REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 04-05-2011	2. REPORT TYPE FINAL	3. DATES COVERED (From - To)

4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE	5a. CONTRACT NUMBER
IO Best Practices for COIN Doctrine	
	5b. GRANT NUMBER
	5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER

6. AUTHOR(S)	5d. PROJECT NUMBER
LCDR Matthew T. Griffin	5e. TASK NUMBER
Paper Advisor (if Any): Lt Col Reagan E. Schaupp	5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER

7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)	8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER
Joint Military Operations Department Naval War College 686 Cushing Road Newport, RI 02841-1207	

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
Distribution Statement A: Approved for public release; Distribution is unlimited.

13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES A paper submitted to the Naval War College faculty in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Joint Military Operations Department. The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the NWC or the Department of the Navy.

14. ABSTRACT

Information Operations Best Practices for Counterinsurgency Doctrine. Recent guidance from operational commanders regarding the employment of information operations (IO) in the counterinsurgency (COIN) environment is indicative of the critical role non-kinetic actions play in a fight against insurgents. Commanders in Afghanistan and Iraq have provided very specific guidance to subordinates on what IO actions must be considered in order to be successful in the COIN environment. This paper distills many of those actions into three broad categories and recommends that COIN doctrine be updated with specific IO best practices in order to better prepare U.S. forces to fight wars against insurgencies.

15. SUBJECT TERMS
Information Operations, IO Best Practices, Counterinsurgency, IO Doctrine

16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON Chairman, JMO Dept
a. REPORT UNCLASSIFIED	b. ABSTRACT UNCLASSIFIED	c. THIS PAGE UNCLASSIFIED		18	19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (include area code) 401-841-3556

Standard Form 298 (Rev. 8-98)

NAVAL WAR COLLEGE
Newport, R.I.

INFORMATION OPERATIONS BEST PRACTICES FOR COUNTERINSURGENCY DOCTRINE

By

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

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Signature: _____

4 May 2011

Contents

Abstract

Information operations best practices for counterinsurgency doctrine. Recent guidance from operational commanders regarding the employment of information operations (IO) in the counterinsurgency (COIN) environment is indicative of the critical role non-kinetic actions play in a fight against insurgents. Commanders in Afghanistan and Iraq have provided very specific guidance to subordinates on what IO actions must be considered in order to be successful in the COIN environment. This paper distills many of those actions into three broad categories and recommends that COIN doctrine be updated with specific IO best practices in order to better prepare U.S. forces to fight wars against insurgencies.

INTRODUCTION

The use of IO by operational commanders is as old as war itself. Sun Tzu believed in achieving victory over the enemy's mind rather than meeting him with military force. He wrote, "To subdue the enemy without fighting is the acme of skill."[1] Sun Tzu believed that complete knowledge of the enemy (and self) and the use of deception and psychological operations was critical to achieving victory. The American War for Independence is perhaps one of the most successful insurgencies in history. The effective use of IO by the revolutionaries played a critical role in America gaining its independence from Great Britain.[2]

Today, it is widely accepted by operational commanders and COIN subject matter experts (SMEs) that the deliberate and effective use of IO is critical to successful COIN operations and, arguably, the main effort in a war against insurgents. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are filled with successes that were achieved through the effective use of IO. The U.S. has also experienced the consequences of not using IO effectively and of having IO used successfully by her enemies. The importance of conducting "grassroots" IO effectively in a COIN environment cannot be overstated. Operational commanders today are acutely aware of the importance of IO and have emphasized it heavily in their guidance and strategies.

The depth and specificity with which the International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF) and Multi-National Forces–Iraq (MNF-I) Commanders have articulated IO-related

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[1] Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, trans. Samuel B. Griffith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963) , 77.
[2] The Sons of Liberty were extremely effective at using IO to advance their cause and ultimately gain independence from British rule. Paul Revere distributed information pamphlets to the populace. John Hancock delivered fiery speeches that fueled the passions of the people. The Committee of Correspondence published information as well as disinformation. Benjamin Franklin conducted public diplomacy in France to form an alliance that proved critical to winning the War of Independence. David Hackett Fischer, *Washington's Crossing,* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

best practices underscores the critical role IO plays in the COIN environment. The actions of

Soldiers and Marines at the tactical level can have operational and strategic implications.

The IO best practices outlined by experienced operational commanders must be codified in

doctrine with similar depth and specificity to better prepare forces to operate in the COIN

environment today and in the future.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

The field manual for counterinsurgency, FM 3-24, was developed by General James

Mattis and General David Petraeus. Both of these operational leaders commanded divisions

in Iraq and led their service's training and doctrine command. The manual is intended to

attune conventionally-oriented ground forces to a new kind of war – a political-cultural-

sociological struggle that is far bigger than a straightforward military problem.[3] FM 3-24

offers pertinent insights regarding the use of IO in the COIN environment but it needs to be

more comprehensive and updated with the lessons that have been learned since it was

published in 2006.

FM 3-24 identifies the major challenges that must be addressed in the COIN

environment. Insurgencies are complex political wars that cannot be won by military force

alone. The U.S. learned this lesson in Vietnam – tactical and operational dominance does not

guarantee strategic success. U.S. forces train, plan, and fight based on experiences from

previous wars. In Vietnam, U.S. forces had been trained, equipped, and organized to fight

the Russians in Central Europe so it was natural for U.S. commanders to respond with

superior firepower and mobility against an elusive enemy who could not be brought to a

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[3] FM 3-24, "Counterinsurgency," notes for advisors, 28 January 2008, 1.

decisive battle.[4] COIN is a battle of ideas; success depends wholly on the people who are the

center of gravity. No amount of tactical proficiency or technology can defeat an insurgency

– information operations are needed.[5]

FM 3-24 includes a discussion about IO logical lines of operations (LLO) and a table

that outlines broadly some key considerations for developing the IO LLO. For instance,

words used by COIN forces are important because they have specific meanings. This can be

particularly important when communicating with the host nation (HN) population or

conveying a message to insurgents. Also, media should be used to publicize insurgent

violence, highlight COIN successes, and respond to insurgent propaganda. Lastly, Soldiers

and Marines must stay engaged with the populace. Indeed, this is arguably the most

important element of the IO LLO. The manual describes presence and patrols, mingling with

the people, and touches briefly on building trust to develop intelligence.[6]

FM 3-24 identifies some of the key considerations for using IO in the COIN

environment; however, the guidance is too broad for the tactical level where Soldiers and

Marines are engaged in the IO LLO on a daily basis. The following pages will discuss,

interpret, and contrast FM 3-24 with recent commanders' guidance.

FM 3-24 provides two specific examples that underscore the importance of words and

their meaning. For example, *liberators* may be welcomed but *occupiers* may generate a

resistance. The manual also suggests that COIN forces should refrain from referring to and

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[4] Robert W. Komer, *Bureaucracy Does Its Thing: Institutional Constraints on U.S.-GVN performance in Vietnam*, DARPA Report R-967-ARPA (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 1972), vii.
[5] FM 3-24, "Counterinsurgency," notes for advisors, 28 January 2008, 1.
[6] U.S. Army, *Counterinsurgency*, Field Manual (FM) 3-24 (Washington, DC: Headquarters Department of the Army, 15 December), 5-9 Table 5-1.

considering the area of operations (AO) as a *battlefield* because doing so will ensure the AO continues to be one.[7]

Words used by COIN forces have the potential to dissuade or embolden an insurgent and appeal to or drive away the HN population. For years, COIN forces and political leaders have used the term *jihad* to refer to violent extremism. David Kilcullen, a recognized COIN expert, also used the term but now uses *takfiri*. He posits that *jihad* is a noble ideal in Islam – a sacred duty – and when Westerners categorize violent extremists as *jihadists* they are actually legitimizing the terrorists. *Takfiri*, on the other hand, is a disapproving term in Arabic that specifically relates to violating Islam's injunction against compulsion in religion and regarding fellow Muslims whose beliefs differ from those of the *takfiri* infidels. Using *takfiri* properly labels the terrorists' ideology as heretical, not merely extremist.[8]

Operational leaders, ground forces, COIN SMEs, academics and others continue to expand their knowledge of insurgent groups and have developed greater understanding of the people and the countries in which the insurgencies are taking place. The knowledge that has been gained in recent years must be incorporated in COIN doctrine. A basic lexicon would be of value, perhaps as an annex to FM 3-24 that includes native terminology, axioms, and everyday expressions that appropriately reflect the values, culture, religion, and social norms of the populace. This would allow COIN forces to engage more effectively with the population they are trying to protect and avoid pitfalls caused by misunderstandings or improper use of words.

Publicizing insurgent violence to discredit the insurgency is an essential element of the IO LLO. The neutral or perhaps the ambivalent HN population might be swayed to

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[7] *Ibid.*

[8] David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerilla* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2009), xix.

support COIN efforts if, for instance, the insurgents are publicized as harmful actors that use violence indiscriminately to advance a senseless cause that threatens the population's aspiration of a peaceful existence. Concurrently, COIN forces must highlight their own success and respond quickly to insurgent propaganda. FM 3-24 discusses the importance of these facts and encourages the use of media to influence intended audiences but it lacks detail needed at the tactical level. Two initiatives, recently undertaken by the State Department and U.S. Central Command, exemplify the types of programs that can be used at the tactical level to gain an advantage over insurgents in the information war.

State Department improved access to radio and television for Afghans living in underserved areas by leasing free space to Afghan service providers on a tower built near Kandahar Airfield under the protection of U.S. forces. This is the first of several towers to be constructed throughout Afghanistan.[9] This initiative will 1) empower the Afghani people by enabling them to speak out against insurgent violence and repression without fear of reprisal 2) inform Afghani communities by broadcasting information that is helpful to their daily lives and 3) influence the Afghani people by sharing with them COIN accomplishments and refuting insurgent propaganda and disinformation.

U.S. Central Command uses a communications program named Operation EARNEST VOICE. It is intended to reach regional audiences through both traditional and Web-based media. General Petraeus stated, "In each of these efforts, we follow the admonition we practiced in Iraq, that of being first with the truth."[10] According to General Petraeus, this operation tracks and disrupts insurgent recruiting efforts by demonstrating the futility in

[9] Walter Pincus, "New and old information operations in Afghanistan: What works?" The Washington Post, 28 March 2010, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/new-and-old-information-operations-in-afghanistan-what-works/2011/03/25/AFxNAeqB_story.html (accessed 7 April 2011).
[10] *Ibid.*

supporting the insurgency and amplifying the moderate voice. Additionally, the operation detects and flags adversary, hostile, corrosive content in some open-source Web forums.[11]

Engaging with the population is perhaps the single most important activity COIN forces can undertake to earn the trust and confidence of the HN population and ultimately "win" their loyalty and support. FM 3-24 lacks specific guidance to prepare Soldiers and Marines to interact with the populace more effectively. The manual points out the importance of engaging with the populace and understanding the local culture but it only a cursory discussion and does not account for the multitude of actions that are involved in conducting effective engagement.

General Petraeus's guidance encourages Soldiers and Marines to "Earn the people's trust, talk to them, ask them questions, and learn about their lives." The commander's guidance continues with even greater specificity suggesting COIN forces "inquire about social dynamics, frictions, local histories, and grievances."[12]

General Petraeus personally walked the streets of Iraq wearing a soft cap and no body armor and no weapon – unlike his predecessor, General George Casey, who usually carried a sidearm. As General Petraeus made his way down the street with Iraqi generals, he bought bread, fruit, and chocolate from local vendors. He greeted Iraqi people, gave a television interview, and handed a soccer ball to a boy. General Petraeus's actions may seem unimportant but they had a significant impact on the Iraqi people.[13]

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[11] *Ibid.*

[12] GEN David H. Petraeus, *COMISAF's Counterinsurgency Guidance*, (Kabul, Afghanistan: COMISAF/CDR USFOR-A), 2.

[13] Linda Robinson, *Tell Me How This Ends: General David Petraeus and the search for a way out of Iraq* (New York, NY: PublicAffairs, c2008), 313.

The risk to forces may not allow for such affable engagement; however, these examples demonstrate the specific guidance being promulgated by commanders and the countless actions that can be pursued by COIN forces during engagement operations.

Overall, FM 3-24 provides broad IO-related guidance and outlines some of the important elements related to the effective use of IO in a COIN environment; however, greater detail is needed at the tactical level where Soldiers and Marines are involved in grassroots IO on a daily basis. The commander's guidance that has been published in the last five years contains keen insights from experienced operational commanders and very specific IO-related guidance that is particularly relevant for tactical-level COIN forces.

While commanding ISAF, both General Stanley McChrystal and General David Petraeus provided very specific IO-related guidance aimed at the tactical level because they understood that the words, actions, and behavior of every single Soldier and Marine can have a direct impact on the outcome of the COIN effort. The IO lessons learned and best practices published by these experienced commanders must be codified in doctrine with a level of detail and specificity that will prepare Soldiers and Marines to operate more effectively in the COIN environment – today and in future wars against insurgents.

IO LINES OF EFFORT

When examining the multitude of IO-related best practices articulated by operational commanders, three main IO lines of effort emerge. When summarized in "package form," these provide useful starting points for doctrinal inclusion. These themes are neither all-encompassing nor a panacea for developing an IO LLO to defeat an insurgency. Rather, they are examples intended to demonstrate 1) what IO-related actions operational commanders

have deemed critical to COIN operations and 2) the detailed IO guidance being promulgated in order to better prepare Soldiers and Marines to operate more effectively in the field.

1. *Be a Good Guest*

We are taught as children the importance of good manners, being polite, and showing respect to others. This may seem like an odd topic for warfighting doctrine but operational leaders have used this idea to capture the essence of an ongoing effort that is critical to COIN operations in Afghanistan.[14] Being a good guest is not unique to Western or American culture. Indeed, this concept applies to nearly every society in the world in one way or another. In fact, arguably it is more important in other world regions – in some cases, vastly so – than in America or the West.

No society is homogenous; however, respect for people and property is something common to most if not all cultures. The center of gravity in a war against insurgents is the HN population – earning their trust and confidence is critical. If COIN forces kill civilians or damage their property, they will make more enemies than they can eliminate.[15] Generals McChrystal and Petraeus directed subordinates to use only the firepower necessary to win a fight – recognizing that COIN forces cannot kill or capture their way to victory. The people and their property must be treated with respect whenever possible. The actions and behavior of COIN forces, seen through the eyes of the local populace, will have lasting effects. Every Soldier and Marine must think of themselves as a role model. General Petraeus reminds his forces that "it is those at tactical levels – the so-called 'strategic sergeants' and 'strategic captains' – who turn big ideas in counterinsurgency operations into reality on the ground."[16]

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[14] Petraeus, *COMISAF's Counterinsurgency Guidance*, 2.
[15] *Ibid.*
[16] *Ibid.*, p. 4.

Today, COIN forces are closely engaged with the population and the elders in Afghanistan because operational commanders recognize the importance of this relationship. General Petraeus's guidance includes a short, simple statement that captures the essence of being a good guest: "Spend time, listen, consult, and drink lots of tea."[17]

In 2003, the U.S. Army had been conducting what had been described privately by Marine officers as unnecessarily heavy-handed operations in the al Anbar province of Iraq.[18] The Marines, under the command of General James Mattis, were preparing to relieve the Army but they would take a completely different approach to COIN operations. The hard-nosed tactics used by Soldiers under the command of General Raymond Odierno corroded the trust that might otherwise have existed between the Iraqi people and their liberators. The Army surrounded villages with barbed wire, rounded up relatives of guerillas, and used an identification card program. These tactics were strikingly similar to those used in the French-Algerian War where the French Army won battles at the cost of losing the war.[19]

When General Mattis and his Marines arrived in al Anbar province in 2003, they were determined to use a different strategy – one that had been successful in the southern region of Iraq. The Marines were conscious of cultural sensitivities and social norms in Iraq and would work hard at being "good guests." General Mattis understood that trust and connecting with the Iraqi people was critical to success. His strategy focused on building the trust and loyalty of the Iraqi people.

The Marines removed their sunglasses when they spoke with the Iraqi people to eliminate perceived barriers, grew mustaches because they were ubiquitous among Iraqi men, and searched Iraqi houses with care and respect. They knocked on doors, handled property

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[17] *Ibid*., p. 2.
[18] Thomas E. Ricks, *Fiasco The American Military Adventure in Iraq* (New York, NY: Penguin, 2006), 312.
[19] *Ibid*.

with care, asked the occupants to open doors and cupboards, treated the families with respect, and were careful not to dishonor the head of the household.[20] The manner in which the Marines conducted operations in al Anbar province was perhaps the most illuminating aspect of General Mattis's COIN strategy. Many of the same principles are reflected in General Petraeus's guidance today.

The approach taken by Generals Mattis and Petraeus in Iraq and by Generals McChrystal and Petraeus in Afghanistan demonstrate the criticality of the actions and behavior of Soldiers and Marines at the tactical level. Today, General Petraeus expects his forces to patrol on foot whenever feasible -- "stop by, don't drive by."[21] When General McChrystal was the ISAF Commander, he purposefully included the following account in his commander's guidance to make clear the impact COIN forces can have on an insurgency through their actions.[22]

> An ISAF patrol was traveling through a city at a high rate of speed, driving down the center to force traffic off the road. Several pedestrians and other vehicles were pushed out of the way. A vehicle approached from the side into the traffic circle. The gunner fired a pen flare at it, which entered the vehicle and caught the interior on fire. As the ISAF patrol sped away, Afghans crowded around the car. How many insurgents did the patrol make that day?

General McChrystal described another incident where an ISAF unit had fruit trees cut down to improve maneuverability in a relatively permissible area. Those fruit trees represented the livelihood of many of the villagers – improvised explosive devices (IEDs) began appearing on the road shortly after this incident.[23] Destroying a home or property

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[20] *Ibid.*, p. 314.
[21] Petraeus, *COMISAF's Counterinsurgency Guidance*, 3.
[22] GEN Stanley A. McChrystal, *ISAF Commander's Counterinsurgency Guidance,* (Kabul, Afghanistan: ISAF), 1.
[23] *Ibid.*, p. 2.

jeopardizes the livelihood of an entire family and creates more insurgents. General

McChrystal wrote: "We sow the seeds of our own demise."[24] He also emphasized the

importance of interacting with local people. How COIN forces drive, fly, patrol, use force,

and what and who they fund all have implications.[25]

Being a good guest can have "game-changing" effects. Earning the trust and

confidence of the people – the center of gravity – is critical to success. In order to earn that

trust, COIN forces must demonstrate "respect and sensitivity for the cultures and traditions of

others, and an understanding that the rule of law and humanity don't end when the fighting

starts."[26]

2. *Win the Information War*

Information operations are the insurgent's main effort. The effective use of

psychological operations and propaganda enables insurgents to exert control over the local

population by influencing their decision calculus. General McChrystal's guidance points out

that people "watch, listen, and make rational choices based on who can better protect them,

provide for their needs, respect their dignity and their community, and offer opportunities for

the future."[27]

COIN forces must be more proactive and aggressive in the information war to

reassure the HN population and delegitimize the insurgents. Insurgents will continue to

broadcast rhetoric by all means available to disrupt COIN efforts. David Galula makes an

important point regarding the constraints under which COIN forces must operate. Galula

describes the insurgent as "…having no responsibility, is free to use every trick; if necessary

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[24] McChrystal, *ISAF Commander's Counterinsurgency Guidance*, 3.
[25] *Ibid*., p. 1.
[26] Small Wars Journal, "General McChrystal's Initial Guidance,"
http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/2009/06/general-mcchyrstals-initial-gu/ (accessed 29 March 2011).
[27] McChrystal, *ISAF Commander's Counterinsurgency Guidance*, 3.

he can lie, cheat, exaggerate. He is not obligated to prove; he is judged by what he promises, not by what he does."[28] Conversely, COIN forces must uphold international norms of war, obey laws, and protect the population against corruption and human rights violations. This asymmetry creates a particularly challenging situation for the COIN effort; however, with the effective use of IO, COIN forces can achieve perhaps a level of equilibrium with the insurgents in the information domain.

There are many strategies that can be used to win the information war. General Petraeus's guidance offers several key considerations for defeating the insurgent in the information war. Specifically, COIN forces must "avoid spinning, and don't try to 'dress up' an ugly situation" and "challenge disinformation."[29]

COIN forces may find themselves caught in the middle of a precarious situation caused by an unfortunate event such as the destruction of property or civilian casualties. This type of situation, if handled poorly, can be harmful to the relationship with the HN population and provide material for the insurgents to exploit. When appropriate, COIN forces must be prepared to accept responsibility promptly, demonstrate transparency to local officials, and take corrective action if necessary. An article entitled *Strategic Communications and the Combatant Commander*, recommends that COIN forces consider declassifying prestrike information that supported the target rationale, cockpit video, other imagery, attack details, and other relevant, explanatory, and "defensible" information.[30] This idea may seem irrational but perhaps there is value in what is being recommended when one

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[28] David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare Theory and Practice* (New York, NY: Praeger, 1964), 14.
[29] Petraeus, *COMISAF's Counterinsurgency Guidance*, 3.
[30] Jeffrey B. Jones, Daniel T. Kuehl, Daniel Burgess, and Russell Rochte, "Strategic Communication and the Combatant Commander," Joint Force Quarterly Issue 55, 4th Quarter 2009, 106.

considers, for example, the 1991 U.S. air strike on the Al Firdos C3 bunker in Baghdad that killed several hundred Iraqi civilians, including women and children.

In the past, the U.S. has taken the "moral high ground" perhaps with respect to countering insurgent propaganda. Disinformation must be actively countered as rapidly and vigorously as possible. Failing to respond tends to validate the disinformation.[31] Insurgents will continue to use every method of media available to "attack" COIN efforts with rhetoric and disinformation. Their objective is to polarize the population – manipulate the people into choosing a side – the insurgency side of the war. COIN forces must be prepared to "counter-attack" promptly and aggressively with information that unequivocally refutes insurgent rhetoric.

COIN forces must strive to "control the narrative" as much as possible. General Petraeus's guidance suggests that COIN forces must "beat the insurgents and malign actors to the headlines."[32] The effective use of embedded reporters and combat camera is one way in which this objective can be achieved. This particular strategy also enables COIN forces to "preempt rumors and be first with the truth" – another key consideration highlighted in General Petraeus's guidance. U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) has used embedded media from both Western news organizations and Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya. Local or regional reporters, using print, visual, broadcast, and Web-based media, are much more likely to "reach" intended audiences. Embedded reporters can be very helpful in publicizing truthful information about COIN operations, refuting disinformation spread by insurgents, and disseminating information that is helpful to COIN operations.

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[31] Jones, Kuehl, Burgess, Rochte, "Strategic Communication and the Combatant Commander," 105.
[32] Petraeus, *COMISAF's Counterinsurgency Guidance*, 3.

Developing appropriate themes and messaging is absolutely critical. Audience and cultural analysis must be right – being wrong can be counter-productive, result in a loss of credibility, and fuel any negative perceptions of COIN forces.[33] Additionally, selecting the wrong method of delivery such as a shortwave radio when the intended audience uses Facebook all but guarantees the message will not be received. Using the Internet to disseminate information to remote, rural areas would be equally ineffective.

There are a multitude of factors to be considered when developing subject matter to be used in the IO LLO such as dialect, religion, cultural, demographics, and literacy rate to name a few. Individual Soldiers and Marines do not have to be IO experts but they must understand that delivering an effective message to right audience via an appropriate medium is crucial to winning the information war.

In the COIN environment, public affairs (PA) guidance must be active and aggressive. The use of embeds, combat camera, social media, and other creative methods that allow COIN forces to beat the insurgent to the headlines with the truth. COIN forces own everything up through the strike, but the insurgent (and his media support) owns everything past the strike. U.S. forces must reverse this trend by using PA and media more effectively.[34]

The fundamental principles of communicating effectively to win the information war must be underpinned in doctrine. IO and media-related tactics, techniques, and procedures that have been used effectively must be formalized in doctrine.

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[33] Jones, Kuehl, Burgess, Rochte, "Strategic Communication and the Combatant Commander," 105.
[34] *Ibid*., p. 107.

3. Empower the People

The people are the center of gravity in wars against insurgencies – earning their trust and confidence is critical to success. General McChrystal made this point clear in his commander's guidance when he wrote: "Earn the support of the people and the war is won."[35] He also spelled out the need for a change in mindset; specifically, the way in which "offensive operations" were viewed. For instance, holding routine *jirgas* with community leaders to build trust and solve problems as well as using projects and work programs to bring communities together, are offensive operations because they take away from the insurgent the one thing he cannot afford to lose – control of the population.[36]

General Petraeus emphasized to COIN forces that they must ensure the people with whom they are working are equally concerned with helping the HN population. Otherwise, COIN forces will appear to be part of the problem.[37] If the local populace perceives impropriety on the part of COIN forces, the negative response will have a corrosive effect on the relationship and result in setbacks in the overall effort.

General Petraeus emphasized that importance of the HN population knowing that they will not abandoned. Getting the people actively involved in the success of their communities, identifying corrupt officials, and helping COIN partners address grievances and find local solutions is an important part of empowering the people. Ultimately, it enables the populace to build a future that will enable communities to prosper as COIN forces began to withdraw incrementally.[38]

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[35] McChrystal, *ISAF Commander's Counterinsurgency Guidance*, 3.
[36] *Ibid*., p. 4.
[37] Petraeus, *COMISAF's Counterinsurgency Guidance*, 2.
[38] *Ibid*.

T.E. Lawrence led the Arab Revolt against the Ottoman Empire. His writings – nearly 100 years old – offer advice that is still relevant to today. Lawrence wrote, "Do not try to do too much with your own hands. Better the Arabs do it tolerably than that you do it perfectly. It is their war, and you are to help them, not to win it for them."[39] COIN forces must strive to empower the populace to find local solutions to local problems and assuage safety and security concerns of the people. General McChrystal suggests that these are the circumstances under which the influence of the insurgent will end permanently. The community must be mobilized to participate actively in their own safety and stability.[40]

The discussion concerning the three IO lines of effort in the previous pages endeavors to coalesce into three themes some of the most pertinent IO-related guidance that has been promulgated by operational commanders since FM 3-24 was published in 2006. And, to substantiate the necessity of updating existing COIN doctrine with greater specificity applied to the IO LLO based on commanders' guidance. COIN doctrine must contain an appropriate level of detail to be relevant to Soldiers and Marines engaged in IO at the tactical level where the insurgency can be won or lost based on the actions of young leaders on the ground – "many important decisions are not made by generals."[41]

Some may argue that U.S. forces have been conducting COIN operations successfully using existing doctrine and real-world experience gained from ten years of fighting insurgents in Iraq and Afghanistan.

That U.S. forces have been "doing okay so far" is hardly a convincing argument that doctrine does not need updating. Doctrine must continue to change in order to adapt to the

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[39] T.E. Lawrence, "Twenty-Seven Articles," Brigham Young University Library, http://wwi.lib.byu.edu/index.php/The_27_Articles_of_T.E._Lawrence (accessed 26 April 2011).
[40] McChrystal, *ISAF Commander's Counterinsurgency Guidance*, 4.
[41] University of Chicago, "Paradoxes of Counterinsurgency Operations," University of Chicago Press, http://www.press.uchicago.edu/Misc/Chicago/841519.html (accessed 7 April 2011).

experiences of the conflicts in which U.S. forces are fighting.[42] Real-world experience is essential to developing an effective COIN force; however, bad habits – even complacency – can develop, particularly in protracted insurgencies where COIN forces might become frustrated with a lack of instant, tangible results that are often achieved by conventional military force. COIN training and doctrine must prepare forces for a marathon with incremental wins rather than a sprint with quick, decisive results.

Moreover, the potential exists for "institutional memory loss" when forces are involved in a protracted insurgency with relatively short deployments and a constant turnover of forces.[43] Periodically codifying lessons learned and best practices in doctrine allows forces to train, plan, prepare, and fight more effectively. Historically, the U.S. has fought its wars based largely on the experiences gained from its most recent war – this pattern is unlikely to change.

A second argument may contend that doctrine adds rigidity and ties the hands of forces when what is needed is flexibility to adapt – particularly in a COIN environment. Expanding the IO section of FM 3-24 would actually increase flexibility and adaptability by providing forces with additional, non-kinetic options. Including greater detail in the IO LLO will prompt young leaders to be creative, encourage them to use every IO resource at their disposal, and better prepare them to effectively engage with the HN population. It will also provide leaders with a standardized, valid source from which they can articulate the principles of developing an effective IO LLO.

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[42] Marc G. Tranchemontagne, "Structuring the Problem of Global Insurgency: The Evolution of CONPLAN 7500" (research paper, Newport, RI: U.S. Naval War College, Joint Military Operations Department, n.d.), 4.
[43] Komer refers to a "lack of institutional memory" when describing the U.S. Army's conduct of the Vietnam War and cites short tours as being a contributing factor. Robert W. Komer, *Bureaucracy Does Its Thing: Institutional Constraints on U.S.-GVN performance in Vietnam*, DARPA Report R-967-ARPA (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 1972), viii.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to more comprehensively address COIN operations, capture best practices, and codify perhaps the most relevant line of effort, COIN doctrine must be updated with the recent knowledge and experience of the operational commanders that have been leading the U.S. COIN effort in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Commanders have recognized the importances of IO to COIN operations and have articulated what they believe are IO best practices for fighting an insurgency. Every COIN operation *will* be different; however, the IO lines of effort discussed here can be applied universally – no matter where or what the next insurgency will be.

Army and Marine doctrine commands should conduct an extensive review of the commander's guidance that has been promulgated since FM 3-24 was published and update COIN doctrine, specifically the IO LLO, with the best practices learned from the last ten years in a way that affords flexibility to the commander but better prepares Soldiers and Marines to perform in the COIN environment.

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