



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
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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 #3 -Clear-Hold-Build

ISSUE: Is the doctrinal solution for counterinsurgency adequate? Currently the manual uses the operational framework of "clear-hold-build." Does this discussion provide enough depth for how the military takes strategic goals and connects them to tactical actions through operational art?

DISCUSSION:

1. The prevailing operational framework for counterinsurgency is clear-hold-build. Unfortunately, the solution is not specific enough to provide Army forces with the information necessary to plan or execute counterinsurgency operations. Furthermore, there are contradictions between FM 3-24 and FM 3-24.2 regarding clear-hold-build. The entire chapter of FM 3-24 must be refined to clarify the actions necessary to execute counterinsurgency operations. To start, the naming convention used to define clear-hold-build must be specific enough to avoid confusion by using appropriate doctrinal terminology.

2. Clear-hold-build is not an approach. It is operational art. It is how the Army takes strategic goals of securing the population and capacity building and connects it to tactical units. It is an operational framework that has been used by US forces in counterinsurgency operations. It can be used as an operational framework from the introduction of foreign forces to conflict resolution. It can also be used as campaign design to be executed by multiple units on a rotational basis. Clear-hold-build can also be a framework for a specific area such as Samarra or Fallujah in Iraq or the Arghendab River Valley in Afghanistan.

A. However, clear-hold-build has not been the only operational framework used by US forces. Combined action has been used as an operational framework. It is also logical to see combined action, conducting operations in conjunction with the host nation security force, as a primary component for clear-hold-build to be effective. Another alternative to clear-hold-build is deliberate offensive operations to defeat insurgent forces with less regard to development of host nation institutions. Deliberate offensive operations generally come at the expense of addressing the population's grievances or the root cause for the insurgency, and deliberate offensive operations can only be executed under specific conditions. Doctrine should define when commanders and staffs should look at clear-hold-build as an option in counterinsurgency operations.

B. The “ink spot” theory or approach is a technique for applying clear-hold-build. It describes focusing the components of clear-hold-build to a specific area and then upon achieving designated conditions, expanding the actions of clear-hold-build to other areas. Because the components of clear-hold-build support host nation solutions, the ink spot theory presupposes that the population and leadership in adjacent areas will facilitate counterinsurgency actions in order to get the ink spot to spread to their area. The actions taken during this approach are the same as the components of clear-hold-build, so it is not a different concept, it is a specific technique for applying clear-hold-build.

3. The components of clear-hold-build are not stages or phases. It may be appropriate to create “strata” within the clear-hold-build construct in order to create deliberate phases within the construct. These strata should be identified by end state conditions, but each will still require components of clear-hold-build. These strata labels must also have specifically defined terminology to avoid confusion of the tasks that the force must execute. Examples of strata labels include disrupt, deny, transition, exploit, and overwatch.

4. The balance between offense, defense, and stability operations, based on the conditions in the area of operations, is critical to clear-hold-build. Multiple lines of effort are necessary to succeed in all components of clear-hold-build. Clear-hold-build cannot be accomplished by only security tasks or security force assistance tasks. To employ it effectively, the counterinsurgent must execute security, security force assistance, governance, and economic development tasks throughout all components of clear-hold-build. The proportion of these tasks must be determined based on the existing conditions.

5. The terminology for clear-hold-build needs to be clarified. More specifically, the terms used for counterinsurgency operations must be precise with universally understood definitions to avoid confusion.

- The definition of *clear* does not apply appropriately to counterinsurgency. FM 3-90 defines *clear* as “a tactical mission task that requires the commander to remove all enemy forces and eliminate organized resistance in an assigned area.” In a counterinsurgency, defining enemy forces is difficult as elements of the population may be actively or passively participating in enemy activities. Furthermore, organized resistance will not be completely eliminated in an insurgency until the population accepts the legitimacy of host nation institutions. The overall purpose of this component of the strategy is to reduce the enemy’s ability to effectively influence an area or its occupants. The purpose of counterinsurgent actions during this component is to create the conditions to institute host nation institutions in that area. As the doctrine is written, and as it has been applied over the past several years in Iraq and Afghanistan, a more appropriate term is *secure*. The definition of *secure* in FM 3-90 is “preventing a unit, faculty or geographic location from being damaged or destroyed by enemy action.”

- The definition of *hold* does not apply appropriately to counterinsurgency. The definition of *hold* in FM 3-90 is “to maintain possession of a position or area by force.” In a counterinsurgency, maintaining possession of an area must be done by the host nation security force. The idea of possession pertains to the ability to influence the area and cannot be accomplished solely by the use of force. The focus during this component is to initiate host nation institutions and build the capacity of the host nation security forces and government to secure the area. A more appropriate tactical task that describes the actions necessary to accomplish what is currently written in doctrine is *control* which FM 3-90 defines as “a tactical mission task that requires the commander to maintain physical influence over a specified area to prevent its use by an enemy.”

- There is no doctrinal definition for *build*. The focus of this component of the strategy in doctrine is to transition lead responsibility for stability of an area to host nation entities. The tactical task that best meets the criteria for actions denoted in doctrine is *support*, which is defined in FM 101-5 as “the action of a force that aids, protects, complements, or sustains another force.” This definition may need to be expanded to include support to host nation institutions as well as another force.

6. Counterinsurgency is part of Army decisive action under unified land operations. To comply with ADP 3-0, the components of clear-hold-build could be labeled seize the initiative, retain the initiative, and exploit the Initiative. As the term *clear* introduces the component of conventional operations focused specifically on enemy forces, *seize the initiative* clarifies for the counterinsurgent the conditions to be achieved during this component of the strategy. Similarly, the term *hold* does not appropriately direct counterinsurgent forces towards tasks outlined in the doctrinal manual while *retain the initiative* offers a more broad definition of tasks across the security-governance-development domains. Finally, as the counterinsurgent attempts to transition responsibility of an area to the host nation, *exploit the initiative* is a more appropriate depiction of action than is *build*.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That the revision of FM 3-24 clarifies an operational framework for counterinsurgency. Updated doctrine must provide more depth to the clear-hold-build framework to address how and when this element of operational art is applied under the conditions of an insurgency.

2. That the US Army redefine the operational art for conducting counterinsurgency operations using precise terminology that reduces confusion as to what the counterinsurgent must accomplish.

3. That counterinsurgency doctrine use *secure-control-support* to best reflect tactical terminology appropriate for action. Alternatively, doctrine could reflect *seize the initiative, retain the initiative, and exploit the initiative* as an operational framework in the next version of ADP 3-0.

REPLY:

Request you provide comments regarding the adequacy of the operational framework of clear-hold-build. You may reply by e-mail to usarmy.leavenworth.cac.mbx.coin@mail.mil.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John M. Paganini". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

JOHN M. PAGANINI

LTC, IN

Director, The Counterinsurgency Center