

United States Marine Corps  
Command and Staff College  
Marine Corps University 2076 South Street  
Marine Corps Combat Development Command  
Quantico, Virginia 22134-5068

**MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES**

ADVISING FOREIGN FORCES: FORCE STRUCTURE IMPLICATIONS OF THE  
INDIRECT APPROACH TO IRREGULAR WARFARE

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

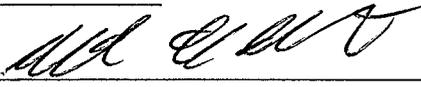
CDR Robert C. Muse, USN

AY 07-08

Mentor and Oral Defense Committee Member: 

Approved:

Date: 30 April 2008

Oral Defense Committee Member: 

Approved:

Date: 30 April 2008

# Report Documentation Page

Form Approved  
OMB No. 0704-0188

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

1. REPORT DATE <b>2008</b>		2. REPORT TYPE		3. DATES COVERED <b>00-00-2008 to 00-00-2008</b>	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE <b>Advising Foreign Forces: Force Structures Implications of the Indirect Approach to Irregular Warfare</b>				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S)				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) <b>United States Marine Corps, Command and-Staff College, Marine Corps University, Marine Corps Combat Development Command, 2076 South Street, Quantico, VA, 22134-5068</b>				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT <b>Approved for public release; distribution unlimited</b>					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT <b>Same as Report (SAR)</b>	18. NUMBER OF PAGES <b>29</b>	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT <b>unclassified</b>	b. ABSTRACT <b>unclassified</b>	c. THIS PAGE <b>unclassified</b>			

## **Executive Summary:**

**Title:** Advising Foreign Forces: Force Structure Implications of the Indirect Approach to Irregular Warfare.

**Author:** Commander Robert C. Muse, United States Navy

**Thesis:** The US Military has historically crafted ad-hoc solutions to the recurring problem of advising foreign military forces. The United States government must undertake a serious effort to craft a long term plan to address need for foreign military advisory capability.

**Discussion:** In order to prevail in the current global and regional conflicts and posture for future irregular threats, the United States military must expand its capacity to train, equip and advise indigenous forces; deploy and engage with partner nations; conduct irregular warfare; and support security, stability, transition and reconstruction operations. As a key element of a strategy to defeat insurgency, the capability to advise foreign military forces has taken on a new significance in planning the U.S. Military's future force structure. Doctrinally labeled Foreign Internal Defense (FID) the mission of advising foreign military forces has traditionally been assigned to the Special Operations Forces (SOF) under the command of the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM). In spite of the acknowledged importance of the mission the US Military has not demonstrated an institutional commitment to building the large scale apparatus necessary to optimize its advisory capacity. The US Military is currently sourcing the advisory missions in Iraq and Afghanistan in an ad-hoc manner, building teams of individual augmentees from the active components, the National Guard and the reserves. These individuals are usually selected based on timing rather than suitability for the mission, and they are trained in a manner that demonstrates little regard for the criticality of the skills required for mission success. With current force structure increases approved for both the United States Army and United States Marine Corps, the opportunity to craft a permanent solution to the problem of advisory capacity could be at hand.

**Conclusion:** Use of the pending DoD manpower increases to create a new advisory corps could institutionalize historical lessons learned and set conditions for long term success in the protracted war against global insurgency.

### DISCLAIMER

THE OPINIONS AND CONCLUSIONS EXPRESSED HEREIN ARE THOSE OF THE INDIVIDUAL STUDENT AUTHOR AND DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT THE VIEWS OF EITHER THE MARINE COPRS COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE OR ANY OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY. REFERENCES TO THIS STUDY SHOULD INCLUDE THE FOREGOING STATEMENT.

QUOTATION FROM, ABSTRACTION FROM, OR REPRODUCTION OF ALL OR ANY PART OF THIS DOCUMENT IS PERMITTED PROVIDED PROPER ACKNOWLEDGEMENT IS MADE.

## Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	ii
DISCLAIMER	iii
PREFACE	v
INTRODUCTION	2
HISOTORICAL PERSPECTIVES	4
KOREA	5
VIETNAM	7
RECENT EXPERIENCE: IRAQ	12
IMPLEMENTATIOIN	14
TOWARD REFORM	17
CITATIONS	21
BIBLIOGRAPHY	22

## *Preface*

The genesis of this research paper was a conversation that took place in Anbar Province, Iraq in February of 2005. As Commander of a Naval Special Warfare Task Unit I had been re-tasked by the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force-Arabian Peninsula (CJSOTF-AP) to assume a role in the mission to train, advise and assist Iraqi Security Forces in Anbar Province. Specifically my unit was directed to partner with a Military Transition Team (MiTT), an American a motorized infantry battalion and an Iraqi infantry battalion in an effort to overhaul the advisory mission that had failed to produce reliable Iraqi Security Forces in the province. The core MiTT, composed of ten officers and non-commissioned officers who had been with the Iraqi battalion for four months, would be augmented by twenty additional personnel from the partner American battalion. My team would provide guidance to the MiTT personnel on Foreign Internal Defense best practices and focus on training and advising the Iraqi battalion's scout platoon for reconnaissance, intelligence gathering and other specialized functions.

Prior to the commencement of our four-week scout platoon plan of instruction we requisitioned 40,000 rounds of ammunition for live fire training. One of the senior enlisted personnel from the core MiTT team questioned why we needed so much ammunition, stating that "you can't teach these guys to shoot, they think Allah guides their bullet." I asked the Sergeant how much shooting they had done with the Iraqis, and he replied that in the previous four months they had shot one magazine of thirty rounds each. At that point I realized how under prepared the MiTT personnel were for their mission. The core MiTT personnel were all individual augmentees who had two weeks preparation before joining their Iraqi battalion. They joined their Iraqi Battalion immediately prior to the assault on Fallujah in November 2004. The selection and training of the MiTT was clearly carried out on an ad-hoc basis. That fact

combined with a lack of talent on their part reduced the MiTT's role to that of liaison officers to the Iraqi leadership with minimal impact in terms of improving combat effectiveness or setting a positive operational example. Considering the fact that conventional US Military forces had executed the long-term advisory mission in Vietnam I was shocked by the ad-hoc nature of the selection and training of this team.

I set out on this research project to investigate the selection, training and preparation of personnel for the advisory mission. My initial goal was to raise awareness of this problem and propose methods to avoid fielding groups like the one I worked with in order to optimize the impact of the current mission. As my research progressed I realized that the US Military had repeated this pattern over time and my thinking in regard to the advisory mission was not original or new. My revised goal is to combine this research with my personal experience in order to lend an additional perspective to the discussion of academics and policy analysts who have recently called for institutional reform regarding the US Military's foreign military advisory capability.

## INTRODUCTION

This war requires the U.S. military to adopt unconventional and indirect approaches... to act with and through others to defeat common enemies – shifting from conducting activities ourselves to enabling partners to do more for themselves.<sup>1</sup>

- 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review

The 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review reflects a shift in emphasis for the defense establishment based on the challenges posed by irregular warfare. In order to prevail in the current global and regional conflicts and posture for future irregular threats, the United States military must expand its capacity to “train, equip and advise indigenous forces; deploy and engage with partner nations; conduct irregular warfare; and support security, stability, transition and reconstruction operations.”<sup>2</sup> As a key element of a strategy to defeat insurgency, the capability to advise foreign military forces has taken on a new significance in planning the US Military’s future force structure. Doctrinally labeled Foreign Internal Defense (FID) the mission of advising foreign military forces has traditionally been assigned to the Special Operations Forces (SOF) under the command of the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM). Given the global nature of the threat, the requirement for additional advisory capacity has been projected to grow significantly, potentially calling for teams to deploy long term in up to seventy countries.<sup>3</sup> The Army’s recently published counterinsurgency manual reflects the shift in scale, noting that:

The scope and scale of training programs today and the scale of programs likely to be required in the future has grown exponentially. While FID has been traditionally the primary responsibility of the special operating forces, training foreign forces is now a core competency of regular and reserve units of all services.<sup>4</sup>

In spite of the acknowledged importance of the mission the US Military has not demonstrated an institutional commitment to building the large scale apparatus necessary to optimize its advisory capacity. Despite nearly seven years of recent lessons learned advising

foreign military forces, the US Military is currently sourcing the advisory missions in Iraq and Afghanistan in an ad-hoc manor, building teams of individual augmentees from the active components, the National Guard and the reserves. These individuals are usually selected based on timing rather than suitability for the mission, and they are trained in a manner that demonstrates little regard for the criticality of the skills required for mission success. With current force structure increases approved for both the United States Army and United States Marine Corps, the opportunity to craft a permanent solution to the problem of advisory capacity could be at hand. Lieutenant Colonel John Nagl, noted counterinsurgency scholar and current active duty armor officer, has suggested that the Army should use up to 20,000 personnel from the approved increase to create a standing advisory corps.<sup>5</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Nagl's Battalion currently administers the training program for Military Transition Team (MiTT) personnel prior to their deployment to Iraq or Afghanistan, a position which provides him with unique insights into the adequacy of the current program. His vision for a new advisory corps would institutionalize the lessons learned from the last seven years and set conditions for long term success in the protracted war against global islamist insurgency. Others have suggested creating hybrid organizations of general-purpose forces organized for security cooperation missions, establishment of an advisory sub-specialty community, or further increases to the size of the Special Operations Forces to increase American capability to advise and assist foreign forces. Regardless of the specific solution, however, the historical thread of repeatedly crafting ad-hoc solutions to the recurring problem clearly demonstrates that the United States must undertake a serious effort to craft a long term plan to address need for foreign military advisory capability.

## HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

The United States Military has a long and mixed history of advising foreign military forces. Security assistance to foreign forces during World War II provided equipment and training to many American allies including Great Britain, France, Iran, China, the Soviet Union, and Latin America.<sup>6</sup> During the post war years Military Assistance Groups (MAGs) and Military Advisory Assistance Groups (MAAGs) offered leverage in the United States' bid for strategic influence in the cold war by continuing to provide equipment, training, advice and assistance to Greece, the Philippines, China, Iran, Japan, and Korea among others. The advisory mission would take on a new dimension with the outbreak of hostilities on the Korean peninsula and the effort of the Republic of Korea MAG (KMAG) to assist the Republic of Korea in major combat operations against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and the People's Republic of China (PRC). On the heels of the conclusion of the Korean conflict, the United States would establish the advisory mission in Vietnam in order to shore up the Republic of South Vietnam against a communist insurgency. From 1961 through 1973 US Military Advisors would play a major role in combat operations against the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese regular forces. In the 1980's the United States military would once again find itself involved in a major counterinsurgency effort, this time in the Latin American country of El Salvador. This twelve year effort would offer limited manpower but significant financial and equipment resources while achieving mixed results in reforming a Latin American military. While the US Military learned from these experiences, there appears to be no significant institutional adaptation based on the experiences of these advisory missions. In effect the US Military adapted to each situation in turn and repeated the process from the beginning in each successive conflict. The experience of standing up the advisory mission in Iraq clearly demonstrates a

continuation of this trend. The question remains whether the United States military will take the necessary steps to embrace the current set of lessons or discard these hard-earned experiences.

## KOREA

In August of 1948 the United States turned over control of occupied South Korea to the Republic of Korea (ROK) under President Syngman Rhee and established the Provisional Military Advisory Group (PMAG) in order to assist the fledgling ROK Army (ROKA).<sup>7</sup> By 1949 the PMAG evolved into the KMAG, composed of five hundred members tasked with the mission of developing all branches of the Korean military and national police. Initially conceived as a constabulary and border security force, the ROKA evolved into a force of eight light infantry divisions by the summer of 1950.<sup>8</sup> In response to the North Korean invasion, President Rhee placed the ROKA under US Military operational control and the KMAG's mission evolved to one of liaison as well as training, equipping and advising the Korean military. During the course of the war, the KMAG grew from 500 to 2,866 personnel. However, the growth of the KMAG was an ad-hoc effort that rated a low priority compared to the urgency with which the US built up its own forces. The US Military selected advisors based on little more than their availability and provided no special training for them enroute to their assignment. In some cases, preparation for an advisory tour amounted to an officer's predecessor meeting him at the train station, turning over the keys to his jeep, and showing him the location of the division command post.<sup>9</sup> KMAG competed with the regular line units for personnel but officers generally did not consider advisory duty a career enhancing assignment. Things would not improve until the latter part of the conflict when ROKA proficiency became a prerequisite for the withdrawal of American units, thus taking on a much more important role for American strategy.<sup>10</sup> By 1953 the KMAG had taken steps to improve the preparation of

incoming advisors, conducting formalized orientations, providing an *Advisor's Procedure Guide*, and ensuring that advisors received the "Ten Commandments" of advisory duty.<sup>11</sup>

In 1953 the US Army commissioned a study on the advisory mission in Korea. The KMAG Advisor: Role Problems of the Military Advisor in Developing an Indigenous Army for Combat Operations in Korea was published in 1957 and it offered numerous prescriptions for institutionalizing a significant portion of the lessons learned by the KMAG advisors. Based on their research, the authors of this study offered nine major recommendations for the US Army to maintain this capability for the long term, the most germane to the institutionalization of this capability are:

1. Selection qualifications for MAAG advisors should be based on:
  - a. The officer's professional competence, preferably demonstrated by command experience—including combat command if possible—for advisors to line units.
  - b. Special screening of officers and enlisted men for qualities, temperament and fortitude to withstand the strenuous psychological and physical demands of advisory duty in tactical units of a local national army, particularly under combat conditions.
  - c. Personal characteristics of tact, patience, emotional stability, self-sufficiency, and self-discipline that will enable the officer to work effectively and harmoniously with local national personnel and that will induce a respect and confidence in Americans and the US.
  - d. Preference to officers with facility in the local language.
2. Advisors should be given orientation for MAAG-type assignments, preparatory to entering on such duty, and be explicitly briefed on: their advisory duties and responsibilities; the structure, organization, and the known strengths and weaknesses of the local national army; and the culture and customs of the local nationals and methods of working with them. Language study should be encouraged and facilitated by short intensive courses and/or on a self-study basis, unless more thorough preduty language courses are required at the option of the chief of the MAAG involved.
8. The factors found important for KMAG advisors to work effectively with their ROKA counterparts should be referred to, for the information and guidance of advisors in other MAAGs, particularly in underdeveloped or Asiatic countries.

9. MAAG or military-mission type problems should be included in the curriculums of the Army's principal service schools, with particular emphasis in schools for advanced career officers.

Unfortunately few if any of the advisory recommendations were implemented in a way that would institutionalize the lessons learned. The US Military would find itself advising the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) in counterinsurgency operations within four years of the publication of the Advisor's Guide. The Vietnam experience would once again reflect an ad-hoc effort that would yield mixed results.

### VIETNAM

American involvement in Vietnam provided the United States military with its largest and most complex advisory mission. Established in 1950 to bolster the French effort to maintain control over its former colony, the Military Advisory and Assistance Group Indochina, became the Military Advisory Assistance Group, Vietnam (MAAG-V) in 1955.<sup>12</sup> Although the Korean experience influenced the operational and strategic level the objectives of the MAAG-V effort to create a Vietnamese military in our own image, the US Military discarded the tactical lessons learned regarding the selection, training, and preparation of advisors. As in previous efforts, "the Army selected its advisers, not on the basis of any particular familiarity with counterinsurgency, but on the principle that generalists rather than specialists were best suited for the role. According to this criterion, practically any officer was qualified to serve as an adviser, and just about every kind did."<sup>13</sup>

Initially fielded for defense against external threats, the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF) found itself unprepared for the challenges of the insurgency mounted by the Viet Cong. By 1961 US advisors regularly accompanied tactical RVNAF units on combat operations, but were not authorized direct participation in combat or operations near international borders.

In December Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara authorized MAAG-V to assign an advisor to each province and an advisory team to each operational combat battalion.<sup>14</sup> As the threat increased, the RVNAF increased its strength, requiring more advisors. In order to meet the growing demands, MAAG-V evolved into the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV), activated under General Paul D. Harkins in February of 1962. In spite of the increased efforts of MACV, the advisors continually found the RVNAF personnel lacking. In the summer of 1963 one senior Division Advisor found that "few of the regulars or territorials knew how to adjust the sights of their rifles and carbines well enough to hit a target, let alone a guerilla."<sup>15</sup>

By the end of 1963, MACV strength had grown to 16,263 personnel with 1,451 advisors deployed among the RVNAF.<sup>16</sup> In spite of the copious amounts of manpower devoted to the problem, the ad-hoc nature of the selection, training and preparation of the advisors seriously impacted the advisors' mission effectiveness. Interviews and after action reports reveal that many advisors regarded their training as inadequate, noting that the Military Assistance training Advisory course "provided no more than "an introduction to the problems of working in a foreign culture."<sup>17</sup> Additionally, most advisors only received a basic familiarization in the Vietnamese language, and rarely lasted more than six months with any one unit, departing just when they were hitting their stride with respect to area orientation and key relationships with their Vietnamese host units. Many contend that MACV did not pay attention to the quality of personnel assigned to the advisory mission, a problem that grew worse with the introduction of front line American combat units into the war in 1965.

In 1965 the Johnson administration committed large scale combat forces to the fight in Vietnam and the advisory effort took a back seat to the front line combat units. Similar to the experience in Korea, the American advisory effort in Vietnam would not take center stage again

until indigenous proficiency became a key to facilitate the withdrawal of American combat forces. As large scale American involvement began to draw to a close, the surge in importance of the advisory effort dramatically increased the scope of the commitment if not the quality of the effort. As of 1970, MACV field advisory strength reached a high of 14,332. This included 2,976 combat unit advisors at the regimental and battalion level, 5,685 CORDS advisors working to pacify the provinces and districts; and 2,305 advisors on Military Advisory Teams. These numbers equated to the officer and non-commissioned officer strength required to lead approximately 8.65 US Army divisions.<sup>18</sup> Debate regarding the effectiveness of the advisory effort continues to this day in academic and policy circles. Dr. Mark Moyar suggest in his recent work Triumph Forsaken , The Vietnam War, 1954-65 that the American approach was on the right path prior to President Ngo Dinh Diem's assassination in 1963.<sup>19</sup> The bulk of historical and policy analysts take the orthodox approach to analysis, including former advisor Jeffrey Race, author of War Comes to Long An. Race contends that the advisory effort was doomed to failure by a fundamental lack of understanding of the social process of revolutionary war at all levels of both the American and South Vietnamese governments.<sup>20</sup> Both the orthodox and revisionist positions regarding the efficacy of American intervention support the notion that an institutionalized approach to the advisory mission would benefit the situation. At a minimum this approach would provide a unified chain of command for reporting and analysis of the effectiveness of the mission. It could have potentially provided enough support to the RVNAF so as to obviate the need for the large-scale intervention of American combat troops that came to pass in 1965.

A significant body of literature suggests that various efforts were made to improve the training and preparation of combat advisors throughout the war. As early as 1961 the Howze

Board, convened in order to investigate force structure changes for counterinsurgency under Lieutenant General Hamilton H. Howze, advocated a standing advisory capability within the general-purpose forces. Better known for its recommendations regarding the use of helicopter mobility, the report of the Howze Board recommended three divisions and three battle groups be assigned a primary mission of counterinsurgency. These divisions would specially organize and train adviser teams with sufficient numbers of area oriented personnel to facilitate mission readiness. These divisions would be further organized at the Department of the Army level under a centralized command structure with new personnel assignment policies in order to facilitate a greater depth of expertise in a particular region of the world.<sup>21</sup> The implementation of Howze's recommendations would see the emphasis on advisory skills minimized over the tactical shift to the structuring of air-mobile air assault divisions for introduction into the fight in Vietnam. Howze's findings regarding the advisory mission represent some of the earliest references to the idea of institutionalizing force structure for foreign military advising. The arc of this idea can be traced forward forty-seven years and remains relevant to this day.

In a 1965 study ordered by the Secretary of the Army, Lieutenant General Ralph Haines Jr. produced a set of recommendations that could have resulted in significant force structure changes that would have institutionally postured the military to better address the mission of advising foreign forces. General Haines' recommendation to "modify and enlarge the Foreign Area Specialist Program"<sup>22</sup> eventually evolved into a new program called the Military Assistance Officer Program (MAOP). Initially envisioned as a requirement that would call for approximately six thousand billets to be filled by Captains, Majors, and Lieutenant Colonels, MAOP was intended to develop

A more integrated effort, to remedy a lack of command support for civil-military operations by creating a G5/S5 command support for civil-military operations by

creating a G5/S5 staff section, to develop the integrated and coordinated skills required for successful stability operations, to bring together military functions related to advising host nation military forces, and to focus on operational issues separate from the intelligence focus of FASP. [Foreign Area Specialist Program].<sup>23</sup>

In response to the Chief of Staff of the Army directive to implement the MAOP program, the Military Assistance School, Institute of Military Assistance at Fort Bragg, North Carolina instituted a Military Assistance Officer Command and Staff Course in September 1969. Despite the expectation that there would be an eventual need for six thousand MAOP officers, by 1970 only 552 MAOP positions existed. As with other special advisory programs during this period, the US Army found it difficult to attract the quantity of qualified personnel needed. In March 1972 the MAOP and the FASP were combined into the Foreign Area Officer (FAO) Management System and the Army ceased its effort to create an officer sub-specialty focused on the advisory mission.<sup>24</sup>

In 1980 a BDM Corporation study commissioned by the Department of the Army on the lessons learned from Vietnam addressed the advisory effort in its volume titled *Functional Analyses: The Conduct of the War*. The BDM study summarized its final conclusion regarding the advisory effort:

Any future advisory effort should rely on a cadre of highly trained specialists rather than a massive effort by amateurs. The use of specialists familiar with the history, culture and government of the country in which they are to serve, fluent in the language which they will have to use, and well trained in advisory techniques would improve the likelihood that the failure of Vietnam could be avoided. Specialists with an understanding of the country to which they are assigned will stand a far better chance of correctly assessing the situation and of prescribing solutions which will address the real problems. Furthermore, such advisors would be more likely to earn the respect of their counterparts and, thereby, to establish a relationship of mutual respect. US prestige and influence can only be enhanced by the employment of fully competent advisors even if their numbers are necessarily limited.

The US military services have demonstrated their professional excellence in training foreign personnel and units in technical skills; they have not performed well in advising in politico-military matters because of their lack of background, training, education, and competence.<sup>25</sup>

Ultimately in spite of the effort expended to study and analyze the advisory effort, few of the recommendations were carried out in a meaningful and lasting way. In the wake of Vietnam with cold war threats looming, the US Military turned its attention primarily to the task of defeating the Soviet menace in a conventional or nuclear conflict in Europe, abandoning any attempts to institutionalize the lessons learned from the advisory effort.

### **RECENT EXPERIENCE: IRAQ**

When you say you need advisors, you either look to SF or you put your hands in your pocket and start kicking stones because there's no definition of advisors and there's no advisory training outside of SF.<sup>26</sup>

The United States Military's advisory effort in Iraq represents the largest commitment of American Military forces in support of a combat advisory mission since the Vietnam War. The Department of Defense (DoD) commenced this mission with no preparation, no organizational structure, and little to no doctrine to guide its actions. Begun in earnest in 2003, by the summer of 2007 the United States Government had expended over \$19 billion and deployed approximately 6000 trainers on 500 training teams while building an Iraqi Security Force of approximately 350,000 personnel.<sup>27</sup> Although the United States Military has been involved in training and advising foreign forces at various times for over one hundred years, the US Military retained little or no institutional memory from these experiences in the aftermath of the Vietnam War<sup>28</sup>. The fact that the US Military largely buried the lessons learned from recent history was harshly reflected by the genesis of the latest advisory effort. According to Brigadier General James Schwitters, Commanding General of the Coalition Military Assistance Training Team (CMATT) from June 2003 to June 2004, only thirty percent of his assigned Military Advisory

Team (MAT) and Advisory Support Team (AST) personnel were effective in conducting their mission.<sup>29</sup> Considering the state of readiness of the general purpose forces with respect to the advisory mission prior to the march up to Baghdad, thirty percent effectiveness is not a surprising initial success rate.

When the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) issued Order Number 2, disbanding the Iraqi Ministry of Defense, National Security Bureau, Army, Republican Guard, Special Republican Guard and Directorate of Military Intelligence on May 23 2003, Ambassador Bremer set the stage for reconstruction of Iraqi Security Forces from the ground up.<sup>30</sup> CPA Order Number 2 specified that the New Iraqi Corps would be geared toward external threats and would provide for “defense of the nation, including defense of the national territory and the military protection of the security of critical installations, facilities, infrastructure, lines of communication and supply, and the population.”<sup>31</sup> This mission would require the rapid mobilization of an ad-hoc organization to recruit and train an American advisory force while simultaneously advising and assisting the new Iraqi Security Forces in a combat environment. Activated within weeks of the order to disband the Iraqi Army, the CMATT materialized under the CPA’s Office of Security Transition (OST) in order to start the rebuilding process.<sup>32</sup> Initial efforts to recruit and train the NIA using Private Military Contractors proved problematic.<sup>33</sup> Halfway through their \$48 Million cost-plus contract, the CPA abandoned the Vinnell approach and contracted the Jordanian military to assist with the mission.<sup>34</sup> As the environment declined and the insurgency intensified CMATT would eventually be placed under the umbrella structure of Multi-National Security Transition Corps-Iraq (MNSTC-I) where responsibility for the Iraqi training and advising mission resides to this day. The ad-hoc nature of the CMATT/MNSTC-I organization combined with the lack of institutional memory regarding the tactics, techniques and procedures

for the advisory mission demonstrates a continuing trend in the US Military's approach to the advisory mission.

### IMPLEMENTATION

As they stand up, we'll stand down.<sup>35</sup>

- President George W. Bush

I think our training was fundamentally flawed from the get-go. I don't think anybody really knew who was ultimately charged with training soldiers going to Iraq for the MiTTs.<sup>36</sup>

- 1LT Jeremy Burke

Considering the importance of the mission of training the Iraqi Security Forces so that they can "stand up," one would expect an appropriate amount of emphasis to be reflected in the training and preparation of the personnel carrying out the mission. First Lieutenant Jeremy Burke, a reservist from the 80th Division (Institutional Training), served as an intelligence (S2) and operations (S3) officer on a brigade advisory team in Sinjar Province, Iraq. During a post deployment interview with the US Army Combat Studies institute, Burke describes the process of assigning personnel to the advisory teams as "kind of like a fantasy football league draft and a lot of us were getting bumped to other teams."<sup>37</sup> Once activated 1LT Burke and his teammates traveled to Camp Atterbury, Indiana for their initial mobilization training. Burke describes his mobilization training as:

A lot of fundamental skills refreshers – gas mask training, battle rifle marksmanship and land navigation. There was no discussion of what MiTT-specific training we would get. As I figured out by the end of the training, there was really nothing they could schedule to train the MiTTs. They didn't have any idea what to do.<sup>38</sup>

Burke's experience painfully demonstrates the lack of institutional memory regarding the selection and preparation of advisors. Other MiTT personnel received even less preparation,

with personnel placed as individual augmentees on MiTTs and ASTs with as little as two weeks preparation prior to deployment. Although they received additional training on their arrival in Kuwait, according to Burke the bulk of the personnel still had a scant understanding of what to expect during their upcoming deployment: "we still weren't clear as to what our actual mission was going to be. We knew the very general mission would be to advise the Iraqi Army, but that was pretty much the extent of it. We didn't know the concept of the operation. We didn't know the intent."<sup>39</sup>

CPT Christopher Isgrig, another reservist activated to fill a position on a MiTT relates an experience echoing that of LT Burke:

I only joined the unit about two weeks before we actually got on the plane for Kuwait. Because of everybody going to different training segments, they hadn't put together the unit as a unit until we were actually on the ground in Iraq. When we hit the ground at Camp Buehring and the Phoenix Academy, there was just session upon session of PowerPoint slides... We got the classes three times... We kind of wondered why they trained us three times on the same stuff.<sup>40</sup>

In addition to the problems with their mobilization training, the MiTTs lacked organizational support in every key war fighting function, from command and control to logistics and intelligence support. Captain Isgrig noted that the reservists on the MiTTs were often overshadowed by the active duty personnel attached to the American combat units in the local area of operations, which further limited the MiTTs in their ability to influence the Iraqis:

The Iraqis tended to respond much better to Active Duty soldiers. They knew who they were and they respected them a whole lot more. The Active Duty soldiers were part of an organization that had some depth to it and they could tell.<sup>41</sup>

The combination of shortfalls in training, experience, and organizational depth resulted in a MiTT that was largely ineffective in carrying out its assigned mission. Captain Isgrig summarizes his experience:

In the final analysis, the only thing we could really do was sit there and make sure the Iraqi units didn't put villagers in a ditch and shoot them or commit some other type of war atrocity. Other than that, we really couldn't provide that much service to them.<sup>42</sup>

While Captain Isgrig and LT Burke represent the extreme end of the spectrum regarding advisory experience in Iraq, the fact remains that their experiences demonstrate with excruciating clarity the impact of the military's inability to institutionalize the lessons learned from previous advisory missions. In spite of the shortcomings of the advisory effort, Iraqi Security Forces have steadily improved. As of summer 2007, ISF have assumed provisional control of seven of eighteen Iraqi provinces.<sup>43</sup> This achievement stands as a testament to the ability of the American fighting man to improvise and overcome in a difficult environment, but it does not excuse the senior military and political leadership of their responsibility to do their utmost to prepare the troops for success.

The training and preparation of the MiTTs has improved incrementally since the early days of CMATT. However, the underlying organizational structure has not evolved significantly beyond that of an ad-hoc organization made up of individual augmentees. These individuals receive a basic training package that focuses more on combat survival than on advising and assisting foreign military personnel. Further, no amount of improved training could make up for the lack of organizational depth that limits the effectiveness of an ad-hoc organization across the war fighting functions. The fact that the battalion commander in charge of implementing the MiTT training pipeline recently advocated the creation of a standing advisor corps speaks volumes.<sup>44</sup> As the role for American combat brigades in Iraq diminishes, the role for combat advisors will increase. The potential length of the advisory commitment will continue to be the subject of debate for some time. Lieutenant General James Dubik, Commanding General of MNSTC-I testified before Congress in January 2008 that significant US military assistance may

be required for ten more years in order to ensure that Iraqi Security Forces can stand on their own.<sup>45</sup> The experience in Iraq clearly demonstrates that the United States military must undertake a serious effort to craft a long term plan to address the need for a robust foreign military advisory capability.

### **TOWARD REFORM**

The Coalition started the U.S. advisory mission in an ad hoc way, but now understands its importance. Improvements have been made recently, but much more remains to be done. The Department must now improve selection, training, and utilization of Transition Teams. The Department must also create appropriate incentives to attract the best personnel to Transition Teams and ensure that advisors remain competitive for promotion.<sup>46</sup>

- House Armed Services Subcommittee on Oversight and Reform.

Although selection of personnel has remained an ad-hoc individual process, both the Army and Marine Corps have taken steps to improve the training of the MiTTs. In 2006 the Marine Corps established the Security Cooperation Education and Training Command (SCETC) in order to standardize the training and preparation of their MiTTs. Recently the Marine Corps also announced the pending formation and deployment of Security Cooperation Marine Air Ground Task Force (SC-MAGTF). This new a concept seeks to apply the lessons learned from the indirect approach and apply them to General Purpose Forces in order to add the specific elements necessary for these types of missions.<sup>47</sup> Regionally tailored training would be augmented by additional Foreign Area Officers and foreign military training experts from the Marine Corps Training and Advisory Group in order to ensure the proper mix of forces for the SC-MAGTF deployment. Although announcement of this concept demonstrates recognition of the problem and a step in the right direction for the Marine Corps, in many respects it appears to be a half measure and the effectiveness of its implementation remains to be seen.

For their part, the Army has consolidated its MiTT training at Fort Riley, Kansas, assigning the training oversight duties to the 1st Brigade of the 1st Infantry Division. However, significant shortfalls in the training remain. Although the training pipeline has improved, as of fall 2007 the sixty day training schedule for prospective MiTT members only contained three days of cultural familiarization, thirty hours of language training, and optional country briefs on their upcoming areas of operation.<sup>48</sup> According to Lieutenant Colonel John Nagl few of the cadre members at Fort Riley have been advisors themselves. One of the four battalions conducting the training has only three former advisors on its staff.<sup>49</sup> Clearly the incremental improvements instituted by the Army and the Marine Corps in their advisory programs will not posture the military for success in Iraq or in the long-term struggle against insurgencies on a global scale.

A chorus of voices in policy circles has pointed out the need for an institutional solution to replace the historical succession of ad-hoc efforts. Andrew Krepinevich, president of Washington D.C. based think-tank Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessment has pointed out the need to posture forces for irregular warfare since the 1986 publication of his book The Army and Vietnam when he was an active duty Major in the US Army. In recent testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee in April 2007, Krepinevich stated:

We also need to consider creating something equivalent to an “Advisor Corps”—a cadre of officers and NCOs that can train indigenous and allied forces in peacetime while serving with newly trained indigenous force units in wartime. It comes as no surprise that oftentimes the soldiers sent by the Army to serve as advisors are the men it can most easily afford to do without. Nor is this sort of duty looked upon favorably by the Army’s best young officers and NCOs... I am aware of no plans the Army has to create training and advising organizations to build “partner capacity” by enabling America’s allies and partners to “scale up” quickly to meet the challenges that might be posed by irregular warfare contingencies.<sup>50</sup>

Krepinevich further points out that carrying out the current plan of expanding the number of Brigade Combat Teams would appear to “reflect a desire to prepare for the kinds of challenges we would prefer to confront rather than those we will most likely encounter.”<sup>51</sup> In the same session before the Senate Armed Services Committee, retired Major General Robert H. Scales echoed the sentiment:

Institutionalizing the advisor program in the Army is a major step...the ground forces of the future will be made up of more than just brigades. We will need a very strong corps of trainers, advisors and military assistance groups capable of being sustained for decades in regions of the world where new allied armies will be created or improved. We will need many more specialized units to assist in nation building such as special operating forces, civil affairs, military police and engineers.

In an essay published by the Center for a New American Security, Lieutenant Colonel John Nagl elaborates on the concept of creating an Advisor Corps, recommending that the US Army :

Establish a permanent, 20,000-member Advisor Corps. This Corps would develop doctrine and oversee the training and deployment of 750 advisory teams of 25-soldiers each, organized into three 250-team divisions. Each division would be commanded by a Major General who would deploy with the teams on their year long advisory tours.<sup>52</sup>

Nagl further points out that continuing the current approach would weaken the rest of the Army by continually stripping out seasoned leadership at the officer and NCO level in order to fill the individual augmentation requirements of the MiTTs. The height of the Vietnam advisory effort witnessed the deployment of 14,332 personnel in 1970, a figure that represents the officer and non-commissioned officer strength required to lead approximately 8.65 divisions, roughly 173,000 personnel. Estimates of our post surge posture in Iraq place the requirement for combat advisors as high as 20,000. A continuation of the current policy will provide a sub-optimal product for the vital mission of advising and assisting the Iraqi Security Forces and will

significantly weaken the capability of our conventional forces postured for the potential outbreak of a large scale contingency or major theater war.

An institutionalized approach would alleviate the problems that have impacted the ad-hoc nature of previous advisory missions. A standing organization that would recruit, assess, select, train and sustain an advisory force would mitigate the shortfalls in training and organizational depth demonstrated by current and previous advisory efforts. A standing organizational framework with a clear chain of command would also enable the military to attract top talent by offering incentives for participation through promotion, pay, and institutionalized recognition of the importance of the advisory mission. These efforts would create a career track for the right individuals rather than a sidetrack for personnel who were available for orders.

In spite of the acknowledged importance of the mission of advising foreign military forces, the US Military has not demonstrated an institutional commitment to building the large scale apparatus necessary to optimize its advisory capacity. Despite nearly seven years of recent lessons learned advising foreign forces, the US Military is currently continuing the historical pattern of sourcing the mission in an ad-hoc manor. Numerous potential solutions to this situation have circulated throughout academic and policy circles. The notion of using the currently authorized military manpower increases to create a standing advisory corps holds out the most promise to institutionalize the lessons learned from the past and posture for continued success using indirect methods to combat global insurgency. Regardless of the specific solution, the historical thread of repeatedly crafting ad-hoc solutions to the recurring problem of advising foreign forces clearly demonstrates that the United States must undertake a serious effort to craft a long term plan to address the need for foreign military advisory capability.

- <sup>1</sup> 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review, p.2.
- <sup>2</sup> Robert Ramsey, Advising Indigenous Forces: American Advisors in Korea, Vietnam, and El Salvador p.1
- <sup>3</sup> Testimony of Thomas G. Mahnken, Testimony Before the House Armed Services Committee Terrorism, Unconventional Threats and Capabilities Subcommittee, March 15, p.4.
- <sup>4</sup> FM 3-24 Counterinsurgency, p.6-3.
- <sup>5</sup> John Nagl, Institutionalizing Adaptation It's Time for a Permanent Advisory Corps, p.5.
- <sup>6</sup> Ramsey, p.2.
- <sup>7</sup> Ibid, p. 5.
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid,, p.5.
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid., p.13.
- <sup>10</sup> Ibid., p.12.
- <sup>11</sup> Ibid, p.12.
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid, p.27.
- <sup>13</sup> Andrew F. Krepinevich jr, The Army and Vietnam, p.80.
- <sup>14</sup> Ibid, p.27.
- <sup>15</sup> Neil Sheehan, Bright and Shining Lie: John Paul Vann and America in Vietnam p.55.
- <sup>16</sup> Ibid, p.28.
- <sup>17</sup> Ibid. p.28.
- <sup>18</sup> Ibid, p.32.
- <sup>19</sup> Mark Moyar, Triumph Forsaken The Vietnam War 1954-65, p.37.
- <sup>20</sup> Jeffrey Race, War Comes to Long An: Revolutionary Conflict in a Vietnamese Province p.x.
- <sup>21</sup> Krepenevich, p.108.
- <sup>22</sup> Ibid, p.62.
- <sup>23</sup> Ibid, p.62.
- <sup>24</sup> Ibid, p.62.
- <sup>25</sup> Ibid, p.69.
- <sup>26</sup> Interview with COL Sean Ryan – Combat Studies Institute p. 6.
- <sup>27</sup> Stand up and be Counted: The Continuing Challenge of Building the Iraqi Security Forces, 110<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, July 2007.US House of Representatives, Committee on Armed Services, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, p.6.
- <sup>28</sup> “Center Focuses on Security” Fort Leavenworth Lamp Online, August 2007 p.1.
- <sup>29</sup> Combat Studies Institute Interview with BG Schwitters, p xxx.
- <sup>30</sup> The Report on the Independent Commission on the security forces of Iraq, p.56
- <sup>31</sup> Ibid, p.57
- <sup>32</sup> OST Press Release June 2004.
- <sup>33</sup> Stand Up and Be Counted: The Continuing Challenge of Building Iraqi Security Forces, p13.
- <sup>34</sup> Ibid p.13.
- <sup>35</sup> White House Press Release, President’s Speech in West Virginia March 22, 2006.
- <sup>36</sup> CSI Interview 1LT Jeremy Burke, p.5
- <sup>37</sup> Ibid p.1.
- <sup>38</sup> Ibid, p.2.
- <sup>39</sup> CSI Iinterview with LT Burke, p.8.
- <sup>40</sup> CSI interveiw with CPT Isgrig, p.3.
- <sup>41</sup> Ibid p.4.
- <sup>42</sup> Ibid p.5.
- <sup>43</sup> General James Jones, The Report of the Independent Commission on the Security Forces of Iraq, p. 39.
- <sup>44</sup> Nagl, p.5.
- <sup>45</sup> Ann Scott Tyson, Iraq May Need Military Help for Years, Officials Say, Washington Post, Jan 18,2008, p.A15.
- <sup>46</sup> Stand Up and Be Counted, p.12.
- <sup>47</sup> The Long War: Send in The Marines. A Marine Corps Operational Employment Concept To Meet An Uncertain Security Environment p.17.
- <sup>48</sup> 60 Day MiTT training schedule.
- <sup>49</sup> Nagl, p.5.

---

<sup>50</sup> Andrew Krepinevich, Testimony before the Senate Armed Service Committee – The Future of U.S. Ground Forces: Challenges and Requirements (17 Apr 2007). p.10.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, p.10.

<sup>52</sup> Nagl, p.6.

---

## Bibliography

- Bacevich, Andrew J., James D. Hallums, Richard H. White, and Thomas F. Young. American Military Policy in Small Wars: The Case of El Salvador. New York, NY: Pergamon-Brassey's, 1988.
- Clay, Steven, Iroquois Warriors in Iraq, Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2007.
- Clay, Steven, Operational Leadership in the Global War on Terrorism Interview with COL Sean Ryan. Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2006.
- Clay, Steven, Operational Leadership in the Global War on Terrorism Interview with 1LT Jeremy Burke. Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2006.
- Clay, Steven, Operational Leadership in the Global War on Terrorism Interview with CPT Christopher Isgrig. Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2006.
- Dockery, Martin J. Lost in Translation: VIETNAM: A Combat Advisor's Story. New York, NY: Ballantine, 2003.
- Donovan, David, Once a Warrior King Memories of An Officer In Vietnam, New York, NY: McGraw Hill, 1985.
- Jones, General James, The Report on the Independent Commission on the Security Forces of Iraq, Center For Strategic and International Studies, Washington DC, September 2007.
- Krepinevich, Andrew, The Army and Vietnam, Baltimore, MD, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986.
- Krepinevich, Andrew, Testimony before the Senate Armed Service Committee – The Future of U.S. Ground Forces: Challenges and Requirements, 17 Apr 2007.
- Meoni, Mark A. “The Advisor: From Vietnam to El Salvador” Master of Military Art and Science Thesis, US Army Command and General Staff College, 1992.
- Moyar, Mark, Triumph Forsakeen The Vietnam War 1954-1965, New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Nagl, John A. Institutionalizing Adaptation: It's Time for a Permanent Army Advisor Corps Center for a New American Security, 2007.
- Department of Defense, 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review Report, 2006.
- Race, Jeffrey, War Comes to Long An Revolutionary Conflict in a Vietnamese Province, Berkely, CA: University of California Press, 1972.

---

Ramsey, Robert D III, Advice for Advisors: Suggestions and Observations from Lawrence to the Present. Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2007.

Ramsey, Robert D III, Advising Indigenous Forces: American Advisors in Korea, Vietnam, and El Salvador, Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2007.

Rendall, Tom, Center focuses on security force assistance, Leavenworth Lamp Online, August 2007.

Sheehan, Neil, A Bright and Shining Lie: John Paul Vann and America In Vietnam. New York, NY: Vintage Books 1988.

US House of Representatives, Committee on Armed Services, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations Stand up and be Counted: The Continuing Challenge of Building the Iraqi Security Forces, 110<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, July 2007.

Testimony of Thomas G. Mahnken, Philip Merrill Center for Strategic Studies, Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, The Johns Hopkins University, Before the House Armed Services Committee Terrorism, Unconventional Threats and Capabilities Subcommittee, March 15, 2006.