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Quantico, Virginia 22134-5068*

MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

TASK FORCE 1/6 IN RAMADI:

A Successful Tactical-Level Counterinsurgency Campaign

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTERS OF MILITARY STUDY

MAJOR R. M. HANCOCK, USMC

AY 07-08

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Date: 29 April 2008

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Report Documentation Page

Form Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188

Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.

1. REPORT DATE 2008	2. REPORT TYPE	3. DATES COVERED 00-00-2008 to 00-00-2008			
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Task Force 1/6 in Ramadi: A Successful Tactical-Level Counterinsurgency Campaign		5a. CONTRACT NUMBER			
		5b. GRANT NUMBER			
		5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER			
6. AUTHOR(S)		5d. PROJECT NUMBER			
		5e. TASK NUMBER			
		5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER			
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) United States Marine Corps, Command and-Staff College, Marine Corps University, Marine Corps Combat Development Command, 2076 South Street, Quantico, VA, 22134-5068		8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER			
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)		10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)			
		11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)			
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT Same as Report (SAR)	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 30	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT unclassified	b. ABSTRACT unclassified	c. THIS PAGE unclassified			

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Executive Summary

Title: Task Force 1/6 in Ramadi: A Successful Tactical-Level Counterinsurgency Campaign

Author: Major R. M. Hancock, United States Marine Corps

Thesis: From September 2006 to May 2007, Task Force 1/6 achieved success in a tactical level counterinsurgency campaign in support of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM due to superb campaign design, through the employment of a flexible and effective task organization, and through successful partnership with Iraqi Security Forces.

Discussion: From September 2006 through May 2007, Task Force 1/6, the 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment conducted a counterinsurgency campaign as part of the 1st Brigade Combat Team, Multi-National Forces-West in support of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM. During these nearly eight months, Task Force 1/6 achieved significant success in providing security to the most significant portion of the city of Ar Ramadi, the capital of Al Anbar Province. In designing the battalion's operational concept, Task Force 1/6 personnel began with a comprehensive understanding of the implications of the situation in Ramadi, and developed a clear assessment of that situation. This shared understanding enabled the formulation of a tactical-level campaign that focused on three logical lines of operations, and applied that plan in a systematic way to achieve intermediate objectives that ultimately led to the achievement of the battalion's endstate. The inherent flexibility of the task organization established by Task Force 1/6—both within the task force headquarters as well as within the task force's subordinate units—specifically the shifting of non-kinetic operations responsibilities from the task force operations officer to the task force executive officer enabled the execution of extensive planning for both kinetic and non-kinetic operations with equal focus—thereby allowing for the simultaneous conduct of operations along two of the battalion's three logical lines of operations. Task Force 1/6's organization of its subordinate units enabled those subordinate units to conduct operations along all three of the designated lines of operations. Task Force 1/6's successful partnership with Iraqi Security Forces was a literal force-multiplier for the battalion in its counterinsurgency fight in Ramadi. The focusing of the Task Force's Military Transition Team on the training and proficiency of the Iraqi Army battalion staff enabled its partnered Iraqi Army Battalion to gain its independence from coalition forces. Additionally, Task Force 1/6 significantly benefited from its commander's creation of augmentation teams to perform liaison, coordination, and training functions with partnered Iraqi Police and Iraqi Army units. The result of such efforts enabled the Task Force commander to effectively control not only his task force but to also employ nearly 500 Iraqi Army soldiers and approximately 1,200 Iraqi Policemen.

Conclusion: The modern day counterinsurgent can benefit from a study of Task Force 1/6's tactical level counterinsurgency campaign. By conducting a thorough design, through the establishment of a flexible task organization of subordinate units and through the assessment of roles and responsibilities of staff members, a unit can ensure success across their established logical lines of operations. Finally, modern day counterinsurgents can significantly benefit through expanded partnerships with indigenous forces; thereby increasing the forces available for the conduct of counterinsurgency operations.

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Preface

The following thesis is a result my experience as the Operations Officer for 1st Battalion, 6th Marines in Ramadi, Iraq from August 2006 to May 2007 and my continued study in this area. This continued study would not have been possible without the many discussions of the area with my senior and subordinate commanders, and fellow staff officers who shared the same experience. This document is an attempt to provide an answer to a question often asked of me, that of “what did Task Force 1/6 do to secure Ramadi?” It was that question that drove me to attempt the following explanation. In the end, any amount of planning that I conducted in my previous position was based upon the ideas and solid foundation of my commander, Lieutenant Colonel William R. Journey, USMC, the finest commander with whom I’ve had the pleasure to serve.

This document is labeled “For Official Use Only” due to the citations made of the interviews of Marines from Task Force 1/6 conducted by the Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned staff aboard Camp Lejeune, NC. I am indebted to the MCCLL for capturing this information.

Lastly, I am indebted to the staff of the Marine Corps Command and Staff College who helped to make this work possible; including my mentor Professor Erin Simpson.

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TASK FORCE 1/6 IN RAMADI: A Successful Tactical-Level Counterinsurgency Campaign

*"It's another sweltering afternoon in the most dangerous place in Iraq.... Nowhere is the fighting more intense than in Ramadi, the capital of Anbar province and for the moment the seething heart of the Sunni-led insurgency. ... The city remains a stronghold of insurgents loyal to [al-Qaeda in Iraq]... ."*¹

The preceding quote appeared in Michael Ware's Time magazine cover story published on May 29, 2006. With U.S. public opinion for Operation IRAQI FREEDOM sinking, Ware's article raised the nation's awareness of the level of violence in Ar Ramadi, the capital city of Iraq's Al Anbar province. His article demonstrated a less than positive outlook on the execution of IRAQI FREEDOM, and his prognosis for the future, while positive, was measured: improvement is happening, and will continue to happen very, very slowly. On September 16, 2006, the nation again awakened to news that the war in Al Anbar province was not going well. On this date, Major General Richard Zilmer, Commanding General of Multi-National Forces West, commented in response to a leaked classified report from a senior Marine intelligence officer, Colonel Peter Devlin, that the "political and security situation in Anbar had deteriorated so much that only more aid and another division of troops...could turn things around."² Today, nearly two years since the printing of that article, Ar Ramadi and Anbar Province as a whole are seen as the models for the conduct of the counterinsurgency fight within Iraq. What happened to make this difference?

While many reasons can be cited for the drastic, positive improvements to the security situation in Ramadi—including the surge of U.S. forces beginning in June 2006 with the deployment of the Army's 1st Brigade, 1st Armored Division (the Ready First Combat Team) and the organization and support of tribal leaders known as the "Anbar Awakening" who ordered their followers to "assist the Americans against the jihadists" by joining the newly forming Iraqi

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police³--this paper will focus on the tactical-level counterinsurgency campaign conducted by Task Force 1/6, the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, and will demonstrate how this battalion was able to capitalize on the improving security situation to achieve campaign objectives that were truly greater than the sum of the battalion's individual battles and counterinsurgency actions. From September 2006 to May 2007, Task Force 1/6 achieved success in a tactical level counterinsurgency campaign in support of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM due to superb campaign design, through the employment of a flexible and effective task organization, and through successful partnership with Iraqi Security Forces.

BACKGROUND**Ar Ramadi, Iraq**

Ar Ramadi lies along the Euphrates River, approximately 70 miles west of Baghdad, and is known as the southwestern-most point of the "Sunni Triangle". Ramadi was home to approximately 450,000 Iraqis prior to the 2003 U.S. invasion, and estimates were that approximately 150,000 persons lived in the city during Task Force 1/6's participation in Operation IRAQI FREEDOM. Prior to Task Force 1/6's arrival, Ramadi had been the responsibility of multiple U.S. Army and Marine units including: 2d Battalion, 4th Marines; 2d Battalion, 5th Marines; 1st Battalion, 5th Marines; 3rd Battalion, 7th Marines; 3d Battalion, 8th Marines, and 1st Battalion, 506th Infantry.

Friendly Force Units

In May of 2006, the Ready First Combat Team was directed to move from Tal' Afar to Ramadi to relieve the 2-28th Infantry, a National Guard brigade serving as the 1st Brigade Combat Team of Multi-National Forces-West. The Ready First Combat Team was charged with duplicating its success at securing and restoring local governance in Tal' Afar, and deployed to

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Ramadi with an additional three battalion task forces, raising the strength of U.S. forces in Ramadi to five battalion task forces. The brigade developed a campaign strategy that centered upon the newly forming counterinsurgency doctrine of “clear, hold, and build” and began to participate in a complex fight employing kinetic and non-kinetic tactics to achieve success. As stated in the brigade’s after-action report, Ready First Combat Team’s “willingness to accept and manage risks inherent in positioning forward and utilizing foot patrols instead of mounted armored patrols, and through sustained efforts to build relationships with the local leadership and general population, the effective integration of Iraqi Police and Iraqi Army into their fight and the willingness to initiate Civil Military Operations (concurrent in many instances with security operations) led to noteworthy success...”⁴

The Ready First Combat Team did achieve noteworthy success in the three-months of their campaign prior to the introduction of Task Force 1/6; however, the enemy had decided to make a stand in the area of operations that Task Force 1/6 would assume and therefore opposed every move conducted by Task Force 3rd Battalion, 8th Marines (Task Force 3/8)—Task Force 1/6’s predecessors. Consequently, the campaign plan designed by Ready First Combat Team, while descriptive of the fight to be conducted in Ramadi, provided great latitude to Task Force 1/6, and enabled the unit to develop its own plan to achieve success.

Task Force 1/6 deployed to Ramadi, to conduct a relief in place and transfer of authority with Task Force 3/8 in September 2006. Task Force 1/6’s primary mission was to conduct combined counterinsurgency operations to neutralize anti-Iraqi elements in zone and assist the reestablishment of local Iraqi governance by improving the security and stability of West-Central Ar Ramadi. Task Force 1/6 operated as a major subordinate command of the Ready First Combat Team and assumed control of its area of operations (AO) at midnight on September 21,

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2006. Task Force 1/6 continued its counterinsurgent mission until 12 May 2007 when the unit transferred authority to Task Force 3rd Battalion, 7th Marines (Task Force 3/7). During Task Force 1/6's nearly eight-months of operations in the city, the unit's holistic approach to the conduct of counterinsurgency operations significantly reduced insurgent activity.

Battalion-Level Campaign Design

Campaign design involves the translation of operational requirements into tactical guidance. At the operational and strategic level, design includes the analysis of the problem situation and the commander's framing of his understanding of the inter-relationships and interdependencies among the parts to enable the commander to effectively employ elements of national power—DIME: diplomacy, information, military action and influence, and economic initiatives. Effective design of the campaign involves "seeing a problem and the circumstances in which it is embedded as a whole; developing a comprehensive and accurate understanding of all the implications in the problem, environment and players; [and] developing a clear assessment of the interrelationships and interdependencies among all of the pieces that comprise the problem."⁵ While current Marine Corps Doctrine does not direct that commanders at the battalion level—tactical unit commanders—develop comprehensive campaign plans with a focus on campaign design, Task Force 1/6's commander did make an accurate assessment of the "problem" facing his unit. This assessment would significantly impact the operations the battalion would undertake.

Framing the Problem

While there is no documentation of the campaign design plan and the assessments that were conducted, the Task Force 1/6 commander described the situation facing his unit as they

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assumed the mission. When asked about who and what Iraqi military, police, and government organizations were in the battalion's area of operations the commander responded:

"It was very limited when we first got there...Everybody was pretty much to ground. There's no NGO [non-governmental organization] activity, there's no municipal governance. There is an Iraqi Army battalion that we were partnered with and they are nowhere in the city, they're on the fringe of the city in one of the secure areas which is right outside the FOB [forward operating base]. There is one Iraqi Police station, but again, these policemen did not come from the city proper, they came from outside of the city proper and it was nothing more than a jobs program for them at that point. We have pretty much a dysfunctional Iraqi Police element; we have an Iraqi Army unit which is very capable but had really not extended itself because of limited freedom of movement and force protection concerns... No functional municipal governance of any sort and no identification of really key leaders either in the area who went to ground or who have left the area. The Governor of Al Anbar province did in fact live in our AO. He is not partnered with me in terms of sphere of influence. He is a MEF sphere of influence, however, we provided obviously daily coordination with him, his PSD [personal security detachment], we moved him back and forth to work and provided security for him and obviously I had daily conversations with him about things specific to my AO as well as the rest of the province. That's the players; we have both provincial Iraqi players at the provincial level, provincial Police Chief, you have the Governor of the province."⁶

In reference to a question about the nature of the insurgency in the area of operations, the Task Force 1/6 commander responded:

"When we arrived it had been described as the most dangerous city in Iraq. We averaged 10 to 12 firefights a day, 70 to 80 [significant events] a week, very kinetic, limited freedom of movement, whole areas of the city which were predominantly insurgent controlled, population — which was thoroughly subdued by the murder and intimidation campaign of AQI [al Qaeda in Iraq]. It was a stronghold no question about it. ... There's no question that they were bona fide hard-core AQI foreign fighters who were pulling the strings. Heavy financial ties allowed them to pick up the local 18 year old, who with[out] any type of coalition economic development in that area could make \$100.00 and be a part of that insurgency; be a teenager who's somebody important carrying an AK, so I think you had a mix of all of the above, but certainly we're facing complex attacks with 25 individuals. There was an organized nature to this. The day that we assumed the battlespace we were hit with a dump truck VBIED [vehicle-borne improvised explosive device], attacked at four different locations and people were actually trying to close on our positions with fire and movement; something we had not seen in our previous deployment..."⁷

The above sets of comments provide a glimpse into the frame that the Task Force 1/6 commander placed around the problem facing his unit. Ramadi, specifically Task Force 1/6's

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area of operations, was an al-Qaeda in Iraq stronghold; with al-Qaeda in Iraq leadership coordinating the efforts of the various cells within the city. The insurgency was backed, either passively or actively by a population that was supportive of al-Qaeda in Iraq due to the terrorists' effective murder and intimidation campaign that controlled the population and their activities. The police force was ineffective due to tribal affiliations—those that were working were ineffective because they were from tribes located outside of the city limits. The partnered Iraqi Army battalion, while capable by Iraqi standards, was ill-equipped and ill-postured to conduct combined operations with Task Force 1/6 elements let alone assume their own battlespace. The city government was non-existent, and those that could be identified as leaders were subject to the intimidation campaign conducted by al-Qaeda in Iraq's terrorist cells. Furthermore, reconstruction projects could not be initiated due to the lack of overall security and willing contractors to conduct the labor at the behest of U.S. forces.

Campaign Design

To attack this situation, Task Force 1/6 developed a holistic approach to its counterinsurgency operations. While not a new concept, the plan that was developed differed slightly from the methodical, lockstep approach known as clear, hold and build. The battalion received the guidance of the Ready First Combat Team and Marine Expeditionary Force commanders respectively, and developed a mission statement focused on achieving success across three lines of operations: Task Force 1/6 was to conduct combined counter-insurgency operations with partnered Iraqi security forces to neutralize anti-Iraqi elements in zone in order to support and assist local Iraqi governance by improving the security and stability of west-central Ramadi. Restating the purpose, of the operation, the battalion's basic operation order delivered the commander's intent: improve the security and stability of West-Central Ramadi so

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that local Iraqi governance can carry out essential civil functions.⁸ Therefore, performing any actions to build governmental capability prior to dealing with the security threat would be placing the proverbial cart before the horse. In order to clarify this mission statement to the Marines who would be executing it, the Task Force 1/6 commander provided the leadership of the battalion—down to the platoon and squad level—with a document to enhance their understanding of the commander's intent (Refer to Appendix A).

Logical Lines of Operation

The battalion developed three logical lines of operations to be conducted near-simultaneously, to differing degrees within permissive and non-permissive areas of the battlespace. The Task Force 1/6 basic operations order further explained the commander's intent to seek out all those things that stood in the way of improving security and stability. The task force defined the 'enemy' to improving conditions as one of many forms. The task force set forth to conduct combined operations with the Iraqi Security Forces and to conduct concurrent operations along the three logical lines of operations: the neutralization of anti-Iraqi elements and critical threats to improving security and stability; the training, employment, and operations in coordination with partnered Iraqi Police and Iraqi Army; and the conduct and support to civil-military operations and information operations which develop the local population's trust and confidence in the abilities of their own elected leaders and security forces."⁹ The endstate of the battalion's operations was defined as: (Friendly) security/stability sufficient for local leaders to carry out essential civil functions and Iraqi police/Army progressively taking greater responsibility for local security; (Enemy) anti-Iraqi elements isolated from the populace enabling their neutralization; (Terrain) the passive neutral portions of the civilian populace swayed to the

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side of their local government and Iraqi security forces.”¹⁰ The Task Force 1/6 commander described the three lines of operations as follows:

“Our operations followed basically three lines. ... Those were; neutralize the insurgency and those enemy and criminal threats that would oppose security and stability — and that’s mission essential task number one — so we pursued operations that did things to improve security and stability of our AO. Secondly was [to] train and more importantly employ the Iraqi Security forces; those Iraqi security forces that includes Iraqi Army and Iraqi Police. Third would be to support those CMO [civil-military operations] and IO [information operations] efforts which not only improve the quality of life but more importantly give you a tactical advantage which allows you to accomplish mission essential task number one which is to neutralize the insurgency...I believe that you conduct those actions concurrently and not sequentially. For example, you may be conducting kinetic operations to locate and close with the enemy in some portions of our AO, but that does not mean that you are still not pursuing opportunities to leverage the effects that you can get from IO and CMO. In that area, it would be a different degree — and it’s all about degrees I think — so over here where it’s a more secure area you’re less kinetic the degree to which you’re conducting rebuilding efforts, providing essential services to the population, the degree to which you’re doing that is much higher. In another area which is less secure, the degree to which you’re doing those Civil Affairs and IO projects may be less. Maybe you’re discussing it. Maybe that’s on the lowest end of it. We are discussing what the art of the possible is. If we can achieve security in this area, we may be able to provide “x”, and you’re discussing these things with potential local leaders who then in turn he may be able to help influence you in identifying who those insurgents are, so we’re conducting operations across all three of those lines, we’re conducting those in varying degrees and it’s different in every neighborhood and you’re prepared for that thing to ebb and flow back and forth also, so it’s very dynamic, but you would no sooner go attack a [hill] without supporting machine guns or artillery, why would you discount leveraging the effects that you can garner from Information Operations, effective Civil Affairs projects and certainly the most important of which would be leveraging the Iraqi Security force; folks who can actually identify insurgents much better than you.”¹¹

The success of the campaign plan executed by Task Force 1/6 can be based upon the shared mindset that the Task Force commander developed in the leadership of his unit. Along the first line of operation, the neutralization of anti-Iraqi elements and criminal threats leads directly to the endstate of providing enough security and stability to enable Iraqis to perform essential civil functions. That improved security situation would in turn enable the Iraqi Security Forces to begin to secure the city themselves; thereby returning Ramadi to a sense of normalcy

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and reducing U.S. force presence within the city. Lastly, the integrated use of civil affairs projects and information operations would further separate the enemy from the population, while simultaneously improving the lives of the population. The battalion would ultimately provide a better way to the people of Ramadi—if they chose to support the U.S. and Iraqi Security Forces, their lives would improve.

Intermediate Objectives

The transition of this plan into action is where Task Force 1/6 achieved the greatest success. The task force began a multi-phased campaign to achieve the established operational goals. Each block consisted of four one-week plans and intermediate objectives, and resulted in the battalion's systematic march across the battlespace. These blocks would lay out the plan—operating across the three lines of operations—to achieve the stated endstate and objectives:

Block 1's decisive operation was to establish an overwatch position of a major intersection thereby enabling the movement of forces across the battlespace in support of future operations. Supporting operations included the expansion of the partnered Iraqi battalion's battlespace and responsibilities, thereby freeing Task Force 1/6 units to move eastward into enemy controlled territory. Planning consisted of working through partnered Iraqi Police and utilizing Iraqi civilian leadership to develop a plan to create "gated communities"—population control measures—in consonance with the Ready First Combat Team's guidance¹². These gated communities—created through the blocking of intersections with barriers—would enable Iraqi communities within Ramadi to control their own access into and out of their communities; thereby increasing security through local involvement.

Block 2's decisive operation was to establish a company-sized "security station" within the heart of the urban battlespace. Supporting operations included the redeployment of an Iraqi

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Army company to "backfill" the Marines who moved from one position into the new security station. Other supporting operations were the implementation of the gated community plan, and continuing assessment of civil affairs projects within the Task Force 1/6 zone.

Block 3's decisive operation would be the full establishment of "gated communities" in support of disruption operations and the expanded recruitment, training and employment of the Iraqi Police. Supporting operations would focus on the establishment of additional Iraqi Police in the Ramadi Government Center to assist in security, the continued conduct of Iraqi Police recruiting within the battalion's battlespace, and the establishment of an additional Security Station deeper in enemy controlled territory to provide for future Iraqi Police introduction in Central Ramadi. Further success would result from the benefits of mature information and active sources in the area to support intensified targeted, intelligence-driven operations to capture insurgent leadership.

As the task force planned for the conduct of Block 4, looking four-months into the future, the decisive operation was determined to most likely be the focus on Iraqi Police success. Supporting operations would be the independence of the Iraqi Army battalion to overwatch the indigenous police. The Task Force 1/6 staff would focus efforts on training the Iraqi Army battalion to coordinate the efforts of the Iraqi Police as well as to train the Iraqi Army battalion staff to improve their capability to support themselves through combat service support, administration, engineering, maintenance, and training management functions.

Throughout these blocks, efforts would be made to leverage non-kinetic effects to the maximum extent possible. Civil-military and information operation efforts that were to be introduced included the introduction of small-business loans to reinvigorate the local economy, fuel/generator distribution, and influence-material delivery (school supplies, bottled water,

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blankets, street cleaning, Iraqi Police recruitment, and food distribution). Additionally, efforts to support higher-level civil affairs projects would be conducted—support to the reconstruction of the city's dilapidated water treatment plant and water distribution system, and restoration of reliable electrical service to the community.

The preceding paragraphs demonstrate the depth and breadth of understanding gained by Task Force 1/6 and the implementation of that knowledge into the unit's campaign design. In designing the task force's operational concept, Task Force 1/6 personnel began with a comprehensive understanding of the implications of the situation in Ramadi, and developed a clear assessment of that situation. This shared understanding enabled the formulation of a tactical-level campaign that focused on three logical lines of operations—all of which attacked the problem situation in the city of Ramadi. The task force commander's ability to translate that understanding in a format easily understood down to the platoon and squad levels ensured that all members of the unit had the same appreciation for the "why" behind the battalion's actions. Finally, Task Force 1/6's application of that plan as four distinct blocks enabled phased achievement of the intermediate objectives that ultimately led to the achievement of the battalion's endstate. While the campaign was not executed in exact accordance with the plan—due to the acceleration of timelines due to the exploitation of success as well as due to the acceleration of Iraqi Police involvement—the plan proved to be sound and achievable. In order to achieve the plan, Task Force 1/6 would have to employ a flexible task organization that would enable achievement of the multitude of intermediate objectives established. The next section will focus on that task organization.

TASK ORGANIZATION

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Headquarters Staff Organization and Responsibilities

To conduct concurrent operations along the three designated lines of operations, Task Force 1/6 employed a flexible and effective task organization that enabled the shifting of task force main effort between units as well as the weight of those units. Recognizing the importance of all three lines of operations, but also recognizing the primacy of the "neutralize" line of operation to set the conditions necessary to achieve the other lines of operation, the task force commander directed a non-doctrinal distribution of labor among the task force staff—specifically within the roles and responsibilities of the executive officer and operations officer. Doctrinally, the battalion executive officer is the second in command, and acts on a daily basis as the battalion's chief of staff. His focus normally remains on the administration of the battalion's activities, particularly the staff planning process. The operations officer is the tactical arm of the battalion commander, translating the battalion commander's guidance into action. The operations officer, by doctrine, is responsible for the organization, training, and tactical operations of the unit; is responsible for the planning, coordination, and supervision of the tactical employment of subordinate units; and is responsible for the integration of fires and maneuver to support the accomplishment of the tactical mission. The operations officer's duties, by doctrine, include the planning and execution of civil affairs operations and information operations.

Recognizing the high probability of the task force's neutralization line of operation consuming the time and ability of the operations officer and his staff, Task Force 1/6's commander directed the executive officer—vice the operations officer—to assume responsibility for the planning and coordination of civil affairs operations and information operations—thereby ensuring a field-grade officer would be focused on these important "supporting arms" of the

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battalion—while the execution of civil affairs and information operations would remain the responsibility of and would be supervised by the operations officer and his staff. This division of labor enabled the operations officer to focus his effort on the kinetic fight of the battalion, while the executive officer was coordinating the effective employment of the battalion's non-kinetic actions. It also enabled the conduct of the battalion's non-kinetic operations—those of civil affairs and information operations—to receive a higher priority of effort from subordinate units. As the Task Force 1/6 commander noted with respect to this assignment of staff responsibility:

“...I utilized my Executive Officer to put some weight behind it, so if he oversaw the non-kinetic effects working group...[the working group] would have the emphasis it needed because I could potentially neutralize...more insurgents by creating jobs or by effecting the Iraqi Police. I can more effectively neutralize the insurgency that way than I can conducting Intel-driven targeted [raids] which produce a dry hole 90% of the time and inadvertently [tick] off half the population...”¹³

The results of such a task organization enabled the simultaneous planning and conduct of more than 16 battalion-size tactical operations against insurgents as well as the introduction of more than \$9,000,000 of civil affairs projects; and establishment of a district council encompassing the area of operations (which ultimately represented this function to the city council and mayor).¹⁴ The synchronization of these disparate actions occurred formally at a weekly Non-Kinetic Effects Working Group. This meeting, chaired by the Task Force Executive Officer, included representatives from each of the Task Force's functional staff, as well as representation from the Military Transition Team, Police Transition Team, Civil Affairs Team, Information Operations Officer, public affairs representative, and staff judge advocate.¹⁵ The executive officer would chair the meeting, while the operations officer would provide details of the task force's future operations. The meeting included what amounted to brainstorming sessions on how to leverage civil affairs projects and information operations effects into the kinetic actions of the task force's operations—ultimately providing for the needs of the

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population while simultaneously providing a tactical advantage to the task force. As the security situation improved, the civil-affairs and information operations line of operation became the Task Force main effort, resulting in well-coordinated actions that meshed with higher and adjacent units' plans.¹⁶

Subordinate Unit Task Organization

The task organization of Task Force 1/6's subordinate units also enabled the conduct of concurrent actions across the battalion's logical lines of operations. In the months preceding the deployment of 1st Battalion, 6th Marines in support of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, the battalion was organized as a traditional Marine infantry battalion. The battalion changed its organization during its training at Exercise MOJAVE VIPER, when the unit completed Combined Arms Training (CAT) and began Urban Warfare Training (UWT).¹⁷ The reorganization that took place at this point was to enable the accomplishment of the anticipated mission upon relief-in-place/transfer of authority operations with Task Force 3/8. All five of the battalion's companies were reorganized into the following:

"The line companies' three rifle platoons and weapons platoon were reorganized into four line platoons.

Weapons Company was organized into six mobile assault platoons (MAPs). Four were maneuver platoons, one supported logistics combat trains, and one served as the battalion commander's personal security detachment (PSD).

H&S Company was treated as a maneuver element, along with its functional and administrative responsibilities. Operational duties included camp security, city entry control points (ECPs) (combined with IA/IP[Iraqi Army/Iraqi Police]), augmentation teams and partnering with IPs at police stations."¹⁸

At the company-level, task organization began with the tasks defined by Task Force 3/8 at the time of relief in place / transfer of authority. When Task Force 1/6 assumed the mission from Task Force 3/8, the command ensured its task organization for combat matched that of

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Task Force 3/8 in order to ensure a seamless relief-in-place/transfer of authority. Task Force 1/6 utilized the flexible nature of its task organization to its advantage throughout the deployment, economizing forces across the battlespace in order to effectively conduct operations across the Task Force's three logical lines of operations. The flexibility of the task organization is demonstrated by the headquarters and service company's increasing role as a maneuver element and involvement with Iraqi Police as well as through the creation of a mission-oriented company team known as Team MOHAWK.

Team MOHAWK, a combined infantry company minus, was created to assume responsibility for a fixed-site within the city.¹⁹ The fixed site, known as OP Hawk, had been the responsibility of Company C; however, due to mission requirements, the Task Force commander opted to remove this responsibility from Company C and replace it with Team MOHAWK in order to reduce Company C's span of control as well as prepare the fixed site for eventual turnover to Task Force 3/7. The Task Force assistant operations officer, an infantry captain with career-level school experience, was selected to command this unit, which consisted of an infantry platoon from Company C, an Iraqi infantry company from 2d Battalion, 1st Brigade, 7th Iraqi Army Division, and a detachment of Iraqi Police. Team MOHAWK's commander was charged with ensuring the efficient operations of the Iraqi Army and Police units, with Marines in overwatch, and the training of the Iraqi Army and Police units to such a proficiency-level that the responsibility of U.S. force oversight could be conducted by a lieutenant of staff non-commissioned officer upon the Team MOHAWK's relief in place / transfer of authority with Task Force 3/7.²⁰

The inherent flexibility of the task organization established by Task Force 1/6—both within the task force headquarters as well as within the task force's subordinate units—enabled

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units at all echelons of command to assume increased roles and responsibilities throughout their execution of counterinsurgency operations. The shifting of responsibilities from the task force operations officer to the task force executive officer enabled the execution of extensive planning for both kinetic and non-kinetic operations with equal focus—thereby allowing for the simultaneous conduct of operations along two of the battalion's three logical lines of operations. Of equal importance, Task Force 1/6's organization of its subordinate units enabled those subordinate units to conduct operations along all three of the designated lines of operations. Task Force 1/6's accomplishment of "train and operate in coordination with partnered Iraqi Police and Iraqi Army" operations was significantly enhanced by the flexibility inherent with the subordinate companies' task organization. Task Force 1/6's successful partnership with Iraqi Security Forces will be discussed in the following section.

ISF PARTNERSHIP**Mindset**

Task Force 1/6's successful partnership with Iraqi Police elements and Iraqi Army units began with the mindset of its commander. That mindset is demonstrated in a statement by the Task Force 1/6 commander, who said "[f]irst and foremost you have to be there... You have to be there 24/7 in order to have an effective—if nothing more—liaison capability that gives you a green radio that you can talk back to us and know exactly what's going on."²¹ Task Force 1/6 began operations in Ramadi by focusing effort on the location and responsibilities of its partnered Iraqi Army battalion—2nd Battalion, 1st Brigade, 7th Iraqi Army Division. That partnership began with the Task Force's Military Transition Team (MTT).

Military Transition Team Employment

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Task Force 1/6 was greatly enabled by its assigned Military Transition Team—which consisted of members of 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, led by the former executive officer of the battalion. At the direction of the Task Force commander, the Military Transition Team partnered with the Iraqi Army battalion and focused its efforts at the Iraqi battalion staff level. The Task Force commander stated that the Military Transition Team’s composition “worked very well to help train that battalion staff” and continued to state that the focus of Military Transition Teams should be at the battalion staff level.²² Task Force 1/6 saw the training of its partnered Iraqi Army battalion’s companies, platoons, and squads as the responsibility of the U.S. partnered units at the company, platoon and squad level. To this end, the battalion reorganized to achieve success as a “combined action battalion.”²³ This combined action battalion mindset placed the responsibility for increasing the proficiency of Iraqi Army companies, platoons, and squads on the Task Force 1/6 company commanders and subordinate leaders. The majority of Iraqi Army training was conducted “on the job”, recognizing that Iraqi soldiers were “fully capable of conducting independent security operations” with U.S. oversight.²⁴ This mindset was carried over into the Iraqi Police domain, and resulted in Task Force 1/6’s incorporation of the augmentation team concept.

Augmentation Team Concept

The key to Task Force 1/6’s partnership with Iraqi Security Forces was a result of the expanded partnership created through the implementation of the augmentation team concept. Recognizing the paucity of Military Transition Team and Police Transition Team members, and the requirement to have consistent, dependable liaison with these Iraqi Security Forces, the Task Force 1/6 commander required his subordinate commanders to develop augmentation teams. As Iraqi Army and Iraqi Police units were “oil-spotting” across the Task Force 1/6 battlespace along

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with Task Force 1/6 units, augmentation teams were established within each of the fixed-sites (called Security Stations by Task Force 1/6²⁵). Led by a first or second lieutenant (platoon commander) or by a staff non-commissioned officer (platoon sergeant), the augmentation teams also included 5-7 enlisted Marines. The augmentation teams provided oversight of Iraqi Security Force operations and training, and provided much needed liaison between Iraqi Security Forces and Task Force 1/6 units. As stated by the Task Force commander, the augmentation team was “working in all likelihood in the same AO for his Company Commander still, so the Company Commander didn’t lose a rifle Platoon Commander, he just gained another organization that he’s employing, so now he’s got his four security platoons...and now he’s got a police substation that he’s employing and his ability to employ that will now be through that Lieutenant and that out of hide [Military Transition Team or Police Transition Team].”²⁶ Task Force 1/6’s creation of augmentation teams had a significant impact on the coordination and conduct of operations among the Task Force and it’s partnered Iraqi Security Forces.

The subordinate unit partnership between Task Force 1/6’s companies, and their partnered Iraqi Police and Iraqi Army elements resulting from the augmentation teams enabled the companies to establish combined company-level command posts within each of the security stations created by Task Force 1/6. These combined command posts enabled the effective coordination of planned operations, as well as and more importantly, allowed for the swift deconfliction of actions upon contact and significantly reduced the chances of fratricide (U.S. vs Iraqi Security Force).

Task Force 1/6’s successful partnership with Iraqi Security Forces was a literal force-multiplier for the battalion in its counterinsurgency fight in Ramadi. The focusing of the Task Force’s Military Transition Team on the training and proficiency of the Iraqi Army battalion

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staff played a significant role in the enabling of that Iraqi Army Battalion to gain its independence from coalition forces and assume tactical control of battlespace as a Level 2 unit.²⁷ Additionally, Task Force 1/6 significantly benefited from its commander's "out of hide" creation of augmentation teams to perform liaison, coordination, and training functions with partnered Iraqi Police and Iraqi Army units. The result of such efforts to partner with Iraqi units enabled the Task Force commander to effectively control not only his task force of approximately 1,100 U.S. servicemembers, but to also employ nearly 500 Iraqi Army soldiers and approximately 1,200 Iraqi Policemen—the effective partnership increased the battalion task force from 1,100 personnel to 2,700 personnel available to conduct counterinsurgency operations.²⁸ Such growth and capability through successful partnership led to mission accomplishment.

CONCLUSION

Task Force 1/6 was indeed successful in accomplishing its counterinsurgency mission in Ar Ramadi, Iraq. The actions of the battalion, helped to establish security through the effective neutralization of insurgents, clearly reducing the violence prevalent in the previous year to a level that could be managed by Iraqi Security Forces. Such a reduction in the violence was the result of a campaign design that sought to attack the problem through concurrent or simultaneous operations conducted across three logical lines of operations. These actions by U.S. and Coalition Forces would not have been possible without the effective task organization of Task Force 1/6 units; nor would it have been possible without the reassignment of responsibilities between the Task Force's Operations and Executive Officers. By ensuring the conduct of civil affairs and information operations remained a priority effort, under the direction of the Task Force Executive Officer, the Task Force was able to execute numerous civil affairs projects to

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improve the lives of the citizens of Ramadi as well as provide a tactical advantage to Task Force 1/6 and its partnered Iraqi Security Forces—resulting in more than \$9 million dollars worth of projects completed or contracted for completion. Task Force 1/6's successful partnership with Iraqi Security Forces resulted from the focus of effort provided to the Military Transition Team at the Iraqi battalion staff level, increasing their capability to conduct independent operations. Increased security for the population of Ramadi was a consequence of the augmentation team concept, whereby the task force increased its forces available for counterinsurgency operations through increased command and control and leadership. The holistic approach taken by Task Force 1/6 resulted in a success that was greater than the sum of its individual achievements.

The modern day counterinsurgent can benefit from a study of Task Force 1/6's tactical level counterinsurgency campaign. By conducting a thorough design, through the establishment of a flexible task organization of subordinate units and through the assessment of roles and responsibilities of staff members, a unit can ensure success across their established logical lines of operations. Finally, modern day counterinsurgents can significantly benefit through expanded partnerships with indigenous forces; thereby increasing the forces available for the conduct of counterinsurgency operations.

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Notes

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- ² Mark Brunswick, "Iraq: Somber assessment from insurgent hotbed," *Knight Ridder Tribute Business News* (September 13, 2006): <http://proquest.com/>.
- ³ Melinda Liu, "Gathering the Tribes; U.S. field commanders are finally beginning to tap the traditional networks that helped Saddam to stay in power," *Newsweek* 149, no. 22 (June 4, 2007): <http://proquest.com/>.
- ⁴ 1st Brigade, 1st Armored Division, "Operation Iraqi Freedom Initial Impressions Report," April 2007. URL: https://www.mccll.usmc.mil/document_repository/Misc/1-1%20AD%20IIR%20Final.pdf. (FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY)
- ⁵ Steven A. Hardesty, "Rethinking the Marine Corps Planning Process: Campaign Design for the Long War," in *Thoughts on the Operational Art*, ed. D. M. King, 57-70 (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory, 2006), 62.
- ⁶ LtCol William Journey, USMC, Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned interview, 13 July 2007, 7-8.
- ⁷ Journey, 3-4.
- ⁸ Personal recollection of the author, former Operations Officer of Task Force 1/6.
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- ¹¹ Journey, 6-7.
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- ¹⁴ Task Force 1/6, "Operation IRAQI FREEDOM 05-07.2," May 2007. URL: https://www.mccll.usmc.mil/document_repository/Briefings/Optimized%20070625--1st%20Bn,%206th%20Mar.ppt, 55-62. (FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY)
- ¹⁵ Maj Daniel R. Zappa, USMC. Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned interview, 11 July 2007, 8-9.
- ¹⁶ Zappa, 11 July 2007, 8-11.
- ¹⁷ Maj Robert M. Hancock, USMC. Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned interview, 26 June 2007, 6.
- ¹⁸ Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned, "Infantry Battalion Urban Operations: 1st Battalion, 6th Marines. Lessons and Observations from Operation Iraqi Freedom September 2006-May 2007," February 15, 2008. URL: https://www.mccll.usmc.mil/document_repository/IORs/Infantry%20Battalion%20Urban%20Operations%201st%20Bn%206th%20Mar%20v7_0-CDR-3707.pdf, 8. (FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY)
- ¹⁹ Hancock, 7-8.
- ²⁰ Hancock, 7-8.
- ²¹ Journey, 9-10.
- ²² Journey, 24
- ²³ Journey, 24.
- ²⁴ Journey, 24.
- ²⁵ Journey, 10.
- ²⁶ Journey, 25.
- ²⁷ 1st Brigade, 1st Armored Division, 23-25.
- ²⁸ Task Force 1/6, 50.

Task Force 1/6: "Making a Difference"

- ★ We are in Iraq to support and assist the Iraqi government. Within our capabilities as a Marine Task Force... we will do everything we can to support and assist them.
- ★ Our goal is to improve the security and stability of the area we are responsible for by assisting the local Iraqi leaders and their security forces in taking full control because that supports their long term self-reliance.
- ★ We will focus on those things that stand in the way of improving the security and stability... **we will always remember that we work for the good people of Iraq and with their elected leaders & Iraqi Security Forces.**
- ★ We will seek out those things which are an "enemy" to security and stability... the "enemy" comes in many different forms. Terrorism is a tactic. We do not focus solely on defeating a "tactic" but all those things that could negatively impact our combined efforts toward improving the security and stability of our area of responsibility.
- ★ We will conduct **combined operations** with the Iraqi Security Forces and together we will focus our efforts in three areas. We will conduct Ops simultaneously in **all 3 areas**:
 1. Neutralize insurgent and criminal threats to improving security and stability.
 2. Train, employ, and operate in coordination with our partnered Iraqi Security Forces (police and army)
 3. Support civil military projects that improve the essential needs of the people because that contributes directly to "security and stability" by developing the trust and confidence of the people in their own elected leaders and security forces.

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