



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
UNITED STATES ARMY COMBINED ARMS CENTER AND FORT LEAVENWORTH  
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REPLY TO  
ATTENTION OF:

ATZL-CI

20 January 2012

MEMORANDUM FOR SEE DISTRIBUTION

SUBJECT: FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*, Revision Issue Paper #1 – Definitions

PURPOSE: This paper addresses the adequacy of the definitions of insurgency and counterinsurgency as defined by JP 1-02, FM 3-24, and FM 1-02.

ISSUE: Are the current definitions of insurgency and counterinsurgency in FM 3-24 adequate? How should a definition be crafted so as to clearly differentiate the terms civil war, coup, rebellion, and revolution? If the current definitions in FM 3-24 are not adequate, how should they be changed and why?

DISCUSSION:

1. According to Carl von Clausewitz, "The first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgment that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish by that test the kind of war on which they are embarking; neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature. This is the first of all strategic questions and the most comprehensive." (*On War*, Book 1, Chapter 1)
2. There are multiple definitions for the terms insurgency and counterinsurgency within the US government and within NATO. The definitions below have both common and distinctly different elements, even between joint publications and government departments.
3. Definitions frame ideas clearly so leaders can develop of solutions to problems. Doctrine provides the framework for tactics (the employment of forces, assets, and enablers to create a strategy to solve the problem) and procedures to address specific problems. For this reason, the definitions of the different types of conflict should afford United States entities specific definitions to apply specific solutions that address particular types of conflict. Several past definitions of insurgency and counterinsurgency are listed below.

INSURGENCY—

- JP 1-02 (Sep 11), FM 3-24 (Dec 06), FM 1-02 (Feb 10): An organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through the use of subversion and armed conflict.
- JP 3-24 (Oct 09), IW JOC (May 10): The organized use of subversion and violence by a group or movement that seeks to overthrow or force change of a governing authority. Insurgency can also refer to the group itself.

- USG COIN Guide (Jan 09): The organized use of subversion and violence to seize, nullify, or challenge political control of a region.
- NATO Terminology Glossary Terms and Definitions – AAP-6 (2010): An organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through use of subversion and armed conflict.
- FRANCE (Apr 10): an armed organization using guerrilla warfare and/or terrorism
- SPAIN (Jan 08): a violent organized movement that embarks on a lengthy battle with the aim of bringing change to the established political order.
- UK (Jan 10): An organised, violent subversion used to effect or prevent political control, as a challenge to established authority.

#### COUNTERINSURGENCY—

- JP 1-02 (Sep 11), FM 3-24 (Dec 06), FM 1-02 (Feb 1): Those military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological, and civic actions taken by a government to defeat insurgency.
- JP 3-24 (Oct 09), IW JOC (May 10): Comprehensive civilian and military efforts taken to defeat an insurgency and to address any core grievances. Also called COIN.
- USG COIN Guide (Jan 09): Comprehensive civilian and military efforts taken to simultaneously defeat and contain insurgency and address its root causes.
- NATO Terminology Glossary Terms and Definitions – AAP-6 (2010): Those military, paramilitary, economic, psychological, and civic actions taken to defeat insurgency.
- FRANCE (Apr 10): Counterinsurgency (at the tactical level) is a course of action that consists of neutralizing an organization that practices armed violence in the form of guerilla warfare or terrorist attacks, by reducing that organization's freedom of movement through confinement, or even eliminating it through the effects of reduction and/or dispersion. The level of engagement in this type of struggle depends upon the national or international political option chosen, upon the balance of forces on the ground and the attitude of the population.
- SPAIN (Jan 08): all the political, diplomatic, economic, social, military, public-order maintenance, civil, and psychological activities needed to defeat the insurgency.
- UK (Jan 10): Those military, law enforcement, political, economic, psychological and civic actions taken to defeat insurgency, while addressing the root causes.

4. Neither JP 1-02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, nor FM 1-02, *Operational Terms and Graphics*, defines several terms that may affect how the DoD, the joint commands, and the Army define insurgency. Ideally, the

approved definition should distinguish insurgency from the types of conflict listed below. The source for these definitions is the Merriam-Webster on-line dictionary.

- civil war: “a war between different sections or parties of the same country or nation.” (**Comment**: This is a military situation, involving both regular and irregular warfare. The solution to civil war is a military solution – the defeat of the combatants will create an end to the civil war.)
- coup d’etat: “a sudden decisive exercise of localized or concentrated force unseating the personnel of a government.” (**Comment**: A coup differs from an insurgency in that it is a quick event involving few people and is not driven by the population. In fact, if the population does not accept the “legitimacy” of the leaders who executed the coup, they may start an insurgency themselves to unseat the new leadership. Since a coup is a quick event, there is little opportunity for a third party force to get involved to solve it. Our doctrinal solution to a coup d’etat is the “prevent” portion of ADP 3-0.)
- rebellion: “open opposition to a person or thing in a position of authority or dominance. [R]ebellion commonly indicates open armed resistance to government of such strength as to constitute a formidable problem to the authorities <the term *rebellion* is applied to an insurrection of large extent...” (**Comment**: This definition is from the perspective of the person or thing in the position of authority. Since a rebellion is an open opposition/armed resistance, the solution to a rebellion is a military solution. Once the rebellion is eliminated/suppressed, anticipate a post-conflict insurgency situation in which some remaining rebels refuse to accept the conditions of the end of the rebellion and continue to fight [see the US Civil War].)
- revolution: “a fundamental change in political organization or in a government or constitution; the overthrow or renunciation of one government or ruler and the substitution of another by the governed.” (**Comment**: A “revolution” is the result of a successful rebellion.)

5. FM 100-20, *Low Intensity Conflict*, 5 Dec 1990, used five criteria to recognize civil war. Among those were (1) the contestants must control territory, (2) there must be a functioning government, and (3) the sides should have identifiable and regular armed forces (Glossary-1). Although a cursory search of field manuals published since 1962 provided no approved definitions of the other terms, non-military publications do address those terms. For example, the *Oxford Companion to Military History* expands the above definition of “coup d’etat” by noting that the coup is often initiated by the military. It adds that “What distinguishes a coup from revolutions is that they are typically carried out by relatively small groups and do not involve mass political action.” Revolutions, generally, incorporate mass mobilization to change political authority (Goldstone, “Toward a Fourth Generation of Revolutionary Theory,” 2001). *Black’s Law*

*Dictionary* defines rebellion as “Deliberate, organized resistance, by force and arms, to the laws or operations of the government, committed by a subject.” The result of a successful rebellion is a revolution.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That the US government adopt a single definition of insurgency and counterinsurgency.
2. That any definition clearly differentiate “insurgency” from other types of armed conflict.
3. That the word “undermine” be included in the definition. Merriam-Webster defines “undermine” as “subvert or weaken insidiously or secretly.” One example was Muqtada al-Sadr in 2010 urging Iraqis to participate in elections to use the process to oust the Americans through parliamentary action. Another example is the political actions of Hezbollah. Although Hezbollah subsequently withdrew from the Lebanese government as a result of the 2008 Doha Agreement, Hezbollah was able to gain control of one ministerial position and thirty seats in the cabinet.
4. That the definition of “counterinsurgency” not include reference to root causes or grievances that lead to insurgency. Definitions that incorporate those concepts exclude insurgencies that are fomented by self-serving entities, ideological extremists, or foreign powers for nationalistic or other reasons. Historical examples of insurgencies that do not fit the root cause/grievance model of leading to an insurgency include the following:
  - Uganda 1986-2000 (Muslims opposed to the government)
  - Moldova 1991-2002 (control of diamond fields),
  - Croatia 1992-1995 (territorial expansion into a Greater Serbia),
  - Bosnia 1992-1995 (three ethnic factions vying for power), and
  - Zaire 1996-1997 (instigated by Rwanda).
5. That any definition of counterinsurgency not include the word “comprehensive.” The *USG COIN Guide*, JP 3-24, and the IW JOC include the word “comprehensive” in the definition of counterinsurgency. Draft ADP 3-07, *Stability*, defines “comprehensive approach” as a cooperative effort among US Government, intergovernmental, nongovernmental, multinational partners, and private sector entities to achieve a shared goal. Using that proposed definition results in the US not being able to declare it is countering an insurgency unless all organization types are involved. It also commits the US to always including JIIM elements in what would otherwise be a counterinsurgency.
6. That US definition of insurgency as reflected in the *USG COIN Guide*, JP 3-24, JP 1-02, and FM 3-24 (revised) be changed as shown below, and that the existing definition of counterinsurgency as reflected in JP 1-02, FM 1-02, and FM 3-24 be retained.
  - **INSURGENCY**-- The protracted organized use of subversion and violence by a minority group or movement that seeks to overthrow, force change, or undermine the existing de facto system of government or existing social order.

- COUNTERINSURGENCY-- Those military, paramilitary, political, economic, information and influence, and civic actions taken by the military and civilian government agencies to defeat insurgency over a protracted period of time.

REPLY:

Request you provide comments regarding the adequacy of current definitions of insurgency and counterinsurgency. You may reply by e-mail to [usarmy.leavenworth.cac.mbx.coin@mail.mil](mailto:usarmy.leavenworth.cac.mbx.coin@mail.mil).



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