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# The Rediscovery of Doctrine: The US Army and Counterinsurgency

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United States military efforts to topple Saddam Hussein and liberate Iraq from oppression began on 17 March 2003 and concluded less than thirty days later. During the following summer, however, an insurgency began to grow—an event which the US Army was unprepared to counter. This article will address the reasons for that lack of preparedness, what the Army did to recover from its ineffective response, and the lessons that the US Army and US military at large must learn from this experience.

Beginning on 17 March 2003, the United States and its allies took less than thirty days to topple Saddam Hussein and release Iraq from his grip. During the following summer, however, an insurgency developed—an event which the US Army was unprepared to counter. This article locates the reasons for that lack of preparedness in US Army doctrinal shifts. The article draws on US Army doctrinal publications to trace what the Army did to rectify its ineffective response to this Iraqi insurgency which highlighted the contrast between conventional and unconventional fighting so starkly. The article concludes by suggesting that the shortcomings identified and lessons learned are equally applicable to Afghanistan.

The article refers to *insurgency* and *counterinsurgency*, largely eschewing descriptors like, for example guerrilla warfare, low intensity conflict, irregular warfare, unconventional warfare, stability operations, small wars, operations other than war, full spectrum operations and asymmetric warfare. In this article the terms *insurgency* and *counterinsurgency* are used in accordance with the latest US Department of Defense (DoD) dictionary. According to this authority, “insurgency” is “The organized use of subversion and violence by a group or movement that seeks to overthrow or force change of a governing authority.” On the other hand, “counterinsurgency” (COIN) comprehends the “Comprehensive civilian and military efforts taken to defeat an insurgency and to address any core grievances.”<sup>1</sup>

The article includes frequent references to “US Army doctrine”. This term also requires elucidation. *Doctrine* is defined as “Fundamental principles by which the military forces or elements thereof guide their actions in support of

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Defense, Joint Publication 1-02, *Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, amended through 31 October 2009, <[http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/dod\\_dictionary/index.html](http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/dod_dictionary/index.html)> [Accessed 22 December 2009].

national objectives.”<sup>2</sup> In the US military, doctrine is promulgated primarily through field manuals and joint (multi-service) publications. Doctrine provides a common language and uniform procedures for understanding and executing military operations. It is viewed as the *engine of change* from which flow revisions in organisation, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel, and facilities.

The significance of doctrine within the Army enables this article to draw on doctrinal publications in tracing the Army paradigm prior to the war in Iraq and then how the Army adapted its doctrine, training, and operations to the realities of combat.

Soon after his inauguration in January 1961, President John F. Kennedy asked “what are we doing about guerilla warfare?”<sup>3</sup> Kennedy was convinced that guerrilla warfare was the wave of the future. He recognised that an effective COIN campaign required a combination of military, political, and social action.<sup>4</sup>

The Army’s response to President Kennedy’s questions about para-military operations and directives to expand anti-guerrilla warfare training were examined in a March 1962 article in *Army* magazine. The *Army* piece acknowledged that although “the official U.S. policy is to refrain from injecting Americans into foreign governments”, pragmatically, it had to do so; however, it provided no information as to how to do that.<sup>5</sup>

As social and political actions are integral components of COIN, this article will address those aspects of the Army’s efforts to find its way from Vietnam to Iraq and beyond.

Since the end of World War II, US defence policy had focused on fighting limited wars such as in Korea, the use of nuclear weapons, and the doctrine of containment. Although the US Army had long experience with insurgencies, it was in Vietnam that the subject came to the fore. Kennedy faced a Soviet Union that actively encouraged wars of national liberation using surrogates who would engage in revolutionary or guerrilla warfare. During an address at the United States Military Academy in 1962, he made clear his views of the threat:

This is another type of war, new in its intensity, ancient in its origin—war by guerrillas. ... It requires ... a whole new kind of strategy, a wholly different

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Roger Hilsman, *To Move a Nation: The Politics of Foreign Policy in the Administration of John F. Kennedy* (New York: Dell, 1967), p. 413.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 578;

<sup>5</sup> Lloyd Norman and John B. Spore, ‘Big Push in Guerrilla Warfare’, *Army*, 12 March 1962, p. 34.

kind of force, and therefore a new and wholly different kind of military training.<sup>6</sup>

He could have added that countering guerilla warfare would also entail a whole new kind of thinking.

Kennedy directed the Department of Defense to “develop military doctrine for unconventional warfare and counterinsurgency military operations”. The directive included providing training for “friendly indigenous military and paramilitary forces ... in the fields of guerilla warfare and counter insurgency”.<sup>7</sup>

FM (Field Manual) 100-5, *Field Service Regulations, Operations*, 1962, provided the doctrinal foundation for how the Army was to fight in Vietnam. In the chapter on COIN it noted the social, political, and economic causes of an insurgency. The manual also introduced a concept known as the *spectrum of war* that ranged from nuclear war at the high end to cold war at the lower end. Military operations against irregular forces were considered to be a subset of cold war.<sup>8</sup> Causes of insurgencies and the spectrum of war would be concepts interwoven with the development of military doctrine from then until the present.

Also to be addressed in US military doctrine would be the concept known as *nation building*. Army Chief of Staff Harold K. Johnson then coined the term *stability operations* and defined it as “employment of force to maintain, restore, or create a climate of order under which a government under law can function effectively”. Johnson referred to “stability operations” as the Army’s third principal mission.<sup>9</sup>

In a series of field manuals beginning in 1967 the Army sought to address its *stability operations* mission, which it placed at the lower end of the combat spectrum. Doctrinal publications on stability operations (SO), internal defence and development (IDAD), and low intensity conflict continued to recognise that social, political and economic causes of the insurgency had to be addressed to achieve success in nation building. To this end, the host nation government was to be assisted through a coordinated civil-military approach to gain the support of its people. The Under Secretary of the Army objected, arguing that the Army was not in the nation-building business. Nevertheless, the 1968 revised version of the capstone manual FM 100-5,

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<sup>6</sup> John F. Kennedy, ‘Remarks at West Point to the Graduating Class of the U.S. Military Academy’, 6 June 1962, <<http://www.jkflibrary.org>> [Accessed 12 November 2009].

<sup>7</sup> National Security Action Memorandum No. 182, 24 August 1962, pp. 28-9.

<sup>8</sup> Department of the Army, FM 100-5, *Field Service Regulations, Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1962), pp. 136-55.

<sup>9</sup> Department of the Army, FM 33-5, *Psychological Operations—Techniques and Procedures* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1966), p. 22; Andrew J. Birtle, *U.S. Army Counterinsurgency and Contingency Operations Doctrine, 1942-1976* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2006), pp. 421-2.

*Operations of Army Forces in the Field*, left no doubt as to the significance of the SO and IDAD missions:

The Army's readiness for such activities commands a full share of its resources and professional military thought and equal priority with readiness for limited and general war missions.

Manuals during the next thirty years would fluctuate between whether insurgencies were the business of Special Operations Forces and whether "Army forces must be capable of operating effectively in any battlefield environment, including low intensity conflict." How to reconcile the war-fighting and nation-building roles, as well as how federal government agencies and the military would coordinate efforts, were questions that would be debated into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.<sup>10</sup>

Other threats, though, pushed unconventional warfare issues into the background during the 1970s. During the Cold War era, the perception that a numerically superior Soviet Union posed the greatest danger to the United States, and lessons from the 1973 Arab-Israeli War—a war in which technology came to the fore—led to a major change in the Army's doctrinal emphasis. Doctrine shifted from fighting at the lower end of the conflict spectrum to one of powerful armies facing each other in the Fulda Gap and across the plains of Europe. References to guerrilla, insurgency, and COIN disappeared from the principle Army manuals. COIN and its practitioners were effectively removed from the mainstream of Army thought. COIN also practically disappeared from the core instruction at the US Military Academy, at the Army Command and General Staff College, and from other military training programs.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Department of the Army, FM 31-23, *Stability Operations* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1967), pp. 5, 23, 30-1, 113, *passim*; Department of the Army, FM 100-20, *Internal Defense and Development* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1967), p. 1-1; Report, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations, 'Psychological Operations—Role in Establishing a Sense of Nationhood, Psyop-Reason', 1 August 1967, as cited in Birtle, *U.S. Army Counterinsurgency and Contingency Operations Doctrine*, p. 439; US Department of the Army, FM 100-5, *Operations of Army Forces in the Field* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1968), p. 13-1; Department of the Army, FM 100-5, *Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1986), p. i. FM 100-5 is considered a "capstone" manual that provides overarching guidance and direction for conducting operations. It links Army roles and missions to the National Military Strategy.

<sup>11</sup> Department of the Army, FM 100-5, *Operations* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1976); Department of the Army, FM 100-5, *Operations* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1982); John D. Waghelstein, 'Preparing for the Wrong War: The United States Army and Low Intensity Conflict, 1755-1890', PhD thesis, Temple University, 1990, p. 11; Birtle, *U.S. Army Counterinsurgency and Contingency Operations Doctrine*, pp. 480-1; Richard Downie, *Learning from Conflict: The U.S. Military in Vietnam, El Salvador, and the Drug War* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998), pp. 67, 75; Paul Herbert, *Doing What Has to Be Done: General William E. DuPuy and the 1976 Edition of FM 100-5, Operations* (Ft. Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, 1988), p. 37; Ronald Reagan, *The Creative Society: Some Comments on Problems Facing America* (New York: Devin-Adair Company, 1968), pp. 12-3, as cited in Edward F.

Significantly, it was during the decade of the 1970s that the overwhelming majority of general officers who served in Iraq had been commissioned—the time when COIN was not a primary function of the US Army. It was a time, as David Petraeus concluded in his doctoral dissertation, when, because of Vietnam, military leaders “believed that they should advise against involvement in counterinsurgency”.<sup>12</sup>

Whether the Army as a whole should be prepared to fight at the lower end of the spectrum was contentious. National Security Strategy reports to Congress in the late 1980s through 2001 required that the US military be prepared “to aid in combating threats to the stability of friendly governments ... from insurgencies”, primarily by providing training and advice to friendly government forces.<sup>13</sup> But prevailing Army doctrine provided little practical guidance on how to provide such training and advice so as to win the trust and support of the people involved. An Army advisory role to counter insurgencies thus became a matter of national strategy, but it was primarily Special Forces soldiers who executed the missions.

By the 1990s US Army manuals acknowledged that “a deep understanding of host nation culture” was indispensable and recognised that in the fight between insurgent and counterinsurgent, “the contest is for legitimacy”. But as a matter of policy, according to the manuals,

US forces will not normally be committed to combat, particularly in a counterinsurgency. The principal function of US forces must be to assist the host nation.

Conventional forces would be employed to fight insurgents only when the scope was such that larger forces were required. War in depth, simultaneous attack, manoeuvre, and overwhelming firepower as exemplified by the war to evict Iraq from Kuwait were the doctrinal tenets.<sup>14</sup>

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Corcoran, ‘United States Defense Policy and the Third World —The Development of Doctrine 1962-1985’, PhD thesis, University of South Carolina, 1986, p. 247.

<sup>12</sup> David H. Petraeus, ‘The American Military and the Lessons of Vietnam: A Study of Military Influence and the Use of Force in the Post-Vietnam Era’, PhD thesis, Princeton University, 1987, p. 305.

<sup>13</sup> Department of the Army, FM 90-8, *Counterinsurgency Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1986), pp. iv, 1-4; The White House, *National Security Strategy of the United States* (January 1987), p. 5; (January 1988), p. 4; (March 1990), p. 3; (August 1991), p. 4; *A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement* (July 1994), pp. 7, 9; (February 1995), pp. 1, 11; (February 1996), pp. 13, 17; *A National Security Strategy for a New Century* (May 1997), 8; (October 1998), p. 13; (December 1999), p. 46; *A National Security Strategy for a Global Age* (December 2000), p. 3.

<sup>14</sup> Department of the Army, FM 100-20, *Military Operations in Low Intensity Conflict* (Washington, DC: Departments of the Army and Air Force, 1990), pp. 1-8, 1-11, 2-1; Department of the Army, FM 100-5, *Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1993), pp. 13-0, 13-7, 13-8, Glossary-6.

The practical result of this gap between insight and action was that conventional units received no training and commanders little instruction in COIN.

In June 2001, three months before 9/11, the Army published its revised capstone operations manual FM 3-0. The chapter on stability operations hearkened back to earlier manuals by emphasising the requirement to identify the causes of the insurgency and the need for the host nation to address grievances. It also made clear that it was essential to “integrate all resources—civilian and military, public and private—so that host nation combat operations and development efforts complement each other”. Nevertheless, the manual directed that commanders focus their mission-essential training on combat tasks “unless directed otherwise”.<sup>15</sup> With the benefit of hindsight, the US military’s focus on conventional combat tasks left it inadequately prepared for the type of war that eventuated.

### **Counterinsurgency: A Different Kind of Fight**

Although the calamity of 11 September 2001 shook the United States to its core, the Department of Defense was slow to adapt to the ramifications of the attacks. Beginning in 1997, Congress had required the DoD to provide a Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) to bridge the gap between strategy and resources. That first QDR called for a military capability “to deter and defeat large-scale, cross-border aggression in two distant theaters in overlapping time frames”. Despite the attacks on US soil, the QDR published on 30 September 2001 called for a military that could “swiftly defeat aggression in overlapping major conflicts”. Only once did it mention insurgencies, and that was in reference to the Andean region of South America. A revised introduction based upon the events only a few weeks earlier did acknowledge that the United States “must identify the capabilities required to deter and defeat adversaries who will rely on ... asymmetric warfare to achieve their objectives”. Substantively, there was little indication that a new way of thinking about military threats would be required. How well the US military could adapt to adversaries who employed asymmetric measures remained to be seen.<sup>16</sup>

Events in the summer of 2003 seemed to confirm the validity of the conventional doctrine that had guided the training of US privates and generals in the preceding decades. ‘Shock and Awe’ and ‘Thunder Runs’

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<sup>15</sup> The Army adopted the joint numbering system for manuals. FM 3-0 is the replacement for the 1993 version of FM 100-5. Department of the Army, FM 3-0, *Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2001), pp. 9-8, 9-9.

<sup>16</sup> William S. Cohen, ‘Report of the Quadrennial Defense Review’, May 1997, <<http://books.google.com/books?id=1buLAnPa0ZYC&pg=PA1&dq=quadrennial+defense+review+history#v=onepage&q=quadrennial%20defense%20review%20history&f=false>> [Accessed 17 November 2009], pp. 11, 12, 31-2; Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2001), pp. iv, 17.

had seemingly validated the Army's approach to warfare.<sup>17</sup> Speed, firepower, and a focus on conventional warfare had led to the swift collapse of the Saddam regime. Training to fight a 1991 Gulf War scenario in the force-on-force encounters at the National Training Center had led to a rapid, decisive victory. The mind-set was confirmed. The conventional doctrine that had guided the training of privates and generals for decades had proven to be valid.

With the Iraqi Army defeated, the military immediately began to transition from offensive operations to the creation of a secure environment and to the conduct of stability operations to facilitate the establishment of government and economic development. The 1993 FM 100-5 had warned commanders that

In the turbulent period immediately following the end of combat operations ... pending the reestablishment of a civilian infrastructure, military forces may be in the best position to ... establish civil order and public services, and to provide health assistance and other post-conflict activities.<sup>18</sup>

As subsequent developments were to show, simply acknowledging such opportunities without indicating what training and resources units needed to exploit them is hardly effective doctrine.

In July, General John Abizaid, new commander of US Central Command, described a new reality: members of former Iraqi government, intelligence, and military organisations "are conducting what I would describe as a classical guerrilla-type campaign against us. [The insurgency] is adapting to our tactics, techniques and procedures", he warned, "and we've got to adapt to their tactics, techniques and procedures". As Lieutenant General Scott Wallace, commander of the US V Corps remarked, "The enemy we're fighting is a bit different than the one we war-gamed against, because of these paramilitary forces." Whether the US military was prepared to adapt to a COIN campaign, to include re-establishing a civilian infrastructure, was the question.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> 'Shock and Awe' refers to the use of overwhelming firepower to achieve rapid dominance of an enemy. In Iraq Shock and Awe was the unofficial designation for the artillery, air, and cruise missile attacks on Baghdad in March 2003. 'Thunder Runs' are the names given to two armoured thrusts into Baghdad in April 2003.

<sup>18</sup> V Corps and CJTF-7, 'V Corps—CJTF-7 Transition and Challenges' briefing, 30 September 2004, as cited in Donald P. Wright, Timothy R. Reese, et al., *On Point II, Transition to the New Campaign: The United States Army in Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, May 2003-June 2005* (Ft. Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2008), p. 30; FM 100-5, *Operations*, 1993, pp. 13-2, 13-7.

<sup>19</sup> 'DOD Press Briefing—Mr. Di Rita and Gen. Abizaid', *Defense Link*, 16 July 2003, <<http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=2845>> [Accessed 23 November 2009]; Michael E. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, *COBRA II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq* (New York: Panteion Books, 2006), pp. 500-1; Thomas E. Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq* (New York: Penguin Press, 2006), pp. 170-2, 195; Brian Knowlton, 'Top U.S. General in Iraq Sees "Classical Guerrilla-Type" War', *International Herald Tribune*, 16 July 2003, <<http://www.nytimes.com/2003/07/16/international/>

Whether Iraq was an insurgency became a heated political question in Washington. As mentioned, an insurgency is “an organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government”.<sup>20</sup> Did such a government exist in Iraq in the summer of 2003? Some would claim that a guerrilla threat became evident in March during the fighting around Nasiriyah and Najaf. Others would argue that the evidence of an insurgency became obvious when four Blackwater contractors were killed on 31 March 2004 in Fallujah. Despite the capture of Saddam Hussein, attacks continued to increase into 2006. The realities of war, the theories of COIN, and the requirement to rebuild a nation collided head-on.<sup>21</sup>

In February 2003, the Army published FM 3-07, *Stability Operations and Support Operations*, which included those types of operations under the new rubric of “Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW)”. Hence units that had been conducting offensive operations or were deploying to Iraq suddenly had to adapt to a new doctrine and a new type of warfare. One commander related that “the division has had to change its whole operating style after 20 years of focusing on fighting conventional heavy forces”.<sup>22</sup>

In reality, FM 3-07 was too new for commanders to have studied and determined how to implement its guidance. Even if they had been able to study it, the manual indicated that US forces would be working in conjunction with host nation forces to provide a secure environment for reconstruction. The manual had not anticipated a situation where there were no host nation security forces and no established government. In fact, “the October 2002 CENTCOM War Plan presupposed that relatively benign stability and security operations would precede a handover to Iraq’s authorities”.<sup>23</sup> Commanders in Iraq were basically on their own with precious little to assist them with the unexpected mission.

What had begun as a conventional operation for which commanders and units had trained at the National Training Center and elsewhere had morphed into an unconventional operation which only a few units had previously encountered. The war became something alien to what politicians and soldiers had expected it to be. For example, units involved in

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worldspecial/16CND-POLI.html> [Accessed 3 December 2009]; Jim Dwyer, ‘A Gulf Commander Sees a Longer Road’, *The New York Times*, 28 March 2003.

<sup>20</sup> Department of Defense, Joint Publication 1-02, *Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*.

<sup>21</sup> Wright, Reese, et al., *On Point II*, pp. 32-3, 101, 114; Ricks, *Fiasco*, p. 333.

<sup>22</sup> FM 3-07, *Stability Operations and Support Operations* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2003), p. 1-1. FM 3-07 superseded FM 100-20, *Military Operations in Low Intensity Conflict*, 1990; Anthony H. Cordesman, *The Current Military Situation in Iraq* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 14 November 2003), p. 13.

<sup>23</sup> ‘Excerpts From the Schlesinger Report’, Wednesday, 25 August 2004, p. A13, *Excerpts of the Report of the Independent Panel to Review DoD Detention Operation*, <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A30013-2004Aug24.html>> [Accessed 25 November 2009].

stability operations in the Balkans had had little difficulty managing an insurgent force in that campaign. Units that had focused on force-on-force encounters were facing threats from terrorists, suicide bombers, and Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs). The insurgent, moreover, could adapt to the changing situation, as well.

The upshot was that US commanders were being thrust into, not only an unconventional environment, but also one which required them to conduct stability operations, to include nation building. The latest FM 3-0 doctrine said little about actually having to conduct COIN operations while also conducting stability operations. It was a situation that required adapting to new missions while still having to protect the force and conduct traditional offensive conventional operations.

Those leaders who had read or studied COIN theory and who recognised that force alone would not restore stability to Iraq, sought to build relations with influential Iraqis to establish the close civil, political, and military cooperation essential to a successful COIN effort: in Mosul, Major General David Petraeus met with bankers and local government officials. In Samarra, the brigade commander met with and provided money to the city council to initiate development projects. Similar frequent meetings with local leaders and a softer approach to apprehensions often led to a marked decrease in violence. Others believed that killing insurgents was the only solution to the growing problem. In his book, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*, David Galula wrote: "The population ... becomes the objective for the counterinsurgent as it was for his enemy."<sup>24</sup> But how were US soldiers engaged in combat on the ground supposed to win the population?

By August 2003 Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez, the senior commander in Iraq, realised that "maybe our iron-fisted approach to the conduct of [operations] was beginning to alienate Iraqis". He ordered his units to limit large-scale operations and to implement the plan to stabilise the country. While this was in consonance with existing doctrine, for the soldier on the ground it was a tightrope walk to balance attacking insurgents and possibly alienating the people versus focusing on reconstruction, training and governance which would allow the insurgents a respite during which they could regroup. As Major General James Mattis, commander of the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division later stated: "If you're not confused, then you don't know how complex the situation is."<sup>25</sup>

Well known is the story of General David Petraeus and the changes he brought to Mosul beginning in summer 2003. Recognising that close

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<sup>24</sup> Ricks, *Fiasco*, pp. 229-31, 250; David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1964), p. 75.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 122; Ricks, *Fiasco*, p. 343.

cooperation between the US military and the Iraqi civilians and officials was critical, he set about implementing procedures which he had learned through formal education, reading, and experience. When he left the city in the spring of 2004, it was quiet. It must be recognised, however, that Petraeus had a full division to provide security and achieve his goals. The follow-on unit had approximately one-fourth as many soldiers and a commander with a different mind-set.<sup>26</sup>

Petraeus was not alone in his methods and views on COIN. Other units in Sadr City and Al Anbar Province also sought to provide security, re-establish the rule of law, provide essential services, and establish governments headed by Iraqi officials. Some commanders, though, continued to take the conventional approach to deal with an unconventional problem.<sup>27</sup>

By the summer of 2004 there was no question that the US military was involved in a full-blown insurgency. Upon taking command of Multi-National Forces—Iraq, General George Casey, the new US commander, directed his staff to develop a COIN plan that included both addressing the insurgent violence and rebuilding the country. The plan reflected his view that the war had become primarily one of COIN. He also made clear that facilitating the creation of an Iraqi government perceived as legitimate by the people was absolutely critical. Robert Komer, head of Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support in Vietnam, had warned that in the face of a low-intensity challenge, the Army “must stress adaptability—sizing up each situation on its merits and preparing tailored responses”.<sup>28</sup> Without adequate current doctrinal guidance, however, planning by Casey’s staff and adapting to an unconventional environment could be very difficult.<sup>29</sup>

Filling the existing doctrinal gap was the responsibility of the Combined Arms Center (CAC) at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Lieutenant General Scott Wallace, who had previously commanded the US V Corps in Iraq, took command of the CAC in June 2003. Wallace had realised that after the initial success in Iraq something had to be done about the condition of the people. Soon after arriving at the CAC, he asked his staff to review existing doctrine to determine whether it adequately addressed COIN or training of foreign forces. The response was that such doctrine was essentially non-existent. What was there was, in the words of one of his staff officers, “a mile wide and an inch deep”. Specifically lacking was information on full

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<sup>26</sup> Ricks, *Fiasco*, pp. 228-32; Wright, Reese, et al., *On Point II*, p. 117.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 42, 177-8; Ricks, *Fiasco*, p. 392; Bruce Hoffman, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Iraq* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2004), p. 9, OP-127-IPC/CMEPP; Bob Woodward, *The War Within: A Secret White House History 2006-2008* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2008), p. 19.

<sup>28</sup> Robert W. Komer, ‘How to Prepare for Low-Intensity Conflict in the 1980s’, in William J. Taylor and Steven A. Maaranen (eds), *The Future of Conflict in the 1980s* (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1982), p. 20.

<sup>29</sup> Ricks, *Fiasco*, p. 232.

spectrum operations, culture, human intelligence, information operations, intelligence requirements, and security for the population. He directed his staff to produce an interim field manual in five months. In September 2004 Wallace approved the manual, FM-I (Interim) 3-07.22, *Counterinsurgency Operations*, and had it distributed to the force.

While the manual provided a one-source document for the basics of COIN, its content focused on division level and below. Also, because of the time constraint, there was nothing in the final product about training foreign forces. To address principles that were applicable at levels above division, and to include concepts that had not been addressed in the interim manual, Wallace directed that the formal doctrine development process be used to create a final manual that was more comprehensive. In the meantime, the interim manual would meet the immediate need for an up-to-date doctrinal publication in the field. Drafting a new manual got a significant boost when Wallace was reassigned as Commander of the Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), which is responsible for developing all Army doctrine, and David Petraeus became the new CAC commander.<sup>30</sup>

In addition to the lack of current doctrine, another problem was that there was no centralised mechanism to share lessons learned or to provide basic COIN instruction and training. Those deficiencies led to several innovations. In 2004 the US Army National Training Center and the Joint Readiness Training Center began to shift from a Soviet-type training scenario to a COIN scenario. That involved constructing towns and villages and recruiting role-players who could speak languages common to Iraq and Afghanistan. Cultural awareness became a critical component of the new training.

Institutional solutions to increasing knowledge of COIN were not limited to existing Army organisations. In December 2005 General Casey created the Counterinsurgency Center for Excellence (COIN CFE) in Iraq to provide instruction and advice on COIN and stability operations. With the interim COIN FM as a guide, instructors began to acquaint commanders primarily at brigade level and below with the basics of COIN. A critical component of the training was integration of Iraqi political and cultural instruction for the new-to-theatre commanders. Later, classes would include general officers. A similar organisation, the Counterinsurgency Training Center–Afghanistan was subsequently created with a similar mission.<sup>31</sup>

To meet the Army's education institutional requirements to provide adequate COIN and stability operations training, the military education system began to incorporate COIN training back into the curricula. What had all but vanished since 1975 suddenly became either stand-alone courses or

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<sup>30</sup> Jan Horvath, interview with author, 7 December 2009. LTC Horvath was the principal coordinator for development of the interim COIN field manual.

<sup>31</sup> Jan Horvath, interview with author, 7 December 2009.

embedded into other instruction in the basic courses, in the intermediate level education system, and at the national War College level. At the Fort Leavenworth Command and General Staff College and School of Advanced Military Studies, the number of COIN-related monographs and Master's theses exploded. Professional military journals suddenly were devoting entire issues to COIN articles. For example, articles about COIN published in the Army's *Military Review* increased from three in 2001 to twenty-four in 2006. In 2001, 2.5 percent of the topics for the monographs and theses were on COIN topics. By 2006, that percentage had increased to 7.7 percent.<sup>32</sup>

To coordinate the rapid expansion of COIN doctrine and training, then Lieutenant General Petraeus and Marine Corps Lieutenant General Mattis established the Counterinsurgency Center at Fort Leavenworth. The Center's mission was and is to integrate COIN efforts among the services, to facilitate the implementation of COIN doctrine, to coordinate with other government agencies to address COIN-related issues, and to provide instruction both to US forces and to the international military community. The Center has become the Army's focal point for COIN and the proponent for stability operations and security force assistance principles and practices.<sup>33</sup>

To promulgate lessons learned, CAC directed the Battle Command Knowledge System and Center for Army Lessons Learned to establish mechanisms to gather and disseminate information. This has resulted in a plethora of web sites and publications designed to address specific issues encountered by units in Iraq and Afghanistan. Additionally, the CAC Battle Command Training Program conducts and supports conventional and COIN training to provide senior leaders the skills and experiences required for COIN operations.<sup>34</sup>

The 1990 version of the Low Intensity Conflict field manual called for "a deep understanding of host nation culture". Such an understanding was not a new concept. A 1999 assessment of operations in Bosnia concluded that "Greater emphasis must be placed on geopolitical and cultural training for the army's officer corps." Despite those statements, cultural understanding in Iraq and Afghanistan was decidedly lacking. In 2006 TRADOC developed

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<sup>32</sup> Ricks, *Fiasco*, p. 419.

<sup>33</sup> US Army/US Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Center, <<http://usacac.army.mil/cac2/coin/index.asp>> [Accessed 9 December 2009]. A proponent organization has responsibility relative to doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel, and facilities and related requirements for a particular function. For additional information on the Counterinsurgency Center see *Army* magazine (December 2009), pp. 61-2.

<sup>34</sup> Department of the Army, FM 100-20, *Military Operations in Low Intensity Conflict*, 1990, p. 1-8; Battle Command Knowledge System, <<http://usacac.army.mil/cac2/bcks/Intro.asp>>; Center for Army Lessons Learned, <<http://usacac.army.mil/cac2/call/about.asp>>; Battle Command Training Program, <<http://usacac.army.mil/cac2/bctp/about.asp>> [All accessed 9 December 2009].

a unique program to deploy social scientists as members of Human Terrain Teams to assist commanders with an understanding of the local population and culture and to advise them on tactical situations that could have cultural implications.<sup>35</sup>

In a speech to the nation on 25 October 2005, President Bush declared “our strategy is to clear, hold and build”. His announcement was a surprise to the Army leadership in Iraq. FM 31-73, *Advisor Handbook for Counterinsurgency*, April 1965, had linked the terms “clear” and “hold”. Not since then had they appeared in a doctrinal publication and never had the term “build” been included. The military leadership in Iraq was left to guess at exactly what the President’s words meant. Although the meaning was clarified in November in the National Security Council document *National Strategy for Victory in Iraq*, it was not contained in Army doctrine.<sup>36</sup>

At Fort Leavenworth, Petraeus gathered together a team of Army, Marine Corps and civilian authors in December to complete the revised COIN field manual. The Army released the manual, FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*, in December 2006. Included were six pages on clear-hold-build.<sup>37</sup> On 10 January 2007, in an address to the nation, President Bush announced the role for the additional troops being sent to Iraq:

Our troops will have a well-defined mission: to help Iraqis clear and secure neighbourhoods, to help them protect the local population and to help ensure that the Iraqi forces left behind are capable of providing the security that Baghdad needs.<sup>38</sup>

It was a mission straight out of the new field manual. Two months later Petraeus replaced General Casey as commander of Multi-National Forces–Iraq.

At the national level, the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Report, reflecting the realities of the situation in Afghanistan and Iraq, unconditionally acknowledged that “in the post-September 11 world, irregular warfare has

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<sup>35</sup> ‘Human Terrain System’, <<http://humanterrainsystem.army.mil/missionstatement.html>> [Accessed 9 December 2009]; Howard Olsen and John Davis, *Training U.S. Army Officers for Peace Operations: Lessons from Bosnia*, Special Report, (Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace, 1999), p. 9.

<sup>36</sup> Transcript, ‘President Bush Speaks At Bolling Air Force Base’, 25 October 2005, <<http://edition.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0510/25/se.01.html>> [Accessed 2 December 2009]; Woodward, *The War Within*, pp. 32-3; National Security Council, *National Strategy for Victory in Iraq*, November 2005, p. 8.

<sup>37</sup> Department of the Army, FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, Headquarters US Marine Corps, 2006), pp. 5-16–5-23; John Nagl, ‘The Evolution and Importance of Army/Marine Corps Field Manual 3-24, Counterinsurgency’, *Small Wars Journal*, 27 June 2007, <<http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/2007/06/the-evolution-and-importance-o/>> [Accessed 2 December 2009].

<sup>38</sup> George W. Bush, ‘President’s Address to the Nation’, 10 January 2007, Transcript of President Bush’s Address to Nation on US Policy in Iraq, <<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/01/11/us/11ptext.html>> [Accessed 2 December 2009].

emerged as the dominant form of warfare confronting the United States". In a dramatic shift, the report recognised that general purpose forces would be required to "conduct long-duration counterinsurgency operations" and must "be as proficient in irregular operations, including counterinsurgency and stabilization operations, as they are today in high-intensity combat".<sup>39</sup>

How the Army would adapt to the worsening insurgency and implement the QDR guidance was attracting top-level attention in the Pentagon. In September 2006 during a meeting with the Secretary of Defense, a retired general laid out the Iraq problem plainly and forcefully. Military forces could not occupy large bases, he argued. They had to move into the cities and towns to live with, get to know, and protect the people. The Marines had tried that in Vietnam with the Combined Action Platoon, but the program had been abandoned, primarily because it was viewed as tying down too many troops who were too vulnerable to attack.<sup>40</sup>

Other doctrinal publications beyond FM 3-24 followed. In February 2008 the Army published a revised FM 3-0, *Operations*. This version continued the theme of the previous manual by emphasising that stability operations would be conducted "directly and continuously", in combination "with tactical tasks directed against the enemy". The manual also provided guidance about military support to reconstruction efforts. FM 3-24.2, *Tactics in Counterinsurgency*, April 2009, was based on lessons learned and focused on tactical operations at brigade level and below. The next month the Army published FM 3-07.1, *Security Force Assistance*, as a guide for US forces to build the capacity of foreign security forces.<sup>41</sup>

By this time, the US Army had been joined by other US institutions in developing a US response to COIN. In 2009 the Department of State led a multi-department effort to publish the *US Government COIN Guide*. The *Guide* stressed that COIN requires "comprehensive civilian and military efforts designed to simultaneously contain insurgency and address its root causes". It recognised that "COIN approaches must be adaptable and agile", and that security, governance, and economic activities must be undertaken simultaneously. It also recognised that there must be unity of effort among the military, other US government agencies, coalition partners, and the affected government to fight an insurgency. To ensure that all military services were implementing COIN doctrine in concert, in October

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<sup>39</sup> Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2006), pp. 36, 38, 42.

<sup>40</sup> Ann Marlowe, 'The Picture Awaits: The Birth of Modern Counterinsurgency', *World Affairs Journal* (Summer 2009), <<http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/Archives/issue-lp/summer-09.html>> [Accessed 7 December 2009].

<sup>41</sup> Department of the Army, FM 3-0, *Operations* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2008), p. viii; Department of the Army, FM 3-24.2, *Tactics in Counterinsurgency* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2009), p. viii; Department of the Army, FM 3-07.1, *Security Force Assistance* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2009), p. 2-8.

2009 the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff published Joint Publication 3-24, *Counterinsurgency Operations*.<sup>42</sup>

These initiatives bore fruit: US commanders realised that Iraqi forces simply were not up to the task of securing the population and moved troops from the large base camps into Joint Security Stations (JSS) manned by US and Iraqi soldiers and Iraqi police.

By August 2007 a steady decline in violence had begun. Much of that decline can be attributed to the decision to locate JSS in neighbourhoods in accordance with COIN doctrine. Also relevant was the Anbar Awakening which occurred as a result of Iraqis being appalled by the brutality displayed by many insurgents, as well as a pause in operations by Moqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army. By June 2008 attacks had been reduced from a high of 1550 each week to 200, and tips provided by citizens "skyrocketed". Significant to the Awakening was the number of US troops available to provide security while the Iraqis gained strength. Also significant were the literacy programs created by US forces to assist Iraqis to meet the standards for admission as police trainees.<sup>43</sup>

Putting the guidance of FM 3-0 into practice, military commanders in Iraq imported a concept that had previously been employed in Afghanistan—the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) composed of military and civilian personnel. Their mission was to

assist Iraqi provincial governments with developing a transparent and sustained capability to govern, promoting increased security and rule of law, promoting political and economic development and providing provincial administration necessary to meet the basic needs of the population.

Unfortunately, security concerns, the lack of a well-defined mission, and funding and recruiting shortfalls caused the teams to get off to a slow start. Some of these problems continue even now, but decisions to imbed the PRTs with combat brigades appear to have increased their effectiveness.<sup>44</sup>

Upon his return to Iraq in June 2008, General Petraeus issued his COIN guidance that emphasised the principles that had been codified in the COIN field manual: "Secure and serve the people"—provide security and restore

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<sup>42</sup> US Government, *U.S. Government Counterinsurgency Guide* (Washington, DC: Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, 2009), pp. 2, 3; Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Counterinsurgency Operations*, 2009, *passim*.

<sup>43</sup> John Nagl, 'Lessons from Iraq for Afghanistan and Beyond', <[http://web.mit.edu/ssp/seminars/wed\\_archives\\_08fall/nagl.html](http://web.mit.edu/ssp/seminars/wed_archives_08fall/nagl.html)> [Accessed 2 December 2009]; Woodward, *The War Within*, pp. 369, 380-1, 419; Kimberly Kagan, *The Surge: A Military History* (New York: Encounter Books, 2009), pp. 32, 70; Bing West, 'Counterinsurgency Lessons from Iraq', *Military Review* (March-April 2009), p. 3.

<sup>44</sup> Embassy of the United States of America, 'Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) Fact Sheet', 16 June 2006; Robert M. Perino, *Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Iraq*, (Washington DC: US Institute of Peace, 2007).

basic services; “Live among the people”—living in the neighbourhoods is essential to providing security; “Foster Iraqi legitimacy”—encourage Iraqi leadership and partner with them to establish governance, economic development, and provision of services; “Walk”—interact with the people face-to-face; “Build relationships”—establish personal relationships with local leaders, tribal sheiks, and government officials; “Learn and adapt”—adjust tactics and policies, share good ideas. He was particularly focused on having soldiers interact with the people face-to-face. “Living among the people is essential to securing them”, he wrote. Petraeus’s ideas would be reinforced by his successor, General Ray Odierno, who used many of the same words, and emphasised that leaders must be “flexible, imaginative, and adaptive”.<sup>45</sup> Overall, reduced violence in Iraq suggests that a change in mind-set and implementation of COIN principles by a succession of commanders is having the effect envisaged in the doctrine.

### **Learning from the Past; Adapting for the Future**

In their book, *Military Misfortunes*, Eliot Cohen and John Gooch concluded that there are three types of failure: failure to learn, failure to anticipate, and failure to adapt. Clearly, the US Army can be accused of failure to anticipate. As former Vice Chief of Staff of the Army General Jack Keane noted: in Iraq,

we put an Army on the battlefield that I had been a part of for 37 years. It doesn't have any doctrine, nor was it educated and trained, to deal with an insurgency ... After the Vietnam War, we purged ourselves of everything that had to do with irregular warfare or insurgency, because it had to do with how we lost that war. In hindsight, that was a bad decision.

Petraeus, citing Professor Glenn Paige’s analysis of decision-making during the Korean War, explains failure to anticipate as follows: “past events experienced first hand, especially during an individual’s impressionable years”, will influence strongly the way they think.<sup>46</sup> The Army had learned how to prepare itself for a force-on-force encounter against the Soviet army. In Iraq the US Army was suddenly thrust into a role for which it was not prepared.

Not only did the US military fail to anticipate the breakdown of Iraqi society, disintegration of the Iraqi government and the advent of a large-scale insurgency. When the Army found itself in an unconventional fight in Iraq

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<sup>45</sup> General David Petraeus, ‘Multi-National Force-Iraq Commander’s Counterinsurgency Guidance’, 21 June 2008; General Raymond Odierno, ‘Multi-National Force-Iraq Commander’s Counterinsurgency Guidance’, 16 September 2008.

<sup>46</sup> Eliot A. Cohen and John Gooch, *Military Misfortunes: The Anatomy of Failure in War* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), p. 26; ‘The Evolution and Importance of Army/Marine Corps Field Manual 3-24, Counterinsurgency’, *Small Wars Journal* (27 June 2007), <<http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/2007/06/the-evolution-and-importance-of/>> [Accessed 16 November 2009]; Wright, Reese, et al., *On Point II*, p. 174; Petraeus, ‘The American Military and the Lessons of Vietnam’, p. 31.

and then in Afghanistan, it had little choice except to search for ad hoc solutions to train and prepare, not only the US military, but also foreign military and police to fight an insurgency.

This highlights a larger issue: The US government has neither the capacity nor the organisation to provide nation-building services for governments that have been completely wrecked. By the fall of 2003 it was evident that Iraq needed far more support for reconstruction than the military alone could provide. As the military soon learned, no government agency was responsible for detailed plans for post-conflict stabilisation operations. The result was that the military was forced to provide personnel and to stitch together mechanisms at the town and village level to bring some order out of the chaos. The new COIN manual recognises the reality that this governmental role is one that the military may be required to fill.<sup>47</sup>

Just as the Under Secretary of the Army objected in 1967 to a military mission of nation building, so, too, do some object today. It is still a controversial topic as evidenced by articles in several recent military journals. The larger issue is, as Retired General Charles Krulak wrote: in a dysfunctional country, “getting NGO’s [Non-Governmental Organisations] and nation building expertise into the fight is simply a non-starter”. What expertise the military can bring to that fight and how they would train for that nation-building mission are difficult questions.<sup>48</sup>

Any doubts that the US government and military are committed to COIN and stability operations for the foreseeable future have been laid to rest by the 2008 National Defense Strategy. The Strategy requires the military to master irregular warfare while also being able to counter conventional threats. It requires the US Armed Forces to “institutionalize and retain” the capabilities to conduct “long-term reconstruction, development and governance” in nations that call upon the US for assistance. To put teeth in the Strategy, the Department of Defense directed all services to “maintain military capabilities ... to meet ... IW [Irregular Warfare]—related requirements”, which includes stability operations.<sup>49</sup>

The US has now begun searching for ways to avoid a repetition of the situation with which the US military was suddenly confronted in Iraq. For

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 171; Karen de Young, ‘Military Must Fill Civilian Jobs in Iraq’, *Washington Post*, 8 February 2007; FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*, p. 2-1.

<sup>48</sup> Bing West, ‘Counterinsurgency Lessons from Iraq’, *Military Review* (March-April 2009), pp. 2-12; Gian Gentile, ‘Nation Building at the Barrel of an American Gun?’, *Small Wars Journal* (13 September 2009), <<http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/2009/09/nation-building-at-the-barrel/>> [Accessed 21 December 2009]; Letter General Charles Krulak to George Will, cited in ‘Krulak on Will’, *Small Wars Journal* (10 September 2009), <<http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/2009/09/krulak-on-will/>> [Accessed 21 December 2009].

<sup>49</sup> US Department of Defense, *National Defense Strategy*, June 2008, pp. 4, 8, 9, 13, 17; Robert M. Gates, ‘The National Defense Strategy: Striking the Right Balance’, *Joint Forces Quarterly*, no. 52 (1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2009), p. 3.

example, to provide expertise to rebuild governments in failed or failing states the US government is in the fledgling stages of creating a Civilian Response Corps that can rapidly be activated and employed.<sup>50</sup>

One author wrote: "In no field of conflict [COIN] is the distance greater between elegant theory and messy reality".<sup>51</sup> The US military is still wrestling with how to make the reality less messy. Among the questions being asked are: How does the Army structure itself to fight both conventionally and unconventionally? Is the current approach to building brigade combat teams that can be augmented for Security Force Assistance the right approach?<sup>52</sup> How does the military provide the cultural background, to include language, skills, and knowledge to have a force that can deploy rapidly to a COIN environment? Is current doctrine adequate? How does the US military continue to adapt to the challenges inherent in a world in which insurgencies may be the wars of the future? Should the Army create a permanent organisation to study irregular warfare in anticipation of future conflicts? How will the COIN experiences of junior officers during their "impressible years" influence their ability to think about wars of the future?

Because of the importance of doctrine within the US military, the Army will soon begin a review of FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*. Deficiencies, to include lack of clarity in the areas of military, political, and social activities are being identified. Examples are: how the military deals with the criminal element in an insurgency; the correct metrics to determine whether progress is being made; the prominent role that religion plays in many cultures; whether existing governmental and military institutions should be demobilised and how; how to reintegrate insurgents or representatives of an unpopular government into society. These are not easy topics, but ones that became significant concerns during the on-going US involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan.

In a 2004 Department of Defense report, former Secretary of Defense James R. Schlesinger wrote: "In Iraq, there was not only a failure to plan for a major insurgency, but also to quickly and adequately adapt to the insurgency that followed after major combat operations."<sup>53</sup> Commanders who had the vision to recognise that a new way of thinking was required applied existing doctrine and what little experience they may have had to the existing

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<sup>50</sup> David C. Gompert and John Gordon, *War by Other Means: Building Complete and Balanced Capabilities for Counterinsurgency* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2008), p. 322-32.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 354.

<sup>52</sup> Security Force Assistance (SFA) is defined in Joint Publication 1-02 as "unified action to generate, employ, and sustain local, host-nation, or regional security forces in support of a legitimate authority". The purpose is to support the host nation's internal defence and development.

<sup>53</sup> James R. Schlesinger, et al., 'Final Report of the Independent Panel to Review DoD Detention Operation', <[www.news.findlaw.com/wp/docs/dod/abughraibrpt.pdf](http://www.news.findlaw.com/wp/docs/dod/abughraibrpt.pdf)> [Accessed 25 November 2009], p. 11.

situation. The assumptions that had been prevalent prior to entering Iraq had proven to be false. Circumstances had changed dramatically from what was expected to be a quick conventional operation followed by a rapid redeployment, to an environment that was totally different. Existing doctrine did not fully account for the reality. A new paradigm—an unconventional COIN paradigm—was required. Ad hoc organisations, innovative thinking, and a willingness to break with conventional tradition led to adaptations that have now brought a measure of stability and a functioning government to Iraq

Looking to the future, the question is whether COIN will once again be seen as the anomaly and COIN will again be excised from US Army doctrine, schools, and publications. Or will COIN become the norm and conventional operations go the way of COIN after Vietnam? According to General Montgomery Meigs, the army faces a major challenge: “The army has a wonderful ability to adapt to a crisis, but we have to be better than that and adapt to the environment before the crisis hits”.<sup>54</sup> Ad hoc responses to unplanned contingencies are not a viable military strategy.

To avoid managing a crisis, the Army must develop the budgetary programming mechanisms essential to capturing the concepts that have evolved from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. It must determine which ad hoc organisations that have been created to facilitate the shift to the COIN paradigm should be retained and resourced as permanent fixtures. It has to address the competing conventional and unconventional paradigms that have now been fixtures within the US Army for more than half a decade. What missions can US Army units realistically be trained and equipped and organised to accomplish? Will the US Government resource agencies which have the capacity to assist or reconstitute the governments of failing or failed states? The Army cannot allow a repetition of a situation where the operational force leads change and the institutional force finds itself decades behind.

That the military must adapt to constantly changing environments was one of the eight points made by General McChrystal when he became Commander, International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan. “Constantly adapt”, he wrote. “I ask you to challenge conventional wisdom and abandon practices that are ingrained into many military cultures.” He continued: “And I ask you to push me to do the same.”<sup>55</sup>

McChrystal's challenge was picked up by General Martin Dempsey, Commander of the Army Training and Doctrine Command, in his Leader

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<sup>54</sup> Olsen and Davis, ‘Training U.S. Army Officers for Peace Operations: Lessons from Bosnia’, p. 9.

<sup>55</sup> Stanley A. McChrystal, ‘Commander’s Initial Guidance’, Headquarters, International Security Assistance Force, Kabul, Afghanistan, 13 June 2009.

Development Strategy issued 2 September 2009. The Army needs “leaders who can anticipate change, create opportunities, and manage transitions” in an era of complex, “ill-structured problems”, he wrote. The Army must “develop leaders who can anticipate the adaptations and transitions an enemy will make during the course of an extended campaign” in “an uncertain and complex future security environment”.<sup>56</sup>

In any war, militaries can expect the enemy to adapt to their tactics and way of thinking. Although the US military must remain grounded in doctrine, the pace of change in current and future conflicts demands that leaders accept ambiguity and be able to adapt to a rapidly changing operational environment. The simple lesson of the US Army’s recent experience is that armies must be willing and able to adapt faster than the enemy.

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<sup>56</sup> General Martin Dempsey, ‘A Leader Development Strategy for an Expeditionary Army’, 2 September 2009, pp. 3, 4, 7, 12.