

REVISITING *MODERN WARFARE* COUNTERINSURGENCY in the Mada'in Qada

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NEARLY HALF A CENTURY AGO, Colonel Roger Trinquier, a French Army officer, wrote *Modern Warfare: A French View of Counterinsurgency*.¹ Intent on capturing what really worked in a counterinsurgency, Trinquier drew on the vast experience he had amassed as one of Jean Larteguy's centurions—the hard-bitten French regulars who served as the backbone of the French Army during the tough post-World War II counterinsurgency campaigns in China, French Indochina, and Algeria. *Modern Warfare* became a best seller in France and was translated into English in 1964, complete with an excellent forward by Bernard Fall, the renowned journalist-historian.

In his book, Colonel Trinquier defined modern war as “an interlocking system of actions—political, economic, psychological, and military—that aims at the overthrow of the established authority in a country and a replacement by another regime.”² Fittingly, Trinquier's easy-to-read, practical guide to executing counterinsurgency operations has appeared on a variety of reading lists since the U.S. entry into conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq.³ However, since 2004, no author has examined Trinquier's theories to see if they remain applicable on the Iraqi or Afghan battlefields.

During the 3d Heavy Brigade Combat Team (3HBCT), 3d Infantry Division's (3ID) 14 months of combat in the Mada'in Qada, Iraq, the brigade faced many of the same challenges as Trinquier and his French counterparts did in French Indochina and Algeria.⁴ The brigade also implemented key tenets of Trinquier's *Modern Warfare*—control of the population, destruction of the guerrilla forces, and eradication of the guerrillas' influence on the population—and achieved a significant reduction in violence, the initial stages of reconciliation, and an increase in the capabilities of both the Iraqi Security Forces and the qada government. From the 3HBCT's experience, it appears that many of Trinquier's theories remain as relevant to the 21st century counterinsurgent as they did to his 20th century predecessors.

Background

The 3d HBCT, also known as the Sledgehammer Brigade, deployed to Iraq in March 2007 as the third of five surge brigades. It is a transformed brigade consisting of 1st Battalion, 15th Infantry Regiment (1-15 IN); 2d Battalion, 69th Armor (2-69 AR); 3d Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment (3-1 CAV); 1st Battalion, 10th Field Artillery Regiment (1-10 FA); 3d Battalion, 3d Brigade

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PHOTO: Local Abna'a Al Iraq (Sons of Iraq) gather for a joint clearing operation with U.S. Army Soldiers from the 3d Infantry Division, Salman Pak, Iraq, 16 February 2008. (U.S. Army, SGT Timothy Kingston)

Special Troops Battalion (3-3 BSTB); and 203d Brigade Support Battalion (203 BSB). However, during the deployment, 2-69 AR was detached to Multi-National Division-Baghdad and fought in the streets of eastern Baghdad.

From March 2007 to May 2008, the 3HBCT controlled the Mada'in Qada, the southeastern portion of Baghdad province. Bounded by the Diyala River on the west and the Tigris River on the south, the qada is over 2,500 square kilometers of mostly irrigated farmland with almost 1.2 million Iraqis living there. An ethnic fault line runs through the qada, with over 840,000 Shi'a living in the Narhwan, Jisr Diyala, and Wahida Nahias and 360,000 Sunni citizens clustered around the Salman Pak enclave.⁵ During 2006 and early 2007, ethnic cleansing occurred along the boundary between the sects, resulting in an average of 53 murders per month during 2006. Key terrain in the qada include two bridges into Baghdad, the Baghdad-Al Kut Highway, the former Tuwaitha Nuclear Research Facility, and the Arch of Ctesiphon in Salman Pak.

Upon arrival in Iraq, the Sledgehammer Brigade focused on securing the population. Approximately 2,500 Soldiers served as part of the brigade combat team (BCT), with over 40 percent of them deployed in and amongst the population. The brigade constructed and operated from Forward Operating Base (FOB) Hammer; Combat Outposts (COP) Cahill, Carver, Cashe, Cleary, and Salie; and Patrol Base Assassin. On the ground, 1-15 IN operated in Salman Pak, 3-1 CAV controlled Jisr Diyala, and 1-10 FA patrolled Narhwan. In February 2008, the 13th Georgian



Colonel Roger Trinquier

Light Infantry Battalion (13th GG IN BN) joined the Hammer Team and occupied Wahida. In addition to 3HBCT, over 900 Iraqi Police, 500 members of the Wassit Emergency Response Unit, and over 2,000 National Policemen helped to control the qada. Collectively, the Iraqi Security Forces operated 129 checkpoints. Together, U.S. and Iraqi forces were able to provide almost five security force personnel for every 1,000 residents, equivalent to the force ratio in post-World War II Japan,

but significantly less than the ratio in Bosnia under the implementation force (18:1,000 residents).⁶

Just as Colonel Trinquier experienced in French Indochina and Algeria, 3HBCT fought “armed elements acting clandestinely within a population manipulated by a special organization.”⁷ Due to the presence of two ethnic groups in the qada, the brigade fought two insurgencies—a Shi'a insurgency centered on the Jaysh Al Mahdi (JAM) political

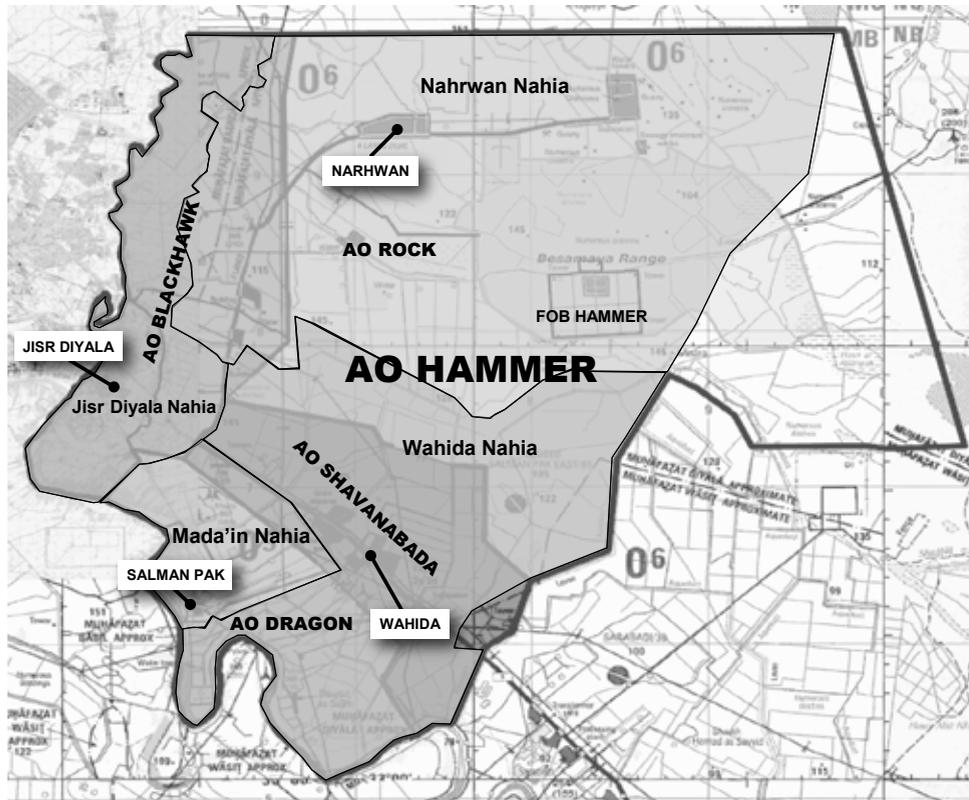


Figure 1. 3HBCT, 3ID Area of Operations (AO Hammer)

organization and the JAM special groups (or “direct action cells”), and a Sunni insurgency composed of members of Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI).

The Shi’a insurgency attempted to control the population in the Jisr Diyala, Narhwan, and Wahida Nahias by dominating the Iraqi Police, taking tacit control of the nahia governments, and managing the health care clinics. In addition, the insurgency solicited donations at the mosques and from local businesses to fund their operations. Tactically, the Shi’a insurgents defended their areas from sectarian attacks; attrited coalition forces (CF) with improvised explosive devices (IED), explosively formed penetrators (EFP), and rocket attacks; and disrupted CF operations with small arms fire. The Shi’a direct action cells in the 3HBCT area of operations consisted of over ten groups in and around Jisr Diyala, Narhwan, and Wahida that attacked coalition forces with 107-mm rockets and EFP IEDs. In the summer of 2007, several 107-mm rocket cells operated in the northern and western parts of the qada and attacked FOB Rustamiyah, FOB Hammer, and PB Assassin with deadly accuracy. Throughout the 3HBCT’s time in the qada, several EFP cells conducted more than a score of attacks against 3HBCT forces along major routes.

The 3-1 CAV, 1-10 FA, and 13th (GG) Infantry Battalion primarily conducted operations against the Shi’a insurgency. Interestingly, the insurgency organized itself in brigades, battalions, companies, and platoons, although each formation was smaller than its American counterpart. The 3HBCT S-2

shop developed an order-of-battle chart that helped track the enemy’s composition. The Shi’a organization replicated the configuration Trinquier fought in Algeria in the late 1950s. This order of battle chart proved a valuable tool as the brigade attempted to neutralize the insurgency in the qada.

The Sunni insurgency that 3HBCT fought was an AQI umbrella organization. It consisted of several IED cells, two vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (VBIED) cells, a suicide vest (SVEST) cell, multiple extra-judicial killing (EJK) cells, a foreign fighter facilitator network, a command and control infrastructure (leadership), and a logistics group (auxiliary) that provided safe houses and vehicles and transported fighters. Working out of the numerous villages around Salman Pak, AQI attempted to control the Nahia’s population; defend the Sunni areas against sectarian aggression; attrit coalition forces with IEDs, mortar attacks, and small arms fire; and disrupt National Police and Iraqi Police operations with IEDs and sniping. During 2007 and 2008, AQI conducted seven VBIED attacks and seven SVEST attacks across the qada. The most spectacular attack occurred on 11 May 2007, when the insurgents detonated two VBIEDs simultaneously on the Baghdad-Al Kut Highway Bridge and the Old Jisr Diyala Bridge. Until repairs were complete five days later, the insurgents succeeded in blocking traffic into Baghdad from the east side of the Tigris. AQI also waged a conventional IED campaign along the Jisr Diyala-Salman Pak highway. In just over a year, 79 IEDs were found

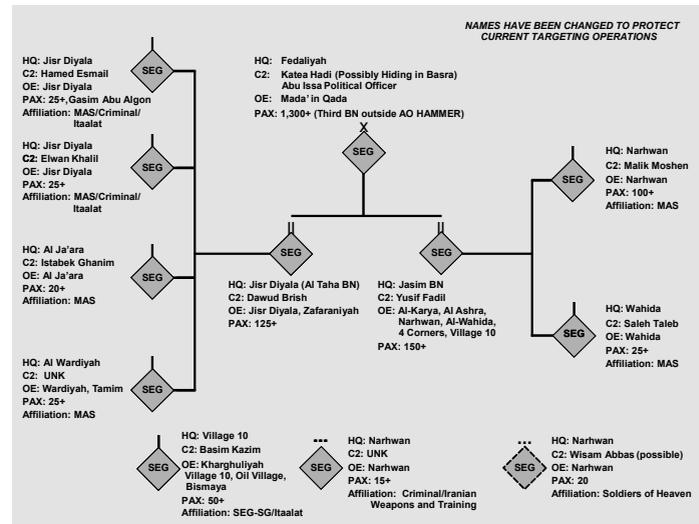
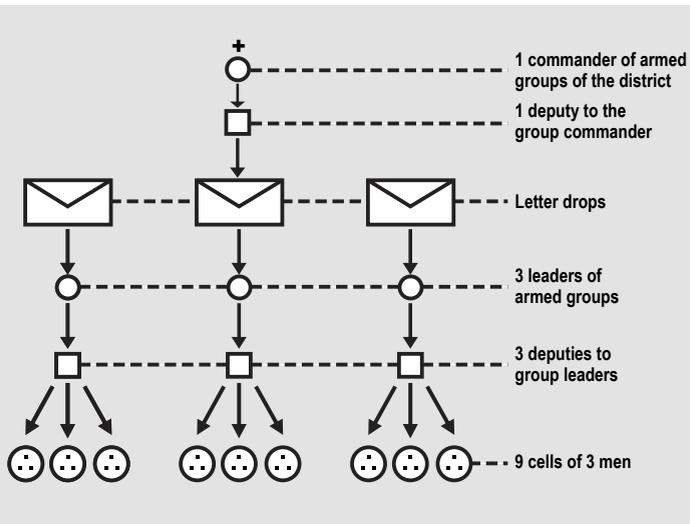


Figure 2. Algerian cell structure (left) and Hammer Shi’a Extremist Order of Battle (right).

or detonated along the route; fortunately, only five attacks caused casualties. AQI dominated Salman Pak until early 2008, when operations conducted by teams of coalition forces working with Sons of Iraq cleared them from the villages of Ja'ara and Bawi. Additionally, a special operations forces' (SOF) raid in early February 2008 killed a key AQI leader, captured 30 other fighters, and forced the remaining AQI to leave the sanctuary around Salman Pak. During the rest of its tour, 3HBCT hunted the remnants of AQI and worked with the Sons of Iraq to keep AQI from returning to the area.

Obviously, Iraq in 2007 and 2008 was not Algeria or French Indochina in the 1950s. However, remarkable similarities in the important topics addressed in Trinquier's *Modern Warfare*—population control, destruction of the guerrilla force, and eradication of the insurgents' influence, for example—show that his work is still valid. Indeed, a careful look at the two experiences—their successes and their challenges—will serve as a practical tool for others conducting modern warfare in the future.

Control of the Population

Colonel Trinquier argues, "Control of the masses through tight organization, often through several parallel organizations, is the master weapon of *Modern Warfare*."⁸ The 3HBCT and the Iraqi Security Forces developed multiple means to control the qada's 1.2 million inhabitants. Three methods in particular—human terrain mapping and biometric data collection, the establishment of the Sons of Iraq, and the empowerment of the Iraqi Police to enforce the law in their neighborhoods—proved effective in establishing and maintaining control of the population.

Data collection. Our human terrain mapping involved a systematic collection of information about the populace of the Mada'in Qada. At the grassroots level, 3HBCT combat patrols kept meticulous records of their everyday contacts by

obtaining photographs and demographic information such as full names, residential addresses, tribal affiliations, and employers.

This example from A Troop, 3-1 CAV highlights the importance of human terrain mapping. Captain Troy Thomas, the troop commander, identified Al Bataa village as a staging area for AQI as they moved from south of Baghdad to Baquba, in the Diyala Province. To separate the insurgents from the rest of the population, Thomas conducted "a careful census of the entire population."⁹ He took account of everyone in the village by collecting data and photographs of each male resident from age 16 to 40. He then placed the cards into a binder and had a local sheik and a Sons of Iraq leader vet the information. The 3-1 CAV used that information during subsequent operations to identify and question Iraqis who were new to the area and who did not appear in the census binder.

The 3HBCT also employed another aspect of human terrain mapping by using the "handheld interagency identification detection equipment" (HIIDE) or the "biometrics automated toolset" (BAT). These systems allowed the brigade to gather biometric data on people, including their pictures, fingerprints, and retinal scans. Human intelligence collection teams would further refine the map through their sources. The brigade also leveraged our Iraqi advisory task force personnel to collect atmospheric and economic data in each of the nahias. In short, the perception of being constantly monitored by intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance assets and the fact that CF possessed precise personal data made would-be insurgents think twice about their actions.

Citizens' groups. Across the country, the Sons of Iraq have made remarkable contributions to security, economic, and political progress. Also known as Concerned Local Citizens or "The Awakening," the Sons of Iraq began in the Mada'in Qada in July 2007, almost a year after their inception in Anbar Province. The brigade recruited close to 6,500 Sunni and Shi'a Sons of Iraq into this quickly growing program between July 2007 and April 2008. These brave Iraqis helped to achieve what Trinquier referred to as the goal of *Modern Warfare*: "control of the populace."¹⁰ In June 2007, prior to the formation of any concerned citizens' groups, there was an average of 2.6 attacks daily in the qada. In April

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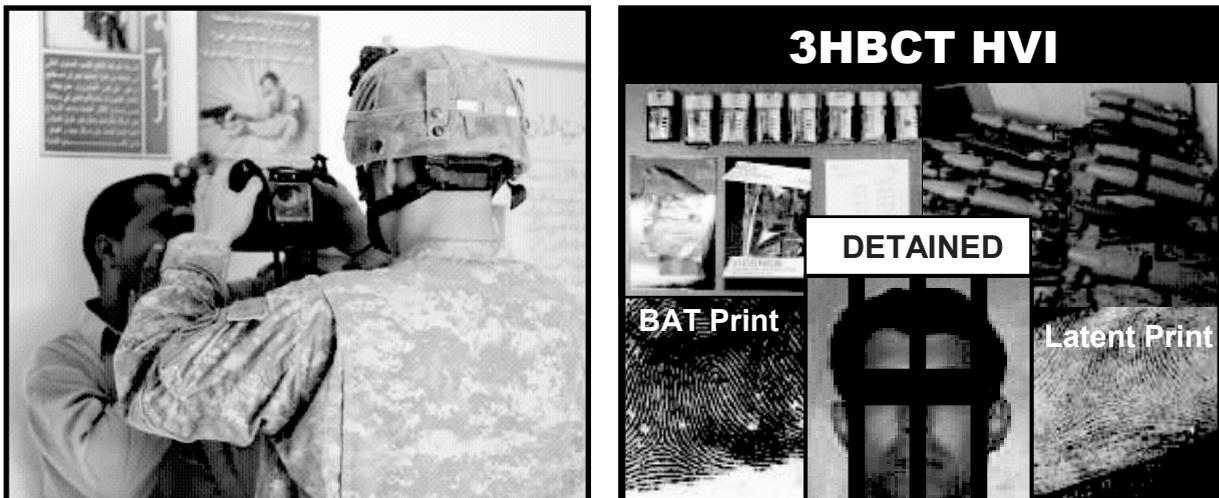


Figure 3. 3HBCT, 3ID, Soldiers use HIIDE to capture a retinal scan (left). A BAT match of a fingerprint led to the detention of a 3HBCT high value individual who participated in a rocket attack on FOB Hammer (right).

2008, after recruiting 6,500 Sons of Iraq, the daily attack average declined to 1.7 per day.

The inaugural Sons of Iraq group, in AO Hammer, was established in the small village of Al Arafia. Under the leadership of Muqtar Allawi and the protection of coalition forces, this citizens' group (and others) started to "take part in their own defense."¹¹ Earning \$8.00 per day, they operated checkpoints, guarded neighborhoods, identified IEDs, reported weapons caches, and interdicted the movement of weapons and insurgents. During the first ten months, the group gave the brigade over 200 tips,

operated 334 checkpoints, turned in 126 weapons caches, and located 45 IEDs. They increased security in the neighborhoods, decreased freedom of movement for insurgents, and removed IEDs and caches, thereby dramatically increasing security across the qada, slowly cutting off the insurgent from the population, and ultimately helping to break the back of AQI in the Mada'in Qada.

Over the next ten months, 3HBCT used the Arafia model to develop 50 different Sons of Iraq groups to improve security and degrade insurgent influence over the local population. The addition of this citi-



The Sons of Iraq guarding a checkpoint on Butler Range Road.

zens' group increased the number of security forces to residents in the qada to a 10 to 1,000 ratio, half the level in the initial stages in Kosovo (20:1,000).¹² Trinquier noted that the "total dependence on terrain and population is also the guerrilla's weak point."¹³ Through the Sons of Iraq, 3HBCT exploited the insurgent's dependence on the population, took control of the terrain, eliminated the peoples' support for the insurgents, and significantly diminished insurgent control of the citizens of the Mada'in Qada. In addition, the local economies in controlled areas blossomed overnight due to the direct stimulus of \$1.6 million in salaries each month.

Police forces. To improve the Mada'in Qada's 900-strong Iraqi Police force, the brigade assigned E Company, 1/125th Infantry and the 59th Military Police Company as its police transition team. In comparison, Trinquier asserted that "broad police operations will be performed by the regular police if they are adequate and capable."¹⁴ Inadequate and incapable of leaving their own station, the qada's Iraqi Police were cowed by the insurgency in April 2007. Taking "advantage of the Army's presence and its protection and the assistance," the Iraqi Police, under the guidance of the police transition team, slowly brought law enforcement back to the qada.¹⁵

In addition to basic police training and daily mentoring, the brigade focused on helping the Iraqi Police track crime statistics. With accurate data now available, 3HBCT was able to show the Iraqi Police how the crime rate declined from 28 murders in February 2007 to only 5 in February 2008. The 2007 murder rate in the Mada'in Qada fell to a rate comparable to Detroit, Michigan's, in 2006.¹⁶ Once the crime statistics program was in place, the brigade encouraged the police to begin enforcing laws and executing warrants issued by judges. In February 2008, the police took the next step and enforced five arrest warrants.

To effectively control the people, Trinquier instructed forces to "cut off the guerrilla from the population that sustains him, render the guerrilla zones untenable, and coordinate these actions over a wide area."¹⁷ The 3HBCT's human terrain map-

ping and biometric data collection process identified and developed data on the population to better isolate the insurgent from his support, the Sons of Iraq groups made former insurgent strongholds dangerous to operate in, and the Iraqi Police began to restore the rule of law in the qada by enforcing laws and executing warrants. Together, these techniques helped 3HBCT drain the sea that the qada's insurgents swam in for so long.

Destruction of the Guerrilla Forces

Colonel Trinquier states that the goal of modern warfare for the counterinsurgent is to "eliminate from the midst of the population the entire enemy organization."¹⁸ From March 2007 to April 2008, 3HBCT and the Iraqi Security Forces used this as their mantra; the brigade killed more than 160 insurgents and captured 560 more. Although the kinetic operations removed the insurgents from the streets, 3HBCT used other means to disrupt the insurgents. For example, aggressively tracking and interdicting the enemy's financial transactions, the brigade collected enough evidence for the authorities to charge insurgents with extortion and eventually prosecute and convict them in the Central Criminal Court of Iraq. Taken together, these endeavors helped to remove the insurgents from the Mada'in Qada.

The 3HBCT understood the need to relentlessly pursue the insurgents both inside the Mada'in Qada and outside it. Over the course of the deployment, 3HBCT killed or captured more than 30 of the brigade's or division's high value individuals (HVIs). Remarkably, almost half of these HVIs were captured outside of the Mada'in Qada—in places like Baghdad, Tikrit, Samarra, and Abu Ghraib. Typically, just as Trinquier described nearly a half century ago, a concerted operation conducted by even a single battalion could "compel the guerrillas...to leave their comfortable hiding places" and seek refuge outside of the area.¹⁹ Once removed, the insurgents would usually adopt easily targetable habits since they assumed that they were safe. The brigade tracked one target for nearly six months

Trinquier instructed forces to cut off the guerrilla from the population that sustains him...

before he was finally captured in Baghdad. This success was due in part to building detailed target packets on the HVIs that could be easily passed to other brigades and the special operations community. Such relentless pursuit had a tangible effect on the enemy. After detaining both a Narhwan JAM battalion commander and his successor, the brigade received an intelligence report indicating that no one in JAM wanted to assume command because they realized that they would likewise be detained by American forces.

In Algeria, the French fought the National Liberation Front which had a “financial committee [that] gathered funds from the population at large...and directly from big companies, banks, leading merchants, etc.”²⁰ Similarly, 3HBCT was confronted by the Narhwan JAM battalion, which funded its operations by intimidating and harassing the local population and the owners of the brick factory, Narhwan’s largest business enterprise. JAM extorted nearly 5,000,000 Iraqi dinars (approximately \$4,200) from the factory owners each week, because refusal to pay the Shi’a extremists meant that the factory would be shut down or its owners kidnapped. By engaging local leaders and interrogating captured guerrillas, 3HBCT intelligence analysts traced the financial network, discovered the process for collecting the funds, and tracked down the key players involved in the extortion in and around Narhwan. The brigade then conducted operations that specifically targeted these key players. In one operation near the brick factory complex, 3-1 CAV detained seven extortionists immediately after they collected their weekly payola. In another

operation, 3HBCT captured the Shi’a extremists’ ledgers. Thereafter, the combat team focused on “following the money” to identify and detain extortionists, severely disrupting the Narhwan Shi’a extremist group’s cash flow and subsequent ability to conduct attacks.

Once an insurgent was detained, 3HBCT worked diligently to ensure his conviction through the Central Criminal Court of Iraq. The brigade stressed to its units that to be successful at gaining convictions, the units needed to take a law-enforcement approach to the insurgency. Toward that end, 3HBCT conducted tactical site exploitation on each objective to collect, document, and organize legally admissible evidence. Units leveraged the Law Enforcement Professionals Program, an MPRI creation that couples experienced law-enforcement agents with Army battalions and brigades to increase conviction rates. Working with law enforcement agents, units constructed criminal case files of unclassified forensic evidence, including fingerprints, photographs of weapons caches, videos of attacks, sworn statements from both U.S. Soldiers and Iraqis, and even signed confessions. Moreover, the thousands of Iraqi biometric records enrolled in BAT and HIIDE proved invaluable in matching evidence found at attack sites to specific suspects.

As a result of this meticulous—sometimes high-tech—evidence collection, the brigade directly linked a dozen insurgents to specific IED and EFP attacks. Additionally, the weapons intelligence teams examined all evidence related to attacks in 3HBCT’s AO to identify bomb-making signatures. These efforts allowed the brigade to track numerous



Dinars confiscated by the 3HBCT when it detained seven individuals suspected of extorting money from the Narhwan Brick Factories, in September 2007.

IED cells and determine their tactics, techniques, and procedures. As a result of detailed tactical site exploitation, organized-criminal case files, and biometric matches to specific IED or EFP attacks, the brigade sent 315 insurgents to the theater internment facility. In addition, as of April 2008, 24 insurgents had been convicted or were awaiting trial at the Central Criminal Court of Iraq.

To destroy an insurgency, Trinquier advises that a counterinsurgent force methodically pursue it “until the enemy organization is entirely annihilated.”²¹ The 3HBCT attempted to destroy both Shi’a and Sunni insurgencies through relentless pursuit of enemy leaders, focused efforts to eliminate insurgency funding, and law-enforcement approaches to countering guerrilla activities. Together, these efforts significantly reduced attacks, emboldened Iraqi Security Forces, and allowed Sons of Iraq to retake control of their communities. Although the insurgents in the Mada’in have not been completely eliminated, they have been neutralized to such an extent that, by April 2008, established laws were being enforced and the elected political leaders and local Iraqis had begun to control the future of the qada.

Eradication of the Guerrilla’s Influence on the Population

As it was for Trinquier and his foes in Algeria, the goal for both the insurgent and the counterinsurgent in Iraq is to “control . . . the population.”²² While the Sunni and Shi’a insurgencies resorted to assassinations, murders, spectacular VBIED and SVEST attacks, and extortion of legitimate businesses to dominate the people, the 3HBCT used all six lines of effort—security, transition, governance, rule of law, economics, and communications—to manage the people of the Mada’in Qada to purge the insurgency and to support coalition forces and the government of Iraq. Some of the more successful policies that 3HBCT employed were reconstructing the irrigation infrastructure, rehabilitating the Narhwan brick factory, stimulating the economy using the Sons of Iraq, and establishing the Voice of Mada’in radio station. Collectively, these initiatives worked towards the “eradication of their [the insurgent’s] influence on the population.”²³

The 3HBCT also funded over \$37 million in projects during its 14 months in the Mada’in Qada.

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Several multi-echelon projects played an instrumental role in reducing the insurgents’ influence, because these projects had both an initial impact and created longer-term, sustainable employment. Two examples stand out. In 2006, insurgents destroyed the huge pumps at the nine Nissan and Al Bawi pump stations. These pumps transferred water from the Tigris River into canals to irrigate farmers’ fields dozens of kilometers away. Working with key leaders in the nahia and qada governments, the brigade coordinated and funded the repair of the pump stations over a nine-month period. The difference between the 2007 and the 2008 growing seasons was remarkable—fields that had lain fallow produced crops. Another project with a multi-echelon impact was the Narhwan Brick Factory complex. In 2007, over half its factories were dormant due to limited distribution of heavy fuel oil, a byproduct from oil refineries. Once again, the brigade worked with officials from Baghdad Province and local leaders to ensure that heavy fuel oil and electricity were available to power the kilns to dry the bricks. After several months of negotiations, the government began to move heavy fuel oil from the Bayji refinery, north of Baghdad, to the brick factories. Dozens of factories re-opened and production increased from 750,000 to 3.7 million bricks per day. The increased flow of oil and the resulting increased manufacturing capacity also increased employment six-fold, from 2,000 to 12,000 employees.

As mentioned above, the Sons of Iraq had a powerful influence on decreasing violence and revitalizing the economy in the Mada’in Qada. The \$8 daily payment to each member resulted in \$1.7 million in salaries to be spent in the local economy, providing an immediate and much-needed economic stimulus. This stimulus, coupled with the marked increase in security, translated into



“Before” and “after” pictures of a market where Sons of Iraq and 3HBCT conducted revitalization projects.

revitalized neighborhoods. No longer intimidated by extremists, and no longer afraid to conduct daily transactions, business owners reopened markets with the help of micro-grants. For example, in early 2008, 3HBCT conducted a market revitalization project in Salman Pak that cleaned up the market. And because the Sons of Iraq had money to spend, storeowners’ profits doubled. In areas where 3HBCT did not form Sons of Iraq groups, the economic recovery was much less noticeable.

In early 2007, extremist groups were also winning the information war in the Mada’in Qada. Without a constant coalition force presence, and given limited sources of outside information and an abundance of extremist propaganda, the insurgency controlled what local Iraqis saw and heard. They were able to portray coalition operations as “brutalities in the eyes of the public.”²⁴ The 3HBCT attacked the insurgents’ messages through an effective information campaign that used leaflet drops, loudspeaker broadcasts, and face-to-face engagements. Iraqi advisory task force and tactical PSYOP teams gathered atmospherics following these IO attacks. Using FOB Rustamiyah’s Peace 106 as a model, 3HBCT established the qada’s first radio station, FM 107.1. Opened in January 2008 as a joint government of Iraq and coalition project, the “Voice of the Mada’in” provided a forum in which Iraqis could ask their questions, voice their concerns, and sometimes express their anger towards local, tribal and CF leaders. Since most Iraqis receive their information from radio and television, the radio station’s potential impact on extremist information warfare is important. The Voice of the Mada’in radio station gave 3HBCT another means with

which to thwart extremist propaganda and spread positive, accurate information about current events and the future of Iraq.

The 3HBCT attacked the Shi’a and Sunni insurgencies in the Mada’in Qada across all lines of operation. The completion of multi-echelon projects increased crop production for farmers and increased productivity and the numbers employed at the Narhwan Brick Factory complex. Establishing the Sons of Iraq provided jobs for unemployed males who might otherwise have taken up arms against the coalition. It stimulated the local economy and led to the reopening of many stores. Finally, the “Voice of the Mada’in” radio station opened lines of communication between ordinary Iraqis and the qada government. More important, these endeavors helped eliminate the insurgents’ control and influence over the Mada’in’s citizens.

Torture in *Modern Warfare* and the Law of Land Warfare

Unfortunately, *Modern Warfare* gained notoriety because of Colonel Trinquier’s advocacy of torture as an acceptable means of defeating an insurgency. He believed that the fear of torture is the only deterrent for the guerrilla since “he cannot be treated as an ordinary criminal, nor [sic] like a prisoner taken on the battlefield.”²⁵ This quotation demonstrates Trinquier’s ignorance of the Just War tradition’s stance on treating guerrillas as legitimate combatants unless they are proven guilty of violating the norms of war. His mistaken attitude encouraged violations of the 1949 Geneva Protocols of War, to which the French had subscribed, that called for due process in determining an insurgent’s status.

From a practical perspective, in a COIN environment the moral corrosiveness of torture runs counter to long-term goals, as it did for France in Algeria. Torture backfired on the French and they lost their strategic legitimacy. Trinquier's advocacy of torture dishonored himself and the French military.

The 3HBCT's experience demonstrated the effectiveness of other measures that both deterred insurgents and allowed the brigade to maintain the standards expected of Americans. In the post-Abu Ghraib environment, rigorous adherence to the law of land warfare is essential. Many of the legitimate measures already discussed—such as population control, biometric data collection on adult males, and relentless pursuit of the enemy—provided that deterrent. During its 14 months in Iraq, the brigade captured more than 560 suspected insurgents. In the same time period, military intelligence interrogators in the division holding area-annex conducted over 1,500 interrogations, with most detainees experiencing an average of 3 interrogations. The system produced 345 intelligence reports without once resorting to torture. The reports the brigade gleaned from interrogations led to numerous operations in and outside the brigade's area that targeted extremists without undermining our long-term credibility. More important, it contradicted Trinquier's assertion that torture is the only way to develop intelligence on an insurgency and deter the guerrilla.

Challenges

From his experience, Trinquier documented several "errors in fighting the guerrilla."²⁶ Likewise, 3HBCT experienced missteps in fighting the insurgency in the Mada'in Qada. Poor placement of outposts, the lack of a standardized national ID card for Iraqis, and 3HBCT's initial large sweep operations all presented challenges that the brigade worked to overcome throughout its tour.

The 3HBCT built several outposts in locations where the Soldiers did not control the population as they could have. Two of the brigade's outposts—Patrol Base Assassin and COP Salie—were perfectly placed in the midst of a town with Iraqi Police or National Police within arm's reach. However, the other five—FOB Hammer, COP Cashe, COP Cahill, COP Cleary, and COP Carver—were separated from the population, the Iraqi Security Forces,

or both. FOB Hammer, although next to an Iraqi Army training compound (FOB Besamiya), was 25 kilometers from any major population center. As a result, the zone of security around the FOB benefited only the few shepherders who lived in a couple of villages south of the FOB. In retrospect, better positioning of the outposts could have helped the brigade to institute greater control over the 1.2 million citizens of the Mada'in Qada.

The lack of a national identification card also made population control challenging. For 25,000 Iraqi dinars (about \$13), any adult Iraqi could get a Jensia card, as long as two other people vouched for his identification. HBCT improvised several solutions to overcome the lack of an ID card, like A Troop, 3-1 Cavalry's binder on Al Baata Village, or B Company, 1-15 Infantry's Sons of Iraq ID card, but a tough-to-forge, accurate, and rigorously enforced system of national identification would have made controlling the population less of a challenge.

Prior to the fall of 2007, 3HBCT engaged in several large unit sweeps, like Operations Blore Heath I and II, Beach Yellow, and Bull Run. Each of these operations achieved short-term tactical successes: several insurgents killed or captured, multiple weapons caches seized, and a handful of IEDs removed. However, each of these operations failed to destroy the insurgency because they did not establish a permanent coalition, Iraqi Security Forces, or Sons of Iraq presence in the villages to keep the insurgents from returning. In the fall of 2007, the 3HBCT Commander, Colonel Wayne W. Grigsby, Jr., mandated that all major operations incorporate Sons of Iraq to hold the terrain, man checkpoints, and keep the insurgents from returning to cleared areas. Subsequent operations—Tuwaita Sunrise I and II, Ja'ara Sunrise, Bawi Sunrise, and Durai'ya Sunrise—achieved not only similar tactical successes, but also emplaced Sons of Iraq checkpoints to prevent the insurgents' return.

From 2007 to 2008, 3HBCT experienced many of the same impediments as their French brethren had before them. Poorly located outposts, the lack of an official national identification card, and large sweep operations without maintenance forces all hampered the brigade's ability to control the population, and thus its ability to neutralize the Shi'a and Sunni insurgencies.

Conclusion

Five years of operations in Iraq have taught a generation of American Soldiers some of the best practices to use in counterinsurgencies. In fact, some of our Army's young men and women may soon boast more COIN experience than their historic predecessors. Still, Colonel Trinquier's work will remain a useful guide for leaders conducting COIN in Iraq. The advent of precision-guided munitions, the internet, unmanned aerial vehicles, mine resistant ambush protected vehicles, IEDs, and EFPs has not changed Trinquier's principles. The 3HBCT's 14 months of continuous combat in the Mada'in Qada resembled the French experience in Indochina and Algeria 50 years earlier because those basics have not changed. Together, the principles of controlling the population, destroying the guerrilla forces, and eradicating the guerrilla's

influence helped to neutralize both Sunni and Shi'a insurgencies. Trinquier's advice also helped initiate the reconciliation process for disenfranchised Sunnis, embolden and enhance the Iraqi Security Forces, and improve the qada government.

Our employment of Trinquier's legitimate principles during our 14 months of counterinsurgency operations has brought significant improvements to the Mada'in Qada. As the French did in Algeria, the 3HBCT experienced some difficulties along the way. Nevertheless, by selectively applying the moral lessons of *Modern Warfare* and heeding the wisdom gained by other American units over the last five years, we made good progress. American Soldiers operating in places like Iraq and Afghanistan in the future can build upon both Trinquier's and 3HBCT's experiences to conduct effective counterinsurgency operations. **MR**

NOTES

1. Colonel Roger Trinquier served as an officer in the French Colonial Marines and Army from 1931 to 1961. During that span, he spent six years in China before World War II in a low-intensity conflict, four years conducting counterinsurgency operations in French Indochina after the war, and three years executing COIN operations in Algeria. He wrote *Modern Warfare* immediately after his retirement in 1961.

2. Roger Trinquier, *Modern Warfare: A French View of Counterinsurgency*, trans. Daniel Lee (New York: Praeger, 1964), 6.

3. The book is available for download from the Command and General Staff College website. See <www.cgsc.army.mil/carl/resources/csi/trinquier/trinquier.asp>. Chapter 5, "Identifying the Adversary;" Chapter 8, "Errors in Fighting the Guerrilla"; and Chapter 10, "Conducting Counterinsurgency Operations", are particularly enlightening for a leader deploying to Iraq.

4. A qada is a subordinate government structure in an Iraqi province. The Baghdad Province, of which the Mada'in Qada belongs, is one part of six qadas and nine security districts.

5. A nahia is a subordinate government structure in a Qada. The Mada'in Qada has four nahias: Narwhan, Jisr Diyala, Wahida, and Salman Pak. It is the lowest form of government recognized by the Baghdad Provincial Government.

6. Peter J. Boettke, Christopher Coyne, and Peter Leeson, *Institutional Stickiness and the New Development Economics—2005*, <www.ccoyne.com/Institutional/>, 2005, 25.

7. Trinquier, 8.

8. *Ibid.*, 30.

9. *Ibid.*, 31.

10. *Ibid.*, 16.

11. *Ibid.*, 75.

12. Boettke, Coyne, and Leeson, *Institutional*, 25.

13. Trinquier, 64.

14. *Ibid.*, 43.

15. *Ibid.*, 44.

16. Data taken from <<http://detroit.areaconnect.com>> Detroit, MI, with a population of 1 million, had 418 murders in 2006 with an average of 47.2 murders per 100,000 citizens. The Mada'in Qada, Iraq with a population of 1.2 million, had a reported 243 murders in 2007 with a weighted average of 40.5 murders per 100,000 citizens. The average number of murders was weighted with the assumption that only 50 percent of the murders in the Mada'in Qada were reported in 2007.

17. Trinquier, 65.

18. *Ibid.*, 43.

19. *Ibid.*, 85.

20. *Ibid.*, 12.

21. *Ibid.*, 48.

22. *Ibid.*, 15.

23. *Ibid.*, 65.

24. *Ibid.*, 48.

25. *Ibid.*, 21.

26. *Ibid.*, 52.