

**COUNTERINSURGENCY  
AND THE SURGE IN IRAQ:  
BALANCING DOCTRINE  
AND STRATEGY**

BY

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**COUNTERINSURGENCY AND THE SURGE IN IRAQ:  
BALANCING DOCTRINE AND STRATEGY**

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

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## COUNTERINSURGENCY AND THE SURGE IN IRAQ: BALANCING DOCTRINE AND STRATEGY

You [military professionals] must know something about strategy and tactics and...logistics, but also economics and politics and diplomacy and history. You must know everything you can know about military power, and you must understand the limits of military power. You must understand that few important problems of our time have...been finally solved by military power alone.

—President John F. Kennedy

Nowhere is Kennedy's insight more relevant than in the context of today's security threats and the use of Counterinsurgency (COIN) operations. He calls for military leaders to broaden their thinking about the application of war to solve the world's problems. Likewise, successful COIN strategies require unity of effort among all instruments of national power.<sup>1</sup> The complexity of today's operational environment, especially in both Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), calls for military leaders and Soldiers to use all resources available: lethal and non lethal, strategic and tactical from division to squad, as well as political and economic resources, to prevail against an asymmetric threat.

The nature of warfare in the 21st century has changed from a linear, conventional threat to asymmetric global transnational insurgencies using terrorism as a tool to control populations. The insurgencies operating today are primarily non-state and independent actors who work to create chaos against or within nation states where state government legitimacy is critical. The Army must be better prepared to support nation states against this asymmetric threat implementing all elements of national power while operating both conventionally and unconventionally.

The US Army began to shift to a Counterinsurgency Operations (COIN) focus in Iraq with the Surge of 2007. President Bush, in coordination with military and civilian

leaders, moved from a *Train and Leave Strategy* focused on training and equipping Iraqi Army and Police units to secure Iraq to a population based *Surge Strategy* focused on increasing combat brigades in and around Baghdad to better secure the population and isolate the insurgents. The immediate goal of this shift in strategy was to reduce the levels of violence so that other elements of national power (economic infrastructure, political processes, etc.) could gain footing. The purpose of the Surge was to employ an increased number of troops in the short-term with the aim of reducing the American military footprint as rapidly as possible once conditions on the ground stabilized and the political and economic functions of an independent nation were able to thrive without disruption. Simultaneously, there was a need to continue to train the Iraqi Military and Police Forces so that they could begin to be increasingly responsible for national security and stability.

Merging historical perspectives, the guidelines of doctrine, and lessons learned since the Iraq War began into an actionable strategy is the challenge of commanders on the ground today. As the commander of 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion, 8<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery, 4<sup>th</sup> Brigade Combat Team (BCT), 1st Cavalry Division in Northern Iraq, I was tasked to conduct COIN operations in the Zaab Triangle area. This was an area in which the Coalition Force Leadership in Multi National Division North expected increased insurgent activity as a result of Surge operations in and around Baghdad.

To guide military leadership in this asymmetrical environment, emerging COIN doctrine was codified in US Army Field Manual (FM) 3-24. Since the beginning of the Surge, counterinsurgency guidelines have been widely circulated and adopted throughout the Army. The nature of the war in Iraq is incredibly complicated and our

military and civilian leaders have had to re-learn the lessons of COIN both from experience on the ground and from historical perspectives captured in the doctrine. Initially, we underestimated the complexity of the Iraqi tribal and religious culture. Had the COIN doctrine been implemented at the onset of the war in March 2003, much of the success of the Surge may have occurred far earlier in the conflict. A better understanding and implementation of COIN doctrine may have minimized errors in the application of force to achieve security after the initial invasion. Given the momentum gained by the Surge of 2007 and the emerging understanding that the COIN doctrine as defined in FM 3-24 has contributed significantly to that momentum, it is imperative that military leaders at all levels become experts at operating as counterinsurgents.<sup>2</sup>

When the Army-Marine Corps writing team for FM 3-24 began its deliberations, it turned to sages from the past like David Galula, who authored Counterinsurgency Warfare in 1964, to develop a baseline list of principles upon which to build the new doctrinal manual. Although this search proved very fruitful, the writers, who were observers and veterans of recent conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, perceived that some new tenants also deserved emphasis based on the evolving nature of modern conflict. As a result, the publication references not only principles of COIN based in large part on history, but also on imperatives derived from more contemporary experience. Together they provide a solid framework for conducting successful COIN campaigns.<sup>3</sup>

When looking at counterinsurgency throughout time, and in an effort to understand the genesis of today's military application, let us first consider David Galula's experiences. David Galula's theory of counterinsurgency had an impact on military leaders as they formulated the current COIN doctrine and Surge strategy.

Galula's theory is relevant to the situation in Iraq today and supports my personal experience during two deployments as part of OIF both prior to and during the surge. He provides insight which I believe to be broadly applicable in Iraq as well as in other conflicts in the world today.

David Galula was a career French infantry officer who formed his thinking about COIN while serving as an assistant military attaché in Beijing assigned to the task of observing the revolution led by Mao Tse-tung. Subsequently, he was in Hong Kong just as insurgencies were gathering momentum in French Indochina. Galula's exposure to COIN was occasioned through repeated contact with fellow officers serving in Indochina and their British counterparts in Malaya increasing his knowledge of COIN. By 1956 he was in Kabylia, Algeria, a region of strong insurgent activity where French pacification efforts had proven to be both frustrating and problematic.<sup>4</sup> His documented observations and theories, shaped by his experience in the 1950s, continue to be relevant today.

Galula's theory on counterinsurgency is based on the following imperatives: 1) Military action is secondary to the political purposes and goals and should be focused to allow the political power enough freedom to work safely with the population. 2) Revolutionary war is unfair; most rules favor the insurgent and information operations permeate everything. 3) It is not ideal, but military forces must be prepared to do traditionally non-military missions. 4) Counterinsurgents must recognize insurgency exists and deal with its root causes.<sup>5</sup> In his writing, Galula paraphrases a Clausewitzian theory with regard to insurgents, "Insurgency is the pursuit of policy of a party, inside a country, by every means." It is not like an ordinary war --- a "continuation of policy by

other means.” An insurgency can start long before the insurgent resorts to the use of force.<sup>6</sup> Other aspects of his observations reference the power and role of the insurgents’ ideology. Galula stresses that an insurgent must have a cause and that he must be able to influence the population to support his cause through multiple means, including force. Popular support is critical to both the insurgent and counterinsurgent and insurgent ideology can be adjusted with the cause as the situation changes in any environment. Galula states that counterinsurgent leaders must comprehend the impact of the political, social, and economic environment on the cause of the insurgent. This amplifies his imperative that counterinsurgent warfare must include more than combat operations in order to isolate the insurgents and to get the population to at least tolerate their presence and operations. Galula also discusses the importance of intelligence and that counterinsurgents should divide up terrain and conduct decentralized operations with leaders understanding all aspects of the environment and employing propaganda to further gain support of the people.<sup>7</sup>

Our ability to learn from experience as well as history is also important. We have fortunately learned a great deal about the nature of warfare in Iraq since the conclusion of major combat operations and many of Galula’s lessons apply. Some of the most important lessons are as follows. (1) Unity of command between military and civilian leaders is essential. There was clearly a struggle for common ground as Joint Task Force 7 (military command) and the Civilian Provisional Authority (CPA) (civilian command) were working phase four operations (Stability) in Baghdad. (2) A counterinsurgent force must be culturally aware. There was a general misunderstanding of the Iraqi culture as it applied to tribal norms and what would be

required to establish local governance in this context. This was the case in Al Anbar when dealing with Sunni Sheiks as well as in the initial aggressive de-ba'athification efforts. (3) Military forces must be balanced in strength and apply the appropriate force when dealing with insurgents in and around the population. There was also much debate about the size of force at the onset of Phase IV (Stability) operations. However, it is not always about the amount of combat power but rather the operating strategy that is employed. General Eric K. Shinseki, then chief of staff of the Army, told Congress in February of 2003 that he estimated "several hundred thousand" Soldiers were needed to occupy Iraq. In the fall of 2003 there were 150,000 coalition soldiers – plus 90,000 contractor personnel not shown on the rolls but carrying out military support duties. Perhaps 240,000 were not equivalent to "several hundred thousand." But adding more American Soldiers would not have made a major difference unless they operated with Iraqi forces under an enlightened counterinsurgency strategy, which did not exist at the time.<sup>8</sup> Many of the lessons learned were adjusted with the emerging COIN doctrine and proved effective at the onset of the Surge of 2007.

In looking to history to gain potential insights into engaging in the complex conflicts of today, we see that 20<sup>th</sup> century insurgents adopted the Maoist strategy of a "Peoples War." Using these strategies, insurgents mobilized the rural population against an established government. The Maoist approach called for mobilization through underground political organization followed by prolonged guerilla warfare then eventually moving to conventional methods. Much of the success of the Maoist approach materialized through conventional military victories as was demonstrated in both China and Vietnam.<sup>9</sup> The on-going threats faced in the Global War on Terror are

ideologically based non- state actors working to create chaos against or within a nation state. They have chosen a different approach than conventional warfare. Instead, terrorism is the primary tool used to influence the population.

In a broad sense, insurgencies in the 21st century can take two forms, “national” insurgencies and “liberation” insurgencies. In a national insurgency the insurgent group struggles for power against a national government which has some degree of legitimacy and support. In liberation insurgency the insurgent group battles what is seen as outside occupiers by virtue of race, ethnicity or culture. The goal of the insurgent group is to liberate the country from allied occupation. Vietnam after 1965, Chechnya and the current Taliban /al Qaeda insurgency in Afghanistan and Iraq are examples of liberation insurgencies.<sup>10</sup> While engaged in a liberation insurgency we must take a holistic approach to help legitimize the government by working more effectively with all elements of power in coordination with interagency and coalition partners.

It is important that we understand the nature of the insurgency in order to best counter it, all the while understanding that the support of the population is critical to success. Failed counterinsurgencies reveal unsuccessful operational practices. The American intervention in Vietnam and the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan are examples of these malpractices. In the crucial early period of these wars, military staffs, rather than civilian governments, guided operations which were typified by large unit sweeps that cleared but then abandoned communities and terrain. Emphasis was on killing and capturing enemy combatants rather than on engaging the population.<sup>11</sup>

The US military “Surge” initiated in mid-2007 in Baghdad and neighboring Iraq provinces has been largely successful in military terms. It has helped to lower the level

of violence suffered by Iraqis and Americans alike and, in tandem with other steps, has restored a measure of security to western Iraq and portions of Baghdad.<sup>12</sup> Much of the success can be attributed to applying important lessons along with COIN imperatives from the new doctrine published in FM 3-24. The Surge was truly a population-centric operation, in which insurgents were cleared from the human terrain rather than the physical. The goal was to isolate the insurgents from the population they prey on, earning trust and confidence of the population and gaining additional intelligence.

In addition, we had learned that political progress by itself could not reduce the violence. From May 2003 through mid 2006, the Bush Administration focused on political progress as the key. The transition of sovereignty in mid 2004, the election of a transitional National Assembly in January 2005, the approval of a new constitution by referendum in October 2005, and the election of a fresh national assembly in December 2005 were all expected to subdue the violence by creating an inclusive and balanced Government.<sup>13</sup> During this period, U.S. and coalition commanders tried to stay in the background and push Iraqis in the lead. The violence increased around the country, as Sunni insurgents and Al Qaida took advantage and dug in to cities that were left open and Shia militias took control of abandoned Shia lands.

Political solutions are essential in COIN operations but all politics are local and the problem must be solved simultaneously at the local and national levels. We have learned a political solution must be accompanied by military operations with the objective of isolating insurgents from the population in order to increase security for the population and give the politics a chance to work. The clear, hold, build tactic proved effective in Tel Afar in 2005 and served as a model for success as a result of coalition

forces working closely with Iraqis by getting out among the population. Prior to that operation, the majority of clearing missions were based out of large Forward Operating Bases (FOBs) which were, by design, geographically separated from the population and the rapid reduction in the number and thus visible presence of coalition forces undermined the success of almost all operations. In Sadr City and Najaf, the withdrawal led to the complete, if not quiet restoration of the militias that had been driven out. On the contrary, every successful operation was preceded by commanders' taking the time to develop a strong information network to successfully gauge the local situation. To do this, coalition forces were moved out from large FOBs and placed among the population to gain confidence and increase cooperation leading to more actionable intelligence. This strategy led up to Operation Phantom Thunder during which Al Qaeda strong holds were attacked simultaneously throughout the country. This was a strategy that had not yet been attempted.<sup>14</sup> Subsequently, the presence of the military in combat outposts, more closely situated with the population, diminished the insurgents' ability to reconstitute and rebuild their operations.

There are certainly other challenges in dealing with the complexity of the human terrain. Iraq is not in the midst of a single insurgency focused simply on ending American occupation, nor is it enmeshed in a sectarian civil war in which one clearly defined religious faction makes war on another over doctrinal differences. Instead, struggles over national identity and political power lie at the heart of the issue. Iraq is experiencing a complicated set of civil wars and power struggles over conflicting visions of identity and reality.<sup>15</sup> In her article "After the Surge: Next Steps in Iraq," Judith S. Yaphe offers an alternative view about Iraqi nationalism given by a young Iraqi man who

served as an advisor in the prime minister's office. According to Yaphe, the man argued while talking to a group in Washington D.C. that the United States and Iran were trying to destroy Iraqi's national identity. He blamed the U.S. for creating a political vacuum in Iraq and faulted Iran for institutionalizing instability as part of its strategy to establish hegemony and spread Shi'ite theocracy throughout the region. The only solution, he said, is the revival of Iraqi nationalism, even if it means shelving the development of democracy. The young Iraqi man called on the U.S. to draw on a broad spectrum of Iraqi political parties, including ex-Ba'thiststs, to create a new national resistance movement that could counter Iranian efforts to destabilize Iraq and a national compact to frame government reforms and national reconciliation.

Building nationalism occurs on two levels: developing a representative government at the national level, while establishing the systems at the local level that build hope for the population that the government will protect and provide essential services over the long term better than the insurgents. The challenge is developing democratic ideals, "A government by the people for the people where all men are created equal," while striving for a national identity. It is a true paradox because people must trust the government first in order to have a feeling of national pride. The government must have the capacity and means to provide security, essential services and resources. One great challenge is to minimize corruption at the national level to ensure the local population is provided for while developing the systems at the local level wherein leaders are empowered to coordinate resources needed to provide for their communities. All elements of the security forces must be capable of securing borders as well as policing the population with effective law and order. The democratic

ideal of security at the local level whereby the police are trusted and respected to provide for the population is essential. Critical to long term success is having positive and trustworthy leadership in the police, the army and in the government in order to establish a legitimate system of governance. However, the idea of an American style democracy has met some resistance in Iraq largely because of the struggle between tribal culture and governing systems at every level. This must be balanced where tribal leaders and government officials work together to provide for the people.

Counterinsurgents must understand and reconcile differing standards, a task that may present difficulties for Americans who place high importance on democratic practices and liberal values. They must realize that local opinions – not ours – will determine legitimacy.<sup>16</sup>

Perhaps the biggest challenge under these conditions is how to effectively influence the population while being perceived as the occupying force. It is difficult to isolate an insurgent that preys on the population by exploiting the fact that the so-called occupying force is not of the same ethnicity or religion. Only with effective governance will the hearts and minds of the population be won over. Less important than ultimately winning hearts and minds is to modify behavior. Critical to achieving this is that within the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) the main goal is to create loyalty, with local leaders it is to garner trust and confidence, and in the general population it is to generate tolerance of coalition forces and trust and confidence in the government and Iraqi security forces. From this comes actionable intelligence leading to isolation of the insurgents, increased security and stability. Changing the strategy to a population-centered action with the

Surge in 2007 was a positive step in demonstrating resolve against the insurgents while providing hope for the population that the government can provide basic needs.

T.E. Lawrence proffers advice in his 1917 piece “Twenty Seven Articles,” in *The Arab Bulletin*. “Do not try to do too much with your own hands. Better the Arabs do it tolerably than that you do it perfectly. It is their war, and you are to help them, not to win it for them. Actually, also, under the very odd conditions of Arabia, your practical work will not be as good as, perhaps, you think it is.”<sup>17</sup> Like Galula, his experience and writings were instrumental in developing COIN doctrine. It is important to balance what the host nation can handle during a transitional period. Placing “Iraqis in the lead” was an acceptable strategy to get the country moving toward having a legitimate government with effective security forces, but forcing too much responsibility too early was a mistake. For example, in many cases both the Iraqi police and army officials became extremely frustrated after processing detainees into a corrupt judicial system only to be released to again create more problems. In this case, the security forces had the necessary capability but an ineffective judicial system that perpetuated an ineffective system. At the local level, elected officials were held accountable even when the systems that linked national to provincial governments were not in place and provided limited capability. Eventually, adequate resources to empower local leaders were developed which led to greater commitment to the overall progress. The idea of democracy is appealing to Iraqis but cannot be realized in a tribal society unless systems are in place to achieve effective governance. The struggle for legitimacy between the government and insurgents is at the heart of the issue. When enduring, functioning bureaucracies that support resource allocation, program funding, civil

projects, and manageable communications with national government is in place it begins to erode the influence that the insurgents maintain over the population. Moving forward, U.S. unit commanders need to facilitate change in their area by working with their Iraqi counterparts. They can provide a great deal of synchronization and support behind the scenes while the Iraqis can effectively lead with communications and in organizing the population.

The 4<sup>th</sup> BCT, 1CD faced many of the challenges discussed both in FM 3-24 and by Galula. Implementing doctrinal practices in support of the Surge strategy contributed to our many successes during that pivotal time. The BCT developed an operating framework based on Lines of Operations (LOOs).

#### Lines of Operations (LOOs)

The lines of operations framework is a flexible way of communicating strategic priorities while establishing guidelines for soldiers and junior leaders when conducting tactical operations. The overarching strategy is that each LOO has equal priority but it allows flexibility to focus individual operations on a particular line at any given point in time while continuing to consider the effects that the action will have in the other lines. It incorporates elements of physical planning over time (dates, events & goals) as well as logical planning (“how” to govern or improve economic infrastructure). As shown in Figure 1, there is a continuous feedback loop to ensure constant communication and consideration for all lines as well as a focus on overall security.

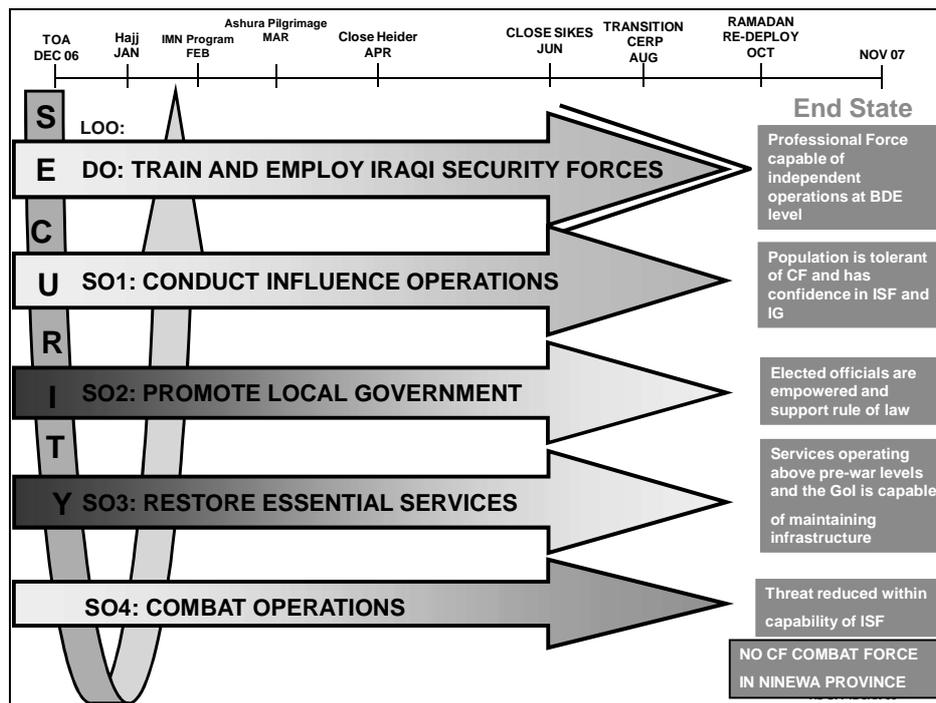


Figure 1. Operating Frame Work along Lines of Operations (LOOs)

As Galula points out in his theory as well as in FM 3-24, COIN operations must be population-centric. The target audiences for influence operations used by the BCT were the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) (Police and Army), the population (Local Provincial to include key leaders), and the Anti Iraqi Forces (AIF), or the threat. Of the five lines of operations listed in Figure 1, it is important to understand that the Influence LOO is unique; in most cases, influence operations was a subset of Information Operations (IO). In the 4<sup>th</sup> BCT, LOO framework elements of Information Operations (IO) are used in each of the LOOs. Information operations and Security are not stand alone LOOs but were integrated in each of the five LOOs. Each LOO has its own imperative gleaned from doctrine and experience “on the ground.”

*Train and Support the Iraqi Security Forces.* It is essential that through training, American Soldiers teach the Iraqis how to foster positive leadership among the officers

and non commissioned officers (NCO) in the Iraqi Army. Iraqi units with strong leaders performed well at the battalion and brigade level. There was still a need to increase capability at the company level to ensure a capable officer corps at the junior level for the future of Iraq. Along with proper schooling for junior Iraqi officers, partnership between Coalition Forces (CF) and Iraqi units was critical to achieving these improvements. Developing a culture among the Iraqis that fostered trust and confidence between officers and non commissioned officers was perhaps the greatest challenge. Most Iraqi officers acknowledged the strong bond in the U.S. Army between officers and NCOs but have little confidence in their ability to work together with their NCOs. Changing the culture of mistrust between the two groups is important. Ultimately, progress needs to continue toward creating a strong trustworthy NCO corps in the Iraqi Army.

Developing an intelligence sharing capability in Iraqi units and executing operations based on solid intelligence that help detect insurgents for arrest and prosecution is perhaps the most important practice needed to protect a population from threats to its security. Honest, trained, and robust police forces responsible for security can gather intelligence at the community level.<sup>18</sup> The ability to police the population is essential in both developing security and creating hope among the people. Through the development of a solid partnership with local police in the contested Zaab Triangle, I observed a dramatic increase in their effectiveness. The police leadership was empowered to accept additional risk in patrolling when working alongside either Iraqi Army units or coalition force soldiers who were operating out of Combat Outposts (COPs). Also, additional resources in the form of vehicles and radios provided by

provincial police chiefs enabled them more flexibility in accomplishing their mission. The improved capability further isolated the insurgent forces from the population and emboldened local leaders to provide information.

Based on the momentum gained through more effective intelligence based operations, the Iraq Army Division Headquarters responsible for the area took more responsibility for security and disbanded the corrupt Strategic Infrastructure Battalions (SIB) and replaced them with Regular Iraq Army Units. The coordination between police and army also improved and better roles and responsibilities were established allowing the police to work more among the people while the Army focused on Check Points.

*Promote Governance.* Legitimacy is gained only when the population has trust and respect for the government. Facilitating the links between the local, provincial and national government is critical along with balancing power between tribal and government leaders to achieve harmony which will lead to legitimacy. The combination of Civil Military operations is the cornerstone of progress in this endeavor. Leading up to the Surge, the ISF improved security but the government was behind in providing for the population. As a Task Force commander, I was able to provide for some of the basic needs to the population through funds provided by Commander Emergency Relief (CERP) dollars. Although this helped in providing hope, it was only a temporary fix to a complex problem perpetuated by a lack of a functioning bureaucracy and corruption. The gains in security would have been negated had the government not passed a budget and provided needed funding to the people. Real progress only happened when U.S. civil military organizations were able to mobilize Iraq leaders to establish systems

from national to local level that would help train leaders to request resources as well as provide assets needed through budget formulation and execution. Town hall style meetings in which local government and tribal leaders discussed issues with the population was a step in the right direction. It must be reinforced with empowerment through resourcing from the highest level.

Once the systems to request resources are nested through national government, the corruption at the highest levels must be eradicated. There was a dramatic increase in resource allocation from national to provincial areas as a result of Surge operations. In 2007, the provincial budget was resourced at 20% while the 2008 budget was resourced at 80%. I attribute this to the increased effectiveness of systems that were enabled through education and cooperation between tribal and government leaders as well as the improved security gained by isolating the insurgents.

*Restore Essential Services.* Corruption and greed at all levels of government were the greatest roadblocks to restoring essential services leading up to the Surge. Developing a comprehensive plan with local leaders and organizing the means to communicate needs from the local to provincial leaders was the key to improving this situation, but, until legitimate resourcing to supplant black market activities could be established, hope for a positive future among the population is only a fantasy. Once again, our own Civil Military collaboration, which improved considerably during Surge operations, was critical in developing an Iraqi led system of prioritizing and funding projects to improve quality of life for Iraqis. Until that time only U.S. Commanders Emergency Relief Fund (CERP) dollars were consistent. However, during Surge operations, civil organizations such as Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) and

Government Support Teams (GST) were effectively mobilized to conduct direct coordination with local government and ISF officials which significantly increased the effectiveness of the resourcing system. This was especially evident with the allocation of legitimate fuel and water from the provincial to local level. As a result of the improved security and resource availability, more Iraqis were confident enough to work as part of the Ministry of Oil to secure the vital pipelines running from southern to the northern regions of Iraq. This effectively decreased the black market corruption and empowered the government to provide those resources. Decentralizing PRTs and GSTs to coordinate as part of battalion staffs helped to synchronize political, civil, and military operations at the lowest level. Parallel communication up the chain that supported established Iraqi systems was essential to balance the process and guard against corruption at every level.

*Conduct Combat Operations.* Balancing rules of engagement as they apply to the use of force became increasingly complex when trying to isolate insurgents from the population during COIN operations. There were times when overwhelming effort was necessary to destroy or intimidate an adversary and reassure the populace. Irreconcilables had to be killed, captured or the source of their recuperative power destroyed. This always posed a risk of alienating the population. In general, counterinsurgents should calculate carefully the type and amount of force to be applied and who wields it for any operation.<sup>19</sup> But, this must be balanced and commanders must be prepared to mitigate unintended negative consequence that may occur as a result of combat operations with a well prepared consequence management package that includes all elements of civil support to compliment the gains of military action.

Ideally, Iraqi police should take the lead in planning and conducting raids against insurgent forces. As a result of the ongoing Surge, the bonds between ISF and Coalition forces were strengthened and there was an increase in police activity due to the confidence they gained from solid partnership with the coalition. More importantly, the number of raids against known targets were increased and steadily improved in effectiveness.

We discovered additional challenges while conducting combat operations as part of COIN in an asymmetric environment. It was especially difficult to achieve surprise when operating from Forward Operating Bases (FOBs). Maintaining Operational Security (OPSEC) was also an issue when conducting combined operations with the ISF, both with the police and with the Army. Conducting objective reconnaissance/surveillance is difficult as well. Establishing COPs as part of the Surge helped defeat the insurgent early warning systems as ingress routes were shortened and often operations could be executed as part of normal patrols in and around the population. Prior to developing COPs, air assault operations also effectively defeated early warning. Deception through disinformation to Iraqi soldiers often helped to achieve surprise. Unfortunately, we learned early that leaks of pending operations from the FOB were normal; conversely, we also found that once ISF leaders and units could be trusted and trained, they would become the best reconnaissance asset to develop target intelligence and maintain contact with the target as operations were conducted. Lastly, we developed procedures in which partnered Iraqi units were not informed of target location until the mission was under way. The risk was mitigated through intense, repetitious training on standard raid procedures.

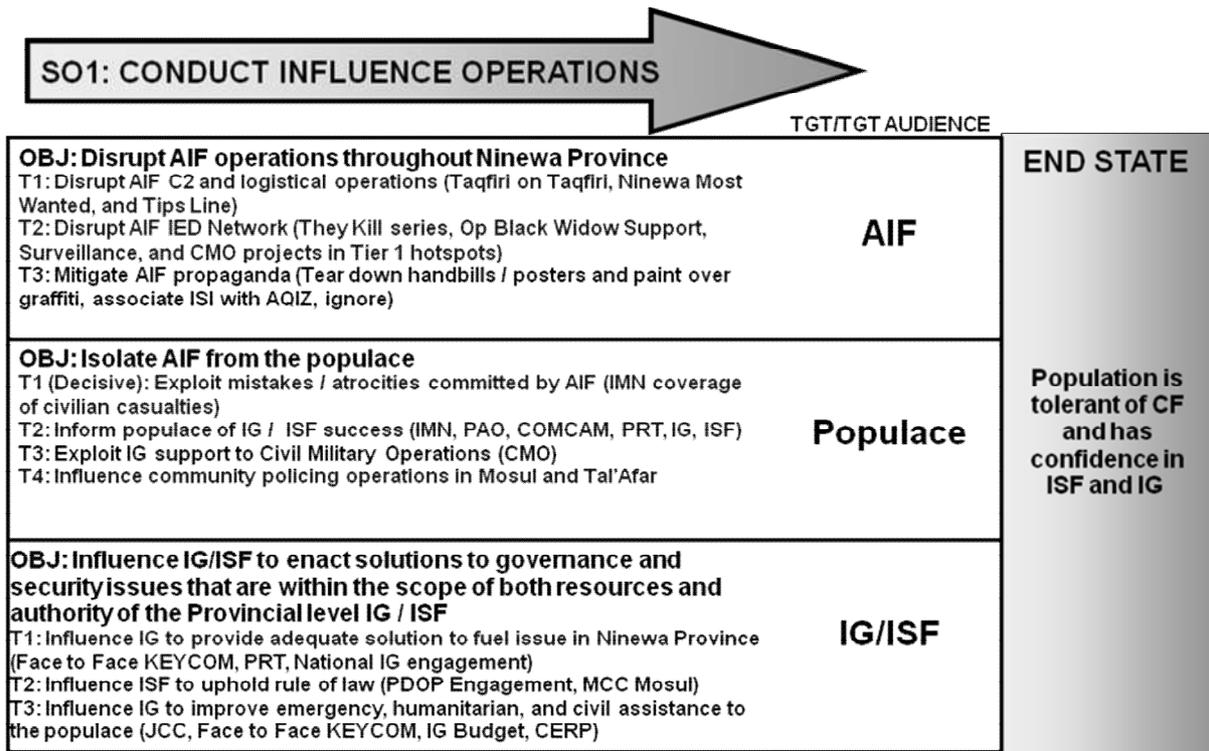


Figure 2.

*Influence Operations.* Conducting Influence operations through a comprehensive engagement strategy is an important element for commanders at all levels while participating in COIN operations. Engagements should be treated as any operation with proper planning and resources that will guarantee nested objectives and collection assets. U.S. units primarily focused on gaining intelligence and information through source intelligence driven by Human Intelligence Teams (HUMINT) and then produced detailed intelligence reports that were shared at all levels through an integrated data base. At the beginning of our deployment, leader driven engagements were not as well synchronized and did not get the same attention as other operations and opportunities to share important information were missed. We learned quickly throughout the organization that our engagement strategy must be comprehensive and coordinated just as a combat operation. Preparation, execution, and follow up must be rehearsed and

synchronized with proper reports generated. Using PSYOP and HUMINT assets proved effective in developing products that better informed the population which further isolated insurgents and earned trust and confidence for the ISF and Government of Iraq (GOI). Considering the three target audiences in Figure 2, specific objectives for each is important in any operation. It proved effective for my organization to use influence as a separate LOO, especially while developing and executing an engagement strategy that was nested from the brigade level through company level. We also learned that every operation, lethal or non-lethal, had second and third order effects on each target audience and that they must be considered in both planning and execution. Influencing the local populace favorably is paramount to securing support against terrorism and sectarian extremism. The more Coalition and more importantly, the government of Iraq (GOI) can do to improve the environment, the more the local populace will accept the new government and its concepts of unity, democracy, and freedom.<sup>20</sup>

*Information Operations (IO).* We designed our LOO strategy and trained and organized our staff to ensure that the elements of IO (Psychological Operations (PSYOP), Military Deception (MILDEC), Electronic Warfare (EW), Computer Network Operations (CNO), and Operational Security (OPSEC)) were integrated in each operation. Influence operations is usually used as a subset of IO, however, we chose to use influence as a separate LOO because of its importance in a comprehensive engagement strategy as stated above. Of all the elements in IO, PSYOP and the application of counter propaganda are worthy of special consideration while conducting COIN operations. The insurgents thrive on the use of propaganda to influence the population mostly by manipulating the truth. A commander's ability to counter that

through deeds and words is critical, especially when done in coordination with Iraqi military and civilian leaders. Informing the population is an important tool in countering insurgent propaganda – the truth is powerful and “good news must be propagated.” We found that in the absence of an effective television media network, local news publications distributed by the ISF and government representatives were effective tools to inform the population. It is most effective when members from the community are contracted to produce and contribute to the publication. When applying the elements of IO the effects on the population must be the top priority as they are the center of gravity in COIN operations.

*Security.* The most critical factor for any COIN effort is establishing security for the civilian populace. With regard to our LOO framework, our unit approached the issue of security as a constant factor crossing all lines. As progress was made in any single area, security would improve enabling progress in other areas. This constant loop of improved security generated greater trust within the population. Without a secure environment, no permanent reforms can be implemented and disorder will likely spread. To establish legitimacy, CF commanders must transition security activities from combined operations to Iraqi-led law enforcement as quickly as feasible. When insurgents are perceived as criminals, they lose public support. Using a legal system established in line with local culture and practices to deal with such criminals enhance the government’s legitimacy.<sup>21</sup> As the police and army gain confidence and competence the population will feel more secure. Implementing the rule of law is perhaps one of the greatest challenges going forward in Iraq.

## The Way Ahead

As we look to the future in Iraq, there are many considerations that must be made to ensure success. We cannot afford to lose the momentum gained during the last 2 years with the military Surge and political and economic gains we have witnessed in Iraq. Our forces must continue to be adaptable on the ground. We must make sure that our junior leaders are trained in COIN practices while maintaining their core competencies. Blending the efforts of the military and civilian counterparts is essential in both planning and tactical execution. Based on my personal experiences and historical perspectives I believe our military should focus particular attention in the following areas:

*Balancing Command and Control (C2) and Unity of Effort.* The Battalion Task Force should be the centerpiece for counterinsurgency operations. Assets should be allocated from BCT to Battalion Task force to reinforce a decentralized bottom-up methodology when dealing with COIN. Battalion staffs must be proficient in collections management and conducting expedient analyses in dealing with the threats. It is also imperative that battalions, in turn, resource company level command posts to conduct analyses. Synchronization of all combat multipliers and authorities should be decentralized to the battalion level whenever possible. Some risk must be taken to allow battalion level commanders to make quick decisions in balancing lethal and non lethal actions.

The COIN environment creates unique challenges in command and control because of the asymmetric threat that calls for a variety of decentralized small units operating in large areas with extended lines of communication. Battalion level commanders normally operate in areas in coordination with several other organizations

from Special Forces to provincial reconstruction teams. In many cases, there is not a clear chain of command and information stove piping and reporting can result unless there is unity of effort. Building strong working relationships and systems to analyze relevant information at the lowest level is the key to success when operating in these conditions. Synchronizing efforts at the battalion task force must be the norm to reduce risks both in operations and with information and reporting. This must be accomplished with ISF units as well as CF units. Given the complexity of coordinating with ISF units, roles and responsibilities between Military Transition Teams (MITT) supporting Iraq brigades partnered with U.S. battalions must be clearly defined and complimentary. Placing MITT under operational control (OPCON) of the battalion/brigade task force is the optimal command relationship in an effort to minimize confusion. This would improve synchronization with partnered Iraqi units.

Optimizing the Special Forces capability to conduct foreign internal defense (FID) operations in coordination with MITT to assist in Training ISF is also critical. Special Forces, allied military forces and advisory teams, organized to support police forces and fighting insurgents, can bolster security until indigenous security forces are competent to perform these tasks without allied assistance. In the U.S. Armed Forces, only Special Forces (SF) is expressly organized and trained for counterinsurgent warfare and advising indigenous forces.<sup>22</sup>

*Borders and Boundaries.* When engaged in a population-centric counterinsurgency on human terrain, both geographic borders and operational boundaries require careful consideration. It is clear that the boundaries that define Iraq are not conducive to tribal considerations and certainly challenge a national identity for

Iraq over traditional tribal loyalties. This is especially true in considering the Iranian influence over Shia that live within Iraq's eastern border and also for the Kurds who occupy north and Sunni in the west. Because of this, it is important to understand the external pressures from Iran, Turkey, and Syria when attempting to influence a unified Iraq which is important to the US security interests. The same is true for military boundaries; conventional wisdom places these control measures along prominent terrain and ensures proper coordination between adjacent units particularly when it becomes necessary to deconflict and integrate direct and indirect fires. However, in an asymmetric COIN environment, the very control measure that is designed to prevent fratricide and ensure proper coordination can hinder rapid response and freedom of action for adjacent units, allowing insurgent forces to exploit the seams between units. Consideration of boundary location should be based on the human environment rather than key terrain. Host nation military leaders must have input to unit boundaries and partnered unit boundaries should overlap when possible.

*Command Guidance.* During his remarks at The US Army War College on 23 September 2008 the Army Chief of Staff General Casey discussed the nature of the threat in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. He confirmed many of the lessons both from history and recent experience by reminding us that the threat is asymmetric; it involves non state and independent actors, and that COIN operations take place in and around the people while in conventional warfare population centers are typically bypassed. Casey also stressed the importance of maintaining core competencies as the U.S. could be called upon to confront a non state actor like Hezbollah or could be called upon to assist allies like Georgia. Casey talked about the characteristics of Army leaders and stated that

they must be versatile and adaptable. He reminded us that we were too process-oriented and needed to modify our traditional military decision making process for a more flexible and expedient method.<sup>23</sup> The current complexities of the environment and the challenges that Casey described demand some dynamic training and cultural adjustments stressing empowerment and decentralization to our junior leaders.

*Empowering Junior Leaders.* The Army's culture has an enduring, legitimate pull between essential centralized control, and necessary decentralized innovation. In his article "Organization Culture," Leonard Wong examines the Army's traditional hierarchical culture and suggests that its assumptions of power distance are not aligned with today's environment. Power distance is the degree to which members of an organization expect power to be distributed equally. Commanders at all levels should heed this observation especially when mentoring their junior leaders. We must empower our junior leaders to be active participants in decision making and encourage a candid bottom up feedback approach, gaining consensus when the situation allows. This should be the norm rather than the exception.<sup>24</sup> In order to foster an environment of critical thinking and assertiveness, commanders should understand that "disagreement is not disrespect" and act accordingly when engaged in critical discussion with subordinates. This also applies to the Army's "can do" mentality. Again, commanders must balance the art of what is truly doable and understand that a different thought toward mission accomplishment is not a measure of disloyalty but rather critical thinking. Cultural norms will only be changed first if leaders set the example and demonstrate that junior officers have a voice. Next, assertiveness and innovativeness must be rewarded. Once subordinates are empowered, they must be

recognized for their ability with more opportunity for schooling, as well as flexibility in duty assignments at the company grade level.<sup>25</sup>

As we have had a propensity to ride the “strong horse” in tactical units, we should rather allow our best and brightest an opportunity to foster their talents through educational opportunities beyond the Officers Basic Course (OBC) and the Captains Career Course (CCC) as desired such as exchange programs with the interagency immediately following the CCC. We should also foster an environment where more talented lieutenants can assume command prior to the CCC as the norm rather than the exception. In adopting these changes in assignments, duty positions, and schooling we must be able to accept some risk in manning key positions. I believe that it is possible primarily because of our talented Non Commissioned Officer support chain.

*Adaptability and Promoting Lessons Learned.* Promoting lessons learned is a key responsibility of commanders at all levels. The U.S. military has developed first class lessons-learned systems that allow for collecting and rapidly disseminating information from the field. But these systems only work when commanders promote their use and create a command climate that encourages bottom up learning. Junior leaders in the field often informally disseminate lessons based on their experiences. However, incorporating this information into institutional lessons–learned, and then into doctrine, requires commanders to encourage subordinates to use the institutional lessons- learned process.<sup>26</sup> Our ability to adapt to a complex environment as demonstrated by the 2007 Surge in Iraq is critical to success in future combat operations. Balancing a doctrinal baseline such as FM 3-24 with the rapid dissemination of Tactics Techniques and Procedures (TTP) and lessons learned

throughout the force will be even more important as our enemies continue to adapt to our operations.

*Civil Military Relationship.* We must learn from the lessons in Iraq and continue to improve our ability to coordinate and synchronize with interagency organizations. The struggle against insurgents using terrorism as demonstrated in Iraq is different from other wars in our history. We will not triumph solely or even primarily through military might. We must fight these networks, and all those who support their efforts to spread fear around the world, using every instrument of national power – diplomatic, economic, law enforcement, financial, information, intelligence, and military.<sup>27</sup>

Counterinsurgency operations have (re)emerged, involving a “...confluence of military and non-military operations... This requires an organization vested with the power to coordinate political, social, economic, and military elements”.<sup>28</sup> And “...because insurgency is a holistic threat, counterinsurgency must be integrated and holistic.”<sup>29</sup> Beyond Iraq however, transnational threats such as al-Qaeda are now understood as a “global insurgency” rather than simply as an international terrorist network.<sup>30</sup> We must capitalize on the momentum gained by surge operations as well as lessons learned on the importance of civil military cooperation to develop and fund a culture that continues to build a team of civil military professionals that is capable of employing all elements of national power simultaneously from tactical to strategic flexible enough to defeat an asymmetric threat capable of exploiting any mistake to manipulate and prey on defenseless populations. Ultimately, there is no such thing as a “proper civil-military balance.” What is necessary for effective policy, good decisions, and a positive outcome is a relationship of respect, candor, collaboration, cooperation—

and subordination.<sup>31</sup> Recent counterinsurgency experience in Iraq by junior leaders which demand cooperation must be sustained and reinforced to maintain this skill in our leaders now and in the future.

*Maintaining Core Competence.* In balancing the Army's ability to operate along the full spectrum of war we must assimilate lessons learned from the Vietnam era. The Army was reluctant to change from a conventional mentality to an unconventional one to combat the insurgents of the time. We have demonstrated through emerging doctrine published in FM 3-24 Counterinsurgency that the Army is flexible enough to adjust. The challenge now is to balance our ability to operate along the full spectrum of war. It is within our capability to operate in an unconventional environment without losing our core combined arms competencies of fires and maneuver which are critical against potential conventional threats. However, this will take a strategy that incorporates some adjustments in training and resourcing in the near term and the long term.

As a recent Field Artillery battalion commander, my unit was challenged to form a maneuver task force and conduct COIN operations against an asymmetric insurgent force in support of OIF. We were also challenged to reestablish the battalion's core competencies in both the delivery of fires and the synchronization of fire support for my BCT as a new life cycle unit. My team developed and implemented a training plan in coordination with the BCT staff that allowed us to do both.

Based on my experiences and challenges to maintain core competency while conducting a non standard mission, I believe that artillerymen, in particular, are developing a new generation of better combined arms officers at the junior level. They

have been forced to operate in a dynamic asymmetrical environment in both OIF and OEF which has made them better leaders. Junior officers are responsible to lead regardless of the task. I watched first hand as my junior company grade officers grew in competence, character, and confidence in coordination with their NCOs. It is possible for a Field Artillery battalion to maintain core competency while simultaneously developing the skills necessary to execute unconventional warfare as a counterinsurgent force. A twelve month training cycle is adequate if events are prioritized and resourced to achieve proficiency in essential tasks. Lethal platoons in both maneuver and fires can be trained and ready. The FA Battalion Commander must work closely with the BCT commander to coordinate a Combined Arms Live Fire Exercise (CALFEX) prior to the capstone combat maneuver training center (CMTC) exercise rotation. The commander must also coordinate with mentors from the Asymmetric Warfare Group (AWG) to train platoons and companies during Situational Training Exercises (STXs) focused on COIN using the latest Tactics Techniques and Procedures (TTP) from Theater. Multi-echelon training at Battalion and Brigade employing Command and Control (C2) exercises using simulations are necessary in preparing staffs to develop skills needed in a COIN environment. They should capitalize on the traditional military decision making process (MDMP) engrained in our leaders to develop more agile staffs capable of quick reactions and resourcing. These are some of the basics that can be employed. I contend we can train to operate as a counterinsurgent force and maintain core competency though it is challenging. We are no longer afforded the time or resources to conduct the Cold War era mass FA battalion

training exercises, but I contend that if we have lethal platoons and a trained battalion staff those skills will be ready when needed.

Based on my experience, I believe that it is possible now for all maneuver units to balance training to conduct both conventional and irregular warfare. To accomplish this, resources must be allocated for an annual training period that allows recovery, reset and collective training for both and maximizing a CMTC experience as a capstone exercise prior to deployment.

In conclusion, the Surge strategy employed in Iraq in 2007 was effective not only because of the increased troop strength but because lessons learned since the initial invasion were employed and emerging coin doctrine published in FM 3-24 counterinsurgency was implemented simultaneously. Furthermore, the counterinsurgency doctrine captured in FM 3-24 provided an effective framework for leaders at every level (strategic, operational, and tactical) to adapt based on the complex environment in Iraq as well as historical perspective. It is, however, especially important that as the doctrine is understood that leaders at all levels rapidly share effective tactics techniques and procedures (TTP) as it applies to the doctrinal framework. This must be done with an emphasis on linking the tactical to the strategic level of war. Also, as we continue to combat the current threat we must not lose our core competencies in the synchronizing fires and maneuver. This is challenging but achievable if appropriately resourced and coordinated. The current situation and our future success will demand leaders that are adaptable, agile, innovative, and empowered. We must continue to learn and adapt both our culture and training to defeat the threat that challenges global stability along the full spectrum of war. Galula's

theory on COIN as it applies to doctrine published in FM 3-24 Counterinsurgency is extremely useful to commanders in training for and executing COIN operations in Iraq. The insights forged in conflict provide an excellent tool for commanders to better understand the environment and thus give clear guidance. Perhaps the most important lesson for all commanders when applying doctrine as well as new tactics, techniques and procedures is to understand that the enemy has a vote and the environment is fluid. We must be flexible, agile and adaptable in order to defeat the threats of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### Endnotes

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>4</sup> David Galula, *Pacification in Algiers* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corp, 2006): ix-xi,

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<sup>6</sup> David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (Westport Ct: Praeger Security International, 2006),1.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 67-99.

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<sup>17</sup> David J. Kilcullen, "COIN in Iraq: Theory and Practice, 2007", Briefing Slides, 2007, <http://kingsofwar.files.wordpress.com/2007/10/kilcullencoibrief26sep07-1.pptin> (accessed January 20, 2008).

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<sup>19</sup> *Counterinsurgency* FM 3-24, 1-25.

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<sup>21</sup> *Counterinsurgency* FM 3-24, 1-23.

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<sup>26</sup> *Counterinsurgency* FM 3-24, x.

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