues outstanding from the visit: the feasibility of Special Branch recovering enough to resume leadership of interrogation from the army and the strategic climate in the international community that painted British interrogation as brutal, illegal and illegitimate.[146] Before examining the strategic issue of legitimacy, it is worth examining in the depth the lessons from the military challenge in rebuilding the interrogation capability in Aden.

<center>Rebuilding Interrogation in South Arabia–The Int Corps
Approach</center>

The Int Corps team deployed to Aden from 18 September 1964 to 30 Jan 1965 and produced two reports on their operational experience. The first report was written in early Dec 1964 by Lt Col Richards, the CO; the second in early February by his chief instructor Warrant Officer Class Two (WO2) Everson. Both were classified Secret and reached a strictly controlled audience in Whitehall: the MOD, the Colonial Office and third organisation - probably BSS.[147] The team was tasked to take control of the

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[144]The visit had a high enough profile for the Richards report to be circulated within the small community in Whitehall concerned with intelligence in Aden in 1964. See CO 1035/178 for cover note from Colonel Cowper (Chief of Intelligence) to Jack Morton at the Colonial Office and copied in to "Box 500" (probably BSS).

[145]CO 1035/179, McCarthy.

[146]Walker, *Aden Insurgency*, 185-188

[147]The second report from WO2 Everson is hereafter referred to as the Everson Report, also found in declassified Colonial Office records, CO 1035 178. The Richards

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interrogation effort to identify the terrorists attacking British forces and to re-equip and run the interrogation centre on an enduring basis if they saw fit to do so.[148] Once they arrived in Aden, the focal point for their effort was taking over the interrogation of all those held as suspected terrorists but particularly an individual suspected of being an important figure in the insurgency. The context was the acknowledged lack of capacity of Aden Special Branch to cope with its own losses and the situation. The insights gained from his interrogation, and from the remaining personnel in the facility, provided the bulk of the intelligence gained and lessons learned from the JSIU team.

If the two reports are compared against each other some telling insights emerge: one, breakthroughs can occur when certain basic techniques are followed–the oral, aural and visual isolation of prisoners from each other based on alert guarding and physically suitable facility; concerted interrogation sessions focusing on a vulnerable individual; a contrast in approaches by the interrogators; support by intelligence personnel to the interrogators to ensure maximum information is available to the interrogators. However, even where breakthroughs are made complacency amongst the intelligence team– especially the interrogators who have invested so much personal effort in the process - is a significant risk. Even when a suspect "breaks," or comes "off story," that is no guarantee that they will not continue to resist and withhold information. Regular changes in techniques by the exploitation team are needed, and must be anticipated, to keep a dominant position and prevent the terrorist suspect gaining the initiative.

Report includes a note that copies in a government department referred to as "Box 500"; this is probably a cover term for BSS.

[148]CO 1035 178, Richards report, 31-32, paragraph 6.

The location and physical layout of the detention and interrogation facility in

Aden was so poor in September 1964 that it merited strong words of criticism by Lt Col

Richards. He found it:

quite unsuitable for the purpose in that:

a) Isolation of the prisoners, verbal or visual, is impossible.

b) Part of the courtyard and the whole verandah are overlooked by the road leading into Fort Morbut (used, by among others, local Army-employed civilians) and by the Corporals' Club. Had the building been erected 180 degrees the other way–that is, out to sea–this major security problem would have been nullified.[149]

The guard force was in little better condition. Their lack of basic professionalism

was absolutely dreadful. The guard force lacked even a basic level of competence. They

were nowhere near striving to achieve the level required to maximise the prospects for

gaining intelligence from the suspects. To do so, it is important for the guards to be

competent, behave legally but also to see their role as part of the intelligence process. Lt

Col Richards found that:

Discipline was, to say the least, slack. On initial inspection the main suspect in a terrorist incident was playing cards through the Grille door of his cell with a man who was an eye witness against him. At meal times and for ablution purposes prisoners were not segregated. Arab policemen chatted with prisoners.[150]

The short-term solution was for the military to take the lead on guarding and for

the guard force to take a significant degree of its direction from the intelligence team–

particularly the interrogators.

This situation [no segregation and poor guarding standards] was quickly corrected and guards were briefed daily by the PSI WO2 Everson. Shortly after the arrival of the team guard duties were taken over by the RM Commandos, a number of

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[149]CO 1035/178, Richards Report, 32, paragraph 12.

[150]CO 1035/178, Richards Report, 32, paragraph 13.

whom had been in interrogation centres as prisoners during E and E exercises [Escape and Evasion] in the UK and knew the form.[151]

It is worth noting this relationship as the issue of who controls the detention aspect of exploitation is by no means an easy one in a COIN campaign. By allowing intelligence personnel to lead it provides opponents of the internment and interrogation policy to claim that illegal, or at least immoral, techniques are being used. By placing the detainees under the control of a guard force that is not under the same command and control as the interrogators then a separation of the two activities is achieved. However, that is likely to come at the cost of unity of effort within the exploitation facility to create the optimal circumstances to enable intelligence breakthroughs to occur. Of note, it did not occur to Richards and Everson to ask for someone else to come in and take over the detention role; from the surviving documentation they took their role in guiding the guard force as a key part of the intelligence process.

The interrogators faced a difficult challenge when they arrived in Aden: they knew nothing about the NLF as an organisation, had no local human or technical intelligence sources to draw on, and had to start from scratch interrogating prisoners who had been held for a long period without giving any information. After isolating the prisoners from each other, setting up a competent military guard force, calling in military engineers to improve the infrastructure and gaining what insight they could from Special Branch, the interrogators set about their task. They chose the prisoner who had been interrogated least thus far as that provided the "freshest" candidate for interrogation. They dedicated their efforts to that one individual for five days of concerted, focused

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[151]Ibid.

work. It resulted in the detainee Zaki Lufti Freij (hereafter referred to as "Zaki") coming

"off story" and disclosing a substantial amount of information about the NLF. Richards

described the process of achieving a breakthrough with Zaki as:

> WO2 Everson would interrogate in a very hostile and harsh manner for some
> hours, followed by Lt Col Richards who showed a correct, but slightly
> sympathetic manner. As time went on the show of sympathy was increased, and at
> the same time it was demonstrated that the sympathetic interrogator was also the
> one in command. WO2 Everson continued to be harsh, hostile and fear inspiring
> throughout . . . on the fifth day of interrogation, when the team arrived for the
> evening session, ZAKI asked to see Lt Col Richards, threw himself on his mercy
> and broke down.[152]

Once the breakthrough was made Lt Col Richards was clearly very confident that

his team had gained the cooperation of the detainee and that he was providing a hereto

unknown level of insight into the anti-British insurgency:

> ZAKI produced, in considerable detail, membership lists, cell lists and the
> political instruction programme of the Front. He also gave names of key men
> most of whom were still being sought by SB when the team left Aden. . . . The
> information produced by the interrogation of ZAKI was assessed by the Aden
> Intelligence Centre and Special Branch as of great importance. It was their first
> proof that the National Liberation Front existed as an organisation, it gave them a
> very large amount of detailed information on the Front, and it confirmed beyond
> doubt that FAISAL SHABI was an important–if not the most important–Egyptian
> agent in Aden.[153]

The successes reported by Lt Col Richards represent a breakthrough in

intelligence that would be very gratifying for any organisation–particularly one as hard-

pressed as the British AIC and Special Branch in late 1964 Aden. However, the success

in getting Zaki "off story" in Oct-Sep 1964 is not just telling for the techniques used to

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[152]CO 1035/178, Richards report, 33, paragraph 17-18.

[153]CO 1035/178, Richards report, 33, paragraph 19 and 21.

make the initial breakthrough but also for highlighting the dangers of overconfidence and need for a long term plan that anticipates continued resistance by the detainee.

Following Lt Col Richards departure from Aden further NLF-linked detainees were captured and put through the new army-led interrogation facility at Fort Morbut. In WO2 Everson's subsequent report from late January 1965 it emerges that Zaki's submission was temporary or at least equivocal. WO2 Everson's interrogation of other NLF prisoners Abdul Maliq and Abdul Razzaq unearthed a significant NLF leadership meeting at which Zaki had been present but not disclosed in his earlier interrogations. WO2 Everson explains:

> In spite of ZAKI's long and comprehensive confession obtained by Lt Col Richards and WO2 Everson on their first visit, both ABDUL RAZZAQ and ABDUL MALIK spoke of an important meeting of leaders of the National Front in Aden at which ZAKI was present but had not mentioned.[154]

WO2 Everson now faced a difficult challenge: resuming exploitation of a detainee, who had been processed once before, hailed as a significant success, released from exploitation and prepared for a legal process likely to lead to safe repatriation to his home country. This situation highlights the importance of persistence and avoidance of complacency; it also underlines the likelihood of continued passive resistance by dedicated insurgents and the need for the exploitation team to anticipate resistance and develop a plan to retain the initiative. The steps taken by WO2 Everson and his team are illustrative of how difficult this can be and the importance of disrupting the physical and mental comfort zone of the detainee:

> Accordingly, ZAKI was moved from the comfortable surroundings in which he was being detained pending deportation proceedings (he is a Jordanian) back to

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[154]CO 1035 178, Everson report, 8, paragraph 7.

the Spartan life of the Interrogation Centre. When confronted with the information regarding this meeting he went on a silence strike for three days.[155]

Fortunately for the British, WO2 Everson and his team were able to overcome Zaki's resistance and made a further breakthrough. The reasons given by Zaki for finally succumbing to the second wave of interrogation reveal the complexity of the task facing an intelligence exploitation team. There is no single reason why Zaki broke; it was an accumulation of factors–two of which were accidental:

> he eventually broke down and confessed to being at the meeting. Later he told his interrogator that three things that were instrumental in affecting his confession, these were:
>
> a. the fact that the interrogator knew about the meeting, the fact that there was blood on the floor of his cell (a previous prisoner had had a genuine haemorrhage from natural causes),
> b. the fact that a previous prisoner had written on the wall of the cell with his finger dipped in soup the following quotation, "The torture of the conscience is the worst torture of all."[156]

The final quote from Zaki gets at the heart of interrogation and exploitation: the power of conveying to the detainee superior knowledge by the authorities–sufficiently strong information overmatch that resistance is simply pointless–but supported by a psychological feeling of uncertainty. The latter will always be an uncomfortable area as it walks closest to dark places that few care to tread. Yet is it really different from the fear achieved in the enemy frontline by prolonged artillery bombardment or the sound of approaching tanks? Regardless of the outcome of the latter moral debate, the importance of focusing on convincing the detainee that he faces a captor who already knows everything about him is an important lesson. It means that the exploitation centre itself

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[155]Ibid.

[156]CO 1035/178, Everson Report, 8, paragraph 7.

requires a strong intelligence team to support interrogation so that perception of superiority is achieved with the detainee. The irony then is that to gain high quality intelligence output from the exploitation centre, it is necessary first to invest in intelligence staff to support the exploitation process.

There are six further lessons that come from the interrogation of Zaki and his two colleagues Maliq and Razzaq. One, the shock of capture must be maintained for a detainee by isolating them from other prisoners and not beginning interrogation until a clear plan is in place. Two, it takes time and effort of a focused interrogation team to have a chance of bringing a high quality detainee off story–five days in the case of Zaki. Three, a breakthrough is unlikely to be achieved by one single act: think about how to create a range of conditions that will push the subject to come off story. Four, no matter how cathartic the breakthrough may appear to all parties (interrogator and subject) the exploitation team must not be lulled by their own success–expect, and plan for, continued resistance and evasion. Five, build and man a detention facility from the beginning, optimising the conditions for exploitation. Six, have a team of intelligence analysts available to support the interrogators–in the case of Richards and Everson they noted the absence of good quality intelligence support from Special Branch so took the lead on research themselves:

> Intelligence Support. A general briefing on the requirement was given to Lt Col RICHARDS but no briefs for the detainees awaiting immediate interrogation were ready and throughout the visit the initiative in acquiring briefs and information had to be taken by the team. This is not to say SB were uncooperative. On the contrary, they were most eager to help in every way possible but had little understanding of the requirement besides being heavily overworked.[157]

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[157]CO 1035/178, Richards report, 32, paragraph 10.

The latter point is particularly damning of the Special Branch. Intelligence on terrorism in Aden was their primary task; to be unable to give satisfactory support to the interrogation team as they exploited the only suspects in detention is a fundamental failure. It lends further credibility to the assessment by Prendergast twelve months later that Special Branch, and the wider intelligence community, were complacent and incompetent (no matter how well meaning). Prendergast and Richards' assessment of the weak knowledge of the insurgency within the intelligence staff in Aden is supported by another contemporary–Superintendent Jim Herlihy.[158] Herlihy was a career Special Branch officer brought in by Prendergast in 1966 as part of his reforms in Aden. The quality of the organisation that he joined was underwhelming; his observations on the level of knowledge of their enemy indicate suggests there was a corporate failing within the intelligence community:

> Presumably to remedy the totally inadequate knowledge of the enemy, all AIC personnel and the Interrogation Centre staff were given a lecture by a visiting Foreign Office gentleman. This dealt entirely with the structure and modus operandi of the Egyptian Intelligence Service, and in particular on the difficulties of penetrating this very active and security-conscious body. Although not without academic interest, the lecture was of no practical use. We were less concerned with the machinations of the EIS than with the operations within Aden of the NLF and FLOSY, and about these the lecturer obviously knew as little as we did.[159]

Despite the frustrations that Lt Col Richards, WO2 Everson (and later Superintendent Herlihy) clearly experienced when setting up a functioning interrogation capability in Aden it is interesting to see some degree of evolution and innovation. Even

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[158]Herlihy, Superintendent (Retired) Jim, "The Aden Emergency, 1963-67" from *British Empire*, Stephen Luscombe editor. http://www.britishempire.co.uk/images4/article/article.htm (accessed 29 November 2012).

[159]Herlihy, Chapter 2.

in the short period between their two reports there is a subtle improvement in the British

capacity to handle a high value target. Everson relates the handling of Abdul Razzaq in

terms that suggest planning and imagination went into the methodology of exploiting him

once he came "off story." Of note, is the willingness to create a smaller separate facility

for important detainees and decision to move Razzaq to increase the likelihood he will be

more productive as a one size fits all approach may not work for all prisoners:

> Abdul RAZZAQ proved to be a difficult person to interrogate as his story proved
> to be a mixture of truth, half-truths and lies, but it was from him that the visiting
> team eventually obtained the organisational details of the National Front….on 18
> Jan 65, ABDUL MALIK, ABDUL RAZZAQ and ZAKI were transferred from
> the Interrogation Centre to a safe house and WO2 Everson moved in and lived
> with them until his return to the UK on 30 Jan 65. His task was to produce a
> comprehensive debriefing report on NATIONAL FRONT activities in ADEN
> from their combined stories, and this he did.[160]

The Richards and Everson reports provide an insight into two other areas of

intelligence exploitation: one, the integration of interrogation into the operations process

for the agencies targeting the insurgency; two, the importance of linguist and interpreters

to enable interrogation. Towards the end of their initial visit in Sep-Oct 1964 Lt Col

Richards and WO2 Everson were surprised with the local security forces acted on the

intelligence gained from their interrogation of Zaki and arrested twenty people:

> During the latter part of the JSIU team's stay in Aden, just before the local
> elections, Special Branch made a number of arrests–some based on information
> provided by ZAKI–and flooded the interrogation centre, without warning, with 20
> detainees. The Centre is designed to hold 6.[161]

This is a startling failure in basic management of resources and coordination.

However, it also shows an even more significant structural problem: the separations of

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[160]CO 1035/178, Everson report, 8, paragraphs 8 and 10.

[161]CO 1035/178, Richards report, 34, paragraph 25.

operations from intelligence and exploitation. It is fundamental in a COIN campaign to ensure intelligence is driving operations and aim that the results from those operations should generate yet more intelligence to enable another wave of operations. In recent years this has been encapsulated in the term "F3EA"–"Find, Fix, Finish, Exploit, Analyse."[162] The situation described by Lt Col Richards is the worst kind of left hand-right hand confusion; it is indicative of ignorance of basic coordination methods amongst military and law enforcement. It is further corroboration of Prendergast's assessment that Aden Special Branch was endemically poor.

A final point from Lt Col Richards was that interpreters were not an essential requirement in Aden as "almost all Adenis of sufficient ability and intelligence to become involved in political and/or terrorist activities speak English. Thus Arab-speaking interrogators or the use of interpreters are fortunately not essential."[163] Leaving aside the likely prospect of those cunning politically aware Arabs not playing cricket by pretending not to speak English, the subsequent report from WO2 Everson highlighted the reality of conducting exploitation in an Arab-speaking region:

> SAID MOHAMMED NASIR. Arrested as owner of car arrested as owner of car seen by two British NCOs leaving the scene of the bomb incident at the OASIS bar where two British servicemen were killed and nineteen injured….his interrogation continues dependent upon the availability of an Arabic interpreter.[164]

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[162]For an unclassified but thorough account of the concept of F3EA targeting, see publication from the RAND Corporation, http://www.rand.org/pubs/occasional_papers/ 2009/RAND_OP258.pdf (accessed 29 November 2012); The Small Wars Journal's discussion of F3EA, http://smallwarsjournal.com/topics/F3EA (accessed 29 November 2012).

[163]Richards report, page 36, paragraph 33, CO 1035/178.

[164]CO 1035/178, Everson report, 9, paragraph 17.

It is particularly poor for intelligence professionals not to identify this critical capability as insurgent organisations tend to reorganise quickly post attack when a member of the cell is captured (as in the case of Nasir). In practice that means the currency of the intelligence he has to offer on his fellow cell members diminishes with every passing hour. It is very unlikely that an individual so strongly linked to a serious attack of this magnitude would be left fallow if there were sufficient linguists available to support interrogation.

Exploitation: The Benefits of Peer Review

The above comparison of the lessons learned by the two best qualified and most experienced interrogation personnel in the Int Corps (the CO and PSI of JSIU) highlights the extent of what can be achieved by hard work and professionalism involved. However, it should also underline the importance of avoiding complacency and always seeking a new advantage over the captured enemy. An important component of ensuring the intelligence community continually strives for high standards is external scrutiny and feedback. In the case of interrogation in Aden, it is worth considering some other views from contemporaries.

A British government organisation known within Whitehall as "Box 500" (probably BSS) sent a memo to the Security Intelligence Advisor that specifically refuted two points within the Richards report: one, that Arab linguists would not be necessary; two, that the intelligence breakthrough provided from Zaki was as significant as suggested. Leaving aside the degree of professional rivalry that may have existed between army intelligence and BSS (if any), it is worth noting that the Box 500

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assessment of the utility of interpreters was more realistic than that of Lt Col Richards. It

is also worth noting that they were correctly sceptical about Zaki's degree of cooperation:

> The SLO [Security Liaison Officer] does not agree that the visit of the
> interrogation team was quite as successful as made out in the report. In particular,
> the interrogation of ZAKI did not produce the high grade of intelligence indicated
> and although some of the information was valuable it appears that it was mostly
> low grade and that he by no means gave all he could.[165]

The final point is on the mark; although the preceding criticism appears slightly churlish

given the context of a near intelligence vacuum on any details about the NLF's existence

and inner workings prior to the Zaki interrogation. The benefit of peer review from

within the intelligence community is clear: persistent exploitation of the source to

develop greater understanding is imperative with no room for complacency.

The Prendergast report was more balanced in its assessment of the progress made

"I understand that the small team of interrogators has done extremely well and has

produced some valuable intelligence."[166] He did make three observations of significant

issues to be resolved within the exploitation centre: one, the leadership, tasking and

organisation of the exploitation process; two, the lack of exploitation of captured

documents; three, administrative control of the interrogation centre.

The latter two issues rare fairly straightforward points: to achieve the best

possible chance of breaking a detainee's resistance then the translation and use of all

documents captured with him is a significant boon:

> I was also not convinced that adequate use is made of captured documents. These
> can be a most valuable aid to interrogation and I would suggest that the Head of
> Special Branch might explore the possibility of arranging for the translation and

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[165]CO 1035/179, note from Security Advisor to JO Morton, 25 February 1965.

[166]CO 1035/179, Prendergast report, 10, paragraph 24.

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processing of capture documents to be carried out at the Centre. This should ensure that particularly sensitive and useful papers are made available to the interrogators with the least possible delay.[167]

The point about oversight and administrative control of the interrogation facility is so basic that it is troubling that it was necessary–particularly in light of the efforts made one year earlier when Lt Col Richards' team reinvigorated basic guarding standards in the facility. However, the points made by Prendergast indicated that whoever ran the facility was not doing so to basic standards–simple to solve but with strategic consequences:

> I would stress the need for tight control and general running of the Centre. In view of the interest shown by various organisations both local and international in the care and treatment of detainees, it is essential that the responsible officer, in this case the Head of Special Branch, is always able to give a clear statement of the position at the Centre and the physical condition of each detainee at any particular time.[168]

The leadership and tasking of interrogators harks back in part to the issue of centralised control of intelligence. Prendergast's concern was that the output from interrogation was not being properly analysed and assessed by Special Branch. Therefore the latter was not giving direction and tasks to the interrogators to ensure that the detainee was properly exploited for maximum intelligence value. In Prendergast's view:

> I found myself wondering if the interrogation team in Aden was not left too much to its own devices . . . I feel that there should be more control over and direction of the interrogation effort by the Head of Special Branch. The interrogators should not have to work out their own interrogation plan; this should be kept under review by the desk officer directly concerned at Special Branch headquarters. Every interrogation report should be critically examined by the

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[167]Ibid., 11, paragraph 26.

[168]CO 1035/179, Prendergast report, 11-12, paragraph 27.

Head of Special Branch and his desk officer to ensure that no lead is being overlooked or inadequately developed.[169]

This is a telling insight into how Prendergast perceived best practice for CT targeting in a COIN campaign (to use contemporary terminology). He did not question the basic premise that there should be a direct command and control relationship between the organisation responsible for intelligence and CT operations (in this case Special Branch) and the exploitation team (in this case the Interrogation Centre). It is a partnership between the two but with the collector taking direction, and even specific input on the interrogation plan, from the officer responsible for prosecuting the operation against the enemy network. Rather than perceive this as a conflict of interest or dangerous interference he saw it as the only way of achieving effectiveness and efficiency:

> There is no implied criticism of the interrogator in this practice. The interrogator is not meant necessarily to see the whole picture whereas the desk officer in his broader knowledge of the subject is better placed to spot omissions in interrogations and to gauge the potential of the material in front of him.[170]

Herlihy offers an additional perspective on what progress had been made with interrogation by Spring 1966. It is not a ringing endorsement of the capability and provides a useful counter-balance to any culture of complacency::

> The Interrogation Centre had an equally minuscule chance of producing anything worthwhile. Army Intelligence Corps personnel, some of whom had some knowledge of Arabic, staffed it. None, however, had any of the local knowledge without which an interrogator is working in the dark, and nobody was in a position to give them any kind of useful brief on the organisations or personalities their clients were, allegedly, working for. Like everybody else, they were having

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[169]Ibid., 11, paragraph 25.

[170]Ibid., 11, paragraph 25.

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to start from scratch with no assets, and were doing their best under the unsatisfactory circumstances.[171]

Again, Herlihy reinforces the point about intelligence support to interrogators with the collective team having a sound understanding of the local environment in order to achieve success. Overall, there was still a long way to go; unfortunately for the British their time was rapidly running out. By the time Herlihy made his observations it was 1966: the British government had reversed its commitment and decided to abandon its position, and allies, in South Arabia. It was also over two years into the Emergency and eighteen months since it had called out the experts from the army to re-organised the interrogation capability. This was an organisation that was just not learning fast enough.

Herlihy's account of his appointment by Prendergast as commander of the new CT group within the Aden Special Branch illustrates the joint, inter-agency nature of the organisation, its links to the army unit it was directly supporting and the CT team's control of the interrogation facility:

> In John's [Prendergast] office the briefing was short and clear. Stress was laid on the desirability of immediate results. There was the warning that that all operations must be strictly controlled. In particular, the Interrogation Centre was to be kept under strict supervision, and was to be maintained in such a state that it could be opened for inspection at any time by representatives of the Red Cross, visiting junketeers from the United Nations or any stray self-promoting politician on a taxpayer-funded holiday. The message was loud and clear. On no account was anything to be allowed to happen which could be considered embarrassing to the Government of the United Kingdom in general, and its Minister for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in particular. The basic set-up of B Group was designed to utilise to best advantage the resources available. In the absence of an effective Police Force, this meant that it was heavily dependent on the Army… For all except the simplest operations it would also have to rely on them to provide the necessary operational personnel and any subsequent back-up required. What the Army would gain (it was hoped) would be better targeting, enabling them to strike back more effectively and thus reduce their casualties. Aden

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[171]Herlihy, Chapter 2.

Brigade invariably met all demands made on them, and never provided B Group with less than 100% co-operation. "B" Group was responsible for the production of operational intelligence, taking action on that intelligence, and any interrogation, documentation and detention of prisoners resulting. The existing Interrogation Centre was assimilated into the Group. Under the command of an Intelligence Corps Major, it was staffed by Arabic linguists of ranks ranging from Sergeant to Major, with a Lieutenant Commander in the Navy and a gentleman from the Foreign Office thrown in for good measure.[172]

The degree of integration and cooperation described by Herlihy is impressive even by contemporary standards where the "JIIM" environment is stressed as the way ahead hard won through recent experience rather than our operational inheritance. Although in a modern conflict any CT team is likely to be commanded by the military, it is worth noting the focus in one individual to achieve unity of command and effort with "B" Team. The organisations may be different but the environment was very similar and the methods of leadership and command very similar to our own current practices. It is also telling that Herlihy did not ask for a significant increase in manpower to his team. When considering how best to pursue targeting, it is worth noting the two essential ingredients: cooperation from all agencies and a small number of dedicated personnel working hard.

Conclusion

Exploitation in South Arabia was clearly a significant challenge and one that the British forces made some effort to address. However, it is telling that their efforts to do so lacked appropriate investment in resources (the laughably poor interrogation facility at Fort Morbut) and a strong sense of urgency. The impetus and expertise for change came from outsiders brought in to audit, grip and reorganise the local organisation that proved

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[172]Herlihy, Chapter 4.

totally inadequate for the task. Significantly, those brought in were experienced personnel who had learned their lessons in previous British colonial conflicts. What obstacles prevented this expertise from spreading throughout British institutions through doctrine and culture? The surviving documentation that relates to Special Branch, the intelligence community and the exploitation capability shows that as early as September 1964 it was evident even in Whitehall that all was not well. The lack of urgency in addressing those core issues is a significant factor in explaining the British failure to adapt quickly and ultimately their defeat.

CHAPTER 5:

COIN IN SOUTH ARABIA–INTELLIGENCE LESSONS RELEARNED?

> The major drawback still remains a lack of timely intelligence. Little information is forthcoming from the local population, and the Interrogation Centre, following the recent publicity and Egyptian inspired smear campaign has become almost ineffective.[173]
>
> — Admiral Michael LeFanu

> In late June 2009 . . . the American and British troops could not venture a kilometer from their cramped base without confronting machine gun and rocket fire from insurgents. Local farmers, wary of reprisals by the Taliban, refused to make eye contact with foreign soldiers, much less speak with them or offer valuable battlefield and demographic information.[174]
>
> — Major General Flynn

The evolution of the British campaign in South Arabia, and the role of intelligence within it, has no simple answers, panaceas or silver bullets for anyone seeking answers to the challenges of stability operations in the contemporary operating environment. Study of the surviving material provokes feelings of frustration at the gaps in the records - feelings probably not dissimilar to those of the participants who grappled with the problem. Yet the South Arabia campaign cannot be ignored; it sits obstinately as an enigmatic failure between campaigns of relative British success in Cyprus, Kenya, Malaya and Oman. The question of how the British managed to achieve their political objectives in those equally adverse environments yet fail in South Arabia goes beyond

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[173]Report from the Commander in Chief Middle East to Combined Chiefs of Staff, Middle East Command Newsletter Number 5, 1 July 1966-30 April 1967, 5320/9/CINCME, Annex B, DEFE 11/541, Secret. Declassified records of the Ministry of Defence, the UK National Archives, Kew. Hereafter referred to as "CINC MEC Newsletter."

[174]Flynn Report, 13.

the scope of this thesis. However, the inadequacy of the intelligence organisation in South Arabia, and the attempts at reforming it, provide an insight into the political and military realms as well as enduring lessons on intelligence within a COIN campaign.

This chapter covers two key areas: first, a proposition on the strategic issues that contributed to the overall intelligence organisation being insufficient to the task in South Arabia; two, an examination of the enduring lessons for the intelligence community using the Int Cycle and principles of intelligence as the framework for analysis.

The overall British failure in South Arabia is in itself a slightly controversial idea. Within the military, there was reluctance to admit that it was a defeat; to some extent this attitude persists. It echoes the German army's "stabbed in the back" myth from World War One. However, it is rested upon a very narrow view of the political interest of the UK in the region and the reasons for that objective changing. It also failed to account for the changed political context in which Britain's credibility and position was significantly undermined. The account from the sacked High Commissioner Sir Kennedy Trevaskis is telling:

> Following the announcement of the British decision to withdraw, the incident of terrorism in Aden soared sharply to new heights of sanguinary brutality. The rebuff to silly British hopes that it would usher in a new era of peace and good-will was unmistakeable but they floated bravely on in a fresh spate of wishful thinking.[175]

In a very narrow sense there is some truth to the suggestion that there was no British defeat and if there was it was political. The forces that withdrew in November 1967 had achieved at least 50 percent of their new political objective. However, this was based on a complete political U-turn on Britain's interests in South Arabia and the wider

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[175]Trevaskis, *Shades of Amber*, 237-238.

region. The change in British policy in late 1965 could not have been starker. It switched from creating a friendly state called the Federation of South Arabia that hosted a major British base in Aden to completely leaving South Arabia altogether, handing over to any form of local government and retaining no base. In his final newsletter to CDS, Commander in Chief Middle East noted his own satisfaction at the successful military withdrawal but could not keep his concern for the intended political end-state from creeping into his report:

> Perhaps more by luck than judgement we were able to achieve our two main aims: an orderly withdrawal and some prospects for stability after our departure. But it was a close run thing.[176]

Although it is understandable for combatants in a conflict to be reluctant to admit defeat, it is essential that it be confronted lest denial creep in and prevent positive change within the institution. The plain truth is that the British government's decision to abandon South Arabia was driven by the dreadful security situation making achievement of the original political and military goals unachievable based on the resources the new government was prepared to expend. This decision was at least in part driven by the enemy's political narrative as the new British government formed by the Labour Party had long had misconceived ideas about the validity of the insurgency in South Arabia as legitimate opposition, a "national resistance," rather than Egyptian-sponsored violence seeking to impose its own political settlement. If it was possible for British soldiers and Adeni police officers to walk safely through Sheikh Othman District, or for the leaders of the Federation to drive through the Sheikhdoms and not fear the NLF, then there would

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[176]CINC MEC Newsletter, Number 6, Secret, 30 November 1967, 4, paragraph 24.

have been no pressure for the British to leave or abandon their original goals. Throw in

British civilian and military casualties with little prospect that the situation would

improve in the near future and it is clear this was not a strategic decision made from a

position of strength. Either way, the Egyptian-sponsored insurgency prevailed by

persuading the British political leadership that it was not winning, could not win and

should not even keep trying. By any sensible measure, that is defeat.

The exchange on this topic between the dismissed High Commissioner Trevaskis

and Minster of Defence Denis Healy MP reveals the underlying assumptions of the

Labour government:

> When I heard the news I [Trevaskis] was appalled. Memories tumbled over
> themselves in a crowded confusion: all the promises and assurances that so many
> of us had made, of the debts we owed to Arab friends who remained true to their
> word when our fortunes were at their lowest….I quickly obtained an appointment
> with Denis Healy…[according to Healy] they done their best and, having failed to
> get any Arab agreement, had had to abandon it. The fact was that the people of
> Aden did not want a military base and to try to impose one on them would be
> wrong.[177]

Lest Trevaskis's strong views be portrayed as sour grapes from a discredited civil servant

it is worth noting the sceptical comments from the Commander in Chief Middle East

Forces in his official newsletter back to Whitehall in 1966. Following the British U-Turn

he wrote:

> The main event of the period has however been [the] decision to abandon the base
> in Aden and to refuse any commitment to defend the Federation of South Arabia
> after independence. And our main concern has been the effect of this decision on
> the incredibly confused situation in the Yemen and in South Arabia, and the
> possible longer term effects of these things, taken together, on stability on the
> peninsula as a whole . . . whatever their merit in a wider political, economic and

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[177]Trevaskis, 237-238

strategic context they have, viewed from Aden, given Nasser a shot in the arm just when he needed it most and when we would have least wished to give it to him.[178]

The Commander in Chief's final despatches from Aden are a mix of frustration, realism at the brutal local situation and pride at the professionalism of the military that was able to execute a successful withdrawal in such difficult circumstances. It is significant that by that stage he had come to define his mission in terms of achieving that goal: withdrawal. The local conditions were then merely to have "some prospect for stability." There was no appetite displayed in LeFanu's reports for a MOD internal inquiry into the conflict or any suggestion that a comprehensive, cross-government review was needed. The old policies pursued of building a stable, friendly Federation of South Arabia that would support an enduring British military presence in the Middle East had been forgotten. The new policy–withdrawal–had been embraced and achieved. Therefore, why suggest the campaign was a defeat or answer any questions about what went wrong?

<u>The True Legacy of South Arabia: Outright Denial or
a Lack of Introspection?</u>

So what is the problem with the British military choosing to avoid self-critical reflection in the South Arabian campaign–particularly when there were successes to enjoy in Malaya and Oman? A very coherent argument for self-reflection into the performance in South Arabia was offered by a Maj-Gen Sir John Willoughby, a senior figure in the conflict. He provided a succinct explanation of why introspection was constructive:

> These "police actions," internal security operations and counter-insurgency campaigns–call them what you will–always seem to follow the same pattern,

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[178]CINC MEC Newsletter Number 4, 5 October 1966, Secret, 6, paragraph 6.

almost the same programme. But it would be a mistake to conclude that the story is therefore always the same, and empty of new lessons; or that the precedents of the past can ever be taken for granted.[179]

There are more recent examples that suggest the South Arabian campaign has relevance. There are echoes of the South Arabian situation in the British withdrawal from Basra in 2007 and even in the current NATO strategy of combat troops leaving Afghanistan in 2014. The similarity is the change in objective being sought from a political objective based around creating positive conditions in the area that support our national policy objectives to placing withdrawal of military forces altogether as the goal being sought. Former General Officer Commanding Multi-national Division South East (MND (SE)) General Sir Richard Shirreff was unequivocal in describing the strategic situation he faced in Basra in 2006 and the perception in the UK:

> Well, it was pretty clear to me that--and in a sense, you are now looking over the period as a whole of my time in command--we had a strategy that involved extraction rather than necessarily achieving mission success. It was, in a sense, an exit strategy rather than a winning strategy. A winning strategy was going to require significant additional resources. . . . My sense was that the overriding theme within PJHQ [Permanent Joint Headquarters] within London was, as I say, accelerated transition and that the gravity of the situation was not fully appreciated. As I say, the focus was to exit rather than achieving adequate success.[180]

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[179]The above statement is the opening quote of Maj-Gen Willoughby's Forward to Paget, *Last Post*, 19. Maj-Gen Willoughby was a highly respected figure in the South Arabia campaign. He was GOC MELF from May 1965 to May 1967 and therefore provided the key level of leadership in Aden as the "Security Commander" for the Emergency. He proceeds to pay tribute to the sacrifice of British Servicemen and highlights the particular stress of serving in this kind of conflict.

[180]Testimony to the UK's Iraq Enquiry by Lt General Sir Richard Shirreff, http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/44178/20100111am-shirreff-final.pdf (accessed 29 November 2012).

Redefining the political objective as successful withdrawal should not shield anyone from confronting the truth that in doing so we (the counter-insurgent) have failed to achieve our original political objectives through the use of force and, more importantly, the enemy has somehow prevailed. After recognising this uncomfortable truth, the key issue is actively looking for answers as to how and why it happened and what must be learned. The withdrawal from Afghanistan will prompt an internal review within the US and UK militaries of performance that is comprehensive and apolitical. The example from the South Arabia campaign suggests that such a review would offer lessons at the tactical, operational and strategic levels across all parts of the military–not least within intelligence.

Intelligence Performance in South Arabia–Strategic Factors

There are seven key strategic factors that contributed significantly to the intelligence community struggling in the South Arabia campaign: one, the complacency in existing colonial institutions; two, the slow pace of change within the British bureaucracy; three, overstretch of British resources across the globe; four, lack of unity between the Foreign Office and Colonial Office in the region; five, lack of understanding of local customs, politics, religion and culture within the military; six, failure to work closely with local allies; seven, the lack of consensus within British politics that resulted in the strategic U-Turn and departure from South Arabia.

Complacency may be a factor common to the governing authorities at the beginning of all COIN campaigns. It is hard to think of any campaign in which the government has been effective and its intelligence apparatus competent. Almost by definition they must be failing in some way otherwise an insurgency would not be able to

develop and challenge the status quo. Nevertheless the atmosphere of "nine to five" observed by Prendergast in October 1965 within a Special Branch that had been ripped apart by the NLF is impossible to condone. The key lessons here are to avoid complacency but also have the courage to admit and confront it when events show your organisation to be inadequate or out of its depth.

The insidious effects of complacency probably influenced the lethargic pace of change within the Colonial Office bureaucracy that ran the conflict. However, it is not fair to lay blame solely with that organisation. The surviving documentation clearly shows that the JIC and Chiefs of Staff in Whitehall recognised in early 1965 that Special Branch was non-effective and therefore little intelligence work was occurring. Yet it took until Oct 1965 for the British bureaucracy to agree on dispatching Prendergast from Hong Kong to audit the intelligence organisation in Aden. That is a stunningly slow decision making cycle that was woefully inadequate for defeating the NFL and EIS. The key lesson here is achieving an appropriate sense of urgency to defeat your opponent and having the will to push the supporting bureaucracy to meet those raised standards.

The lack of available British resources not committed to an important task somewhere else in the world also comes across in the surviving documentation. When the Colonial Office is struggling to find suitably qualified Special Branch officers to send to Aden it is apparent that this is an organisation in which one experienced Arab speaking detective is worth his weight in gold. The lesson here is development of appropriate skills within the intelligence community and ruthless prioritisation of where they are deployed.

For a country that was capable very early on of recognising the true opponent in South Arabia as Nasser's Arab nationalist regime in Egypt, it is rather surprising that

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unity of effort could not be achieved between the Foreign Office (FO) and Colonial

Office (CO). Even if command of the British mercenary force conducting an

unconventional warfare campaign against the Egyptians and their Republican allies in

Sanaa is put to one side, the failure of the FO and CO to agree on what to do about

Yemen is very poor. To have the FO arguing in favour of recognising the new regime in

Sanaa in the hope of improving relations with Nasser while the other argued just as

fiercely against recognition due to its opposition to Nasser suggests that unity of effort

was a distinct prospect for the British state. The key lesson here is unity of command and

effort–particularly for the national intelligence agencies as they pursue operations across

a wider region whereas the military in a COIN campaign are necessarily responsible for a

more narrow area of territory.

When the time came during the Emergency for British military forces to become

directly involved in providing security and fighting the insurgency the lack of Arab

language skills was an immediate barrier between the counter-insurgent and local

populace. The situation as compounded by the absence of any cultural or political

understanding of the Arabs beyond the superficial level of issuing cards that translated

words of command into Arabic. This is not a criticism of the British Army's tactical

performance in South Arabia. Rather the lesson here is that the deployment of large

numbers of conventional forces into an environment in which they have little or no

understanding and familiarity is not likely to result in improved collection of intelligence.

To the credit of the British units in Aden, they developed their own plain clothes units to

do exactly that. However, the rest of their reporting showed an understandable focus on

counting the number of incidents in their AO each day and tracking the local pattern of

life. This is comparable to the modern issue of intelligence staff focused on SIGACTs rather than understanding the whole environment as noted in the Flynn report.[181] To turn the ground holding units into a more sophisticated force it is necessary to improve language skills and awareness of local culture and politics. The latter skills are more consistent with Special Forces; this point suggests an additional lesson: unless absolutely necessary, aim to fight a COIN campaign with Special Forces only and keep conventional military units in supporting roles.

For all the effort by the former High Commissioner Sir Kennedy Trevaskis and the many brave young Political Advisors out on their own in the Protectorates, the intelligence organisation for the whole of South Arabia was never achieved. As McCarthy noted in December 1965 there was no intelligence machinery for the whole country and much lay fallow in the WAP and EAP. Even in the Richards report in November 1964 it was noted that deserters from the Yemeni army rarely made it back to the Interrogation Centre in Aden as the local tribal Sheikhs would treat them as guests! The disjointed intelligence organisation in South Arabia reflected the structural problems within the would-be Federation. However, that does not mean it was beyond redemption. During the same period that the British failed to achieve a coherent intelligence organisation in Aden and the Protectorates the NLF, with support from the EIS, achieved a dominant position in both territories. Their success was aided by the incoherence of the British intelligence apparatus that was more or less blind to the manoeuvre. The key lesson here is that some kind of intelligence organisation that accounts for local

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[181]Flynn Report, 7-8. For an example of the day to day focus of British Army ground holding units in Aden in 1967 see WO 305/4302, 1 RNF SITREPs from declassified records of the War Office, UK National Archives, Kew.

capabilities must be established over the whole of the theatre of operations–no matter how awkward that is to accomplish. Failure to do so invites the enemy to build up their strength in the shadows and seize the initiative.

The final point is the lack of domestic political consensus within the UK; this was the critical moment in the campaign–the point when the British effectively gave up. The impact on the intelligence effort was certainly poor–as previously indicated, there was little incentive for the local populace to provide any information when they knew the counter-insurgent was leaving. There is an additional factor worth considering: the moral component for the military forces still present in the campaign: what was the point in them pursuing their task (intelligence or any other) if departure was only a matter of time? This issue was confronted by Admiral LeFanu in his final report:

> Knowing that one's days are numbered has a psychological effect in the amount of force that is used to meet a given situation and in one's judgement as to what constitutes legal or illegal action by the local population. There is substance in the theory, first defeat your terrorist and then let him know he will be independent. It is easier to apply the rules strictly when there is no apparent intention of withdrawing.[182]

LeFanu rightly identifies the psychological factors in executing a fighting withdrawal in a COIN campaign with the implicit point that it asks a great deal of those risking their lives in such circumstances. However, the above statement is an impressively indirect way of telling the head of the British military and political masters that a COIN campaign is best fought by actually trying to win rather than withdrawing to a publically stated timeline. The implicit latter criticism seems to have been left hanging in the air. The issue of

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[182]CINC MEC Newsletter Number 6, Secret, 30 November 1967, 4, paragraph 21. Note the date: this was the final Newsletter sent by LeFanu to London as the withdrawal of all British forces from South Arabia was completed.

reluctance to engage in an official review of performance is returned to in the final

section. First, what can be learned within the intelligence domain?

Lessons from the Int Cycle in the South Arabia Campaign

Direction

Not until mid-1965 was a leader appointed as the sole focus for security issues

within the Emergency. With the appointment of the GOC Middle East Land Forces

(MELF) as the "Security Commander" with responsibility for control of the Emergency

there was a degree of clarity on who was in charge of the security aspect of counter-

insurgency.[183] However, this did not synchronise the security component with the overall

political framework. Unlike Malaya, there was no combination of High Commissioner

and Director of Operations in one appointment. The consequences of this late and

inadequate examination of the British command structure in South Arabia was that there

was a dangerous lack of clarity on who was driving the Int Cycle. Was the Chief of

Intelligence responsible to the High Commissioner, the Commander in Chief Middle East

Command or to GOC MELF? If the answer was yes to all then what was the priority for

resources? The lack of clarity on who was in charge was reflected in the difference

between Prendergast and McCarthy over centralised control and the friction between

political and security intelligence.

The other key issue that set the Int Cycle off on the wrong foot from the

beginning was the lack of vision on the nature of the problem. The terms of the

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[183]"Operational Executive-Minutes of the 5th meeting held at 10:30am Saturday 15 May 1965 at the Security Secretariat," CO 1035/179, declassified records of the Ministry of Defence, the UK National Archives, Kew.

Emergency were focused on the threat to security triggered by the attempted assassination of the High Commissioner on 10 December 1963. The nature of the problem though went much wider; it encompassed Egyptian and Republican Yemen subversion within South Arabia and the credibility of the British political effort to help their local allies build a functioning state in South Arabia. Yet the mandate for the intelligence organisation was focused on terrorism. Consequently, little or no intelligence apparatus was established in the rural Protectorates leaving British forces blind to the emerging threat of the Egyptian-controlled NLF as the latter moved from rural to urban phases. Finally, there was little or no direction to the intelligence organisation to develop strong links with their allies in the Federation government. The lack an intelligence apparatus within the latter was noted in late 1965 when the Prendergast review was circulating around Whitehall. By that point it was felt that time was against them. A key lesson for future operations is to consider developing this at the start of your own campaign and have a plan for how the two organisations will interact and eventually merge.

<div align="center">Collection</div>

At no point in the surviving documentation is there any sign of a formal estimate of the operational environment by the intelligence staff in Middle East Command or an equivlant document by the Colonial Office. It may well be that this was done–perhaps informally. However, the lack of coherence in the collection of intelligence suggests that the intelligence organisation approached its position in an *ad hoc* manner as it dealt with an ever worsening crisis. The actions taken by the various civilian and military members of the intelligence community in South Arabia suggest two structural problems: one, a

reliance on human intelligence as the only means of collecting on the NLF and FLOSY; two, little coordination of what they did collect by the various improvised human intelligence collection capabilities.

The latter issue was most telling in Aden when army units set up their own plain clothes surveillance teams. It was an ingenious and brave innovation but the name given to them–"Special Branch"–highlighted the inadequacy of the organisation that should have been fulfilling that role. The coordination of the SAS, Aden Special Branch and Army Special Branch units was noted as not being particularly good by contemporaries. Aside from being a matter of basic tactical coordination it indicates the lack of coordination within the HUMINT domain.

The reliance on a single source of collection is in itself a significant problem in a COIN campaign. Corroboration by other forms of intelligence is lost and the risk of collection bias increases significantly. It is a fair comment that the enemy's vulnerability plays a large part in which collection method is pursued by the counter-insurgent. For example, if the insurgency is in a rural area it may be entirely reliant upon radio communications to organise attacks and is therefore vulnerable to electronic warfare. However, that does not excuse the counter-insurgent from proactively seeking new ways of collecting against the insurgency to gain corroboration and greater insight. It is particularly important as the enemy is likely to adapt their own techniques as they react to your own actions making any advantage in collection temporary or partial. In South Arabia, HUMINT was the primary method yet the authorities were aware of Egyptian control of the organisation from nearby Taiz in Republican Yemen with a support network running through the rural territories in the WAP. It is hard to believe that none of

this was done with electronic communications. If it was done, and was being collected on by the British but has not yet been declassified, then where was the link between the strategic collection assets tracking communications and the counter-insurgents operating at the tactical level? The responsibility for all of the above should have sat squarely with the Director/Chief of Intelligence yet there is little sign of formal mechanisms to ensure it occurred effectively and efficiently. This is an important area worthy of further study as the coordination of strategic and tactical intelligence collection remains and enduring challenge.

Finally the absence of any reference to the army's ground holding units as sources of intelligence is notable from the various reviews of intelligence in Aden. It is particularly odd given the desperate position the British faced where any possible avenue would have been welcome. Tactical intelligence collection from the army could have helped the strategic level but there is no sign this was realised by contemporaries. For example, as the situation worsened in 1966-67 as the NLF and FLOSY fought for control of Aden, the British government desperately sought a negotiated political settlement with someone so they could leave with some dignity. However, as the FLOSY and ATUC leadership was courted by the British authorities the NLF were in the process of winning control of the streets. A surviving picture of a British soldier on patrol in Aden (probably in Sheikh Othman District) suggests that there was evidence available at the tactical level of this struggle.
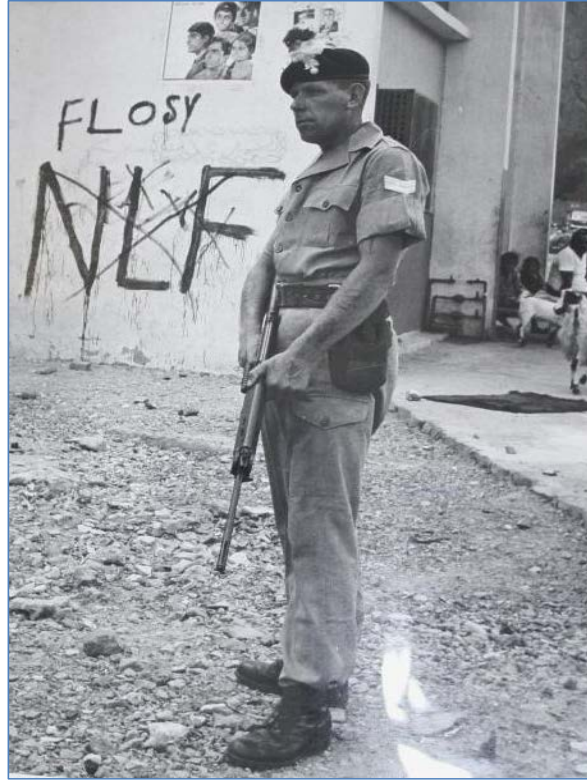
Figure 8.   British soldier in front of NLF vs FLOSY graffiti, Aden 1967

Source: 1st Battalion, the Royal Northumberland Fusiliers, Unit War Diary, 1967, WO 305/4305, declassified records of the War Office, the UK National Archives, Kew.

The graffiti on the wall shows the contest between FLOSY and the NLF. When analysed in conjunction with the Daily Situation Report (SITREP) from the same British unit it is clear that a violent power struggle is going on. Just from looking at it, the analyst is likely begin to form an assessment that the NLF is stronger than FLOSY but they are engaged in a conflict with each other. On 5 April 1967 their SITREP revealed a fascinating pattern of violence: of the sixteen total incidents six were definitely not against the British military or Aden police but seemed to be against targets within the local community that were not known; this includes pistol shots and grenade attacks. In comparison there were only four attacks against the British military and only one

confirmed attack against the local police.[184] It shows the degree of insecurity for the local population due to the on-going violence and also that the insurgents were engaged in violence directed at someone other than the occupiers. If there had been a better coordinated intelligence organisation then the intelligence available from these ground holding units could have been processed to provide Britain's strategic decision makers with an assessment of who was winning the intra-insurgent civil war and therefore who to try and bargain with.

<div align="center">Processing</div>

Perhaps the greatest missed opportunity of the South Arabia Campaign was the creation of a centralised intelligence organisation–the AIC–but the total failure to make it work effectively. The apparent inadequacy of the AIC was seemingly well-known within theatre even if it did take until the Prendergast report in Nov 1965 for Whitehall to be told in blunt terms the extent of the problem. The debate between McCarthy and Prendergast on the alleged split between political and security intelligence plus their divergence of views on the scope of the Chief of Intelligence's role indicated a conceptual problem as well as in execution. It is significant that separating political and security intelligence from each other was not an enduring lesson taken into doctrine by the British Army post-Aden. The basis of McCarthy's argument that the Chief of Intelligence's charter was difficult to fulfil is no doubt valid. However, on balance the benefits of pushing for centralised control coupled with unity of effort within the

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[184]Daily SITREP from 1 RNF to Headquarters Aden Brigade, WO 305/4302, from declassified records of the War Office, the UK National Archives, Kew.

intelligence community as suggested by Prendergast and Cowper is probably the better

approach.

To achieve the suggested standard of centralised control it is necessary to have the

right intelligence architecture across the theatre. This was a point on which McCarthy and

Prendergast agreed. Both noted the existence of intelligence material in the Protectorates

but the lack of appropriate "plumbing" to get it back to the analysts at the AIC. A

common agreement was that the analysts responsible for those regions needed to leave

the AIC in Aden and be relocated in Mukalla and Al Ittihad respectively. This is a valid

lesson consistent with the theme in the Flynn report that stresses the importance of

moving analysts out into the field as needed.[185] If Prendergast's suggestion had been

implemented then the overall intelligence architecture in South Arabia would have had

three intelligence "fusion" cells but each located in its own area of operations as fitted the

actual flow of information based on local power structures. The Chief of Intelligence

would still have provided the centralised control and guidance from Aden but would have

done so from an improved position due to the improved structure within the overall

organisation. In short, better three Int Cells working in three AOs supporting one theatre

level Fusion Cell than have one weak, poorly connected Fusion Cell that fails in its role

as the one stop shop for all intelligence in theatre.

The quality of the intelligence produced by the AIC is worth further research and

analysis; from the overall tone of the perspectives from the Political Advisors, Special

Branch and the army unit war diaries it does not seem to have covered itself in glory.

However, without direct access to their output it is not possible to assess the quality of

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[185]Flynn Report, 15.

their output. From the detail in the regular MEC newsletters back to the UK there was clearly a decent understanding of the extent of Egyptian support, the capabilities of the NLF and the broad trends within the civil war between the NLF and FLOSY. However, were they able to achieve enough detail for intelligence to be actioned by ground holding units or the CT team in Special Branch? Did the AIC provide sound understanding of the enemy threat for the Aden Brigade based on analysis of attack trends and NLF capabilities? Was GOC MELF provided with advance warning of major NLF attacks or subversion with the Federal Regular Army? How did the national intelligence agencies interact with the AIC? This is an area worth further research and study as the lessons from the AIC are likely to be relevant to contemporary experience in the military intelligence community.

<center>Dissemination</center>

There are two key issues with dissemination: one, the extent to which intelligence from the tactical level on the extent of the deteriorating situation within the FRA and in Aden reach the operational and strategic levels; two, the extent to which the insight provided from highly classified material collected by the national intelligence agencies reached the tactical level. Again, this is an area that requires further research as there are more questions than answers: did any of the commanders on the ground understand who their enemy was by 1967 even though the JIC had been writing about EIS support for the NLF since Jan 1965? Why did senior leadership in the UK think the FRA was fine when the intelligence reporting was very clear that they were not? The key lessons from the South Arabia campaign is the importance of investing in the infrastructure for

dissemination and having a culture of intellectual honesty to honestly, and bluntly, share

unwelcome information.

<center>Institutional Learning</center>

A key goal in this thesis was to examine the extent to which the UK military–

particularly the Intelligence Corps–attempted to formally learn lessons from its

experience in the South Arabian campaign. Unfortunately, it was not possible to do so

due to the lack of material on this specific area found in the declassified documents

within the National Archive and thje Intelligence Corps Archive. Further investigation

may well identify a body of official documentation that analysed the military, or

intelligence, performance in South Arabia. However, what is clear is there was no public,

or private, admission of failure nor a position taken that a defeat had been suffered that

requiring officially-sanctioned reflection. Admiral LeFanu signed off in his final

Newsletter from MEC to the Chiefs of Staff with some telling observations about the

campaign–including the failure of intelligence to come to grips with the problem. As

noted above, he did not call for an MOD review or cross-government enquiry. Why

should he? The withdrawal was successful. The previous three years of the Emergency

are airbrushed away so no lessons need be learned in why the British use of force failed

to achieve the original desired end-state.

From the lack of evidence of any internal reviews in the surviving documentation,

this attitude seems to have been prevalent at the tactical level as well. The official unit

diary of 1 RNF in 1967 shows no mention of any after action review or post-operational

report when they returned to the UK. In fact, the 1 RNF diary barely skips a beat as they

return from Aden; in September they are conducting battalion training and preparing for

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public duties in Newcastle Upon Tyne as Her Majesty the Queen visits the area. Internal security, counter-insurgency and Aden are not mentioned again.[186]

The Intelligence Corps can claim no great success in institutional learning either. From the documentation found on the South Arabian Campaign there is no material present that indicates a formal, officially-sanctioned review of its performance in South Arabia took place. The bulk of material that does exist shows that aside from one officer who was particularly proactive in providing his own notes and papers, there was little institutional curiosity about the campaign. A perfunctory examination of the catalogue of articles that have appeared in the in-house journal of the Intelligence Corps "The Rose and Laurel" shows only one article on Aden–by the same officer who donated his notes once he was a Brigadier. There are also many more articles written on sporting activities and adventure training than there are on how intelligence performed in any campaigns (other than World War Two).[187] A lack of intellectual curiosity about its own profession is a troubling trait for an institution that requires critical thinking, analysis and assessment as a core skill. It may be that it is completely "normal" within British military culture to spend as little time as possible asking difficult questions and seeking some guidance, if not outright answers, from history. However, that does not make it any more disappointing that an organisation expected to contribute a disproportionate amount of expertise to any future COIN campaign should be so uninterested in its own past experience of attempting to do so. It may not be that the picture is as bleak as suggested

[186]WO 305/4302, Declassified records from the War Office, the UK National Archives.

[187]Author's observation following research of article titles in register of "Rose and Laurel" articles.

above; further research is required, and would be welcome, into Int Corps doctrine and training from 1945 to 2011. As a starting point, it would probably be particularly instructive to examine the performance of military intelligence within the British COIN campaigns in that period and then compare it to the evolution of training and doctrine.

Conclusion

Over the course of researching this thesis two participants in the conflict were interviewed. Despite both gentlemen having long and distinguished careers, it was evident that the experience in South Arabia had stayed with them–particularly the sense of frustration at the outcome of the campaign. There is much from an intelligence and operational perspective that can be learned from further study of the South Arabia campaign. For example, how to conduct effective CT targeting with limited resources in the Arab world, developing an effective, strategically sound exploitation capability and designing an intelligence organisation that fits a complex operational theatre. There is also a moral component that is equally worth examination; allowing a generation of the military to serve in this kind of campaign and yet leave them with feelings of professional and personal frustration is likely to create the conditions that cause institutional and individual poor health. As the NATO campaign in Afghanistan draws to a close in similar circumstances to the British in South Arabia, it is worth considering the impact of the experience on the institutions themselves and the participants. Just as up-armoured vehicles, mine detectors and ISR were worth the investment in the war, some robust, honest critical thinking about our performance in the campaign may be an equally sound investment.

GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

Aden. The colony under British sovereignty; also known as Aden State.

Aden Trades Union Council (ATUC). The organisation in Aden responsible for representing the labour force; sponsored by Egypt, ATUC became heavily politicised, anti-British and supported violence and protests during the Emergency.

British Security Service (BSS). More commonly known as MI5, BSS's primary role is in defence of security of the UK mainland. There were links to the colonies through Special Branch.

Colonial Office. The civil service organisation within the UK government responsible for administration, government and order within the colonies. They provided the administrative and policing manpower for the colonies and the UK's political leadership in South Arabia.

Eastern Aden Protectorate (EAP) The territorial area of various Sheikhdoms, Sultanates and tribal territories to the east of Aden that bordered Saudi Arabia and Oman with which the British Crown had treaties but did not exercise direct administrative or military control. The EAP was asked to join the FSA but declined.

Federation Of South Arabia (FSA) The would-be state that by 1963 comprised Aden and the Western Aden Protectorate; intended by the UK and their local allies to gain independence in 1968, retain a British military base and have security treaties with the UK.

Foreign Office The civil service organisation within the UK government responsible for diplomacy. In this period it was separate from the Colonial Office. Critically, within the context of the Emergency, the Foreign Office was the lead department for interaction with Egypt and Yemen.

Front For The Liberation Of South Yemen (FLOSY) The Egyptian-sponsored anti-British insurgent organisation within Aden. FLOSY was an attempt to unify the NLF and the Aden trades union movement. The NLF broke away and ultimately prevailed over FLOSY.

High Commissioner Part of the Colonial Office, the High Commissioner was the highest ranking civilian and effectively the UK's authority in country.

Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) The JIC was the central committee within the UK responsible for intelligence for senior political and military leaders.

Local Intelligence Committee (LIC) The LIC was the JIC's subordinate organisation in Aden responsible for intelligence assessments in South Arabia.

Middle East Command (MEC) The UK's tri-service military organisation commanded by a 3-star officer responsible for the UK presence in the entire Middle East. Under the various British Defence White Papers from 1953-64 it was intended to provide a military response to a global war against the USSR in the event of a global war. After the loss of friendly territory in Israel and Egypt in the 1950s the UK decided on Aden as the most appropriate location for MEC.

Middle East Land Forces (MELF) The land component within MEC. From July 1965 onwards the General Officer Commanding MELF was also responsible for the security aspects of the Emergency.

National Liberation Front (NLF) The insurgent group in South Arabia that ultimately prevailed over the UK, Federation of South Arabia and FLOSY. They too were sponsored by the Egyptian Intelligence Services but generated a political narrative of being an indigenous, "nationalist" resistance.

Political Agent or Advisor The UK's advisor to local tribal leaders in the EAP and WAP. A civil servant from the Colonial Office, the Political Agent/Advisor worked alone with little or no protection other than the terms of the original treaty agreed with the local tribal leader.

Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) More commonly known as MI6, the primary role for SIS in the context of the Aden Emergency was counter-espionage and counter-intelligence against the Egyptian Intelligence Services supporting the NLF and FLOSY. SIS was also active within Republican Yemen.

Special Branch (SB) Part of the UK police force structure in the UK mainland and in the colonies, Special Branch was responsible for counter-terrorism, counter-subversion, political intelligence and support to the national intelligence agencies as requested. In the colonies the tradition was to recruit members of the local population as well as British citizens. The combination of local knowledge and British expertise was often very effective; Aden Special Branch was the first organisation targeted by the NLF in their terrorist campaign.

Western Aden Protectorate (WAP) The territorial area of various tribal territories surrounding Aden. The British Crown did not exercise direct administrative or military control. The WAP combined to form the Federation of South Arabia in 1962.

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