



MAY-JUNE 2011

# Military Review

THE PROFESSIONAL JOURNAL OF THE U.S. ARMY

MAY-JUNE 2011

<http://militaryreview.army.mil>



A joint team of U.S. Air Force and Marine search and rescue personnel from Yokota Air Force Base look over the disastrous aftermath at Sendai Airport, Japan, 13 March 2011. They are part of the disaster relief forces assisting with Japan's earthquake and tsunami recovery effort. (U.S. Air Force photo/SSgt Samuel Morse)



Military Review

## Feature: The Year 2012: South Korea's Resumption of Wartime Operational Control p2

Lieutenant Colonel James M. Minnich, U.S. Army

## The Afghan Balance of Power and the Culture of Jihad p33

Lieutenant Colonel John J. Malevich, Canadian Army, and Daryl C. Youngman, Kansas State University

## The Fight for the Village: Southern Afghanistan, 2010 p25

Lieutenant Colonel Brian Petit, U.S. Army

## Maintaining the Combat Edge p8

Major General Michael S. Tucker, U.S. Army, with Major Jason P. Conroy, U.S. Army



# Military Review

**Lieutenant General  
Robert L. Caslen, Jr.**

*Commander, USACAC  
Commandant, CGSC*

**COL John J. Smith**

*Director and Editor in Chief*

**MAJ Kevin Cutright**

*Acting Deputy Director  
Assistant Editor*

## Editorial Staff

**Marlys Cook, LTC, USA (Ret.)**

*Managing Editor*

**Peter D. Fromm, LTC,  
USA (Ret.)**

*Supervisory Editor*

**John Garabedian**

*Associate Editor*

**Nancy Mazzia**

*Books and Features Editor*

**Julie Gunter**

*Visual Information Specialist*

**Linda Darnell**

*Administrative Assistant*

**Michael Serravo**

*Visual Information Specialist,  
Webmaster*

## Editorial Board Members

**Brigadier General**

**Sean B. MacFarland**

*Deputy Commandant, CGSC*

**Clinton J. Ancker, III, Director,**

*Combined Arms Doctrine Directorate*

**Robert Baumann, Director,**

*CGSC Graduate Program*

**COL Wayne Grigsby, Director,**

*School of Advanced Military Studies*

**Gregory Fontenot, Director,**

*University of Foreign Military and  
Cultural Studies*

**Lester W. Grau**

*Foreign Military Studies Office*

**John Pennington, Chief,**

*Publication Division,*

*Center for Army Lessons Learned*

**Thomas Jordan, Director,**

*Capability Development Integration  
Directorate*

**William G. Robertson**

*Director, Combat Studies Institute*

**COL Daniel S. Roper, Director, USA/**

*USMC Counterinsurgency Center*

**Dennis Tighe, Deputy Director,**

*Combined Arms Center-Training*

## Consulting Editors

**Colonel Douglas Bassoli**

*Brazilian Army,*

*Brazilian Edition*

**Colonel Cristian E. Chateau**

*Chilean Army,*

*Hispano-American Edition*

## FEATURED ARTICLES

### 2 **The Year 2012: South Korea's Resumption of Wartime Operational Control**

*Lieutenant Colonel James M. Minnich, U.S. Army*

The United States must unencumber its forces from a peninsula-centric mission in Korea and transform the ROK-U.S. relationship into a strategic alliance for the 21st century.

### 8 **Maintaining the Combat Edge**

*Major General Michael S. Tucker, U.S. Army, with Major Jason P. Conroy, U.S. Army*

The Army's gains in stability and counterinsurgency skills have come at the expense of its ability to conduct major combat operations. This imbalance must be corrected before the expertise of our field grade officers and senior NCOs is lost.

### 17 **Preparing Soldiers to Help Foreign Partners Meet 21st Century Challenges**

*Brigadier General Edward P. Donnelly, U.S. Army, and Lieutenant Colonel Robert Maginnis, U.S. Army, Retired*

Security cooperation will play as great a role in an era of persistent conflict as deterrence did during the Cold War. The Army must integrate security cooperation into its training, doctrine, and education.

### 25 **The Fight for the Village: Southern Afghanistan, 2010**

*Lieutenant Colonel Brian Petit, U.S. Army*

The future of Afghanistan may not be won in the villages, but history teaches us that it will not be won without them. Here are five observations about village stability operations.

### 33 **The Afghan Balance of Power and the Culture of Jihad**

*Lieutenant Colonel John J. Malevich, Canadian Army, and Daryl C. Youngman, Kansas State University*

Population-centric COIN has been misinterpreted as "getting them to like us," with no genuine understanding of the root causes of the Afghan insurgency.

### 40 **Two Tours in Afghanistan: Twenty Years and Two Armies Apart**

*Major Eero Kinnunen, Estonian Defense Forces, and Lieutenant Colonel Lester W. Grau, U.S. Army, Retired*

One leader's reminiscences of his combat time in Afghanistan, serving first in the Soviet Army against the Mujahideen and then with the Estonian Army against the Taliban.

**Cover Art: Soldiers from the Republic of Korea 75th Mechanized Infantry Brigade and the U.S. 2nd Infantry Division hustle toward their fighting positions during a combined arms live fire exercise, 18 April 2010. Photo by SGT Karla Elliott, 2ID Public Affairs.**



## 50 Neuroscience for Combat Leaders: A Brain-Based Approach to Leading on the Modern Battlefield

*Major Andrew Steadman, U.S. Army*

Educating soldiers about brain function and incorporating cognitive stressors into training helps them perform with emotional stability.

## 62 Wartime Sourcing: Building Capability and Predictability through Continuity

*Lieutenant Colonel Heather Reed, U.S. Army*

Continuity of unit and augmentee sourcing can benefit both the soldiers' welfare and mission effectiveness. The quality of dwell time should be considered, not merely its quantity.

## 70 Death from Above: UAVs and Losing Hearts and Minds

*Jeffrey A. Sluka, Ph.D.*

The "greatest, weirdest, coolest, hardware in the American arsenal" is probably undermining the campaign in Afghanistan.

## 77 Economic Violence: It's Time to Change the Game

*Captain Jonathan Pan, U.S. Army*

The troop surge in Afghanistan does not mean there should be a corresponding surge in financial aid.

## INSIGHTS

### 83 An Old Man's Thoughts on War and Peace

*Professor Edward Bernard Glick*

We may enjoy peace, but we shall never entirely rid ourselves of war because we are "wired" to fight.

## BOOK REVIEWS

### 87 Contemporary Readings for the Military Professional

The Secretary of the Army has determined that the publication of this periodical is necessary in the transaction of the public business as required by law of the department. Funds for printing this publication were approved by the Secretary of the Army in accordance with the provisions of Army Regulation 25-30.

Martin E. Dempsey  
General, United States Army  
Chief of Staff

Official:

JOYCE E. MORROW  
Administrative Assistant to the  
Secretary of the Army 0988604

*Military Review* presents professional information, but the views expressed herein are those of the authors, not the Department of Defense or its elements. The content does not necessarily reflect the official U.S. Army position and does not change or supersede any information in other official U.S. Army publications. Authors are responsible for the accuracy and source documentation of material they provide. *Military Review* reserves the right to edit material. Basis of official distribution is one per 10 officers for major commands, corps, divisions, major staff agencies, garrison commands, Army schools, Reserve commands, and Cadet Command organizations; one per 25 officers for medical commands, hospitals, and units; and one per five officers for Active and Reserve brigades and battalions, based on assigned field grade officer strength. *Military Review* is available online at <http://militaryreview.army.mil>.

*Military Review* (US ISSN 0026-4148) (USPS 123-830) is published bimonthly by the U.S. Army, CAC, Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-1293. Paid subscriptions are available through the Superintendent of Documents for \$42 US/APO/FPO and \$58.80 foreign addresses per year. Periodical postage paid at Leavenworth, KS, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Military Review*, CAC, 290 Stimson Avenue, Unit 2, Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-1254.



# The Year 2012

## South Korea's Resumption of Wartime Operational Control

Lieutenant Colonel James M. Minnich, U.S. Army

*The contents of this paper reflect the author's original views and are not necessarily endorsed by the U.S. Army or the Department of Defense.*

Lieutenant Colonel James M. Minnich is a U.S. Army foreign area officer who has served 12 years in Korea and is the author of several books, articles, and papers, including *Political Legitimacy* and *South Korean President Park Chung-Hee*, published by the Korean National Defense University. He is fluent in Korean and holds masters degrees from Harvard University and the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College.

PHOTO: U.S. soldiers walk through smoke during a military exercise with South Korea in Dongducheon, north of Seoul, March 2011. (AFP photo/Jung Yeon-Je)

**F**ROM THE SILVER screen to the pulpit, many are prophesying apocalyptic events in the year 2012 as Earth supposedly enters its final phase of existence. As if this were not bad enough, it is also the year that the Republic of Korea was originally scheduled to reassume wartime operational control (OPCON) of its military forces from the United States. This transfer should have occurred as planned, and must occur in 2015 without another delay. It will unfetter U.S. forces now stationed in Korea for global strategic use.

Sixty years ago, newly liberated from Japanese domination and embroiled in a desperate war of survival, the Republic of Korea (ROK) made a strategic decision to subordinate its military forces under the operational control of the United Nations.<sup>1</sup> When hostilities ceased with an armistice agreement, the UN was empowered to maintain the armistice until a peace settlement could be concluded.<sup>2</sup> As a result, the UN commander retained full OPCON over ROK forces until the 1978 establishment of the ROK-U.S. Combined Forces Command (CFC), when full OPCON transferred to the CFC commander.<sup>3</sup> In 1994, the ROK reassumed *peacetime* OPCON of its forces while the CFC commander retained *wartime* OPCON of ROK forces.<sup>4</sup>

Placing ROK military forces under the control of a U.S. commander has provided a milieu of stability and fostered the development of the ROK military; however, the OPCON subordination of one nation's military under another is not a permanent construct. In 2003, at the behest of the Korean government, CFC undertook a command relations study to determine if it was appropriate for the Republic of Korea to reassume wartime OPCON of its forces. The study evolved into the Strategic Transition Plan, which is now being implemented in a combined fashion. In September 2006, the ROK and U.S. heads of state agreed that Korea should assume the lead for

its own defense. At the 41st ROK-U.S. Security Consultative Meeting held in October 2009, the ROK Minister of Defense and U.S. Secretary of Defense reaffirmed their 2007 decision for this transition to occur on 17 April 2012.<sup>5</sup>

However, on 20 January 2010, ROK Minister of National Defense Kim Tae-Young seemed to step back from this agreement when he publicly declared that 2012 would be “the worst time” for a transfer of wartime OPCON because of North Korea’s burgeoning nuclear weapons posture.<sup>6</sup>

For its part, the U.S. government reaffirmed its commitment to “provide specific and significant bridging capabilities until the ROK obtains full self-defense capabilities,” continue to “contribute enduring capabilities to the combined defense for the life of the alliance,” and “provide extended deterrence for the ROK, using the full range of military capabilities, to include the U.S. nuclear umbrella, conventional strike, and missile defense capabilities.”<sup>7</sup>

However, some fear that pressing concerns elsewhere could undo America’s enduring presence on the Korean peninsula or precipitate public and political cynicism about the continued relevance of the alliance. The concerns arise from fears that single-theater focused forces are not viable and that the ROK-U.S. alliance is in its twilight of efficacy. Observers worry that the long war on terrorism will demand so much U.S. combat power that the United States will precipitously withdraw its forces in Korea if they are not accessible for rotational use. They also worry that when conditions change and governments are left scrambling to justify the future relevance of the alliance, both countries will face cries from citizens and public officials for the immediate withdrawal of U.S. forces from Korea, sacrificing strategic necessity on the altar of public furor.

We must unshackle U.S. forces in Korea for global strategic use while solidifying America’s

enduring military presence on the Korean peninsula. The United States must—

- Unencumber its forces in Korea from a peninsula-centric mission.
- Exercise strategic flexibility of forces.
- Recast the ROK-U.S. alliance as a comprehensive, strategic alliance for the 21st century.

## To the Peninsula and Beyond

When the Soviet Union collapsed, U.S. overseas forces were arrayed as they had been since the Korean War. As America reaped its peace dividend, it downsized its forces, reshaped its global posture, and rethought its willingness to engage in massive ground fights, including on the Korean peninsula.<sup>8</sup> United States forces deployed along the Korean demilitarized zone as a tripwire against a North Korean invasion are now preparing to move to positions south of Seoul—in essence compelling Korea to assume a heavier defense burden.

However, to consolidate its forces further south on the peninsula, the United States must relieve these forces from their peninsula-centric mission. This process began with a 2003 agreement to transfer 10 military missions from U.S. to ROK forces and has expanded as Korea prepares to accept wartime OPCON of its own forces. To ensure a seamless transition, ROK-U.S. Combined Forces Command has conducted an annual computer-simulated warfighting exercise since August 2008 to train and certify this future command and control structure of independent, parallel national commands with the United States supporting the ROK lead.<sup>9</sup>

However, for U.S. forces to truly retain an enduring presence on the peninsula, they must be fully unencumbered for global employment. We should not merely consolidate U.S. forces on robust installations in Korea and continue a single-theater focused mission with a new command structure.

Some argue that South Korea does not have the experience to assume complex combat missions,

***We must unshackle U.S. forces in Korea for global strategic use while solidifying America’s enduring military presence on the Korean peninsula.***



AP Photo/South Korean Army via Yonhap

**South Korean Army soldiers disembark from a Black Hawk helicopter during an exercise to prepare for possible aggression by North Korea, south of Seoul, 20 January 2011.**

and that it cannot compensate for lost U.S. combat capabilities. Others say that the absence of U.S. forces from the peninsula would embolden North Korea to attack South Korea. These and other concerns can be effectively mitigated. Regarding training inadequacies, the United States has a process to certify ROK performance before transferring military missions. For capabilities shortfalls, the United States would either provide bridging capabilities or transfer missions at a slower rate until the ROK acquires more advanced capabilities. We can mitigate North Korean threats by moving comparable U.S. capabilities into the region when deploying on-peninsula U.S. assets off-peninsula.

### **Strategic Flexibility of Forces**

In January 2006, after years of bilateral negotiations, then-ROK Minister of Foreign Affairs Ban Ki-Moon and then-U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice signed a Joint Statement of Strategic Consultation for Allied Partnership, which recognized America's right to globally employ its forces stationed in Korea while recognizing Korea's right not to be drawn into a regional conflict against

its will.<sup>10</sup> This "strategic flexibility" has yet to be exercised in any meaningful fashion. Some point to the deployment of the U.S. 2nd Infantry Division's 2nd Brigade Combat Team to Iraq in 2004 as one exercise of strategic flexibility, but this brigade was actually re-stationing in the United States with an en route deployment to Iraq. To qualify as an exercise of strategic flexibility, units must deploy from the Korean peninsula and then return to the peninsula at the conclusion of their deployment.

American forces stationed in Germany have followed this deployment model. Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm broke the paradigm that U.S. forces were in Germany solely for the defense of Germany. This paradigm shift must also occur in Korea. The recent agreement among the U.S. military services to normalize tour lengths from the traditional one- and two-year deployments to three-year assignments is reshaping this paradigm.<sup>11</sup> In 2009, U.S. Forces Korea increased command-sponsored assignments by 60 percent, approving 5,000 service members to serve three-year assignments with their family members. This, however, accounts for little more than 15 percent of the total assigned force.

While DOD's goal is to phase out all unaccompanied tours in Korea, much work is still ahead before we transition from single-theater focused *forward-deployed* forces to globally deployable *forward-stationed* forces.<sup>12</sup> Meanwhile, the United States should address Korea's geopolitical concerns about this transformation.

Like many weaker partners in alliances, Korea wrestles with fears of *abandonment* on one hand and fears of *entrapment* on the other. The Korean government signed the 2006 Strategic Flexibility Agreement to forestall further reductions of U.S. forces or U.S. abandonment of Korea. It wants a credible and enduring U.S. military presence to remain on the peninsula, but understands that changing security conditions requires U.S. forces to be globally deployable.

Korea is also apprehensive that the United States might choose to employ its Korea-based forces in a Taiwan Strait crisis, and is afraid of armed reprisal from its neighbor, China. It also fears economic reprisal from China, its largest trading partner.

An effective strategic communications plan can placate Korea's concerns. The U.S. government should tell the ROK that it will not use its peninsula-based forces in a Taiwan Straits confrontation. It is difficult to conceive of a scenario where Korea would ever sanction such an act. The end of the ROK-U.S. alliance would be certain anyway if the U.S. government unilaterally deployed its on-peninsula forces in direct contravention to ROK policy. All but the direst scenarios would rule out such an employment of forces.

Regardless, to assuage our ally's concerns and in the interest of consensual strategic flexibility, I strongly urge the U.S. government to be more frank about its intended global employment of peninsula-based forces. This is a time-sensitive issue that can readily become a public outrage in Korea.

While political pragmatism may have been the first step in acquiescence to strategic flexibility,

sustainable flexibility requires a transparent and incremental "flexing" approach in which the United States routinely deploys its Korea-based forces in off-peninsula training exercises. It should do so with Korean forces encouraged to participate during bilateral and multilateral exercises to lessen domestic and regional anxieties and advance a comprehensive, strategic alliance.

## Recasting the ROK-U.S. Alliance

At the 34th ROK-U.S. Security Consultative Meeting in December 2002, then-U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and ROK National Defense Minister Lee Jun announced the "Future of the ROK-U.S. Alliance" policy initiative (renamed "Security Policy Initiative" in 2004), chartering a consultative body "to adapt the alliance to reflect changing regional and global security circumstances."<sup>13</sup> The two governments have taken several alliance-strengthening measures, the most visible being the ongoing consolidation of U.S. forces south of Seoul. Efforts to shrink the widely dispersed, 100 installation-strong U.S. footprint in Korea are helping sustain America's enduring military presence there, but equally important are less visible efforts to recast the alliance into something broader than the defense of Korea. At the 38th ROK-U.S. Security Consultative Meeting in October 2006, the Security Policy Initiative working group said it had completed a two-year joint study on the vision of the ROK-U.S. alliance, and that the alliance would contribute to peace and security on the peninsula, within the region, and globally.<sup>14</sup>

Yet, the alliance is still seen as a peninsula-centric military arrangement. The failure to recast it as a comprehensive, strategic alliance means that the rationale for it will invariably dissipate once the North Korean threat abates. This would be unfortunate, because a recast alliance would be mutually beneficial. Of course, nations build relations on the pillars of trust, common values, and common interests. While these pillars have matured, the United States brazenly approaches the bilateral relationship asking what Korea can do for it, and Korea guardedly wonders what America will ask for next. These viewpoints must be reconciled for this relationship to broaden and persist in an era where a North Korean threat no longer exists.

***An effective strategic communications plan can placate Korea's concerns.***

Most Americans know very little about Korea: they do not know the major Korean brands (such as Hyundai, Samsung, and LG); too few are sure which Korea is America's ally (North or South); and many believe that Korea is an underdeveloped third-world country. The reverse is true in Korea, where everyone has studied many facets of America since primary school. This must change. Universities can sponsor language and culture exchanges, ad campaigns can associate consumer products as being from "South" Korea, and Korean sports and entertainment troupes can visit America's major cities.

Historically, Korea has been a debtor nation that depended on American largesse for its economic survival; those days are gone. Korea has emerged near the top ten largest global economies, the United States is Korea's fifth largest importer, and Korea is America's seventh largest importer.<sup>15</sup> Bilateral trade opportunities are much larger than are currently being realized, which is why the Korea-U.S. Free Trade Agreement was signed in 2007, although it still needs to be approved.<sup>16</sup> While this trade agreement benefits both countries economically, if the United States is to increase its Korean trade advantages over the European Union, Congress

must act quickly. Approving the trade agreement will exponentially advance efforts to broaden the ROK-U.S. military relationship into a comprehensive, strategic alliance. This economic meshing, coupled with Korea's emerging role as a quintessential member of the G-20, can significantly enhance Korea's influence in Asia and throughout the world.

A comprehensive, strategic alliance will also help in addressing climate control through collaboration in low-carbon, green-growth clean technologies, such as nuclear power, smart grids, and green vehicles. A partnership in global peace operations can help address crises of humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, and peacekeeping, as well help combat the evils of human trafficking, counterfeiting, illegal drugs, piracy, and terrorism.

## The End of the Cold War

The end of the Cold War led to an evolution of America's military alliances and global defense posture everywhere except in Korea, where anachronistic arrangements remain in place. Early last year, there were strong indications that the Korean government would officially request to delay the resumption of wartime OPCON of its own forces in



AFP photo/Kim Jae-Hwan

Female members of South Korea's Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) conduct a bayonet drill at a training camp in Seongnam, south of Seoul, 19 January 2011.

2012. The United States should have rejected such a request and urged Korea to follow through with the agreement. However, after much negotiation, at last year's G-20 economic summit President Barack Obama and South Korean President Lee Myung-bak agreed to delay OPCON transfer from April 2012 to December 2015. One concern is that waiting for Korea to better posture for the transition might lead to renewed debates about abrogating the agreement and retaining the current ROK-U.S. CFC arrangement. The ROK-U.S. alliance and America's military presence in Korea will become irrelevant unless we free U.S. forces in Korea for global strategic employment while strengthening our enduring military presence on the Korean peninsula.

The alliance today is perhaps as healthy as it has been in its 56-year existence, which will prove beneficial as we chart the course ahead. However, we need look no further back than the last decade for the palpable acrimony pointing to the underlying fissures in this relationship and the need to recast this alliance now. Ten years ago, the ROK government and populace collectively embraced inter-Korean relations, leaving many to blame the United States for a divided peninsula, and a vocal and violent minority demonstrated for the immediate withdrawal

of all U.S. forces from Korea. That environment complicated several sensitive issues.

Extreme nationalists stoked anti-American sentiments with startling results: A 2002 Winter Olympics controversy virulently incited the Korean nation after Korea's speed skater Kim Dong-sung was disqualified on a technicality and a U.S. athlete won the gold medal; the 2002 U.S. tactical vehicle accident which killed two Korean school girls led to massive and prolonged demonstrations, fire bombings, and retaliatory attacks upon U.S. servicemen; and in 2008 a protest against the importing of American beef led more than 500,000 Koreans to stage street demonstrations that nearly immobilized the government.

The above incidents are not raised as reasons to consider dissolving the alliance; that would be myopic, leaving America without an important ally or military presence in East Asia. Efforts to evolve the ROK-U.S. alliance are not synonymous with an attempt to abrogate the alliance's core function: America's agreement to help the ROK defend itself against aggression. Rather, the incidents reinforce the risk of failing to recast the relationship as a 21st-century alliance built on trust, yoked in common values and interests, no longer defined by a North Korean threat, and welcoming an enduring U.S. military presence unfettered for global force employment. **MR**

---

## NOTES

1. United Nations Security Council, Official Records of the Security Council, Fifth Year, 476th Meeting (document S/1588), *Resolution 84 (1950) of 7 July 1950*.

2. U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Arms Control, *Korean Armistice Agreement* (Panmunjom, Korea, 27 July 1953).

3. Department of Defense, Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), *U.S.-ROK Terms of Reference for the Military Committee and ROK-U.S. Combined Forces Command*, 27 July 1978.

4. DOD, OSD, *U.S.-ROK Terms of Reference for the Military Committee and ROK-U.S. Combined Forces Command/Strategic Directive 2*, 7 October 1994.

5. DOD, OSD, *41st U.S.-ROK Security Consultive Meeting Joint Communiqué*, 22 October 2009, <<http://www.defense.gov>> (19 February 2010).

6. "Why Is 2012 'the Worst Time' for Troop Control Handover?" *Chosun Ilbo*, 22 January 2010.

7. DOD, OSD, *41st U.S.-ROK SCM Joint Communiqué*, 22 October 2009, <<http://www.defense.gov>> (19 February 2010).

8. B.B. Bell, *Statement of General B.B. Bell, Commander, United Nations Command; Commander, Republic of Korea-United States Combined Forces Command; and Commander, United States Forces Korea before the Senate Armed Services Committee* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office [GPO], 7 March 2006, and 24 April 2007).

9. Richard P. Lawless, "The US-ROK Relationship," prepared statement of Richard

P. Lawless, Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Asian and Pacific Affairs, before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on International Relations (Washington, DC: GPO, 27 September 2006). Walter L. Sharp, "Statement of General Walter L. Sharp, Commander, United Nations Command; Commander, Republic of Korea-United States Combined Forces Command; and Commander, United States Forces Korea before the Senate Armed Services Committee" (Washington, DC: GPO, 19 March 2009).

10. Department of State, *Joint United States-Republic of Korea Statement on the Launch of the Strategic Consultation for Allied Partnership* (Washington, DC: GPO, 19 January 2006).

11. Walter L. Sharp, Statement before the Senate Armed Services Committee (Washington, DC: GPO, 19 March 2009).

12. DOD, *Quadrennial Defense Review* (Washington, DC: GPO, 2010), 52.

13. DOD, OSD, *34th ROK-U.S. SCM Joint Communiqué*, 5 December 2002.

14. DOD, OSD, *38th U.S.-ROK SCM Joint Communiqué*, 20 October 2006, <<http://www.defense.gov>> (19 February 2010).

15. Lee Myung-bak, "Meeting with His Excellency Lee Myung-bak," Council on Foreign Relations (21 September 2009), <[http://www.cfr.org/publication/20255/meeting\\_with\\_his\\_excellency\\_lee\\_myungbak.html](http://www.cfr.org/publication/20255/meeting_with_his_excellency_lee_myungbak.html)> (19 February 2010).

16. U.S. Office of the United States Trade Representative, "Korea-U.S. Free Trade Agreement," <<http://www.ustr.gov/trade-agreements/free-trade-agreements/korus-fta>>.



# Maintaining the Combat Edge

Major General Michael S. Tucker, U.S. Army, with Major Jason P. Conroy, U.S. Army

*The Army has to regain its edge in fighting conventional wars while retaining what it has learned about fighting unconventional wars.*

— Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates, 10 October 2007<sup>1</sup>

Major General Michael S. Tucker is the commander of 2nd Infantry Division in the Republic of Korea. He recently completed a tour as the deputy chief of staff (operations) for the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan. He also served as a brigade commander in Iraq. He holds a B.S. from the University of Maryland, an MPA from Shippensburg University, and an MMAS from the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College.

Major Jason P. Conroy, U.S. Army, is the chief of Operational Assessments at the Joint Functional Component Command for Space, Vandenberg Air Force Base, and the author of *Heavy Metal: a Tank Company's Battle to Baghdad* (Potomac Books, 2005).

---

PHOTO: Soldiers from the Republic of Korea 75th Mechanized Infantry Brigade and the U.S. 2nd Infantry Division hustle toward their fighting positions during a combined arms live fire exercise, 18 April 2010. (Photo by SGT Karla Elliott, 2ID Public Affairs)

**T**HE UNITED STATES has been at war in Iraq and Afghanistan for over nine years. During this time, there have been profound changes in the Army's force structure across all warfighting functions. These changes have accompanied a steady atrophy in our ability to conduct major combat operations (MCO) and should give us cause for concern. Much of the unit structure and training competency that existed nine years ago are no longer present, even though the National Security Strategy of May 2010 mandates: "We must maintain our military's conventional superiority, while enhancing its capacity to defeat asymmetric threats."<sup>2</sup>

The Army's recent shift to emphasize a single mission essential task list (METL) is a positive change. However, due to the short dwell time within the Army Force Generation (ARFORGEN) model, we have not fully exercised the modular force structures that exist in the Army today under the rigor of our new METL. Our modular force has also not been subject to long-term ARFORGEN requirements and sustainment operations at home station. This shift in focus to a single METL, combined with extended dwell periods, will allow commanders at all echelons to experience and identify modularity's effect on their units.

The changes toward modularity have transformed the Army from a division-based structure optimized for fighting large-scale conventional wars to a brigade-based expeditionary force largely stationed in the continental United States. While this reorganization has proven to be versatile and effective in support of Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom, we have yet to truly test the modular force in support of our new METL. Many senior leaders, both military and civilian, have recognized this shortcoming; however,

U.S. Army, SGT Andrea Merritt



**A Bradley Fighting Vehicle tows an M58 mine-clearing line charge as it prepares to clear a simulated minefield while an Apache helicopter provides fire support during the 2nd Infantry Division combined arms live fire exercise, 18 April 2010.**

they have had few opportunities to observe training events focused on major combat operations conducted by a modular force. The capabilities, types, and numbers of this modular force are in need of review as we increase dwell times and focus on preparing trained and ready forces.

Our veteran Army is an effective stability and counterinsurgency force, but our junior leaders and soldiers are untrained on the wide area security and combined arms maneuver tasks found in our current METL. The pool of available talent to restore these capabilities is dwindling at the brigade level and below. Currently, the Army's only expertise and experience with these skill sets resides with senior noncommissioned officers and senior field grade officers. If we have not effectively trained and mentored our junior leaders on such skills, we will lose hard-earned institutional knowledge resident in the Army of Desert Storm and Operation Iraqi Freedom I.

Insights garnered from battalion-, brigade-, and division-level exercises conducted within the 2nd Infantry Division (2ID) over the past several years confirm that the Army must swiftly use its intellectual capital to restore balance in training. Not only is 2ID the Army's only forward-deployed committed division, it is also the Army's only modular divi-

sion currently focused full time on major combat operations in support of the Army's new METL. The 2ID regularly trains for wide area security and combined arms maneuver tasks during a variety of full-spectrum training events.

### Preparing for Hybrid Opponents

*We have learned through painful experience that the wars we fight are seldom the wars that we planned. As a result, the United States needs a broad portfolio of military capabilities with maximum versatility across the widest possible spectrum of conflict.* — Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates, 2 February 2010<sup>3</sup>

If we have learned anything from the current conflicts, it is that our enemies will seek to use a full array of threats against us. They will employ a mixture of these threats and transition among them over the course of an extended campaign. This mixture of threats has been labeled the "hybrid threat" in FM 5-0, *The Operations Process*.<sup>4</sup> However, the reality of Russian tanks rolling into the Republic of Georgia not long ago was an important reminder that nation-states and their militaries still matter. Of more interest to 2ID is the North Korean threat 30 kilometers from our division headquarters.

Israel's failure against Hezbollah in 2006 demonstrates the risk of neglecting MCO skills for an extended period. When called upon to conduct major combat operations against a hybrid threat, the Israeli Defense Forces failed to achieve tactical, operational, or strategic success. Returning to full spectrum training resulted in dramatic success in the 2008-2009 Gaza campaign. A recent RAND study reported the Israeli Forces learned that the basics of joint combined arms fire and maneuver were necessary for successful operations against hybrid opponents and that tanks and infantry fighting vehicles provided mobile and precise firepower to close with and destroy the enemy.<sup>5</sup>

## Army at a Tipping Point

Focused on protracted counterinsurgency missions since the fall of Baghdad in 2003, the Army is at a tipping point. We all but stopped training on tasks supporting MCO several years ago, and we are now clearly seeing the effects of this shift. We have made enormous gains in stability and counterinsurgency skills such as protecting the population, training host nation security forces, and integrating joint and interagency enablers. However, these gains have come at the expense of our ability to conduct MCO. In the long term, the ARFORGEN model will provide a versatile mix of tailorable, rotating networked organizations.<sup>6</sup> But, the process has barely been able to keep up with the demand of deploying units in support of OIF and OEF. In many cases, the demand has exceeded the supply, leaving no strategic flexibility. Many units are on a nearly 1:1 "boots on the ground" (BOG) to dwell time ratio, which exceeds of the Army's immediate goals of 1:2 for the Active Component and 1:4 for the Reserve Component.<sup>7</sup> The Army has already identified that it cannot maintain this pace and retain an all-volunteer force for an extended period of time. Consequently, the longer-term Army goal is 1:3 for the Active Component and 1:5 for the Reserve Component. The BOG-to-dwell time ratio must increase so the force can rest, recuperate, reset, and retrain. With a longer dwell time, training must include combined arms offensive and defensive operations to maintain our hard-earned superiority in MCO. We must increase professional military education attendance to address the current backlog and ensure we prepare NCOs and officers

for greater decision-making and leadership responsibilities across the full spectrum of operations.

After 12 months of distributing food at refugee camps or negotiating with local officials, armor companies and field artillery batteries find it difficult to skillfully conduct gunnery. In addition, many, if not most, of the intelligence tactics, techniques, and procedures that we use during MCO reside almost solely in the personal experiences and memories of senior NCOs and field grade officers who trained and executed those tasks early in their careers. Order of battle skill sets have become a lost art among junior military intelligence personnel. Today, intelligence analysts are more like police detectives looking for "persons of interest." The average soldier cannot identify threat equipment, threat capabilities, or the significance of signature equipment, but he can identify individuals or persons on watch lists.

Units now receive junior NCOs and officers who have had little or no training on offensive and defensive operations against conventionally organized and equipped enemies. They have little or no knowledge of breaching or gap crossing operations and have difficulty analyzing the terrain, visualizing enemy courses of action, and developing event templates to identify signature equipment and high-value targets. These tasks and skills are crucial and quickly atrophy if not practiced.

With budget supplementals and Overseas Contingency Operations funding over the past nine years, the Army has enjoyed abundant resources, but in the future, we can expect tightening budgets that affect our weapon systems, capabilities, and size. We must examine how to organize and train for the future while fighting our ongoing wars. We must make hard choices about the training, capabilities, and force structure of our organizations. We should anticipate external pressure across our institutions to accept efficiencies that generate "good enough" organizations capable of executing our METL.

**... armor companies and field artillery batteries now find it difficult to skillfully conduct gunnery.**

Many of our revised training models already reflect this reality, and budgetary constraints will increase the challenge.

## Current Force Structure

The purpose of modularity was to create a brigade-based Army more responsive to the needs of geographic combatant commanders by better employing Joint capabilities, facilitating force packaging and rapid deployment, and fighting as self-contained units in nonlinear, noncontiguous areas of operations. The goal of this effort was to enhance ongoing operations by reorganizing existing units within the Army's structure. The centerpiece of this reorganization is the brigade combat team (BCT), and the result of modularity is that brigades are no longer tied to specific headquarters or posts. Essentially, modularity means organizations task-organized for the operational environment.

There are still many concerns with the composition, structure, and number of modular organizations. Some of these concerns are with the numbers, capabilities, and types of BCTs in the Army. The number of BCTs grew from 33 to 43 and the BCTs became much more versatile and self-contained;

however, heavy and infantry BCTs gave up significant capability with the loss of a maneuver battalion in favor of a reconnaissance battalion. Before modularity, more than half of the total brigades in the Army were heavy brigades. The proposed number of heavy brigades in Total Army Analysis 12-17 is 17 of the 45 BCTs, or 38 percent. Although the Stryker BCT provides exceptional maneuverability and firepower, it lacks protection and is extremely vulnerable to tanks and most anti-tank weapon systems our adversaries employ. Infantry BCTs are essential during MCO; however, they lack a vehicle that provides mobility or protection. Only in the last several years have BCTs been issued a mix of up-armored HMMWVs and mine-resistant ambush-protected vehicles (MRAPs) while deployed. Without mobility and a mounted weapon system, the infantry BCT does not have staying power against mounted hybrid threats. The infantry BCT needs a ground combat vehicle that provides mobility and protection to its maneuver elements. The Army's ongoing effort to provide it is an encouraging step.

Most of the controversy over the conversion of organizations to a modular design has been



U.S. Army, SGT Karla Elliott

Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment prepare for lanes training during a 2nd Infantry Division combined arms live fire exercise, 18 April 2010.

about the command and control structure above the brigade level. The Army decided on the three structures of division, corps, and theater army headquarters. The modular corps and division designs are similar, but with two key differences.

Divisions are the Army's primary tactical warfighting headquarters. While BCTs are the basic building blocks of the Army's tactical formations and the principal means of executing engagements, divisions utilize their more robust staff to integrate engagements into battles. The division headquarters' principal task is synchronizing subordinate brigade operations.

Second, the higher-grade rank structure of the corps headquarters makes it a better choice for transitioning to a Joint headquarters such as a Joint Forces Land Component Command or Joint task forces. The Army continues to struggle with the role of the division and corps headquarters and their relationship to brigades. Some worry that "we've PowerPointed over the problem of the Army division and corps headquarters echelons of commands and what their roles should be. The Army is more than just a collection of brigades."<sup>8</sup> The Army has still not truly tested and validated these headquarters for MCO.

## Atrophied Skills

*As we seek innovations in our training, we will never forget that at every echelon of our profession we must still rely on our leaders to be masters of their weapons systems, skillful in unit tactics, and competent in combined arms operations and the integration of organic and joint fires.* —General Martin E. Dempsey, June 2010<sup>9</sup>

Leader and soldier skills critical to the Army's ability to conduct MCO are disappearing from our tactical units at a rapid pace. Many of our senior leaders have recognized this shortcoming, but few have had the opportunity to observe the results of our Army's dilemma during training events oriented toward our new METL. Maneuvering mounted forces to close with and destroy the enemy through direct and indirect fire is quickly becoming a lost art. Today's maneuver organizations are very good at operating at the independent platoon level, but they cannot operate as a maneuver element in an integrated combined arms force. They are very comfortable conducting platoon patrols in a mix

of up-armored HMMWVs and MRAPs for short durations from forward operating bases. However, it has been years since platoons have maneuvered as part of a larger company or battalion formation over extended distances and time, integrating both direct and indirect fires.

There has been less demand for indirect fires. Fire support in counterinsurgency and stability operations requires a much smaller volume of fires than that required during MCO. In Iraq and Afghanistan, maneuver commanders often task their fires organizations to perform missions outside their core competencies (i.e., provisional maneuver battalion, escort missions, base defense). Now a generation of company grade officers and junior NCOs are not proficient in the tasks associated with the delivery and coordination of indirect fires. Because of collateral damage considerations and target sets that do not require a large volume of fire, we seldom mass fires at the battery level or higher in stability and COIN operations.

Another core maneuver task that has atrophied, and one that has been impacted by the modular organization, is combined arms breaching. This complex task requires synchronization, which necessitates detailed reverse-breach planning, clear sub-unit instructions, well-rehearsed forces, and effective command and control. This type of training and education is lacking today, with only senior NCOs and officers retaining the skill sets to plan and execute this complicated operation. Moreover, having only one engineer company within each heavy BCT significantly limits its ability to accomplish this task.

Diminishing combat engineer expertise in executing gap crossings is acute. Engineer soldiers do not have the experience to plan or advise their battalion and brigade commanders on executing this task to standard. Exacerbating the problem is the absence of an engineer battalion in the heavy BCTs, which means the brigade commander's expert for engineering operations is a major on the

***Maneuvering mounted forces to close with and destroy the enemy through direct and indirect fire is quickly becoming a lost art.***



**The Avenger Weapon System engages a target with a Stinger missile during a live-fire exercise conducted by 6th Battalion, 52nd Air Defense Artillery, near Dacheon Beach, Korea, 13-20 November 2010.**

brigade staff who might not have a background in breaching or gap-crossing operations. The current initiative to restructure the brigade special troops battalion as a brigade engineer battalion with an additional engineer company may address this concern. However, this initiative does not address the training and oversight of the military intelligence company or the signal company in the heavy BCT (which falls under the special troops battalion).

The build-up of forward operating bases and corresponding contract support has led to erosion in Army sustainment capabilities that once ensured our freedom of action and extended operational reach. Major combat operations demand high volumes of materiel—particularly fuel, ammunition, and spare parts—to prosecute operations over extended distances. We have seen repeatedly that our logisticians are unaccustomed to processing the volume of supply requests necessary to maintain combat power or executing supply trains by echelon over extended distances. Also, many of our operators are no longer accustomed to maintaining their own vehicles. The quick development and fielding of MRAPs has meant contracting the necessary maintenance support. Stryker vehicles are also primarily maintained by contractors.<sup>10</sup>

Contracting is an essential service in the sustainment field, but it can be a double-edged sword. In 2ID, a shortage of mid-level maintenance personnel has meant units are unable to

perform required services. To ensure that units maintain their operational readiness, 2ID contracted the services for some equipment across the fleet. While this is necessary to sustain the operational readiness of a “fight tonight” unit, it deprives our maintenance personnel of key training and competence required for lengthy major combat operations.<sup>11</sup>

Many Army leaders are losing the art of battlefield decision-making or mission command. Once our “bread and butter,” making decisions based on what the forward commander can observe, sense, and hear on the radio is becoming a lost art. An enormous amount of untranslated, unusable information now inundates commanders via satellite downlink. Moreover, commanders have come to expect near-perfect situational awareness prior to making a decision. Such information is often only available within stationary tactical operations centers with fixed, robust command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance architecture. Commanders are uncomfortable with making decisions while on the move based on FM radio or Blue Force Tracker reports.

Combined arms battalions depend on the experience of senior NCOs and company and field grade officers to meet basic gunnery standards. However, what was routine seven or eight years ago is discovery learning today. It is more difficult to achieve gunnery standards and skill levels because of the

design and nature of our modular organizations. Commanders from the branch associated with the battalion's regiment usually lead combined arms battalions. The other two field grade officers usually come from the Armor and Infantry branches. Seldom are all three officers familiar with appropriate gunnery skills. This often results in a lack of coaching and expertise, particularly within units suffering acute shortages of mid- and senior-grade NCOs. We gain little efficiency during gunnery training because the unit is essentially firing a task-organized gunnery routine every time it goes out to the range. 2ID is returning to pure fleet gunneries up to the Table VIII level to generate efficiency and reduce the length of the gun lines, while maximizing platform expertise.

Recent observations with gunnery densities in Korea reveal alarming trends in section-and-crew drills and proficiencies. Training videos reveal that crew members are not proficient in crew drills pre-to-fire checks. Vehicle crew evaluators and unit leaders do not know what "right looks like," and thus are unable to make necessary corrections. Leaders are not familiar nor proficient with weapon systems. This loss of core competencies in branch-specific weapon systems is at an all-time high in the force.

## **Modular Division Challenges and Solutions**

One of the biggest challenges of the division headquarters is that it is not authorized intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance assets. However, many division intelligence officers fail to realize that they can still influence the use of BCT assets to answer the division commander's priority information requirements, while still supporting those of the BCT commander. When the division headquarters receives its own organic assets, such as the future Sky Warrior, and more battlefield surveillance brigades are fielded, this will cease to be an issue.

Modularity and the shift away from the division-based structure to a brigade-based structure has also meant less warfighting experience and knowledge of critical functions among battalion and brigade commanders. Military Intelligence, Signal, Air Defense Artillery, Logistics, Field Artillery, and Engineer branches have lost the divisional brigade and battalion commanders that used to mentor junior and mid-grade officers in their respective branches. To

***This loss of core competencies in branch-specific weapon systems is at an all-time high in the force.***

mitigate this loss of training oversight, 2ID has established responsibility for select warfighting functions in all of the brigades across the division using Central Selection List lieutenant colonels from the division staff. Without this oversight, staff officers would fill key developmental positions without a mentor. The training plans for warfighting functions are included in 2ID quarterly training briefs and published in the division's guidance.

The current modular structure limits the division's ability to conduct shaping operations. In most cases, the division's ability to conduct shaping operations is determined by the number and type of support brigades (combat aviation, fires, battlefield surveillance, and maneuver enhancement). The support brigade in highest demand is the maneuver enhancement brigade, which provides mobility, breaching, and gap-crossing capabilities, as well as military police and civil affairs specialties. These assets are critical, especially since the BCTs only have one engineer company with extremely limited mobility, counter-mobility, and survivability assets. In accordance with Field Manual 3-0, "for major combat operations, divisions should have at least one of each type of support brigade attached or OPCON to it."<sup>12</sup> There are 14 corps and division headquarters in the Active Component, but only three battlefield surveillance brigades and maneuver enhancement brigades and six fires brigades. The disproportionate number of support brigades does not allow each division and corps to conduct full spectrum exercises with the assumed array of support brigades. Future division-level exercises should include a representative capability of the five support brigades (battlefield surveillance, combat aviation, fires, maneuver enhancement, and sustainment) and a mix of BCTs to fully test the modular headquarters across all warfighting functions.

The divisional command posts are another challenge. Conducting major combat operations is arguably more dynamic and presents more demanding

challenges than those in a COIN environment. The operational tempo of major combat operations, along with the demand for rapid synchronization of warfighting functions, requires close consideration of how we train and organize our command posts for combat. With the current division design, two command posts exist—a robust division main command post (DMAIN) and a much smaller division tactical command post (DTAC)—as well as the mobile command group. While the DMAIN can conduct all the necessary functions in a stationary position when properly manned and equipped, we still have not tested it in an MCO environment while under enemy pressure and constant movement. The DTAC is much smaller than the DMAIN and only designed to oversee operations for limited missions and for limited periods. Not designed as an alternate command post, it normally integrates into the DMAIN along with the logistics assets, formally known as the division rear command post. In 2ID, we have identified the requirement for a sustainment operation center. With the threat of enemy indirect fire during MCO, division command posts require hardened command and control vehicles to protect vital communication links. They must also be flexible enough to displace on very short notice. Currently, division-level command posts operate from various forms of tents that lack protection and impair the division's ability to conduct mission command and control on the move.

## Restoring Balance in Training and Preparing the Army

*One of the Army's concerns . . . is getting back to training for high intensity situations—a capability vitally important to deter aggression*

*and shape behavior of other nations... [O]ne of the principle challenges the Army faces is to regain the traditional edge of fighting conventional wars... —Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates, 10 October 2007<sup>13</sup>*

Our senior NCOs and field grade officers demonstrated great proficiency in OIF I. We need to consider carefully how far we should allow this MCO capability to diminish. We must achieve a balance across the full spectrum of operations and mitigate the risks associated with our ability to deter rivals from threatening U.S. national security interests. The Army will continue to face conflict from one end of the spectrum to the other, and at a bare minimum, it must maintain a basic level of proficiency in major combat operations.

We have an approaching window of opportunity to focus on improving our MCO capabilities as the Army prepares to drawdown in Iraq. The decrease in the demand for forces provides an excellent opportunity to improve our superiority in major combat operations. Our MCO intellectual capital will soon retire, so if we make it a priority now, we can make significant headway before the impending era of constrained resources.

As stated by Secretary of Defense Gates, the Army has to regain its conventional fighting edge in order to deter potential adversaries. As we lengthen dwell times and increase opportunities to train and maintain our units, commanders will also need to be aware of the challenges with modularity masked during repeated deployments to OEF and OIF. Commanders must develop training strategies that capitalize on the existing experience in their formations and produce forces capable of facing hybrid threat contingencies and conducting major combat operations. **MR**

---

### NOTES

1. Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates, Washington, DC, Wednesday, 10 October 2007, <<http://www.defense.gov/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1181>> (9 August 2010).

2. *National Security Strategy* (Washington, DC: The White House, May 2010), 5.

3. Gates, "Opening Summary, Budget Request," testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee, Washington, D.C., 2 February 2010, <<http://www.defense.gov/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1417>> (9 August 2010).

4. FM 5-0, *The Operations Process (Final Approved Draft)* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 25 February 2010) 3-4.

5. David E. Johnson, "Military Capabilities for Hybrid War: Insights from the Israel Defense Forces in Lebanon and Gaza" (Santa Monica, CA: RAND OP-285-A, 2010) 36-37.

6. "Army Force Generation," U.S. Army *Stand To!*, 20 July 2010, <<http://www.army.mil/standto/archive/2010/07/20/>> (11 Aug 2010).

7. U.S. Army, "2009 Army Posture Statement," Addendum E (Army Force Generation), 7 May 2009, <[http://www.army.mil/aps/09/addenda/addenda\\_e.html](http://www.army.mil/aps/09/addenda/addenda_e.html)> (18 April 2010).

8. LTG David Barno, U.S. Army (Retired), "A general covers an Army war game," from *The Best Defense: Tom Rick's Daily Take on National Security, Foreign Policy*, 17 May 2010, <[http://tricks.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2010/05/17/a\\_general\\_covers\\_an\\_army\\_war\\_game](http://tricks.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2010/05/17/a_general_covers_an_army_war_game)> (11 August 2010).

9. General Martin E. Dempsey, "Training Development for an Expeditionary Army," *Army Magazine*, June 2009, 14-16.

10. With modularity and the shift from a division-based structure to a brigade-based structure, many of the personnel, maintenance, and materiel management functions shifted from the division to the brigades. In most cases, the brigade now manages these three key functions. However, the knowledge, expertise, and proper rank structure do not exist at the brigade level. Prior to modularity, seasoned senior war-

rant officers in the division materiel management center managed supply commodities such as ammunition, vehicles of all types, and repair parts for the entire division. Today, we have delegated the property book functions to the brigade. The brigade property book section is authorized one CW2 as the property book officer. If there is a warrant officer assigned to this position, it is usually one who has just completed the basic course. This reduction in skill and experience hinders proper analysis of unit equipment authorizations, on-hand quantities, shortages, excess, and unit property book fidelity. Additionally, by decentralizing the property book teams, we have reduced the division accountability technician's ability to provide constant "over the shoulder" teaching, coaching, and mentoring to newly assigned property book officers. Modularity also consolidated equipment at the brigade level, which further degrades proper oversight and accountability. In the case of ammunition, an NCO at the division headquarters (usually without the necessary skill level, expertise, and authority) has replaced the senior warrant officer who managed ammunition directly at the materiel management center.

11. Modularity has also had a significant impact on the maintenance organizations and structures within BCTs. Maneuver commanders, who are ultimately responsible for the maintenance of their assigned equipment, no longer have organic maintenance

assets. They now have a robust forward support company in the brigade support battalion with maintenance assets. This company provides direct support to the maneuver battalion and is typically, but not always, attached. However, with this organizational structure change, the battalion staff lost the battalion maintenance officer, typically an experienced captain handpicked by the battalion commander or executive officer. The maintenance control officer in the forward support company now fills this role. This is a logistician slot, typically filled by a new second lieutenant from the Transportation, Quartermaster, or Ordnance branch. The loss in knowledge and experience has placed additional requirements on the battalion maintenance technician (a warrant officer) to fill the gap. Most commanders end up using the battalion maintenance technician as their battalion maintenance officer preventing him from providing technical expertise and supervision of support and maintenance systems clerks, diagnostics, troubleshooting, and battalion repair parts management. It is crucial for the maintenance control officer billet to be changed back to a captain position.

12. U.S. Army, *Field Manual 3-0: Operations*, Appendix C, Para. C-20 (30 April 2010).

13. Secretary of Defense Gates, Washington, DC, 10 October 2007, <<http://www.defense.gov/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1181>> (12 August 2010).

**AMERICA'S ARMY:  
THE STRENGTH OF THE NATION**

**CAC "Intellectual Center of the Army"**

**Army Operational  
Knowledge Management -  
AOKM Qualification Course**

**18 July – 5 August 2011**

***KM Fundamentals, KM Processes, Enterprise Content Management,  
Collaborative Teaming, Knowledge Mapping, KM Tools/BC Systems  
Integration/COP Management, Staff Integration, Digital Gunnery***

**Public Page: <http://usacac.army.mil/cac2/AOKM/>  
LTC Andy Mortensen, Chief, AOKM Proponent, (913)684-6793**

# Preparing Soldiers to Help Foreign Partners Meet 21st Century Challenges

**Brigadier General Edward P. Donnelly, U.S. Army,  
and Lieutenant Colonel Robert Maginnis, U.S. Army, Retired**



Brigadier General Edward P. Donnelly, U.S. Army, recently completed two years as the Army's deputy director for strategy with responsibility for, *inter alia*, the International Affairs and Security Cooperation portfolios. He has served in the continental United States, Germany, and seven operational and combat tours. He holds several advanced and professional degrees, including a J.D. from Suffolk University.

Lieutenant Colonel Robert Maginnis, U.S. Army, Retired, served for 24 years on active duty with the U.S. Army and now serves as a senior strategist with the Army G3/5/7 (International Affairs). He is a national security columnist with *Human Events* and an on-air analyst for a variety of radio and television media outlets and non-profit organizations.

---

PHOTO: Bert Braun, a Department of State civilian team leader with the Kunar Provincial Reconstruction Team, and U.S. Navy CDR Mark Edwards, the team's commander, speak with an Afghan worker at the Bahrabat school in Kunar Province, Afghanistan, 13 September 2010. (U.S. Air Force, SSG Ashley Moreno)

**T**HE FIRST HALF of the 21st century will not be like the last half of the 20th. Then, we faced a peer competitor who would provide unambiguous notice of hostile intentions against which we could deploy massive amounts of conventional forces alongside similarly trained and equipped forces of allied nations. Today and tomorrow, we face a more uncertain threat, posed by a much wider range of actors who, before they attack us directly, must expand their power and influence over populations whose governments ignore legitimate needs and aspirations and whose security forces fail to protect them from the depredations of radical groups espousing extremist ideologies.

Security cooperation, an umbrella term for Department of Defense (DOD) programs designed to build capacity in and relationships with foreign nations, was developed in the 20th century but was little used by a military largely focused on a major land conflict. However, it is exactly the right kind of tool for developing partner capacity and long-term relationships in the 21st century.

We had little knowledge or practice of counterinsurgency when we began Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom, and in the past the Army had little knowledge and paid scant attention as a service to security cooperation. Other than in special programs for foreign area officers and those bound for specific security cooperation missions in Iraq and Afghanistan, we dedicated little effort to this important task in our professional military education system. Moreover, Army security cooperation remains stove-piped as policy rather than integrated as doctrine. This may explain why the techniques of planning and executing security force assistance missions are not in the core curriculums of our educational institutions. We must reverse this trend by integrating security cooperation into our training, doctrine, and education, or we risk repeating the mistakes that left us unprepared for the current strategic environment.

## Adjustment to a Changing World

Several global trends are shaping the international security environment: globalization, readily available technology, population growth, urbanization, increasing demand for resources, climate change, and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. This conflux of trends is pressuring governments to satisfy their citizens' legitimate aspirations for justice, prosperity, and economic opportunities. Governments unable to meet these expectations face friction from actors espousing extremist ideologies and risk losing their ability to govern. Ineffective governance creates conditions that extremist groups exploit to spread their radical ideologies. Ultimately, these circumstances suggest persistent conflict through the first half of the 21st century. The protracted confrontations of states, nonstate actors, and individuals willing to use violence to achieve political and ideological ends will define the strategic environment.

U.S. forces will likely have four predominant tasks:

- Prevail in protracted counterinsurgency campaigns.
- Engage other nations to build capacity and assure friends and allies.
- Support civil authorities at home and abroad.
- Deter and, if necessary, defeat enemies in future conflicts.

While the second task, engagement, has long been a component of U.S. national strategy, only episodically has the nation relied upon its military forces to take a significant role. Our limited engagement to build other nations' capacity is partially the result of the past threat posed by peers, the moderate level of international stability ensured by competing superpowers, and the low level of threat posed by extremist groups. Today, the U.S. military must accept this engagement role as part of a balanced strategy to ensure continued security. If the threat is persistent, so must be the response.

## Security Cooperation

Security cooperation—DOD interactions with foreign defense establishments to build their capacity and capability, facilitate access, and build relationships—complemented by similar activities by other federal agencies, provides the framework for persistent engagement, the first line of defense against persistent conflict.<sup>1</sup>

Security cooperation builds the capacity of foreign nation defense forces and institutions to enable them to—

- Secure their territory and govern their populations.
- Export security capacity-building efforts to assist other nations.



DOD, Chief MSgt. Richard Simonson

U.S. Army SPC Christopher Gearhart, left, assigned to the Nuristan Provincial Reconstruction Team security force, leads members the Department of State and U.S. military to the agriculture center in Nangaresh, Afghanistan, 18 November 2010.

- Interoperate with us across the spectrum of conflict.

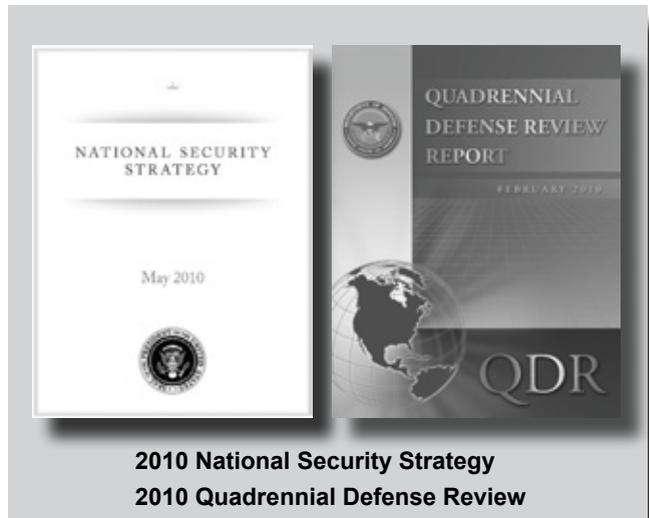
These efforts also help establish the long-standing relationships that assure access, cooperation, support, and assistance.

DOD security cooperation efforts, as described within the 2010 *Guidance for Employment of the Force*, reinforce other federal agency efforts generally conducted or coordinated by the Department of State to improve another nation's governing, economic, and informational capabilities.<sup>2</sup> The military is the primary instrument for building the capacity of other nations' military forces and institutions, and it supports other agencies in building partner nations' nonmilitary security forces and institutions through security force assistance.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, the military has supplementary roles helping other U.S. government agencies build the governance capacity of partner nations. Security cooperation, which includes security force assistance, can gain the cooperation of those partner nations across the spectrum of conflict.

## How Will the Army Conduct Security Cooperation?

High-level strategic documents such as the 2010 *National Security Strategy* and DOD's 2010 *Quadrennial Defense Review* guide U.S. security cooperation efforts. At all levels, security cooperation is a major task for the Army. General George Casey anticipated its growing importance when he wrote that engaging with partner nations to build their capacity will "help in preventing future conflicts by increasing the capacity of other nations' security forces."<sup>4</sup> That view led to the inclusion of his guidance in the 2010 *Army Security Cooperation Strategy*, which frames security cooperation authorities, resources, processes, sustainment mechanisms, programs, and initiatives in terms of ends, ways, and means in order to guide Army support priorities.<sup>5</sup> This new structure is intended to bring order to this evolving and critical mission set.

It is clear from the *Army Security Cooperation Strategy* that security cooperation is a whole-of-Army effort. The Department of the Army (DA) is building a campaign support plan that will guide the generating force in support of Army component command security cooperation engagements and prioritize and establish processes for distributing engagement resources.



Army component commands will translate geographical combatant command end states and objectives into requirements that DA can help satisfy. Those plans will link security cooperation shaping activities such as security force assistance with the geographical combatant command end states. Then the Army component's security cooperation division will manage the execution of those activities by working with Army operating and generating forces.

Army operating forces are requested and tasked through the global force management process which will eventually align brigade combat teams with Army component commands during their train-ready phase of the Army Force Generation (ARFORGEN) process.<sup>6</sup> The brigade combat teams will conduct security cooperation activities in support of end states or objectives, such as security force assistance to partner military forces for peacekeeping operations.<sup>7</sup>

## Building Security Cooperation Competency

The *Army Security Cooperation Strategy* pumps new life into the Army's whole-of-force security cooperation efforts. This emphasis on security cooperation prompted a comprehensive review of Army doctrine, training, and education, leading to programs that best prepare our soldiers for 21st century security cooperation. The increased importance and larger scale of security cooperation missions requires the Army to place greater emphasis on developing the skills and knowledge sets needed to plan and conduct such tasks.

The skills required are significant. Operators must know how to manage the security cooperation life cycle—that is, to assess the environment, understand the objectives, develop a plan, execute it, and evaluate its success. Writing a theater campaign plan and an Army campaign support plan takes considerable knowledge and proficiency in contracting, negotiating, and reporting requirements, as well as language skills and expertise in building relationships with foreign partners.

These critical skill sets need to be inventoried for each Army security cooperation position. Then the Army needs to wrestle with two questions. First, what security cooperation skills and knowledge are taught and where? Secondly, what should be taught and by whom? Furthermore, the Department of Defense recognizes that security cooperation is a Joint mission, so there will likely be Joint or department-level solutions to these questions, as well. The services and the Office of the Secretary of Defense have begun the work to ensure that these educational gaps are addressed without creating four service programs when one Joint program might do the job.

In 2004, then-Army chief of staff General Peter Schoomaker testified, “We train for certainty, and we educate for uncertainty.”<sup>8</sup> Simply put, education imparts knowledge, while training involves the acquisition of skills. The Army does too little of both when it comes to security cooperation.

## **Security Cooperation Training and Education**

General Casey said, “Army training and education programs must be dynamic and adaptive, instilling full spectrum capabilities in the operating force while keeping pace with constantly evolving doctrine and operational requirements.”<sup>9</sup> That is especially true for the early 21st century, which portends the conduct of security cooperation missions of a frequency, duration, and scope significantly greater than what was required in the latter half of the 20th century.

The Army’s lone current formal security cooperation training is exclusively for those deploying to Iraq or Afghanistan to become advisors for security force assistance engagements. Last year, the Army created the 162nd Infantry Training Brigade at Fort Polk, Louisiana, to conduct tactical-level advisor training of Joint, multi-functional, foreign-area transition teams. The unit is “adaptive as fights change,” according to the command.<sup>10</sup> Flexibility is critical because, as the Army receives new security force assistance missions, the 162nd will expand its training expertise to provide training that is globally relevant.

Army personnel designated to become security cooperation officers (formerly security assistance officers) or to fill security cooperation billets are normally given the opportunity to attend the Defense Security Cooperation Agency’s two- or three-week “overseas course.”<sup>11</sup> The Defense Institute of Security Assistance Management focuses the course on security assistance policies since most security cooperation funds are executed using security assistance management procedures. Security cooperation already has the endorsement of senior military leaders, and Congress may include emerging missions like security cooperation in professional military education.

Twenty years ago, the House Armed Services Committee reviewed professional military education and concluded that, although many of its individual courses, programs, and faculties are excellent, the system must be improved to meet the needs of the modern professional at arms.<sup>12</sup> The U.S. House of Representatives Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations updated that 1989 report last year. The subcommittee’s April 2010 report struck the same tone as the 1989 report: professional military education “must continuously evolve in order to imbue service members with the intellectual agility to assume expanded roles and to perform new missions in an ever dynamic and increasingly complicated security environment.”<sup>13</sup>

***...education imparts knowledge, while training involves the acquisition of skills. The Army does too little of both when it comes to security cooperation.***



U.S. Air Force, TSgt. Laura K. Smith

**A member of the International Security Assistance Force provides security at a local boys' school during a volunteer community relations visit in Kabul, Afghanistan, 18 September 2008.**

There is no doubt security cooperation is one of those “expanded roles” that warrants significant attention in military education. The most recent capstone concept for Joint operations supports this view. It states, “The future is unlikely to unfold as steady state peace punctuated by distinct surges of intense conflict. Rather, the major initiatives of U.S. foreign policy—major war, strategic deterrence, foreign humanitarian assistance, security cooperation, and so on—are all likely to unfold against a global backdrop of chronic conflict.”<sup>14</sup>

The growing significance of security cooperation is also evident in the Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman’s special areas of emphasis for Joint professional military education. Two of the chairman’s nine areas for academic year 2010-2011 were building partnership capacity and security force assistance—both elements of security cooperation.<sup>15</sup> One of the areas for academic year 2009-2010 was, “Building Partnership Capacity is a preventive strategy to build the capacity of foreign partners to counter terrorism and promote regional stability.”<sup>16</sup>

Some special areas of emphasis make their way into the *Officer Professional Military Education Policy* (CJCSI 1800.01D) as a Joint requirement.<sup>17</sup> The presence of security cooperation-related topics in the special areas of emphasis two years running and the importance given the issue by the 2010 *National Security Strategy*, the 2010 *Quadrennial Defense Review*, and Secretary of Defense Robert Gates’ writings suggest the issue is gaining importance and might become a future Joint requirement.<sup>18</sup>

We should update the Army’s professional military education system to educate soldiers on security cooperation at appropriate levels, and include some knowledge about security cooperation at every level for both officers and noncommissioned officers. Junior officers and sergeants must make security cooperation work at the unit-engagement level while senior personnel do the planning and resourcing.

Army professional military education does include some security cooperation material. The

Army War College's core curriculum for academic year 2009-2010 included a 3.5 hour lesson, "Theater Strategy and Campaigning," an introduction to theater strategy and theater security cooperation. The lesson focuses on how a combatant commander translates national strategic direction through a theater strategy into a theater security cooperation plan. The core curriculum and the Joint Warfighting Advanced Studies Program include readings, discussions, and exercises that involve theater security cooperation. The college also offers two security cooperation-related electives: "Strategy and Military Operations in Failed States" and "The Role of Security Sector Reform: A Whole-of-Government Approach."<sup>19</sup>

The Army's Command and General Staff College has a one-hour core lesson that considers four topics, one of which is security cooperation's role in U.S. strategy. The college also offers both a classified and an unclassified security cooperation-related elective course. Both elective courses consider interagency, congressional, coalition, and host nation influences on security cooperation and require the student to present an assessment of a security cooperation topic or country engagement program.<sup>20</sup>

## Much Remains to be Done

Everyone has a stake in properly addressing the issue of security cooperation, which includes integrating security cooperation throughout Army doctrine, providing more training opportunities for soldiers destined for security cooperation-related positions, and including more material in Army educational core and elective curricula.

The Army should integrate security cooperation throughout its doctrine, especially for operations at the mid- to low-end of the spectrum. Army Regulation 11-31, *Army International Security Cooperation Policy*, governs security cooperation, but the Army is just beginning to develop security cooperation doctrine for the large swath of the force that has already participated in security cooperation engagements.<sup>21</sup> The Army should also reinforce this doctrine via shaping exercises at the combat training centers.<sup>22</sup> These exercises should task critical security cooperation skills that support combatant command end states for operations and contingencies.

The Army should create an elective series with an additional skill identifier to educate leaders on security cooperation principles and programs and teach them how to execute them. Soldiers and DA civilians assigned to security cooperation divisions at each Army component, geographical combatant command security cooperation planners and country team personnel, and staff members of brigades and battalions engaged in security cooperation missions need this specialized training.

Finally, the Army should be aggressive about including security cooperation courses across all military educational institutions, beginning with blocks of instruction that help captains and senior noncommissioned officers understand more than theory. These soldiers need to understand how to use an interpreter and the tactical steps supporting the big security cooperation picture—that is, how to engage with partner nations to build the capacity of their security forces. This will lay the foundation for and stimulate an interest in language and cultural awareness training. Most importantly, company grade officers and noncommissioned officers need to know how to train partners, which is the skill they will apply in unit-level security cooperation engagements. Company grade officers (who will populate the commands and staffs that execute the plans and conduct security force assistance missions) require grounding in the fundamentals of security cooperation as well as instruction in security force assistance execution.

Junior field grade officers (who will populate the staffs of Army service components writing theater campaign plans and the staffs of DA, Army commands, and direct reporting units that provide much of the resources to execute them) must learn how to plan and conduct security force assistance missions, develop campaign plans for establishing and maintaining security and stability, and understand the theater strategies that guide those campaign plans.

**...the Army should be aggressive about including security cooperation courses across all military educational institutions...**

The U.S. Army Command and General Staff College ought to make security cooperation a much larger part of its core curriculum. Security force assistance mission planning and execution, as a key element of stability operations, is as important as counterinsurgency and major combat operations. Students must understand the interagency processes, the capabilities involved, and how security cooperation supports U.S. foreign policy. Students should draft a theater security cooperation strategy and plans that support combatant command end states and objectives.

The Command and General Staff College should also offer electives that address a security cooperation program that builds capacity and maintains relationships within a specific country or region. Another elective should address how to link stability requirements with resources to leverage existing capacity-building programs, including those of other federal and international organizations.

Senior field grades (who populate the staffs of the combatant commands, the Joint staff, and the Office of the Secretary of Defense that develop these strategies, and of the institutional Army that develop the capabilities and acquire the resources to execute them) must learn how to develop those strategies at theater and national levels. Thus, the Army War College should devote significantly more time to security cooperation. It ought to include security cooperation steady state/shaping activities in a contingency planning exercise that begins with a combatant command's strategy.<sup>23</sup> It should

offer security cooperation-related electives such as building a relationship with foreign partners, designing campaign support plans, learning the technical aspects of foreign military sales, understanding equipment transfers and defense cooperation, executing security force assistance, and conducting brigade combat team assessments of security cooperation engagements with an interagency component.

## 21st Century Security Cooperation

The first half of the 21st century will feature a strategic environment completely unlike that of the last half of the 20th. Employing security cooperation to build partner capacity plays as great a role in the era of persistent conflict as deterrence did against hostile state actors during the Cold War. Our professional military education system is every bit as important in educating our leaders in security cooperation skills to prevent conflict as it was in educating leaders on fire and maneuver skills so vital against a different foe.

To defend against the extremist groups that seek to ignite persistent conflict into perpetual war, the capacity of other nations' security forces, their directing institutions, and their governing institutions are the first line of defense. Leaders trained and educated on the principles of planning and executing security cooperation, security force assistance, and building partner capacity are essential in order for freedom-loving nations to stand together and ensure a stable and secure world. **MR**

---

### NOTES

1. U.S. Department of Defense (DOD), *2010 Guidance for Employment of the Force* (draft 30 April 2010) (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office [GPO], TBP), 166. Security cooperation is defined as "All DOD interactions with foreign defense establishments to build defense relationships that promote specific U.S. security interests, develop allied and partner military capabilities for self-defense and multinational operations, and provide US forces with peacetime and contingency access to a host nation."

2. *Ibid.* The *Guidance for the Employment of the Force* consolidates and integrates DOD planning guidance related to operations and other military activities into a single, overarching document.

3. U.S. Army Field Manual (FM) 3-07, *Stability Operations*, (Washington, DC: GPO, 2008), <[http://downloads.army.mil/docs/fm\\_3-07.pdf](http://downloads.army.mil/docs/fm_3-07.pdf)>, G-2. Security force assistance is defined as "The unified action to generate, employ, and sustain local, host-nation, or regional security forces in support of legitimate authority."

4. George W. Casey, Jr., "The Army of the 21st Century," *Army*, October 2009, 30.

5. DOD, *Army Security Cooperation Strategy* (draft 6 May 2010) (Washington, DC: GPO, TBP).

6. DOD, *2008 Army Posture Statement*, available at: <[http://www.army.mil/aps/08/addenda/addenda\\_e.html](http://www.army.mil/aps/08/addenda/addenda_e.html)> (29 June 2010). "The ARFORGEN process is used to manage the force and ensure the ability to support demands for Army forces. ARFORGEN sequences activities for all active and reserve Army units to include: Reset, Modular conversion, Modernization, Manning adjustments, Soldier and leader training and education programs, Unit training, Employment, and Stationing decisions."

7. *Guidance for Employment of the Force*, 2010, 25-27. There are 10 security

cooperation focus areas in this document: (1) operational capacity and capability building, (2) human capacity/human capital development, (3) institutional capacity/security sector reform, (4) support to institutional capacity/civil-sector capacity building, (5) combined operations capacity, interoperability, and standardization, (6) operational access and global freedom of action (U.S. defense posture), (7) intelligence and information sharing, (8) assurance and regional confidence building, (9) international armaments cooperation, and (10) international suasion and collaboration.

8. Peter Schoemaker, statement to the House Committee on Armed Services, *Army Transformation: Implications for the Future Part II*, Hearing, 21 July 2004, available at: <[http://commdocs.house.gov/committees/security/has203000.000/has203000\\_of.htm](http://commdocs.house.gov/committees/security/has203000.000/has203000_of.htm)> (8 June 2010).

9. Casey, 36.

10. DOD, *Modular Brigade Augmented for Security Force Assistance Training*, briefing by 162nd Infantry Brigade, Fort Polk, LA, 2009.

11. DOD Instruction 5132.13, *Staffing of Security Cooperation Organizations (SCOs) and the Selection and Training of Security Cooperation Personnel* (Washington, DC: GPO, 2009), <<http://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/corres/pdf/513213p.pdf>>.

12. House Committee on Armed Services, Subcommittee on Oversight & Investigations, *Another Crossroads? Professional Military Education Two Decades After the Goldwater-Nichols Act and the Skelton Panel*, report prepared by Lorry M. Fenner et al., 11th Cong., 2010, Committee Print 111-4, vii.

13. *Ibid.*

14. *Ibid.*, 3.

15. DOD, The Joint Staff, *Memorandum, Minutes of the 4 February 2010 Military Education Coordination Council (MECC)*, signed by Lloyd J. Austin, III (Washington, DC: GPO, 2010).

16. DOD, The Joint Staff, *Memorandum, 2009 Joint Professional Military Education (JPME) Special Areas of Emphasis (SAEs)*, signed by James E. Cartwright (Washington, DC: GPO, 2009).

17. DOD, The Joint Staff, *Officer Professional Military Education Policy (OPMEP) CJCSI 1800.01D* (Washington, DC: 2009), <[http://www.dtic.mil/cjcs\\_directives/cdata/unlimit/1800\\_01.pdf](http://www.dtic.mil/cjcs_directives/cdata/unlimit/1800_01.pdf)>.

18. Robert M. Gates, "Helping Others Defend Themselves," *Foreign Affairs* (May/June 2010): 6. Secretary Gates writes "Helping other countries better provide for their own security will be a key and enduring test of U.S. global leadership and a critical part of protecting U.S. security, as well. Improving the way the U.S. government executes this vital mission must be an important national priority."

19. Ben Leitzel, "Lesson TSC-06 Theater Strategy and Campaigning" (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, 2008).

20. U.S. Army Combined Arms Center, "Lesson C203 Strategic Environment" (Fort Leavenworth, KS, undated).

21. The Army has security sector reform doctrine in FM 3-07, chap. 6, and security force assistance doctrine in FM 3-07.1. See endnote 3 for link to FM 3-07. For FM 3-07.1, *Security Force Assistance* (Washington: GPO, 2009), go to <<http://usacac.army.mil/cac2/Repository/FM3071.pdf>>.

22. Department of the Army, *Combat Training Center Program*, Army Regulation 350-50 (Washington, DC: GPO, 2003), <[http://usacac.army.mil/cac2/cac-t/documents/r350\\_50.pdf](http://usacac.army.mil/cac2/cac-t/documents/r350_50.pdf)>.

23. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 3-0, *Joint Operations* (as amended through 22 March 2010) (Washington, DC: GPO, 2006), <[http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/new\\_pubs/jp3\\_0.pdf](http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/new_pubs/jp3_0.pdf)>, IV-27.



## COMBAT STUDIES INSTITUTE FORT LEAVENWORTH, KANSAS



### Conference Announcement

#### The American Profession of Arms in Times of Sustained Conflict: Historical Perspectives

**27-29 September 2011**

The Combat Studies Institute (CSI), Combined Arms Center at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, will host a symposium entitled "The American Profession of Arms in Times of Sustained Conflict: Historical Perspectives." The symposium will include a variety of guest speakers, panel sessions, and general discussions.

This symposium will explore U.S. Army efforts to develop and sustain its level of professionalism through periods of long conflicts within a historical context. Separate services and international topics may also be considered. In the process the symposium will also examine current issues, dilemmas, problems, trends, and practices.

The symposium will be held in DePuy Auditorium at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

### WHAT WE DO:

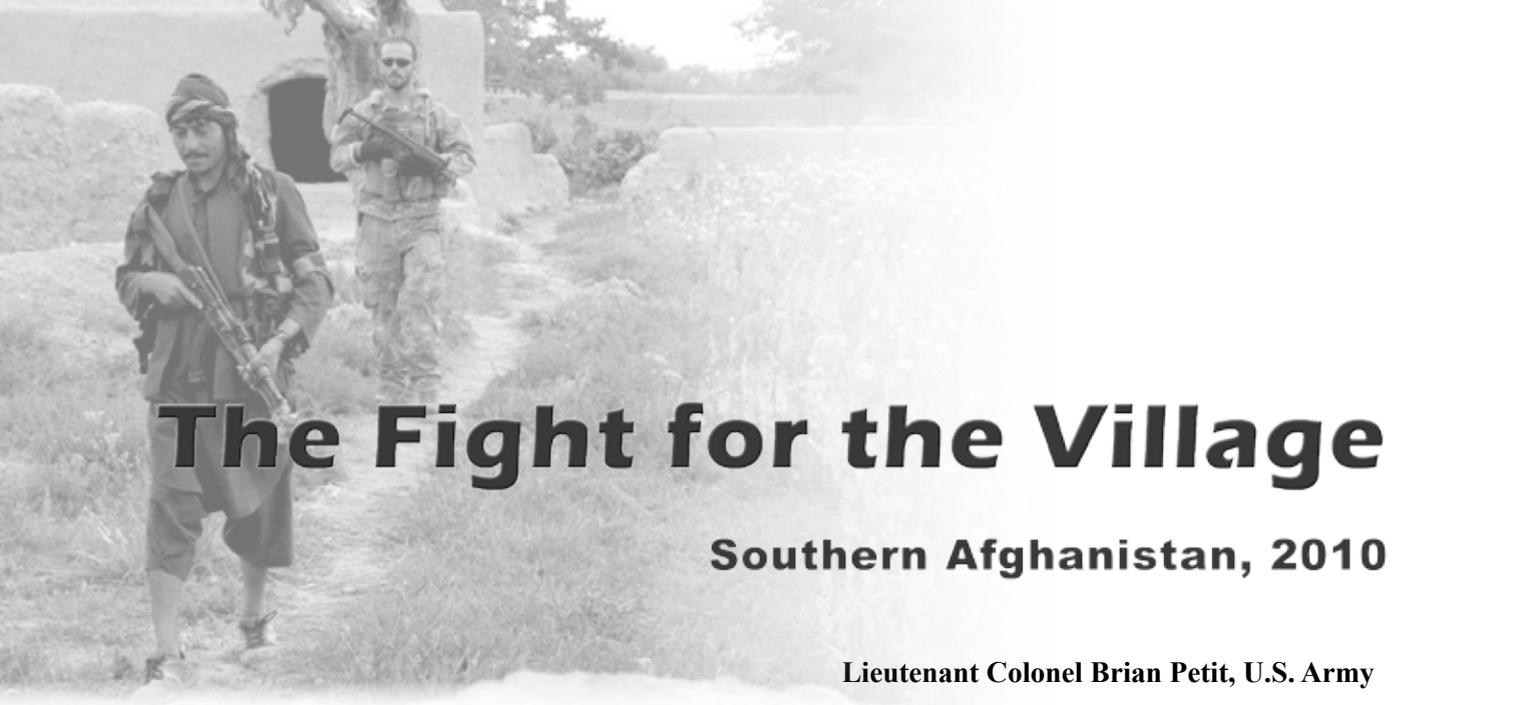
- Publish books and monographs covering current doctrinal issues from a historical perspective.
- Assist, plan, and conduct staff rides around the world for U.S. Army units and agencies.
- Develop, maintain, and coordinate an integrated progressive program of military history instruction in the United States Army Training and Doctrine Command service school system.
- Conduct the annual CSI Military History Symposium.

For more information about CSI publications or assistance to your organization contact the following:

CSI Publications and the Symposium:  
Dr. Donald P. Wright or Mr. Kendall D. Gott  
[donald.p.wright@us.army.mil](mailto:donald.p.wright@us.army.mil) / [ken.gott@us.army.mil](mailto:ken.gott@us.army.mil)

Staff Rides:  
Dr. Curtis King  
[curtis.king1@us.army.mil](mailto:curtis.king1@us.army.mil)

Military History Instructional Support  
LTC Clay Mountcastle  
[johnc.mountcastle@us.army.mil](mailto:johnc.mountcastle@us.army.mil)



# The Fight for the Village

Southern Afghanistan, 2010

Lieutenant Colonel Brian Petit, U.S. Army

*This article is dedicated to Master Sergeant Mark Coleman, U.S. Army Special Forces, killed in action in an Afghan village on 2 May 2010.*

Lieutenant Colonel Brian Petit is the director of the U.S. Army Irregular Warfare Fusion Cell at Fort Leavenworth, KS. He commanded Special Operations Task Force South (2nd Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group) in southern Afghanistan in 2010.

He thanks Captain Rob Snyder, Captain Greg Adams, and Captain Chris Countouriotis from 2nd Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne), for their contributions to this article.

PHOTO: An Afghan Local Police member patrols near his village accompanied by a U.S. Special Forces soldier, Kandahar Province, 2010. (Photo courtesy of author)

**A**FTER NINE YEARS of war in Afghanistan, a predominant societal structure—the Afghan village—continues to challenge counterinsurgency strategists and practitioners who seek to gain and maintain influence among Afghanistan’s rural population. The Afghan village is difficult to understand, complicated to engage, and a challenge to meaningfully influence. In the past year, the military’s most studied and experienced U.S. special operations forces and Afghan partners achieved considerable—though reversible—successes in the complex human and physical environments of select villages.<sup>1</sup> This essay offers observations from Combined Forces Special Operations Component Command—Afghanistan (CFSOCC-A) village stability operations conducted in southern Afghanistan in 2010.<sup>2</sup> Five detailed observations were consistent among ten separate teams living in southern Afghan villages.<sup>3</sup> They illuminate the role of the village in protecting the Afghan population.

Afghanistan’s rural villages contain the very population that both the insurgents and counterinsurgents seek to influence, inspire, or intimidate. A rural-based insurgency is underway in Afghanistan.<sup>4</sup> Approximately 70 percent of Afghanistan’s population of 32 million resides in rural areas or villages, well outside of urban population centers.<sup>5</sup> In southern Afghanistan, most live in agrarian village clusters sustained by seasonal crops fed by flood irrigation. Even major southern Afghanistan cities like Qalat and Tarin Kowt are more village-like than urban, retaining their rural features even in densely populated areas. The future of Afghanistan may not be won in the villages, but history teaches us that it will not be won without them.

Villages range from a dozen inhabitants to over 1,000. Most are sustained by subsistence farming and lack basic services such as electricity, sewage, purified water, or formal education. Authority resides in the traditional social networks: tribes, clans, kinships, and family. Tribal affiliation and family relationships shape belief systems and motivate behaviors. Villages

are patriarchal. Family life is structured around the *qalat* (citadel)—a mud-walled compound that serves both to contain (women, possessions, goats) and to repel (intruders and the public). Afghan village life is simple and Hobbesian—nasty, brutish, and short. The life expectancy for both men and women is 44.<sup>6</sup>

Abdul Salam Zaeef, the author of *My Life with The Taliban*, starts his 2010 book with this telling sentence: “I was born in the small village of Zangiabad in 1968.”<sup>7</sup> Zaeef defines himself by his village first, his family next, and then his lifelong affiliation with the Taliban. Loosely confederated villages such as Zaeef’s hometown of Zangiabad (a highly contested village) west of Kandahar City are the typical rural village groupings that constitute districts. Many districts form a province. There are 34 provinces in Afghanistan.

Influencing Afghanistan’s village populations remains a key component of the Taliban’s strategy to prolong the conflict, drain international resources, test the will of the United States, and deny access to the rural population, which usually rejects the Taliban ideology. To implement this strategy, the Taliban co-opt and coerce villagers outside the reach of Afghan government protection

capabilities. The Taliban and associated criminal enterprises burrow into village clusters, becoming difficult to identify and even more problematic to decisively defeat. Villages are “insurgent camouflage.” They are remote, culturally indistinguishable to outsiders, self-sustaining, and they provide nearly endless littoral nesting grounds for insurgents to roost in and operate from. The antibody to Taliban encroachment—the villager—is at great risk if he resists. *The essence of village stability operations is supporting village leaders and village inhabitants who have the will to resist Taliban hegemony.*

In Pashtun-dominated southern Afghanistan, the majority of villages and their attendant districts remain outside the influence of the government’s civil and security services. Geographic challenges alone complicate the process of positively influencing village life. Yet, villagers remain the “swing voters” whose allegiances we and the Taliban seek. Convincing the villagers to resist Taliban encroachment actively and passively is critical to stabilizing Afghanistan.

## Village Stability

Village stability operations are executed by small, combined teams built around a Special Forces



Photo courtesy of author

Afghan and U.S. local defense teams rely on motorcycles for mobility, survivability, and easy access to the population, Arghandab District, Kandahar Province, 2010.

Operational Detachment-Alpha.<sup>8</sup> Village stability operations employ a bottom-up methodology that strengthens and stimulates village social structures to provide security, enable development, and nurture local governance. Village stability operations reinforce village elders, tribal elders, and mullahs who are anti-Taliban and *principally* pro-government. The goal is to improve stability inside lasting social structures and create zones that are inhospitable to insurgent overtures or intimidation. We reach a strategic decisive point when we link up these villages to their districts and provinces and establish meaningful connections to the national government.

## Field Observations and Challenges

The observations that follow come from U.S. Army Special Forces team members who lived—fully embedded—in multiple southern villages from January to August 2010. I will briefly summarize each observation and follow with an expanded discussion.

- Respect and authority are the precursors to achieving influence. Meaningful and lasting progress in Afghan villages can only come from a position of real or perceived power informed by cultural understanding, tactical competence, and financial development.
- Afghanistan's culture of resistance is pervasive. Pashtun concepts of shame and honor are often the impetus to fight. Channeling these impulses to work against the insurgency is achievable and effective.
- Keeping the insurgent “mentality” away from the population is often easier to do than keeping out the insurgents.
- We should place community kinships above tribal kinships. Community kinships are less divisive in binding villages to their districts and their local leaders. Ideally, tribal engagement is a means to progress into community engagement.
- The desire to advance oneself as an individual or within one's tribe often thwarts collective

progress. Corrupt or unproductive individual or tribal aspirations can hinder efforts to develop communal benefits.

## Respect and Authority

Gaining and maintaining universal respect and authority among the population enables security, development, and governance in the villages. In rural Afghanistan, demonstrating sufficient cultural understanding while exhibiting the ability to act powerfully earns respect. Personal relationships are paramount, but they must grow from a position of strength. Personal interactions must stimulate a villager's belief that this alliance will prove beneficial to him, his family, his clan, or his tribe. Achieving *willful dominance* and *cultural understanding* in a persistently productive, calibrated manner is perhaps the most challenging tactical feat at the village level.

To undermine Taliban influence in the villages, we must supplant their dominance and break their monopoly on authority. Villages and villagers principally aim to survive and prosper. To do so, they will visibly align or subjugate themselves to the dominant, lasting presence. Vulnerable villagers want to improve their survivability and will adjust their moral, political, or ideological preferences to side with the perceived dominant party. In village stability operations, the trifecta of authority, tactical competence, and economic benefits promotes sustainable progress.

In the Taliban-saturated Zerekoh Valley in Shin-dand Province, U.S. Special Forces teams achieved a “breakthrough” with a series of actions that demonstrated willful authority, tactical competence, and economic benefits.

First, the teams made strong first impressions on the villagers in initial village shuras. The small things counted—attentive listening; recognition of elders, *khans* (landowners), and *maliks* (local chieftans); knowledge of local issues; simple expressions of experience and wisdom in life and in combat; and measured offers of assistance. Beards and

***To undermine Taliban influence in the villages, we must supplant their dominance and break their monopoly on authority.***



**A district Afghan police officer communicates with local elders during an Afghan-run medical seminar designed for rural constituents, Zabol Province.**

clothing were a small, but not insignificant, contributing factor. Initially, beards produced immediate visual stimuli suggesting maturity, wisdom, male-aggression, and familiarity: important first impression signals. Ultimately, a soldier armed with basic local language phrases and interpersonal skills can accelerate the critical cultural and human connections.<sup>9</sup> A soldier must make a strong enough initial impression to convince a villager to override the obvious hazards of cooperating with coalition forces, Afghan forces, or both. Villagers want to be winners, but we must incentivize their willingness to expose themselves and invite violence into their lives.

On 8 May 2010, after we had established basic village defenses in Zerekoh Valley over a period of weeks, the Taliban directly attacked the locals and Special Forces teams. Our response—with its speed, violence of action, and effective but discretionary use of indirect fires—was a defining moment for the village. Tactical firefights rarely produce lasting victories, but they can demonstrate the competent use of lethal force. The Special Forces teams viewed the tactical firefight of 8 May 2010 as a decisive moment in coalescing the support of the villagers.

The people must believe it is in their interest to resist Taliban threats. They will only do this if they believe that a more dominant *and lasting* authority will prevail. The initial move to achieve this belief was to demonstrate power, lethality, or coercion that supplanted the insurgents as the strongest influence in the area. When the villagers perceived such strength, *maliks* (village elders) became responsive to measures like construction projects, representative shuras, and conflict resolution mechanisms. In the Zerekoh Valley, *destruction* was the catalyst for *construction*.

Establishing a position of influence is achievable in any village. The challenge is to maintain influence over wide areas, offer physical protection for villages and their inhabitants, and transfer that influence to a reasonably capable local malik, Afghan Security Force commander, or local defense chief. No matter the immediate

benefits from Afghan government security, villagers will remain “fence sitters” if we do not counter the Taliban presence readily, visibly, and consistently. This is the most challenging tactical feat in rural Afghanistan. Long-term success in the village means establishing an effective, persistent, and reliable local (preferably governmental) presence that convinces villagers to actively resist the Taliban.

## Culture of Resistance

Afghanistan has a well-documented culture of violence and armed resistance against outside influences. Xenophobic attitudes are prevalent, and they lend unpredictability to even the most benign engagements. Given this premise, how does the culture of resistance contribute to a successful counterinsurgency campaign?

For many years in the Zerekoh Valley, Taliban fighters were *mujahedeen*. They adopted the name of the well-respected freedom fighters of the 1980s that repelled the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. In the Zerekoh Valley in spring 2010, the villagers resisted the Taliban, which led to an increase in Taliban attacks and population control measures. The escalation of violence caused open resentment

of the Taliban. The villagers bravely took up arms and soon it was their turn to assume the honorific of *mujahedeen*. The villagers came to regard the Taliban—and not U.S. troops—as the outsiders.

Once a village defense force establishes itself as a real competitor of the Taliban, security will increase. The challenge in empowering local village defenders is maintaining the force as a viable defense-oriented mechanism that protects the population. Village defense groups must focus on limited village defense yet have the training and equipment to win tactical engagements with well-armed insurgents.

When the Pashtun “culture of resistance” mobilizes against the Pashtun Taliban, the conditions are present to support local defense groups led by Afghans. Development, representative shuras, and other progressive measures can take root and grow. Conversely, if the Pashtun “culture of resistance” regards the coalition or the Afghan government as the enemy, the insurgents, “accidental guerrillas,” and locals alike will thwart any attempts at progress.<sup>10</sup>

## Separating the Insurgent “Mentality” from the Populace

In many villages, the insurgents *are* the population. Success is less about separation than the cessation of insurgent activities from an individual or kinship group. Inserting the word “mentality” into the often quoted phrase, “separating the insurgents from the people,” was popularized by a Special Forces sergeant working with pacified insurgents in the strategic Arghandab River Valley north of Kandahar City.<sup>11</sup> The sergeant was emphasizing that long-term effects must come from convincing villagers to stop giving passive or active support to anti-government violence. The phrase “insurgent mentality” wisely recognizes that the insurgency is not monolithic, and that many factors motivate anti-coalition sentiment—political aims, tribal infighting, economic rewards, and shame or honor motivations.

Many effective insurgents came from the villages in southern Afghanistan. The insurgent commanders and sub-commanders were members of local tribes. The individual fighters and auxiliary forces were the sons of prominent tribesmen. In these cases, separating the population from the insurgency is

***...keeping the insurgent from pursuing insurgent actions and ideals is attainable.***

impossible. However, keeping the insurgent from pursuing insurgent actions and ideals is attainable.

We need to understand and address intractable rifts between locals, including tribal divisions, blood feuds, and internal power struggles. It is necessary to keep differences under control and focus the animosity of the population against the insurgency and its destructive effects. Adirah village adopted the outlook that violent actions were a scourge on the community. This powerful cultural attitude led to fewer attacks in many villages in the highly volatile Arghandab River Valley.

In Adirah, jump-starting a representative shura helped to reinstall local governance councils that had been attrited over the past 30 years of conflict. The key to generating momentum in these shuras was the skilled introduction of development. A Special Forces team sponsored community elders who executed over 55 small projects in their village cluster (total cost of \$250,000). The locally run projects—culverts, irrigation, retaining walls, foot bridges—produced clear benefits to the community and quickly galvanized the locals against insurgent encroachment. The community planned, organized, and built each project. The Special Forces team utilized Commander’s Emergency Response Program (CERP) monies with a “shura to shovel” turnaround of two days. The rapid use of CERP funds to support local project nominations solidified the credibility of the elders (and the coalition). Critically, projects were nominated and started in hours and days, not weeks or months.<sup>12</sup>

The Adirah CERP projects were community-run and required approval from the district. While the Arghandab district government was not yet responsible for assigning or managing these projects, seeking district approval exercised the “connective tissue” between self-empowered locals and their district officials. The insurgents refrained from targeting the projects village elders supported.

Insurgents still exist in Adirah. However, community and tribal cohesion has served as a powerful deterrent leading to reduced insurgent attacks and increased employment. This dynamic also set the conditions for the “silent reintegration” of insurgents into the community. Soon, insurgent violence abated and discreet elder-to-insurgent dialogues resumed. This stimulated short-term pacification and opened the way for a lasting reintegration of local insurgents.

## Community Kinships over Tribal Kinships

We should value community kinships over tribal kinships. Community kinships emphasize connectivity through vocation, hardships, religion, or community-based commonalities. There may be multiple tribes within a single community or small village. Community kinships are less divisive in binding villages to their districts and their local leaders. Pure tribal engagement is often a requirement, but we should view it as a means to progress into collective community engagement. The most effective engagements involve residence or community-centered *qawms* (social kinships), which are not dogmatically oriented around tribes.

In the violent district of Khas Oruzgan in northeast Oruzgan Province, one U.S. Special Forces team with multiple rotations into the area continued to experience poor results when assembling leaders from more than one tribe. Although it was counter-intuitive, the team assisted the district governor in holding separate, tribally oriented shuras to establish trust, confidence, and consensus on major security, development, and governance issues. Leaders felt safe to express themselves candidly in these forums. The “disaggregating” effect of these separate tribal shuras ultimately enabled a successful assembly of multiple tribes, managed by capable elders who could promote common goals without the specter of perceived tribal advancement.

In Khas Oruzgan, insurgent violence stunted conflict resolution, so the district governor altered the approach to assembling *shuras* or *jirgas* and simply gathered a group of respected elders and citizens to represent their villages. Consequently, in the spring of 2010, insurgent attacks decreased significantly, and new areas became open for commerce.

However, a successful village stability program such as the Khas Oruzgan effort will have limited

effects when the district level governance is not capable or willing to continue the forward progress. When villages seek aid from a dysfunctional, undermanned, or corrupt district center, progress becomes tenuous, and islands of security become vulnerable to anti-government influence.

Tribal engagement is a prerequisite to community engagement. Without meaningful dialogue with tribal influencers, efforts to promote progress will meet with frustration. The embedded U.S. teams viewed tribal engagement as critical, but not a strategy in itself. Even in areas where provincial and district governments are absent, it is crucial to link productive acts of local governance to a broader Afghan government concept.

In practice, the nuances of human relations are remarkably challenging, and it takes time to understand the complexities of tribe and subtribe dynamics. Assessing local ties and establishing personal relationships are critical before taking any power-altering actions. Even the best choices can produce ancillary negative outcomes, alter power balances, and elevate individuals at the expense of institutions. We can mitigate such risks by consistently reinforcing community kinships over tribal kinships.

## Gauging Motivations for Advancement

A critical part of assessing a village’s status is gauging motivation. Among the villages engaged



Photo courtesy of author

**A Special Forces village advisor confers with a village elder on a construction project, Arghandab District, Kandahar Province, 2010.**

in southern Afghanistan, groups supporting village stability initiatives fell into two categories: 1) a dominant tribe or group strong enough to endure insurgent attacks, or 2) a disenfranchised tribe or group seeking to ascend in the power structure by aligning itself with powerful Afghan or coalition partners. A third group was present, although rarely: those committed to combating the Taliban for ideological or personal reasons.

The assessment of motivations is critical to effective engagement. All individuals and groups are attempting to increase their stature, resources, power, and influence. We must gauge their motivations and assess the risks they are taking. How will the population view this? Who will move closer to the Afghan government? Who will potentially move farther away? Are the improvements in security, governance, and development worth committing some of our limited resources?

Historically, alliances forged for security and survival in Afghanistan have usually been pragmatic ones. The Alikozai tribe's calculated capitulation to the Taliban in 1994 is one example of Afghan political survivalism. One must see beyond the obvious "willing" individuals and groups and examine their motives for cooperation. In 2010, Special Forces teams assessed certain villages in critical districts as unsuitable or unfeasible for a variety of reasons: too violent, insufficient leadership, caustic tribal imbalances, or unwilling to support the coalition and Afghan priorities.

Few villages exist that openly support the Afghan government. Identifying groups that are *principally* or *potentially* pro-Afghan government is a solid start, given Afghanistan's pervasive mistrust of centralized government. If locals genuinely desire to resist the Taliban and to organize themselves to improve security and progress, then the opportunity exists to connect them to their district government, and by extension, to the provincial and national governments.

## Transitioning

In July 2010, Afghan President Hamid Karzai approved the Afghan Local Police program as a formalized security initiative under the Afghan Minister of the Interior. By design, the initial Afghan Local Police programs are grown from successful village stability operations. This ensures that the

governance, development, and security conditions are suitable to sustain and manage trusted local police. Currently, Afghan Local Police growth is contingent upon village stability operations to shape—then verify—that the police program can be implemented without excessive risk. This is encouraging progress, although all sides acknowledge that the rewards carry risks. Building credible Afghan Local Police alters economic and social balances, inevitably shifting social status and honor quotients. However, pushing back Taliban encroachment requires taking such risks now, or suffering an irreversible loss of faith from rural populations. By stabilizing villages with small-scale civic improvements and helping the local police program maintain security, the Afghan government and the International Security Assistance Force have staked their success on winning in select rural populations.

Afghan National Security Forces continue to field Afghan Special Forces teams that partner with U.S. Special Forces teams to transition the gains won within the villages to Afghan civil and military leadership. Village stability operations are not exclusively designed for U.S. or Afghan Special Operations Forces. To execute village stability in remote areas requires mature, small teams able to operate independently with inherent force protection capabilities, intelligence personnel, sufficient combat power, austere logistics, civic and medical capabilities, and a variety of mobility options. Equally, we must consistently follow through on our commitment to a village. Any coalition and Afghan force that possesses these capabilities is suitable to help the Afghan government stabilize villages.

## Protecting the Population from the Inside Out

Southern Afghanistan's predominately Pashtun population has existed under multiple governmental regimes in the past 25 years, and few of them have had effective outreach into the rural areas. Villages usually provided their own security and governance within the larger and generationally volatile swings of centralized government. The villages will accept the basic provision of security and justice as the mark of a competent ruling power. Village stability operations aim to satisfy these basic requirements with credible and legitimate Afghans from those very communities.



Photo courtesy of author

**Urban and rural village compounds have high walls that reduce their street-level visibility, Kandahar Province, 2010.**

The five observations above describe the challenges of *how* to protect the population in the villages. The solutions we derived from these observations were imperfect and non-uniform. Only solutions that matched each village’s capability, personality, and communal will were workable and sustainable.

The Afghan government and coalition counterinsurgency strategy emphasizes protecting the population. In remote areas, populations too often protect themselves by collaborating with the Taliban. The “fight for the village” means changing

this predilection by offering viable alternatives that bolster village stability and foster connections to the Afghan government. Village stability works “backwards.” We establish stability in the villages first, then connect village governance to the districts and the provinces. Investing in Afghanistan’s villages is analytically rigorous, socially tiring, and highly dangerous. Yet, the rewards are worth the risk, for in combating Afghanistan’s rural insurgency, we cannot “win” without support from the villages. **MR**

## NOTES

1. For forces under Combined Forces Special Operations Component Command-Afghanistan (CFSOCC-A) and Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force-Afghanistan (CJSOTF-A), Afghan partnerships range from Afghan Kandaks (army battalions) to village defenders currently training and forming Afghan Local Police units. Some Special Forces teams in villages begin with no partnerships, with the aim of assisting village leaders in raising local defense units.

2. Village Stability Operations (VSO) in Afghanistan has also been called community defense initiative (CDI) and local defense initiative (LDI). A similar SOF-sponsored, locals-based program in Wardak Province was named Afghan Public Protection Program (AP3). These programs have a variety of precursors from U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War.

3. The village experiences for this paper were derived from teams living and working in the following provinces: Oruzgan, Helmand, Shindand, Kandahar, and Zabul.

4. Seth Jones, *Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan*, RAND Counterinsurgency Study, Volume 4, 2008. There is a consensus among academicians and analysts that Afghanistan’s insurgency is principally rural-based.

5. Accurate population statistics are difficult to ascertain, and vary widely. Sources include Asia Foundation estimates, <[www.asiafoundation.org](http://www.asiafoundation.org)> and U.S. State Department website, <[www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov)>.

6. See <[www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov)>.

7. Abdul Salam Zaeef, *My Life with the Taliban* (New York, Columbia University Press, 2008), 1.

8. Village stability operations are also performed by U.S. Marine Corps Special Operations and Naval Special Operations units operating under CFSOCC-A and CJSOTF-A, though the preponderance of these operations, and my experiences, were with U.S. Army Special Forces.

9. Several of the U.S. Special Forces teams initiated village stability operations with no Afghan partners. The growth of the Afghan Special Forces is enabling the Afghans to take the lead in the villages, with U.S. Special Operations Forces advising.

10. Reference to David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla* (Oxford University Press, 2009).

11. Separating the insurgent “mentality” from the population was a phrase used by Sergeant First Class B. Bowlin on ODA 1234 in the Arghandab District.

12. Commander’s Emergency Response Program (CERP) remains a highly effective program. The difficulty in using CERP is often meeting the requirements to appoint and train qualified two-soldier teams, securing appropriate cash-on-hand for every team, and using the CIDNE database to nominate projects. To run decentralized village stability operations effectively required over 35 CERP Teams (field ordering officer and paying agent) in one Special Forces battalion. This also required the distribution of cash to each team, ahead of time, to allow the team to use the money as a “weapon system.”



# The Afghan Balance of Power and the Culture of Jihad

Lieutenant Colonel John J. Malevich, Canadian Army, and  
Daryl C. Youngman, Kansas State University

**D**EFINING THE ROOT causes of an insurgency amounts to identifying why an otherwise docile population takes up arms against its government. Westerners and Afghans alike do not typically awake in the morning contemplating who will lead their nation that day. Most people lead lives with simple concerns. They wake up, go to work, interact with colleagues, come home, and play with their kids. Their government-related concerns typically center on mundane issues such as trash pickup and law and order. In Afghanistan, however, this balance has been upset.

What has gone so wrong that people feel compelled to revolt against their government? We will discover the root cause of the current insurgency in answering this question.

We may visualize the conflict in Afghanistan as the competition of alternative narratives—government vs. insurgent—that demands the local people choose between them. In his Tactical Directive of 6 July 2009, General Stanley McChrystal writes, “Our strategic goal is to defeat the insurgency threatening the stability of Afghanistan. Like any insurgency, there is a struggle for the support and will of the population. Gaining and maintaining that support must be our overriding operational imperative and the ultimate objective of every action we take.”

General Sir Gerald Templer, director of operations and high commissioner for Malaya, summarized this concept as early as 1952, saying, “The answer lies not in pouring more troops into the jungle, but in the hearts and minds of the Malayan People.” Templer says that, in the counterinsurgency (COIN) fight, the people ultimately decide who wins, and success in COIN has both an emotive component (“hearts”) and a cognitive component (“minds”).

The COIN mantra—to win “the hearts and minds” of the people—has unfortunately led us into gratitude theory. In the West, we all too often confuse winning the hearts and minds of people with “getting them to like us.” We approach populations not with solutions for their grievances, but with gifts. We distribute soccer balls with International Security Assistance

Lieutenant Colonel John J. Malevich, Canadian Army, is chief of counterinsurgency at the U.S. Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Center of Excellence, Fort Leavenworth, KS.

Daryl C. Youngman is an associate professor at Kansas State University, and facilitates mutually beneficial partnerships with military and international interests.

---

PHOTO: SGT Ajim, a 20-year-old native of northeastern Afghanistan's Takhar Province and member of 1st Battalion, 1st Afghan National Civil Order Police Brigade, speaks with a village elder in Kandahar Province, 25 February 2011. (U.S. Army, SGT Ben Watson)

Force logos and give children school supplies. These well-intentioned actions miss the point. We soon discover that the people like us, but even so, they do not support us—or their government. Thus, we fail.

We fail because we fail to protect the population. When we retreat to our forward operating bases, the insurgents punish those who accepted our gifts. We fail because we gave them the wrong gifts. We fail because we do not understand Templer's message. He did not write about getting the people to like him, but rather about getting them to make a conscious decision that it was in their own long-term interest to support their government over the insurgents.

## What We *Think* is Driving the Insurgency

Current discussions suggest a number of circumstances as “root causes” of the insurgency. Under analysis, many of these presumed root causes appear to have limited relevance.

**Aid projects.** We often view aid and development projects as a means of reaching out to the population and favorably influencing their hearts and minds by demonstrating that the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) and coalition forces can meet their developmental needs better than the insurgents can.

However, if aid projects are addressing a root cause, the investment is a very poor one. Its costs are disproportionate to its results. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan database alone lists about 22,000 ongoing provincial reconstruction team (PRT) projects.<sup>1</sup> Provincial reconstruction teams are so successful that locals will go to the PRT rather than their own government for a quick repair job.<sup>2</sup> Yet, if development projects are this successful, why are the people still supporting insurgents? Why, in the face of all this aid, do attacks continue to increase?

Aid projects seem to illustrate the premise in Afghan culture that giving endlessly without receiving anything in return is a sign of weakness. A vignette General McChrystal includes in his COIN guidance illustrates this point. A base receives mortar fire from

a local village, but that mortar fire ends once the village obtains school supplies. This suggests we are being shaken down for aid. Maybe we got the behavior we rewarded. Maybe we have no idea what is going on.

**Poverty.** We say poverty and lack of economic growth contribute to insurgency, but history does not support this premise. The 13 colonies in America were the richest part of the British Empire in 1776, but they obviously formed an insurgency. At the time of its revolution in the early 20th century, Russia had the fastest growing economy in the world. In fact, the revolution actually slowed Russia's economic growth. There are many poor countries in the world today—Tanzania in Africa, for example—but they are not wracked by insurgency. Poverty may contribute to local grievances, but it is difficult to find historical evidence that poverty is a root cause or contributor to insurgency. The “grievance” noted by Mao in his early insurgency principles can be promulgated in the richest of environs.

Afghanistan has always been a poor country with scarce resources that depended upon plunder received from the Sikhs and Sinds and Punjabis.<sup>3</sup> In spite of its poverty, there was no widespread insurgency from 1929 until about 1979—and poverty did not fuel the 1979 revolt.

We have preconceived notions about the nature of the insurgency that may be misguided or even



(U.S. Air Force, TSgt Rebecca F. Corey, PRT Ghazni)

**SSG John Nichols, assigned to Provincial Reconstruction Team Ghazni, with his interpreter, Zabid, speaking with local shop merchants in Qara Bagh, Afghanistan, 14 December 2009.**

false. We have a deeply flawed understanding of the Pashtun people and *Pashtunwali*, the way of the Pashtun. We do not understand the roles and importance of the tribes and elders, the influence of the mullahs and Islam, or the competition for power among the tribes, Islam, and the government. This seriously impedes our population-centric counterinsurgency.

Because of our eagerness to distribute aid money and our limited understanding of the internal power dynamics of Afghanistan, our good intentions are being manipulated, and we are being taken advantage of. The government of Afghanistan is not the Jeffersonian democracy we had hoped for.

### The Real Root Cause: Jihad

Westerners have not come to the realization that this insurgency is an Islamic jihad. The insurgency's root cause is not lack of economic opportunity, but the desire to establish an Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan under *Sharia* law.

Our failure to reinstate King Zahir Shah to his throne is an example of our lack of understanding of the Afghan condition. A true parliamentary democracy with the king as the head of state could have provided solutions for problems coalition forces faced in 2009. When some alleged that the election was corrupt, the king could have held power until the issue was decided. In the eyes of many tribes, the present Durrani-based government without a Durrani king cannot provide cultural or social stability, and is not legitimate. We failed to realize that Amir Abdur Rahman Khan—the Iron Amir and father of the modern Afghan state—established the legitimacy of the monarchy for all Afghans (and in fact established that its rule and legitimacy stemmed from God).<sup>4</sup>

Focusing attention on tribes, clans, and elders (who compete for legitimacy and control of the people) will ultimately lead to our failure in Afghanistan.

### The Orientalist Approach

Our perspective on Afghan culture is clouded by the Orientalist approach. Orientalism—the practice of examining Afghan culture from a Western perspective—provides interesting incidental and useful information, but it does not help identify the root cause of the insurgency. An examination of the

code of Pashtunwali illustrates how Orientalism can obscure our perspective.

Understanding the code of Pashtunwali is essential. Certain elements of it may contribute to the ongoing conflict, but the Pashtunwali code is not the center of gravity in the COIN fight and not a root cause driving insurgents. Nor does it offer a solution to the insurgency. Briefers teach Western troops that Pashtunwali is a tool they can use to understand Afghans and to influence them to support their government. However, the Pashtunwali code is of limited validity and utility in modern Afghanistan.

The Pashtunwali code has been characterized as a 1,000-year old culture that has elements of a perfect Greek-style democracy. It is said to provide rules for governance, justice, and personal conduct. Closer examination uncovers flaws and myths. Pashtunwali includes the concept of *bedal*, or revenge. If a Pashtun has been wronged, he and his descendants are honor-bound to seek revenge. That is why collateral damage is so detrimental to the government's cause. As General McChrystal's guidance puts it, "kill two insurgents, make 20."<sup>5</sup> However, if this is really the case, why aren't the Pashtuns rising up against the Taliban for their crimes against them?

Where do city dwellers (with no village elders to consult) fit into the Pashtunwali conundrum? Of what significance is Pashtunwali to those who have grown up in refugee camps in Pakistan and Iran? What do those who now call themselves elders know of it? The current generation is being led by those who only have a faint memory of Pashtunwali. What do those who have lived in London, Toronto, and Dubai make of the Pashtun honor code? Pashtunwali provides insight into Afghan cultural history and a steady income for numerous pundits as they present briefings on the subject, but it is not a central guiding principle in the lives of Pashtuns. The Pashtunwali does not cover all Pashtuns.

***Westerners have not come to the realization that this insurgency is an Islamic jihad.***

Coalition thinking has long depended on advice offered by capable advisors whose insight has proved valuable. However, many native-born advisors enjoyed the benefits of higher education in foreign universities and spent large portions of their lives in various nations with lifestyles vastly different from most rural Afghans. They have given us a flawed perception of Afghan society. The current view of the insurgency's root causes overlooks many social factors in the daily lives of common Afghans, and does not address Islam as a political power.

## Afghan Society

Conventional wisdom describes an almost perfect triangle of power in Afghanistan. Wise elders provide leadership and justice for the community. The government is a minor (and necessarily evil) player that tries to interfere in the affairs of the tribes, usually with disastrous results. The mullahs are supposedly little more than schoolteachers or simple country bumpkins who can neither read nor write (in spite of their *madrassa* educations).<sup>6</sup> However, a new group has broken into the above

“triangle of power” and disrupted the harmony of traditional life in Afghanistan.

This group, the insurgents, has a separate agenda. It has corrupted the mullahs with guns and money, corrupted or driven out government officials, and eroded the power of the elders. We focus our efforts on reestablishing the natural order of things, in putting Afghan society back into a state of harmony. Westerners chastise the Afghan government for being corrupt and inefficient. We ignore the mullahs or despise them for overstepping their role as schoolteachers and fools. We focus on empowering the local elders, in the hope they will lead various tribes to rebel and force out the Taliban. These hopes are in vain. We do not really understand what is going on within the power dynamic, and we don't really know what motivates the elders. Further, we have not really engaged with the people. We have not done population-centric COIN.

## How Does the Afghan Societal Dynamic Really Work?

We should not see Afghan society as the triangle noted above, but as the location of a power struggle



U.S. Army, SPC Christopher Baker

A mullah of Day Kundi Province speaks to a crowd of villagers on the final day of Ramadan, 20 September 2009.

for control of the population by three distinct groups: the government, the elite rural landholders, and the mullahs.<sup>7</sup> This power struggle has been a facet of life in Afghanistan since the establishment of the modern Afghan state by Abdur Rahman Khan.

The Afghan state does in fact exist for the average Afghan. Afghans do identify with and accept government down to the village level.<sup>8</sup> Afghans accept taxation by the state and conscription into the army. They expect the government to provide law and order and set the conditions for trade. Afghans also believe in a strong central state to defend against infidels. There is more to rural life in Afghanistan than agriculture; there is also trade and commerce.

A primary goal of the government is to simply exist across Afghanistan as an entity that can ensure patronage of the elites that it supports. To do this, it must maintain an army. To finance and fill that army, it must impose taxes and exert control over the population.

The government of Afghanistan has also aspired to maintain its autonomy as an independent Islamic state. Here the elites and intelligentsia come into conflict with conservative elements in society. The government believes that it can best maintain the Islamic State of Afghanistan by adapting modern, Western ways to achieve its goals.<sup>9</sup>

**The rural elites.** Landowners are Afghanistan's rural elites. The vast majority of rural Afghans are sharecroppers who work the land. In rural areas, loyalty is given through a system of patronage called the *Qawn*. The *Qawn* is a source of constantly shifting power and loyalty given to those who appear best able to provide for the community. The shifting loyalties keep rural Afghanistan and its power politics in a constant state of disequilibrium.<sup>10</sup> The power of an elder is dependent upon his ability to provide favors. To perform favors, he must interpose himself between the government and the people.

There are essentially two groups competing for control and support of the Afghan people. On the one hand, the elders (warlords) intercede between the government and the people to ensure they stay in control of local trade and crime. The coalition is splitting its resources between the government and the elders. If the goal is to link the people with their government, why do this? On the other hand, the mullahs seek to control the souls of Afghans and establish a Deobandi Islamic Emirate for Afghanistan. To pursue this goal,

they are using the lexicon and jingoism of jihad. To date, the coalition has effectively ignored this. Why?

**Mullahs.** We have been led to believe that the importance of the mullah as a powerful figure in Pashtun culture is a recent phenomenon. However, mullahs have inspired Pashtuns to make life difficult for numerous Afghan rulers and even challenge the might of the British Empire. Today's Mullah Omar follows in the footsteps of the charismatic mullahs of yesteryear—Mullah Hadda (1893); Mullah Powinda (1893-1907); the Faqir of Ipi (1936-1960); Mawlana Faizani (1970s); and Qazi Amin (1970s-1980s). Each was a charismatic leader who raised and led large armies. It is notable that in the late 1970s and early 1980s, such religious leaders expelled tribal leaders and elders from the Pech Valley because they claimed the elders lacked the vigor to fight the government.

## The Mullah's Life

On becoming a mullah, a man enters an entirely new existence. No longer constrained by the social status of his father, the mullah's influence can dramatically rise. Education and tradition give him the means to do so.

In rural Afghanistan, one's place in society is typically tied to the position held by one's father. If the father was a great leader in the community or a great landowner, the son will follow in his footsteps. If an individual was born a landless peasant, it is unlikely that he will achieve any higher position within his community. There is very little social mobility for young men in rural Afghan society. In the past, the government was an outlet for young men seeking to escape the bonds of the rural power structure to climb the social or financial ladder. However, elders interested in getting their share of donor money have blocked access to what little government presence there is in the Afghan countryside. There is really only one alternative for the ambitious young Afghan: the madrassa-mullah-jihad option.

At the madrassa, young men get a new father (the *pir* of the madrassa), are free to take a new name, and can break formal tribal and familial bonds. As mullahs, young men have social freedom. They then leave the madrassa, establish their own mosque, and cultivate their own group of followers. They can travel freely across Afghanistan because they are holy men.



**COL Stephen Quinn, 189th Infantry Brigade commander, eats lunch with village elders after a *shura* at the Shinkai District Center, Zabul Province, Afghanistan, 17 February 2011.**

As such, they are free of tribal and familial affiliations and limitations.<sup>11</sup> A mullah may be the only one in his community who can read; this gives him the ability to interpret the Koran. He has the power to say who is a good or bad Muslim. He can even excommunicate people, a punishment often tantamount to a long, slow death. The mullah's power base supposedly derives from Allah. If a cleric credits himself with a miracle, or claims to have had dreams that included divine instruction, his prestige and power increases significantly.<sup>12</sup>

Finally—and significantly—a mullah is the only figure in Afghan culture who can call for a jihad. This is important for two reasons. First, tribal fighters believe it is not honorable or feasible to fight outside one's *kehl* (local area). Second, unless one is fighting in a jihad, society will not consider him a martyr upon his death. Clearly, a mullah's declaration of jihad is important, and in Afghanistan, jihad is the only form of fighting that has national significance. Jihad creates a highly motivated fighting force. Consequently, the mullah is very powerful in Afghan society.

### Why We Got It Wrong

Modern Westerners are not accustomed to considering religion as a political power. As a society that often expects quick solutions, we search for

instant remedies to problems as complex as solving an insurgency. That we are being played by all sides in Afghanistan is clear—plenty of evidence points to it. Well-intentioned or not, the advice offered by educated Kabulis and “Halfghans” has not always been productive in determining a path forward. Our perspective has been clouded by the lens of Orientalism, seeking the root cause of the insurgency through a Western rather than an Afghan perspective.

### The Beginning of Success

A successful way forward must take into account the factors noted above. We need to recognize that whatever we call it, the current conflict is jihad, Afghan style. While solving local problems with solutions unique to our own “valley” or area of operations, we need to think about the nation of Afghanistan and support national-level players. The government of Afghanistan is not *of the people*—it is only *of some of the people*. Facing up to this fact is the first step in changing the situation. We need to end the disconnect between Afghanistan's government and its people.

A religious element is the root cause of this insurgency. Young rural men who are frustrated by their lack of opportunity or upward social mobility turn to the rhetoric of jihad to improve their

prospects. The GIRoA's absence in rural society exacerbates their frustration, as do the elders who ensure that all money and opportunity flow through their own hands.

We may believe that Afghans do not want the Taliban or jihad, but each year young men do fight for the Taliban—a group whose leadership is, essentially, religious. We cannot forget this. The otherworldly siren song of jihad promises glory and opportunity.

To end the insurgency, we must employ strategic and tactical approaches simultaneously, incorporating the elements outlined below.

**Strategic approaches.** Strategically, we must do the following—

- Recognize the mullahs as nationwide influencers and bring them to our side.
- Defeat the jihadi message.
- Emphasize that Talibanization means the death of Pashtunwali.
- Stop trying to change Afghanistan's culture.
- Connect the government to the people.
- Hold district elections.
- Stop appointing district governors in the President Tariki fashion (patronage).
- Continue to push for a larger Afghanistan National Security Force to support the GIRoA.
- Continue funding the Afghanistan National Security Force after the coalition leaves.
- Continue pushing for Pakistan to arrest Afghan Taliban.

**Tactical approaches.** We must take the following tactical approaches to ending the insurgency:

- Protect the population.
- Consult with the local mullah.
- Arm our junior leaders with a knowledge of the Koran. (“The ink of the scholar is as important as the blood of the martyr.”)
- Give mullahs aid money for local projects they sponsor.

## Real Progress

Through our emphasis on development, we have enmeshed ourselves in looking for gratitude, which does not advance the COIN fight. We have failed to understand the competition between entities in Afghan culture, the mullahs' historical influence and current power, and jihad. Because we have failed to understand the dynamic of competition, we have also failed to conduct population-centric COIN. We must understand this dynamic and stop being manipulated by societal actors.

If not, we will fail to address the root cause of the insurgency—a stagnant power structure that provides radical Islamists with the opportunity to take advantage of the disenfranchised and recruit them with Islamic rhetoric and dreams of glory, martyrdom, and social mobility.

Recognizing that the mullah is a national player in what is truly a jihad and following the recommendations above at the strategic and tactical levels will advance us toward a more effective solution. **MR**

---

## NOTES

1. Mark Ward, Special Advisor on Development to the United Nations Mission in Afghanistan, “The Role of Provincial Reconstruction Teams,” Center for International Studies Lecture, 20 February 2010.  
 2. Ibid.  
 3. Hamish Nixon, “How Do You Govern Afghanistan,” National University of Singapore, 26 February 2009.  
 4. David B. Edwards, *Heroes of the Age: Moral Fault Lines on the Afghan Frontier* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 82. Abdur Rahman sent a huge tapestry out across Afghanistan with a proclamation outlining the extent of his terrestrial control. By placing a mosque at the center of his kingdom and calling himself Amir, he established his link to Allah, his legitimacy, and his right to call for jihad.  
 5. “ISAF Commander's COIN Guidance,” GEN McChrystal, 25 August 2009, 2.  
 6. David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 81.  
 7. Edwards, 82.  
 8. Oliver Roy, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan* (Cambridge: Cambridge

University Press, 2001), 21.

9. Ibid., 64.

10. Ibid., 23.

11. Kilcullen, 81. In this passage, the elder's words are very illuminating. It is not “as if” the Taliban are their own tribe. They are, quite literally, their own tribe. Because they are from the madrassa, they are seekers of religious knowledge and truth. They frustrate the elder. He cannot control them because they are outside of his tribal paradigm. In Ammanullah Khan's bid to oust the British from greater Pashunistan in 1919, he uses the mullahs to act as de facto liaison officers to keep the tribes fighting the British and not each other. He also used them to act as logistics officers because the tribes are not arrayed to provide for logistics in their fighting styles.

12. Mullah Omar claims to have had a dream in which two female spirits visited him and told him that he had to save Afghanistan from the warlords. In his march to power, he goes to the mosque in Kandahar and puts on what is claimed to be the cloak of Mohammed. There is a well-known superstition that whoever finds and wears the cloak of Mohammed can save Afghanistan.

# Two Tours in Afghanistan

## Twenty Years and Two Armies Apart

**Major Eero Kinnunen, Estonian Defense Forces, and  
Lieutenant Colonel Lester W. Grau, U.S. Army, Retired**

*The opinions expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the U.S. Government or the Government of Estonia.*

*Major Kinnunen is a lean, hard, soft-spoken infantryman whose eyes do not always smile when his mouth does. He has recently completed his second tour of duty in Afghanistan, which is not that unusual except that his first tour was over twenty years ago with the Soviet 40th Army. This is his story.*

Major Eero Kinnunen has served two tours in Afghanistan, one with the Soviet 40th Army Special Forces (Spetsnaz) and one as an Estonian company commander with the International Security Assistance Force. Both tours were in the Kandahar region.

Lester W. Grau is a senior analyst for the Foreign Military Studies Office at Fort Leavenworth, KS. He retired from the Army in 1992 after having served in Vietnam, Korea, and Europe, including a posting in Moscow. He has published over 50 articles and 5 books on Afghanistan, including *The Bear Went Over the Mountain*. Dr. Grau holds a B.A. and M.A. in international relations and a Ph.D. in military history.

---

Left photo: Private Eero Kinnunen, waiting for helicopters to redeploy from an operation in Registan Desert, December 1986.

Right photo: Major Eero Kinnunen, infantry company commander, Helmand, Afghanistan, 21 March 2008.

**I** AM AN ESTONIAN from a small town some 250 kilometers southeast of Tallinn. In 1985, after graduation from high school, I began my university education. The first part was a month spent harvesting potatoes on a Soviet collective farm. In those days, the state interrupted all sorts of activities so that students, soldiers, pensioners, and factory workers could “volunteer” to help with the harvest. We were mediocre harvesters, but we had some great parties. Upon my return from the harvest, I was conscripted into the military.

Usually, university students were deferred from the draft until graduation, when they would serve as reserve officers. However, there was a war on and there was no education deferment for me. I was conscripted into the Soviet Special Forces (Spetsnaz) and sent to Chirchik, Uzbekistan, which is close to Tashkent. Chirchik had a mountain training center and a large air base. Our firing ranges and training areas were mostly in the mountains. I have no idea how I ended up in the Spetsnaz, but it probably had something to do with my high school sports (handball, cross-country skiing, and orienteering). At 16 years old, the selection process began by listing your preferences for the draft board. I put down the airborne forces. My Russian was not too good when I started, but it got better during the six months of training at Chirchik, which was good but very hard mentally and physically. We did everything we would eventually do in Afghanistan—long range patrols, ambushes, raids, reconnaissance. Helicopters would drop us off in the mountains and we would have to accomplish our ambush or raid and find our own way back.

## First Tour

Most of the Spetsnaz who served in Afghanistan were conscripts, but the rugged six months of training did much to prepare us. At graduation, our first sergeant (a long-serving warrant officer) extolled the deeds of our predecessors and told us to emulate them. We had no idea where we were going to serve inside Afghanistan, but the cadre had all told us, “If they send you to Kandahar, hang yourself, because that is true hell.” We were split into various groups and sent to the airfield at Tashkent to wait for our aircraft. My plane took off in the dark and landed in the dark at 0300 or 0400. It did not turn off its engines and quickly returned to Tashkent. There was no one to meet us. We sat at the side of the runway. Hours later, the sun rose, and we felt like we were in an oven. A vehicle drove down the runway and picked up the officers in our group. We asked where we were. It was Kandahar.

Other vehicles drove up, and the battalion representatives began selecting their new members. The physically fit Russian guys were selected first. The Central Asians were picked last. There was definitely a racial bias in the selection process. I was the only Estonian and was picked quickly after the Russians were. I found that I was now a member of the 173rd Spetsnaz Battalion, which was garrisoned on a piece of the Kandahar air base apart from the 70th Separate Motorized Rifle Brigade—the main combat force on the base. The barracks were tents and later plywood and modular buildings. The food was terrible. Water supplies were limited.

We new guys had about a month to get our act together. We did a lot of range firing, small unit training, and a lot of marching. We could shoot as much as we wanted. This was different from the Soviet Union, where the ammunition was strictly controlled and limited. Our platoon leader conducted a trial mission to test our abilities. We went into safe areas in the mountains and desert while he evaluated our performance under pressure. We moved mostly at night. Once the platoon leader was convinced of our reliability, we joined the rest of the battalion in real operations.

We had missions within a 200-kilometer radius of Kandahar air base. We worked in the Registan Desert in the south, in Helmand Province to the west, in the mountains to the north, and out to the Pakistan border in the east. We did a lot

of ground movement on foot or in our infantry fighting vehicles. We performed blocking and shaping missions in support of the 70th Brigade. When we moved, soldiers with the most experience walked on point. Our primary mission was to hunt and interdict mujahideen caravans. We would do this with ambushes, raids, patrols, and helicopter inspections. Ambushes and raids were conducted on targets for which we had good intelligence. Helicopter inspections were conducted in areas where we were familiar with the terrain, the normal times of enemy movement, enemy tactics, and the looks of a peaceful versus a hostile caravan. Helicopter inspections normally involved two gunships and two lift ships. We Spetsnaz were in the lift ships. We normally flew into the area at dawn or near dusk—when hostile caravans arrived in the target area, shifted hiding places, or loaded cargo.

When we found a caravan, we would inspect it from a very low altitude to determine its size and probable cargo. If the caravan’s personnel behaved in a hostile manner, the gunships destroyed the caravan. If they behaved peacefully, the lift ships would land in front and behind the caravan and we would conduct a detailed search. The gunships would circle overhead, and if necessary, support our evacuation and withdrawal. We had a lot of success with this technique. We took as few prisoners as possible. Prisoners require guards. We always had five to ten prisoners that we were



Photo courtesy of author

Private Eero Kinnunen on the shooting range in early 1987.

stuck guarding for over six months. When higher headquarters finally took them, they were handed over to the Afghan government—which usually turned them loose. So, it was easier to release them immediately with a warning.

We had little other contact with the people, but we had a linguist assigned to our group. He was a brand-new second lieutenant with no military experience who had just graduated from a language institute. He studied Dari, but the people in our area spoke Pashto. He had little opportunity to improve his language skills. If the people saw us during a mission, we moved. When the people saw helicopters flying around their area, they knew that we were probably on the ground nearby. Then they would hunt us. They primarily used the *Kochi* nomads as their scouts. The nomads were herdsmen, and they would move their flocks of sheep or goats slowly over the area, looking for us. Sometimes they would move three or four flocks over the same area while they looked.

Once we were located, the armed mujahideen would come. Our first reaction was to move two to three kilometers away to avoid them or to get evacuated by helicopter. If it was night, the helicopters would not come and then we might have to build fighting positions and battle it out until sunrise. Communications were always a problem in that terrain. On several occasions, we were unable to establish contact with our headquarters and the enemy hammered us badly. When we had good communications, we could get close air support, which was always welcome. Unlike helicopter transport, close air support was always available. The mujahideen seldom broke contact without the intervention of close air support. We always worked outside of the range of supporting artillery.

Our normal mission was three to four days long. Patrols in the desert and mountains were particularly tough. In the desert, we did not have to heat our rations. We just set them out in the sun and soon they were ready. We normally moved with a three-man point consisting of senior, end-of-tour guys. They moved about a kilometer in front of the group. When I was senior, I hated this duty, but many of the guys wanted it.

We Spetsnaz were well-armed and equipped. We had all sorts of Kalashnikovs with silencers, sniper rifles, Chinese RPGs with bi-pod mounts, AGS-17

***We were guarding against the mujahideen, but also against other battalions that might strip our vehicles for spare parts, ammunition, and other essentials.***

automatic grenade launchers, and NSV .50-caliber machine guns. Our radio equipment was first-rate as well. The guys on point traveled light, carrying a Kalashnikov, a canteen, ammunition magazines, and some grenades. The main body functioned as mules. They carried the .50-caliber and the AGS-17 guns broken down into component parts, as well as the heavy ammunition for them. The sappers carried mines and explosives, the radio-men carried the radios. Unlike the mujahideen who had mules, donkeys, and camels, we carried everything on our backs—45 kilos (100 pounds) was not uncommon. We did not wear standard boots, which were inappropriate for the terrain. I managed to get some tennis shoes.

My company had BMPs [Boyevaya Mashina Pekhoty tracked infantry fighting vehicles]. The other two maneuver companies in the battalion had BTRs [Bronetransportyor wheeled personnel carriers]. Our companies rotated between garrison duties, mission preparation, and mission accomplishment. Garrison duties included guard rotations and normal camp support. We were guarding against the mujahideen, but also against other battalions that might strip our vehicles for spare parts, ammunition, and other essentials. We had next to nothing in the way of recreational activities. We had a sauna, but since we were in the desert, we did not need much help in sweating. We had an outdoor exercise area with some chin-up bars and parallel bars, but little else. Mail came fairly regularly. We were paid 15-20 rubles a month (roughly 20-25 dollars).

## **First Combat**

Following our shakeout period, my first three days of actual combat revealed what Spetsnaz actions were like in the Kandahar area. Twenty men boarded two Mi-8MT helicopters and flew

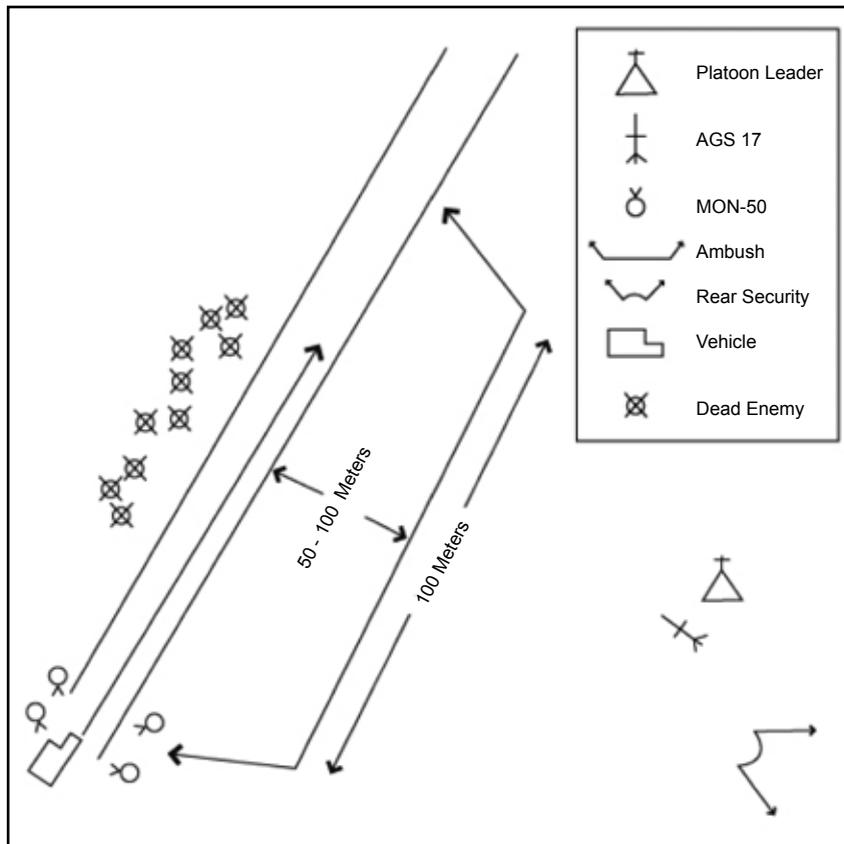


Figure 1

out in the late afternoon. It was early fall. We had an RPK light machine gun, three PK machine guns, an AGS-17 automatic grenade launcher, AKMS 7.62mm short-barreled assault rifles with silencers, AKS-74 short-barreled 5.45mm assault rifles, and a Dragunov SVD sniper rifle. Many of our assault rifles had the GP-25 under-barrel grenade launcher.

Sometimes we flew straight to the insertion point, and sometimes we made several false landings before and after the insertion. This time we flew straight to insertion and then hiked in the dark to our ambush position along a dirt road northeast of Kandahar. The land was fairly flat and covered with low brush and vegetation.

Our ambushes were fairly deep (see Figure 1). We had the first line 50 to 100 meters from the road. The forward position had two sections of six men each and paralleled the road for about 150 meters. Behind that, we had the three-man AGS-17 position and the ambush command post—the platoon leader and the two radio operators. Behind that, we had a two-man rear lookout post. We put four

MON-50 (Soviet claymore) directional mines on one end of the kill zone, firing out of the zone and parallel to the ambush party. The mines provided a way to attack enemy vehicles and to secure against an enemy trying to turn that flank. We did not dig any fighting positions since we did not want to leave evidence of our visit.

We waited in the dark. The moon, which could provide some illumination, had not yet risen. Then we heard the noise of a vehicle coming down the road. We listened for the sound of other vehicles, but heard only one motor. It was moving straight toward our directional mines and into our kill zone. We detonated all four mines and everyone opened fire. The vehicle was still moving! I was firing a PK machine gun. I could see my bullets hit the vehicle's side. This was no pickup truck. The vehicle drove the entire length of the kill zone and sped away before we could launch an illumination rocket to see what it was.

We moved into the kill zone, trying to determine what had gone wrong. We discovered 10 dead or

dying mujahideen lying on the side of the road. It took several weeks before we figured out what might have happened. Someone in the area had an old BTR-40—a Soviet-built armored truck with a roofless rear troop-carrying compartment.<sup>1</sup> This was probably the vehicle in our kill zone. The Spetsnaz seldom used RPGs in ambush since we never encountered armored vehicles in guerrilla convoys. This was one time when we could have used one.

At dawn, the helicopters flew in to retrieve us. We returned to Kandahar air base, ate, cleaned our weapons, and got some sleep. We were going out again that night. Late that afternoon, we boarded three helicopters. We were now a force of 25, as we added a three-man .50-caliber NSV machine gun team and two other Spetsnaz soldiers. We again flew northeast, but this time we landed in the mountains. We walked most of the night to one of our unit's favorite ambush sites. We holed up on high ground in a hide position, where we got some sleep after posting sentries. At dusk, we moved to the ambush site and our

platoon leader put each of us in position, assigned our sectors of fire, and made sure we knew who was on our left and right. My partner and I were at the right flank of the main ambush position (see Figure 2). Our ambush kill zone stretched 500 meters.

We lined the kill zone with MON-50 directional mines, firing right across the road. The main ambush position was 200 to 300 meters away from the road, and the AGS-17 was positioned forward in the middle of it with the platoon leader. The tripod-mounted NSV was on over-watching high ground some 500 meters from the road. We had a rear observation and security post of four men covering us from adjacent high ground. The ambush overlooked a road intersection. A dry streambed ran parallel to the intersecting road and through a culvert under the main road.

A Spetsnaz ambush of a multi-vehicle column usually let the first vehicle pass since its function was often reconnaissance. The second vehicle was the target for a weapon with a silencer. If we could

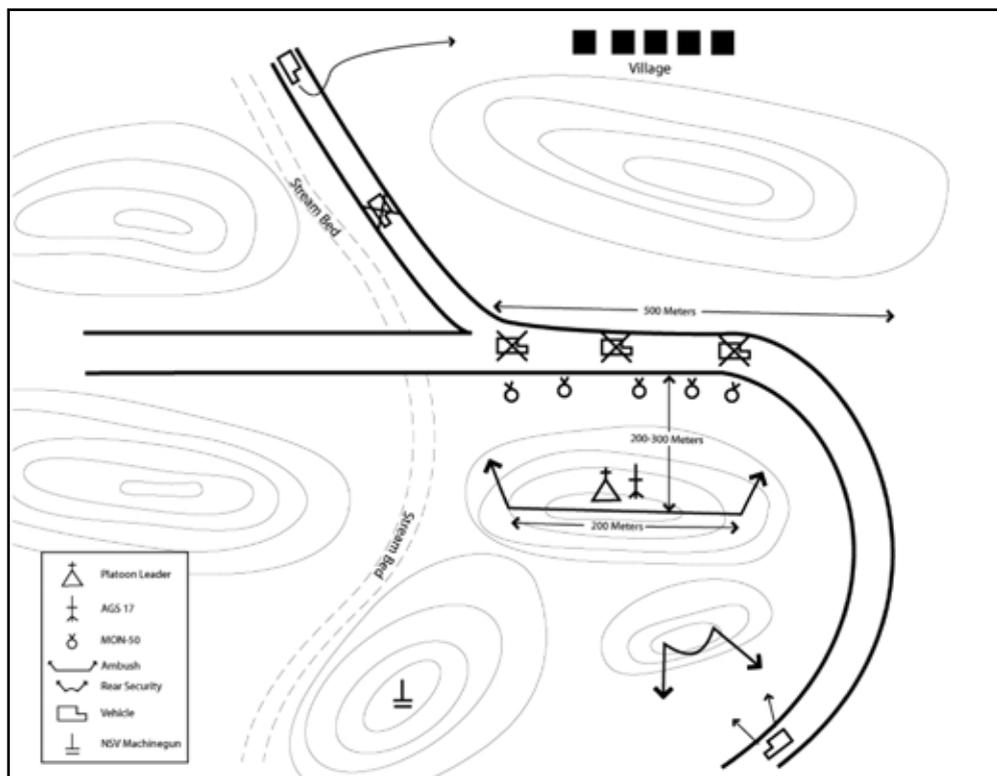


Figure 2

stop a vehicle inside the kill zone without alerting the following vehicles, they would bunch up. The ambush was then triggered with the explosion of directional mines or the firing of a SVD sniper rifle. The platoon leader would then launch an illumination rocket and everyone would open fire against targets in their sector. You fired your first magazine nonstop full-automatic to create a shock effect and establish fire supremacy. Then it was free fire within sector.

The moon was up, so it was not a problem driving without headlights or seeing approaching vehicles. We heard motors moving in our direction. They strained as they climbed and then quieted down again. Finally, the first vehicle drove carefully through our kill zone. It did not stop and we let it go. It was probably a kilometer in front of the others. Finally, the second vehicle appeared. Our lieutenant let it get to our right flank. The silent weapon failed to stop this vehicle, but the MON-50s did. An illumination rocket showed three trucks in our kill zone spaced 100 meters apart. Our main ambush force destroyed them. The NSV machine gun took out a fourth truck that was about to turn onto the main road from the intersecting road. Another truck, seeing the NSV destruction, reversed and probably hid in the nearby village. The mujahideen dismounted from the lead reconnaissance truck and tried to take our ambush from the rear, but our four-man rear security post stopped them.

We moved into the kill zone. There were 10 dead guerrillas. The cargo included ammunition, clothing, and military equipment. We collected their weapons and burned or blew up the rest. One of the trucks was fully loaded with 107mm rockets. When this truck caught fire, it exploded and rockets flew everywhere. We had a free fireworks show watching the rockets arc overhead. We saw nothing else of the enemy that night. We asked to be picked up at dawn, but the helicopter pilots felt that our position was too risky, so we had to run across the mountain carrying our gear and the captured enemy weapons.<sup>2</sup> We finally boarded our aircraft and flew back to Kandahar air base.

The Spetsnaz did not spend a lot of time on the base. We spent a lot of time on ambushes and raids. Some went well, some did not, and often nothing happened. My year and a half passed. On 9 November 1987, I flew out of Kandahar to

***A lot of us veterans had a problem fitting back into Soviet society.***

Tashkent. They gave me a train ticket home and 100 rubles mustering-out pay. I cashed in my train ticket and, adding this to my pay, bought an airplane ticket home to Estonia. I was a veteran and ready to get back to civilian life. I never wanted to see Kandahar again.

## **Second Tour**

Adjustment to civilian life was not easy. It was good to be home and back on campus, but my studies did not seem relevant to my life. A lot of us veterans had a problem fitting back into Soviet society. And things were changing in the Soviet Union. There was a lot of turmoil. As veterans, we had certain privileges, but we were not treated like the veterans of the Great Patriotic War (World War II). We were usually ignored, so we sought each other's company. For two years, we had dreamed our countrymen would welcome and honor us. Then the Soviet Union dissolved and the new Estonian politicians (mostly former Soviet officials) questioned why we veterans had gone in the first place. Estonian veterans of Afghanistan were not honored or granted privileges. I dropped out of school and worked a series of odd jobs. Eventually, I ended up back in the Army as a recruiter. After a few months of work, I was sent to a six-month officer candidate school. After I graduated, I attended the infantry officer basic course and served in a variety of infantry jobs over the years.

The Estonian Army worked hard to rid itself of all traces of the Soviet days. Soviet-educated officers were initially common, but Estonian-educated officers are now the norm except at the highest levels. The Estonian Army replaced its Soviet equipment with Western equipment—Finnish armored personnel carriers, German and Finnish howitzers, Swedish and German machine guns, and the Israeli Galil and the Swedish AK-4 assault rifles. All ammunition conforms to NATO standards. The



Estonian Army, Captain Georgi Kokoshinski

**MAJ Kinnunen, with his radio operator, interpreter, British liaison officer, and Intelligence NCO, talks with a local herdsman, near Now Zad, Helmand, Afghanistan, 21 March 2008.**

primary ground force is a brigade. Two of the battalions are manned by conscripts, while the third has volunteer soldiers. This professional battalion was deployed on foreign tours to Bosnia, southern Lebanon, Kosovo, Iraq, and Afghanistan. I became a company commander in this battalion for three years before deployment. On 9 November 2007, my company deployed to Afghanistan. We arrived 20 years to the day that I had completed my first tour. Of course, we landed in Kandahar.

Kandahar air base had changed dramatically. The living accommodations were great; the food was great; and there was a gymnasium, a large post exchange, coffee shops, and entertainment and recreation. Of course, my company did not stay in Kandahar.

We were attached to the British 52nd Infantry Brigade. We moved to Camp Bastion at Lashkar Gah. We spent two weeks training. The British had completed clearance operations in the Sangin Valley area and were planning to take back the Taliban-held town of Musa Qalah—a logistics and drug transfer point and traditional trouble spot. They wanted to have a large British force available, but the British in the area were dispersed holding the towns of Sangin and Now

Zad, and the Kajaki Dam. My company relieved the British force holding Now Zad. My logistics support unit was at Camp Bastion. My company's living accommodations were mud huts and fairly dismal, but the British left some combat engineers, an 81mm mortar platoon, and support activities in Now Zad, and they cooked for our camp. The British also provided us with close air support and a British artillery/air support controller.

Estonian Army deployments last six months. About half of my unit had deployed before; some of them by now have eight deployments. Three of my men were Afghanistan veterans from the Soviet days. We had our Finnish Sisu Pasi XA-180 armored personnel carriers along.

My immediate commander was Lieutenant Colonel Stuart Birrell, the commander of the British Royal Marines 40th Commando. In an interview on Estonian television, he described our mission:

Since the last Estonian company was here, we now have more FOBs [forward operating bases] and we operate more in the green zones and towns. There is less of a requirement for maneuver units in the desert just now. What we need is to be “in,” since the

populations are in the towns. Now Zad is an area where we know there is an enormous population, but we haven't gotten to them yet, so I am using the Estonians to speak to them and to try and pull them back in. The threat level is quite significant in the whole of the Northern Helmand area. The Taliban is still here and Now Zad is the subject of regular attacks. So far, the Estonians have held the upper hand and really taken the fight to the enemy, which has been excellent and has kept the Taliban on their back foot.<sup>3</sup>

My company's primary mission was to hold Now Zad and keep Taliban forces in place so that they could not reinforce Musa Qala. The Taliban had turned Musa Qala into a fortified zone with well-built fighting positions and trenches. The civilians had left the town. Once the fighting began, we expected that the Taliban would reinforce Musa Qala, so we mounted patrols and ambushes to threaten local Taliban control and prevent their departure.

This tour was very different from my first. My company was defending two positions outside the semi-deserted village of Now Zad. The village, which sits between the mountains on a wide plain, is a maze of high-walled compounds and dirt streets, but the more challenging area is the green zone east of the city and across the wadi.

A green zone is a verdant, fertile agricultural area with surface irrigation canals feeding small, fenced-off plots full of vineyards, poppy, marijuana, onions, melons, pomegranates, nut trees, and wheat. These green zones are more than farming regions. They are fortified zones for a static defense. The Taliban enjoy freedom of movement and concealment behind the high adobe walls that screen the wadi and protect the individual land holdings. The Taliban engineered these green zones for positional defense. They mouse-holed firing ports into the walls, situated their machine guns with interlocking fields of fire, and established alternate firing positions as well as redundant fall-back positions throughout the zone. They reinforced these with an integrated system of bunkers and trench-works. Their thick adobe bunkers proved somewhat mortar- and bomb-proof. Besides machine guns and small arms, the Taliban had RPGs, rockets, and 60mm and 82mm mortars.

I pushed patrols into the villages and into the green zones. I put my armored personnel carriers into stand-off positions, trying to keep 500 meters between them and possible RPG firing points. Flank security for my patrols was always a major consideration. Afghanistan's terrain quickly absorbs available combat power, particularly in the green zones. After fighting our way through the first two or three walled complexes—often with the aid of mortars and air strikes—our combat power was expended. Then I would begin the withdrawal. Even if I had no contact on the way in, I would always have contact withdrawing. The Taliban always launched a pursuit. They hoped to get close enough so that we could not successfully employ our mortars. It also demonstrated to the local inhabitants that they were still in control. The trick was to begin my withdrawal before the Taliban could detect it, so I would establish a base of fire as I began to thin my forward elements and pull back my flankers. Then I would bound my squads back.

Guerrilla warfare is about maintaining lines of advance, withdrawal, and communication. The guerrilla leader and the counterinsurgent commander are both trying to interdict the other's lines. Consequently, guerrilla warfare is a fight where both sides try to stop the other's logistics. Normally, Now Zad had a monthly resupply by



Estonian Army, Captain Georgi Kokoshinski

Major Kinnunen with his radio operator, near Now Zad, Helmand Province, Afghanistan, 21 March 2008.

truck convoy and relied on sling-loaded Chinooks in between. While the fighting was going on in Musa Qala, the British were trying to push a truck convoy there. In support of this, I conducted a feint. I moved my company south out of Now Zad and secured a crossing point over the wadi, as I would usually do when the truck convoy came (see Figure 3). When the convoy got to a southern road or wadi juncture (wadis make great alternate roads), they turned northeast toward Musa Qala. Then I moved my company quickly to secure the southern high ground overlooking the village of Dahana, which sits in a mountain pass about four miles from Now Zad. This, of course, drew the Taliban to my area, and they fired several 107mm rockets at us from Dahana. I put a road checkpoint and my tactical command post in Dahana Pass.

From this elevated position, I could control movement in the area. I could also see that the Taliban had established their own checkpoint four or five kilometers away in the Taliban-controlled village of Cangolak. They were stopping all traffic moving south. Meanwhile, the convoy I was aiding

went on to Musa Qala unmolested. Deception is difficult in an environment where the enemy can see your every move, but it is important—and possible.

I had a lot more contact with Afghans during my second tour of duty. I had three Afghan interpreters that the British supplied. We met with the local village leaders regularly. During the summer, we were welcome. Children asked for candy, and people were happy to see us. In the winter, the children disappeared, and we were not very welcome. We understood that the Taliban occupied the villages in the winter. However, NATO rules of engagement prevented us from searching them. I was responsible for conducting presence patrols and meeting with locals within 10 kilometers of Now Zad. (I shortened this to six kilometers in the north; otherwise, it would have been a full-blown fight in the green zone.) We conducted *shuras* in Now Zad, and on three occasions, I had applications for sanctuary and cease-fire agreements from the attendees. The problem, of course, was removing the Taliban infiltrators from the group, so I could not grant sanctuary.

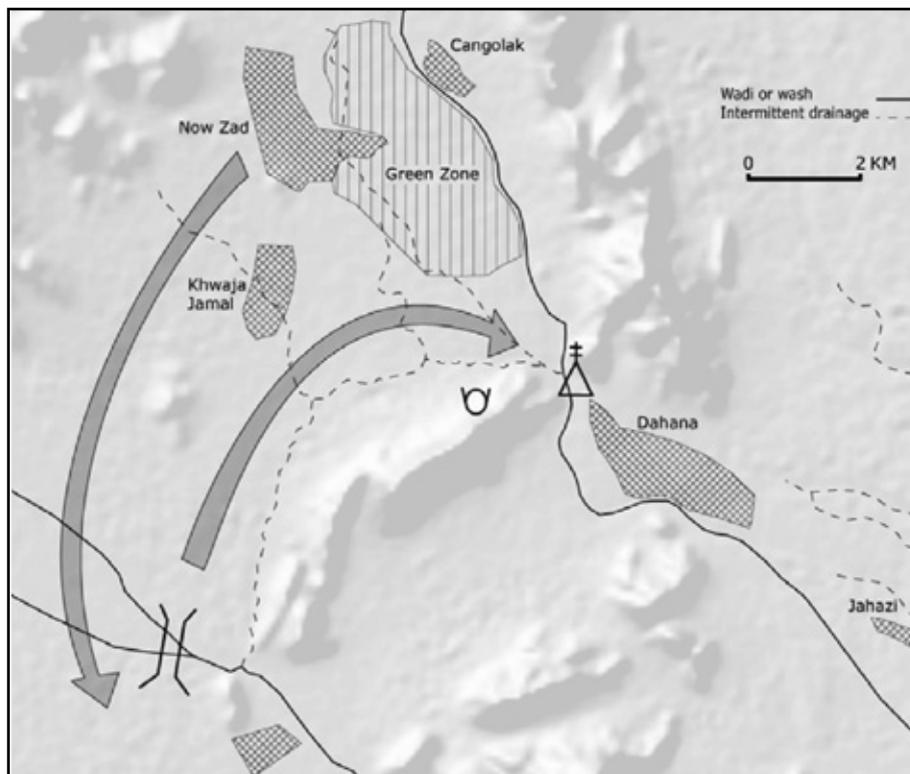


Figure 3

The cease-fires were obviously designed to let the drug harvest proceed unmolested. There were two different groups of Taliban in our area, the local members who were eager fighters but not well trained, and the outside Taliban, who spoke with a different dialect than the locals and were better trained. The latter group included those who placed the IEDs along the roads. Most of the IEDs seemed to be manufactured at the same facility and had Iranian parts.

We left in May. Another Estonian company from my battalion replaced us, so the transition was easy. The commander was a friend of mine. The Estonians have made a difference during their time in Now Zad. The Taliban are no longer able to exert the onerous influence that they previously enjoyed.

### Differences Between the Tours

The first major difference was the rules of engagement. Soviet rules were loose, when they existed at all. NATO rules are very restrictive. They save civilian lives, but they also allow the Taliban to live and to fight another day.

The enemy is different. The mujahideen and Taliban have the same basic skills, but the Taliban seem better organized. The mujahideen had more heavy weapons. The Taliban have some well-trained specialists—gunners who can hit your 100- to 200-square-meter camp with a 107mm rocket from seven kilometers away on the first shot. However, if you can kill the gunner, it will take them weeks to replace him with someone efficient. They have gone to 60mm mortars because our counter-battery radar can detect 82mm mortars, but often misses smaller rounds. Once, a Taliban forward observer chased my command post and

me with some 40 rounds of 60mm mortar fire. He knew what he was doing, had good communications, and kept us running.

There was a huge difference in logistics support and welfare. Living accommodations were relatively better during my first tour, but availability of good food and drinking water was much better during my second tour. We had two wells at Now Zad, so we were not dependent on bottled water. During the first tour, there was no construction or fortification material available, so we had to scrounge it ourselves. In the second tour, we had HESCO barriers and all sorts of fortification material. We had open Internet, daily email contact with families, and DVDs for entertainment. During the first tour, a letter would take a week to arrive and we were not allowed any packages. The Spetsnaz battalion might show an occasional movie outdoors at night.

My first tour was all about offensive combat and taking out enemy logistics. My second tour was static defense, and the challenge was keeping the enemy from gaining the initiative. In both tours, the fight was about logistics and interdicting the enemy's lines of advance, withdrawal, and communications. Deception was important in both tours, but more difficult in the second.

I have spent more of my life in the vicinity of Kandahar than I ever wanted to. Yet, I will go back again and, strangely, I am looking forward to it. The challenge, the camaraderie of my fellow soldiers, and the ability to help bring peace to a very violent corner of the planet are important to me. I have lost friends in both wars, and both have kept me from my family. There are many emotions involved in this story that are difficult to express, but such is a soldier's life. **MR**

---

### NOTES

1. The BTR-40 was produced between 1950 and 1960 as an armored reconnaissance vehicle. One hundred of them were sent to Afghanistan as part of a military aid program between 1959 and 1960.

2. Captured weapons were the commander's way of proving his reports and

effectiveness. Evacuating the other material was difficult, but captured weapons were almost always evacuated.

3. "Hüjijatud Linna Valvurid Válisilm," [Guardians of the Abandoned City], Estonian National Television, January 2008.

# Neuroscience for Combat Leaders

## A Brain-Based Approach to Leading on the Modern Battlefield

Major Andrew Steadman, U.S. Army



“**E**VERYTHING YOU DO in life is based on your brain’s determination to minimize danger or maximize reward.”<sup>1</sup> The brain wants to move toward things in life that give it pleasure or ensure survival, and away from things that cause pain or threaten survival.<sup>2</sup> Combat demands that military individuals overcome this natural impulse to survive and move toward the danger. From this perspective, succeeding in combat is a measure of how well the brain copes with dangerous situations and performs tasks that ensure survival.

The field of neuroscience has seen significant advances in recent years, and the benefits of this knowledge can positively affect numerous disciplines, including combat leadership. Using functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging, surgical methods, and experiment-based approaches, researchers have revealed many of the biological processes that underlie our most basic emotional and cognitive behaviors, such as how and why we react to threatening situations, how our brains allocate energy to cope with competing demands, and how our senses interact with our minds to create the world we know.<sup>3</sup>

Learning about brain function and physical reactions to stress does not simply inform the leader, but creates self-awareness that makes him better able to control those processes.<sup>4</sup> Tactical-level military leaders can use this new knowledge to understand the effects of combat, anticipate and recognize cognitive reactions, and adjust their leadership abilities to succeed in difficult situations. They can do this by performing exercises to decrease physiological stress reactions, using emotionally controlled leadership to guide their organizations, and creating an environment during battle that facilitates effective decision making. By educating soldiers about brain function and incorporating cognitive stressors into training, leaders can prepare their units to perform in battle with emotional stability.

### Basics of the Brain

Combat leaders need a basic knowledge of cerebral biology to understand the importance of the mind’s function during combat. The two major brain areas most relevant to this topic are the limbic system and the prefrontal cortex.<sup>5</sup> The former is the collection of brain regions involved in emotions, learning, and memory. The latter is the center for higher-level thinking, which

Major Andrew Steadman, U.S. Army, is an Infantry officer and a student at the Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, KS. He holds a B.S. from the U.S. Air Force Academy. His combat experience includes two deployments to Iraq and one to Afghanistan.

PHOTO: U.S. Marine Corps SGT Jose Paez and LCPL Anthony Lewis participate in a security and presence patrol in Sangin, Helmand Province, Afghanistan, 18 January 2010. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by CPL David Hernandez)



DOD, SSGT Michael L. Casteel, U.S. Army

**U.S. Army SPC Chris Avila, right, and other soldiers engage Taliban forces during a halt to repair a disabled vehicle near the village of Allah Say, Afghanistan, 20 August 2007.**

actively influences body functions and performance.<sup>6</sup> Inputs travel along pathways in both these systems and allow us to react to scenarios with a balance of emotion and reason.

Located in the center of the brain, the limbic system primarily contains the thalamus, hypothalamus, hippocampus, and the amygdala, and is the creator of emotions and memory.<sup>7</sup> Its primary function is to interpret information sent from the body's senses and to issue emotional commands back to the body. The limbic system also sends its data to the executive areas of the brain (frontal lobe) for cognitive processing and receives instructions about how the body should respond to the given situation.<sup>8</sup>

Sometimes, the limbic system can independently respond to the world, like when we react to threatening situations. This occurs at the subconscious level, when the amygdala—the fear and anxiety response center—compares data from the world with the hippocampus, which is the memory database of experiences.<sup>9</sup> If the incoming information corresponds to a threat that has been tagged as negative or dangerous,

the amygdala immediately commands the body into action. We have all experienced this process when our reflexes have caused us to snatch a hand away from a closing door or leap away from a snake.<sup>10</sup>

The more sophisticated processes of the mind occur in a sheet of tissue just behind the forehead known as the prefrontal cortex. As explained by Dr. Rand Swenson of Dartmouth Medical School, the prefrontal cortex is also known as the “thinking brain,” the manager of “memory, judgment, planning, sequencing of activity, abstract reasoning . . . impulse control, personality, reactivity to the surroundings, and mood.”<sup>11</sup> This area is what allows humans to solve math problems, develop abstract concepts, and ponder our own existence. It is also the area that military leaders use to balance risks in combat, develop courses of action, and create strategies to lead effectively.

Every part of the brain is packed with blood vessels that provide the oxygen needed to fuel its 100 billion cells.<sup>12</sup> As we engage various brain systems during daily activity (e.g., driving, throwing a ball),

**...military leaders must preserve cognitive function when leading during combat.**

the brain redirects blood and glucose to the appropriate areas (e.g. visual cortex, motor cortex) to fuel the most important event occurring at the time.<sup>13</sup> This allocation leaves less fuel for other brain functions, like cognitive control, which requires vast amounts of blood and glucose to operate.<sup>14</sup> When the limbic system is heavily engaged, as it is during the high-threat stress of combat, it will quite literally steal fuel from the prefrontal cortex, thus handicapping a leader's ability to combat the situation with cognition.<sup>15</sup> As successful business consultant and CEO David Rock explains in *Your Brain at Work*, "the degree of activation of the limbic system is the degree of *deactivation* [emphasis added] of the prefrontal cortex."<sup>16</sup> Brain research has also shown that there are many more neural connections that flow from the amygdala directly to the prefrontal cortex than vice versa.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, it is easy for our emotions to guide or suppress our rational thoughts. This is a crucial fact because military leaders must preserve cognitive function when leading during combat.

## The Limbic System in Combat

The limbic system is evolutionarily older than the prefrontal cortex—primitively old, in fact. It developed to help man survive the ancient battlefield of predator versus prey. The limbic system has the "chemical authority" to initiate rapid responses to threats and is good at doing so.<sup>18</sup> The amygdala ignites; adrenaline flows to the blood; the pulse races; the eyes focus and rapidly scan for a threatening movement.<sup>19</sup> We halt unnecessary digestion and tense major muscle groups in preparation for a clash. Then the brain, teeming with blood vessels, redirects the available supply of oxygen and glucose-rich blood to the limbic and motor areas so that we can react quickly in the impending fight. At this point, the mind is in its most basic survival mode; it has no spare energy to devote to solving geometry problems or to pondering philosophical dilemmas. This biological decision to focus resources

toward limbic areas during dangerous situations is what keeps us alive at a time when a cerebral problem-solving approach would be fatally slow.

But today's military leaders do not face the same world that our ancestors did. While there are still many threats that require rapid, reflexive action, leaders also have to manage countless streams of information; communicate over multiple technological systems; balance political, military, and civilian considerations; and lead hundreds of men and women in the process. Combat requires a coherent and rational mind.

Combat is full of stressful moments—initial contact with the enemy, rushing to secure enemy terrain, or responding to an unexpected event—that test emotional resolve. Those involved experience intense sensory input and encounter debilitating explosions, grotesque scenes, and threatening enemy movements. As the limbic system attempts to keep pace with the environment, it starves the soldier's ability to maintain a clear mental framework. Coupled with the typically exhausting physical exertion of combat, soldiers are consistently at risk of degraded cognitive processing.

This occurrence is evident in countless historical accounts of soldiers rendered immobile by battle. In his survey of soldier actions in World War II, the famous soldier author S.L.A. Marshall observed, "Some fail to act mainly because they are puzzled what to do and their leaders do not tell them; others



(U.S. Marine Corps, CPL William J. Faffier)

**U.S. Marines with Company B, 1st Reconnaissance Battalion, engage enemy forces from a patrol base near Sangin, Afghanistan, 22 October 2010.**

are wholly unnerved and can neither think nor move in sensible relation to the situation.”<sup>20</sup> Renowned historian J.F.C. Fuller’s observation is similar: “In an attack half of the men on a firing line are in terror and the other half are unnerved.”<sup>21</sup> Works by Bruce Siddel and Dave Grossman, particularly *Sharpening the Warrior’s Edge* and *On Combat*, present an exhaustive analysis of combat’s effect on the human body and what soldiers can expect when they face it.<sup>22</sup>

## The Leader in Combat

Each duty position on the battlefield contains some balance of reflexive and cognitive tasks. Some can be trained repeatedly and developed into muscle memory, like loading and firing a weapon. Others are more cognitive in nature, like calling for indirect fire or coordinating a synchronized attack. While each soldier has his own personal tactical situation to react to, typically frontline riflemen operate in the reflexive region, while the cognitive component of battle increases with rank and responsibility.

In this article, the term “leader” refers to any individual who is responsible for leading several groups of soldiers in maneuver against the enemy and must manage multiple battlefield systems. This leader spends most of his battlefield time outside of his weapon’s sights. While team and squad leaders are unquestionably “leaders,” they use battle drills and reflexive training to guide most of their actions and will not have to rely on their abstract cognitive abilities during combat unless they are operating as an autonomous element.

The platoon leader and platoon sergeant are the first leaders that engage in more complex problem solving than direct-fire battle. The company-level commander is squarely in the cognitive region, with occasional moments that require reflexive action. The battalion-level commander will rarely perform actions that are not based on premeditated cognition.

What can these leaders do to mitigate the physical reactions to stress that will inevitably occur? What methods are available to regain cognitive control and place the leader in a position to maximally benefit the unit? First, actively decrease the effects of stress. Second, infuse emotional stability into the organization. Finally, create an environment that facilitates effective decision making.

*“While many animals get through life mostly on emotional automatic pilot, those animals that can readily switch from automatic pilot to willful control have a tremendous advantage.”<sup>23</sup>*

**Control the effect of emotional energy.** As combat will readily reveal, the body and mind undergo rapid changes when reacting to stress. While moderate levels of stress improve functions like motor skills, stress can easily impair performance in cognitive areas, where today’s tactical leaders typically need to operate.<sup>24</sup> Heart rate, blood pressure, and breathing will all increase; digestion will slow and nausea may occur; speech may falter, and auditory and visual cues may diminish.<sup>25</sup> All of these effects are natural as the body emotionally reacts to the fight. However, leaders have a responsibility to control the effect of emotional energy and remain calm in the face of danger.

One proven technique used by law enforcement and military professionals to combat stress is “tactical breathing.”<sup>26</sup> As Grossman explains, tactical breathing is “a tool to control the sympathetic nervous system” that will “slow your thumping heart, reduce the tremble in your hands, deepen your voice” and “bathe yourself with a powerful sense of calm and control.”<sup>27</sup> As one of the only two autonomic nervous system actions that we can control (the other is blinking), breath rate is the first reaction to stress that leaders can rein in.<sup>28</sup> Immediately after a significant stressor occurs (e.g., the enemy initiates contact) or just prior to entering a high-stress situation (e.g., the final approach to an objective), simply take several successive deep breaths and hold each one for three to five seconds. As you breathe, visualize your body relaxing and remaining calm during the event. Although time may not allow leaders to take a long tactical pause, simply diagnosing a rapid breathing pattern and forcing a couple of slow breaths will help decrease the body’s agitated state.

Another method of controlling stress is a concept called “labeling and reappraisal,” which is the act of naming the emotional state you are experiencing and actively reassigning a new emotion that is more productive for the situation.<sup>29</sup> Verbally identifying the emotions or reassuring yourself out loud activates the prefrontal cortex and begins to reclaim some power from the limbic system.<sup>30</sup> Simple cue-words like “steady,” “stay focused,”

and “relax” are active reminders that can elicit controlled behavior. A unit’s motto can be another steadying phrase. Repeating these words can trigger confidence and strength in the face of trying circumstances. More important, such statements not only have an effect on leaders, but can also filter through an organization to reinforce its members. The key is to talk oneself into a mental framework that is capable of handling the highly cognitive experience of modern combat.

Any military leader will readily support the practice of unit rehearsals before an operation. Do individuals not also have the responsibility to rehearse how they will react in combat? Professional golfers, divers, and other elites who rely on precise skills use a technique called visualization to reinforce desired behavior. Likewise, a tactical leader can benefit by visualizing himself performing with emotional calm and cognitive clarity. A leader with a clear vision of how he wants to perform will, as survival author Laurence Gonzales puts it, create a kind of “memory of the future” that the brain can access during combat.<sup>31</sup> Like muscle memory, proper mental processes can become reflexive.

**Infuse emotional stability and control into the organization.** Leaders must discover ways to control their application of emotional energy. Their behavior is a compass for the unit, an indicator of what stress is allowable and appropriate for the situation. The first actions after a significant event—like an attack with an improvised explosive device—set the unit’s tone for the engagement. As General George S. Patton counsels, leaders are always on parade.<sup>32</sup> An uncontrolled yell, a high-pitched radio call, or even a worrisome look can transmit stress and doubt to the unit. Conversely, leaders with composure and confidence despite stressful circumstances will infuse those traits into the unit. Commanders should be deliberate and concise. Leaders should objectively verify emerging information to avoid overreacting or acting too hastily.

Neuroscience research reveals that there are methods leaders can use to do this. Noted author Malcolm Gladwell describes “deliberate emotion” in *Blink*: “We take it as a given that first we experience an emotion, and then we may—or may not—express that emotion in our face. We think of the face as the residue of emotion. . . . The process works in the opposite direction as well. Emotion



U.S. Army, PFC Cameron Boyd

A U.S. soldier patrols a field in Nangarhar Province, Afghanistan, 19 January 2011.

can also *start* in the face. It is an equal partner in the emotional process.”<sup>33</sup>

A German psychology experiment revealed that people who were physically made to smile by holding a pen clenched in their teeth rated cartoons as funnier than people who watched the same cartoons while holding a pen in their lips, which prevented smiling.<sup>34</sup> Facial expressions are not just a representation of emotions; they can *direct* emotions. Leaders can physically incite a more positive, relaxed emotional response in their bodies by intentionally forming a relaxed facial expression during combat events. This demeanor will also cue similar responses in the soldiers around them.

*“Insight comes from a quiet brain.”*<sup>35</sup>

**Create an effective decision making environment.** Regardless of rank, and even in the midst of intense combat, leaders must create an environment that is conducive to making cognitive, not emotional, decisions. They can start creating this environment by physically and emotionally disengaging from the immediate fight. This may mean finding sufficient cover for a local command post. A company commander seldom belongs in the hatch of his vehicle or exposed on a street, scanning for targets like a rifleman. Of course, desperate times will call for every gun to be in the fight, but only a handful of commanders will ever face that situation. The goal is for the leader to mentally “zoom out” from his personal tactical situation and take a more macro-level view of the battle, preparing his brain to handle the impending cognitive challenges.

The commander should then use his “space” from the battle to focus on what he has trained to do: assess and analyze what has occurred, recognize friendly force vulnerabilities, predict what the enemy will do next, decide on a feasible course of action, communicate the plan to the unit, and apply the appropriate leadership skills to inspire the unit to accomplish the mission.

The specifics of these steps can include conducting rapid terrain analysis and land navigation using complex digital systems; calling for mortar, artillery, or aircraft fires; establishing hasty graphic control measures to prevent fratricide; assimilating frantic, vague reports from subordinates; and relaying relevant data to higher echelons, among many other



(U.S. Marine Corps, CPL David Hernandez)

**U.S. Marine Corps 1LT Brad Fromm coordinates on the phone while clearing compounds in Sangin Valley, Afghanistan, 1 December 2010.**

tasks. These are not reflexive actions that one can repeat until they are muscle memory. Nor are they actions that the emotional limbic system can control. They are highly cognitive and require a steady mind.

A leader needs to find a suitable environment where she or he can generate new ideas, new insights, for each unique tactical situation encountered. Battle drills are, of course, an effective method units use to survive the first moments of a new event. But leaders must think beyond the battle drill and formulate innovative ways to beat the enemy. As neuroscientist Jonah Lehrer explains in *How We Decide*, “This is where the prefrontal cortex really demonstrates its unique strengths. It is the only brain region able to take an abstract principle and apply it in an unfamiliar context to come up with an entirely original solution.”<sup>36</sup>

The brain assembles new ideas using a system called “working memory.” Working memory is the temporary storage area the prefrontal cortex uses to hold concepts in place while it accesses other, more permanent bits of information (like stored knowledge, past experiences, and technical data).<sup>37</sup> This ability “allows the brain to make creative associations as seemingly unrelated sensations and ideas overlap.”<sup>38</sup> “Once this overlapping of ideas occurs, cortical cells start to form connections that have never existed before, wiring themselves into entirely new networks.”<sup>39</sup>

To create new ideas in combat, leaders must enable and facilitate this process. They must “think about what they’re thinking about.” The prefrontal cortex cannot generate new ideas while stressful events constantly bombard its working memory. Leaders must protect their cognitive faculties, prioritize facts, and not let extraneous information distract them.<sup>40</sup> Sometimes deliberate problem solving is necessary; other situations are novel and require a creative solution. When successful, the prefrontal cortex will hold the crucial facts of the situation in its working memory and compare them with previous knowledge and experience to generate new solutions. Again, this can only occur when the leader has created a suitable environment. He will not obtain any genuine insights if he is distracted by incoming fire, annoyed by a radio operator screaming information, or if he has allowed his stress levels to spike.

In combat, the process may occur like this: the enemy attacks on one side of a platoon combat outpost with machine gun and rocket fire. The platoon’s guard force reacts instinctively, returning fire where possible, but the platoon sergeant breaks his gaze from the explosions and asks, “What else can be happening here?” When he disengages his working memory from the visually overloading stimulus and thus momentarily quiets his brain, his mind begins to process the events in light of other stored knowledge, such as a remembered report of a previous attack in which the enemy used gunfire and rockets as a diversion to support a larger attack from the opposite direction. With the insight that this first attack could be a diversion, the platoon sergeant informs the unit and wargames with the platoon leader where a second attack might occur. Such insight will not happen if leaders are myopically focused on the near fight to the extent that it prevents their cognitive abilities from engaging.

Once a leader achieves a state of comparative emotional calm, he permits his mind to sense patterns in the environment that otherwise might have been suppressed by stress or distraction. Neuroscience research explains what we all have sensed at one time or another—that the mind can know something about our surroundings before we are fully aware of it. Detecting subtle patterns is the job of a group of brain regions called the basal ganglia, which have connections to virtually every

**Neuroscience research explains what we all have sensed at one time or another—that the mind can know something about our surroundings before we are fully aware of it.**

part of the brain.<sup>41</sup> The basal ganglia subconsciously process massive amounts of data and send signals that cause visceral, emotional responses to the body.<sup>42</sup> This is what happens when you walk out the door without your car keys and have a gut feeling that “I’m forgetting something. . . .”

A leader can access this process during combat, but only if he is tuned in to listen for it. The brain can analyze the developing situation and compare the data with the lifetime of knowledge, experience, doctrine, and lessons that have accumulated in long-term memory. It will filter out extraneous information, discover relevant patterns of information, and, using emotions, alert the body that the prefrontal cortex should redirect its attention.<sup>43</sup> In this way, hunches are not just superfluous feelings, but expressions of powerful analytical processes hard at work.

## **A Model for Cognitive Battle**

In *Your Brain at Work*, David Rock explains that the mental processes relevant to performing work are *understanding, recalling, deciding, memorizing, and inhibiting*.<sup>44</sup> His example involves a business leader who must complete a proposal by focusing on relevant information, remembering similar past proposals, selecting the best method to complete the proposal, committing applicable information to long-term memory, and blocking out mental processes not beneficial for the task. Military leaders must perform similar cognitive tasks when responding to a combat situation. The difficulty of their task is compounded because every battlefield is different, and every battlefield is deadly. Let’s examine a typical combat engagement.

**Understanding.** Following the initial shock of an attack, *understanding* involves how a leader “creates maps in the prefrontal cortex that represent

new, incoming information and connects these maps to existing maps in the rest of the brain.”<sup>45</sup> It means absorbing the relevant terrain (which is unanticipated terrain if the enemy initiated the attack) and overlaying it with pertinent data like population considerations, maneuverability requirements and restrictions, and friendly force disposition. The leader accepts and adjusts to his new environment as the arena in which he will fight, and then begins to form his new mental map. This is also the opportunity to sense patterns in the environment that may affect the decisions to come.

**Recalling.** In battle, *recalling* is the process of comparing the existing situation with the database of stored knowledge in the long-term memory networks. Think of it as looking into the cupboard to identify what ingredients are available to make dinner. This important mental process filters through all lessons, instruction, and experiences to determine what can be used to cope with the current situation. While being attacked from a building, for instance, the leader’s mind may instantly make connections to the doctrine he learned in his early years. Then, the lessons learned from dozens of urban exercises reestablish their neural link to the prefrontal cortex and make themselves available for use. Maybe a phrase or piece of advice from a former instructor just pops into his head. Recalling is the brain’s way of gathering the most relevant

information in anticipation of making a complex decision.

**Deciding.** A combat leader’s brain engages in the *deciding* process when it chooses which recalled information will be most useful and applies it to the real-time world to build a new mental map. This is cognitive course of action development. Deciding brings together learned skills and past knowledge to form a response plan specific to the current scenario. Sometimes a leader firmly decides on a course of action; other times, the cumulative effect of the recalling process creates emotional hunches that point to a certain response. After deciding on a course of action, the brain shifts from conceptual analysis to specific application. The new mental map now occupies the working memory space and the prefrontal cortex engages to find detailed answers needed for execution. These include what route friendly forces will take, when and where they will engage, what fire control measures subordinate units need, what information must be passed higher, and so on.

**Memorizing.** David Rock describes *memorizing* as “holding maps in attention in the prefrontal cortex long enough to embed them in long-term memory.”<sup>46</sup> Research shows that it is impossible for our brains to simultaneously hold multiple complex concepts in working memory without degrading accuracy.<sup>47</sup> (Imagine trying to write a text message while driving in England on the left side of the road.) In combat, rapidly comparing the details of multiple courses of action is quite a difficult task. Thus, it is important for leaders to move the mental map of a battle plan into long-term memory so the prefrontal cortex can reoccupy working memory. This allows the comparison of the plan with new ideas and emerging information.

For leaders in battle, memorizing is also the internalization of a plan. Focusing on the concept of an operation (planned or hasty) creates familiarity that allows execution without redundant analysis or reference to written notes. Memorizing is a form of rehearsal and wargaming for leaders, compelling them to review their plan from multiple angles and search for vulnerabilities or errors.

**Inhibiting.** Finally, *inhibiting* is the practice of selective focus, when one actively tries to not engage certain mental maps because they are irrelevant or counterproductive.<sup>48</sup> An American driver



(U.S. Army, SPC Andy Barrera)

**A U.S. Army combat medic patrols a village in the Kharwar district of Logar Province, Afghanistan, 12 February 2011.**

in England should actively try to forget the mental perspective of driving on the right-hand side of the road. Working memory cannot juggle two competing complex concepts without diminished efficiency. As a combat example, consider a leader who has only Iraq deployment experience and was almost entirely engaged with IEDs. He spent the year concentrating on how to defeat IEDs and focused battle drills to respond accordingly. Now in Afghanistan, where the enemy in his particular region conducts exclusively small-arms and rocket attacks, the leader must suppress his learned tendencies, realign his mental perspective, and develop new neural connections that will help him properly frame and respond to the most likely threat.

**Personalizing.** To these, I add *personalizing*, which can apply to every moment of a leader's day. This is the application of leadership principles and personality attributes that will guide the organization to accomplish the mission effectively. There are many examples of leaders who, intentionally or not, seem to change their personality in combat. The emotional stress of the situation causes them to display different leadership traits than they demonstrated in training. Personalizing is the leader's conscious effort to prevent external influences from altering the foundation of character and leadership that she has consistently developed and that her subordinates have learned to expect.

## Training for the Emotionally Stable Fight

*"It therefore follows that the far object of a training system is to prepare the combat officer mentally so that he can cope with the unusual and the unexpected as if it were the altogether normal and give him poise in a situation where all else is in disequilibrium."*<sup>49</sup>

Training for combat is about changing the brain. Decades of neuroscience research have firmly shown that the brain is highly adaptable and that repeated activities designed to create specific behaviors—like combat training—literally “change cellular structure and strength of connections between neurons.”<sup>50</sup> At the rifleman level, training teaches soldiers to respond reflexively to situations that demand a spontaneous conditioned response, such as engaging an enemy fighter at close range. It is the same behavioral process that professional athletes apply to develop the fine-tuned motor skills needed in competition.

This learning process also applies to activities that demand higher cognitive ability, such as detailed planning for a combat operation or reacting to a complex attack. A way to train this capability would be to construct an exercise that requires leaders to undergo physical or fear-induced stress and then perform deliberate, time-constrained planning for an ambiguous situation.<sup>51</sup> This could be a simple



U.S. Army, SPC Evan D. Marcy

U.S. Army SPC Rosenquist engages enemy forces during a patrol near Contingency Operating Post Honaker Miracle, Afghanistan, 29 July 2009.

puzzle-solving activity or a complicated vignette-based planning exercise that incorporates combat systems. This “cognitive stress shoot” would allow leaders to discover their personal responses to stress and identify useful techniques to overcome the cognitive disabilities associated with it.<sup>52</sup>

Units should also structure training to present multiple streams of information and detectable patterns of enemy activity that will teach leaders what to look for. Historical battle accounts reveal that small changes in the environment, like a lack of regular street activity, can sound subconscious alarms. Constructing patterns in training and then altering them can teach leaders to listen to their hunches and be extra vigilant when “something doesn’t feel right.” Incorporating collateral battlefield elements, like a civilian populace, challenges leaders to cognitively analyze the situation and think beyond the battle drill.

On the individual level, leaders should develop personal cognitive battle drills that better prepare them for the mental challenges of combat. They should rehearse exactly what words they will use to report an initial contact and what guidance they anticipate issuing in the opening moments of a battle. These drills create neural circuitry that is familiar to the brain when the actual event happens, thus making it easier to execute with calm and confidence.

These drills serve as a personal routine that primes the individual to control stress, sense subconscious patterns, engage cognitive problem solving, and lead with emotional control. Then, by adding the element of physical danger or stress to the scenario, leaders can adapt to perform the cognitive thinking despite emotional distraction.<sup>53</sup> David Rock notes, “People who succeed under pressure have learned to be in a place of high arousal but maintain a quiet mind, so that they can still think clearly. Over time and with practice, this capacity can become an automatic resource. The brain can be wired to deal better with emotions.”<sup>54</sup> This adaptation will develop mental fitness for leaders that may prove to be crucial in the unit’s future battles.

Leaders must learn where they should position themselves on the battlefield to facilitate their cognitive responsibilities. Despite mission, terrain, or movement technique, leaders must discern what position allows them to survey all aspects of the fight.<sup>55</sup> As much as possible, they should directly observe their soldiers and get information real time

without compromising their ability to keep a macro view. Conversely, soldiers expect to see their leaders at the proverbial “front” and cannot respect leaders who are never among them. Finding this balance is part of what makes command an art.

Most importantly, all leaders have a responsibility to build a database of professional knowledge that will assist them in creating insight during stressful situations. They do this by studying doctrine, seeking instruction from mentors, being self-critical about performance, recording new ideas, participating in thought exercises, discussing related concepts with peers, and reading professional works. A solid knowledge of history (long-term memory) will provide the prefrontal cortex (and working memory) with a vast array of tactical options from which to generate new solutions for the current fight. Coupled with an ever-expanding collection of personal experiences, a thorough knowledge of the military profession will enable leaders to find creative answers on the complex battlefield.

## Recommended Changes

The concept of brain-based combat leadership deserves attention in both military professional development courses and unit-level education and training programs. Teaching leaders what they will physiologically experience will better prepare them to maintain emotional stability and to effectively lead others during combat. The Army’s Center for Enhanced Performance (ACEP) provides such instruction; it also conducts biofeedback testing to give soldiers direct feedback about their performance under various stressors.

The Army Training and Doctrine Command should consider the following recommendations to deepen the NCO and officer corps’ institutional knowledge regarding the application of neuroscience to combat leadership:

- Develop a block of instruction for sergeants and above that teaches the fundamentals of brain function in combat, cortical energy management, stress reduction, cognitive control, and leadership in stressful situations. This will give them a working knowledge of the topic areas to assist them during school training and at home station.
- Provide instruction to soldiers and officers attending the Warrior Leader Course, Basic Noncommissioned Officer Course, Maneuver

Advanced Noncommissioned Officer Course, Basic Officer Leadership Course, and the Captains Career Course.

- Provide instruction and practical exercises to deploying units during home-station preparation.
- Broaden the ACEP program's scope to target company and field grade-level decision making in combat. Fund an expansion of the ACEP program to include teams that can visit deploying units and teach the fundamentals of brain-based combat leadership and help plan training to maximize unit cognitive development.

## Conclusion

*"The test of fitness to command is the ability to think clearly in the face of unexpected contingency or opportunity."*<sup>56</sup>

Combat involves a wide range of events, dangers, and sensory inputs that can easily overwhelm the

unprepared mind. The first job of every soldier, regardless of rank, is to maintain his composure and react reflexively to the threat as required. Leaders, however, must go beyond the conditioned response to combat that we train on the live-fire range. They must "zoom out" to adopt a macro-level view of the battle, quickly analyze the events occurring, decide on an appropriate response, coordinate complex systems, and then apply the appropriate leadership skills to accomplish the mission. These brain functions are among the most sophisticated processes that we humans can perform. Leaders who do not protect their own cognitive function during combat will find themselves short of the biological resources necessary to win, and can place themselves and others at risk. In this sense, knowing *how to think* could be a combat leader's most valuable tool. **MR**

---

## NOTES

1. Evian Gordon, Ph.D., quoted in David Rock, *Your Brain at Work: Strategies for Overcoming Distraction, Regaining Focus, and Working Smarter All Day Long* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009), 105.

2. Rock, 107.

3. According to Columbia University, Program for the Imaging and Cognitive Sciences, "Functional MRI is based on the increase in blood flow to the local vasculature that accompanies neural activity in the brain." It allows scientists to observe what regions of the brain are activated in response to presented stimuli or during episodes associated with disorders like seizure activity and PTSD. Columbia University, Program for the Imaging and Cognitive Sciences, <<http://www.fmri.org/fmri.htm>> (8 March 2010). Other research methods used to map neural pathways include chemical tracing of neurotransmitters and cerebral interruption using surgical lesions. Joseph LeDoux, *The Emotional Brain: The Mysterious Underpinnings of Emotional Life* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 155.

4. Rock, *Your Brain at Work*, 57.

5. It is important to note that the theory of a "limbic system" is a contested topic in the arena of neuroscience because the term implies that there is one consolidated system that governs the emotional activities of the brain. Such a system has never been unequivocally proven. Therefore, I follow conventional science by using the term "limbic system" as a collective label for the processes that occur among the brain regions that independently influence fear response, memory recall, bodily reactions, and others.

6. Jonah Lehrer, *How We Decide* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2009), 100.

7. American Health Assistance Foundation, <<http://www.ahaf.org/alzheimers/about/understanding/anatomy-of-the-brain.html>, April 2010> (14 March 2010).

8. Rand Swenson, M.D., Ph.D., *Review of Clinical and Functional Neuroscience*, chap. 11, online resource, Dartmouth Medical School, <[http://www.dartmouth.edu/~rswenson/NeuroSci/chapter\\_11.html](http://www.dartmouth.edu/~rswenson/NeuroSci/chapter_11.html), 2006> (15 March 2010).

9. *Ibid.*, chap. 9, <[http://www.dartmouth.edu/~rswenson/NeuroSci/chapter\\_9.html](http://www.dartmouth.edu/~rswenson/NeuroSci/chapter_9.html)>.

10. In this case, the optic nerves transmit visual data to the visual thalamus, which sends the information along two pathways to the amygdala. The quicker of the two is a direct link from the thalamus to the amygdala, resulting in rapid but less-detailed information about the threat. LeDoux refers to this system as "The Low Road." This is the instant that your mind recognizes a curved, slender object on the trail at your feet and springs your body into evading action. The slower data pathway routes the information from the thalamus, first through the frontal cortex, and then to the amygdala. This is "The High Road," termed so because the frontal cortex analyzes the data in detail and makes a more precise appraisal of the threat. If the object at your feet is not a snake but a stick, then this is the moment you consciously realize your error, laugh at yourself, and continue hiking. But of course, "It is better to have treated a stick as a possible snake than not to have responded to a possible snake." LeDoux, *The Emotional Brain*, 163-66.

11. Swenson, *Review of Clinical and Functional Neuroscience*, chapter 11.

12. Brian Wandell, "Looking into the Brain," podcast lecture, Stanford University, 29 April 2008, downloaded 26 February 2009.

13. *Ibid.*

14. Lehrer, *How We Decide*, 152.

15. John Case, David Rock, "Neuroscience in the Workplace," 18 February 2007, podcast (7 April 2009).

16. David Rock, "Your Brain at Work—David Rock's new book," 8 October 2009, podcast (9 October 2009).

17. Joseph LeDoux, "Fearful Brains in an Anxious World," podcast, The New York Academy of Sciences: Science and the City Podcast, 21 November 2008 (7 February 2010).

18. Laurence Gonzales, *Deep Survival: Who Lives, Who Dies, and Why* (London: W.W. Norton, 2003), 229.

19. Lehrer paraphrase of Antonio Damasio description of the mind's reaction to danger. Jonah Lehrer, *Proust Was a Neuroscientist* (New York: First Mariner, 2008), 19.

20. Brigadier General S.L.A. Marshall, U.S. Army, Retired, *Men Against Fire: The Problem of Battle Command in Future War* (Alexandria: Byrrd, 1947), 48.

21. J.F.C. Fuller, as quoted in Marshall, *Men Against Fire*, 71.

22. Bruce K. Siddel, *Sharpening the Warrior's Edge: The Psychology & Science of Training* (Belleville: PPCT Research Publications, 1995).

23. LeDoux, *The Emotional Brain*, 175.

24. *Ibid.*

25. Dave Grossman, Loren W. Christensen, *On Combat: The Psychology and Physiology of Deadly Conflict in War and in Peace* (USA: PPCT Research Publications, 2004), 88.

26. *Ibid.*

27. *Ibid.*, 320.

28. *Ibid.*, 321.

29. Rock, *Your Brain at Work*, 112.

30. Rock, "Your Brain at Work," podcast.

31. Gonzales, *Deep Survival*, 44.

32. Paraphrase from General Patton's speech to the Third Army in England, 5 June 1944, published by Charles M. Province (Random House, 1988), 32.

33. Malcolm Gladwell (New York: Little, Brown, 2005), 208.

34. *Ibid.*

35. Rock, "Your Brain at Work," podcast.

36. Lehrer, 130.

37. *Ibid.*

38. *Ibid.*

39. *Ibid.*

40. Rock, *Your Brain at Work*, 40.

41. *Ibid.*, 81.

42. Lehrer, *How We Decide*, 23.

43. Ibid., 38.  
 44. Rock, *Your Brain at Work*, 34.  
 45. Ibid., 34.  
 46. Ibid.  
 47. Ibid., 23.  
 48. Ibid., 34.  
 49. Marshall, 116.  
 50. Committee on Opportunities in Neuroscience for Future Army Applications, National Research Council, *Opportunities in Neuroscience for Future Army Applications* (Washington, DC: National Academies Press, 2009), 20, <[http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record\\_id=12500](http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=12500)> (19 May 2009).  
 51. It is important to note that exercise-induced stress is not the same as fear-induced stress. Fear-induced stress amplifies the effects of heart rate, blood pressure, and breathing and can severely impact the individual's ability to react

with cognitive control. Accompanying combat skills with physical exertion, however, has proven to significantly improve the individual's ability to cope with fear-induced stress. Grossman, *On Combat*, 44.

52. The traditional term "stress shoot" refers to a shooting exercise where soldiers participate in a physically stressful activity (e.g. pulling a weighted stretcher or sprinting) then immediately transition to a shooting exercise. The goal is to train the soldier to fire his weapon accurately despite the hindering effects of stress.

53. The use of Simunitions®, for example, has greatly improved military and law enforcement professionals' conditioning to combat. The effect of having to feel "real pain" in the training scenario creates a higher level of fear-induced stress than training exercises that do not incorporate physical pain. Grossman, *On Combat*, 36.

54. Rock, *Your Brain at Work*, 115.

55. Major Thomas Siebold, U.S. Army, email to author, 3 May 2010.

56. Marshall, 117.



ARE YOU HEADED  
IN THE RIGHT  
DIRECTION?



**The Army 360 / Multi-Source Assessment and Feedback (MSAF) program helps ensure that you are. The program increases leader self-awareness and provides direction for leadership improvement and sustainment.**

Army 360 provides:

- Personalized and confidential feedback from traditional and non-traditional sources – superiors, peers, and subordinates.
- The opportunity to receive coaching from senior-level leaders who can aid in understanding feedback and taking action on it.
- Assessments for all AC/RC leaders – Civilians, Non-commissioned Officers, Warrant Officers, and Commissioned Officers.
- Individual or unit-level participation.
- Flexibility in use – post-deployment, following promotion, after assuming command, prior to a PME/CES course, after a training exercise, etc.

Army 360 supports the Army's strategy related to sustaining a force led by competent, confident, and adaptive leaders. The impact is a better-led force with leaders who understand leadership competencies and attributes, and are capable of leading across the full spectrum of operations.

**[HTTPS://MSAFARMY.MIL](https://msafarmy.mil)**  
 Center for Army Leadership, Combined Arms Center



# Wartime Sourcing

## Building Capability and Predictability through Continuity

Lieutenant Colonel Heather Reed, U.S. Army

**T**HE U.S. MILITARY has been fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan for over nine years, yet our Army continues to source the fight year-by-year rather than devising a long-term sourcing solution. Although we are supplying these wars with the appropriate number and types of units and personnel, we can do this more efficiently and more effectively by revising our methods. We can also bring a semblance of predictability to our soldiers' lives that will improve the short- and long-term health of the institution.

The method of sourcing I propose is to align requirements (units and individuals) habitually with units or sourcing organizations. Recently, our leadership has proposed a plan termed "Campaign Continuity" that begins to address one weakness in our current sourcing process. However, to improve the process, we need to analyze a number of aspects of sourcing, including tour length, continuity in sourcing, and the balance of sourcing for both units and individual augmentees.

We should determine a way to best balance the health of the service and the welfare of the soldier with mission accomplishment. I propose to do this by reviewing the impacts of tour length, dwell time, reset, and continuity. I will also make recommendations on how to ensure that the entire force has the opportunity to contribute to current and future fights.

### Maximum Tour Length vs. Optimal Tour Length

Accepting the current operating environment as a long-term war requires conducting an analysis of tour length for service members. The Army must determine the maximum duration that it expects a soldier or unit to deploy. Our current method of deployment schedules seems to focus on dwell time to determine tour length. In fact, we should do the opposite. Once we determine maximum tour length, we can determine dwell time.

Lieutenant Colonel Heather Reed, U.S. Army, is a force structure command manager in the Headquarters, Department of the Army G3. She was formerly the deputy chief of force management, Combined Joint Task Force 101, in Bagram, Afghanistan. She has a B.S. from the U.S. Military Academy and an M.S. from Long Island University.

PHOTO: An instructor with the 75th Security Forces Squadron demonstrates proper buddy care techniques during a combat readiness training course at Hill Air Force Base, Utah, 4 September 2010. (U.S. Air Force, SSgt Renae Saylock)

Closely examining the psychological impacts of serving in a combat zone is important to determine maximum tour length. Depending on the intensity of the assignment and exposure to combat stress, there is likely a maximum amount of time in a combat zone before service members experience a significant degradation in capability. The mental health advisory teams sent to Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom have conducted investigations and provided insight and recommendations to improve force health. In November 2006, Mental Health Advisory Team IV's central findings included the following observations: "Overall, Soldiers had higher rates of mental health problems than Marines," and "Deployment length was related to higher rates of mental health problems and marital problems."<sup>1</sup> Key recommendations included extending the interval between deployments and decreasing deployment length.<sup>2</sup> The Army has only focused on the first recommendation.

Our current policy is that all units deploy for 12 months (including mobilization for reserve units). Based on the above findings and having served both a 12-month and a 15-month deployment, I propose that 12 months should be the maximum tour length, the longest time we expect a soldier to operate in a combat zone.

The next thing we need to determine is optimal tour length—the tour length that best balances the requirements of the mission and the health of the soldier. Based on Mental Health Advisory Team IV findings, six to nine months is a better range

to ensure mental health and optimal performance for most soldiers. In 2008, the surgeon generals of the Army, Navy, and Air Force told senators that "the optimal tour in Afghanistan and Iraq to reduce combat stress should be 6 to 9 months with 18 months at home."<sup>3</sup> Although the 18-month is not yet achievable, the 6- to 9-month tour length is possible in the current operating environment if we implement a better plan for continuity. While I propose 6 to 9 months for most units, we should determine appropriate tour lengths not by blanket policy but by mission and unit type. We should examine mission requirements, reset time, and the psychological impact of time deployed in a combat zone. These factors should drive tour length, which should then determine dwell time, rather than letting dwell time govern tour length. This means that units or soldiers with shorter tours will deploy more often. We should base optimal tour length on mission requirements and reset requirements, balanced with the understanding that shorter tour lengths are better for mental health.

In determining optimal tour length, we should look at each type of mission based on two factors: frequency and level of interaction with the local populace, and similarity of the unit's deployed mission to their doctrinal mission.

In a counterinsurgency, missions that require interaction with the local populace and relationship-building may require longer tour lengths or repeated deployments to the same location to facilitate the necessary interpersonal relations between soldiers and key leaders in local governance, tribal, and



U.S. Army. D. Myles Cullen

Chief of Staff of the Army GEN George W. Casey, Jr., talks with unit commanders who will lead forces in Afghanistan, Fort Drum, NY, 30 July 2010.

security elements. The length and intensity of train-up requirements for deployed missions also merits consideration. For example, a helicopter mechanic performs the same job whether located at an airfield in Bagram, Afghanistan, or at a U.S. base, but a provincial reconstruction team (PRT) member is part of an ad hoc organization from three different services and performs missions unique to deployed operations. Such missions require greater train-up and more time in theater to realize the benefits of the training. These factors may point to a longer optimal tour length. Division and higher headquarters may require a longer tour length to accomplish strategic goals and support the rotation of subordinate units.

## Unit Continuity

Reset and team building are unique aspects of sourcing units. Reset will have an effect on tour length in some cases, both in terms of personnel and equipment. For example, upgrades to existing platforms have proven to significantly impact aviation units.

Two factors can limit the impact of equipment reset in determining dwell time and tour length. First, we must maximize the use of theater-provided equipment in Iraq and Afghanistan, performing upgrades and resets in theater or within the Central Command area of responsibility whenever possible. (The Army is already working to improve this process for Afghanistan, and should give it full emphasis in both conflict regions). This effort will also significantly lower the impact of deploying and redeploying forces on the limited transportation assets available. Second, we need to look at adjusting the reset model as we adjust our tour lengths, and reset equipment based on need rather than timeline.

Long dwell times have an upside but also pose a significant disadvantage in terms of continuity: a long dwell time allows for significant unit personnel turnover, particularly within low-density military occupational specialties. This high-turnover rate also requires a more intense train-up period to integrate new personnel. By comparison, a shorter tour length and corresponding dwell time incurs less personnel turnover and, by extension, greater continuity, allowing units to focus on refreshing atrophied skills. We can reduce the train-up

***...dwell time really can mean spending time with families rather than months in the field and at combat training centers.***

requirement by increasing the frequency with which units return to the same deployed areas of operations. Although this will not lengthen dwell time, it will improve the quality of this time because units will not require the intense field training currently needed to prepare them for deployment. In other words, less turnover means the unit needs less training to deploy, and dwell time really can mean spending time with families rather than months in the field and at combat training centers.

Individuals returning to the same location provide a benefit to their unit and the host nation government they support. They are able to build on existing relationships and cultural understanding as well as maintain continuity of effort within their areas of operation. Moreover, a unit returning to the same location (with sufficient continuity in the organization) produces an even better effect in maintaining continuity of operations. Often, new units arrive in theater and make quick adjustments in operations to realize their impact within the length of the unit's tour. Sometimes the leaders of the new unit make the changes before they fully understand all the implications of their actions. If units return to a location where they have previously served and they retain some of their leaders, they have the knowledge necessary to anticipate the second- and third-order effects of their actions and are less likely to derail efforts of a previous unit.

After determining optimal tour length and requisite unit dwell time based on operational requirements and reset ability, we will most likely have the force structure to align two to three units per force requirement—more as we withdraw from Iraq. One option for sourcing is to employ two Active Component (AC) units and one Reserve Component (RC) unit in rotation for each requirement. Each of the AC units will have two deployments and one long and one short dwell period during a rotation, and the RC unit will

deploy once during this cycle with a longer dwell time between rotations (e.g., AC1—AC2—AC1—AC2—RC, repeat). An example of this alignment could be assigning responsibility for an area in Afghanistan to 2nd and 3rd Brigade Combat Teams from the 10th Mountain Division (Fort Drum, New York) and 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (New York Army National Guard). By assigning this responsibility as semi-permanent, these three organizations can improve home station train-up by incorporating lessons from the recently redeployed unit into the training of the about-to-deploy unit. Moreover, we can increase the effect of lessons learned by exchanging leaders to serve as observer/controllers during unit field training and training center rotations.

By using a 9-month deployment cycle and 30-day (or less) reception, staging, onward-movement, and integration model, units will have one long dwell period and one short dwell period in a cycle. During the short dwell period, the unit will experience limited turnover, conduct refresher training, and coordinate with the unit currently in theater to prepare for deployment. During the longer dwell period, the unit will have greater turnover, requiring a more extensive train-up and a training center rotation. Their equipment will be reset as required. The RC unit will maintain a constant dwell between deployments, but will maintain a partnership with the other two units in order to train and prepare for deployment and ensure a shorter mobilization period.

Returning people and units to the same locations warrants not only deploying individual units to the same places. It may also merit maximizing individual reassignments to units that deploy to and from the same areas. Many soldiers point out that sending a “guidon” to the same location doesn’t mean that the unit has the same people. A soldier who serves in a brigade combat team in Afghanistan for one tour may move to another unit

on the same installation for his or her second tour. We can capitalize on this by aligning entire posts with Afghanistan or other theaters of operation (e.g., Fort Bragg and Fort Campbell might be “Afghanistan posts,” with soldiers moving among units on these posts or “Regional Command-East posts”). This helps retain firsthand knowledge of areas of operation and fosters working relationships among similarly aligned brigades and division headquarters. Although a modular army means that units can work for any headquarters or have any subordinate units, there is value added in habitual working relationships where possible. In addition, as we draw down in Iraq, we can either include off-ramped units in rotations to Afghanistan (using four or more units to increase dwell time) or have them regain proficiency in the skills needed for a more conventional fight to better balance all global requirements.

Finally, we need to examine additional sourcing methods to ensure that the entire service contributes its expertise to the fight. If there is an inequity in the deployment burden among units, military specialties, or ranks, we should address it with greater emphasis. Such inequities, whether perceived or actual, affect morale, and efforts to eliminate them are not wasted.

In sourcing the war, the primary focus remains on large units, such as brigades and deployable higher headquarters. However, the availability of brigades is rarely our Achilles’ heel: the differential between the high demand and low supply of specialty skilled enablers is the real concern. While the military needs to maintain certain organizations for a conventional war, these units should not be on the sidelines awaiting such a contingency. Individuals often have a functional area or a secondary specialty. Certain operational units should be no different. Directing such secondary missions early would allow these units to allocate equipment, conduct training for these secondary missions, and

***Many soldiers point out that sending a “guidon” to the same location doesn’t mean that the unit has the same people...***



U.S. Army photo, John Crosby

**A soldier says his goodbyes during a departure ceremony at Camp Atterbury Joint Maneuver Training Center, Indiana, 25 September 2010.**

augment the force structure for counterinsurgency-specific missions. For example, counter-improvised explosion device exploitation and fixed-site and convoy security operations that would normally fall to military police units, already in short supply, could be formally specified as secondary missions to other units. To facilitate this additional mission set, the Army should look at two options.

The first is developing augmentation tables of distribution and allowances similar to those we use to support brigade combat teams with an advisory mission. The Army G3 has developed such tables for additional soldiers to augment brigade combat teams serving as advise and assist brigades in Iraq and security force assistance brigades in Afghanistan. When a unit has been assigned this mission, the requisite augmentation paragraph is “turned on,” authorizing additional soldiers for the unit. The same could be done for other units performing nonstandard missions.

The second option is adjusting manning requirements based on a unit’s nonstandard mission. For example, there are many ad hoc requirements in theater that do not closely match an existing

Army organization. Most of these requirements are for officers and NCOs, so we source them as individuals rather than as units. Instead, we should assign a unit to the mission that is a “best fit” and provide guidance to Human Resources Command on its level of fill. This will allow the organization to train as a team before it deploys without leaving soldiers at home or bringing more downrange than it needs for the mission.

Finally, we need to consider “talent-to-task,” or picking the right person for the right job. The Army can extend this to assigning the right unit for the right job, particularly the National Guard. Although our Reserve Component units are capable of performing the same conventional missions as the Active Component, in this fight they bring much more to the table if we leverage their skills. We need to transition from using Reserve Component units to fulfill conventional missions and instead take advantage of the other unique skills and knowledge that these soldiers and airmen gain from their civilian jobs.

Consider the example of provincial reconstruction teams. In Afghanistan and Iraq, we employ ad

hoc PRTs, comprised of Active and Reserve Component soldiers, sailors, and airmen who form as teams three months before deployment and deploy for nine months at a time. An improved model is applied for agribusiness development teams, currently employed in Afghanistan, where the members for each team are unilaterally sourced by one state National Guard command, with the intent of forming a partnership between the state and the advised Afghan province. Although this is a fledgling concept, habitual state partnerships are promising.

The next step in this evolution is to establish a state partnership with each province in Regional Command-East, and eventually Regional Command-South. The state National Guard would provide teams whose mission combines that of the PRT and agribusiness development teams. State leaders (both political and National Guard) would develop a relationship with the Afghan provincial government to better determine support requirements. Ideally, sourcing would involve a National Guard unit augmented with civilians to provide technical skills. States would

link with provinces based on similar agriculture, natural resources, and economic capabilities, and the state would update requirements based on the province's needs. The National Guard would provide the required security force and administrative support from the sourced unit, and the state would provide agricultural advisors and the reach-back capability to state agricultural colleges. Advisors could be volunteer instructors on sabbatical, civilian contractors, or come from the Department of State's Civilian Reserve Corps.

### Individual Augmentee Continuity

One other way to capitalize on talent is to rethink assignment of individual augmentees to Joint manning document billets, looking at continuity and skill set rather than simply military occupational skill and grade. Currently, the Army uses the Worldwide Individual Augmentee System tasking process to source individual assignments. When General David Petraeus initially built his staff in Iraq and deliberately included a number of military members with doctoral degrees, many



U.S. Army, PFC Donald Watkins

U.S. soldiers with 4th Brigade, 10th Mountain Division, conduct clearing operations in the Baraki Barak district of Logar Province, Afghanistan, 21 December 2010.

touted him as taking a novel approach to staffing a combat headquarters. These individuals were not chosen by their ranks or military occupations, but for their education, background, and individual experiences. *Newsweek* even published an article entitled the “Brainiac Brigade” about the intellectuals he assembled for his staff.<sup>4</sup> Novel, maybe. Smart, yes. We should take the same approach throughout the Central Command area of responsibility.

First, we need to leverage soldiers from generating force organizations: U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command; the U.S. Military Academy; Headquarters, Department of the Army; etc. Second, we need to provide continuity by assigning individual augmentee positions to specific organizations at the lowest level feasible. The Army G8 has filled the force management augmentee slot in Combined Joint Task Force-101 for several years. This cross-fertilizes knowledge among the officers in the G8 and creates working relationships between organizations in theater and in the U.S. We could accomplish the same things in many positions at headquarters in Iraq and Afghanistan by identifying individuals whose duty description in their organization at home is similar to one on a Joint manning document. Service academy faculties are ideal for the higher echelon positions at the operational or strategic level. (We send a large number of senior captains to earn masters degrees and then teach at West Point for three years, which takes them out of the deployment cycle for five years or longer.) Each HQDA staff section with a counterpart in Afghanistan would benefit from rotating individuals into theater to bring back fresh experiences.

By giving an academic department at West Point or a directorate at various headquarters specific ownership of certain Joint manning document positions, we bring unique skill sets to higher-level deployed commands, create reach-back ability, build continuity within the organization that owns that mission, and build credibility as soldiers remain current in Operation New Dawn and Operation Enduring Freedom issues. Many advise and train mission sets in Iraq and Afghanistan align with Army generating force mission sets.

These units organize, train, equip and generate, and employ and sustain the military and police forces of these two countries.<sup>5</sup> Our generating force commands should own applicable training teams and Joint manning document positions for these corresponding organizations. The same continuity and cross-fertilization will occur as organizations maintain enduring responsibility for the same billets. On a 3-year tour at one of these generating force organizations, one should expect to deploy for approximately 12 months, depending on one’s job or skill set. I specifically use the terms “job” or “skill set” because conventional military occupational specialty descriptions are not always what we look for in today’s COIN fight.

Not only do generating force units bring the right skills to the fight, but commanders, directors, and department heads can internally manage deployment cycles. This adds continuity, predictability, and flexibility. With the reach-back that this provides, shorter tours may be feasible. With the flexibility this provides, we allow soldiers to work together to support the combatant commander while meeting their personal needs. For example, if a soldier has a personal event that he or she wishes to attend (birth of a child, high school graduation, etc.) a coworker may deploy early to allow him or her to return home. Since both individuals work in the same office for the same boss, this is far more feasible.

## Relooking the Way We Source Requirements

These recommendations will require changes in our sourcing procedures and new guidance to Human Resources Command in priorities for personnel assignments, but they will improve our overall efforts. We cannot continue to greatly under-source our generating force by turning to it for individual augmentee sourcing.

By relooking the way we source requirements and devising a long-term solution, we can become more effective in performing our military mission and assuring a good measure of the predictability that our soldiers need. We should start this now for those requirements that we consider to be long-term. **MR**

NOTES

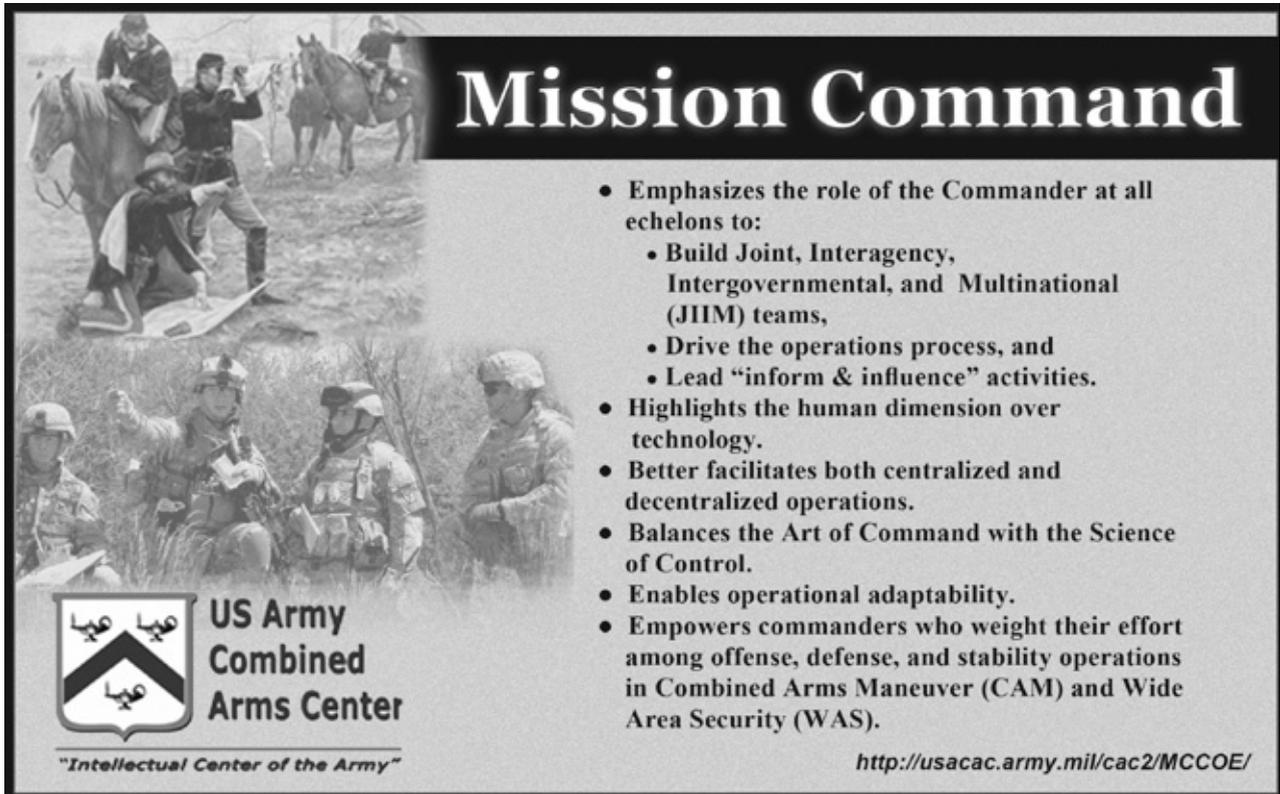
1. Office of the Surgeon, Multinational Force-Iraq, and Office of the Surgeon General, U.S. Army Medical Command, "Mental Health Advisory Team IV Final Report," 17 November 2006, 3, <[http://www.armymedicine.army.mil/reports/mhat/mhat\\_iv/MHAT\\_IV\\_Report\\_17NOV06.pdf](http://www.armymedicine.army.mil/reports/mhat/mhat_iv/MHAT_IV_Report_17NOV06.pdf)>.

2. "Mental Health Advisory Team IV Final Report," 5.

3. Bob Brewin, "Top military doctors say six- to nine-month combat tours would reduce stress," GovernmentExecutive.com, 17 April 2008, <<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0408/041708bb1.htm>> (21 March 2010).

4. Babak Dehghanphishah and John Berry, "Brainiac Brigade," *Newsweek.com*, 17 September 2007, <<http://www.newsweek.com/id/40756>> (21 March 2010).

5. MNSTC-I Homepage, <[http://www.mnstci.iraq.centcom.mil/history\\_of\\_mnstci.asp](http://www.mnstci.iraq.centcom.mil/history_of_mnstci.asp)> (17 December 2010). Site is no longer accessible. See NTM-A/CSTC-A homepage, <<http://ntm-a.com/documents/enduringledger/el-oneyear.pdf>> (24 March 2010).



# Mission Command

- Emphasizes the role of the Commander at all echelons to:
  - Build Joint, Interagency, Intergovernmental, and Multinational (JIIM) teams,
  - Drive the operations process, and
  - Lead "inform & influence" activities.
- Highlights the human dimension over technology.
- Better facilitates both centralized and decentralized operations.
- Balances the Art of Command with the Science of Control.
- Enables operational adaptability.
- Empowers commanders who weight their effort among offense, defense, and stability operations in Combined Arms Maneuver (CAM) and Wide Area Security (WAS).

**US Army Combined Arms Center**  
 "Intellectual Center of the Army"

<http://usacac.army.mil/cac2/MCCOE/>

# Military Review

*Military Review* is a forum for "fearless, thoughtful, but loyal dissent..."  
 "...this is a sign of institutional vitality, health, and strength."  
 - Secretary of Defense Robert Gates

**Interested in subscribing?**

U.S. military units, embassies, Congressional offices, or any U.S. agency involved in national security can receive editions for free. Send requests to [leav-milrevweb@conus.army.mil](mailto:leav-milrevweb@conus.army.mil).

Private subscriptions are available through the Government Printing Office bookstore (<http://bookstore.gpo.gov>).

**For detailed instructions, click on "Reader information" at our homepage (<http://militaryreview.army.mil>).**



# Death from Above



## UAVs and Losing Hearts and Minds

Jeffrey A. Sluka, Ph.D.

*This article expresses the opinions of the author and does not reflect the official position of any agency of the Department of Defense.*

*Military Review expresses deepest condolences to the families of Navy Corpsman Benjamin Rast and Marine Staff Sergeant Jeremy Smith, who lost their lives in April 2011 in what may have been an accidental attack by a Predator drone flying in support of operations near Sangin, Afghanistan.*

Jeffrey A. Sluka is an associate professor of social anthropology at Massey University, New Zealand. He authored *Hearts and Minds, Water and Fish: Popular Support for the IRA and INLA in a Northern Irish Ghetto* (Greenwich: JAI Press, 1989) and edited *Death Squad: The Anthropology of State Terror* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000).

*PHOTO: MQ-9 Reaper landing after a mission in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, Afghanistan, 2007. (SSgt Brian Ferguson, U.S. Air Force)*

**A**RMED UNMANNED AERIAL vehicles (UAVs) or *drones* are in constant use over Afghanistan and the Pakistan tribal borderlands, the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. As Washington and the U.S. military see it, the ideal use of Predator and Reaper drones is to pick off terrorist leaders. In 2007, hunter-killer drones were performing 21 combat air patrols at any one time, by the end of 2009 they were flying 38, and in 2011 they increased to about 54 ongoing patrols. In 2009, the Air Force reported that for the first time they would be training more joystick pilots than new fighter and bomber pilots, creating a “sustainable career path” for those Air Force officers who fly UAVs.

### Wonder Weapons

Perhaps out of fear of strategic loss of national will over unpopular U.S. and coalition casualties, Central Command seems to have accepted drones as the current weapon of choice in the fight against Al-Qaeda and the Taliban. Drones are reportedly “knocking off the bad guys right and left.”<sup>1</sup> According to one estimate, by March 2011 at least 33 Al-Qaeda and Taliban leaders (high value targets) had been killed by the drones and from 1,100 to 1,800 insurgent fighters had been killed as well.<sup>2</sup> Tom Engelhardt observes in *Drone Race to the Near Future* that the UAVs are the “wonder weapon of the moment,” and “you can already see the military-industrial-robotics complex in formation.”<sup>3</sup> In fact, as James Der Darian describes in *Virtuous War: Mapping the Military-Industrial-Media-Entertainment Network*, drones are already part of a massive and expanding “military-industrial-media-entertainment network.”<sup>4</sup>

The hype and hubris surrounding this technology is immense, and the mainstream media has been full of glowing reports on the drones, some of which imply that their use could win the war against terrorism all by itself. For example, an April 2009 report claimed that the drones were killing Taliban and Al-Qaeda leaders and “the rest [of their numbers] have begun fighting among themselves out of panic and suspicion.” “If you were to

continue on this pace,” counterterrorism consultant Juan Zarate told the *LA Times*, “al Qaida is dead.”<sup>5</sup> In an uncritical *60 Minutes* report on U.S. Air Force drone operations in May 2009, the officer in charge was asked if mistakes were ever made in the drone attacks: “What if you get it wrong?” “We don’t,” was his response.<sup>6</sup>

The Air Force declares that its priority is to precisely target insurgents while avoiding civilian casualties. They strongly aver that they are very concerned about civilian casualties, that they take extreme measures to avoid them, and that “casualty avoidance can be the targeting team’s most time-intensive task.”<sup>7</sup> At the Combined Air and Space Operations Center, Middle East, a military lawyer (judge advocate) is always on duty to provide advice reflecting the Law of Armed Conflict, the international treaties that prohibit intentional targeting of civilians and require militaries to minimize risks to civilians. The Air Force also asserts that a strict NATO protocol requires high-level approval for air strikes when civilians are known to be in or near Al-Qaeda or Taliban targets, and when civilians are detected, strikes are called off. The U.S. military

claims its targeting is extremely precise, and that it has called off many operations when it appeared that civilian casualties might result.<sup>8</sup> Such claims are consistent with counterinsurgency (COIN) tactics outlined in Field Manual 3-24.

Today, UAV use is being hyped as “the future of war,” the “only good thing to come out of the war on terrorism,” and an effective and highly discriminate counterterrorism and counterinsurgency weapon. No one doubts that robots will eventually occupy a central role in the U.S. military. Surviving aspects of the Army’s now-defunct Future Combat Systems modernization effort (now the Army Brigade Combat Team Modernization Program) call for a host of unmanned vehicles and combat drones. As P.W. Singer has shown in *Wired for War*, such modernization entails unprecedented changes in perspective.<sup>9</sup>

However, that UAVs are more cost effective in lives and money and the sunny view that they will someday take our soldiers entirely out of harm’s way are now appearing to be questionable propositions. The extraordinary hype these weapons still garner as the “greatest, weirdest, coolest, hardware in the American arsenal” is beginning to look like



U.S. Air Force

MQ-1 Predator, armed with an AGM-114 Hellfire missile.

unexamined haste.<sup>10</sup> An article in *Newsweek* in September 2009 went so far as to categorize the drones as “weapons porn.”<sup>11</sup> This view of surgical high-tech precision and effectiveness is beginning to wear thin in the face of available statistics.

Even if we question the statistics that seem to indicate that drone platforms are more inaccurate than thought, the data does point to a need to critique and reassess their use in COIN. The effects of drone-related mistakes could be undermining U.S. goals to have the Afghan security forces take over. Even if U.S. strategy shifts to counterterrorism, the Afghan National Army has to fight a counterinsurgency, and winning hearts and minds will be at the core of their struggle.

### Critique of the Drone War

The evidence shows that the hyperbole surrounding UAVs and their vaunted precision is sheer fantasy, if not literally science fiction. There have been many mistakes, such as the one in June 2009 when “U.S. drones launched an attack on a compound in South Waziristan. Locals rushed to the scene to rescue survivors. A U.S. drone then launched more missiles at them, leaving a total of 13 dead. The next day, local people were involved in a funeral procession when the U.S. struck again” and 70 of the mourners were killed.<sup>12</sup>

***The evidence shows that the hyperbole surrounding UAVs and their vaunted precision is sheer fantasy, if not literally science fiction.***

The drone strikes have already caused well over a thousand civilian casualties, have had a particular affinity for hitting weddings and funerals, and appear to be seriously fueling the insurgency.<sup>13</sup> Rather than presenting a picture of them as nearly single-handedly winning these wars, statistics suggest it would be more accurate to say that they are now almost single-handedly losing it. The question is whether tactics are serving strategy. A UN report in 2007 concluded that U.S. air strikes were among the principle motivations for suicide attackers in Afghanistan, and at the end of 2008 a survey of 42 Taliban fighters revealed that 12 had seen family members killed in air strikes, and six joined the insurgency after such attacks. Far more who have not joined have offered their support.<sup>14</sup>

The drone attacks in Pakistan, which have been touted as the most successful, have been responsible for the most civilian casualties. Of the 60



AP Photo/Shakil Adil

Supporters of a Pakistani religious group rally against the suspected U.S. drone missile strikes on tribal areas, April 2009, Karachi, Pakistan.

Predator strikes there between 14 January 2006 and 8 April 2009, only 10 hit their actual targets, a hit rate of 17 percent, and they killed 687 civilians. In total, Pakistan Body Count, which only tracks drone casualties, says that by the end of March 2011, 2,205 civilians had been killed and 909 seriously wounded, and that this represents just a three percent success rate against Al-Qaeda.<sup>15</sup>

Even David Kilcullen, the author of *The Accidental Guerrilla*,<sup>16</sup> dubbed by the media a “counterinsurgency guru,” told Congress in April 2009 that the drone attacks in Pakistan were back-firing in the COIN fight and should be stopped:

Since 2006, we’ve killed 14 senior Al-Qaeda leaders using drone strikes; in the same period, we’ve killed 700 Pakistani civilians in the same area. The drone strikes are highly unpopular. They are deeply aggravating to the population. And they’ve given rise to a feeling of anger that coalesces the population around the extremists and leads to spikes of extremism . . . The current path that we are on is leading us to loss of Pakistani government control over its own population.<sup>17</sup>

Kilcullen pointedly observed that the “kill ratio” has been 50 civilians for every militant killed, a “hit rate” of 2 percent, or 98 percent civilian casualties, which can hardly be called “precision.”

Kilcullen argues that the appeal of the drones is that their effects are measurable, killing key leaders and hampering insurgent operations, but their costs have far outweighed the benefits for three reasons. First, they create a “siege mentality” and casualties among civilians, which leads to support for the insurgents. Second, they generate public outrage not only in the local area, but throughout the country, as well as internationally and at home in the United States. Third, their use represents a tactic—more accurately, a form of technology—substituting for a strategy. Kilcullen concludes, “Every one of these dead noncombatants [creates] an alienated family, a new desire for revenge, and more recruits for a militant movement that has grown exponentially even as drone strikes have increased.”<sup>18</sup>

Furthermore, even when the air strikes have succeeded in killing militant leaders, in many cases this has simply turned them into martyrs. For example, over 5,000 people attended the funeral of rebel commander Ghulam Yahya Akbari, killed

in a U.S. air strike in October 2009. Reports said that “thousands wept” and “women wailed from the rooftops” as a long procession of over 5,000 accompanied his body to the grave site near his native village in Herat Province.<sup>19</sup>

A poll in Afghanistan in November 2009 reported that 76 percent of respondents were opposed to Pakistan partnering with the United States on missile attacks against militants by drone aircraft.<sup>20</sup> The reliance on air power has served to undermine public support in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and continued aerial bombing will result in more civilian casualties, leading to more resentment, resulting in more support and recruits for the insurgents, leading to a long, losing war. As Engelhardt argues:

Force creates counterforce. The application of force, especially from the air, is a reliable engine for the creation of enemies. It is a force multiplier. Every time an air strike is called in anywhere on the planet, anyone who orders it should automatically assume that left in its wake will be grieving, angry husbands, wives, sisters, brothers, relatives, friends—people vowing revenge, a pool of potential candidates filled with the anger of genuine injustice. From the point of view of our actual enemies, you can’t bomb, missile, and strafe often enough, because when you do so, you are more or less guaranteed to create their newest recruits.<sup>21</sup>

Singer agrees, saying, “We are now creating a very similar problem to what the Israelis face in Gaza. They’ve gotten very good at killing Hamas leaders. They have in no way shape or form succeeded in preventing a 12-year-old in joining Hamas.”<sup>22</sup>

## Implications for Moral and Strategic Efficacy

In military operations, targeting decisions must be made to minimize civilian casualties; a decision made otherwise is a war crime—this point is uncontroversial. The further point is that not minimizing civilian casualties is highly counterproductive strategically. Because most drone victims are civilians, hunter-killer drones appear, *prima facie*, to be criminal weapons of state terror on one

hand and strategically wrongheaded on the other. In the UK, Lord Bingham has compared them to cluster bombs and land mines, weapons that have been deemed too cruel for use. Kilcullen judged their use as “immoral.”<sup>23</sup> Such naming does not bode well for attaining COIN objectives. Robert Naiman, in “Stopping Pakistan Drone Strikes Suddenly Plausible,” has observed:

Since it is manifestly apparent that, 1) the drone strikes are causing civilian casualties, 2) they are turning Pakistani public opinion against their government and against the US, 3) they are recruiting more support for insurgents and 4) even military experts think the strikes are doing more harm than good, even from the point of view of US officials, why shouldn't they stop?<sup>24</sup>

The answer appears to be because the military argues that they are the only game in town, and they are seen as an alternative to more troops on the ground, thereby reducing U.S. casualties—a strategic concern over national and international will. A further related reason appears to be because now there is a huge and very powerful multi-billion dollar “military-industrial-media-entertainment” complex driving it. The degree to which this influence shapes policy is anyone’s guess, but it likely helps not at all in determining the best strategic approach. Instead, the drive to technology often creates an inertia that works against developing sound strategy. Colonel Douglas MacGregor has observed that, “[American] politicians frequently substitute a fascination with direct action in the form of air strikes or special operations killings for strategy.”<sup>25</sup>

Perspective is everything in making moral and strategic assessments. To President Obama and most Americans, the drones are seen as terrorist-killers,

***...the drive to technology often creates an inertia that works against developing sound strategy.***

but on the ground among the civilian populations of Afghanistan and Pakistan they are viewed as fearsome and indiscriminate assassins. From the “top down” perspective, remote controlled hunter-killer drones are perceived as a fantastically successful new weapon, right out of science fiction. But from the “bottom up” perspective of the targeted populations, they have been experienced as a flawed weapon which is feared, resented, and despised because of the collateral damage they have caused. They have been prime recruiting agents for the militants and have alienated the “hearts and minds” of the population<sup>26</sup>

During the 1980s, the use of helicopter gunships by the Soviets in their war in Afghanistan and by the militaries armed by President Reagan in El Salvador and Guatemala generated discussion of the psychology of the *fear* of aerial attack—of death from above experienced as “state terror”: “Many Afghans now say they would rather have the Taliban back in power than nervously eye the skies every day.”<sup>27</sup> A villager who survived a drone attack in Pakistan explained that “even the children, at play, were acutely conscious of drones flying overhead.”<sup>28</sup> Psychologically, Afghans and Pakistanis in the tribal zone view the drones as dangerous predators, and they are never going to see them as their protectors. Ignoring this psychology would likely prove to be strategic folly.

For many, the much touted sophistication of UAV technology only makes the civilian deaths more galling. They ask, if it’s so sophisticated, how come in practice it’s so indiscriminate and kills so many innocent people? That is the experience on the ground. As one local politician in Afghanistan expressed it: “They are bombarding villages because they hear the Taliban are there. But this is not the way, to bomb and kill 20 people for one Taliban. This is why people are losing hope and trust in the government and the internationals.” Like many Afghans and Pakistanis, he was starting to suspect a more sinister meaning behind the civilian deaths: “The Americans can make a mistake once, twice, maybe three times,” he said. “But twenty, thirty times? I am not convinced that they are doing this without intention.”<sup>29</sup> True or not, this is a perception that is growing in the region, and the trajectory of the perception is making the information realm of coalition efforts nearly untenable.



(AP Photo/Fraidoon Pooyaa, File)

**An Afghan woman and her daughter wail after their relative was killed in an air strike in Azizabad, a village in the Shindand district of Herat Province, Afghanistan, 23 August 2008.**

Michael Ignatief warns that virtual war is a dangerous, seductive illusion: “We see ourselves as noble warriors and our enemies as despicable tyrants. We see war as a surgical scalpel and not a bloodstained sword. In so doing we mis-describe ourselves as we mis-describe the instruments of death. We need to stay away from such fables of self-righteous invulnerability.”<sup>30</sup> Virtual war dehumanizes the victims, desensitizes the perpetrators of violence, and lowers the moral and psychological barriers to killing.

As a counterinsurgency weapon, therefore, hunter-killer drones appear to be losers. They are creating more militants than they kill, and their escalating use is alienating or “losing the hearts and minds” of the civilian populations in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Drones killed more than 700 civilians in 2009 alone.<sup>31</sup> In October that year, the UN Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial Executions warned that U.S. drone strikes that kill innocent civilians violate international laws against summary execution and

represent extra-judicial killings.<sup>32</sup> In other words, they can be viewed as a terrible and terrifying new form of state-sanctioned “death squad.”

The dark psychology of state terror in the use of unmanned assassination drones is revealed in their names: “Predators” and (Grim) “Reapers.” These names in themselves suggest a willful obtuseness about the efficacy of information operations. Civilians hear these names and are psychologically conditioned by them: they are not only terrified by hunter-killer drones overhead, many are radicalized. Polls in Afghanistan and Pakistan show that a desire to strike back against the United States increases after every drone attack, and when Faisal Shahzad, the Pakistani-American who tried to plant a bomb in Times Square in May 2010, was asked at his trial how he could justify planting a bomb that could kill children he answered: “When the drones hit, they don’t see children, they don’t see anybody. They kill women, children, they kill everybody. . . I am part of the answer . . . I’m avenging the attack.”<sup>33</sup>

Similarly, while the Israelis now routinely use UAVs to bomb the Gaza Strip, this has only served to radicalize more Palestinians: “Robot drones have successfully bombed much of Gaza from secular Fatah to Islamist Hamas to fanatical Jihad.”<sup>34</sup> By

losing hearts and minds, the UAV war in Afghanistan and Pakistan is losing the fight against and increasing the threat of terrorism, and making further terror attacks on America more likely, not less. **MR**

## NOTES

1. Tom Engelhardt, "Drone Race to a Known Future: Why Military Dreams Fail—and Why it Doesn't Matter," *Truthout*, November 10, 2009, <<http://www.truthout.org/1111095>>.
2. New America Foundation, <<http://counterterrorism.newamerica.net/drones>> (30 March 2011).
3. Engelhardt.
4. James Der Darian, *Virtuous War: Mapping the Military-Industrial-Media-Entertainment Network* (New York: Routledge, 2009).
5. *The Week*, April 3, 2009, 7.
6. CBS Interactive Staff, "Drones: America's New Air Force," <[http://news.cnet.com/8301-11386\\_3-10237404-76.html](http://news.cnet.com/8301-11386_3-10237404-76.html)> (11 May 11 2009).
7. Cited in Anna Mulrine, "Targeting the Enemy: Inside the Air Force's Control Center for Iraq and Afghanistan," *US News & World Report*, 9 June 2008, 26.
8. Mulrine, 28.
9. P.W. Singer, *Wired for War: The Robotics Revolution and Conflict in the 21st Century* (New York: Penguin, 2009). Also see Bill Yenne, *Attack of the Drones: A History of Unmanned Aerial Combat* (Osceola, WI: Zenith, 2004) and Steven Zaloga, *Unmanned Aerial Vehicles: Robotic Air Warfare 1917-2007* (Buffalo, MN: Osprey, 2008).
10. Priya Satia, "Attack of the Drones," *The Nation*, 9 November 2009, 14, 16.
11. David Graham, "Weapons Porn: The Greatest, Weirdest, Coolest Hardware in the American Arsenal," *Newsweek*, 23 September 2009, <<http://www.newsweek.com/id/215823>>.
12. Kathy Kelly, "Now We See You, Now We Don't," *Truthout*, 26 June 2009, <<http://truthout.org/062609R?>>.
13. Tom Engelhardt, "What Are Afghan Lives Worth?" *Truthout*, 7 July 2009, <<http://www.truthout.org/070709B?n>>.
14. Anand Gopal, "The Surge That Failed: Afghanistan Under the Bombs," *Truthout*, 10 October 2008, <<http://www.truthout.org/100908U?>>.
15. Pakistan Body Count, <<http://www.pakistanbodycount.org/>> (30 March 2011).
16. David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Middle of a Big One* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).
17. Cited in Robert Naiman, "Stopping Pakistan Drone Strikes Suddenly Plausible," *Truthout*, 7 May 2009, <<http://www.truthout.org/050709A?>>.
18. David Kilcullen and Andrew Exum, "Death from Above, Outrage Down Below," *The New York Times*, 17 May 2009.
19. Jean MacKenzie and Mustafa Saber, "Did a US 'Hit' Create an Afghan Hero?" *Truthout*, 15 October 2009, <<http://www.truthout.org/1015093?>>.
20. Tom Engelhardt, "War of the Worlds: London 1898, Kabul 2009," *Truthout*, 8 October 2009, <<http://www.truthout.org/1009091>>.
21. Tom Engelhardt, "Catch 2,200: Nine Propositions on the US Air War for Terror," *Truthout*, 10 April 2008, <[http://truthout.org/docs\\_2006/printer\\_041008S.sshml](http://truthout.org/docs_2006/printer_041008S.sshml)>.
22. Cited in Dan De Luce, "No Let-Up in US Drone War in Pakistan," *Truthout*, 22 July 2009, <<http://www.truthout.org/072209B?n>>.
23. Priya Satia, "Attack of the Drones," *The Nation*, 9 November 2009, 14, 16.
24. Naiman.
25. Douglas MacGregor, "It's Time for Us to Leave Afghanistan," *Defense News*, 25 May 2009.
26. See Abdul Mujahid, "Aerial Bombing Makes Terrorists," *Truthout*, 24 May 2009, <<http://truthout.org/052409Y?>>, and Jonathan Landay, "Do US Drones Kill Pakistani Extremists or Recruit Them?," *Truthout*, 7 April 2009, <<http://www.truthout.org/040809S?>>.
27. Anand Gopal, "The Surge That Failed: Afghanistan Under the Bombs," *Truthout*, 10 October 2008, <<http://www.truthout.org/100908U?>>.
28. Kathy Kelly, "Now We See You, Now We Don't," *Truthout*, 26 June 2009, <<http://truthout.org/062609R?>>.
29. Cited in Aryn Baker, "Backlash from Afghan Civilian Deaths," *Time*, 23 June 2009, <<http://www.time.com/time/world/article/08,8599,1636551,00.html>>.
30. Michael Ignatief, *Virtual War: Kosovo and Beyond* (London: Chato and Windus, 2000), 214-215.
31. Johann Hari, "Obama's Escalating Robot War in Pakistan is Making a Terror Attack More Likely," *The Huffington Post*, 15 October 2010, <<http://www.common-dreams.org/print/61390>>.
32. See "US Drone Strikes May Break International Law," *Radio Netherlands Worldwide*, 28 October 2009, <<http://www.mw.n.international-justice/print/35807>>; Daya Gamage, "US Un-manned Drone Attacks Killing Civilians are Extra-Judicial Killings-UN Report," *Asian Tribune*, 27 June 2010, <<http://www.asiantribune.com/news/2010/06/27/un-un-manned-drone-attacks-killing-civilians-are-extra-judicial-killings-%E2%80%9292un-report>>; and Scott Horton, "Rules for Drone Wars: Six Questions for Philip Alston," *Harpers Magazine*, 9 June 2010, <<http://harpers.org/archive/2010/06/hbc-90007190>>.
33. Hari.
34. Ibid.
35. Photo: AP. From J. Sri Raman, "The Scream and the Drone," *Truthout*, 9 April 2009, <<http://www.truthout.org/040909K>>.
36. Photo: U.S. Air Force, from Robert Naiman, "Stopping Pakistan Drone Strikes Suddenly Plausible," *Truthout*, 7 May, <<http://www.truthout.org/050709A?>>.
37. Photo: AP. From Tom Engelhardt, "What are Afghan Lives Worth?" *Truthout*, 7 July 2009, <<http://www.truthout.org/070709B?n>>.

# Military Review

*Military Review* is a forum for "fearless, thoughtful, but loyal dissent..."

"... this is a sign of institutional vitality, health, and strength."

- Secretary of Defense Robert Gates



## Interested in subscribing?

U.S. military units, embassies, Congressional offices, or any U.S. agency involved in national security can receive editions for free. Send requests to [leav-milrevweb@conus.army.mil](mailto:leav-milrevweb@conus.army.mil).

Private subscriptions are available through the Government Printing Office bookstore (<http://bookstore.gpo.gov>).

For detailed instructions, click on "Reader information" at our homepage (<http://militaryreview.army.mil>).



# Economic Violence

## It's Time to Change the Game

Captain Jonathan Pan, U.S. Army

*This article expresses the opinions of the author and does not reflect the official position of any agency of the Department of Defense.*

*Captain Jonathan Pan served as the economic development officer for 5th Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division in southern Afghanistan. He holds a B.A. in economics and philosophy from Baruch College, City University of New York, and is currently pursuing an M.A. from King's College London's War Studies department.*

---

*PHOTO: U.S. Army soldiers speak with Iraqi students at the reopening of the Baghdad University Museum of Natural History and Internet Cafe. The museum and cafe were rebuilt using \$40,000 of the Commander's Emergency Relief Program funds of the U.S. Army's 1st Armored Division during Operation Iraqi Freedom. (U.S. Army)*

**A**TROOP SURGE IS in progress in Afghanistan, but there should not be a corresponding Commander's Emergency Response Program (CERP) surge. An aid surge in Afghanistan would be an incentive for commercial warlords to maintain perpetual war because their continued financial success depends on it. Since NATO has failed to influence the very actors destroying the Afghan people's confidence in their government (i.e. Ahmed Wali Karzai and company), it is time to influence them financially.

As Tony Corn asserts in *Small Wars Journal*, "nonlethal warfare does not mean nonviolent warfare, but a re-definition of violence itself."<sup>1</sup> NATO and the COIN industry have been strong proponents of nonlethal warfare while ignoring one of the most powerful nonlethal tools at their disposal: the U.S. dollar. This isn't a new concept. During the Cold War the United States sold cheap grain to the Soviet Union, and the Soviets paid for the grain through hard currency earned by its oil and natural gas exports. This demonstrated where the Soviet Union could be leveraged economically: through its dependence on U.S. agriculture—bad for the Soviets because the U.S. could turn it off and good for the U.S. agricultural community because it opened up a large new market—and through its dependence on rising oil and natural gas prices in the 1970s. When the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in 1979, President Jimmy Carter imposed a grain embargo for the rest of his presidency. To some degree, the Soviet Union could be considered a one-crop economy (oil and gas), so that proved to be devastating.<sup>2</sup> For example, Ronald Reagan's administration secretly pressed Saudi Arabia to increase oil production to reduce world oil prices in the 1980s. Lower oil prices meant less revenues for the Soviet Union. Combining that with increased U.S. defense expenditure created economic violence at its finest. *It is time to bring back economic violence as a viable military strategy.*

## Economic Leverage

Economic violence today could appear in the form of an aid freeze, which would be painful for commercial warlords because they might have to think twice before spending three million U.S. dollars in a single Las Vegas trip. Ironically, this trip came to light through a conversation with a certain Sherzai (of the Gul Agha Sherzai clan) who was waiting in line to purchase goods (for U.S. troops) at the Kandahar Airfield U.S. Post Exchange. Gul Agha Sherzai is currently the governor of Nangarhar Province in eastern Afghanistan, and he has served as the Kandahar Provincial governor in the past. According to *The Globe and Mail*, “Mr. Sherzai had admitted to receiving one million dollars a week from his share of import duties and from the opium trade.”<sup>3</sup> In addition, the Sherzai clan reaps major financial benefits from projects in and around Kandahar Airfield, the main NATO base in southern Afghanistan. Major General Abdul Razziq Sherzai, brother of Gul Agha Sherzai, broke ground on a new athletic complex in April 2010, with a “soccer field, physical training pad, and a running track,” to the tune of \$83 million. This amount includes “expanding dormitories, utilities and other facilities.”<sup>4</sup> According to Major General Sherzai’s son (the owner of Sherzai Construction and Supply Company), the Sherzai clan has a large stake in the aforementioned project and all other projects around Kandahar Airfield because “General Sherzai owns the land.” (After he made this statement, he quickly corrected himself by saying that the defense ministry actually owned the land.)

Aside from the fact that the Afghan National Security Forces do not face any air threat from the Taliban, the only other logical reason for expanding the Kandahar Air Wing would be to increase rotary wing assets in support of Afghan ground troops. Even so, the \$83 million is only for facility construction and does not include the cost of new aircraft. This amount of money could pay the sala-

**...to employ 39,903 more police officers will probably help more than any amount of increase in rotary wing support.**

ries of 39,903 new police officers for a year (new police recruits were paid \$240 a month in 2010). Using that \$83 million to employ 39,903 more police officers would probably help more than any amount of increase in rotary wing support.

The primary factor for the existence of such projects is the bureaucratic propensity of government agencies to expend as much of their budgets as they can before the end of the fiscal year. A United States Agency for International Aid (USAID) officer in Kandahar summed up the spending culture quite nicely during a conversation with me. He said, “There is over \$500 million left in CERP for this fiscal year but only three months left, so you guys should hurry.”

According to the *Special Investigator General for Afghanistan Reconstruction’s (SIGAR) Quarterly Report to the U.S. Congress (April 2010)*, “As of March 31, 2010, the United States had appropriated nearly \$51.5 billion for relief and reconstruction in Afghanistan since fiscal year (FY) 2002.” Of that \$51.5 billion, I am certain that less than half is transparent enough for auditing purposes. The U.S. military keeps a meticulous online CERP database, which can trace projects to a ten-digit grid. Meanwhile, looking for specific USAID (or any other aid agency) information is tantamount to looking into a black hole. This problem does not require invoking the Freedom of Information Act. The data is not hidden because it does not even exist. The majority of USAID programs are tracked at the provincial level at best. This makes auditing and inspecting old projects a difficult endeavor. Compounding the spending culture is the propensity for building Afghan projects to U.S. or international standards.

A 7.8-km road project in Spin Boldak, Kandahar, was estimated and funded at \$9,550,190 but awarded to the winning contractor for \$4,494,629. For an unknown reason, a previous project left a 7.8-km stretch of Highway 4 unpaved. As luck would have it, Gul Agha Sherzai has another “Abdul Razziq” in his entourage, his protégé, the infamous Colonel Abdul Razziq (no relation to Major General Abdul Razziq Sherzai) of the Afghan Border Police. Colonel Razziq has been involved with both road projects; he is accused of placing the contractor of the first road project in jail for delays caused by the provincial governor.



(U.S. Air Force, MSGT Juan Valdes)

**Afghan contractors working for the U.S. Agency for International Development install a drainage system at the Joint District Community Center in Arghandab District, Kandahar Province, Afghanistan, 13 December 2009.**

The situation was conveniently resolved when the contractor's associates paid the governor a visit. A writer who recently returned from Kandahar has told me that the good colonel has been promoted to brigadier general.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers designed a 16-classroom, two-story school for \$2.5 million. The Zabul Provincial Reconstruction Team estimated the cost of a similar-sized Ministry of Education school at \$440,000. The main difference in price? The \$2.5 million design is earthquake resistant by U.S. standards while the \$440,000 design complies with Afghan standards.

Careless spending led to the Sherzai Las Vegas incident, which is a story that reinforces the Afghan public's perception that international aid does not benefit the common person. Besides gambling, some warlords build exquisite mansions in Kabul, one of which rents for \$47,000 a month.<sup>5</sup> In Kandahar City, the prime real estate is Aino Mino—a development “spearheaded” by Ahmed Wali Karzai's brother, Mahmoud Karzai.<sup>6</sup> Major General Sher Mohammed Zazai, the commander of the Afghan National Army 205th Corps based in

Kandahar, has ordered an investigation of Ahmed Wali Karzai's involvement in building illegally on government land. We have yet to see if this is an anticorruption move or simply a business move of the Tajik-dominated defense ministry against the Kandahar Pashtun elite.

Aside from the commercial warlords, the government itself is failing to provide for the populace. Due to easy and abundant international aid money, provincial ministries create a wish list (they call it a provincial development plan) containing what they want, but cannot fund through their own government. The Kandahar Provincial Development Plan for 2010 had the following highlights: “construction of a museum” for \$1,087,000; “construction of cement factory” for \$150,000,000; “construction of 10,000 apartments in three blocks in Kandahar City” for \$70,000,000.<sup>7</sup> In the middle of a raging insurgency with public officials being publicly assassinated in mosques (the deputy mayor in April 2010) or killed in suicide attacks (the deputy provincial governor in January 2011), is this what the provincial government should really be focused on?

Instead of focusing his efforts on repairing craters on the highways, the Kandahar director of public works, engineer Abdul Mohammad Ehsan, spent his time trying to solicit business in Kandahar. Kandaharis love it when Kabul businessmen, who frequently subcontract work to Kandahar companies from the comfort of their Kabul mansions, keep winning the prime contracts. The Kandahar Department of Public Works will not operate outside a 10-km radius of Kandahar City. To fund any CERP project, one has to obtain a memorandum of agreement for sustainment from the respective government department. To get to any line director, one has to work through the Kandahar provincial reconstruction team's local hire in charge of setting up meetings with directors. During my deployment, Kham Mohammad Khadim was that contact.

Khadim's cousin conveniently owns a construction company named Southern Afghanistan Development Construction Company, and during some phone calls, it seemed that Khadim would delay any meetings unless a few small projects would flow to his cousin.

While such Afghans have financial incentives for perpetual war, some NATO civilian advisors and contractors have incentives just as lucrative: some get paid more than the vice president of the United States (\$230,700).

To be fair, there are always risks in a war zone, but most contractors themselves would concede that the primary risk is of a random rocket attack on a heavily secured base. Perhaps, it is more likely to be hit by a cab in New York City. Some interpreters' salaries are on par with or exceed a U.S. general officer's pay (up to \$200,500). With so much money on the line—Mission Essential Personnel received a no-bid, one-year, \$679 million extension of its contract to field interpreters to the U.S. Army in Afghanistan in May 2010—one would think that Dari speakers would not be deployed to the Pashtun south where they are utterly useless—yet that often happens. Contractors are the military's way of doing

something that it cannot do with its limited combat power. In some cases, it makes more sense to secure a company-strength (120 soldier) combat operating post for \$1 million a year with local nationals than to dedicate a whole infantry platoon, which would take away a third of the company's combat power. In other cases, such as law enforcement professionals, human terrain teams, or other advisors, the benefits remain to be seen.

## Time for Change

It is time to rein in both Afghans and NATO contractors. While military violence causes media uproar and a voter backlash at home, economic violence would be tolerated and perhaps even cherished in the United States. (Would a U.S. taxpayer be angry that an Afghan warlord cannot spend \$3 million in Las Vegas anymore?) If NATO adopts a policy of economic violence, it has an opportunity to change the game. The new game aims to coerce the commercial warlords to help end perpetual warfare. To be sure, they have the means (guns, men, and money) to do so. In order to adopt a strategy of economic violence, NATO should immediately halt all noncombat-essential contracts that do not directly benefit coalition forces, deploy engineer assets capable of supporting its tactical engineer needs, limit funding for aid, and reevaluate the benefits of having a large contractor force.

This strategy would prevent commercial warlords from enriching themselves on non-combat-essential contracts. The troops can live without the international eateries on the main bases that are supplied through trucking companies complicit in protection rackets. Having internal engineer assets prevents the incentive for contractors to sabotage projects. When blowing up projects stops being profitable, non-ideological contractors will no longer have a reason to do so. Every NATO member provides some form of aid, but the United States provides the bulk of it and should therefore lead the way in limiting it. The U.S. Congress should consider limiting the budgets

***...one would think that Dari speakers would not be deployed to the Pashtun south where they are utterly useless—yet that happens often.***

for the Department of Defense’s CERP program and all USAID programs in Afghanistan for Fiscal Year 2012. We certainly cannot have three-letter agencies running around with bags of money. The current logic seems to be that spending a few billion dollars *could* save even one NATO soldier’s life, and therefore it is worth it. However, that line of logic puts the premium on force protection rather than the mission, which is convincing the Afghan people that their government is legitimate. U.S. combat commanders are incented to have minimum casualties above completing the mission. Any U.S. or Afghan casualty will generate scrutiny. Commanders are already handcuffed; the continued influx of international aid into the pockets of the elite will limit their capacity to accomplish the mission even more.

Some experts have been voicing their concerns about aid for quite a while, and others are beginning to get on board. Andrew Wilder, a researcher at Tufts University, wrote an op-ed piece for *The Boston Globe* in September 2009, which revealed, “instead of winning hearts and minds, Afghan perceptions of aid and aid actors are overwhelmingly

negative. And instead of contributing to stability, in many cases aid is contributing to conflict and instability.”<sup>8</sup> This sentiment culminated in the “Winning ‘Hearts and Minds’ in Afghanistan: Assessing the Effectiveness of Development Aid in COIN Operations” conference at Wilton Park in March 2010. A report from the conference had similar views on aid. It stated that—

- Current stabilization strategies are based on entrenched and often questionable assumptions.
- The implementation of counterinsurgency doctrine has not adequately addressed political issues.
- Effectively designed and delivered aid does seem to have some stabilization benefits at a tactical level, but not at a strategic level.
- Less is often more. Too much aid can be destabilizing.
- Aid seems to be losing hearts and minds rather than winning them in Afghanistan.
- Strengthening provincial and district governance and fostering effective and transparent Afghan leadership that connects to Kabul is key.<sup>9</sup>



(U.S. Air Force, MSgt Juan Valdes)

Afghan contractors working for the U.S. Agency for International Development spray water during road construction at the Joint District Community Center in Arghandab District, Kandahar Province, Afghanistan, 13 December 2009.

NATO should not continue its current broken wartime contracting strategy. Rethinking aid is almost as important as reeducating contracting officials who oversee the disbursement of aid. When I provided intelligence that a certain contractor was allegedly paying the Taliban, a U.S. contracting official replied with the following:

Subject acquisition is being solicited on a best value, low price, and technically acceptable basis. Local government officials should be advised that we are required to follow U.S. law in the acquisition of goods and services in this country. It is a violation of the Procurement Integrity Act for anyone to reveal or share with you, the governor, or anyone else any information on subject acquisition. Your direction, if carried out, would result in a serious violation of said statute. I would advise otherwise.<sup>10</sup>

While ultimately the suspected contractor was not allowed to bid on that project, acquiring goods and services on a “best value” at the “lowest price, technically acceptable” basis leads to a counterintuitive situation—sometimes the lowest bidders are corrupt. In this particular case, a Popalzai company paid discounted security fees to local commanders and reduced wages to local unskilled labor because this company was affiliated with Ahmed Wali Karzai.

## Economic Violence

NATO’s best and brightest are armed with the world’s most advanced technologies, billions of dollars for aid to “properly” conduct “COIN-centric full spectrum operations.” Yet the basic human principle that people respond to incentives is ignored. Major Grant Martin wrote an article in *Small Wars Journal* in which he replaced the word “economist” with “military theorist” and the word “economics” with “the study of warfare” in a *New York Times* op-ed piece.<sup>11</sup> This modified op-ed reads just as well with the substitute words.

Infantrymen can patrol all day and do all the the right COIN things, but at the end of the day what can an infantry platoon leader say to an Afghan farmer who sees all the inequities right in front of him? Freezing billions of dollars worth of aid would not affect the common Afghan who has not seen a penny of it in the last nine years. However, it will give a strong incentive to those who have been silently promoting perpetual war to choose the Afghan government’s side. Economic violence is as much about limiting funds as it is about transparency of money used. Both are necessary. Perhaps, there will be a study someday that proves international aid to be a positive factor. However, this study cannot even start without an accurate account of every dollar spent. To that end, NATO should immediately commence a campaign of economic violence and financial transparency. **MR**

---

### NOTES

1. Tony Corn, “Peaceful Rise through Unrestricted Warfare: Grand Strategy with Chinese Characteristics,” *Small Wars Journal* (June 2010): 5, <<http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/journal/docs-temp/449-corn.pdf>> (27 June 2010).

2. Robert G. Jensen, Theodore Shabad, and Arthur W. Wright, *Soviet Natural Resources in the World Economy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 631.

3. Doug Saunders, “Corruption eats away at Afghan government,” *The Globe and Mail*, 30 March 2009, <<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/article683261.ece>> (27 June 2010).

4. Joe Bauer, “Kandahar Air Wing Commander Breaks Ground on New Athletic Complex,” *NATO Training Mission Website*, 15 April 2010, <<http://www.ntm-a.com/news/categories/aircorps/468-kandahar-air-wing-commander-breaks-ground-on-new-athletic-complex?lang=>> (27 June 2010).

5. Karen Bruillard, “Garishly incongruous ‘poppy palaces’ lure affluent Afghans,” *Stars and Stripes*, 9 June 2010, <<http://www.stripes.com/garishly-incongruous-poppy-palaces-lure-affluent-afghans-1.106485>> (27 June 2010).

6. Dion Nissenbaum, “Afghanistan president’s brother, Ahmed Wali Karzai, under

investigation,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, 18 May 2010, <<http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Asia-South-Central/2010/0518/Afghanistan-president-s-brother-Ahmed-Wali-Karzai-under-investigation>> (28 June 2010).

7. Kandahar Provincial Development Plan 2010.

8. Andrew Wilder, “A ‘weapons system’ based on wishful thinking,” *The Boston Globe*, 16 September 2009, <[http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/editorial\\_opinion/oped/articles/2009/09/16/a\\_weapons\\_system\\_based\\_on\\_wishful\\_thinking/](http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/editorial_opinion/oped/articles/2009/09/16/a_weapons_system_based_on_wishful_thinking/)> (27 June 2010).

9. Report on Wilton Park Conference 1022, “Winning ‘Hearts and Minds’ in Afghanistan: Assessing the Effectiveness of Development Aid in COIN Operations,” 11-14 March 2010, <<http://www.wiltonpark.org.uk/documents/conferences/WP1022/pdfs/WP1022.pdf>> (27 June 2010).

10. Private email correspondence with a U.S. contracting official on 25 April 2010.

11. Grant Martin, “The Need for the Return of History,” *Small Wars Journal* (12 June 2010), <<http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/journal/docs-temp/456-martin.pdf>> (27 June 2010).



# An Old Man's Thoughts on War and Peace

Edward Bernard Glick

**W**HEN I WAS a young man in graduate school, two books impressed me mightily. They still do. One is Konrad Lorenz's *On Aggression*. An M.D. and a Ph.D. and a 1973 Nobel laureate in medicine and physiology, Lorenz established the field of ethology, the study of the behavior of animals within their natural environment. In his prologue to *On Aggression*, Lorenz wrote, "The subject of this book is aggression, that is to say the fighting instinct in beast and man, which is directed against members of the same species." According to him, animals, particularly males, are biologically programmed to fight over resources and turf, and this behavior is part of natural selection. In short, to a great degree, aggressive behavior is innate.

The other book that influenced me mightily as a young man was Robert Ardrey's *The Territorial Imperative*. Ardrey popularized and expanded on Lorenz's ideas. After reading Ardrey, a Book-of-the-Month Club reviewer asked, "Are we a territorial species? Do we defend ourselves, whether by war or other means, because we have learned to do so—or because, as animals, we must?"

Reading Lorenz and Ardrey provides a good reason for believing the Roman proverb *Si vis pacem para bellum*, "He who wishes peace should prepare for war." (The full text of the proverb goes on to say, "He who desires victory should carefully train his soldiers; he who wants favorable results should fight relying on skill, not chance.")

War is no longer limited to soldiers in uniform battling each other. War now includes terrorists who do not wear uniforms, do not represent a sovereign state, and use civilian airplanes and motor vehicles to crash into buildings in order to kill their enemies.

Despite these changes in war, many pacifists who cling to the notion that war is immoral continue to forget that soldiers, not sermons, stopped Islam from advancing into Christian Europe at the Battle of Vienna in 1683. It was

A previous contributor to *Military Review*, Edward Bernard Glick is professor emeritus of political science at Temple University, Philadelphia, PA. He is also the author of *Soldiers, Scholars, and Society: The Social Impact of the American Military*.

PHOTO: German officers captured in French Morocco, June 1940. (U.S. Army, LTC Robert Longini)

not sermons, but soldiers, who freed the American colonists from Great Britain's rule in 1781, and soldiers, not sermons, truly emancipated America's slaves in 1865 and liberated the survivors of the Nazi death camps in 1945.

Counterterrorism is the predominant form of contemporary war. One might say that, after the attack on New York's World Trade Center on 11 September 2001, Americans divided themselves into the September 10th people, the September 12th people, and the September 13th people. The September 13th people blame the United States for the events of September 11th and think that the proper U.S. response is to abandon American "arrogance" and American support of Israel. The September 10th people reject these notions, but think that terrorist acts are crimes that should be countered only by our law-enforcement and intelligence communities. The September 12th people believe that today's terrorists want to destroy Western civilization, and that acts of terrorism are acts of war that we must counter with mainly military responses.

When it comes to terrorism beyond our borders, passages from an article I published in 1979 about the Iran hostage crisis come to my mind:

The essential question—and it will cause us great pain in every sense if any of the hostages are harmed or are still being held when these words are printed—is the extent to which the Western world in general, the Third World in particular, and the United States especially, are themselves responsible for this governmentally condoned terrorism.

In its most recurring form, modern terrorism has manifested itself in the confrontation between the Arabs and the Israelis. . . . Decades ago, Israel warned the world, particularly the Western nations, that internationally tolerated terrorism is a political virus that knows no boundaries. If left unchecked it would spread to other causes, continents, and countries.

So long as they thought they were immune from the terrorist virus, aloof bystanders could adopt this kind of logic and base their actions and inactions on it. But there are no aloof bystanders. The

***...internationally tolerated terrorism is a political virus that knows no boundaries.***

Tehran terrorists have proven that once and for all. If the countries of the West do not band together against terrorism, whatever the short-term economic sacrifices, their long-term future as truly sovereign states is quite problematical.

Those who hate America like to discuss war within the framework of American imperialism and colonialism. Yes, the United States took land from the native peoples of North America. But so, too, did the French, British, and Canadians. So did the Spaniards and Portuguese in Latin America. So did the Australians and New Zealanders in the South Seas. So did the Russians, Chinese, and Japanese in Asia and Europe. Did the Scots, Welsh, and Catholics of Northern Ireland want to be a part of Great Britain? Do the Tibetans want to be part of Communist China?

Yes, the United States conquered the Philippines and Puerto Rico in the 1898 Spanish-American War and remained in de facto control of Cuba until 1934. But this country gave the Filipinos independence in 1946, and it has promised statehood or independence to the Puerto Ricans whenever they want to have it.

Yes, President Theodore Roosevelt, influenced by U.S. Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan's sea-power theories, took advantage of a revolt against Colombia to acquire what became the Panama Canal Zone in 1903. The new Panamanian government gave the United States the French concession to construct the Canal, which the United States completed in 1914. But President Jimmy Carter returned both the Zone and the Canal to the Panamanians in 1977.

Yes, in 1945, President Harry Truman ordered the U.S. Army Air Force to drop atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, thus ending Japan's participation in World War II. Yes, for a few years, the United States was the only power with nuclear



U.S. Air Force

The *Bockscar* and its crew, who dropped the “Fat Man” atomic bomb on Nagasaki, 1945.

weapons on this planet, but we blackmailed no one. Nor did we take anyone’s land. By contrast, the Soviet Union incorporated huge swaths of post-war Poland and Germany.

If we compare the United States to Assyria, Babylonia, Persia, Greece, and Rome—or for that matter, Ottoman Turkey, Spain, Portugal, Japan, Russia, Britain, and France—we can only conclude that the United States was and is the least warlike and least imperialistic super power in history.

Of course, there is the question of war within the context of a nuclear-armed Iran. A few years ago, Thomas Friedman of the *New York Times* wrote, “I’d rather live with a nuclear Iran because it is

the wisest thing under the circumstances.” Thomas Friedman may feel this way, but for the leaders of Israel, an Iranian nuclear bomb and its associated delivery systems raise existential questions.

Can the Jewish state live with an Iran that possesses nuclear weapons and the means to deliver them? Can it ignore an Iranian leader who labels the country “a fake regime” that ought to “be wiped off the face of the Earth?” How should it react to President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad’s plans for a second Holocaust, even as he denies that the first one ever happened? Millions of Israelis are descendants of those who died in the Holocaust. In 1981, when Iraq threatened Israel, Israel’s then prime minister, Menachem Begin, ordered the Israeli Air Force to

destroy Iraq's nuclear reactor and then declared that "Israel has nothing to apologize for. In simple logic, we decided to act now, before it is too late. We shall defend our people with all the means at our disposal."

One sometimes hears the argument that if Iran can live with an Israeli bomb, why can't Israel live with an Iranian bomb? The answer is that no Israeli leader has ever threatened to eradicate Iran.

Iran is a large country, but Israel is a tiny one, smaller than New Jersey. At its narrowest point, it is only nine miles wide. Israel's nuclear arsenal can deter its enemies only if they have the wisdom and the sanity to be deterred. During the Cold War, the Russians and the Americans operated under a political and military doctrine known as MAD, for mutual assured destruction. The doctrine assumed that no matter how bad things got between the Soviet Union and the United States—the 1962 Cuban missile crisis being a case in point—neither side would risk annihilation.

The leaders of Iran do not think that way. They reason as follows: "We have 70 million people, and Israel has 7 million. If we attack the Zionists with nuclear bombs, they will respond in kind. If they are lucky, they will kill half of us, but if Allah wills it, we shall kill all of them, and there will still be 35 million of us left."

We humans may enjoy periods of peace—sometimes for a long time—but we shall never entirely rid ourselves of war because we are "wired" to fight over pieces of land. Konrad Lorenz, Robert Ardrey, and Publius Flavius Vegetius Renatus (the man who coined the Latin phrase *Si vis pacem para bellum*) are correct. So, too, is Max Boot, the American author and military historian. He rejects the "sunny, if ahistorical, Enlightenment faith that peace is the natural order of things and war a temporary aberration."

Like it or not, this is the world in which we have lived in the past. This is the world in which we live now. And this is the world in which we shall live in the future. **MR**



U.S. Navy, JO1 Preston Keres

A New York City fireman calls for 10 more rescue workers to make their way into the rubble of the World Trade Center, New York City, 15 September 2001.

# MR Book Reviews



Featured Review

**A CHANCE IN HELL: The Men Who Triumphed Over Iraq's Deadliest City and Turned the Tide of the War**, Jim Michaels, St. Martin's Press, New York, 2010, 259 pages, \$17.15.

The "surge" that changed the course of the war in Iraq was a complex and, in some ways, mysterious event. Its origins and evolution are likely to be a subject of fierce debate among military analysts and historians for years to come. However, what will not be debated is the central role of the "Anbar Awakening" in recasting the terms of the Iraqi conflict. Probably more than any other single factor, it made a victory against the insurgency conceivable.

In *A Chance in Hell*, Jim Michaels traces the beginning of the awakening to a place—Anbar Province's key city, Ramadi—and a partnership—the alliance of two men, an Iraqi sheikh and an American colonel. They were Abdul Sattar Bezia of the Abu Risha tribe and Colonel Sean MacFarland, commander of the 1st Brigade, 1st Armored Division. Sattar was a minor chieftain who had made the bulk of his fortune in oil smuggling. MacFarland was the soft-spoken, devout maverick from upstate New York who led a mechanized "legacy" force that seemed ill-suited for the mission of urban counterinsurgency. These unlikely allies cooperated to break the insurgent grip on Ramadi. In doing so, they established a model for success that later "surge" reinforcements would follow as they deployed into the battlefields of Iraq.

The author does not belabor the point, but what strikes one is Sattar's and MacFarland's courage. They made their partnership work. Defying the insurgents ultimately cost Sattar his life. For his part, MacFarland

needed all the moral courage he could muster in challenging the doubts of the Marine chain of command in Anbar province while disregarding theater guidance to let the Iraqi security forces do the bulk of the fighting. Even as he did so, MacFarland was writing letters to 85 families of the men he lost in the fight for Ramadi. One can only imagine all this made for a very long year for MacFarland, who currently serves as the deputy commandant of the Command and General Staff College.

*A Chance in Hell* is probably not the definitive account of the pivotal campaign for Ramadi. In telling the story, Marine officer-turned-journalist Michaels uses a breezy, highly readable style that jumps from vignette to vignette and character sketch to character sketch. At times, the reader will find the account thin on context and chronology, but for the time being, this is the best account we have of the campaign for Ramadi and well worth the attention of military professionals and those who seek a better understanding of the long, difficult war in Iraq.

**LTC Scott Stephenson, Ph.D., USA, Retired, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas**

**WAR AND MORAL DISSONANCE**, Peter A. French, Cambridge University Press, New York, 342 pages, \$27.87.

Peter A. French may be the most prolific author writing in the field of applied ethics today—a field he helped pioneer almost 30 years ago with his landmark study, *Individual and Collective Responsibility: The Massacre at My Lai*. French's 19 books and scores of articles eruditely encompass a breathtakingly diverse array of topics. The titles include *Cowboy Metaphysics*, *Corporate Ethics*, *Ethics and College Sports*, and *Ethics in Government*. His work is highly regarded in

philosophical circles and written in a clear, evocative style accessible even to undergraduates.

Any of his books on military ethics promises to be an insightful, meaningful read. At first, *War and Moral Dissonance* delivers on this promise. In his opening essay, "The Two Collar Conflict," French writes of his experiences teaching ethics classes to U.S. Navy and Marine chaplains from 2004 to 2006. The "two collar conflict" to which French refers is the chaplain's struggle between his responsibility to uphold the principles of his faith and his designated military responsibility to teach, advise, and promote a secular professional ethic. French depicts this struggle as a tragic one that too often results in moral schizophrenia. Leaders so afflicted, he claims, can have worse psychic injuries than the warriors they counsel.

French's stories of troubled chaplains are themselves troubling. He writes of chaplains who thought that military necessity compelled them to lie or to keep dark secrets despite the opposite guidance their faiths provided. He relates the torment of chaplains who did not believe in a war but felt it their professional duty to promote the war's cause as just. He records one chaplain poignantly proclaiming that the price paid for his wartime service was his "immoral immortal soul."

French suggests that inner moral dissonance may contribute to indiscipline. A 2003 Associated Press article about the U.S. Navy's Chaplain Corps reported that, in the previous decade, "Regular officers had a discipline rate of two per 1,000, while the rate for chaplains was 45 per 1,000." Even if such cited facts represent statistical aberrations, French's personal testimony and ideas on the subject retain power. In fact, it is hard to

imagine a more compelling argument against our current ethically incoherent community of chaplains serving as caretakers of America's secular military ethic than this essay.

However, the volume's subsequent essays are not rooted in French's personal experience and often fall victim to his strong opinions and selective research. A superb essay, "Torture," is tainted when French buys into the popular myth that all professional interrogators routinely applied enhanced interrogation techniques (torture) during the initial years of the War on Terrorism. True, to its everlasting shame, the Bush Administration did enable these techniques, but their actual use only involved a small fraction of U.S. interrogation facilities. Most commanders and interrogators knew better than to engage in such practices.

I should forewarn U.S. military readers that French has a low opinion of their institution. For example, French writes that defective planning "seems to be a frequent occurrence in military operations." Of greater concern to open-minded military readers is that few of the essays aim to help them to better understand how to wage war. Some essay topics are irrelevant. (Such topics include: What is moral evil? What role does the loss of innocence play in moral responsibility?) Other topics seem hardly worth debating at all. (One such topic: Can a virtual online life provide a meaningful substitute for real life to those suffering from severe physical injuries, gained from war or elsewhere? French's answer is that an individual's life, virtual or real, is only as meaningful as the individual finds it.)

In short, some military readers may find *War and Moral Dissonance* worth buying just for its powerful opening essay. After this auspicious start, though, the volume soon loses its power and relevance for the warfighter. The book still has fine passages that deserve to be read and digested, but finding them can prove to be a chore.

**Major Douglas A. Pryer, USA,  
Wales, UK**

**INTO THE VIPER'S NEST: The First Pivotal Battle of the Afghan War**, Stephen Grey, Zenith Press, Minneapolis, MN, 2010, 352 pages, \$28.00.

Acclaimed author Stephen Grey delivers a captivating account of the battle for Musa Qala, which he deems the most significant battle in Afghanistan since the toppling of the Taliban in 2001. *Into the Viper's Nest* is Grey's first major work since winning the 2005 Amnesty International Media Award for an exclusive story exposing the CIA's rendition program.

Musa Qala, in the Helmand River Valley, has a population of approximately 30,000. In 2007, when the battle of Musa Qala took place, it was the only town in Helmand Province that the Afghan central government did not control. In fact, the town had become a Taliban stronghold. *Into the Viper's Nest* highlights the heroism, valor, and sacrifice of the paratroopers of the 1st Battalion, 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division, and the soldiers of the British 2nd Battalion, Yorkshire Regiment, who fought to take back the town over the course of three days. Grey recreates the battle and the events leading up to it using his personal notes, observations, and interviews he conducted with soldiers, commanders, and senior leaders. Perhaps the book's most useful contribution comes from the author's observations about counterinsurgency and the Afghan war, the competence of Afghan security forces, and the complicated relationship between the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) commander and Afghan President Hamid Karzai.

Grey notes that the key to winning the Afghan war is securing the population. In Helmand Province, the Taliban were mainly ordinary tribesmen disillusioned with the Afghan government and seeking security and stability. As the author points out, the idea behind counterinsurgency is to clear the enemy from an area, hold the area to keep the enemy from coming back, and

then build something positive for the population to win their support. Yet, in too many instances, "Afghans had seen plenty of 'clear,' precious little 'hold,' and almost no 'build.'" Lieutenant Colonel Brian Mennes, commander of the 1-508th, noted that clearance operations had resulted in too much death on both sides, which only served to alienate the population and turn them against the ISAF and the Afghan government. Mennes observed that doing little things like handing out blankets and maintaining a visible presence helped foster cooperation from the locals. For example, in one town, the locals would flash lights when a Taliban patrol approached and pointed out the paths the Taliban used, enabling Mennes to plan and conduct ambushes.

Afghans in the Helmand River Valley supported the Taliban because even though they distrusted and disliked the Afghan police, viewed as much worse than the Taliban because even though they established checkpoints to control the flow of drugs, they were frequently intoxicated from smoking hashish and heroin themselves, and shook down villagers for money. When they were not high or extorting money, they refused to work if they were not paid on time. The author also discovered that Helmand had a secret police force run by an officer who raped young boys and women, stole money from the locals he was paid to protect, and was nearly always drunk or stoned.

The Afghan army is also the target of stinging rebukes. *Into the Viper's Nest* describes its officers as conceited, lazy, and overly confident in their abilities. In fact, the author states that one of the reasons he wrote *Into the Viper's Nest* was to tell the story of the true heroes in the battle of Musa Qala—the paratroopers of the 1-508th. After the battle took place, an Afghan army battalion was "staged" to ride triumphantly into town. American paratroopers and British soldiers remained strategically out of sight. All of the press accounts detailing the battle of Musa Qala heralded it as a great victory for the Afghan National Army

(ANA). Everyone involved in the fighting knew better. The Afghan army could not handle an operation of Musa Qala's magnitude without getting slaughtered.

Another issue was the ANA's inability to adequately plan for operations to which President Karzai hastily committed them. Grey gleaned that this was a source of constant consternation for the security assistance force commander at the time, General Dan K. McNeill, who wanted to conduct a major operation in Musa Qala on at least four prior occasions but was denied by Karzai each time. Karzai had gotten word that a Taliban commander, one Mullah Salaam, who lived in Musa Qala, was interested in abandoning the Taliban in favor of supporting the central government in exchange for weapons and his personal security. With the possibility of flipping a key Taliban commander, Karzai gave the green light to take back Musa Qala despite McNeill's concern that Musa Qala would become a battle for control over valuable drug turf in the Helmand Valley. The author noted that both American and British diplomats were concerned about Karzai's links to the opium trade through some of his corrupt ministers and his brother.

The author spent most of his effort describing the events and major battles during the three-day operation to secure Musa Qala and includes detailed maps. The book's epilogue contains Grey's observations of Musa Qala after he visited almost two years later. Although security had much improved and the town bazaar was thriving, he found that the ISAF had yet to rebuild the mosque as promised after they entered the town in 2007. Mullah Salaam was alive and as gloomy as ever, blaming the Afghan government for failing to deliver on all of the promises of improvement he made to the people when he took over as the local governor.

*Into the Viper's Nest* is well researched and thoroughly documented. The author's vivid description of the fighting places the reader alongside American paratroopers

and British soldiers as they battle to take back Musa Qala. The book's weakness lies in the author's overreliance on this one particular battle to paint the entire Afghan National Army and police force as corrupt and incompetent. Even though the author's observations are frank and unflattering at times, *Into the Viper's Nest* does provide the reader with an appreciation for the magnitude of the difficult political decisions President Obama will have to make in deciding how to withdraw U.S. forces.

**MAJ John L. Kiel, Jr., USA,  
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas**

---

**THE IRAQ EFFECT: The Middle East After the Iraq War**, Frederic Wehrey, Dalia Dassa Kaye, Jessica Watkins, Jeffrey Martini, Robert A. Guffey, RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, CA, 2009, 187 pages, \$40.00.

Assessment is critical for success and an important element in the improvement of an individual, organization, or state. In the interest of executing the immediate, pressing, or next mission, we underestimate the importance of assessment. A failure to assess and take prudent action can lead to the loss of lives and a better future. *The Iraq Effect: The Middle East After the Iraq War* provides informed, fair assessment.

The product of a U.S. Air Force-funded research effort, the book discusses the balance of power in the Middle East after Operation Iraqi Freedom and provides recommendations that the United States should consider in the near term, including an Air Force engagement strategy in the region. The authors focus on long-term regional security, a refreshing, comprehensive approach to the ongoing strategy and policy debate.

The book does not overlook the human dimension in discussions of policy. It highlights the significant impact of refugee movements across Iraq's "porous and expansive" borders. While it addresses the effect of Operation Iraqi Freedom on the region, it correctly does not describe it as the "sole driver" behind ongo-

ing shifts and trends in the region.

The authors' recommendations are relevant, clear, and straightforward. They recommend a U.S. policy that encourages dialogue and is less confrontational. They describe China, Russia, Turkey, and Iran as important to future regional security.

*The Iraq Effect's* most encouraging deduction demonstrates that Al-Qaeda is in decline and that its efforts in Iraq brought discredit to the organization. This observation, coupled with "forging better regional intelligence sharing" with renewed emphasis on regional partnerships, has immediate implications. To ignore this book's focused assessment and its strategy and policy recommendations risks squandering victory. Highly recommended.

**LTC Troy Busby, USA, Retired,  
Fort Belvoir, Virginia**

---

**SUPERPOWER ILLUSION: How Myths and False Ideologies Led America Astray—and How to Return to Reality**, Jack F. Matlock, Yale University Press, New Haven, CT, 2010, 344 pages, \$20.00.

Retired ambassador Jack F. Matlock begins *Superpower Illusion* with the intriguing thesis that the United States was never a superpower. A strong member of a coalition of nations united in defeating communism during the Cold War, yes, but not a superpower. In fact, Matlock makes a strong case that the administrations of George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton, and George W. Bush unwisely led us to believe that the United States could operate unilaterally in the turbulent international security environment of the 1990s and early 21st century.

Matlock contends that the moniker, a "new world order," fostered an American "delusion of unipolarity that fed temptations to act alone," alienated allies, and did nothing to warm relations with former adversaries. For Matlock, the abandonment of traditional diplomatic relationships in favor of unilateral action promoted an international feeling that the

United States relished its self-identified position of preeminence. As a diplomat, Matlock maintains that estrangement from Europe damaged the Cold War international system, a useful and stable arrangement.

By casting Russia as a failed superpower and deemphasizing the concerns of the British, French, and other long-time European allies, the United States set itself on the tumultuous course of having to handle complex security crises essentially alone. According to Matlock, the election of Barack Obama was a watershed moment. The United States was realigning itself with the community of nations to work as an equal partner.

The book is about the limits of power, a primer on the unintended consequences of declaring victory, and deserves the attention of military and diplomatic officers alike. As the United States prepares to conclude military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, Matlock offers keen insights on how we should present and position our nation in the future.

**Sean N. Kalic, Ph.D.,**  
**Fort Leavenworth, Kansas**

---

**UNGOVERNED SPACES: Alternatives to State Authority in an Era of Softened Sovereignty**, edited by Anne L. Clunan and Harold A. Trinkunas, Stanford Security Studies, Stanford, CA, 2010, 310 pages, \$24.95.

In past centuries, states focused on other states as the greatest threats to peace and security. In the post-9/11 world, our worst nightmares involve terrorists, weapons traffickers, or computer hackers operating from the shadowy realms of failed states, obscure hinterlands, or cyberspace.

In the provocative book *Ungoverned Spaces*, Anne L. Clunan and Harold A. Trinkunas challenge the popular vision of “ungoverned spaces” as both an inaccurate and counterproductive descriptor for these physical and conceptual regions that exist under something other than firm state control.

The very diversity of these essays—ranging from the warlord realms of Somalia to border regions under tribal Pashtun law, from Rio de Janeiro’s druglord-controlled slums to Hezbollah territory in Lebanon, and finally venturing out to cyberspace and offshore banking—offers the strongest support for the editors’ claims. The spaces described are vastly different, defying any single template for analysis or policy recommendation. Most significantly, all are “governed” by someone or something. Not all constitute threats, and when they do, imposing state authority may not be a necessary or practical solution. The book’s oft-repeated example is the poor reception Al-Qaeda encountered from Somalia’s warlords when it tried to establish a base in what they assumed to be the fertile ground of this famously failed state.

While the authors question the old, state-centric paradigm, they offer few policy recommendations. Indeed, even their implied suggestion that states will have to work with local power structures is problematic, raising a host of moral and legal problems. If we can persuade Somali or Afghan warlords to oppose Al-Qaeda, what will the United States have to tolerate from warlords in return?

Essays involving case studies—like the studies of Southern Lebanon, the Brazilian *favelas*, and the Pashtun tribes—provide vivid images to illustrate their points. Other essays are like Pentagon briefings, abstract exercises in confusing terminology. Nonetheless, *Ungoverned Spaces* is worth reading for the provocative questions it poses, even if readers will be left to search for the answers to them on their own.

**COL David F. DiMeo, Ph.D.,**  
**USA, West Point, New York**

---

**CROSSROADS OF INTERVENTION: Insurgency and Counterinsurgency Lessons from Central America**, Todd Greentree, Naval Institute Press, 2009, Annapolis, MD, 196 pages, \$21.95.

When do nations decide to intervene in another country? What makes them choose to do so? According to Todd Greentree, these decisions personify what he calls the “crossroads of intervention,” the point at which a decision maker decides on the intervention strategy to pursue in a country or region. The intervention comes in two forms: overt aggression against another state or involvement in internal conflict.

The actual crossroad is the point at which a decision maker decides on the intervention strategy to pursue in a country or region. Greentree argues that the decisions and outcomes of insurgencies and interventions in Central America after the Vietnam War provide insight into the strategy and policy processes of Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom as well as conflicts of the future.

Greentree suggests that although the origins of insurgencies from Vietnam to Operation Iraqi Freedom are different, fundamental similarities exist in the U.S. political and military responses to them. In each case, a perceived threat to U.S. vital national security interests provided the justification for intervention, each conflict compelled prolonged participation in irregular warfare, and all were more costly than anticipated.

In addition, the insurgencies were interdependent. After the Vietnam War, the United States entered a period when the public did not support large-scale military involvement. Essentially, the U.S. government could not justify involving itself in third world countries because the insurgencies in Central America were temporally proximate to Vietnam. By not committing a military force to Central America, the United States avoided the pitfalls of Vietnam, but limited its study of Central America’s “modern insurgencies.” However, by the time of Operation Iraqi Freedom, this sensitivity to the U.S. involvement in Vietnam had passed, and George W. Bush had leeway for military involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq. Unfortunately, the government and public forgot the lessons of Nicaragua and El Salvador.

The major lessons learned through Greentree's studies provide policy makers with some key insights to consider. First, the United States must not ignore political situations by pursuing too strongly a military course of action. Second, America must not abandon its protégés once U.S. policymakers achieve their strategic goals. Third, U.S. policymakers must be clear in the reasoning behind their decisions for intervention. The sole argument of "spreading democracy" does not hold water any more.

**MAJ Randy P. James, Jr., USA,  
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas**

---

**THE HISTORY OF CAMP TRACY: Japanese WWII POWs and the Future of Strategic Interrogation**, Alexander D. Corbin, Ziedon Press, Virginia, 2009, 190 pages, \$21.95.

As the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan enter into their ninth and tenth years respectively, the United States continues to struggle with the stigma associated with interrogations. Alexander D. Corbin's *The History of Camp Tracy: Japanese WWII POWs and the Future of Strategic Interrogation* documents this fact. It also successfully demonstrates that improving interrogation strategy depends on extracting and implementing lessons learned from historical failures. In fact, the first-hand observations and experiences of the U.S. intelligence fiasco at Abu Ghraib, Iraq, in 2004 inspired Corbin, a seasoned U.S. Army Arabic-trained interrogator, to write the book. Corbin's contribution will prove invaluable in improving interrogation strategy.

In this insightful, relevant, and easily digestible book, Corbin provides a thorough account of ineffective military intelligence interrogation planning and execution in Iraq and Cuba and the successes the United States had in interrogating Japanese soldiers at Camp Tracy in California during World War II. He documents disturbing accounts of poor site selection, untrained interrogators, overcrowding, and prisoner abuse in Iraq. He then shifts to a

meticulous comparison of the cultures of World War II-era Japanese and Islamic extremists and outlines the detailed planning that went into interrogation operations at Camp Tracy, where the U.S. military recognized that prescreening interrogators and prisoners of war and creating a unified command for interrogation operations was critical for mission success: "Although the Navy interviewed approximately 450 prospective recruits, of them only 35 were selected for interrogation training," and "only 5,431 Japanese POWs out of the total population of over 38,000 Japanese POWs—roughly fourteen percent—were actually sent to the continental United States." Not surprisingly, Corbin received the 2008 Joint Chiefs of Staff History Office's Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz Archival Research Award.

Corbin accessed recently released official World War II declassified military records, including original plans, interrogators notes, and prisoner statements. He also documents professional literature authored by various Japanese and American soldiers, and he has interviewed seven former interrogators who served at Camp Tracy. According to the author, "Camp Tracy was a top secret mission; the veterans, who are now in their 80s and 90s, did not take notes or write about their experiences in diaries, and in some cases had not spoken of their involvement at Camp Tracy . . ."

*The History of Camp Tracy* is the finest compendium of knowledge on interrogation strategy in existence. The author's findings are enlightening and clearly illustrate that interrogation planning, techniques, and procedures performed at Camp Tracy in the 1940s may be considered suitable strategy today. As an indication of the book's relevance and importance, a senior military representative at the Pentagon has been quoted as saying "I will be testifying on detainee and interrogation policies before Congressional committees . . . and will also be participating in a senior panel convened to design a way ahead on interrogation for the next

administration. I cannot think of a higher compliment to pay you than to assure you that I will refer to your thesis in making my arguments."

**MAJ Richard H. Hetherington,  
USA, Iraq**

---

**THIS TIME WE WIN: Revisiting the Tet Offensive**, James S. Robbins, Encounter Books, New York, 2010, 364 pages, \$25.95.

*This Time We Win: Revisiting the Tet Offensive* is a direct, honest, and strong book about the Vietnam War. James S. Robbins, the senior editorial foreign affairs writer for *The Washington Times*, presents a clear analysis of executive branch decision making during Lyndon Johnson's administration. Robbins also explains why U.S. media hurt our war effort and helped to turn our decisive victory during the 1968 Tet Offensive into a defeat with short- and long-term consequences.

To set the stage, he begins his book with an overview of what was happening in Washington. Robbins points out why Johnson's administration was at best incompetent and at worst dangerously arrogant.

Questions: Where in the Constitution is the power of policy formation given exclusively to the president? In fact, can we successfully fight any war without the active involvement of Congress and the people? Johnson was foolish enough to follow the advice of such people as Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara, whose strategy of "gradual escalation" sent a clear message to Ho Chi Minh. Unfortunately, the message was that the United States would never be totally committed to the war. In contrast to Johnson, Ho Chi Minh had only one goal: to win the war. He had defeated the French, and now he wanted do the same to the Americans. Toughness is what Ho Chi Minh understood, nothing else. Robbins puts it this way: "In the long run it meant that the United States lost in Vietnam by choice; we chose not to do the things we needed to do in order to win." Johnson and McNamara simply did

not know what they were doing. Ho Chi Minh did.

Robbins writes that according to captured Viet Cong papers, Tet was “a campaign designed to bring about a decisive victory and end the war.” The president did not fully understand how big the Tet Offensive was, and as a result, America was not in a position to take advantage of the decisive defeat it inflicted on the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese at Tet. A big factor was that the American press got Tet so wrong that the result was that all of the South Vietnamese and American troops who fought so valiantly on the battlefield and “won” had their efforts turned to defeat.

North Vietnamese General Giap, who led the Tet Offensive, thought the result of Tet was “tremendous losses in terms of the revolution’s position and strength.” In other words, the Viet Cong were defeated, and the North Vietnamese Army was not much better off. For example, consider the embassy attack on 31 January 1968. The press made it sound like a big victory for the Viet Cong. In fact, 19 Viet Cong attacked the embassy and were killed.

Robbins’ account of AP photographer Eddie Adams’ famous photograph of General Nguyen Ngoc Loan shooting a notorious Viet Cong assassin, Bay Lop, in the head is sad to read. The press turned General Loan, a hero, into a monster. Robbins brings back the truth.

The author’s narrative about the brutal, 26-day fight for Hue is first-rate. Again, because of the biased U.S. press, the American people never understood what happened there. Robbins corrects this mistake. He gives the reader vivid insight into how brutal the Communists were. Robbins’ account of the U.S. Marines 77-day fight for Khe Sanh is also superb.

Unless you are already an expert on Vietnam, *This Time We Win* will give you many insights into this tragic war.

**Robert Previdi, Manhasset, New York**

**YALTA: The Price of Peace**, S.M. Plokhy, Viking, New York, 2010, 451 pages, \$29.95.

The first major work on Yalta produced after the end of the Cold War, S.M. Plokhy’s *Yalta: The Price of Peace* reappraises the Yalta peace conference by benefiting from open Russian archives. Plokhy approaches the conference mostly from Roosevelt’s perspective, but gives ample time to Churchill and Stalin. Stalin’s actions are particularly well explained and examined compared to previous works. Plokhy’s overriding theme is the incompatibility of the United States, the British Empire, and the Soviet Union. There was little to bring the Big Three together other than the defeat of Nazi Germany. As Plokhy writes, and as post-war history shows, we should remember that “in the absence of common values binding allies together, the difference between friend and foe can simply be a matter of time.”

Most of the book deals with Yalta’s day-to-day negotiations. The Soviets were able to record many of the conversations that took place at the negotiating table as well as private discussions between various members of the U.S. and British delegations. Plokhy gives particular emphasis to the discussions on the creation of the UN, which was of great personal importance to Roosevelt. One of Yalta’s legacies is the British and U.S. acceptance of Soviet occupation of Poland, but Plokhy argues that Stalin’s insistence on Soviet control over Poland made Churchill’s best efforts to prevent it ultimately futile. Poland was one of the prices that Stalin insisted on for Soviet involvement against Imperial Japan. Obtaining a commitment by the Soviet Union to fight against the Japanese was one of Roosevelt’s primary objectives of the Yalta conference and he proved willing to pay for it with Chinese territory and well as Polish independence.

Plokhy demolishes one myth surrounding Yalta—that of the role of Alger Hiss. Although we now know that Hiss was a Soviet agent for

years before World War II, his role at Yalta was unclear until the opening of Russian archives. Apparently, Hiss was involved with collecting military information for the Soviets. Plokhy finds that “his military handlers showed little interest in the political information he could provide” and that he had minimal influence on the political settlements made at Yalta.

Plokhy vividly paints the personalities of the Big Three. Stalin appears genial and open, which helps to explain the Allied willingness to accept his assurances. Churchill is very aware of the grim realities of Soviet rule, and oddly, Roosevelt is reluctant to work with Churchill on the Polish question or even consult with him as to the purpose of the conference before it starts.

Plokhy concludes with a lengthy look at Yalta’s legacy, arguing that the agreement proved vague enough for all parties to accept and led to divergent interpretations at Potsdam and during the post-war period. Plokhy sees the later disillusionment with Yalta as a product of the start of the Cold War, when the radically different aims of the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union became painfully clear. The problem was not necessarily the agreement itself, but its application.

**John E. Fahey, Fairfax, Virginia**

---

**UNBROKEN: A World War II Story of Survival, Resilience, and Redemption**, Laura Hillenbrand, Random House, New York, 2010, 473 pages, \$27.00.

This biography takes off with a B-24 journey across the Pacific Ocean, but Lieutenant Louie Zamperini’s story of survival begins when his plane, *Green Hornet*, with a crew of 11 crashes into the ocean, killing eight. The survivors drift at sea for 47 days: dodging strafing from a Japanese plane; hand-fighting sharks; and cheating starvation by wringing the neck of an albatross, consuming its raw flesh, and crafting the bird’s bones into fishing hooks. Only two lieutenants survived

the 2,000-mile raft-journey to the Japanese-occupied Marshall Islands. After enduring their harrowing sea journey, Zamperini is moved to Japan where another, longer story of fortitude unfolds. The author describes the horrific life American POWs suffered at the hands of the Japanese captors; they lived in maggot-infested huts with stinging insects while being subjected to arbitrary torture that filled their days for the next two years, as guests of the Emperor.

Hillenbrand sets the stage for this tale by chronicling young Louie's developmental journey. We follow the Torrance Tornado's "childhood of artful dodging" and watch as he acquires the confidence of someone "clever, resourceful, and bold enough to escape any predicament," including what he thought was the humiliation of growing-up as a poor Italian-American immigrant in California, striving to speak English, and endeavoring to fit in at school. Louie seemed destined for juvenile hall, or court-ordered sterilization, but Louie's brother Pete refocused the Torrance Tornado's stubborn streak to track and field, leading him to the 1936 Berlin Olympics where his "blistering last lap" in the 5,000-meter race resulted in a handshake and praise from Adolf Hitler along with waves of speculation about the gold awaiting him in the scheduled 1940 Olympics in Japan. War changed everything, but Louie's fortitude stood him in good stead for the challenges he would endure in the prison camps.

Hillenbrand describes the terror of waiting for the next beating, the inescapable thoughts of hopelessness, and the endless pain of repeated blows from relentless torturers. A story so intense it's almost incredible, a story that challenges the reader's comprehension, this description of the life-and-death struggle of the POWs will remain with you longer than you like. Zamperini himself has praised Hillenbrand's seven-year devotion to getting every detail correct. He says her authentic storytelling and

impressive research is so penetrating that, "She knew things about me that I didn't even know myself."

As a story of PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) and the challenges of returning home, *Unbroken* is relevant to today's military veteran; it illustrates the long-distance race from resilience to rescue, a journey whose route includes as many valleys and peaks as the primal wartime fight for survival. Ultimately, this biography portrays the path across the finish-line to redemption through faith and optimism. An inspiring guide book for a returning veteran striving to reconcile the horrors of war with the warmth of friends and family, battling to forgive the unforgivable, and genuinely attempting to renew his foundations of self, *Unbroken* is a must read that ultimately brings the resilient warrior home.

**MAJ Jeff Bergmann, USA,  
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas**

---

**MUNICH, 1938: Appeasement and World War II**, David Faber, Simon and Schuster, New York, 2009, 512 pages, \$30.00.

David Faber's *Munich, 1938* provides a gripping, chilling account of British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's policy of appeasement with Nazi Germany prior to World War II. The result was the sacrifice of Czechoslovakia, a supposed ally, in the pursuit of peace at any price at the Munich Conference. Chamberlain's actions merely whetted Hitler's appetite for further territorial aggression and led to the start of World War II a year later.

Faber draws from a reservoir of primary sources to show the folly of seeking peace with dictators and aggressors at any cost. Faber provides a fresh, objective view of Chamberlain, exposing his naiveté and self-delusion as to Hitler's character. (Chamberlain said of Hitler: "I got the impression that here was a man who could be relied upon when he had given his word.") Supported by a coterie of sycophants, Chamberlain played upon the populace's painful memory

of World War I, while keeping his Cabinet poorly advised of his plans. Unfortunately, the outspoken voices of Winston Churchill and Anthony Eden were ignored during this disgraceful chapter of European history.

The book is a must read for all U.S. diplomats, politicians, and military officers. An important lesson is that a strong response in the early stages of trouble may deter a dictator. Chamberlain's approach achieved the opposite result, and it is a mistake to be avoided in a number of hotspots around the world today.

**Kevin D. Stringer, Ph.D.,  
Zurich, Switzerland**

---

**MARSHALL: Lessons in Leadership**, H. Paul Jeffers with Alan Axelrod, Palgrave MacMillan, New York, 2010, 204 pages, \$22.00.

*Marshall: Lessons in Leadership* (part of Palgrave's series on great generals) is the last book by historian H. Paul Jeffers, who died in December 2009. Jeffers' book joins other biographies of General George C. Marshall, who is universally recognized as one of America's greatest generals.

So, what does this book have to say that others, including Forrest Pogue's four-volume biography, have not?

Little new historical information about Marshall's life has been unearthed in this new biography. Nevertheless, it is an engaging, colorful, and eminently readable story about Marshall's life, his military career, and his triumphs. The book is organized chronologically, beginning with Marshall's 1880 birth in Uniontown, Pennsylvania. It provides enough information about his childhood and youth to give the reader a sense of Marshall prior to his military career, but not so much as to detract from the part of the story the reader wants to get to—his Army career. The author gets there quickly. In Chapter 2, Jeffers recounts Marshall's early experience as a junior officer in "an army that had no enemy."

Like most military officers before World War I, Marshall progressed slowly. But Marshall made the most of these early assignments. According to Marshall himself, one of his toughest assignments was to assist in mapping 2,000 square miles in southwest Texas, near Fort Clark, in 1905. In this assignment, he met Malin Craig, who “thirty-four years later would recommend him to be his successor as army chief of staff.”

The story reaches its climax when chronicling Marshall’s service as army chief of staff during World War II. The author puts you in the room with Marshall and other colorful characters from the war—Franklin D. Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, Dwight D. Eisenhower, and George S. Patton.

Throughout the book, Jeffers concentrates on Marshall’s temperament—always controlled, mission focused, and never egotistical—and his leadership style—quickly identifying officers with talent and potential and getting them into assignments where they could develop and demonstrate their potential. Perhaps this “character study” aspect of the book is the author’s greatest contribution to the understanding of Marshall as a man, a military officer, and a leader. Recommended for all readers.

**Clark Capshaw, Ph.D.,  
Alexandria, Virginia**

---

**1864: Lincoln at the Gates of History**, Charles Bracelen Flood, Simon and Schuster, New York, 2009, 521 pages, \$17.00.

*1864* is an extensive, thorough, and admirable work of literature, an introspective book on human suffering, personal sacrifice, excitement, passion, and politics. The book discusses one of the U.S. Civil War’s most crucial years and deserves to be compared to David McCullough’s *1776*. Complementary books are Ronald White, Jr.’s, *Eloquent President* and Garry Wills’ *Lincoln at Gettysburg*.

Charles Flood has disassembled and dispersed the apparition that is Lincoln. Lincoln’s achievements

and strengths as well as his failures and shortcomings form an accurate portrait of a figure facing a multitude of personal and professional challenges. From expansion of executive powers during conflict, to effectively negotiating national needs through long-range political planning agendas, Lincoln articulated his position over and over again in speeches and written documents. Lincoln’s successful defense of his unpopular Emancipation Proclamation, the saving of the union, and then winning a second term speak volumes about those efforts.

Flood defines Lincoln’s daily life through stories told by Lincoln himself and his two personal secretaries. The reader feels the warmth, devotion, and humor that Lincoln used to infuse the nation, his family, his friends, and his staff alike. Even his fair treatment of those who opposed him displays a character as rare as the individual. For healing and reconstruction of a nation to take place, precisely these attributes were necessary: a conciliatory approach to the south and an incredible generosity for the vanquished.

The book is a must read and a great addition to any collection on the Civil War. *1864* is a telling reflection of one of the Civil War’s most prominent architects.

**LTC Thomas S. Bundt, Ph.D.,  
USA, Fort Sam Houston, Texas**

---

**CONSTANTINE: Roman Emperor, Christian Victor**, Paul Stephenson, Overlook Press, New York, 2010, 350 pages, \$30.00.

Paul Stephenson, professor of Byzantine history at Durham University, has written a masterful biography of the controversial Roman emperor Constantine that gives refreshing new perspectives on the actions and motives of this highly controversial emperor.

Because of Constantine’s adoption of Christianity, many previous works have interpreted him as a church figure. Stephenson reorients the discussion by focusing on Constantine’s military actions,

interpreted through the motif of the Roman “theology of victory.” While mystery religions offering personal salvation flourished, Romans still practiced a state religion that sought the support of the traditional gods for the stability of the empire. Over time, rulers sought the support of one main god, a *summus deus*. Because the aid of this god would bring victory, a ruler could maintain the loyalty of the troops, thus assuring himself of his grip on power. When Constantine battled his rivals in the collapse of the Tetrarchy, he sought the support of the god *Sol Invictus* (unconquered sun).

During this time, Christianity continued to spread rapidly. Stephenson uses the controversial “sex, health, and arithmetic” thesis to explain the religion’s exponential growth. Constantine conflated the identity of Jesus Christ with *Sol Invictus*, blending Roman and Christian beliefs and gaining Christian support. Once he had consolidated power, Constantine maintained his allegiance to this god of victory, reworking a vision of the god *Apollo-Sol* into the famous story of a vision from the Christian version of god at the Battle of Milvian Bridge. Constantine’s subsequent interest in church affairs increased as he realized that stabilizing the church would aid him in stabilizing the empire.

Ultimately, this is a story about the intersections of politics and religion, showing how Constantine used both to his advantage. Stephenson admits that the paucity of evidence on many aspects of Constantine’s life force him to make educated guesses. To supplement the sparse documentary record, he uses findings from coinage, statuary, and monumental architecture and provides pertinent illustrations for major pieces.

Several of his ideas bear further scrutiny. Stephenson’s thesis that Constantine established orthodoxy with the Trinitarian controversy at the Council of Nicaea is debatable, as even the New Testament evinces certain inviolable doctrinal

formulations early in church history. Stephenson's conclusion that the idea of Christian martyrdom formed the basis of Islamic martyrdom assumes causation and not the existence of separate but similar

phenomena. While the author's purposeful avoidance of footnotes does aid in smoothing the read, it creates frustration at not having clear direction for tracing ideas to their sources. Overall, this work will be of great

interest to students, clergy, and military leaders exploring the relationship between religion, military action, and political power.

**ILT Jonathan E. Newell, USAR, Amherst, New Hampshire**

## MR We Recommend



**HANNIBAL: The Military Biography of Rome's Greatest Enemy**, Richard A. Gabriel, Potomac Books, Dulles, VA, 2011, 288 pages, \$35.95.

The Romans' destruction of Carthage after the Third Punic War erased any Carthaginian historical record of Hannibal's life. What we know of him comes exclusively from Roman historians who had every interest in minimizing his success, exaggerating his failures, and disparaging his character.

Yet there is no doubt that Hannibal was the greatest Carthaginian general of the Second Punic War. When he did not defeat them outright, he fought to a standstill the best generals Rome produced, and he sustained his army in the field for 16 long years without mutiny or desertion. Hannibal was a first-rate tactician, only a somewhat lesser strategist, and the greatest enemy Rome ever faced.

Richard A. Gabriel's brilliant new biography shows how Hannibal's genius nearly unseated the Roman Empire.

**From the publisher**



**A WORLD ON FIRE: Britain's Crucial Role in the American Civil War**, Amanda Foreman, Random House, New York, June 2011, 1008 pages, \$35.00.

Historian Amanda Foreman's *A World on Fire* tells the fascinating story of the American Civil War and the major role played by Britain and its citizens in that epic struggle.

Even before the first rumblings of secession shook the halls of Congress, British involvement in the coming schism was inevitable. Britain was dependent on the South for cotton, and in turn the Confederacy relied almost exclusively on Britain for guns, bullets, and ships. The Union sought to block any diplomacy between the two and consistently teetered on the brink of war with Britain. For four years the complex web of relationships between the countries led to defeats and victories both minute and history-making. In *A World on Fire*, Amanda Foreman examines the fraught relations from multiple angles while she introduces characters both humble and grand, bringing them to vivid life over the course of her sweeping and brilliant narrative.

**From the publisher**



**THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN: Five Months that Changed History: May-October 1940**, James Holland, St. Martin's Press, New York, 2011, 704 pages, \$40.00

From British historian James Holland comes a groundbreaking new book, *The Battle of Britain: Five Months that Changed History, May-October 1940*, which paints a stirring picture of that extraordinary summer when the fate of the world hung by a thread. Holland has written this definitive account of those critical months based on extensive new research, and examines, for the first time, the conflict on land, sea, and at home, as well as in the air.

If Britain's defenses had collapsed, Hitler would have dominated all of Europe. With France facing defeat and British forces pressed back to the Channel, there were few who believed Britain could survive; but, thanks to a sophisticated defensive system and the combined efforts of the Royal Air Force, the Royal Navy and the defiance of a new Prime Minister, Britain refused to give in.

**From the publisher**



The street sounds to the soldiers' tread,

And out we troop to see:

A single redcoat turns his head,

He turns and looks at me.

My man, from sky to sky's so far,

We never crossed before;

Such leagues apart the world's ends are,

We're like to meet no more;

What thoughts at heart have you and I

We cannot stop to tell;

But dead or living, drunk or dry,

Soldier, I wish you well.

Poem XXII, *A Shropshire Lad*, 1896

A.E. Housman

ART: Grenadier, 40th Regiment of Foot, 1776, P.W. Reynolds, 1894.



Terracotta figurine of a cataphract horse and rider, created during the Northern Wei Dynasty (386 to 534 AD) in China. During the Three Kingdoms period of Korean history (57 BC through 668 AD), such heavily armed cavalry serving as an elite assault force represented the core of Korean armies.