

## **The Combined Action Platoon and its Applicability in Future Conflict**

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to the Faculty of the School of Advanced Warfighting  
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The United States' dramatic conventional victories in Operations DESERT STORM and IRAQI FREEDOM (I) have created a situation where it would be unreasonable to assume that adversaries would attempt to engage the United States in conventional warfare. The overwhelming resources, vast manpower, and cutting edge technological advantages the U.S. holds would make such a course of action unfeasible. What then should the U.S. expect to face in the future? According to Lieutenant General James Mattis, "the greatest probability is the rise of so called irregular challengers. . . insurgency (among other things) . . . will challenge U.S. security interests globally.<sup>1</sup> If General Mattis is correct, in the near future, the U.S. will face challenges in the form of insurgencies and a tested method to help win such a conflict is the Combined Action Program.

Insurgencies are not defeated using the methods that led to our lopsided conventional victories since Desert Storm. General William Westmoreland tried the conventional approach to defeating an insurgency in Vietnam and failed miserably.<sup>2</sup> He is but one example of a commander who failed to see what really allowed an insurgency to succeed. To win victory a multifaceted strategy must be employed solving the socioeconomic problems that led to the insurgency as well as rooting out and killing the hard core insurgents. One of the key elements required to defeat an insurgency is the will of the people. In the words of General Vo Nguyen Giap, commander of the North Vietnamese Army, "Without the people we have no information . . . They hide us, protect us, feed us, and tend to our wounded."<sup>3</sup> For the military the most important issue is having a population that will not protect, hide, or support the insurgents. This presents a challenge that may seem new to a conventionally trained U.S. military, but in fact it is

something that the United States has been dealing with for some time. The Philippines, the Banana Wars, and Vietnam are but a few examples of “irregular” warfare that America has engaged in within the last century. In these conflicts one method experimented with that seems to have had some success in garnering the support of the population and defeating an insurgency was the Combined Action Platoon (CAP) concept that the Marines used in Vietnam. As we move forward this concept may be an option for how the United States Military deals with insurgencies in the future. This paper will explore the concept of CAP during Vietnam, why it was employed, how it was structured, and what type of success it enjoyed. We will then discuss the difference in the insurgency we faced in Vietnam and the one we face now, early attempts of the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division to employ a version of CAP during Operation Iraqi Freedom II, how it was structured, any success it may have enjoyed, and recommendations for the future.

The Combined Action Program in Vietnam was developed in order to assist in the counterinsurgency effort conducted by the South Vietnamese Government with the assistance of U.S. forces against Vietcong guerrillas and North Vietnamese forces. Although the circumstances for each particular Combined Action Platoon were different, generally CAP was employed in rural villages wherein the local population was supportive, or at least passive and not openly hostile to U.S. forces. CAP was developed due to the confusing and complex nature of the war in Vietnam. One of the problems that was pervasive was the fact that, “there was not one enemy, but three. The VC hard “hard core” operating in battalion strength; the VC guerrillas, who lived off the people; and the VC infrastructure (VCI), who lived among the people.”<sup>4</sup> This created a huge problem for American forces as they passed through a given area because unless the Americans

stayed put, many provinces would immediately revert to VC control as soon as the last U.S. troop left the area. To counter this in the Phu Bai province the Marines of 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 4<sup>th</sup> Marines came up with a novel solution. In each village the Marine had a potential ally in the Popular Forces, or PF. The problem was that, “the PF was at the bottom of the scale. Minimally trained, armed, and paid, he [was] a part-time soldier organized and commanded at the district level, generally living with his family in his native hamlet. With support and supervision almost totally non-existent, he could do little towards his basic mission of providing hamlet and village level security.”<sup>5</sup> Although the PF was weak, the Marines knew that he had some things that they did not. He knew the area, and he knew the people. He was invested in the community, and wanted to protect his family and his crops. With all of the firepower, training, and organization the Marines brought to bear in this type of warfare, if the Marines couldn’t find the enemy their advantages were useless. However, if they could integrate the PF into their formations, this disadvantage would be offset. Similarly, although the PF knew who and where the VC were, they did not have the strength to rid themselves of the VC. The Marines would bring them this strength. Combining the Marines and the PF therefore, had all the makings of a symbiotic relationship that could truly make some progress in conducting the counter-insurgency.

The overall objective of what was termed the Combined Action Program was, “the pacification of rural Vietnam.” The mission of the individual platoons was two fold: “(1) to enhance village and hamlet-level security by the active performance of integrated military operations with the Popular Force, and (2) to increase the ability of the villagers to sustain and defend themselves by encouraging and participating in projects

contributing to the well being of the people and their identification with the national government.”<sup>6</sup> To accomplish this a Marine squad consisting of a Sergeant Squad Leader, a grenadier, a corpsman, and four fire teams, would be combined with a PF platoon consisting of a platoon leader, a platoon headquarters, and 20 to 40 soldiers.<sup>7</sup> The two units would then work together, with the fundamental idea that there would be a parallel chain of command. “In this philosophy, unity of command is sacrificed in favor of sharing responsibility between concerned elements of both the American and Vietnamese hierarchy.”<sup>8</sup> This was key to the whole idea of CAP. The Americans were not in charge, and neither were the Vietnamese, they both were. This created a sense of shared responsibility that empowered the PFs. They were not merely servants of the Americans, together with the Americans they were attempting to clear their village of VC and make it a better place.

Besides the violation of “Unity of Command” another drawback of this system was the fact that many PF units were potentially infiltrated with VC. This would require an extraordinary amount of trust for an American unit to give grid locations, ambush sites, mission orders to their Vietnamese counter parts. It would require Marines who were not only technically and tactically proficient to accomplish this, but Marine who were willing to work with the PFs, and risk there lives on the assumption that the PFs would not shoot them in the back. Therefore, the Marines that would man the CAPs would have to be a cut above the average Marine. However, during the struggle in Vietnam manpower was always in short supply. Therefore the requirements for CAP Marines were somewhat modest. II MAF order 3121.4 states, “A. Personnel to be assigned to Combined Action units will meet the following criteria: 1. Preferably with 2

months in country and a minimum of six months remaining on current tour. 2. Be a mature motivated Marine and be highly recommended by his commanding officer for duty with CAP. Selection of the squad leaders should receive special attention because of the importance of his function as the U.S. representative for revolutionary development.”<sup>9</sup> Even these modest requirements were difficult to adhere to however. Although most CAP Marines were volunteers, an officer commanding a conventional unit in combat would be hard pressed to let his best men go. “It is not realistic to expect an officer in the field to recommend his best men for transfer to any other duty, whatever its nature, and this is precisely what the [CAP requirements] call for.”<sup>10</sup> Because of this, the men assigned were not always the “cream of the crop.”

Once the Marines were selected for CAP they would go through “CAP School”. This two week school located in Da Nang included classes on basic infantry weapons (All CAP Marines were not infantrymen by trade), small unit tactics, first aid, map and compass reading, war-dog use, procedures for requesting and controlling artillery fire, air strikes, medical evaluations, Vietnamese language, history, and culture, Vietnamese politics, history and organization of the PFs, and VC organization, weapons and tactics.”<sup>11</sup> With the amount of material to be covered only a broad overview of many subjects could be addressed. Marines assigned to CAP were therefore not terribly well prepared to begin an assignment that would involve living and fighting with Vietnamese speaking, poorly trained soldiers, against a disciplined, politically motivated, and highly resourceful enemy. Further, the Marines would be isolated from higher headquarters and be under the command of a young sergeant who on average was 22 years old.<sup>12</sup>

Once assigned to a village, the CAP would integrate with their PF counterparts, and begin to accomplish their mission. Together they were to, “destroy the Vietcong infrastructure within the village or hamlet areas of responsibility; protect public security and help maintain law and order; protect friendly infrastructure; protect bases and communications within the villages and hamlets’ organize indigenous intelligence nets’ participate in civic action; and conduct propaganda against the Viet Cong.”<sup>13</sup> Overall a tall order for a poorly trained, poorly manned combined Vietnamese/US platoon. However, even with these drawbacks it appears that the Combined Action Platoon succeeded. “Nearly every CAP Marine interviewed believed the program to be a huge success.”<sup>14</sup> Soon after a CAP entered a village the quality of the PF units began show immediate improvement.<sup>15</sup> Simultaneously the quality of intelligence rose sharply and the CAPs were able to identify Vietcong operatives and could make considerable tactical gains against Vietcong formations. The question is what made it work?

The CAP worked in the following manner: When the CAP entered a village the mere presence of the CAP gave the local villager a sense of security. Once the CAP made it clear that it was there to stay the villager would feel more secure, and this feeling of security was enhanced even more as the villager saw the CAP conducting military operations which were meant to defend the village. The fact that the PF, who were also local villagers, participated in these operations gave the villagers, the PF, and the Marines a sense of mutual trust. Successful operations further provided self-confidence to the PFs and made them realize that they were capable of defeating the VC. The capability that the Marines brought to bear in terms of fire support and medical support enhanced the PFs will to fight, and provided further self-confidence. All of this would gain momentum to

the point where the local villager would feel confident enough to participate in the struggle. He might openly support the CAP, or may covertly provide intelligence to the CAP creating further successes and further enhancing the feeling of security. Soon the whole thing would “snowball” as more accurate intelligence led to more successful CAP operations which would lead to more intelligence, etc.<sup>16</sup> “Probably most important to the new military effectiveness of the local units was the morale benefit of working alongside Marine stationed with them for the long haul. The local forces knew the Marines were committed to them, and trust developed from the personal contact of living and dying together.”<sup>17</sup>

It is not the intention of this paper to claim that the CAP program in Vietnam worked flawlessly or that it was some sort of panacea to winning the victory in Vietnam. It is merely the intention of this paper to assert that the CAP program had merit, and if properly managed may have helped defeat the insurgency in Vietnam. The question that this paper is exploring is whether or not the positive aspects of CAP can be used during wars in the future.

As stated above, CAP’s success or failure related directly to the specific situation in which each CAP was employed. By and large, CAP in Vietnam was used in a rural, small village setting. The people that constituted the town and members of the PF were poor, poorly educated, with a very local outlook on the world. Most simply wanted to find a way to avoid the war altogether and move on with their lives. The Vietcong were generally recruited from this same population base. The Vietcong were broken down into “main force” units, and “regional” troops. Whereas the “main force” units were, “uniformed, full-time soldiers . . . who saw themselves as professional soldiers,” the

“regional” troops however were, “local Vietcong groups tended to be far less confident. For the most part, recruits were young teenagers, and while many were motivated by idealism, others had been pressured or shamed into joining. They also harbored real doubts about their ability to fight heavily armed and well-trained American soldiers. Initially, local guerrillas were given only a basic minimum of infantry training, but if they were recruited to a main force unit, they could receive up to a month of advanced instruction.”<sup>18</sup> This then was the situation in which the Vietnam CAP found itself.

Accepting the fact that combating the insurgent forces of radical Islam in the Middle East is a likely scenario that the U.S. military is likely to face in the near future, let us compare situation in Vietnam with the situation in Iraq. Unlike Vietnam, the vast majority of people that U.S. forces will work with in Iraq are from urban settings. This is due to the population density, as well as the modus operandi for the insurgents. 63% of people in Iraq live in an urban setting<sup>19</sup>, and almost all of the insurgent activity in Iraq takes place in villages, towns, and cities, or on the main arteries connecting these urban centers. Since the insurgents use of terror as the primary weapon, most of the activity must take place where masses of people gather so the insurgent’s actions can have the greatest effect. Therefore in Iraq, (and almost all other Middle Eastern countries in which the U.S. may find itself) the CAP program must be implemented in a far different atmosphere than that of Vietnam.

Another fundamental difference between Vietnam and Iraq is the level of education that the Marines will encounter. Unlike Vietnam, the people of Iraq are highly educated, in fact, “at the beginning of the 1980s Iraq had one of the best education systems in the Arab world. The gross enrolment rate (GER) for primary schooling was

around 100% . . .the Higher Education, especially the scientific and technological institutions were of international standard, staffed by high quality personnel” (United Nations Office of the Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq. 2003.<sup>20</sup> The people’s education level is coupled with the fact that most people in the Middle East have a negative view of the U.S. and particularly the U.S. military. “Opinion surveys conducted by Zogby International, the Pew Research Center, Gallup (CNN/USA Today), and the Department of State (INR) reveal widespread animosity toward the United States and its policies. A year and a half after going to war in Iraq, Arab/Muslim anger has intensified. Data from Zogby International in July 2004, for example, show that the U.S. is viewed unfavorably by overwhelming majorities in Egypt (98 percent), Saudi Arabia (94 percent), Morocco (88 percent), and Jordan (78 percent).”<sup>21</sup> Therefore, rather than dealing with an unsophisticated peasantry who is predominantly ambivalent towards the U.S., today U.S. troops will have to deal with an educated, cosmopolitan population which has an underlying hatred and mistrust of the U.S. This may be a significant hindrance in employing a CAP concept.

Although these may be drawbacks, the U.S. does have a few things going in its favor. One of these is in the nature of the insurgency itself. “In Vietnam, [the U.S.] confronted an entrenched, organized and motivated opponent that had a seemingly limitless capacity to absorb punishment.”<sup>22</sup> A significant difference between Vietnam and Iraq is that the insurgents the U.S. faces today adhere to no single political ideology; rather they are menagerie of different groups who are held together by their shared hatred of the U.S. Having said this, the most prominent group of insurgents are Sunni Arabs, who feel disenfranchised from in the new Shia dominated Iraq. “Many ex army officers,

security force personnel, and Ba'ath party members lost their privileged status in the new Iraq and remain bitter, angry, and frustrated. This fact, combined with the perceived humiliations of being forced to live under foreign occupation and, worse still, the prospect of longer-term Shia supremacy, led many to take up arms.”<sup>23</sup> Ideologically motivated, with a hatred for Americans and the perception that life in Iraq holds no future for them, makes this group particularly dangerous. At first this would appear to be a strength for the insurgents, however, their very desperation may turn the people against them as they continue to use violence to accomplish their aims. In the words of Che Guevera, “The insurgent can thrive on even and indifferent peasantry – his defeat can come only if the people regurgitate him.”<sup>24</sup> The insurgent violence may cause exactly this reaction as innocent civilians continue to be targeted. Once the insurgents are “regurgitated,” like the Vietcong, they will be unable to easily blend into the local societies, and therefore will be able to be targeted by U.S. forces. Once insurgents are identified and removed, the level of violence will begin to subside, thus increasing the people’s willingness to expose other insurgents. This fact suggests a CAP program may hold promise in Iraq.

In an area of the world where the U.S. is perceived poorly, the CAP platoon may be a method of not only training, and assisting in counter insurgency operations, but finding a long term solutions to the United States’ poor image in the Middle East . Changing perceptions of the U.S. is one of the most important aspects of the CAP program. In Vietnam “The basically decent and humane behavior of the American personnel improved the people’s regard for American troops and dispelled myths about the brutal American aggressors. [This] may have provided the villager with his first

evidence that the Americans . . . were concerned about his welfare.”<sup>25</sup> This holds just as true today as it did in Vietnam. In the Iraqi culture, relationships are very important. “A key to establishing good working relations with an Arab is to establish a good personal relationship. . . Arabs are driven more by the personal relationship than time constraints, mission requirements, or professional skills.”<sup>26</sup> One cannot establish relationships hiding behind the walls of a firm base, or patrolling through an area and then returning to a secure compound. What is needed is daily interaction with the Iraqis to facilitate a mutual understanding, and enhance U.S. Marines’ credibility. Simply getting familiar with the people is a significant aspect in the ability to change opinions. “Increased familiarity—through repeated contact with a person or thing is yet another factor that normally facilitates [the ability to influence] . . . one positive circumstance that may work well is mutual and successful cooperation.”<sup>27</sup> This is exactly what the CAP program is meant to foster. Admittedly, the U.S. will be starting off in a poor position, but with CAP the face to face daily interaction with the Iraqi population and successful combined operations with their Iraqi Army and Police counterparts has the potential of making a significant impact on the Iraqi’s view of Americans. By working with and among the same Iraqis in a village, town, or city day after day, the people will soon realize that if the U.S. arrives in an area we are committed to the people of that country. Further, this daily interaction will dispel the images of the brutal American occupiers, and the people of Iraq will see the Marines (and the U.S.) for who they really are. This may be the most valuable aspect of the CAP program.

Just as in Vietnam this type of operation requires strict discipline and a sense of professionalism from the American troops. But, it is just those troops that give us another

advantage over what the U.S. experienced in Vietnam. “One critical difference between Iraq and Vietnam is that today’s volunteer military is a totally different institution. By and large, the force is more professional, better trained and better equipped than its predecessor from the 1960’s.”<sup>28</sup> Today’s more professional force which understands its role and is culturally aware, trained to be very selective when taking out a target, and understands the necessity of treating the Iraqi people with respect, has the potential to be a significant force multiplier when it comes to winning “hearts and minds”. With this in mind, the Marines are currently attempting to employ CAP in Iraq.

In the fall of 2003 just after I Marine Expeditionary Force had returned from Iraq following Operation Iraqi Freedom (I) it became evident the Marines would quickly have to return to Iraq. An insurgency in the Sunni Triangle was gaining steam, and the Marines were being tasked with assuming battle space in the Al Anbar province in order to help quell the unrest. As the months passed it became evident that a full fledged insurgency was underway. Recognizing this early on, and realizing that the only way that the United States was going to be able to withdraw from Iraq was to have effective Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) in place, the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division Commander, then Major General James Mattis, decided to reintroduce the CAP program to the Marine Corps. The idea behind CAP was to “put an Iraqi face” on the security efforts in Iraq. In the words of T.E. Lawrence, “Do not try to do too much with your own hands. Better the Arabs to it tolerably than that you do it perfectly. It is their war, and you are to help them, not win it for them.”<sup>29</sup> Each battalion was tasked with designating one platoon as the CAP platoon, and a training program was hastily organized.

The training that the platoons underwent took place at 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division Schools in Camp Pendleton California, and consisted of a 10 day program which consisted of reporting formats and techniques, patrolling techniques, basic infantry skill, the uses and capabilities of foreign weapons. The platoon also received lectures from an expert in Middle East cultures, and veterans of the CAP program in Vietnam.<sup>30</sup> Following the ten day package they were given a 2 week course in Arabic, completing the training program. Given to the platoons and average of 3 weeks before deployment, this training was considered by many to be inadequate.<sup>31</sup> Not only was the package too brief, but it was under staffed and resourced, leaving the Marines that were to soon be deployed to a combat zone to feel under-prepared. Particularly disturbing was the minimal language training, which led much of the small unit leadership to purchase language tapes and books on their own in order to better prepare their Marines.<sup>32</sup>

Each platoon was not organized in any special fashion, nor was there any system of screening. The Marines did not volunteer for CAP and for most battalions a section of the under-utilized 81mm mortar platoon (unlikely to be heavily employed in a SASO environment) was simply designated as CAP.<sup>33</sup> A typical CAP platoon consisted of 16 Marines, including a Lieutenant platoon commander and a corpsman. Generally about half of the Marines had previous combat experience with the remainder being Marines who recently joined the battalion after completing basic infantry training. On average two NCO's were in this group. These Marine were organized into 4 man fire teams and were typically equipped with M16A2s (later M16A4s) plus two medium machineguns. For mobility each platoon was issued two or three highback HMMWVs (up armored as they became available) and for communications three PRC-119 VHF radios and an EPLRs

radio for talking to higher. Depending on where the platoon was located each platoon was issued a satellite phone (iridium or thuriya), which generally proved reliable when other communications failed.<sup>34</sup>

Upon arrival in Iraq CAP platoons were employed in various places, and each CAP operated in a different fashion. Generally they were coupled with an Iraqi National Guard or Army Company and conducted training and operations concurrently. The emphasis on training or operations depended on the specific circumstances surrounding each platoon, but most platoons conducted both. In some cases the CAP established a formal training program for the Iraqis, which ranged from a week long course consisting of basic weapons handling, marksmanship and basic infantry skills<sup>35</sup> to, “a 10-week live fire and physical training (PT) intensive course to build the marksmanship, offensive skills capabilities, implicit communications, and unit cohesion of the combined platoons.”<sup>36</sup> In other cases, “the Iraqis learned mostly through watching and working with [the Marines].”<sup>37</sup> Depending on the situation the CAP would work with the police who were also fighting insurgents.

Operations conducted by the CAP ranged from handing out candy to children to high end combat operations in Fallujah. Every CAP interviewed saw a vast improvement in the tactical performance of the Iraqis by the end of the tour, and in some cases they performed heroically. A general theme was that the Iraqis greatly improved the quality of intelligence the Marines received. A typical example: “On a routine logistics run to the battalion forward operating base, CAP India Marines detained two suspected triggermen after an IED attack. A week earlier, during VCP training, the ING leaders were trained to exploit their suspicions of people they were questioning with their local expertise and

ability to hear accents. Armed with this training, the Iraqi platoon sergeant was able to ascertain in 10 minutes what would have taken a Marine and translator hours to figure out. Neither suspect's accent was from Nasr Wa Salam, where the suspects claimed to be from nor did either one know anyone from the city. Both triggermen were detained and transferred to the regimental detention facility after Marines and ING gave statements."<sup>38</sup> There are countless other examples.

Generally the CAPs performed very well, however this was dependent on the location of the CAP as well as the overall quality of the Iraqi forces with whom they were coupled. Regional, tribal, and religious affiliations greatly affected the Iraqi Forces loyalty to the fledgling Iraqi government, and where some Iraqis were willing to risk their lives for the government, others, occasionally under orders from sheiks or imams, would simply not take chances.<sup>39</sup> With time however, all of the CAPs reported an increase in effectiveness after working with the Iraqis.

Time was another consideration that greatly affected the performance of the CAPs. The more time that the Marines stayed in one area, the more they would be able to train the Iraqis, the better their intelligence would be, and the more the bonds of loyalty would arise between the Marines and the Iraqis. Further, the longer the CAP stayed in one place, the more the local people perceived them as a good thing, and the less hostility that was encountered among the civilians. (GET QUOTE) However, none of the CAPs were employed in one area for more than 6 months, and many for less than 3, thus decreasing their effectiveness.

Although most suggested ways to improve CAP, without exception, commanders interviewed for this paper agreed that the CAP program in Iraq was a

success. With a future in which we may face more and more insurgencies, it appears that this program may have applicability. However, a few changes in training and employment need to be made to increase the performance of CAP.

A greater emphasis must be placed on CAP training before the platoon deploys. More emphasis should be made on training the Marines to be trainers. They need to be taught all of the tactical skills that are involved with CAP (which by and large consists of basic infantry skills), but they also need to be given an increased package on combined arms. Each Marine should be comfortable with employing mortars, artillery, and air, and all of the communications equipment that would make it possible for the platoon to employ these assets. Further, they need to attend “train the trainer” courses. The ability of the CAP to increase the tactical effectiveness of poorly trained indigenous soldiers relies on each Marine being able to teach his counterpart basic infantry skills. Knowing something and teaching it are two very different things, and if the Marines are taught to be instructors it can only enhance their ability to prepare the indigenous troops to assume the responsibility of fighting their own fight. The CAP also needs to have a much more significant language training course than a 2 week package. If this is unfeasible for the entire platoon, then it should at least be done with the leadership. A 6 month immersion program at DLI in Monterey for the Platoon Commander and his NCO’s would give the CAP a huge increase in capability and effectiveness. Finally, the entire platoon should undergo a training program which focuses exclusively on the culture in which they are going to operate. If every Marine in the platoon is culturally aware, the efficiency and effectiveness of the platoons will increase dramatically.

When employing the CAP in country commanders need to be willing to assume some risk. The slow start of CAP in Iraq was at least in part due to the fact that commanders were unwilling to place a small platoon in an isolated and unprotected area. Given the right communications equipment, some training, and a little mobility a small CAP platoon has the ability to focus a great deal of fire power at a given place very quickly. However, putting a platoon in an isolated position will require leaders to assume risk. The benefit however, far outweighs this risk, and if the CAP is properly trained and outfitted the risk is greatly reduced. The CAP should also be kept in place for much longer time periods than it is currently. It takes time to build bonds, complete training, make contacts, and flesh out intelligence. Three to six months is simply not enough time to get the full value from a CAP. Platoons should be kept in place at least a year, and an extensive turn-over period should be allowed for the follow on CAP. The benefits of keeping the CAP in place longer seem self evident.

Finally, CAP needs to be expanded. Currently, each deploying infantry battalion is required to have 1 CAP platoon.<sup>40</sup> The problem with this is that the battalion is organized and equipped to fight in a conventional role as a battalion. Pulling a platoon out of each battalion not only reduces the manpower of the battalion, but the battalion must give up an extra amount of communications gear and vehicles in order to properly outfit the platoon. Also, an infantry battalion has limited organic fire support assets with which it can support a CAP platoon. Further, pulling the CAP “out of hide” results in a situation that when some of the CAP platoons are undergoing their CAP training, they are missing battalion training that would have been very helpful to the CAP.<sup>41</sup> It is the classic case of trying to do too much with too little time. Therefore, in the future, instead of

pulling a CAP out of infantry battalions, the CAP concept should be employed by itself. CAP battalions should be formed and organized, with a separate table of equipment and organization which allows them to accomplish their highly specialized mission. These battalions would be heavy in mobility, communications, and fire support, which would be used to augment the capabilities of their dispersed and isolated CAP platoons, with a different set of Mission Performance Standards which would focus on small unit tactics, combined arms, training the trainers, cultural awareness, and language skills.

The I MEF commander, Lieutenant General John Sattler, stated in a report to the Senate that “The CAP approach promises the highest return on as local security conditions improve and Iraqi leadership remains committed to the mission.”<sup>42</sup> Again, to defeat an insurgency one must have the support of the people. The CAP idea has the dual advantage of assisting in the training of indigenous forces to defeat an insurgency on their own, and also showing the undecided people of that area that the U.S. is committed to making their lives safer and better. If the will of the people is what is required to defeat an insurgency, and the Combined Action Program is a method for doing this, then CAP may be one solution for winning wars in the future.

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- <sup>1</sup> LtGen James Mattis and LtCol John Hoffman. "Future Warfare: The Rise of Hybrid Wars" *Proceedings*, November 2005, Annapolis: U.S. Naval Institute, p 54-55.
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- <sup>3</sup> LtGen Victor H. Krulak. First to Fight: An Inside View of the U.S. Marine Corps. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1984, p 211.
- <sup>4</sup> Bruce C. Allnutt. Marine Combined Action Capabilities: The Vietnam Experience. McLean, Virginia: Human Sciences Research Inc., December 1969, pp 7-8.
- <sup>5</sup> Ibid. p 9.
- <sup>6</sup> Ibid. p 20.
- <sup>7</sup> Ibid. p 19.
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid. p 17.
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