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**AIRMEN FIRST: SHAPING THE EXPEDITIONARY AIR  
FORCE FOR COUNTERINSURGENCY**

by

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September 2006

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**AIRMEN FIRST: SHAPING THE EXPEDITIONARY AIR FORCE FOR  
COUNTERINSURGENCY**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis attempts to convince Air Force leadership to shift its approach to expeditionary airpower in counterinsurgency (COIN) from one that emphasizes advanced technology for striking targets to one that focuses on airmen to influence indigenous populations. Judging history, airpower will certainly play a supporting role in any effort to quell insurgency through reconnaissance, airlift, and close air support. Thus, wherever the American military deploys for COIN, the Air Force will not only operate, but will also deploy substantial numbers of expeditionary airmen. This forward presence of American airmen at expeditionary airbases enables the Air Force to participate in pacification where it most counts—on the ground, in the surrounding community, and among the indigenous population. To contribute more fully, airmen must comprehend the nature of insurgency to reveal the unique challenges it poses for airpower. To meet these challenges, airmen must develop an appropriate strategic framework for waging COIN so as to correctly shape the expeditionary Air Force by exploiting its own human capital to solve human problems. By bolstering its aviation advisors and security forces, and creating its own cadre of civil affairs airmen, the Air Force can most significantly improve its effectiveness in COIN.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. RELEVANCE

In the twenty-first century, insurgency will likely pose a significant challenge to the American military, and therefore, to expeditionary airpower. To prepare more fully for this type of conflict, the Air Force must comprehend the nature of insurgent warfare to see not only the limitations of traditional conceptions of airpower, but to reveal the opportunities afforded airmen to more effectively meet the insurgents' challenge. While continuing to develop and employ advanced aerospace systems to achieve desired effects throughout the battlespace, the Air Force must increasingly leverage the inherent strengths of its own airmen to achieve truly decisive effects within local populations rife with insurgency. To accomplish this feat, the expeditionary Air Force must reshape itself to participate more effectively in classic pacification campaigns.

Insurgency is neither a new nor radical form of warfare, but rather one which seemingly dominates the present geo-political landscape. In the first four decades following World War II, the United States waged the so called "proxy wars" against communist insurgents in Greece, the Philippines, South Vietnam, and Nicaragua, to name only the most prominent. Then, with the collapse of Soviet communism and the American-led victory in the first Gulf War, a different brand of insurgent arose to challenge the new world order. Be they tribal warlords, narcotics barons, ethno-nationalists, or Islamic jihadists, insurgents took up arms against established governments around the globe. As the lone superpower and de facto world cop, the United States increasingly stepped into the fray to restore security and stability while attempting to limit the human toll. Consequently, the American military progressively deployed to suppress what Carl von Clausewitz once called the "fire in... [the] heather."<sup>1</sup> To the degree that airpower played a role, either directly or in support, the Air Force found itself

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<sup>1</sup> In Graham's translation of *On War*, Clausewitz explains the spread of insurgency and the insurgents' challenge to conventional forces in the following way. "Where no enemy is to be found, there is no want of courage to oppose him, and at the example thus given, the mass of the neighboring population gradually takes fire. Thus the fire spreads as it does in heather, and reaching at last that part of the surface of the soil on which the aggressor is based, it seizes his lines of communication and preys upon the vital thread by which his existence is supported." See Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, J.J. Graham, trans. and ed. (London: N. Trubner, 1873), online at [http://www.clausewitz.com/CWZHOME/On\\_War/BK6ch26.html](http://www.clausewitz.com/CWZHOME/On_War/BK6ch26.html), accessed 20 July 2006.

engaged in every one of these conflicts. Now, in places as diverse as Columbia, the Balkans, the Philippines, Afghanistan, the horn of Africa, and Iraq, the legions of “Pax Americana” continue to face off against insurgents of one flavor or another.<sup>2</sup> Given this frequency of insurgency and the demonstrated willingness of American leadership to check its threat to democracy and globalization, the United States military will almost certainly wage counterinsurgency (COIN) in the decades ahead.

Given this reality, it can be fairly argued that the Air Force will almost certainly deploy expeditionary airmen as part of any American effort to suppress insurgency. Judging the history of warfare since the introduction of the aircraft almost a century ago, airpower has played and will almost certainly continue to play some role in any COIN effort. Although it typically supports ground forces operating in the contested territory, the need for overhead sensors, aerial supply, air transport, and on-call precision firepower will demand airpower’s active participation.<sup>3</sup> While the other Services no doubt possess substantial airpower capabilities of their own, particularly with respect to attack aviation, air mobility, and aeromedical evacuation, these capabilities are largely limited to battlefield and some intra-theater operations due to a reliance on mostly helicopters and fighter aircraft to perform those missions. For the vast majority of fighter operations, persistent attack and sustained presence are only possible due to the air refueling provided by Air Force tankers. As for air mobility and aeromedical evacuation, nearly all of the inter-theater capability, and the overwhelming majority of the intra-theater capability comes from the Air Force, with its substantial fleet of large cargo aircraft. And with its ever-expanding fleet of remotely piloted aircraft, the Air Force also provides the majority of aerial reconnaissance for most battlefield commanders. Since nearly all of

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<sup>2</sup> An explicit comparison to the ancient Roman Empire known as *Pax Romana*, Boot selects these words to justify the extensive deployment of American military forces around the globe for imperial policing to defend its “empire of liberty.” See Max Boot, *The Savage Wars of Peace: Small Wars and the Rise of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 336-352.

<sup>3</sup> Airpower has played a role in fighting insurgents since Brigadier General John J. Pershing led the Mexican Punitive Expedition against Pancho Villa in 1916. Early forays by airpower against insurgents included the Marine interventions in Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and Nicaragua during the interwar years, as well as the numerous colonial wars of the European powers in the Middle East and North Africa. After World War II, airpower was employed against communist insurgents in the Greek Civil War, the Philippine Huk Rebellion, the Malaya Emergency, the French Indochina War, the war in South Vietnam, and numerous other insurgencies across Southern Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America. See James S. Corum and Wray R. Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars: Fighting Insurgents and Terrorists* (Lawrence, KA: University of Kansas Press, 2003).

the air mobility and aeromedical missions must either launch or recover from within the area of operations, the Air Force must deploy expeditionary airmen into the contested territory to support these operations. Furthermore, to the degree that fighters, tankers, and remotely piloted aircraft are forward based to increase operational efficiency, additional expeditionary airmen must deploy forward into theater. Thus, as the argument goes, wherever the American military deploys for COIN, the Air Force will not only assuredly operate, but will also deploy substantial numbers of expeditionary airmen.

While the deployment of numerous American airmen into the contested zone may represent a potential Achilles' heel due to the increased need for force protection, viewed another way, it presents a unique opportunity for the Air Force to become a much more potent force in thwarting insurgency. To the degree that the Air Force deploys highly trained airmen into the contested territory to conduct air operations, it will construct, as necessary, but will definitely operate and maintain one or more expeditionary airbases. To enable and sustain efficient air operations, each airbase will necessarily consist of a runway environment, command and control installations, logistical support facilities, barracks, and supporting infrastructure. As a portal into the theater, each airbase will likely serve as a hub of American activity, supporting not only the Air Force, but also the operations of other Services, the interagency, and various non-governmental organizations. Combined with the presence of high value aircraft and a relatively dense population of American airmen, among others, each expeditionary airbase will represent an operational center of gravity for the American forces conducting COIN. Assuming that the insurgents will not control all of the territory to the same degree, planners could mitigate risks by establishing these airbases in regions of the state's territory less contested by the insurgents. Nonetheless, the relatively large American footprint of any expeditionary airbase within the contested territory represents a blade which cuts two ways. On the one hand, the airbase presents a lucrative target for insurgent activity, therefore requiring substantial effort to establish and maintain security and stability within a sphere of influence to at least the range of indirect fire systems.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, the substantial forward presence of American airmen within that sphere could

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<sup>4</sup> David T. Young, *Applying Counterinsurgency Theory to Airbase Defense: A New Doctrinal Framework*, Published thesis submitted to the Naval Postgraduate School, September 2005, 2-3.

enable the Air Force to exert significant influence on the overall pacification campaign where it most counts—on the ground, in the surrounding community, and among the indigenous population.

Despite this apparent opportunity for airmen to more directly contribute to suppressing insurgency, and the other more traditional contributions of airpower to COIN, albeit in mostly supporting roles, the Air Force continues to struggle with how to define its rightful niche in defeating the insurgents. Failing to fully understand the nature of insurgent warfare, the probability of its occurrence, and the unique challenges it presents to airmen constrained by their own limited viewpoint of what airpower is and is not, the Air Force continues to demonstrate its pure preference for developing technological solutions to what are inherently political problems requiring human solutions. Consequently, the Air Force has neglected to develop its own human resources into the combat capabilities which if deployed would most significantly contribute to quelling insurgency. To date, the preponderance of Air Force effort for COIN has focused on improving aerospace technology for the application of airpower on target. While these innovations, no doubt, have improved airpower's distinctive capabilities for information superiority, rapid mobility, and precision attack, the focus on aerospace systems rather than airmen has prevented the Air Force from realizing its fullest potential to counter insurgents. More significantly, this inappropriate approach has relegated the Air Force to a mostly supporting role – taking pictures, transporting troops, air dropping supplies, and expending ordnance as directed by others with an intellectual stake in the fight.

To maintain its relevance in an era of increasing insurgent warfare, the Air Force must leverage the inherent strengths of its own airmen to exert influence over the local population within a sphere of influence around each expeditionary airbase. By focusing on the development and employment of aviation advisors, security forces, civil affairs airmen, and the senior leaders who will command them, the Air Force can better shape its expeditionary air forces today to actively participate in classic pacification campaigns tomorrow. By becoming a full partner in any pacification effort, the Air Force can assure its continued relevance in the predominant game of the twenty-first century. More importantly, by developing its airmen to thwart insurgency, the Air Force need not

abandon the continued development of advanced aerospace systems optimized to defeat a peer competitor in conventional combat where mobility and firepower still reign supreme, and airpower arguably has become the dominant force.

## **B. PURPOSE**

This study will attempt to convince senior Air Force leadership to shift its approach to expeditionary airpower in COIN from one that emphasizes technology and targets to one which focuses on airmen and indigenous populations. Ever faithful to its own target-centric approach to warfare, the Air Force has focused most of its efforts for defeating insurgency on developing advanced aerospace systems and updated concepts of operation to improve traditional airpower capabilities for command and control, surveillance, intelligence, mobility, and precision attack.<sup>5</sup> Now, readily accepting airpower's mostly supporting role in quelling insurgency, the Air Force has willingly relegated itself to a "help desk" mentality.<sup>6</sup> Often, with too little regard for the

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<sup>5</sup> In testimony before the U.S. Senate, Air Force leadership demonstrated the airmen's pure preference for technology-to-warfighting. Focusing investments on combinations of systems to create distinctive capabilities in support of the Joint warfighter, Secretary Roche and General Jumper unveiled six new concepts of operation, or CONOPS, to help identify the capabilities an expeditionary force would need to accomplish its mission. Of these, the following four directly pertain to counterinsurgency.

- Space and Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance CONOPS (Space and C4ISR) harnesses the integration of manned, unmanned, and space systems to provide persistent situation awareness and executable decision-quality information to the JFC.
- Global Mobility CONOPS provides Combatant Commanders with the planning, command and control, and operations capabilities to enable timely and effective projection, employment, and sustainment of U.S. power in support of U.S. global interests -- precision delivery for operational effect.
- Global Strike CONOPS employs joint power-projection capabilities to engage anti-access and high-value targets, gain access to denied battlespace, and maintain battlespace access for required joint/coalition follow-on operations.
- Global Persistent Attack CONOPS provides a spectrum of capabilities from major combat to peacekeeping and sustainment operations. Global Persistent Attack assumes that once access conditions are established (i.e. through Global Strike), there will be a need for persistent and sustained operations to maintain air, space, and information dominance.

Judging the names of the CONOPS themselves and the amplifying language associated with each, it is fairly clear that the Air Force persists in prosecuting its own target-centric approach to warfare by applying technology to precisely deliver operational effects on specific targets. See Honorable James G. Roche, Secretary of the Air Force, and General John P. Jumper, Chief of Staff, U.S. Air Force, *Testimony before U.S. Senate Defense Subcommittee Hearing on the FY05 Air Force Budget*, 24 March 2004, online at <http://appropriations.senate.gov/hearings/record.cfm?id=219554>, accessed 5 July 2006.

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Air Force Checkmate and U.S. Navy Deep Blue, *Vantage Points: The Use of Air & Space Power in Counterinsurgency and the Global War on Terrorism*, Proceeding of the 2005 Air and Space Power Strategy Conference, 22-25 March 2005, v.

indigenous population, or the social grievances which underwrite insurgency, many airmen continue to demonstrate their penchant for applying kinetic solutions in the absence of any strategic context, or put another way, delivering information, material, and firepower from one location to another as requested by other warfighters with a more vested interest in the fight. If the Air Force hopes to reverse this trend and reach its fullest potential for countering insurgents, it must get its head in the game by first seeking to understand the true nature of insurgent warfare, and then shaping a new approach for employing expeditionary airpower to suppress insurgency.

### **C. METHODOLOGY**

This study will propose an argument for making the Air Force more relevant to the geo-political situation of the twenty-first century by shaping expeditionary airpower for greater effectiveness in COIN. To develop and support the argument, it will sequentially answer six research questions.

#### **1. Argument**

By comprehending the complex nature of insurgency, and then correctly emphasizing the capabilities of its airmen to solve human problems and influence indigenous local populations as aviation advisors, security forces, and civil affairs airmen, the expeditionary Air Force can significantly improve its effectiveness in COIN, thereby increasing its contribution to classic pacification efforts, and ultimately assuring its continued relevance in an era of insurgent warfare.

#### **2. Research Questions**

- What is the insurgents' way of war, and what fundamental challenges does it pose for modern airmen?
- What is the airman's approach to warfare, and what strategic mindset does it produce that hinders expeditionary airpower in COIN?
- What conceptual framework can airmen use to understand insurgent warfare?
- Given the conceptual framework for COIN, how should airmen think about influence in a classic pacification campaign?

- How can the Air Force leverage its airmen to improve expeditionary airpower so as to render it more effective and relevant in COIN?
- How does an improved expeditionary Air Force contribute to a classic pacification campaign, and what benefits are accrued by its participation?

## **D. SCOPE**

### **1. Insurgent Warfare**

This study deals with the particular subset of human warfare waged by the insurgent vis-à-vis the state. Thus, it must address the actions of the insurgent, and the counteractions of the state. Since the actions of the insurgent amount to insurgency, and those of the state to counterinsurgency, the definitions of each present a logical starting point. Defined in terms of those who challenge the state, insurgency is an organized attempt to overthrow an established government through subversion and armed conflict.<sup>7</sup> Juxtaposed against this, counterinsurgency consists of “those military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological, and civic actions taken by the government to defeat insurgency.”<sup>8</sup> Given these two definitions then, insurgent warfare is, in its essence, a power struggle between insurgents and the state using nearly any means available.

In contrast to the rather direct term of “insurgent warfare,” numerous academics and practitioners have used various other more ambiguous terms to label this particular subset of warfare over the years, including small wars, low intensity conflict, military operations other than war, fourth generation warfare, and of late, irregular warfare. While various reasons for these sorted delineations abound, their broad characterizations and subtle differences in context have ultimately served to obfuscate its essential traits. In the attempt to eliminate confusion and to call things what they really are, this study will hereafter only refer to the subject as insurgent warfare, or as either insurgency or counterinsurgency, depending on the perspective. Before moving on, however, the reader deserves a brief explanation as to why the other previously used terms for this type of warfare will not be used in this study.

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<sup>7</sup> Joint Staff, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2006), 264, online at [http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/new\\_pubs/jp1\\_02.pdf](http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/new_pubs/jp1_02.pdf), accessed 20 July 2006.

<sup>8</sup> *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, 127.

Coined by Colonel C.E. Callwell, the famed British practitioner of imperial warfare, the term “small war” originally denoted the operations of regular military forces against irregular forces to suppress rebellion and guerrilla warfare with admittedly no connection to the scale of military operations being carried out.<sup>9</sup> Later, the Marines used the term to describe operations where military force combined with diplomatic pressure to influence the affairs of another state whose unstable government required American intervention.<sup>10</sup> Regardless of definition, however, the term “small war” proves problematic for at least two reasons. First, it is simply inappropriate since “small” does denote a lack of scale. This inaccurate connotation not only can prove perilous to the less informed who might encounter the term, but the matter of scale is purely relative, for the state’s small war of limited aims likely represents the rebel’s total war for basic survival. Second, while the Marines’ definition does hint at the basic characteristic of violent political conflict, the focus of Callwell’s definition on who is fighting rather than on the nature of the conflict being fought inappropriately drives many who use the term to focus on tactical matters of dealing with irregulars rather than the political issues which underwrite the rebellion.

As for the term “low intensity conflict,” or LIC, its use became widespread during the last decade of the Cold War when it was eventually codified into Service doctrine. Defined in terms of a spectrum of conflict, LIC represents the entire lower end of the scale, or all “political-military operations between contending states or groups below conventional war and above... peaceful competition.”<sup>11</sup> Although the complete doctrinal definition does provide some amplification, as Colonel Dennis Drew emphatically points out, LIC is an entirely inappropriate title for a type of warfare that consumes so many nations in violent, political struggle.<sup>12</sup> As with small war, the very relative connotation implied by the title itself proves more misleading than descriptive.

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<sup>9</sup> C.E. Callwell, *Small Wars: Their Principles and Practice*, 3rd Ed. (Lincoln, NE: Bison Books, 1996), 21.

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Marine Corps, *Small Wars Manual* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1940), 1.

<sup>11</sup> U.S. Army, Field Manual 100-20, and U.S. Air Force, Air Force Manual 3-20, *Military Operations in Low Intensity Conflict* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1990), online at [http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/policy/army/fm/100-20/10020ch1.htm#s\\_9](http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/policy/army/fm/100-20/10020ch1.htm#s_9), accessed 20 July 2006.

<sup>12</sup> Dennis M. Drew, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency: American Dilemmas and Doctrinal Proposals* (Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: Air University Press, 1988), 3.



Regarding “military operations other than war,” or MOOTW, current Joint and Air Force doctrine apply this moniker to COIN. Without debating the precise definition of war, the discussion of insurgent warfare under MOOTW seems to imply that COIN does not rise to the level of war. This presents a major problem for the entire Department of Defense, where the existential reason for doctrine as articulated by a former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is to position the Services for “success in fighting our Nation’s wars.”<sup>13</sup> However, since COIN apparently does not rise to the level of war, which of itself represents the military’s *raison d’etre*, the Services willingly relegate COIN to the backwaters of MOOTW, thereby fulfilling David Tucker’s astute observation that organizations with a strong mission give perfunctory attention, if any at all, to tasks that are not central to that mission.<sup>14</sup> For this reason alone, MOOTW should not be used to categorize insurgent warfare. In fact, RAND’s recent recommendation that COIN be made an institutional priority of the Air Force seems to repudiate this categorization altogether.<sup>15</sup>

With the rise of network-centric operations, Colonel Thomas X. Hammes defines “fourth generation warfare,” or 4GW, as using “all available networks—political, economic, social, and military—to convince the enemy’s political decision makers that their strategic goals are either unachievable or too costly for the perceived benefit.”<sup>16</sup> While this definition seems to aptly describe how many insurgents currently operate, as Hammes himself argues, it should just as aptly describe how military forces in any type of conflict operate. The point is that 4GW does not represent a particular type of warfare based on the nature of the conflict, but rather an evolution in the ways of waging war, largely enabled by the information age. Failing to allude to the underlying struggle for legitimate power that is insurgent warfare, 4GW represents too broad of a categorization

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<sup>13</sup> Henry E. Shelton, Letter of Introduction, See Joint Staff, Joint Publication 1, *Joint Warfare of the Armed Forces of the United States*, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2000).

<sup>14</sup> David C. Tucker, *Skirmishes at the Edge of Empire: The United State and International Terrorism*, (Westport: Praeger, 1997), 114.

<sup>15</sup> Alan Vick, Adam Grissom, William Rosenau, Beth Grill, and Karl Mueller, *Air Power in the New Era of Counterinsurgency: The Strategic Importance of USAF Advisory and Assistance Missions*, Restricted Draft (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2005), 145.

<sup>16</sup> Thomas X. Hammes, *The Sling and the Stone: On War in the 21st Century* (St. Paul, MN: Zenith Press, 2004), 2.

for insurgent warfare, not to mention that its descriptive qualities are limited to the notion that 4GW is just one more evolution of warfare following three previous ones—which in and of itself is open to further debate.

As for “irregular warfare,” or IR, the *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* of 2006 uses the term as a general category of warfare to include insurgency and terrorism. Defined as “operations in which the enemy is not a regular military force of a nation-state,” IR fails to pass muster for the same reason that Callwell’s definition of small war fails.<sup>17</sup> By referring to the type of enemy combatants rather than to the nature of the conflict between the opposing sides, IR leads those who use the term to focus on tactics to defeat irregular forces rather than strategies to quell insurgency. In the same regard, since both guerrilla warfare and terrorism also represent mere tactics, neither should be used as a substitute for insurgent warfare. Finally, the now emerging use of “intrastate warfare” also proves less than adequate since it attempts to confine all insurgency to a realm solely within the state. Not only does this fly in the face of the global Islamist insurgency now troubling much of the West, but it also denies numerous cases of insurgents originating from outside a state and operating across its borders.

## **2. Expeditionary Air Force**

This study will confine its prognostication for expeditionary airpower in COIN to the Air Force. Although the other three Services and many coalition militaries also contribute to airpower in significant ways, the Air Force possesses such well-trained and equipped air forces that it arguably dominates the aerospace medium in the context of its own core competencies.<sup>18</sup> Despite this dominance, however, the widely held viewpoint that airpower generally plays a supporting role in COIN has led many in the Air Force to resign themselves to prowling the sidelines during insurgent warfare, content to satisfy the air support requests of others with little to no participation in the development and

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<sup>17</sup> Donald S. Rumsfeld, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2006), 11.

<sup>18</sup> Air Force core competencies include air and space superiority, precision engagement, global attack, rapid global mobility, information superiority, and agile combat support. While it could be fairly argued that the Air Force no longer dominates each of these all of the time, particularly precision engagement and information superiority, it could be just as fairly argued that the Air Force still dominates the majority most of the time. See U.S. Air Force, Air Force Doctrine Document 1, *Air Force Basic Doctrine* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1997), 27-28.

execution of strategy.<sup>19</sup> This lack of initiative has not only produced a vacuum of strategic thought within the Air Force as regards COIN, but it has also slowed the pace of institutional evolution that might render the Air Force more effective in this type of warfare. As for the meaning of words, “airpower” will refer to the combined air and space power of the Air Force, while “airman,” in all of its forms, will refer to any Air Force personnel who in one capacity or another, either directly or indirectly, help bring that airpower to bear in peace or war.

### **3. Beyond Traditional Airpower**

Of note, this work will part ways with many earlier analyses of airpower in COIN by increasing the aperture of its lens to look beyond the traditional roles and missions of airpower. Rather than providing yet another assessment of how advanced aerospace systems can best support COIN from above the earth, this work hopes to shed light on the critical contributions of those airmen working at ground level, whose efforts truly enable expeditionary airpower to operate more effectively, and with greater relevance to thwarting insurgency. Specifically, this study will argue that the Air Force can achieve its greatest potential to suppress insurgency by appropriately emphasizing the operations of those Air Force personnel who could most directly contribute to the successful execution of a classic pacification campaign—aviation advisors, security forces, and civil affairs airmen.

## **E. ORGANIZATION**

Chapter II defines the problem that insurgency poses for airpower by answering the first and second research questions, in turn. Initially, through an exploration into the insurgents’ way of war, the chapter uncovers some of the principal challenges which insurgency presents to modern airmen. Then, through several characterizations of the airman’s approach to warfare, a strategic mindset emerges to reveal why airmen too often rely on the use of coercive power to achieve the nation’s goals. Finally, the chapter demonstrates how this reliance on coercive strategy contributes to airpower landing short when faced with the insurgents’ challenge.

With the problem so defined, Chapter III frames a plausible solution for airpower in COIN by addressing the next two research questions. In answering the third, the

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<sup>19</sup> Checkmate and Deep Blue, v.

chapter lays out a conceptual framework for airmen to understand the interplay between insurgents and the state. Then, moving on to the fourth research question, the chapter attempts to expand the airman's toolbox by outlining a strategic portfolio of influences for application to COIN. Finally, the chapter explains how the state mechanizes its strategy for quelling insurgency through a classic pacification campaign.

With the solution thus framed, Chapter IV addresses the fifth research question by delivering concrete approaches for expeditionary airpower to apply in accordance with the framework. By demonstrating, in turn, how the operations of aviation advisors, security forces, and civil affairs airmen help address the fundamental challenges facing airmen during insurgent warfare, the chapter elaborates how the Air Force can leverage the unique capabilities of its highly trained airmen to execute COIN for far greater effect.

Finally, Chapter V responds to the last research question by demonstrating how the operations of aviation advisors, security forces, and civil affairs airmen contribute to overall success in a classic pacification campaign. Under the command of a senior Air Force leader serving as the designated ground commander for a zone around the expeditionary airbase, these airmen not only secure and stabilize that zone as part of a larger effort to pacify the entire contested territory, but they sow the seeds which reap additional benefits for the American military far beyond the current insurgency.

#### **F. PRIMARY BENEFITS**

The primary benefits of this study are threefold. First, in a general sense, another introspective examination of American airpower in insurgent warfare should reveal new insights into COIN from the airman's perspective. In turn, this can only help to increase the general level of understanding with respect to insurgent warfare. Second, by applying the insurgent's perspective to view airpower at the ground level, this work hopes to reveal opportunities for innovation in expeditionary airpower that will make the Air Force more effective in COIN and more relevant to the projected strategic situation. Finally, by demonstrating how the expeditionary Air Force can significantly contribute to a classic pacification campaign, this study should provide planners with better ways to employ the military instrument for strategic purpose in an era of insurgent warfare.

## II. DEFINING THE PROBLEM

Before attempting to answer any question, one must first define the problem in need of a solution. In the case of airpower in insurgent warfare, this process consists of three essential steps. First, the insurgents' way of war must be dissected to uncover the characteristics which make insurgent warfare so unique as compared to those wars waged by conventional military forces. Armed with this understanding, a comprehensive definition of insurgent warfare may be developed to help reveal the critical challenges which insurgency presents to modern airmen. Second, the airman's approach to warfare must be explained in light of its own characterizations so as to highlight the sharp relief with which airpower stands against the shadowy backdrop of insurgent warfare. Through the lens of these characterizations, one uncovers the sway of offensive ideology, and how that, in turn, produces a strategic mindset limited to the application of coercive power. Finally, by laying the airman's approach to war over the puzzle board of insurgent warfare, one discovers a mismatch as readily apparent as if one were attempting to place a square peg into a round hole. So without further ado, defining the problem begins with the identification of insurgency's fundamental traits.

### A. THE INSURGENTS' WAY OF WAR

Throughout human history, insurgent warfare perpetrated by mostly irregular fighters has occurred with far greater frequency than conventional warfare waged between the regular military forces of competing states.<sup>20</sup> Despite this fact, the pure preference for pitched battle has led the conventional military forces of most states to neglect, and, therefore, to misunderstand insurgent warfare, even as many continued to struggle with insurgent fighters by incorrectly applying still more conventional means. Then as now, when conventional military organizations did examine insurgent warfare, it was the presence of irregular combatants, rather than the underlying nature of the conflict, that dominated their thinking with respect to this type of warfare. As a case in point, the 2006 *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* states that the ongoing "war against [terror]... includes operations characterized by irregular warfare—operations in which

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<sup>20</sup> John A. Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 15. For a brief survey of the topic, see John Ellis, *A Short History of Guerrilla Warfare* (London: Ian Allen, 1975).

the enemy is not a regular military force of a nation-state.”<sup>21</sup> Here again, by focusing on irregular fighters, and how to “find, fix, and finish” them as Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld puts it, the American military inappropriately emphasizes the enemy’s tactics for challenging the state rather than understanding the basis for that challenge or its underlying nature.<sup>22</sup>

## 1. Characteristics

Returning to definitions already cited in the previous chapter, one recalls that insurgency is an organized attempt to overthrow an established government while counterinsurgency consists of those actions taken by the government to suppress that challenge. While these definitions are simple, brief, and to the point, their very brevity falls short of the mark by failing to sufficiently capture the essential elements of this type of violent political conflict. But what are these characteristics? By referring to numerous historical case studies of insurgent warfare already completed by various scholars and practitioners alike, at least six fundamental traits of insurgent warfare come to light.<sup>23</sup>

### a. *Struggle for Legitimacy*

Above all else, insurgent warfare represents a political struggle for the requisite legitimacy to control the population of a specified territory, or in other words, the legitimate right to rule. This legitimacy rests within the collective mind of the governed populace, and it hinges upon not only the governing body’s capacity to rule, but just as important, its demonstrated will to do so. In his treatise on *Revolutionary Change*, Chalmers Johnson helps explain this notion of legitimacy through his model of the social system based on value theory. With assigned roles, behavioral norms, and stratification

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<sup>21</sup> Rumsfeld, 11.

<sup>22</sup> In his article on future defense capabilities (*American Forces Information Service*, 23 July 2005, online at [http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Jan2006/20060112\\_3916.html](http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Jan2006/20060112_3916.html)), Jim Garamone captures the American military’s preoccupation with the destruction of specific threats with his quote of Secretary of Defense Donald S. Rumsfeld.

<sup>23</sup> See Larry E. Cable, *Conflict of Myths: The Development of Counterinsurgency Doctrine and the Vietnam War* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 1986); David Galula, *Pacification in Algeria, 1956-1958*, fwd. Bruce Hoffman (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2006); Ahmed S. Hashim, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Iraq* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006); R.W. Komer, *The Malayan Emergency in Retrospect: Organization of a Successful Counterinsurgency Effort* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1972); Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr., *The Army and Vietnam* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986); Mao Tse-tung, *On Guerrilla Warfare*, trans. and ed. Samuel B. Griffith, II (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2000); Gil Merom, *How Democracies Lose Small Wars: State, Society, and the Failures of France in Algeria, Israel in Lebanon, and the United States in Vietnam* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*; and Robert Taber, *The War of the Flea: The Classic Study of Guerrilla Warfare* (Washington, D.C.: Brassey’s, Inc., 2002).

of the populace, this social system provides the means for a governing body to control its population through the legitimate use of coercive force. Legitimacy is afforded on the basis of system efficiency, or put another way, on the governing body's demonstrated capability to continually synchronize the social environment with shifting popular values through a process of homeostasis.<sup>24</sup> To the degree that the recognized regime is unable to maintain this social equilibrium, the state loses legitimacy in the eyes of a disenfranchised population. Thus, its monopoly over the legitimate use of physical force heretofore enjoyed within the boundaries of a given territory is effectively withdrawn by the human community over which it has presided.<sup>25</sup> To the degree that an insurgency can serve as an alternative to this failing state, the insurgents thereby gain the legitimate right to rule, at least from the local perspective of that segment of the population for whom social equilibrium is reestablished. R.W. Komer stresses the importance of this concept in his comparison of the Malayan and Vietnamese insurgencies, where the differing degree of legitimacy afforded each insurgency by their respective populations served as one of the principal reasons why the former failed where as the latter succeeded.<sup>26</sup>

***b. Population—the Disputed Political Space***

Since legitimacy derives from the subject population resident within a specified territory, the population of that territory necessarily represents the “disputed political space.”<sup>27</sup> But what is meant by the concept of political space, and how is it disputed? In answering the first half of this question, political scientist Shelton Wolin

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<sup>24</sup> See Chalmers Johnson, *Revolutionary Change*, 2nd ed. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1982).

<sup>25</sup> Although Max Weber argues that the state must be characterized by the means of coercive force which only it possesses, Martin Van Creveld asserts that both the state and its monopoly of legitimate force is nothing more than a human invention resulting from the Treaty of Westphalia signed in 1648. Arguing that the concept of legitimacy extends beyond the state, Van Creveld points out that any community able and willing to exert itself for the protection of its members earns their unwavering loyalty even to the point where they are willing to die for it. See Montgomery McFate and Andrea V. Jackson, “The Object Beyond War: Counterinsurgency and the Four Tools of Political Competition,” *Military Review*, January-February 2006, 13; and Martin Van Creveld, *The Transformation of War* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1991), 198.

<sup>26</sup> Komer, 79.

<sup>27</sup> McCormick repeatedly refers to the population as the “disputed political space.” From Gordon H. McCormick, Lectures on *Guerrilla Warfare* at the Naval Postgraduate School, August-September 2005.

defines political space as “the locus wherein the tensional forces of society are related.”<sup>28</sup> As regards insurgent warfare, since the two principal sides—the insurgents and the state—both seek a legitimate right to rule that can only be vested by the people, the population must therefore serve as the focus of activity for both sides. Thus, since it represents a setting wherein the activities of the insurgents and the state are connected both spatially and temporally, the population does represent *the political space* in any insurgent struggle.<sup>29</sup> But is that political space really disputed, or does it just consist of two different segments of a single population each committing its loyalty and allegiance to one side or the other? As David Galula, the famous French practitioner of COIN in Algeria theorizes, “support from the population [is] the key to the whole problem for us as well as the rebels.”<sup>30</sup> Implicit in this statement is the competitive struggle between the state and the insurgents to garner that popular support. Since both sides simultaneously seek the same political end of popular legitimacy, which can only be granted by a majority opinion of the whole population, the insurgents and the state do wage battle over their respective claims to the people’s allegiance. Thus, the population is the sum total of the disputed political space.

As scholars and practitioners of insurgent warfare realize, however, the opposing sides in any insurgency start from vastly different positions.<sup>31</sup> As an “incumbent” power, the recognized regime of the state typically enters the fray with not only substantial amounts of legitimacy afforded by various segments of the population, but also with all the physical support inherent to the machinery of a state already in existence. On the contrary, the insurgents typically operate from an extreme initial disadvantage. Not only do they possess little by way of money, material, or manpower, but they also operate within and from the shadowy underground, where whatever legitimacy they do possess comes to them through the illegal political mobilization of

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<sup>28</sup> Sheldon S. Wolin, *Politics & Vision: Continuity and Innovation in Western Political Thought* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006); online at <http://www.pupress.princeton.edu/chapters/s7767.html>; accessed 21 September 2006.

<sup>29</sup> Wolin, *Politics & Vision*.

<sup>30</sup> Galula, 113.

<sup>31</sup> McCormick points out the asymmetric nature of each opposing side’s initial position in any insurgent struggle. The state typically has plenty of money, manpower, and material, yet very little intelligence, while for the insurgents the exact opposite is true. From McCormick, Lectures on *Guerrilla Warfare*.



people disenfranchised by the state. To sum up this initial inequality, the state has everything but to lose, and the insurgency nothing but to gain. The irony here is that the state, with substantial legitimacy and almost all of the resources, often takes its popular support for granted while attempting to crush the insurgents directly with all its might. On the other hand, as the great practitioner of insurgency, Mao Tse-tung states, the insurgents have no choice but to look to the mass of people as the fountainhead for all of their potential strength.<sup>32</sup> Thus, as Andrew Krepinevich concludes, “the bottom line for a successful [insurgency] is a primary support system anchored on the population.”<sup>33</sup> In that sense, the populace represents the true center of gravity for both the insurgents and the state in any insurgent conflict.

*c. Zero-Sum Contest*

Significantly, the contest for legitimate control over the population of a specified territory is a zero-sum contest between the insurgents and the state.<sup>34</sup> Simply put, the gain of legitimate control by the insurgents represents a loss of the same for the state, and vice versa.<sup>35</sup> In reality, however, the increase in control by one side more than likely represents the loss of only potential control for the other, at least in the early stages of the struggle. This occurs for the simple reason that at the outset of most insurgencies the majority of the population refuses to actively support either side as they wait to see who will command their allegiance, and, therefore, deserve their loyalty. In other words, until either the state or the insurgents convince local people that actively supporting their side will generate benefits while supporting the other side will be detrimental, people withhold both their allegiance and their loyalty. This corresponds to the axiom of insurgent warfare noted by Galula that “in any circumstances, whatever the cause, the population is split among three groups: (1) an active minority for the cause, (2) a neutral majority, [and] (3) an active minority against the cause.”<sup>36</sup> Thus, to the degree that either

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<sup>32</sup> Mao, 73.

<sup>33</sup> Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, 9.

<sup>34</sup> McCormick repeatedly emphasizes the zero-sum nature of insurgent warfare. From McCormick, *Lectures on Guerrilla Warfare*.

<sup>35</sup> According to Dixit and Nash, in the zero-sum game, one player’s gain is the other player’s loss, and vice versa. See Avinnash K. Dixit and Barry J. Nalebluff, *Thinking Strategically: The Competitive Edge in Business, Politics, and Everyday Life* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 1991), 14.

<sup>36</sup> Galula, 114.

side can move in and occupy the contested middle ground of the neutral majority, the other side loses the opportunity to do so. Ironically, when insurgents do threaten the state, the predisposition of the opposing sides often translates into the insurgents moving more rapidly to stake their claim. While the state tries to crush the insurgency directly, the insurgents maneuver to capture greater portions of the neutral majority. Clearly, as either side successfully extends its influence into this neutral area, thereby consuming it, the struggle between the insurgents and the state becomes much more direct in nature. Regardless, whether before or after this point, the nature of the insurgent struggle is that it is always a zero-sum game.

*d. Protracted Nature*

Insurgent warfare is almost always a protracted affair, seldom shorter than at least a few years, and often longer than an entire decade.<sup>37</sup> This protracted nature is by design. To survive their initial position of severe inferiority vis-à-vis the state, the insurgents necessarily wage a protracted conflict to obtain intermediate objectives as enabling steps toward the final overthrow of the ruling regime.<sup>38</sup> In his formative work on the subject, Mao expounds a three-phased method for insurgents to realize their ultimate political end. In the first phase, insurgents organize, consolidate, and preserve their popular base to provide a steady supply of recruits, food, and information. Characterized mostly by subversive political mobilization, training of the political cadre, and covert intelligence, this phase employs sporadic guerrilla operations only as required to protect the base. In the second phase, the insurgents progressively expand their base from the periphery outward to weaken the state by draining its popular support. Here, the insurgents increasingly pursue direct action against state forces to procure arms, ammunition, and other essentials using hit and run guerrilla tactics. Then, in the third and

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<sup>37</sup> In *Conflict of Myths*, Cable demonstrates this point with his sampling of insurgent warfare. From 1925 until their withdrawal in 1933, the Marines helped the Nicaraguan government fight Sandinista guerrillas for more than twelve years. From 1945 until their defeat in late 1949, Greek Communists fought the Nationalist government for over four years in the Greek Civil War. From 1946 until its demise in 1954, the Huk Insurrection threatened the Philippine government for nearly eight years. From 1949 until 1960, Chinese Communists perpetrated the eleven year-long Malayan Emergency until British-Malayan authorities eventually suppressed it. Finally, for nearly three decades following World War II, Vietnamese Communists successfully waged two consecutive insurgencies initially against the French colonial administration, and then against the American-backed regime of South Vietnam, finally obtaining an independent and unified Vietnam in 1975.

<sup>38</sup> Nagl, 7.

final phase, the majority of insurgents move to conventional warfare to decisively destroy state forces in pitched battle so as to permit the installation of their own political order.<sup>39</sup> In the final analysis, as E.L. Katzenbach notes, this type of protracted war amounts to trading space for time and time for will. By initially yielding territory to survive in the face of superior state forces, insurgents gain the opportunity to mobilize popular political resistance against the state.<sup>40</sup> Since the contest is a zero-sum game, any gain by the insurgency necessarily equates to a corresponding loss by the state. Thus, by merely ensuring that they do not meet with rapid defeat, the insurgents' method of protracted war provides them with the greatest probability for success, while denying the state the same.

*e. War by Any and All Means*

Much more so than conventional wars fought among opposing states, insurgent warfare represents war waged by any and all means. That is not to suggest that those means may not be limited in the magnitude of their application, at least from the perspective of the state, but rather to note that they are in no way restricted to the realm of military activities. But why would the means be any different given the different forms of warfare? First, as a struggle for legitimacy, insurgent warfare is an existential conflict for both sides where any outcome other than victory represents an unacceptable option. Therefore, any tool that can be brought to bear to control the objective population is fair game.<sup>41</sup> Second, as Martin Van Creveld explains in *The Transformation of War*, the asymmetric situation where the state is initially much stronger than the insurgents creates opportunities for the latter while staying the hand of the former. For the weaker insurgents, necessity knows no bounds; therefore, with very little challenge to their moral principles, the insurgents readily seek any means to inflict maximum damage without exposing themselves in open combat. However, since the state's use of overwhelming force often undermines its own moral authority with respect to the population, the state must seek alternative means to counter the insurgents.<sup>42</sup> Thus, one arrives at a similar conclusion to that which Samuel Griffith observes.

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<sup>39</sup> In his forward to Mao's classic treatise on guerrilla warfare, Griffith succinctly summarizes Mao's method for waging protracted warfare. See Mao, 23.

<sup>40</sup> As cited in Taber, 42.

<sup>41</sup> McFate and Jackson, 13.

<sup>42</sup> Van Creveld, 174-175.

A revolutionary war is never confined within the bounds of military action. Because its purpose is to destroy an existing society and its institutions and to replace them with a completely new state structure, any revolutionary war is a unity of which the constituent parts, in varying importance, are military, political, economic, social, and psychological. For this reason, it is endowed with a dynamic quality and a dimension in depth that orthodox wars, whatever their scale, lack.<sup>43</sup>

*f. Supremacy of the Indirect Approach*

Without a doubt, the hallmark of the insurgents' way of war is its reliance on the indirect approach, which briefly summarized, seeks to attain the political ends of war by avoiding direct confrontation with the opposing side.<sup>44</sup> In its most obvious manifestation, that being the tactics of the insurgent guerrilla, the indirect approach reflects the pragmatism of dealing with state forces from an initial position of relative inferiority. Mao sums it up in the following way. "Withdraw when he advances; harass him when he stops; strike him when he is weary; pursue him when he withdraws." But as Mao also details, the indirect approach must govern the insurgents' strategy. By being alert to the state's vulnerable spots, insurgents can exploit the situation for relative advantage so as to strike at the state's vital points.<sup>45</sup> As Krepinevich elaborates, the object of this approach must be the population. Through fear, appeal, or a combination of both, the insurgents secure popular support, be it willing or unwilling. In turn, this popular base mans, feeds, shelters, equips, aids, and informs the insurgent guerrillas. In the zero-sum contest of insurgent warfare, the state's inability to control the people conversely depletes its own strength over time by denying it reinforcements, taxes to replenish the force, and intelligence necessary to pursue the insurgents to their demise. Thus, as Clausewitz warns, the insurgency takes its effect like fire in the heather, indirectly attacking the roots of state support, until such time as the flower of the state, dead or dying on the vine, burst forth in a general conflagration to be consumed.

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<sup>43</sup> Although Griffith refers to the topic as revolutionary warfare in his forward to Mao's treatise, his point applies equally well to insurgent warfare. See Mao, 7.

<sup>44</sup> Multiple scholars and practitioners allude to the advantage of avoiding direct confrontation, but Krepinevich and Nagle actually use the term. See Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, 8; and Nagle, 28.

<sup>45</sup> Mao, 46.

## 2. Definition

Given these fundamental characteristics then, and adapting from multiple sources, one derives a comprehensive definition of insurgent warfare to describe the struggle for power where insurgents wrestle with the state by any available means.<sup>46</sup> Thus, insurgent warfare is defined as a protracted, zero-sum contest between insurgents and the state for the requisite legitimacy to control the population of a specified territory.<sup>47</sup> Insurgency is waged by illegal political organizations and mostly irregular military forces against the civil authorities, political apparatus, economic institutions, and military forces of the state. To steal power from the recognized regime despite extreme disadvantage, the insurgency trades space for time, and time for will to slowly seize control of the disputed political space. Through an indirect approach emphasizing the tactics of subversive political mobilization, covert intelligence, psychological operations, sabotage, terrorism, and guerrilla warfare, insurgents attack the state's legitimate hold on power by largely avoiding direct confrontation.

## 3. Typology

Although the above definition largely holds up to the empirical evidence of most insurgencies, as John Waghelstein warns, one must take heed of the confounding fact that far more variation exists across the range of insurgent warfare than across conventional wars. While the problems that underwrite these conflicts are considerably complex, their differences are typically subtle and nuanced.<sup>48</sup> This diversity of insurgencies negates the application of any cookie cutter approach to COIN. Instead, it compels the modern strategist to assess each insurgency on its own character, so as to ascertain its true nature and develop an appropriate response.<sup>49</sup> With this in mind, the following list provides a

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<sup>46</sup> See U.S. Army, Field Manual (Interim) 3-07.22, *Counterinsurgency Operations*, Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2006), 1-1; Richard H. Schultz, Douglas Farah, and Itamara V. Lochard, "Armed Groups: A Tier-One Security Priority," *Institute of National Security Studies Occasional Paper 57*, 2004, 17-18; and Alan Vick, Adam Grissom, William Rosenau, Beth Grill, and Karl Mueller, *Air Power in the New Era of Counterinsurgency: The Strategic Importance of USAF Advisory and Assistance Missions*, Restricted Draft (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2005), 8-11.

<sup>47</sup> Gordon H. McCormick, "A Systems Model of Insurgency," *CIA-RAND Insurgency Board*, 22 June 2005.

<sup>48</sup> Waghelstein details a useful framework for analyzing insurgencies to (1) highlight their common characteristics, (2) develop a typology, and (3) demarcate their peculiarities. See John D. Waghelstein, *Analyzing Insurgency*, Unpublished paper submitted to the National War College, January 2006, 1.

<sup>49</sup> Vick, Grissom, Rosenau, Grill, and Mueller, 57-58.

brief typology of insurgent warfare that is neither exhaustive nor definitive; it is merely meant to serve as a catalyst for further thought.

**a. *National Insurgency***

National insurgencies occur where radical groups claiming to represent the interests of an oppressed public take up a revolutionary struggle for better governance. Typically, the incumbent regime faced with this type of insurgency possesses a degree of legitimacy and popular support directly corresponding to that percentage of the population benefiting from current policy. In this type of insurgency, the dispute can revolve around economic classification, political ideology, or social identity based on race, religion, or ethnicity. Whatever the issue, it impacts a broad swath of the population across the breadth of the territory. To counter a national insurgency, the incumbent regime must implement various reforms to address the social grievances that underwrite the insurgents' struggle.<sup>50</sup>

**b. *Liberation Insurgency***

Liberation insurgencies occur when native people fight to remove the perceived puppet regime of another state. Conflicts of this type typically occur within a state occupied by the military forces of a foreign invader, or in a former colony where the residue of empire still persists. Often viewed as foreign by virtue of race, religion, or ethnicity, the established regime usually possesses a small degree of legitimacy and popular support.<sup>51</sup> Conversely, the insurgents often enjoy the willing support of a substantial popular base, as well as the external support of one or more states aligned against that state perceived to be an occupational or imperial power. Although extremely difficult, methods for countering liberation insurgencies include popular empowerment, or exploiting sectarian fractures to divide, co-opt, and conquer.

**c. *Sectarian Insurgency***

Sectarian insurgencies take place where subnational groups divided along racial, religious, or ethnic lines wage an identity struggle for group survival. Here, the incumbent regime is, or is perceived to be, an instrument of a dominant group or coalition

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<sup>50</sup> Steven Metz and Raymond Millen, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in the 21st Century: Reconceptualizing Threat and Response* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, 2004), 2, online at <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdf/PUB586.pdf>, accessed 30 June 2006.

<sup>51</sup> Metz and Millen, 3.

of groups. Typically, the regime possesses a fair degree of legitimacy and popular support in proportion to that percentage of the population comprised of those groups. However, the fear of domination, violence, and even genocide, coupled with an escalation of sectarian violence, leads to increasing polarization and communal solidarity across all groups as the best means for ensuring communal security.<sup>52</sup> If the final outcome is to be anything other than self-determined division into separate and smaller states, countering the insurgents will likely require the involvement of an outside state or coalition of states, perceived as an impartial third-party, to help the existing regime reestablish legitimate control over the entire contested territory by ensuring the security of all.

*d. Transnational Insurgency*

Transnational insurgencies occur when supranational groups attack the international order and a collection of its member states each possessing varying degrees of legitimacy and popular support. In this type of insurgency, the primary dispute usually centers on a threat, perceived or real, to the supranational group's social identity or economic viability. One example occurs in the Muslim crescent, where the infusion of Western culture through globalization incites Islamic jihadists to perpetrate the overthrow of "infidel" regimes en route to restoring the great caliphate.<sup>53</sup> Another occurs in the agrarian, non-industrial regions of the world, where the enforcement of international narcotics laws "unnecessarily restricts the free market," thereby inciting various narcotics cartels to challenge legal authorities so as to protect their livelihood. No easy task, countering such transnational insurgencies must involve the efforts of a broad-based coalition to discount the perceived threats to resident populations while highlighting illegal activities to strip any shred of legitimacy from these violent non-state actors.

**4. Challenges for Airpower**

With an appreciation of the insurgent's way of war and some of its more common manifestations, the forward thinking airman must reflect, at least momentarily, on the

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<sup>52</sup> This type of insurgency is delineated largely based on Biddle's analysis of the war in Iraq. See Stephen Biddle, "Seeing Baghdad, Thinking Saigon," *Foreign Affairs*, March-April 2006, online at <http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20060301faessay85201/stephen-biddle/seeing-baghdad-thinking-saigon.html>, accessed 30 June 2006.

<sup>53</sup> In his article, Barno refers to this type of conflict as a global insurgency. See David W. Barno, "Challenges in Fighting a Global Insurgency," *Parameters*, Summer 2006, 27.

significant challenges that insurgent warfare might present to modern airpower. Fortunately, by reviewing the conclusions of several comprehensive studies on the topic, one arrives at the following consolidated list.<sup>54</sup>

*a. Understanding Insurgency*

Before all else, airmen must understand the insurgency that they are trying to thwart. In *On War*, Clausewitz states this verity in no uncertain terms.

The first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgment that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish by that test the kind of war on which they are embarking; neither making it for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature. This is the first of all strategic questions and the most comprehensive.<sup>55</sup>

With this in mind, the brief typology above should demonstrate that the diversification in insurgent warfare makes this no simple task. According to Anthony Cordesman, as part of devising an effective strategy to counter the insurgents, airmen must assess the insurgency's underlying causes, know what American involvement can credibly do to address them, understand the will and capability of the indigenous people to help themselves, and face the fact that the ensuing struggle will require a certain amount of time, not to mention, blood and treasure.<sup>56</sup> On a more sobering note, perhaps the most important question that needs to be addressed is whether waging another COIN operation on foreign soil is worth the effort, or if the best way to win is not to play at all, regardless of the resulting instability and civil unrest.<sup>57</sup> So how can the Air Force ensure that it's asking the appropriate strategic questions with respect to insurgent warfare? First, it must establish and maintain a cadre of airmen well studied in the subtleties of insurgency. Over the course of their careers, these airmen should be tracked to gain as much operational experience with COIN as possible. Second, since first hand observation provides the best perspective to learn the nuances of any particular insurgency, the Air

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<sup>54</sup> See Anthony H. Cordesman, *The Iraq War and Lessons for Counterinsurgency*, Working Draft (Washington D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 16 March 2006); James S. Corum and Wray R. Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars: Fighting Insurgents and Terrorists*, (Lawrence, KA: University of Kansas Press, 2003), 425-439; Vick, Grissom, Rosenau, Grill, and Mueller, 26-49; and Checkmate and Deep Blue, vi-vii.

<sup>55</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, Michael Howard and Peter Paret, trans. and ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 88-89.

<sup>56</sup> Cordesman, 16.

<sup>57</sup> Cordesman, 17.



Force must seek opportunities to place these airmen into potential hot spots early and often. By doing this, Air Force leadership could gain a conduit into the womb of insurgency. Not only would this provide invaluable insights into the nature of the struggle, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of the insurgents, but more importantly, it would enable airmen to advise if, and to what degree, American airpower should become engaged. Finally, as part of a broader “self-help” approach to beat the insurgency before it takes root, these airmen could encourage rigorous self-analysis by the incumbent regime to help induce necessary reforms at the earliest opportunity.<sup>58</sup>

***b. Accessing the Fight***

Since airpower will definitely play some role in any American effort for COIN, the Air Force must gain access to the sovereign airspace and territory of the incumbent regime. Not only will nearly all transport missions either originate or terminate at a point within the contested territory, but fighters configured for “in theater” operations will need local basing to achieve their peak efficiency.<sup>59</sup> Consequently, the Air Force must take measures to secure its access to the fight. However, as David Shlapak points out in his work on the issue, “assured” access is no sure thing. Regardless of treaties and informal agreements, the host government will always consider its own interests over all others, and either grant or deny access accordingly. Thus, to shape the shared perception of common interests well in advance, the Air Force must use airmen to build links to the military forces of its potential strategic partners. Not only would this reduce both the chance and magnitude of any future disagreement, but it would likely secure a basing option that is best for all, if and when the time comes for an increased commitment of American airpower.<sup>60</sup> Finally, with first hand knowledge of the contested territory, these airmen could weigh in during planning to place expeditionary airbases in the lesser contested zones so as to mitigate risks while maximizing the potential contributions of American airpower to overall pacification.

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<sup>58</sup> Vick, Grissom, Rosenau, Grill, and Mueller, 49.

<sup>59</sup> David A. Schlapak, John Stillion, Olga Olikier, and Tanya Charlick-Paley, *A Global Access Strategy for the U.S. Air Force* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2002), xiv.

<sup>60</sup> Schlapak, *A Global Access Strategy*, xv. See also David A. Schlapak, “Providing Adequate Access for Expeditionary Air Forces,” *Strategic Appraisal: United States Air and Space Power in the 21st Century*, Zamay Khalilzad and Jeremy Shapiro, eds. (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2002).

*c. Occupying the Disputed Political Space*

With the population serving as the lynch pin of any struggle for legitimacy, expeditionary airpower must find better ways to occupy this disputed political space. Although airpower's psychological operations and overhead presence arguably make inroads into the contested middle ground of the neutral majority, they neither penetrate nor captivate that population as much as real airmen interacting with people on the ground. But for airmen to wring their hands of any responsibility for terrestrial matters is to deny both the laws of physics which demand that aerospace missions begin and end on the ground, as well as the primacy of the objective which calls for establishing legitimacy in the eyes of a population living on the surface of the earth. By solely focusing on the means of influence that come by way of the air, expeditionary airpower limits its own ability to wage what General John Abizaid calls "a war of perceptions."<sup>61</sup> Thus, void of any human messenger, airpower's muted message settles upon the deaf ears of a population largely surrendered to the more human face of local insurgents. However, with numerous airmen ready to deploy to expeditionary airbases across the contested territory, opportunities abound for airmen to occupy the disputed political space in a much more personable way, and therefore, for far greater effect.

*d. Developing Actionable Intelligence*

If airpower is to wrest the initiative away from the insurgents, then airmen must develop more actionable intelligence—accurate, timely, complete, and sufficiently relevant to support the warfighter's decision-making.<sup>62</sup> However, as Corum and Johnson point out, the production of quality intelligence during insurgent warfare is exceedingly more difficult than in conventional wars for several reasons. First, the insurgents present an elusive and opaque opponent because they operate within and from a subterranean world, exposing themselves only as much as required to prosecute their attacks before blending back into the cover of the general populace.<sup>63</sup> Second, to glean real information about the insurgency, old-fashioned human intelligence derived from agents and informants must be coupled with investigative police analysis.<sup>64</sup> Of note, this new

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<sup>61</sup> Barno, 15.

<sup>62</sup> Checkmate and Deep Blue, 36.

<sup>63</sup> Vick, Grissom, Rosenau, Grill, and Mueller, 33.

<sup>64</sup> Corum and Johnson, 434.

emphasis on human intelligence and narrow field surveillance to find, fix, and observe small groups of insurgents represents a significant paradigm shift for which the modern intelligence community is largely unprepared.<sup>65</sup> Third, to enable further penetration and exploitation of the insurgency, intelligence training and collection must refocus to concentrate more on understanding insurgent networks, including their links to popular support.<sup>66</sup> Finally, the compartmentalization of modern intelligence too often limits the sharing of data and analysis necessary to produce and disseminate actionable intelligence to the warfighter.<sup>67</sup> Significantly, the common thread tying most of these issues together is the human dimension of insurgent warfare. Here again, by applying the human capital of its own airmen to intelligence operations within the contested territory, the Air Force could make great strides towards fixing the problem.

*e. Applying Discriminate Force*

Although the military instrument is often used in COIN to compel the insurgents to stop their activities through the application of physical force, airmen must use caution to apply such force only in the most discriminate manner.<sup>68</sup> Accordingly, this requires that airmen apply only the minimum force necessary to achieve desired effects on a specific target, and that those effects be in direct proportion to the amount of change required in the enemy's behavior. Such technical definitions aside, the blunt reality from the airman's perspective is that the bombing of innocent civilians, whether deliberate or unintentional, is ineffective and counterproductive for at least the following reasons.<sup>69</sup> First, such acts usually antagonize the very population that the incumbent regime is trying to enlist, in effect yielding the disputed political space to the insurgents. Furthermore, when antagonized by the depredations of the state, the once neutral majority

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<sup>65</sup> Checkmate and Deep Blue, vi.

<sup>66</sup> Thomas R. Searle, "Making Airpower Effective against Guerrillas," *Air & Space Power Journal*, Fall 2004, 18.

<sup>67</sup> Corum and Johnson, 434.

<sup>68</sup> According to Clausewitz, war is "an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will." Without fully accounting for his subsequent discussions on who can legitimately apply such force, it is by this definition that the use of violent acts by either the insurgents or the state should raise both insurgency and COIN to the level of political action which ought to be called war, and therefore, ought not to be called "operations other than war." While the use of force may be minimal by design, and limited in actuality, its real application by either side, and, therefore, its potential for further application, cannot be denied. See Clausewitz, *On War*, Howard and Paret, trans. and eds., 75.

<sup>69</sup> Corum and Johnson, 434

will turn to actively supporting the insurgents with recruits, resources, and information. Second, civilian deaths and collateral damage generally provide petrol for the insurgents' propaganda machine. Thus, as one study warns, "while conventional wars certainly have political dimensions, counterinsurgency is far more politicized, and its practitioners must always be alert to the potential strategic consequences of even the most tactical of operations."<sup>70</sup> Thus, as the saying would go, for one errant bomb, the population was lost, and the regime fell. Finally, as Corum and Johnson argue, to the degree that airpower represents a unique capability of modern states, people in the lesser developed world are often predisposed to view aerial bombardment, whether precise or not, as cruel and heavy-handed; therefore, its application in any form serves to provoke the ire of those not so endowed.<sup>71</sup> In summary, regardless of how discrete and precise modern airpower may become, airmen need to continue expanding their horizons for the use of discriminate force in COIN, or risk being shot down in a war of public perceptions.

*f. Building State Capacity*

In the struggle for the legitimate right to rule, the Air Force must find ways to help build the state's capacity for good governance. In their study of *Airpower in the Era of Insurgency*, Allan Vick and his colleagues at RAND outline several key ways to reinforce the public's perception that the regime is both willing and ready to rule. First, through competent police organizations, the state can meet its fundamental responsibility of providing security and public safety to the polity. Not only does this build confidence in the regime, but it also shrinks the political space available to the insurgents as an increasingly supportive populace provides additional information about the insurgents. Second, through the development and demonstrated performance of state institutions such as public services, civil administration, education, and health care, the state extends its presence throughout the disputed political space while working to erase the social grievances that underwrite the insurgency. Coupled with the creation of infrastructure such as schools, roads, or airports, the regime reinforces within the populace its unyielding determination to prevail. Finally, if the state is to possess any semblance of legitimacy, it must enact, consistently assert, and operate, itself, under a

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<sup>70</sup> Vick, Grissom, Rosenau, Grill, and Mueller, 44.

<sup>71</sup> Corum and Johnson, 429-430.

rule of law administered through an impartial system of justice.<sup>72</sup> On a cautionary note, while the system employed by most Western democracies may appear to be a good starting point, as Cordesman notes, legitimacy is always “measured in local terms and not in the terms of American ideology.”<sup>73</sup> So given all of the above, how can the Air Force help? By once again leveraging the skills of its own highly trained airmen to solve human problems at the local level, the Air Force can help “the state deliver what the insurgents can only promise.”<sup>74</sup>

***g. Posturing the Expeditionary Air Force***

While each challenge of insurgent warfare is unique, each is similar to the rest in that it relies on the disposition of airmen to posture the expeditionary Air Force. But what measures can the Air Force take to posture itself better in light of all these challenges? First, it must provide its airmen with so called “social intelligence,” or rather the language skills and cultural awareness necessary for airmen to work through, by, and with a local population foreign to themselves. Second, the Air Force must cultivate in its airmen an understanding of the various social structures which comprise the disputed political space, or what Megan Scully terms the “anthropological finesse” to negotiate the complex social networks of various tribes and clans permeating most populations.<sup>75</sup> By accomplishing these two steps, the Air Force arms its airmen with the knowledge and skills to establish human sources by which to penetrate the underground and isolate the insurgent. However, as Krepinevich notes, for anyone to truly succeed against a foreign insurgency, time is required to gain familiarity, earn trust, win confidence, and establish influence.<sup>76</sup> Thus, as a necessary third step, the Air Force must implement longer tours of duty for its airmen performing COIN. To do otherwise, as Loren Boritz argues in *Backfire*, is just bad business—the equivalent of transferring an employee before the completion of on-the-job training.<sup>77</sup> Finally, in light of the truism that COIN is primarily

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<sup>72</sup> Vick, Grissom, Rosenau, Grill, and Mueller, 35-38.

<sup>73</sup> Cordesman, 24.

<sup>74</sup> Vick, Grissom, Rosenau, Grill, and Mueller, 37.

<sup>75</sup> Vick, Grissom, Rosenau, Grill, and Mueller, 33.

<sup>76</sup> Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, 205-209.

<sup>77</sup> Loren Boritz, *Backfire: A History of How American Culture Led Us into Vietnam and Made Us Fight the Way We Did* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 310.

the business of ground forces, the Air Force should shift its focus to concentrate precisely there. While it must continue to seek better ways of utilizing air and space to impact operations on the ground, more importantly, the Air Force must seize its own opportunity to realize the greatest gain for COIN by investing in the capabilities of those airmen who could occupy and influence the disputed political space where it truly exists—on the ground, around the airbase, in the surrounding community, and among the population.

## **B. THE AIRMAN’S APPROACH TO WARFARE**

Against this backdrop of insurgency’s challenges for airpower, one turns next to the airman’s approach to warfare so as to silhouette either its appropriateness or inappropriateness. Although a thorough review is neither warranted nor offered, a cursory look into several common characterizations of airpower serves as the springboard for further assessment.

### **1. Characterizations**

Responsible for delivering sovereign options to defend the United States and its global interests, the Air Force maintains a wealth of doctrine to govern how airmen should fly and fight.<sup>78</sup> Based in large part on the unique capabilities of airpower, including speed, range, and flexibility, this doctrine also serves to provide the *sine qua non* for airpower, that being air and space dominance. However, despite airpower’s unique contributions to warfare and more than a half-century of independence, the Air Force still struggles with its own relevance. Consequently, airmen have overstated their case and stretched new concepts of operation to reinforce that relevance when it never should have been doubted. In the end, the collective mind of airmen has been largely shaped by more than one of airpower’s more prevalent characterizations.

#### **a. Strategic Decisiveness**

Since the airplane’s introduction to warfare almost a century ago, airmen have claimed that airpower possesses a quality of strategic decisiveness not shared by the other military instruments. As Phillip Meilinger notes, the airman’s ability to operate at the strategic level of war for immediate effects has served as airpower’s *raison d’etre* since aircraft first took to the skies. As the logic goes, strategic attack, or rather the

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<sup>78</sup> In an article by Air Force Print News on 12 August 2005, Air Force Chief of Staff, General T. Michael Mosley said the mission of the Air Force is “to deliver sovereign options for the defense of the United States of America and its global interests—to fly and fight in Air, Space, and Cyberspace.”

bombing of an enemy's vital centers deep within his own defended territory, represents a singular capability possessed by no other service.<sup>79</sup> Although time has witnessed different permutations of Giulio Douhet's original theory for strategic attack, airmen have always believed that airpower enjoys a unique capability to achieve national objectives by adversely affecting an enemy's leadership, resources, and strategy.<sup>80</sup> And since airpower can be strategically decisive where others cannot, proponents of this line of reasoning have always argued that airpower should play a predominant role, with a corresponding emphasis on strategic attack. Yet in *The Transformation of American Air Power*, Benjamin Lambeth reveals how more than one analyst has reviewed the history of airpower to render the verdict that strategic attack cannot be considered decisive.<sup>81</sup> While Lambeth agrees with that assessment, he argues that the point is moot, however, since new airpower capabilities obviate the need to break the enemy's will as Douhet originally proposed. "Owing to precision, stealth, and enhanced information availability, airmen are now paradoxically able to use airpower as first envisioned by its earliest advocates, but not in a way that they even remotely could have foreseen."<sup>82</sup> Bypassing

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<sup>79</sup> Phillip S. Meilinger, "Dog Days for the Air Force: What's Wrong and How It Can Be Fixed," Unpublished essay, 2005, 9.

<sup>80</sup> Giulio Douhet asserted that the aerial bombardment of enemy population centers could shatter civilian morale to sufficiently cut off supplies to the enemy's field forces while forcing the population to sue its leaders to capitulate. He held that the enemy's fielded forces should not be the primary object of attack, but rather the population centers from which they drew their support. While Billy Mitchell shared Douhet's views, he additionally believed that airpower could be used to destroy enemy surface forces, both on the ground and at sea. During the interwar years, the Air Corps Tactical School assimilated and refined these views with its theory of daylight precision bombing to disrupt the industrial web. Accordingly, a relatively small aerial force could bring an entire industry to a grinding halt by identifying and destroying discrete targets within the selected system. See Benjamin S. Lambeth, *The Transformation of American Air Power* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000), 263-264. Of course, with the dawning of the Cold War, the Strategic Air Command applied similar concepts to plan the systematic destruction of the Soviet heartland with nuclear weapons if deterrence failed. Then, as the Cold War drew to a close, John Warden devised his theory of air targeting using a bull's eye of five concentric rings to depict the enemy state. With leadership occupying the center, and then moving outward, system essentials, infrastructure, population, and fielded forces, Warden held that fielded forces were the equivalent of a hardened target, and that strategic airpower could achieve its greatest payoff by targeting the enemy leadership directly, or by cutting it off from the population and its military forces. See Meilinger, "Dog Days for the Air Force: What's Wrong and How It Can Be Fixed," 9-18. Today, Air Force Doctrine defines strategic attack "as offensive action conducted by command authorities aimed at generating effects that most directly achieve our national security objectives by affecting the adversary's leadership, conflict-sustaining resources, and strategy." See Air Force Doctrine Document 1, 40.

<sup>81</sup> After reviewing Operation DESERT STORM Jeffrey Record asserted that Saddam Hussein's continued hold on power "irreparably tarnished" the claims of zealous airmen that strategic attack could achieve victory in and of itself. Similarly, in his review of thirty-three different air campaigns dating back to 1944, Robert Pape concluded that strategic attack cannot be called decisive. See Lambeth, 265.

<sup>82</sup> Lambeth, 314.

the typically elusive goal of destroying an enemy's hostile will, airpower can now proceed directly to the enemy's throat by destroying the hostile ability resident in his military forces.<sup>83</sup> Thus, applying new logic to an old argument, Lambeth concludes that airpower's transformation has actually delivered on airpower's promise by "permitting the achievement of strategic goals of a supremely *military* nature from the outset of the fighting."<sup>84</sup> In summary, although airmen may be admitting that strategic attack is not all that it purports, there seems to be little give in the airman's core belief that airpower is still strategically preeminent.

**b. *Real-Time Targeting***

As the object of airpower's strategic capability shifts from vital centers to fielded forces, the concept of real-time targeting has assumed center stage in the airman's approach to warfare. By shifting from the vital centers of leadership and war-sustaining industry to the mechanized units of an enemy's fielded forces, airpower's focus has necessarily shifted from fixed to mobile targets. Consequently, as opposed to executing planned strikes against predetermined targets of strategic value, airmen increasingly execute flexible operations throughout the battlespace to destroy an enemy's emerging military capabilities before they can be brought to bear. However, as Lambeth points out, these operations hinge upon outstanding intelligence as a necessary precondition for airpower to achieve strategic decisiveness.<sup>85</sup> Relying on a vast network of information systems to link overhead sensors to a decision-maker and all his potential shooters, real-time targeting seeks to expeditiously find, fix, and finish fleeting targets before they can disappear into the fog of war.<sup>86</sup> However, as Meilinger notes, airpower's ability to finish targets has always exceeded its ability to find and fix them.<sup>87</sup> Moreover, with the sensor, decision-maker, and shooter seldom being one in the same, the requirement for a *timely* flow of accurate and comprehensive information about an enemy that does not stay put

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<sup>83</sup> Lambeth, 315.

<sup>84</sup> Lambeth, 270.

<sup>85</sup> Lambeth, 9.

<sup>86</sup> The Air Force has become so enamored with real-time targeting and confident in its ability to succeed that former Chief of Staff, General Ronald R. Fogelman predicted that by the early twenty-first century, air and space sensors would be able to find, fix, track, and target anything on the face of the earth. See Lambeth, 288.

<sup>87</sup> Phillip S. Meilinger, *Ten Propositions Regarding Airpower* (Washington, D.C.: Air Force History and Museums Program, 1995), 22.



has become greater than ever before. Finally, since sensors and shooters must constantly be directed where to go and for what to look, good intelligence must observe the effects of earlier operations to orient decision-makers regarding those actions still to be decided.<sup>88</sup> Thus, as Meilinger sums it all up, “in essence, airpower is targeting, targeting is intelligence, and intelligence is assessing the effects of air operations.”<sup>89</sup>

*c. Standoff Precision Firepower*

As airmen state their case, airpower has come of age with the development and regular use of standoff precision firepower from the air. By enabling airpower to destroy an enemy’s military capabilities on the battlefield at minimal cost in terms of blood and treasure, standoff precision firepower has arguably given airpower the strategic decisiveness that airmen have always claimed.<sup>90</sup> With long-range, high altitude aerospace systems employing state-of-the-art weapons from afar, airpower now couples real-time targeting with standoff precision firepower to avoid most threats while eliminating the rest so as to kill even mobile and armored targets with virtual impunity. Enabled by modern technology and new concepts of operation, this amazing ability to apply discriminate force near friendly forces, or in the midst of urban terrain where noncombatants and collateral structures abound, produces an across the board reduction in both human casualties and unintended destruction. More importantly, by employing machines over men, airpower saves lives while providing theater commanders with a more responsible and effective way to apply coercive force than in head-to-head, ground combat.<sup>91</sup> Thus, as Lambeth concludes, airpower’s greatest contribution may be...

...its capacity to save lives—enemy lives through the use of precision to minimize noncombatant fatalities, and friendly lives through the substitution of technology for manpower and the creation of battlefield

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<sup>88</sup> In a very real sense, the success or failure of real-time targeting relies on the airman’s ability to operate inside the enemy’s decision cycle by out-thinking him. According to John Boyd, by tightening one’s own “OODA (observe, orient, decide, act) loop” with respect to the opponent, one could gain the initiative, and therefore, the advantage. See Meilinger, *Dog Days for the Air Force: What’s Wrong and How It Can Be Fixed*, 17-18.

<sup>89</sup> Meilinger, *Ten Propositions Regarding Airpower*, 20.

<sup>90</sup> Meilinger, *Dog Days for the Air Force: What’s Wrong and How It Can Be Fixed*, 27.

<sup>91</sup> Lambeth, 289.

conditions in which land elements, once unleashed, can do their jobs without significant resistance because of the degraded capabilities of enemy forces.<sup>92</sup>

*d. Aerospace Expeditionary Force*

To deliver sustained airpower to theater commanders while maintaining its long-term health, the expeditionary Air Force has relied on an organizational structure known as the aerospace expeditionary force, or AEF. Initially developed to support a strategy of engagement after the First Gulf War, the AEF allowed the Air Force to meet the burgeoning demand for expeditionary airpower despite a dwindling supply of forward based resources in the wake of the Cold War drawdown.<sup>93</sup> Additionally, it enabled the Air Force to provide tailored packages of expeditionary airpower for use in small-scale contingencies while retaining the capability to ramp-up and fight two major theater wars simultaneously.<sup>94</sup> However, after several years of sustained AEF deployments by only a fraction of the Air Force, the high operational tempo of deploying units generated the twin problems of impaired readiness and reduced retention.<sup>95</sup> To address these two critical concerns, the Air Force expanded its expeditionary approach while adapting the AEF for broader application to the entire force. To provide sufficient time for units to train, prepare, deploy, and reconstitute in conjunction with expeditionary tasking, as well as a measure of predictability for the personnel involved, the expeditionary Air Force established a revolving 15-month AEF cycle consisting of five consecutive 3-month periods. To fill the rotation, the expeditionary Air Force structured itself into ten similar but distinctive AEFs, and two on-call aerospace expeditionary wings. Since the latter were reserved for less probable crisis deployments, they simply alternated their on-call status with each 3-month period. As for the former, they were organized into five

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<sup>92</sup> Lambeth, 303.

<sup>93</sup> During the first term of President William J. Clinton, the U.S. military continued three major operations in Iraq and Somalia, while initiating seven more in Haiti and the Balkans. From 1991 to 1998, the Air Force lost two-thirds of its forward European bases. Over the same period, it saw its number of fighter wing equivalents drop from 36 to 20, while its bomber, tanker, and transport fleets experienced reductions of 50, 40, and 30 percent, respectively. See Richard G. Davis, *Anatomy of a Reform: The Expeditionary Aerospace Force* (Washington, D.C.: The Air Force History and Museums Program, 2003), 12-18.

<sup>94</sup> Richard G. Davis, 19.

<sup>95</sup> Since most early expeditionary tasking supported operations in southern Iraq, the vast majority of expeditionary airpower belonged to the air component of U.S. Central Command, or Ninth Air Force. See Richard G. Davis, 11.

separate AEF pairs, with each pair responsible for fulfilling steady-state airpower requirements during a single 3-month period. Thus, with some exceptions, the implementation of this AEF structure ensured that most units and their assigned airmen deployed to theater for no more than three months during any given AEF cycle. Remarkably, this not only fixed readiness and retention, but it also met the needs of theater commanders.<sup>96</sup> Moreover, it set the standard for how expeditionary airpower would operate in the years to come. Even now, with only minor adjustments, the AEF cycle still governs the operational tempo of the expeditionary Air Force, and every airman within it.<sup>97</sup>

## 2. Cult of the Offensive

While any complete assessment of airpower could not be limited to these four characterizations, strategic decisiveness, real-time targeting, standoff precision firepower, and the aerospace expeditionary force do serve to highlight the advanced state of offensive airpower at the twilight of its first century in being. Capable of projecting itself into foreign theaters of war to find, fix, and finish an enemy's military capabilities, modern airpower appears to possess a quality of strategic decisiveness undelivered by the other military instruments. Thus, as the airman's argument goes, offensive airpower must be the logical first choice for any situation in which the military instrument may be applied. But should airmen be concerned by such a fortuitous development?

In his treatise on the cult of the offensive, John Carter warns airmen to beware "the condition that occurs when an organization believes so strongly in the supremacy of offense that it no longer develops and evaluates its doctrine rationally."<sup>98</sup> Since doctrine informs policy, and policy shapes strategy, this abiding faith in the offense can easily produce both a force structure and strategic approach that are altogether, or at least in part, inappropriate. Given the recent accomplishments of offensive airpower in both the Balkans and the Persian Gulf, airmen must be cautious of unreasonably high expectations regarding their ability to purchase influence through the use of coercive force. Failing to

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<sup>96</sup> Richard G. Davis, 86.

<sup>97</sup> In 2003, the expeditionary Air Force extended the AEF cycle to twenty months, with each AEF pair responsible for deploying during a single 4-month period of the cycle.

<sup>98</sup> John R. Carter, *Airpower and the Cult of the Offensive* (Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: Air University Press, 1998), 27.

diversify either the capitalization of the future Air Force or its strategic applications, airmen run the risk of becoming ensnared in a trap of their own cultic ideology.<sup>99</sup>

### 3. Coercion – A Strategic Mindset

To a large degree, the airman’s offensive ideology has produced a corresponding strategic mindset that views all military action through the confining lens of coercive force. That is not to say that under the broadest definitions of coercion put forward by theorist such as Thomas Schelling that this is somehow inappropriate, but rather to suggest that airmen typically apply a much more narrow definition of coercion based on the *use of force* either to deter an enemy from commencing an undesired action, or to compel him to cease that action once it has been commenced.<sup>100</sup> The crucial distinction here, from the airman’s point of view, is not that coercion is causing someone else to choose one course of action over another by making the coercer’s preference appear more attractive than the alternative, but rather that the instrument of coercion always comes down to either the use or threatened use of physical violence.<sup>101</sup>

Type	Means	Mechanism
Denial	Negate ability to attain goals	Reduce hostile will by reducing ability
Decapitation	Destroy regime to paralyze state	Reduce hostile will by disrupting ability
Destruction	Destroy state capacity	Regardless of will destroy current ability

Table 1. Coercive Airpower Strategy.

<sup>99</sup> Carter, 94.

<sup>100</sup> According to Schelling, coercion amounts to the use of influence to either create a desirable outcome or prevent an undesirable one. Significantly, it is not the pain that matters but rather the influence on someone’s behavior. However, by referencing various essays on coercion written by or for airmen, one notes that most emphasize the use of force as the coercive instrument. See Thomas Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1966), 3; Scott Walker, “A Unified Field Theory of Coercive Airpower,” *Aerospace Power Journal*, Summer 1997, online at <http://www.airpower.maxwell.af.mil/airchronicles/apj/apj97/sum97.walker.html>, accessed 29 June 2006; and Karl Mueller, “The Essence of Coercive Air Power: A Primer for Military Strategists,” *Air & Space Power Journal – Chronicles Online Journal*, 17 September 2001, online at <http://www.airpower.maxwell.af.mil/airchronicles/cc/mueller.html>, accessed 29 June 2006.

<sup>101</sup> In “The Essence of Coercive Air Power: A Primer for Military Strategists,” Mueller provides his own definition of coercion which serves as the basis for the one presented here.

Although theorist Karl Mueller clearly states that the broadest definition of coercion implies nothing with respect to the means by which it is administered, a brief review of the professional literature may suggest that airmen think otherwise.<sup>102</sup> Combining theories from two separate essays written by Mueller and airpower practitioner Scott Walker, Table 1 provides a consolidated list of three different types of coercion, as well as the means and mechanism by which each affects the enemy.<sup>103</sup> Although this list is neither authoritative nor definitive, it does provide a quick look into the airman's mind with respect to coercive airpower. Without excessive detail, the table reveals how coercive airpower relies on physical violence to make an enemy perform a cost-benefit analysis so as to select a value-maximizing option that equates to the coercer's preference.<sup>104</sup> Regardless of the type of coercion, the means for each requires that an application of force be directed against the enemy to either deter or compel him. This reliance on coercive force represents the airman's strategic mindset that thinks the only way to apply airpower is through a threat or act of harm.<sup>105</sup> Thus, as airmen see it, the use of airpower to achieve strategic objectives relies on the transaction of coercive influence in which the only currency of exchange is, and must be, force.

### **C. AIRPOWER IN COIN – SQUARE PEG IN A ROUND HOLE**

By placing the airman's approach to warfare against the backdrop of insurgency's challenges, the airman's preconceptions emerge so as to judge better the efficacy of his ways and means. In so doing, the astute observer concludes that the expeditionary Air Force is inappropriately shaped for COIN. While that in no way suggests that airpower's contributions to COIN have been anything less than substantial, it does suggest that until

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<sup>102</sup> In "The Essence of Coercive Air Power: A Primer for Military Strategists," Mueller states that coercion may involve military force, economic sanctions, or a whole range of other political pressures. However, he also admits that his essay focuses "mainly on coercion through threats of harm since this is how coercive airpower is most often used."

<sup>103</sup> Although Walker lists four types of coercion to include punishment, risk, denial, and decapitation, Mueller describes only three, those being punishment, denial, and destruction. In constructing Table 1, the author consolidates the two lists by eliminating risk and destruction. On the one hand, risk is eliminated since it is only a variation of punishment. On the other, destruction is eliminated since, in the purest sense, it fails to meet the coercive goal of changing the enemy's behavior. See Walker, "A Unified Field Theory of Coercive Airpower," and Mueller, "The Essence of Coercive Air Power: A Primer for Military Strategists."

<sup>104</sup> Checkmate and Deep Blue, 115.

<sup>105</sup> In "The Essence of Coercive Air Power: A Primer for Military Strategists," Mueller, himself, focuses his discussion on threats of harm since this is how coercive airpower is most often employed.

the Air Force implements some major changes, the full extent of airpower's contributions to COIN cannot be realized. So what preconceptions lurk within the airman's mind?

As in any human endeavor, both a definition of the problem and a framework for its solution must exist in the minds of men before any appropriate action can be taken, unless by way of stumbling, or sheer blind luck. So with respect to COIN, has the Air Force prepared its collective mind to meet the insurgents' challenge, and has it positioned its individual airmen so that they can rapidly orient to a specific insurgency, if so required? Regarding the first of these two questions, the Air Force must take notice that when it comes to war, airmen naturally default to a "find, fix, and finish" mentality calling for the immediate use of force to destroy the enemy—an approach not entirely appropriate for an adversary who does not readily present himself to the risks of open combat.<sup>106</sup> In part, this occurs due to the airman's abiding faith in offensive power, and the resulting strategic mindset which views the application of the military instrument through the confining lens of coercive influence. It also occurs because airmen seek strategic decisiveness rather than a strategic decision. Thus, they inappropriately pursue direct attack when it cannot produce the results for which it was intended. Additionally, since the insurgent wins by not losing, the airman's quest for a decisive result can prove self-defeating, as airmen work in the futile pursuit of a seemingly impossible goal.<sup>107</sup> As regards the second of these two questions, the Air Force's dogmatic application of the AEF cycle arguably fails to give airmen sufficient time to orient their minds to the nature of the fight. By rotating airmen into and out of the contested territory every three to four months, the AEF cycle robs airpower of those airmen with any experience in the disputed political space. In so doing, the Air Force relegates airpower's play in insurgent warfare to the domain of virtual rookies. As for trying to understand the insurgency, airmen hardly have a chance. Consequently, when the time comes for airmen to work the details of how to meet the insurgents' challenges, they are insufficiently postured, and, therefore, intellectually unprepared. So with this understanding of the airman's mind, how do airpower's ways and means measure up to the insurgents' challenge?

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<sup>106</sup> Vick, Grissom, Rosenau, Grill, and Mueller, 43.

<sup>107</sup> Searle, "Making Airpower Effective Against Guerrillas," 16-17.

Although coercive strategy plays a role in insurgent warfare, the COIN strategist must be careful not to limit strategic thought to the threat or use of harm as the principal way to an end. Within any insurgency, there must be room for “soft” power to co-opt, induce, persuade, and dissuade, short of having to issue explicit threats or take actions that intend physical harm. Regardless, airmen must take note that coercing guerrillas is a complicated affair for at least four reasons. First, since insurgent warfare represents a struggle for legitimacy within the population’s collective mind, coercion presents a multi-layered game in which the coercer seeks to alter the behavior of not only insurgents, but various other actors occupying the disputed political space. Second, because the insurgency is itself an illegal organization with numerous actors operating for a variety of different interests, the insurgents will likely respond to cost-benefit calculus in a loosely rational way, often with far less predictability than say the government of another state. Third, since insurgency is a desperate act committed by those who see no better option than risking everything for something other than the status quo, punishment and denial strategies traditionally find little purchase within the insurgent mind. Finally, coercers must be aware that the insurgents’ revolutionary zeal may void true cost-benefit calculus in situations where the price can never be too high.<sup>108</sup> In the end, airmen must exercise great caution before reducing insurgent warfare to nothing but a form of coercion.<sup>109</sup>

Moving on to real-time targeting, one notes that the concept suffers at least two serious limitations that directly impede the advantages of airpower afforded by speed and flexibility. First, despite its plethora of overhead sensors, airpower possesses dubious capabilities to cull insurgents that do not wish to be seen from among the crowds in which they operate.<sup>110</sup> Although airpower’s sensors may see and hear the bulk of the population, more often than not, even the most advanced technology cannot distinguish individual profiles and voices from within the clutter and noise of humanity. Second, despite an extensive network of communications, airpower’s execution suffers noticeable lag time where as the insurgents’ does not. Because airpower is centrally controlled, the sensor, decision-maker, and shooter are seldom one in the same, while the exact opposite

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<sup>108</sup> Vick, Grissom, Rosenau, Grill, and Mueller, 63-66.

<sup>109</sup> Checkmate and Deep Blue, 114.

<sup>110</sup> Searle, “Making Airpower Effective Against Guerrillas,” 18.

is true for the guerrillas. Consequently, the insurgent routinely operates inside the airman's decision cycle, seizing and maintaining the initiative, while airman try to react in a timely manner, but usually miss the opportunity altogether.<sup>111</sup> Thus, despite airpower's potential ability to respond rapidly to a variety of situations, its advanced technology and longer kill chain with respect to the guerrillas' often prevent airmen from achieving any desired ends.

With respect to standoff precision firepower, the quest for antiseptic lethality also proves problematic. First, because the insurgents operate among the populace, nearly every lethal attack runs the risk of civilian casualties and collateral damage; where urban terrain comes into play, the risks only get worse. Thus, in the war of perceptions, even the well-placed bomb can be strategically decisive, albeit in ways that the airman never wanted. While the Air Force continues to develop low-yield, precision weapons to reduce the adverse effects of such unintended consequences, as long as the intent is lethal, the problem can never be eliminated.<sup>112</sup> Second, airmen must remember that airpower takes no prisoners, and dead insurgents do not talk. With the price of good information coming at a premium, killing insurgents does not come without a cost.<sup>113</sup> Third, by pursuing quick kinetic solutions to single budding insurgents many times over, airpower often ignores the roots of insurgency even as they spread unabated. Finally, for its role in propping the myth of antiseptic lethality, standoff precision firepower often encourages clumsy foreign policy by giving policymakers a false pretense that airpower can purchase victory at bargain prices, even as the record of insurgent warfare clearly indicates otherwise.<sup>114</sup>

In the final analysis, traditional conceptions of airpower and high technology pay too small a dividend in COIN for airmen to rely solely on their use. While that is not to suggest that they are altogether inappropriate, it does suggest that they are not as appropriate as other ways and means when it comes to countering the insurgents. If that

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<sup>111</sup> Searle, "Making Airpower Effective Against Guerrillas," 16.

<sup>112</sup> Checkmate and Deep Blue, 125.

<sup>113</sup> Searle, "Making Airpower Effective Against Guerrillas," 19.

<sup>114</sup> Loren Baritz, *Backfire: A History of How American Culture Led Us into Vietnam and Made Us Fight the Way We Did* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 164.



is the case, then those alternative ways and means should be developed to reinforce what airpower already brings to the fight. As with any human endeavor, however, the problem is not so much the tools as it is the people who wield them, and the case of airpower in COIN is no exception. Imbued with a cultic belief in the power of the offensive, airmen resist what Loren Baritz calls “fighting down,” or beating the insurgents at their own game, because such “simple” methods fail to reinforce the offensive roles with which airmen most identify. Consequently, the Air Force continues to focus on its own preconceived notion of using overwhelming firepower to crush a conventional enemy it wishes to fight, rather than the insurgent guerrilla with which it is faced.<sup>115</sup> Thus, airpower finds itself largely out of shape for the kind of warfare it faces in the twenty-first century where manpower trumps firepower and intelligence must be earned rather than purchased. Metaphorically, then, airpower in COIN represents the proverbial square peg in a round hole—it just does not fit, at least as well as it should.

As in most cases, understanding the nature of airpower’s problem in COIN sheds light on the potential solution. As Baritz sums it all up, “insurgency [is] an intensely human problem” that technology simply cannot solve.<sup>116</sup> As such, it requires a human solution. Therefore, if the expeditionary Air Force is to shape itself to become more effective in COIN, it must develop the human capital resident in its own airmen so that it can put manpower in front of firepower as required. Of course, to guide that process, airmen must first possess a conceptual framework for understanding the interplay between insurgents and the state. That framework serves as the logical starting point for further discussion.

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<sup>115</sup> Baritz, 263-264.

<sup>116</sup> Baritz, 275.

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### III. FRAMING THE SOLUTION

Before airmen can begin to contribute to COIN in more than just a peripheral role, they must first possess a conceptual framework by which to understand the nature of insurgency, and their relationship to it. As alternatives emerge from such a framework, airmen must then expand their conception of influence beyond the airman's traditional mindset of coercive airpower strategy limited to the application of physical force. Finally, to take such an abstract framework and mechanize it such that it can be applied to COIN in the real world, airmen must develop a basic understanding of the classic pacification campaign so that they can determine how best to fit airpower into the fight. So to begin framing a solution, what is the proper conceptual framework for understanding insurgent warfare?

#### A. FRAMEWORK FOR INSURGENT WARFARE

Advocated by celebrated COIN practitioner Sir Robert Thompson of Malayan fame, the popular "hearts-and-minds" theory focuses on the internal social grievances that give rise to an insurgent movement and the popular support which sustains it.<sup>117</sup> In economic terms, it stresses the demand side of insurgent warfare, or rather the social forces that underwrite the insurgents' challenge to the state.<sup>118</sup> As the theory goes, by eliminating the demand for a change to the status quo, the insurgents are effectively put out of business. Consequently, the hearts-and-minds theory advocates the suppression of insurgency by garnering popular support for the state using a three pronged approach aimed at improving security, living conditions, and governance within the disputed political space. Using a combination of inducements and coercion, or the proverbial "carrot and stick," the practitioner of the hearts-and-minds theory manipulates popular loyalties by appealing to the likes and dislikes of people.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> In their essay developing the alternative Cost-Benefit Model, Leites and Wolf provide a brief overview of the Hearts-and-Minds Model to support their comparative analysis of the two. See Nathan Leites and Charles Wolf, Jr., *Rebellion and Authority: An Analytical Essay on Insurgent Conflicts* (Chicago, IL: Markham Publishing Company, 1970), 150.

<sup>118</sup> Ronald F. Stuewe, Jr., *One Step Back, Two Steps Forward: An Analytical Framework for Airpower in Small Wars*, Published thesis submitted to the Naval Postgraduate School, June 2006, 10.

<sup>119</sup> Leites and Wolf, 150. Also see Osman Dogan, *Shadow Wars: An Analysis of Counterinsurgency Warfare*, Published thesis submitted to the Naval Postgraduate School, December 2005, 73.

Juxtaposed against this theory stands the alternative “cost-benefit” theory proposed by Nathan Leites and Charles Wolf of RAND. Here, insurgency represents an operating system that takes inputs from either local or foreign sources and then uses some means of production to convert them into the outputs of active insurgency.<sup>120</sup> In other words, information, people, and material are transformed by analysis, training, and logistics into the intelligence, guerrillas, and weapons that feed the fight. According to this theory, the focus should be on the effectiveness of the insurgents’ activities as they impact the opportunity costs of popular choice to either support or not support the insurgency. As such, this theory places less emphasis on the demand for a change to the status quo than on the supply of insurgent activity as it relates to the cost-benefit calculus of the population.<sup>121</sup> Consequently, cost-benefit theory advocates quelling insurgency by focusing COIN efforts on one of two areas, or some combination thereof. At one extreme, COIN can reduce the availability and therefore raise the costs of inputs to the system. On the other, it can curtail outputs from the system by either interfering with the means of production, or directly blocking the flow of outputs.<sup>122</sup> In any case, the practitioner of cost-benefit theory employs a combination of inducements and coercion to manipulate behavior so as “to increase the costs and difficulties of insurgent operations... rather than [trying to win] popular loyalty and support.”<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Charles Wolf, Jr., *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency: New Myths and Old Realities*, Paper published by RAND, July 1965, 10.

<sup>121</sup> Leites and Wolfe, 151.

<sup>122</sup> Wolf, 11.

<sup>123</sup> Wolf, 25. Not surprisingly, Leites and Wolf advocate their own alternative cost-benefit theory over the hearts-and-minds theory by noting that insurgency can survive and expand in the absence of popular support so long as certain inputs can be obtained at reasonable costs, as measured in the expenditure of both money and coercion. See Wolf, 5. As an airman, Stuewe also favors the alternative cost-benefit theory, but for a slightly different reason based more on its applicability to airpower than on any apparent weakness of the hearts-and-minds theory itself. Since the cost-benefit theory deals with the supply side of the problem, it provides airpower with a more appropriate way to enter the fight. As Stuewe argues, in highlighting the process by which insurgent activities are produced, the cost-benefit theory provides “more definitive analysis regarding the effectiveness of airpower as a means to counter... production.” Stepping back then to the application of that airpower, one logically concludes that the focus of airpower targeting would likely be the means of production and the outputs so produced. See Stuewe, 10. In his comparison of the two models, Dogan seems to provide the dissenting opinion by finding fewer faults with the hearts-and-minds theory than the alternative. Accordingly, Dogan points out that the cost-benefit theory suffers at least three serious limitations. Not only does it assume that the population always behaves in a rational way, but it also assumes that coercion is always the principal tool employed by the insurgents, both of which the empirical evidence clearly refutes. Finally, while the hearts-and-minds theory may focus primarily on the demand side of the problem, the cost-benefit theory suffers the same fallacy from a different perspective by emphasizing the supply side. See Dogan, 71-73.

In considering the alternatives available for COIN, airmen must consider a few final points. First, the state must take the swiftest action possible to nip the insurgency in the bud before it really gets started. As multiple scholars have emphasized, time always works to the insurgents' advantage. The longer the insurgency persists, the greater is the erosion of state legitimacy in the eyes of the population. Thus, for the state to increase its probability of successfully thwarting the insurgents, it is absolutely imperative to act at the earliest opportunity.<sup>124</sup> Second, the civilian-military duality of insurgency requires that the state fight and defeat the insurgents on two separate fronts, one anchored firmly in the hearts-and-minds of the populace, and the other anchored in the military capabilities of the insurgents.<sup>125</sup> Thus, effective COIN must strike a balance between reforms aimed at eliminating social grievances and security force action aimed at eliminating the insurgent threat.<sup>126</sup> Third, in light of the first two points, stabilization and reconstruction must be understood as integral to any COIN strategy from the outset of operations, and not something that follows a phase dominated by actual combat.<sup>127</sup> By focusing on those actions that benefit the all-important public, stabilization and reconstruction purchase the time and popular support required to identify and defeat the insurgents.

## **B. STRATEGIC PORTFOLIO OF INFLUENCES**

Airmen must expand their conception of influence beyond the confining boundaries of coercive airpower strategy limited to the application of physical force. As Paul Davis and Brian Jenkins argue in their study on *Deterrence and Influence*, airmen must broaden their thinking to adopt a portfolio of influences—some which are positive inducements and others that are quite coercive—similar to those shown in Table 2.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Drew, "U.S. Airpower Theory and the Insurgent Challenge," 810.

<sup>125</sup> Drew, "U.S. Airpower Theory and the Insurgent Challenge," 810-811.

<sup>126</sup> FMI 3-07.22, 1-10.

<sup>127</sup> Colin S. Gray, "Stability Operations in Strategic Perspective: A Skeptical View," *Parameters*, Summer 2006, 12.

<sup>128</sup> Paul K. Davis and Brian Michael Jenkins, *Deterrence and Influence in Counterterrorism: A Component in the War on al Qaeda* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2002), 11.

<b>Type</b>	<b>Means</b>	<b>Mechanism</b>
Co-option	Assume ownership	Generate good will regardless of ability
Inducement	Award things of value	Increase good will by increasing ability
Persuasion	Embrace through reasoning	Increase good will regardless of ability
Dissuasion	Deter through reasoning	Reduce hostile will regardless of ability
Punishment	Take things of value	Reduce hostile will regardless of ability
Risks	Rapidly take things of value	Reduce hostile will by reducing ability
Denial	Negate ability to attain goals	Reduce hostile will by reducing ability
Decapitation	Destroy regime to paralyze state	Reduce hostile will by disrupting ability
Destruction	Destroy state capacity	Regardless of will destroy current ability
Annihilation	Obliterate national population	Regardless of will destroy future ability

Table 2. Strategic Portfolio of Influences.<sup>129</sup>

To provide airmen with the capability to achieve real influence over the population, Davis and Jenkins advocate using a systems approach to focus and tailor influence for multiple targets within the disputed political space. Recognizing that any insurgency is a complex system comprised of many different entities and processes arrayed in various organizational structures, to include both hierarchies and distributed networks, airmen can identify select groups operating within the larger overall system that are potentially more vulnerable to influence than others.<sup>130</sup> To enable a process of selective targeting through focused influence measures, airmen must gain ethnographic information so as to decompose the enemy system into its constituent parts. This decomposition of the enemy system can and should be accomplished from multiple perspectives. By decomposing the insurgency on the basis of different classes of actors,

<sup>129</sup> The author adapts Davis and Jenkins “Escalation Ladder of Coercive Influence” by incorporating the coercive airpower strategies of Mueller and Walker. What remains is for airmen to use their imaginations to develop specific techniques for accomplishing each type of influence given a specific target audience. See Davis and Jenkins, 10.

<sup>130</sup> Davis and Jenkins, 13-14.

the influences to which they are susceptible, the lifecycle through which they become active, and the ideology that underpins their values, airmen can begin to develop practical applications of influence. The key to success is to avoid formulating generalities, and instead look for specific circumstances in which various influence strategies from Table 2 could be brought to bear.<sup>131</sup> Significantly, airmen should avoid trying to apply too narrow of a strategy designed to attack a center-of-gravity as vast and diverse as the population of the contested territory. Instead, Davis and Jenkins advocate that airmen fight insurgents by developing a long-term, broad-front strategy employing a combination of inducements and coercion, or rather the carrot and stick.<sup>132</sup>

### **C. PACIFICATION AND THE “OIL SPOT”**

Armed with a portfolio of influences, airmen must next develop a basic understanding of the classic pacification campaign. By so doing, airmen can begin to understand how the theater commander mechanizes overall strategy for COIN, methodically employing state forces throughout the contested territory to expand state control within the disputed political space. With this understanding, airmen can finally envision how the expeditionary Air Force might play a more substantial role in crushing the insurgents.

At this point, it is necessary to define the concept of pacification so as to identify its key components. According to Thompson, pacification is “an offensive campaign designed to restore the government’s authority by a sustained advance in accordance with national priority areas and, at the same time, to protect the individual against a selective reprisal attack so that he can safely play his part within the community, in cooperation with the government, against the [insurgents].”<sup>133</sup> Breaking this down, then, pacification contains at least three principal components: (1) protecting the people; (2) restoring government control; and (3), addressing popular grievances. While the order of these steps may seem trivial, it really matters, for the government truly does not control anyone until it provides for elementary security. As Krepinevich puts it, pacification focuses on providing security for the population precisely for the sake of winning their hearts and

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<sup>131</sup> Davis and Jenkins, 21-22.

<sup>132</sup> Davis and Jenkins, 23-25.

<sup>133</sup> Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, 215.

minds. Rather than trying to kill every insurgent through search-and-destroy tactics, it provides a rationale for the people to support the regime by concentrating on their protection and providing them with opportunities, thereby denying the insurgents their base of popular support, without which they cannot function.<sup>134</sup>

Notably, pacification involves a steady advance into selected priority areas across the contested territory. Starting where the government already enjoys significant popular support, the state solidifies its base areas by protecting the people through enhanced security and increasing programs for stabilization and reconstruction. While the latter rewards the local population's loyalty to the state, the former generates the second order effects of lowering the security premium associated with expensive government projects, while ensuring that the benefits of such programs endure rather than being sabotaged by the insurgents.<sup>135</sup> Largely based on French COIN practitioner Joseph Gallieni's social and military strategy known as *tache d'huile*, this "oil spot" principle calls for a gradual expansion outward from government bases into selected peripheral areas.<sup>136</sup>

Typically, the classic pacification campaign consists of a rolling effort organized around three distinct phases that occur separately, yet simultaneously, in different parts of the contested territory. In the preparatory first phase, the state focuses on training, intelligence, and reforms targeted for a selected area. While military advisors equip and train indigenous forces, civil affairs teams prepare to serve as the cadre for assisting indigenous authorities in civil and political matters. During this phase, special police focus on human intelligence to exploit ethnographic terrain so as to penetrate the insurgent infrastructure and exploit sources of information. Additionally, the government develops and implements political, social, and economic reforms to hit at underlying social grievances. In the military second phase, state forces advance from out of the periphery of the government-controlled base into the areas selected for pacification. Here, they sweep the area of active insurgents using clear and hold tactics. As

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<sup>134</sup> Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, 216; and Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr., "How to Win in Iraq," *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2005; online at <http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20050901faessay84508/andrew-f-krepinevich-jr/how-to-win-in-iraq.html>; accessed 6 June 2006.

<sup>135</sup> Krepinevich, "How to Win in Iraq."

<sup>136</sup> Gallieni developed and employed his *tache d'huile* strategy in 1895 during French colonial actions in Vietnam. See Frederick Quinn, *The French Overseas Empire* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002), 144; and Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, 175.



government control is reasserted, the state forces pass authority for control of the population to various police, paramilitary, and civil defense forces. Finally, in the third and final stabilization phase, special police work with paramilitary and state forces to eliminate insurgent infrastructure, while local police maintain security so that civil affairs teams can work with local authorities to implement additional programs aimed at improving governance, health care, education, and political participation. Essentially, pacification amounts to using a secure government base to expand state operations into a number of adjacent areas for the purpose of separating more insurgents from the populace while eliminating their infrastructure, and then consolidating state control by earning popular allegiance.<sup>137</sup>

In implementing a classic pacification campaign, the state must judiciously employ all of its capabilities since the high demand for limited manpower and material creates serious competition for resources. To facilitate effective command and control over widespread pacification efforts, operations must be distributed among a vast array of networked units.<sup>138</sup> As Gallieni points out, pacification planners and individual units must conduct detailed cartographic and ethnographic analysis so that, to the maximum extent possible, the execution of pacification remains congruent with the preexisting social, political, and economic patterns of the population.<sup>139</sup> Areas targeted for pacification must be selected with care so as not to overextend the state. However, since the state simply cannot abandon lesser-contested regions lest the insurgents be given sanctuary, special operations forces must continually pressure such territory to garner intelligence and early warning. In areas selected for imminent pacification, special police must penetrate the insurgent infrastructure to obtain the intelligence necessary to appropriately plan the effort. Additionally, indigenous information services must construct and maintain databases to permit the sharing of vast quantities of intelligence and ethnographic information. In lesser-contested areas, indigenous military forces with imbedded American advisers initiate offensive operations using clear and hold tactics to separate the insurgents from the population. To delouse areas more infested with active

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<sup>137</sup> Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, 13, 24, and 66; and Krepinevich, "How to Win in Iraq."

<sup>138</sup> Metz and Millen, 25.

<sup>139</sup> Quinn, 144.

insurgents, larger units of general-purpose ground forces may be applied to the problem, as long as they are broken up into smaller formations, and subsequently dispersed for follow-on stabilization. Once state control is firmly reestablished within a given area, national police must assume responsibility, and immediately begin training local police and paramilitary forces to assert state control. Simultaneously, civil affairs teams must work with local civilian authorities to facilitate efficient governance, accelerate ongoing reforms, and increase political participation. As always, special police must continue isolating and infiltrating insurgent cells in the newly pacified territory, gathering more actionable intelligence while recruiting local people to actively do the same. To detect and fix insurgent incursions from adjacent areas not yet pacified, indigenous military forces must patrol the periphery. When insurgent guerrillas are identified, mobile quick reaction forces must employ swarming tactics to fix and finish the insurgent menace before it can disappear into the underground.<sup>140</sup> In the final analysis, the mechanization of pacification requires the use of both static and mobile forces. While the former maintain responsibility for the collective area comprising the “oil spot” of pacification, the latter provide the capability to counter insurgent thrusts wherever they are encountered.<sup>141</sup>

Although the execution of a classic pacification campaign may seem straightforward at first glance, the reality is that it is usually far more difficult to implement than this brief discussion might suggest. As Baritz uncovers in her review of the American performance in Vietnam, several problems typically hamper American efforts in this regard. First, to the degree that guerrilla attacks can incite an American reaction in kind, the risk of unintended consequences often generates more harm than good. In the end, Americans must take heed of Galula’s admonition that the COIN practitioner must always take care not to antagonize the people, even if sparing the population means accepting greater personal risk.<sup>142</sup> Second, because most members of the American military lack cultural and ideological awareness, the required capability to navigate diverse ethnographic terrain is usually quite limited. Third, by tending to place

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<sup>140</sup> Krepinevich, “How to Win in Iraq.”

<sup>141</sup> Galula xxvi.

<sup>142</sup> Galula, vii.

pacification under the aegis of the military, the temptation of trying to solve political problems with purely military solutions often translates into a failure to address the underlying social grievances. As Komer observes, the reason for this is simple: “If you are going to get a program going, you are only going to be able to do it by stealing from the military.”<sup>143</sup> Fourth, because the American military is, in fact, the world’s premier conventional military, it too often resorts to the inappropriate use of firepower over manpower in its own image and likeness.<sup>144</sup> Finally, as Krepinevich notes, Americans lack suitable metrics by which to gage the overall progress of pacification, forcing leaders, quite literally, to muddle their way through it.<sup>145</sup> For airmen with their traditional vision of the “kinetic kill,” their inability to translate influence upon the human condition increasingly obfuscates the assessment of effects already rendered, as well as the determination of those still needed.<sup>146</sup> In the final analysis, the effective COIN practitioner will likely have to trade old-fashioned metrics such as body counts and target counts for more state-of-the-art market metrics that measure to what degree the supply of various COIN and insurgent activities satisfy their demand.<sup>147</sup>

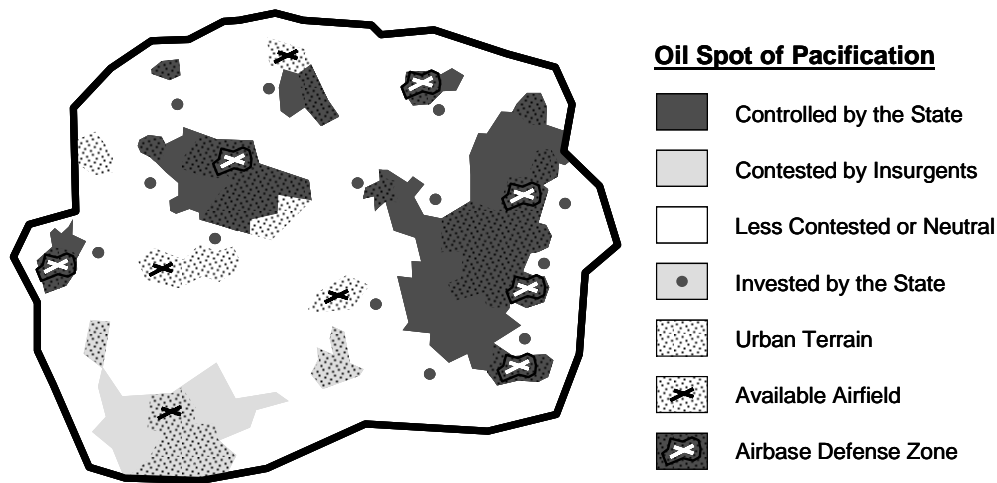


Figure 1. Initial “Oil Spot” of Pacification.

<sup>143</sup> Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, 217.

<sup>144</sup> Baritz, 244 and 268.

<sup>145</sup> Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr. *The War in Iraq: An Interim Assessment* (Washington D.C.: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2005), 6.

<sup>146</sup> Robyn Read, “Effects-Based Airpower for Small Wars: Iraq after Major Combat,” *Air & Space Power Journal*, Spring 2005, 104.

<sup>147</sup> Krepinevich, “How to Win in Iraq.”

So given all of the above, how should airmen think about pacification at the strategic level? Reference the initial “oil spot” of pacification in Figure 3. Here, an insurgency has emerged in the predominantly urban areas of the southwestern region of a notional state, as indicated by the lightly shaded region. The state, with its capital city in the east and several other major urban areas strung out across the northern half of the territory, possesses the loyalty and allegiance of a substantial percentage of the population, as is to be expected. Since this dark “oil spot” on the territory comprises the state’s initial base area, police and military forces immediately move to assert government control throughout, while the air force establishes airbases at six of ten airfields which reside within the base area. Around each of these airbases, the air force establishes an airbase defense zone, within which the expeditionary airbase commander retains sole authority and responsibility for security and stabilization, or in other words, pacification. As the state consolidates its control of the population within this base area, it selects and prepares particular areas adjacent to the oil spot for further pacification. Subsequently, special police and military forces invest those areas, such that over time, the oil spot of pacification expands to consume greater quantities of both the contested territory and the disputed political space. Of course, while the state consolidates and expands its base, the insurgents do the same thing. What is key for both is to expand the base, as rapidly as possible. Thus, after some protracted period of time, the situation evolves to such an extent that most of the contested territory is consumed by either the expanded oil spot of pacification or the insurgency itself, as indicated in Figure 4.

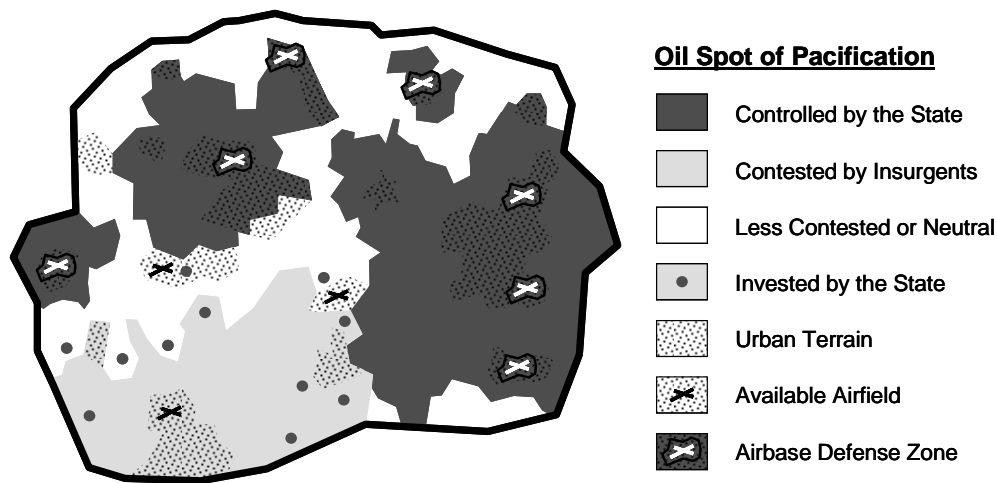


Figure 2. Expanded “Oil Spot” of Pacification.

As the expanding oil spot begins to come into contact with those areas most contested by the insurgency, the struggle between the insurgents and the state becomes more direct in nature. However, since the state does not possess sufficient resources to be everywhere at once, less contested or neutral zones without urban areas or airfields must remain unoccupied, particularly in those portions of the territory where the insurgency does not threaten. As previously mentioned, special operations forces may periodically apply pressure here, but they principally focus on investing those areas selected for imminent pacification—areas in the southwestern portion of the state either bordering or within the contested territory. Although airfields in lesser-contested areas provide tempting potential airbases, the air force refrains from moving in prematurely until such time as active insurgents operating in the adjacent areas have been successfully routed. Of the two airfields in the south central portion of the state’s lesser-contested territory, the western most will likely be the next to be pacified since military forces are already invested there. As for the eastern most, until adjacent areas are less contested, it should best be avoided. Thus, airmen can see from this notional example how the oil spot of pacification slowly expands to consume the entire contested territory.

So what are the principal takeaways for airmen regarding a classic pacification campaign? First, to maximize adaptability so as to win what Steven Metz and Raymond Millen call the “learning contest,” the state must employ its police and military forces using “a networked structure with central coordination but local autonomy.”<sup>148</sup> In other words, by deploying static forces into selected small areas across the territory, decentralized execution of distributed operations at the local level provides individual commanders with sufficient authority and responsibility to do what must be done to pacify their portion of the larger contested territory.<sup>149</sup> Thus, apart from providing initial direction, updated guidance, and requested logistics, higher authorities should stay out of the fight to the maximum extent possible. Second, state forces must move rapidly to consolidate their base by securing those areas that enjoy significant popular support. By

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<sup>148</sup> Metz and Millen, 25. Additionally, Frank Hoffman asserts in his article, “Lessons from Lebanon: Hezbollah and Hybrid Wars” (E-mail to Foreign Policy Research Institute, 29 August 2006) that hybrid insurgent warfare fought by both conventional and unconventional methods requires distributed operations directed by small unit leaders.

<sup>149</sup> Galula refers to the collective deployment of small units of static forces throughout the contested territory during pacification as simply, the “grid.” See Galula, xxvi.

so doing, the state allows the oil spot to set fast in the fabric of society. Third, all other things being equal, the state should select priority areas for pacification based on the potential sources of strength that come from occupying the selected territory. Consistent with this concept, airmen should seek to establish airbases in those areas that are state controlled, neutral, or less contested, in order of priority, so as to permit the most unfettered air operations. If the choice comes down to two airfields in areas equally contested, then airmen should consider which one is more populated or less threatened by adjacent contested territory. Fourth, with respect to expanding the oil spot, state forces should proceed by the path of least resistance. Metaphorically, as the waters of state control fill the disputed political space from the bottom up, the islands of insurgency slowly shrink until such time as they are overwhelmed and disappear altogether. Finally, since airmen best understand all that is required to deliver unfettered air operations, the airman that serves as the airbase commander should also serve as the ground commander for that portion of the territory comprising the airbase defense zone.<sup>150</sup> In accordance with the concept of distributed operations, the airbase commander should therefore possess all authority and responsibility for pacification efforts within his designated area. So if this is the case with COIN in classic pacification, then the prudent airman must next ponder how best to shape the expeditionary Air Force so as to deliver appropriate capabilities to future airbase commanders.

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<sup>150</sup> Holmes, Spacy, Busch, and Resse assert that the responsibility and authority of zone command should be granted to the component commander within the zone who possesses the most stringent security requirements. Arguably, in any zone possessing an airbase, that component commander would be an airman. See Robert H. Holmes, Bradley D. Spacy, John M. Busch, and Gregory J. Reese, "The Air Force's New Ground War," *Air & Space Power Journal*, Fall 2006, 45.

## **IV. SHAPING THE EXPEDITIONARY AIR FORCE**

If expeditionary airbase commanders are to assume authority and responsibility for pacification in those zones containing their respective airbases, then airmen must find better ways and means to control the population, dismantle enemy infrastructure, and counter the enemy force. To meet the challenges posed by insurgent warfare, the Air Force must seek more human solutions to what are inherently human problems. Fortunately, by leveraging the intrinsic capabilities of its own human capital, the Air Force can develop and deploy expeditionary airpower constructed on the strong foundation of aviation advisors, security forces, and civil affairs airmen. In so doing, airmen could significantly improve the efficacy of airpower in COIN by shaping the expeditionary Air Force to play its rightful role in campaigns of pacification.

### **A. AVIATION ADVISORS**

The first of three ways in which the Air Force can harness the power of airmen for insurgent warfare is to bolster its current cadre of aviation advisors. While COIN may belong primarily to the realm of ground forces, the historical record clearly demonstrates that airpower will play a role in almost every bout with insurgents, albeit in a mostly supporting capacity. Since many developing states faced with insurgency need and want airpower capabilities—surveillance, airlift, and close air support—that they do not already possess, the expeditionary Air Force can and should seize upon the opportunity to build partnering relationships so as to help them meet that end. Additionally, since traditional airpower roles will likely be of limited value in the struggle for legitimacy, aviation advisors can help indigenous air forces tailor their existing capabilities to assist their respective governments in administering state control, both politically and militarily.<sup>151</sup> In order to accomplish these two broad functions, as David Dean notes, aviation advisors will execute their missions at three different levels of activity: assistance in non-combat training; integration with ongoing air operations; and direct intervention for foreign internal defense.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Checkmate and Deep Blue, 61.

<sup>152</sup> David J. Dean, "The USAF in Low-Intensity Conflict: The Special Air Warfare Center," Air University review, January-February 1985; online at <http://www.airpower.maxwell.af.mil/airchronicles/aureview/1985/jan-feb/dean.html>; accessed 4 September 05.

According to Wray Johnson, the Air Force has developed its aviation advisors as a “total package” concept combining security assistance with adaptive “in-country” training to advise, train, and assist foreign air forces in the employment and sustainment of air operations.<sup>153</sup> Addressing the “totality of airpower,” detachments of aviation advisors comprise an effective team of airmen from across various specialties, to include one or more of the following: operations, maintenance, logistics, munitions, life support, safety, airbase defense, medical, command and control, and airfield management.<sup>154</sup> To prepare aviation advisors to work with indigenous forces during COIN, education and training focuses on irregular warfare, foreign internal defense, intercultural communications, psychological operations, and a strategic foreign language applicable to a specific region. Additionally, as William Downs notes, aviation advisors must develop intimate familiarity with local people and culture.<sup>155</sup> Ultimately, aviation advisors provide the expeditionary Air Force with a cadre of politico-military professionals who are both culturally and politically astute enough to contribute to insurgent warfare.<sup>156</sup>

So how does an enhanced cadre of aviation advisors help improve the efficacy of airpower in COIN? As one study by RAND lays it out, aviation advisors perform a number of functions that help the Air Force meet insurgency’s challenges for airpower. First, by deploying into the contested territory for foreign internal defense, aviation advisors help develop understanding of a particular insurgency by gaining an insider’s perspective of the partner state’s strengths and weaknesses, as well as those of the insurgents.<sup>157</sup> Additionally, as first arrivers into the contested territory, aviation advisors effectively open the door for subsequent packages of more substantial airpower, thereby helping the larger Air Force secure its access to the fight. Because aviation advisors operating “in-country” can observe the partner state’s most pressing needs, they can synchronize assistance and cooperation to ensure that bilateral relationships remain

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<sup>153</sup> Wray R. Johnson, “Wither Aviation Foreign Internal Defense?” *Aerospace Power Journal*, Spring 1997, 79.

<sup>154</sup> Vick, Grissom, Rosenau, Grill, and Mueller, 113-114.

<sup>155</sup> William Brain Downs, “Unconventional Airpower,” *Air & Space Power Journal*, Spring 2005, 20.

<sup>156</sup> Wray R. Johnson, “Wither Aviation Foreign Internal Defense?” *Aerospace Power Journal*, Spring 1997, 80.

<sup>157</sup> Vick, Grissom, Rosenau, Grill, and Mueller, 93



healthy.<sup>158</sup> To the degree that this is successfully accomplished, aviation advisors can continue to work through, by and with indigenous air forces to achieve a common set of objectives. As Dean emphasizes, aviation advisors often make their greatest in-roads into the disputed political space by executing various civil affairs projects to improve local conditions throughout the contested territory.<sup>159</sup> Clearly, aviation advisors have their biggest impact by building state capacity in the following to ways. Politically, through their own professional example, aviation advisors inculcate indigenous military forces with a profound respect for the judicious application of military force in accordance with accepted legal authority. Militarily, they improve indigenous military forces by not only improving tactical and operational competence, but also by cultivating an appreciation for the more appropriate methods afforded by using the indirect approach.<sup>160</sup> Finally, by leading professional discourse on the important topic of insurgent warfare and helping to develop cultural awareness applicable to theaters rife with insurgency, aviation advisors help posture the expeditionary Air Force to fulfill its potential role in classic pacification.<sup>161</sup>

While Air Force Special Operations Command already maintains a cadre of aviation advisors in the 6th Special Operations Squadron, as Downs laments, the Air Force has too often left the training, advising, and assisting of foreign air forces to other less appropriate personnel, such as contractors.<sup>162</sup> If the use of specially trained advisors really does mark a COIN best practice, as Kalev Sepp asserts, then Air Force aviation advisors ought to lead the way to the degree that airpower capabilities need to be developed for application in a foreign contested territory.<sup>163</sup> Thus, the Air Force needs to bolster this select cadre of airmen, and then deploy them to the contested territory at the earliest opportunity. By so doing, the expeditionary Air Force gains better understanding through greater access; additionally, it helps occupy the disputed political space more appropriately, while enhancing state capacity to defeat the insurgents with legitimacy.

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<sup>158</sup> Vick, Grissom, Rosenau, Grill, and Mueller, 92

<sup>159</sup> Dean, "The USAF in Low-Intensity Conflict."

<sup>160</sup> Vick, Grissom, Rosenau, Grill, and Mueller, 90.

<sup>161</sup> Downs, 22.

<sup>162</sup> Downs, 22.

<sup>163</sup> Kalev I. Sepp, "Best Practices in Counterinsurgency," *Military Review*, May-June 2005, 10.

## **B. SECURITY FORCES**

The second way in which the Air Force can harness the power of airmen for COIN is to continue building up of its own security forces while developing and evolving better concepts of operation for airbase defense. To the degree that success in COIN depends upon operations through, by, and with local people—where they reside at ground level—then security forces, practicing law enforcement techniques, likely represent the best potential capability for expeditionary airpower to play a more direct role in classic pacification.<sup>164</sup>

Since the beginning of the Global War on Terrorism, the American military has found itself deployed to numerous austere locations for all sorts of operations. To the extent that airpower has played a role, the expeditionary Air Force has deployed airmen to support air operations at expeditionary airbases throughout the contested territory. Consisting of relatively large airfields located near urban centers of population, these expeditionary airbases—with all their airmen, aircraft, and logistics—have rapidly emerged as primary targets for insurgents hoping to undermine American credibility and commitment. In fact, since the outset of hostilities in Iraq over three years ago, the number of standoff attacks against American airbases has now surpassed 1500.<sup>165</sup>

But can more and better security forces really stop such attacks, or would it not be better to just focus on using the most lethal means available to kill every potential insurgent? On the basis of his experiences in Algeria, Galula provides a well-informed opinion when he observes that since “the insurgent does not hesitate to use terror, the counterinsurgent [must] engage in police work.”<sup>166</sup> But as Searle cautions, military forces typically make poor policemen for several different reasons. Not only do they lack the investigative skills required to track down insurgents, they also rely heavily on coercive tactics, too often intimidating local populations, and thereby limiting the flow of information. To make matters worse, when military forces do counterattack, the lack of

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<sup>164</sup> As Cordesman puts it, “the actual COIN battle is local and as dependent on police and effective governance as effective military forces.” See Cordesman, 24.

<sup>165</sup> Holmes, Spacy, Busch, and Reese, 43.

<sup>166</sup> Galula, viii.

actionable intelligence coupled with heavy weapons only serves to exacerbate an already difficult situation by often producing unintended casualties and excessive collateral damage.<sup>167</sup>

Fortunately, forward-thinking airmen in the security forces have already begun developing new ways to not only protect expeditionary airbases, but to also influence the overall COIN effort. In his thesis on the topic, David Young outlines an innovative approach to airbase security that neatly folds into the concept of classic pacification. Calling for persistent airbase defense “outside the wire,” Young advocates coupling traditional law enforcement techniques with precision firepower to find, fix, and finish insurgents within a civil-military context. Based on controlling the population, dismantling enemy infrastructure, and countering the enemy force, this new approach relies on the following five principles: act first, unity of effort, protection, penetration, and perseverance.<sup>168</sup> By briefly analyzing each of these in light of insurgency’s challenges for airpower, one can rapidly see how security forces provide one of expeditionary airpower’s best answers to the insurgents.

Security forces “act first” in two distinctive ways. First, to the degree that they assist beddown planning for expeditionary airpower, they help select airfields in lesser-contested areas so as to maximize the effectiveness of future airbase operations. In addition to determining which airfields to use as airbases, security forces also help determine the boundaries of airbase defense zones by outlining the security requirements for all of the selected airfields.<sup>169</sup> Second, by deploying to the expeditionary airbase at the earliest opportunity, but no later than the first arrival of aircraft, security forces proactively establish security throughout the airbase defense zone. By so doing, security forces seize the initiative, thereby denying the insurgents the opportunity of an

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<sup>167</sup> Thomas R. Searle, “Counter guerrilla Warfare for Airmen,” College of Aerospace Doctrine, Research, and Education Quick-Look 2003-01; online at <http://research.airuniv.edu>; accessed 6 June 2006.

<sup>168</sup> Young, 100.

<sup>169</sup> The new battlefield control measure known as a base boundary describes terrain that the airbase commander should influence since it includes the battlespace from which the enemy could attack. As Holmes, Spacy, Busch, and Reese note, the optimal situation is to have this base boundary and the airbase defense zone encompass the same terrain. Typically, the base boundary extends to a distance of five kilometers from the airfield environment. Due to the lethality of modern indirect fire systems, however, airmen rightly argue that the base boundary needs to be pushed out to a distance commensurate with the maximum range of enemy indirect fire systems that could range the airbase. See Holmes, Spacy, Busch, and Reese, 44.

unopposed first attack. In any case, the proactive early action of security forces generates a two-fold effect. First, by mitigating risks it allows commanders to assume risks smartly, thereby increasing airpower's access into theater. Second, to the degree that security forces early action preempts the insurgent threat, it builds state capacity by enabling unfettered air operations from the outset of operations.

Possessing the most stringent security concerns of anyone operating within the airbase defense zone, the airbase commander rightfully serves as the overall zone commander.<sup>170</sup> To create unity of effort, the airbase commander establishes common security objectives in coordination with local civilian authorities. Then, to meet these objectives, security forces meld with local indigenous police and paramilitary forces to form one cohesive team.<sup>171</sup> To the degree that this cohesion produces a collective effort for local security within the surrounding community, the information sharing and combined operations that come with that effort all serve to increase bilateral understanding. Additionally, by ensuring that all components are operating as one distributed team, unity of effort secures a more effective occupation of the disputed political space by the airbase security team.

To ensure protection across the breadth and depth of the local community, security forces maximize presence across the airbase defense zone by dispersing numerous small teams for distributed operations. By sending security forces outside the wire and into the local community, the expansion of their operational terrain not only increases their freedom of action in the physical sense, but also in the informational and moral realms, thereby reducing the insurgents' freedom of action by a corresponding amount.<sup>172</sup> This persistent presence of "law enforcement officers" walking their beat effectively separates the insurgents from the population. Additionally, the constant image of security forces moving about the local community solidifies state control through a benevolent occupation of the disputed political space. To the degree that protection prevents or reduces insurgent attacks, it also guards the soft underbelly of

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<sup>170</sup> Holmes, Spacy, Busch, and Reese, 45.

<sup>171</sup> Young, 101.

<sup>172</sup> Young, 103.

negative public opinion.<sup>173</sup> Finally, by training and advising indigenous police and paramilitary forces to execute security operations with due regard for the civil-military environment, security forces also help build state capacity.

To penetrate the insurgent underground, security forces use investigative police techniques such as social network analysis and undercover surveillance. By identifying the weakest links in various insurgent networks, security forces can either exploit the insurgency for additional information, or isolate the insurgents from the support of the population.<sup>174</sup> Either way, working through, by, and with co-opted indigenous police and paramilitary forces, security forces slowly dismantle insurgent infrastructure to generate a three-fold, compounding effect. First, by cultivating and exploiting additional sources of information through human interaction, security forces produce actionable intelligence by finding and fixing the insurgents. Second, actionable intelligence enables security forces to use swarming tactics in concert with discriminate force to finish the known insurgents. Finally, by accomplishing the first two steps above, security forces remove popular fear of insurgent reprisal thereby producing increasing sources of information and less resistance to the state's control of the population.

The perseverance of security forces helps achieve moral authority by demonstrating to the local population that American airmen “protect” for the benefit of the people. By committing to the long-term security of not only the airbase, but its surrounding community as well, perseverance sends the message that American airmen will not be outlasted.<sup>175</sup> Thus, through the application of constant pressure, perseverance enables airmen to occupy the disputed political space more thoroughly over time, thereby shrinking the insurgency through a slow constriction of its operational terrain.

To enable the security forces to assume their prominent role in pacification, the expeditionary Air Force must immediately take the following three steps. First, to enable the security forces to move beyond the perimeter and out into the community so as to occupy the disputed political space, more personnel must be trained and equipped. Simultaneously, the Air Force must find more effective ways and means to maximize the

<sup>173</sup> Young, 101.

<sup>174</sup> Young, 102.

<sup>175</sup> Young, 103.

influence of the forces made available. Second, airmen must be empowered to solve local problems with local civilian authorities; therefore, the Air Force must decentralize command and control while simultaneously pushing distributed operations. Third, to permit security forces to effectively partner with local indigenous police and paramilitary forces, assigned airmen must receive appropriate language skills and cultural awareness training.

In the end, as Sepp asserts, “the intelligence operations that help detect terrorist insurgents for arrest and prosecution are the single most important practice protecting the population from threats to its security.” Combined with population-control measures that normal law enforcement officers regularly implement, these actions of security forces represent two of the best practices in COIN.<sup>176</sup> Thus, as Young claims, it is the security forces’ focus on law enforcement techniques that makes them better suited for pacification than any other military force, apart from special operations forces. As long as they keep this in mind and avoid the temptation of becoming just another conventional ground force, security forces really do represent expeditionary airpower’s most significant contribution to COIN in the twenty-first century.

### **C. CIVIL AFFAIRS AIRMEN**

The final way in which the Air Force can harness the power of airmen for pacification is to establish and train its own cadre of civil affairs airmen. Currently, the Air Force possesses no capability for civil-military operations; instead, it relies on the Army to make civil affairs teams available when the Air Force thinks it needs them. Herein lies the problem. Many airmen see civil-military operations as the responsibility of ground forces, and since they are airmen they should not be concerned.<sup>177</sup> This, however, denies the fact that all air operations start and stop at some place on *terra firma*, usually at an expeditionary airbase commanded by an airman and located in or near an urban area, with a substantial local populace residing just outside the wire. Thus, like it or not, civil-military operations will occur, and airbase commanders will be responsible.

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<sup>176</sup> Sepp, 9.

<sup>177</sup> In the following statement, Searle provides a great example of the typical airman’s attitude toward civil affairs. “Ground forces naturally take the lead in civil affairs projects and sorting good-guys from bad-guys, and airpower seems to have only a supporting role.” See Thomas R. Searle, “Rediscovering Air-centric Counter Insurgency,” Quick-Look 04-14; online at <http://research.airuniv.edu>; accessed 6 June 2006

If the need for unfettered air operations fails to motivate airmen to work civil-military operations so as to pacify the area around the airbase, then perhaps sufficient motivation could be found in the fact that two of Sepp's best practices in COIN lie in the realm of civil-military operations. By building state capacity to ensure that the populace gets life-sustaining essentials considered basic human rights, and by encouraging popular participation in the local political process, civil-military operations could help expeditionary airpower successfully complete the occupation of the disputed political space at least in local communities adjacent to expeditionary airbases.<sup>178</sup> But what exactly are civil military operations?

Interestingly enough, civil-military operations are defined as "activities of a commander." Thus, they explicitly belong to the realm of that individual responsible for pacification within the airbase defense zone. Notably, civil-military operations establish, maintain, influence, and exploit relations between military forces and the civilians segments of society in a friendly, neutral, or hostile area so as to facilitate military operations for the purpose of achieving American objectives in peace or war.<sup>179</sup> Thus, to facilitate unfettered air operations, civil affairs airmen would work through, by, and with the local civilian authorities to provide population and resource control, foreign humanitarian assistance, civilian information management, nation assistance, and support to civil administration.<sup>180</sup>

Through stabilization and reconstruction, civil affairs airmen could help sustain the security of local people so as to permit more effective control of the population, and the resources that flow from it. Thus, by appealing to the hearts-and-minds of indigenous people, civil affairs airmen could complete the isolation of insurgents from the people. By partnering expeditionary airpower with local civil authorities, civil affairs airmen

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<sup>178</sup> Sepp, 9-10.

<sup>179</sup> U.S. Army, Field Manual 41-10, *Civil Affairs Operations* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1993); online at [http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/policy/army/fm/4110\\_2000/ch1.htm](http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/policy/army/fm/4110_2000/ch1.htm); accessed 16 September 2006.

<sup>180</sup> Based on discussions with an Army civil affairs officer, these five core capabilities might serve as the central focus of civil affairs airmen.

could help promote the rule of law, economic stability, governance, health and welfare, infrastructure, education, and public information.<sup>181</sup>

So how does creating a cadre of civil affairs airmen help address insurgency's challenges for airpower? First, by working through, by, and with local civilian authorities to solve human problems for real people, civil affairs airmen could significantly promote understanding of benevolent American interests among the population. To the degree that successful civil-military operations would precede and enable the deployment of expeditionary airpower, then civil military airmen could also help assure airpower's access to the fight. Second, through population and resource control as well as civil information management, and more importantly, by improving the lives of native people primarily through foreign humanitarian assistance, civil affairs airmen could make great strides in advancing the occupation of the disputed political space. Third, through nation assistance and support to civil administration, civil affairs airmen could help build sufficient state capacity so that the people of the contested territory would cast their lot in with the government, effectively defeating the insurgency. Finally, because civil affairs airmen would have to be skilled administrators with focused cultural awareness and language capability, they would significantly help posture the expeditionary Air Force for its newly expanded role influencing people during COIN, and more particularly, through pacification.

Clearly, civil affairs airmen could take the lead in many aspects of COIN by leveraging all human and material resources to help local government meet the needs of native people. By supporting the efforts of civilians to create conditions for long-term security and prosperity so as to render those areas inhospitable to insurgents, civil affairs airmen represent the unrealized third component in a triad of airmen poised for COIN and pacification.<sup>182</sup> Ultimately, the expeditionary Air Force must remember what Cordesman notes in his lessons from Iraq. Insurgent warfare "is as much political as it is military. Thus, it requires political action, aid in governance, economic development, and attention

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<sup>181</sup> U.S. Army, "Operational Concept for Civil Affairs Operations FDU 05-01," Memorandum provided to the author by an Army civil affairs officer, 16 February 2005.

<sup>182</sup> Thomas R. Searle, "Organizing Air and Space Power for Current CENTAF Operations," Quick-Look 04-4; online at <http://research.airuniv.edu>; accessed 6 June 2006.



to the ideological and political dimension.”<sup>183</sup> If the Air Force really intends to get serious about COIN, then it needs to get serious about civil affairs, too.

As the recent actions by Hezbollah in its war with Israel indicate, the enemy has learned this lesson well.

Using the grass-roots program, Hezbollah has been able to convert the ignored and the disposed Shiite underclass of southern Lebanon into a powerful lever in regional politics. It understands that the basic need in any human conflict, whether or not it involves physical violence, is to take care of one’s political base before striking out at the opponent.... One must be willing to work in the underbelly of local politics, as Hezbollah has done in Lebanon. It is the politics of getting people jobs, picking up trash and getting relatives out of jail. Engaging in this politics has the potential to do much more than merely ingratiate an armed force with a local population.<sup>184</sup>

So what actions must the Air Force take to get civil affairs airmen into the fight? First, it must immediately stand up its own civil affairs program and associated specialty. To implement such a program, the Air Force should quite literally steal from the Army since their program is time-tested and combat proven. The only changes the Air Force might need to make would be to tailor the size of its civil affairs cadre and some of the specific operational concepts to support civil military operations around expeditionary airbases. Second, the Air Force must find the personnel to train and equip. Although current reductions in overall force strength will likely generate resistance to any new requirement, one solution might be to create civil affairs authorizations in the Air Force Reserve. Third, as personnel are received, the Air Force must develop an organizational structure that delivers regional focus while retaining maximum flexibility. Fourth, the Air Force must find effective ways to train civil affairs airmen for their new responsibilities. To minimize cost and maximize interoperability, the best solution probably is to train them with the Army. Finally, to prepare civil affairs airmen for operations in specific areas, cultural awareness and language training would need to be provided. Although the creation of civil affairs airmen seems like a huge investment, the

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<sup>183</sup> Cordesman, 24.

<sup>184</sup> In his article, “Learning from Hezbollah,” (*Washington Post*, 12 August 2006), Brian E. Humphreys...

reality is that in COIN it is only hedging one's bet. And let there be no doubt, the stakes are very high. As Hoffman warns, "ignoring the civil side of COIN... [is like] playing chess while the enemy is playing poker."<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> Hoffman, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Iraq*, 4.

## **V. AIRMEN IN PACIFICATION**

When it comes to the application of airpower in COIN, airmen remain amazingly aloof due to their own air-centric perspective. They typically do not think much about pacification, because to a great degree, it is and always has been associated with ground forces. Moreover, since insurgent warfare is short on targets and long on humanity, the struggle presents few opportunities for airmen to use real-time targeting and standoff precision firepower to showcase airpower's newfound strategic decisiveness. Since traditional airpower only seems to impact COIN on the margins, airmen intellectually detach themselves from the fight, content to loiter high above the fray, offering little more than more of the same—taking pictures, hauling cargo, and delivering firepower to anyone on the ground, and in the fight, who might have an urgent request that they can answer.

### **A. CONTRIBUTIONS**

In reality, the air-centric perspective denies the experience of expeditionary airpower in COIN. The fact is, as plainly demonstrated by the historical record, that airpower will play a substantial role in any American effort to thwart insurgents, albeit in a mostly supporting capacity. Consequently, in order to provide those ground forces principally engaged with the most responsive and effective support possible, the expeditionary Air Force will most assuredly deploy en masse to numerous airfields across the contested territory. As these airfields rapidly transform into expeditionary airbases with the arrival of American airmen, the airbase commander will necessarily establish an airbase defense zone to protect American lives, property, and interests. Since these airbases will most often exist in largely urban areas, the surrounding local communities will present both a challenge and an opportunity. Clearly, American airbases—with their high-dollar aircraft, permanent facilities, storehouses of supplies, and concentrations of humanity—will present a tremendous security challenge as insurgents seek to capitalize on their value as lucrative targets. But just as clearly, the surrounding community will present an opportunity for airmen to contribute to COIN more directly—on the ground, outside the perimeter, and among the populace. And it's not as if airmen will not be there already. With an airbase defense zone extending from the airfield environment to a

distance equal to the maximum range of the insurgents' indirect fire systems, some force will have to occupy that zone, and someone will have to command that force. With the airfield environment driving security requirements, the airbase commander will rightly assume responsibility and authority for ensuring that security is established throughout the zone. Since local authorities will maintain a vested interest in what goes on in the airbase security zone, the airbase commander will establish his objectives and develop his plan in coordination with local authorities. To execute that plan, the airbase commander will rely on deployed airmen to fashion an airbase security team with indigenous police and paramilitary forces. Working together for common objectives, this team will control the population, dismantle insurgent infrastructure, and counter the insurgents. By employing a portfolio of influences within the context of pacification, airmen working through, by, and with the local people will not only secure the airbase, but more importantly, they will provide protection for the populace. As the wellbeing of local people translates into greater legitimacy for the state, the populace will increasingly provide information on the illegal activities of insurgents. So armed with information and a legitimate claim to the use of force, the airbase security team will complete the insurgents' demise. To enable airbase commanders to execute pacification to the limits of their authority, the expeditionary Air Force must rely on a three-legged triad of airmen employing aviation advisors, security forces, and civil affairs airmen to meet and beat the insurgents' challenges for airpower.

As the vanguard of expeditionary airpower, aviation advisors build relationships with indigenous forces, thereby improving access into theater while furthering bilateral understanding. Working through, by, and with indigenous air forces, they primarily build state capacity, ultimately legitimizing the state's use of force to quell the insurgency.

With the arrival of the expeditionary Air Force into the contested territory, security forces work hand-in-hand with indigenous police and paramilitary forces beyond the perimeter and within the community. Dispersing into a distributed network of small patrols, these airmen work the beat to control the population at ground level. By protecting the people, security forces solicit sufficient information from local citizenry to

dismantle insurgent infrastructure. As local citizens increasingly become credible sources of actionable intelligence, security forces swarm the insurgents to finish the insurgency.

In concert with these efforts, newly minted teams of civil affairs airmen provide stabilization and reconstruction within the contested territory. Working through, by, and with civil authorities on behalf of the airbase commander, civil affairs airmen build sufficient state capacity to ensure that expeditionary airpower not only defeats the insurgency, but also wins the peace.

## **B. ADDITIONAL BENEFITS**

While the greatest benefit of expeditionary airpower in COIN is, no doubt, its direct contribution to pacification, the focus on airmen waging COIN at the intrastate level also produces several additional benefits that are not intuitively obvious.

### **1. Economy of Force**

The use of security forces and civil affairs airman to secure airbase defense zones during pacification generates an economy of force that permits general-purpose ground forces to quell insurgency in the more contested areas. Due to current commitments in Iraq and Afghanistan, general-purpose ground forces will be stretched thin for the foreseeable future.<sup>186</sup> By choosing airfields in lesser-contested areas to be expeditionary airbases in accordance with classic pacification, force requirements for the security of airbase defense zones could be greatly reduced, thereby permitting security forces and civil affairs airmen to provide all the protection that is required. Where general-purpose ground forces already accomplish this function, the use of airmen would release these forces to perform COIN in the more contested areas. This would also permit airmen serving in undermanned Army specialties to be returned for service with the expeditionary Air Force.<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> Holmes, Spacy, Busch, and Reese, 51.

<sup>187</sup> Of the almost 30,000 airmen deployed for operations in Iraq and Afghanistan today, more than 1900 are filling combat positions in sixteen different specialties for the Army. See Air Force Association, "Critical Times for Air & Space Power: Air Force Association 2006 Statement of Policy"; online at [http://www.afa.org/AboutUs/PolicyIssues06\\_print.html](http://www.afa.org/AboutUs/PolicyIssues06_print.html); accessed 29 June 2006.

## **2. Strategic Leaders**

The operational experience of leading airmen during pacification provides future strategic leaders with the competence and agility to lead future Joint forces tasked for COIN. The principal reason airmen remain aloof with respect to COIN is that so few Air Force leaders, and even fewer midlevel officers, truly understand the nature of insurgent warfare. Although many have studied insurgency and COIN during their developmental education, most lack any real world experience trying to either control the population or dismantle insurgent infrastructure. By leading security forces and civil affairs airmen for COIN at the intrastate level, senior and midlevel officers gain invaluable exposure to combat decision-making in the civil-military context. Additionally, in their capacity as advisors to senior officers of indigenous air forces, aviation advisors gain the insider's perspective on strategic decision-making.

## **3. More Effective Airpower**

Successful pacification of the airbase defense zone renders the execution of traditional airpower more effective. To the degree that airmen can control the population and dismantle the insurgent infrastructure, they gain the intelligence to eliminate the insurgents. In the final analysis, the efficiency of air operations at the expeditionary airbase improves in direct correlation to the decline of insurgent activity within the airbase defense zone. Additionally, through their active participation in the overall pacification effort, airmen gain invaluable experience and insight into the nuances of the insurgency. By applying this increased awareness across the more traditional airpower roles and missions, it follows that airpower's support of other forces in the more contested zones will also improve.

## **4. Capabilities-Based Air Force**

Investing in the human capital of its own airmen to improve COIN capabilities allows the Air Force to truly develop a capabilities-based Air Force which is at once more ready to fight the insurgent threat but still dominant in the conventional arena. Because insurgent warfare is a human contest it requires a human solution. From the airman's perspective, however, that solution does not need to be applied everywhere, but rather only where the expeditionary Air Force maintains a substantial in-theater presence—at the expeditionary airbase. Thus, the investment in additional security

forces and civil affairs airman must be tailored such that it provides only that capability which might be required to support air operations in some nominal insurgency. Taking Iraq, for example, the Air Force could look at how many expeditionary airbases it maintains within the contested territory, then determine the required security forces and civil affairs capabilities on the basis of accomplishing pacification for that number of airbase defense zones. With respect to aviation advisors, the Air Force should look at the 6th Special Operations Squadron's ability to meet or exceed the demand for such capability, and then adjust the supply as required. Because personnel cost are always exorbitant, additional personnel requirements should be paid by shifting personnel from other specialties. With respect to executing such an option, clearly, the devil would be in the details.

Perhaps the greatest benefit of developing COIN capability through an appropriate investment in human capital is that it allows the Air Force to continue capitalizing its conventional capabilities according to its current roadmap. Since these capabilities are already applied to COIN fairly well, albeit in a mostly supporting capacity, the logic goes that the Air Force should not fix what is not broken. The fact of the matter is that because insurgent warfare, particularly at the intrastate level, is a largely human affair, there are simply limits to what traditional airpower can do, and that no amount of investment in advanced technology can overcome that fact. Thus, the expeditionary Air Force must not try to build a fleet of aircraft optimized for COIN, but rather should continue investing to preserve its current dominance in conventional warfare. As Lambeth notes, this dominance, wrought by stealth, precision, and information technology, finally permits airpower to deliver on the airman's promise of strategic decisiveness, but in ways not envisioned by the early advocates of strategic attack.<sup>188</sup> Instead of trying to defeat an enemy by attacking vital centers so as to destroy both the ability and will to resist, modern airpower produces a strategic decision by destroying the enemy's fielded conventional military forces as the precursor to strategic victory.<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>188</sup> Lambeth, 314.

<sup>189</sup> Lambeth, 320.

### **C. CONCLUSION**

In the final analysis, but for a small additional investment in the human capital of its own airmen, the Air Force needs to change little with respect to achieving its desired future capabilities. By so doing, the Air Force not only preserves its newfound ability to be strategically decisive against any fielded military force challenging America in conventional warfare, but by applying airmen to the problems of insurgent warfare, it also achieves greater efficacy in COIN, and, therefore, greater strategic relevance through its contributions to classic pacification. By ensuring that its airmen understand the nature of insurgent warfare, and then shaping expeditionary airpower in COIN so that those airmen can influence indigenous people, the Air Force can assure its continued relevance well into the twenty-first century.



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